

Walton Firs Newsletter

June 2017



Introduction

The season is well underway here at Walton Firs, and the staff are all being kept very busy with instructing different activities and maintaining the facilities in a good state for large numbers of young visitors which we welcome throughout the season.

Some readers will be aware that we recently held the AGM for the Walton Firs Foundation (the Charity formed to own and maintain the site), and coupled the day with the official opening of the Low Ropes Course and re-dedication of the Chapel. We would like to thank both the Reverend Gregory Hargrove and Councillor Rachael Lake, the Worshipful Mayor of the Borough of Elmbridge, for taking time to come and support the event – more on the day's events later in this issue.

In other news we've made a fantastic start clearing our newly leased land, and released our brand new website since the last issue. I hope you enjoy reading about these and other recent developments at the site, and if you'd like to drop by for a visit to take a look first hand then please drop us a line - we'd be delighted to see you!

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And lots more....



Clearing the New Land

Many of you will be aware that we recently leased some land adjacent to the Activity Centre and the Horse Field from our friends and neighbours at the Burhill Estate. The land was extremely overgrown and had not been used for any purpose for a very long time, and so had to be cleared of some very dense vegetation indeed.

Undeterred, the staff and volunteers undertook to initially clear sufficient area to enable a fence to be installed. It took a gargantuan effort to fight a pathway through the foliage, and then additional effort to get the fence line in the right place. Efforts were supplemented by the arrival of a donated JCB for a fortnight, and additional volunteer chainsaw support. The results thus far are absolutely fantastic - but we still have more work to do to complete the task.

The additional land will be used for activity space, with stage one being the re-location of the Archery Range from its' current position near the Pembroke Hut.

Subsequently there are provisional plans for a Go-Kart track, a bike track and maybe even Tomahawk throwing as an activity!

We have generously been donated the use of a chipper to help clear the debris between 8th-14th June. If you could spare a few hours to come and assist over this week please get in touch.

AGM, Re-dedication of the Chapel and Low Ropes Opening

On the afternoon of 20th May 2017 the Annual General Meeting of the Walton Firs Foundation took place attended by Patrons, Directors and others with an interest in the Charity. Immediately following the Meeting a wide variety of other guests arrived, and the new Mayor of Elmbridge, Councillor Rachael Lake, arrived to preside over the proceedings.

Those present were given a short update on developments at Walton Firs by the Centre Manager, and briefed on some forthcoming projects. The assembly then moved to the Chapel where Reverend Gregory Hargrove conducted a short ceremony recounting the tale of brothers Albert and Albrecht Durer, dedicated the praying hands and re-dedicated the Chapel as a place of reflection for young people.

The guests then proceeded to the new Low Ropes Course, designed by one of the instructors and constructed over the winter months. As mentioned in our previous issue Harken UK generously donated the majority of the rope required, and many of our Patrons assisted with the splicing. The Mayor made a wonderful speech recounting her days as a GSL, and subsequently (and very courageously) safety tested some parts of the course for us before the first group of children were allowed on.

The remaining guests returned to the marquee for refreshments, and those that wished to were given a short tour of the partially cleared newly leased land.

The day was a great success in highlighting the good work of The Walton Firs Foundation, and our heartfelt thanks go out to all the guests, staff and volunteers that contributed to making the day a success.



The Reverend Hargrove (or Kim to many) with some of his former proteges who continue to support Walton Firs for the benefit of young people.

In Appreciation.....

Since the last issue we need to extend our most sincere thanks to....

Gavin Jones Garden Machinery Ltd (donation of a used strimmer to replace one stolen)

Charlotte Booth (work experience volunteer)

Waitrose, Hampton and Cobham (cash donations towards a High Ropes course)

Service Crews (we love you all, and cannot thank you enough)

Ian Smalley and Colin Thomas (both chainsaw maestros, who gave up their time over the Easter break)

Michael Woolford & Colin Fairs (for their extensive JCB and chainsaw work)

Patrons and Directors (for again selflessly donating their time and resources, bringing their chainsaws, sweat and expertise to improve the site in so many different ways)

Maurice Jones (or Rob Williams' Father-in-Law)

For acting as our Official Photographer for the AGM Day. Great work Maurice – many thanks.

AGM, the Chapel and Official Opening of the Low Ropes Course – 20th May 2017



Do you want to be part of a fantastic team?

As a Charity the Walton Firs Foundation relies on a great deal of volunteer support to be able to provide such a brilliant facility for young people.

It's tremendous fun, and makes a real difference to people - and volunteering looks great on your CV too!

