

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday, 20th April 2005 at 9.30 a.m. in the Library, The Queen's House, Lyndhurst.

PRESENT:	Mr O Crosthwaite Eyre	Official Verderer
	Mr J Adams	Elected Verderer & Chairman of the Staff Committee
	Mr A Gerrelli	Elected Verderer
	Mr P Frost	Countryside Agency Appointed Verderer
	Mr J F Kitcher	Elected Verderer
	Miss D Macnair	Elected Verderer
	Mr A H Pasmore	Elected Verderer
	Mrs P Thorne	Appointed DEFRA Verderer
IN ATTENDANCE:	Miss S Westwood	Clerk
	Mr J R Gerrelli	Head Agister (first three items only)
APOLOGIES:	Mrs K Heron	Appointed Hampshire County Council Verderer
	The Hon R Montagu	Appointed Forestry Commission Verderer

IN COMMITTEE

The Head Agister was present for the first three items.

2005/1547 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING DISCHARGE

The Minutes of the Court held on Wednesday, 16th March 2005 were approved and signed.

2005/1548 ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS DISCHARGE

The Announcements and Decisions were approved.

2005/1549 CONDITION OF STOCK RESUME

Report by the Head Agister

The Head Agister said that in his opinion stock is still looking quite good. In the last three or four weeks the ponies have definitely lost some condition, some look rough in their coats where the winter hair is coming away. Some in-foal mares need to be watched and one or two may have to be removed once they have foaled if they do not improve in condition fairly quickly. On the whole the animals look pretty good.

Miss Macnair remarked that there are a lot of lice this year, probably due to the mild weather. Mr Gerrelli commented that a lot of ponies look more "scruffy" than poor.

The Clerk said that very few complaints have been received in the office. In response to a query by Mr Frost, the Clerk explained that members of the public who report a pony about which they are concerned, usually receive a call back to let them know what action is being taken. It was agreed this is good for public relations and lets people know that something is done.

The Head Agister left the meeting.

Report by Mr John Adams – Chairman of the Staff Committee

Mr Adams agreed that on the whole and in particular in comparison with previous years, the animals look exceptionally well for the time of year. April is always the worst month. One or two mares with foals look a little lean and if they don't improve, they will be taken off the Forest.

Verderers' inspections have not been arranged this year because Mr Adams felt they were not necessary. He suggested perhaps a quick look round in May might be useful.

Mr Adams reported that he has seen a few cattle in the north of the Forest which give cause for some concern but the Agister for the area has been told about them and it is likely they have now been removed.

Mrs Thorne remarked that she had heard that a two year old colt in the Ibsley area had chased some riders. Nothing further has been heard though, and it is thought it was a fairly minor incident.

2005/1550 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
see also Minute 1612

RESUME

The Official Verderer confirmed he had no interest to declare in today's Agenda.

The Elected Verderers and Mrs Thorne declared an interest as usual in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Mr A Gerrelli again declared an interest as someone with a small campsite (licensed for 5 touring caravans) just outside the Forest as the Forestry Commission's proposals for Hollands Wood and Roundhill Campsites will be discussed again later.

Mr Kitcher declared his interest in the LIFE Project because he has been employed on LIFE Project works and he is also a member of the Water Basin Forum.

2005/1551 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

RESUME

The Financial Statement for March was accepted.

2005/1552 MARKING FEES

RESUME

The Clerk reported that so far this year marking fees have been received for 5222 animals.

2005/1553 BYELAW ENFORCEMENT

RESUME

Letters have been sent to all those commoners who the Agisters' have noted in their diaries are in breach of the byelaws. The offences involve unbranded ponies, a two year old colt and pigs which have failed to return home at night. A small number of complaints have been received from commoners who have received letters and feel aggrieved.

OPEN COURT - 10.00 a.m. in the Verderers' Hall

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Mike Seddon Deputy Surveyor of the New Forest
Mr Will Parke Area Land Agent (New Forest)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS BY THE OFFICIAL VERDERER

2005/1554 SINGLE FARM PAYMENTS

A meeting took place in London last week, attended by the Official Verderer, Anthony Pasmore, and Richard Manley, at which detailed information was sought from DEFRA on the formula that has been specially created for determining applications for entitlements by New Forest commoners. The meeting proved to be extremely helpful, and we intend to send an information sheet to all practising commoners as soon as possible.

The key message at this stage is, do not delay putting in your application form since no leeway will be given whatsoever for late applications. At our meeting DEFRA made it plain to us that the deadline of May 16th is absolutely final.

