

Working in *partnership*

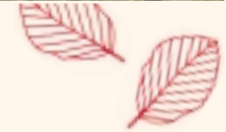
The Conservators are working closely with the relevant local authorities to ensure that the re-introduction is a success. This includes initiatives such as erecting appropriate warning signs and, it is hoped, the promotion of a reduction in traffic speed limits around the Forest. Such initiatives would benefit the Commoners if, as we hope, they decide to return cattle to the Forest in the future and lower traffic speeds would also benefit many other users of the Forest. In the meantime, until such speed reductions can be agreed, a temporary wooden barrier has been built parallel to the Epping New Road (A104) to prevent the cattle from straying directly onto this very busy stretch of fast-moving traffic. The barrier has many 'squeeze' gaps and several gates to allow safe access for pedestrians, horseriders, cyclists and other Forest users.

The success of this grazing re-introduction project is key to the long-term conservation of the Forest. It will ensure that the essential character of the Forest is not lost. We hope too that it will form the basis for a larger project, in partnership with other organisations and with the support of the public, to protect the wider landscape of the Forest and produce a quieter, safer environment for everyone seeking recreation and enjoyment here in this beautiful and unique place.

Epping Forest is one of a number of open spaces, parks and gardens in and around London owned and managed by the Corporation of London as part of its commitment to sustaining a world class city. Each open space is a unique resource managed for the use and enjoyment of the public and for the conservation of wildlife and historic landscape. A full list of sites and visitor information can be found on our website at [www.corpoflondon.gov.uk/openspaces](http://www.corpoflondon.gov.uk/openspaces) or by contacting the Open Spaces Directorate on **020 7606 3030**.

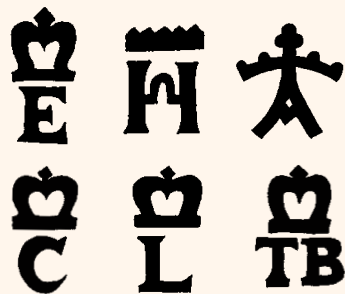
For further information please contact:  
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E-mail: [epping.forest@corpoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:epping.forest@corpoflondon.gov.uk)



**IMPORTANT**

In an emergency or if you see a cow in distress please contact **020 8532 1010** at any time.



Some of the traditional brand signs belonging to Forest Manors



# The ancient custom of *Grazing*

Epping Forest has been common land since at least Anglo-Saxon times. More than 1,000 years of grazing by domestic animals has shaped our present Forest landscape. It has created the varied mosaic of grasslands, heaths and pasture woodland that we are trying to conserve.

The enchanting beauty of such variety inspired many people to fight to protect the Forest when it was threatened by enclosures in the 19th Century. This natural tapestry of heather-clad slopes, blazing-yellow gorse hills and extraordinary open-grown trees was highlighted explicitly for protection in the far-sighted Epping Forest Act of 1878.

In the fight to protect the Forest in the 1870's it was the Commoners' rights of grazing that saved it from enclosure and destruction by developers. In his famous judgement The Master of the Rolls, Sir George Jessel, concluded that Commoners' had the right of inter-commonage, i.e. that their cattle could be allowed to wander freely grazing any part of the Forest, no matter in which Forest parish their owner resided. This meant that the Forest was to be left open to grazing and could not be enclosed or sold off for other purposes.

This right of common of pasture was duly protected by the Epping Forest Act 1878 and coupled with a new right of people to use the Forest for recreation and enjoyment. To this day a registered Commoner (i.e. someone who owns at least half an acre of land in a Forest parish) has the right to graze as many cattle on the Forest during the summer months as s/he has land on which to overwinter them.



Birds-foot-trefoil

Grazing on Epping Forest continued throughout the 1970's and 1980's but was in severe decline. It was 1996 when Commoners' cattle last grazed extensively here and their absence since the BSE crisis has meant a break in a very ancient management practice. It is this grazing tradition, and the important links between the Forest and its surrounding farmed landscape that the Conservators are determined to preserve.

In addition to its inestimable historical value grazing is also vital to the wildlife of the Forest ecosystem. Grazing allows more flowers to flourish than does mowing alone. Low-growing species such as the brilliant yellow and red Birds-foot-trefoil (or "Bacon-and-eggs") only thrive where the thatch of dead grass stems is regularly removed and hooves create bare ground. The unpalatable Pepper Saxifrage and the well-protected Spiny Rest-harrow have evolved their lifestyles to suit grazing. Many insects rely on these flowers and some have become extinct as grazing has declined, including several species of butterfly. Even birds have suffered and no longer can the Yellow Wagtail step jauntily alongside the cattle's feet. Grazing is an essential force driving the rich diversity of this natural system and the Forest is a poorer place without it.

## the *Grazing* re-introduction project

In February 2002 the Conservators of Epping Forest approved a proposal which would achieve the re-introduction of Commoners' cattle to the central part of the Forest in a partnership with a holder of Commoners' rights, E.W Davies Farms Ltd. The re-introduction scheme centres on the area of Forest between Chingford in the south and High Beach in the north. The grasslands that should benefit in this area will include Chingford Plain, Fairmead, Whitehouse Plain and the pollarded glades of Bury Wood.



The herd consists of pedigree English Longhorn cattle, a traditional breed known for their docile nature and ability to thrive on rough grazing.

The English Longhorn is one of the rarer British breeds of cattle, having originated in north-west and central England and Ireland. During the latter half of the eighteenth century it was the most widely used breed for meat production before being replaced by the Shorthorn breed early in the nineteenth century. The number of English Longhorns steadily declined but the efforts of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust have helped to save it from extinction. The cattle are red-brown or brindled with a white back.

An English Longhorn



## Keeping *watch*

The initial group of barren cows will be gradually increased to eventually form a herd of more than 50. A stockman, Robbie Jamieson, has been employed to watch over the cattle to prevent them wandering too far.



Robbie Jamieson

Initially Robbie will be impounding the cattle in temporary corrals at night so that they do not stray onto unlit roads. It is hoped that the herd will eventually become 'hefted' whereby this part of the Forest is so familiar to them that they regard it as their summer home and naturally remain in the area. Permanent pounds for handling Commoners' cattle have long been features of the Forest and two new ones, Fairmead Pound and Chingford Plain Pound, have been constructed.