If you would like to help us by joining one of our Service Teams (or maybe you'd like to form your own?) then please do telephone us on 01932 863243 - or drop us a line at info@waltonfirs.co.uk - we'd love to hear from you!

Planned projects – please help us to turn these into reality

High Ropes Course – Cost £75,000

Identified by visitors as the activity they would most like to see on-site.

Telecoms Building – Cost £25,000

Desperately needed for improving volunteer and staff accommodation.

New Land – Cost £10,000

Clearing and fencing the new land for additional activities comes at a significant cost.

Ablutions – Cost £40,000 (of £330,000)

The new ablutions were so desperately needed that the Foundation was loaned a sum to enable the work to be completed during the winter.

Smaller Accommodation – Cost £11,000 (each)

Feedback suggests that hutted accommodation smaller than our current facilities would be very popular. A range of possibilities exist – but a small wooden structure that sleeps up to 7 are our current favourite. We could easily add to the number of huts if they prove popular!

Fundraising leaflet

We have produced a new fundraising tri-fold leaflet which will be distributed with this newsletter. Please contact us if you need any hard copies

Dennis Peerman

We have been advised that one of the Patrons of Walton Firs Foundation, Mr Dennis Peerman, is quite unwell and has been admitted to a Nursing Home near Portsmouth. We have written to him with our best wishes, but if you would like to do write to him personally then please contact the Centre Manager for the address.

Diary Dates

7 June – Walton Firs Foundation Board Meeting

8-14 June – We have a chipper on site to help with the disposal of foliage from our new land. Please come and help if you are able!

27 June – Management Advisory Group Meeting

7-9 July – Borough Camp. The busiest and best weekend of the year.

12-13 August – Proposed dates for an 'Open Weekend' to help raise the profile of the site locally. We will need lots of help over that weekend.

7 September - Walton Firs Foundation Board Meeting

4 October – Patrons' Meeting

19 December - Walton Firs Foundation Board Meeting

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we learned of the recent passing of Michael Elsoffer, a long term supporter of the site and known and beloved by many. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends.

Recent Improvements

Our vending machines are now successfully installed, and doing some good business with visitors. The coffee machine especially seems popular with teachers!

The outdoor cold shower at the end of the adventure course is nearing completion. This will help visitors get clean(ish) before they make too much of a mess in our nice new ablution block.

Our on-site plumbing has recently been independently inspected, and minor remedial work completed to keep us compliant with legislative requirements.



Lambeth Scouts enjoy a quick game of volleyball between activities during the Early May Bank Holiday

Walton Firs in Waitrose

Waitrose have chosen Walton Firs as part of their Community Matters scheme in Hampton, New Malden and Cobham so far this year. Wimbledon branch have announced that we have been chosen as one of their charities for June – so please think of us if you're in the store! Thank you and thanks to the John Lewis group for their generous support.

Contact Us:

info@waltonfirs.co.uk

www.waltonfirs.co.uk

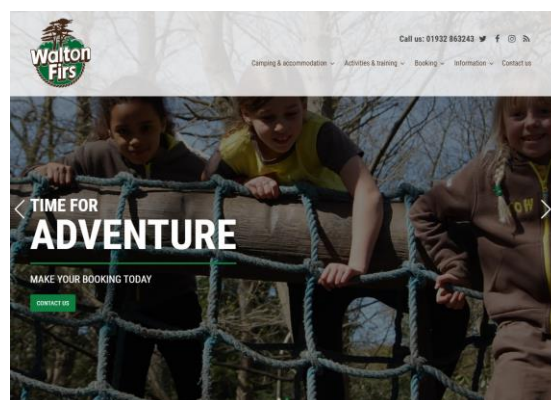
Tel: 01932 863243

Facebook: Walton Firs Activity Centre

Twitter: @WaltonFirs

Instagram: waltonfirsactivitycentre

Digital Developments



www.waltonfirs.co.uk

The new Walton Firs website has now gone live and we are thrilled with the response, which has been overwhelmingly positive.

We can track the number of site visitors each day, their location and some other metrics which will really help us in marketing Walton Firs most effectively.

We have also registered with a website (www.planmyschooltrip.co.uk) which specialises in venues for school trips, and we have begun the process to be accredited by Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) as a quality provider.



The social media accounts on Twitter (@WaltonFirs), Facebook (Walton Firs Activity Centre or @WaltonFirs) and Instagram (waltonfirsactivitycentre) have all been refreshed, and visitors are encouraged to post any 'action pics' of their visit (with appropriate consent naturally).