Any commoner therefore who had animals out on the Forest in the twelve month period up until 21st March 2005 can apply for a single farm payment, and must obtain an application form, sign it, and send it with a map showing the location of the holding to the Rural Payments Agency without delay.

We are shortly going to send out a sheet with the answers to the most frequently asked questions and we strongly recommend commoners read it!

2005/1555 POLICIES

As mentioned last month, our policies are currently being fully reviewed and we have now embarked upon a consultation process with other key Forest organisations. As soon as that process is complete we will adopt the revised policies and they will subsequently be available for viewing on our website, and copies will of course always be available in the office on request.

2005/1556 BRANDING OF PONIES

The Government's draft Animal Welfare Bill seeks to make such acts as branding a pony illegal, however there is power under the draft Act to provide for exceptions. In order to ensure that the branding of ponies in the New Forest continues to be allowed, a meeting was held with DEFRA officials in London on Wednesday 6th April, and the reasons for branding ponies, and the methods used, were explained. We were accompanied by representatives from the Commoners Defence Association, the Dartmoor Commoners Council and from Exmoor.

We are hopeful that together we have been able to explain the very real need for the clear identification of ponies within England's semi-feral herds, and why branding is the best method available for achieving this aim. We have formally requested that an exception therefore should be made in the forthcoming Animal Welfare Bill which will allow branding to continue in the New Forest.

Since the meeting we have conducted a very successful live demonstration which was attended by a senior DEFRA veterinary surgeon from London who said he is very pleased and impressed with what he saw.

2005/1557 STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

We have had a very promising response from those wishing to join Year Two of the Scheme, and I must now declare that the final date for the receipt of applications will be May 16th, which will tie in with the deadline for applications to register land for Single Farm Payments. The scheme will be closed from that date onwards, and no applications can be considered once the deadline has passed.

2005/1558 STALLION SCHEME – INSPECTION OF COLTS

At the inspection held at Beaulieu Road last Saturday 9th April, six colts were selected to run out with a payment to the owner, and two other colts were selected for which no payment will be made under the rules of the scheme.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2005/1559 ACCIDENT REPORT FOR MARCH 2005

The agisters attended 4 accidents in february which compares with 5 for the same period last year.

2 ponies and 1 donkey were killed, and a cow was uninjured.

All 4 accidents occurred during the hours of darkness, and involved private cars or light commercials.

All accidents were reported and 2 involved local motorists.

The total killed and injured for the year to date is 23 compared with 22 for the same period last year.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF THE NEW FOREST

There were no presentments by the Deputy Surveyor

PRESENTMENTS

2005/1560 LAND ROVER TOURS

Presentment by Mr Michael Cooper on behalf of the New Forest Commoners' Defence Association

Mr Cooper advised the Court that the CDA has serious concerns about the granting of permission for vehicular tours through the inclosures for recreational purposes. The CDA is concerned this could open the floodgates for all kinds of vehicular activities. They see no comparison with horse-drawn wagon rides and the Verderers were urged to refuse consent.

2005/1561 LAND ROVER TOURS

Presentment by Mr Peter Roberts on behalf of the New Forest Association

The NFA is also concerned about the potential precedent that might be set if these tours are permitted. There is particular worry that the tours will be ran by licensees without direct Forestry Commission control and the checks which were in place when the Forestry Commission itself ran vehicle based "Safari Tours" last year will be lost. The NFA is concerned that an approval may result in further, perhaps inappropriate requests for vehicular access to the Forest which the Commission will be unable to resist. The Verderers were asked to consider these matters in their discussions.

2005/1562 SINGLE FARM PAYMENTS
Presentment by Col Peter Sweet, Commoner

Col Sweet explained he has been trying for weeks to obtain an application form for the single payment scheme from DEFRA. He said he has telephoned DEFRA many times. Eventually he achieved an answer but was speaking to a non-English gentleman and he had problems getting himself understood. Yesterday, Col Sweet got through to an English person and he is hopeful that the necessary forms will arrive soon.

Col Sweet asked how commoners can send applications when they cannot obtain the forms and he asked if the Court can help.

In reply the Official Verderer said the Verderers have spoken to DEFRA about the various queries raised by commoners. The only advice that can be given now is that application forms must reach DEFRA by the deadline.

2005/1563 SINGLE FARM PAYMENTS
Presentment by Mr Bob Cooper

Mr Cooper expressed sympathy with Col Sweet's problems.

The Official Verderer responded by saying that the only advice is to keep trying to contact DEFRA. He added that the Verderers do not have any spare forms and have not been invited to circulate them on DEFRA's behalf.

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2005/1564 LAND ROVER TOURS

DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer summarised the presentments received this morning. The CDA is asking the Verderers to refuse consent, the NFA is slightly less clear but the thrust of its presentment is that the application if approved would set an unhealthy precedent which may make future requests difficult to refuse.

The Official Verderer addressed the Deputy Surveyor, asking whether he had any further comments to make or information to provide to the Verderers before they consider the application later in the meeting.

The Deputy Surveyor responded saying that he had nothing further to add except that he understands the concerns about proliferation but reminded the Court that any further applications would come back to the Court.

2005/1565 SINGLE PAYMENT SCHEME (Single Farm Payments)

DISCHARGE

The air of confusion continues. Hopefully the press will give coverage to the problems and the need to ensure applications are sent off in time to arrive with DEFRA by the deadline of 16th May. Mr Adams commented that as the Court has a Verderer appointed by DEFRA, perhaps she could assist. It is sometimes unclear as to the precise role of the DEFRA appointee. The Official Verderer tried to clarify the situation saying that the appointment is carried out at arms length. DEFRA does not wish to manipulate its representative who may make as much or as little of their appointment as they feel necessary. He suggested Mrs Thorne may like to open lines of communication with

DEFRA to see where she can provide assistance. The Clerk suggested Mrs Thorne may like to get in touch with a contact at Rural Payments Agency who has recently been most helpful in respect of the Single Payment Scheme.

SUBMISSIONS BY THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

There were no submissions from the Forestry Commission

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COURTS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2005/1566 CODES OF CONDUCT

DISCHARGE

A few comments were made by some Verderers directly to the Progress Project Team, otherwise the Codes were considered acceptable. Miss Macnair remarked that perhaps a comment should have been included asking dog owners not to pick up after their dogs and then throw the bag in the nearest bush!

2005/1567 A31 SHOBLEY EROSION

RESUME

A site meeting will be held on Friday 22nd April at 11.00 a.m. which representatives of the Court are invited to attend. Those attending will meet at Ellingham Cricket Pitch.

Mr Parke remarked that the latest proposals are, at first sight, substantially improved on the previous submission. English Nature has indicated it is willing to give its consent for the works.

Concern was expressed that as some of the gulleys which are to be filled are some 6 feet deep, using heather bales only may be inadvisable. It is thought the result could be a deep trap for animals. The area will need to be fenced temporarily to allow for consolidation.

Mr Adams agreed to attend the meeting but if for some reason he is unable to go, the Head Agister will be asked to go in his place.

2005/1568 BRAMSHAW TO WINDYEATS ROAD RUBBISH

RESUME

A joint letter from the Deputy Surveyor and Official Verderer was sent to Wiltshire County Council. A response has been received, saying they are considering the issues raised. It was noted that on Friday, three men with a truck were seen clearing rubbish which is an improvement on the previous one man and a bag!

2005/1569 TRAIL HUNTING

RESUME

The Deputy Surveyor said that he expects to come to the Court within the next two to three months with a formal request for consent to licence trail hunting. It is likely that applications will be received from the New Forest Hunt, the Beagles and the draghound pack which operates from Ringwood.

The matter will be discussed later in the meeting.

2005/1570 POT BELLIED PIG DISCHARGE

The pig appears to have disappeared.

2005/1571 ELLINGHAM RUGBY PITCH DISCHARGE

Mr Parke said the Club has agreed to remove the logs although some still remain at the moment. A lot of clutter still remains including a barbecue and the cricket pitch covers which should not be stored on the Forest. Mr Parke said he will visit the Club on Friday.

2005/1572 RUBBISH AT SHOBLEY COTTAGES DISCHARGE

Mr Parke has spoken to the occupiers and the rubbish should be much reduced. If there are any further problems, the Clerk will be informed.

2005/1573 HEARING LOOP IN THE VERDERERS' HALL DISCHARGE

It is still not known whether the hearing loop can be switched off during meetings.

2005/1574 DAMES SLOUGH AND NEULANDS INCLOSURES RESUME

The Deputy Surveyor said there are currently no works taking place in either Dames Slough or Newlands Inclosures. Some tree clearance has taken place in preparation for restoration works as well as some pre-restoration river work.

Proposals for all works under LIFE 3 will be discussed at the Water Basin Forum.

The clay was the result of the excavations taking place for foundations at the Burley Deer Larder. The clay has been Dames Slough so that the Environment Agency can use it to infill the river and other areas later.

Concern was expressed that work in Dames Slough will result in the creation of an almighty swamp across the whole valley. As fences are to be realigned and the area will be accessible to stock, this is a considerable worry. It was commented that it seems no consultation has taken place on the proposed works. It was suggested that the Environment Agency have little concern about the views of others. Maxine Elliott of the Agency has not arranged a site visit because the works will be in the inclosure although the Water Basin Forum members should have details of the proposals.

The Official Verderer commented that there are clearly concerns about the long-term effects on this area of the proposed works. Mr Pasmore said a site meeting is essential. He added the land is subject to common rights and temporarily fenced for the growing of timber. It will be opened up in the future and the Verderers foresee there could be problems. He felt it is arrogant and high-handed of the Environment Agency not to consult fully.

The Deputy Surveyor said the proposals were being discussed in the Water Basin Forum but that he could not commit the Agency to arranging a site visit.

Whilst the Court is grateful to the Deputy Surveyor for agreeing to take the Court's concerns to the Forum, the Official Verderer said he would write to the Environment Agency direct.

The Clerk expressed concern that the office may still not be getting all the plans despite a number of requests. The Deputy Surveyor promised to look into it.

2005/1575 PROTECTIVE FENCE ROUND TREE OUTSIDE APPLETREE COURT DISCHARGE

Mr Frost asked if it is necessary for the small protective inclosure around a tree outside Appletree Court to remain. It appears to be unnecessary now.

2005/1576 PLANKS ON THE FOREST AT NEWLANDS RESUME

Mrs Thorne reported that the two pairs of planks at the end of the causeway have become very dangerous to riders. It was suggested that if the National Trust cannot do the track then perhaps the Forestry Commission could do it on their behalf. Mrs Thorne agreed to raise it with the National Trust first.

2005/1577 KEEPERS USING QUAD BIKES TO CHASE PONIES FROM INCLOSURES DISCHARGE

In a recent incident where Forestry Commission staff used a quad bike to drive ponies from an inclosure, a mare fell and ended up in a ditch on her back. From a health and safety point of view it was noted that the quad bike rider was not wearing a protective helmet.

The Clerk commented that she had heard of a recent occasion at Burley where the Agister had been informed that a drive using quad-bikes was to take place. The Agister was, however, busy elsewhere and was unable to attend. He thought, possibly wrongly, that the people involved had an understanding of stock and he did not foresee any problems occurring.

2005/1578 REVIEW OF COMMON LAND LEGISLATION – SECTION 194 OF THE LAW OF PROPERTY ACT 1925 RESUME

Mr Parke suggested that the Court should consider a consultation he has received lately on proposed changes to legislation covering the management of common land. He will provide a copy of the papers to the Clerk and it was agreed a meeting with the Official Verderer, the Clerk and Mr Parke should take place.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Parke left the meeting.

LIFE 3

2005/1579 LIFE 3 AND BEYOND DISCHARGE

Mr Kitcher attended the meeting to discuss a possible future bid for LIFE money. Those present at the meeting were keen that the Court joins in with the next bid and asked for thought to be given to possible projects. Mr Kitcher said he was not terribly popular with everyone present when he said that after animal welfare, the Verderers main concerns are the risk of too much water on the Forest in the future;

improving grazing and more scrub clearance. He specifically commented on the encroachment of coarse herbage on the reseeded areas. The representative from the New Forest Commoners Defence Association suggested that the system for letting Crown freehold land should be reviewed to better support commoners. It was also suggested the Forestry Commission should put more money into putting some of its holdings in order and maintaining them.

Miss Rigglesworth said at the meeting that even if a third LIFE bid is unsuccessful there may be money available from other sources.

Mr Frost commented that proposals are not always set in stone and may be altered later. He cited an example as in the case of the money that was set aside in the last bid for deer fencing which actually went towards re-aligning fences at Mr Frost's suggestion.

2005/1580 ALLUM GREEN DISCHARGE

Mr Pasmore said he met Simon Weymouth from the Forestry Commission and had little objection to the proposed clearance of willow etc. The only concern is the blocking of a Victorian drain which runs at right-angles to the road from just below the Oak Inn. He added that if the drain is blocked, it is essential that a safe crossing place is provided for stock.

2005/1581 WITHYBEDS DISCHARGE

There are no objections to the relatively minor works proposed for Withybeds.

2005/1582 WILVERLEY BOG DISCHARGE

The proposals to cut down two clumps of pines has been withdrawn following considerable opposition. 1 clump is clearly of landscape importance and the Head Agister is of the opinion that both should be retained as they provide good cover or livestock. The Head Keeper, Beat Keeper and Mr Pasmore all felt the clumps should be retained although the natural regeneration which has occurred around them can be cleared. There are no other significant works proposed for this area.

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST COURT AND PREVIOUS COURTS

2005/1583 IBSLEY VERGE DISCHARGE

It is felt the restoration of the verge is satisfactory and it was decided to discharge the item from the Minutes.

2005/1584 CATTLE GRIDS AT IBSLEY RESUME

As Mrs Heron was unfortunately absent from the meeting this item will be resumed at the next Court.

2005/1585 SCHEME FOR NEW FOREST COLTS

RESUME

The Official Verderer will be meeting with Mr Richard Cuzens of the New Forest Show Society tomorrow to discuss the provision of grazing for colts.

Mr Adams remarked that it has been questioned whether the scheme is really necessary given the number of colts forward for inspection this year. It has been suggested the grazing would be better used for more stallions.

The Official Verderer suggested waiting until he hears what the Show Society has to say but he will meet Mr Cuzens with the intention of obtaining some additional land if at all possible.

2005/1586 POLICY REVIEW

RESUME
June

The sub-committee has not had time to meet following receipt of comments from the Commoners' Defence Association and English Nature on the draft policies.

The Forestry Commission has responded to the consultation expressing concern with many aspects of the policies.

Mr Frost said in contrast to the Forestry Commission's response, the National Park Interim Chief Executive thought the policies as written are splendid.

As a result of the comments received, the Official Verderer felt the policies should not be adopted today. He said there is no rush and he would like the opportunity to discuss the policies with the Forestry Commission's solicitor with a focus on the question of legality of some of the statements. Unless the solicitor is convincing in her arguments, the Official Verderer felt there is nothing to stop the Verderers adopting their policies as they stand.

The Official Verderer, therefore, asked the Court to agree to his meeting with the Deputy Surveyor to clarify the points from the solicitor and this was agreed unanimously. Following that meeting, the sub-committee will consider the position.

Mr Frost felt the draft policies should be distributed more widely for consultation but other Verderers disagreed. Mr Pasmore emphasised the importance of ensuring that the policies are legal.

It is hoped the draft policies can be adopted at the May Court.

2005/1587 COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY GRANT

DISCHARGE

The Countryside Agency is only able to offer grants for major expenditure.

2005/1588 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer confirmed that the Court is not included in the list of organisations bound by the Act.

The Official Verderer reminded the Court that such activities are not specifically mentioned in the Annexes to the Memorandum of Understanding. The Court was adamant that vehicle tours should not be considered in the same vein as Wagon Rides.

Following careful consideration and taking into account the views expressed by the New Forest Association and Commoners' Defence Association, the Court decided it could not grant consent for the tours for the following reasons:-

1. They would have a detrimental effect upon the experience of other already established recreational users of the routes, such as walkers and horse-riders.
2. An undesirable precedent would be set, making it very difficult for the Forestry Commission to refuse similar requests in the future.
3. The tours would unnecessarily heighten the visiting public's expectation of the nature and type of recreational facilities on offer over the Open Forest.
4. They would bring extra man-made noise and pollution to tranquil areas of the Forest and
5. They would introduce an intrusion into the more remote parts of the Forest, which is incompatible with the wilderness quality of the Forest.

The Head Agister raised the suggestion of erecting temporary signs seeking information following hit and run road traffic accidents involving stock at a recent meeting of the Wildlife Liaison Interagency Committee. The matter is progressing.

A preliminary investigation indicates that a collection of matters including the installation of seats were agreed en-mass some years ago. The Deputy Surveyor is checking further.

The inspection of 2 year old colts on the 9th April went well. On the whole the standard was good and surprise was expressed at the number which were brought forward. 18 potential colts were inspected by the Pony Society. 15 were passed and then inspected by the Verderers. 9 colts were approved, 6 will receive a premium and 3 were allowed to be depastured without payment. Of those 3, 2 will be turned out. The veterinary surgeons present agreed the standard of colts forward has definitely improved.

The Stallion Scheme Committee needs to decide how many colts should be selected in August but it is important to be aware that there is a limit to the numbers which should be chosen. Progeny and pedigree must be taken into account.

2005/1593 HEAVY TIPPER LORRY ON THE BROOMY TO MOYLES COURT ROAD RESUME

This matter was resumed in the absence of Cllr Mrs Heron.

2005/1594 KINGSTON GREAT COMMON RESUME

The Commoners' Defence Association and the New Forest Association have indicated they may be prepared to contribute towards pursuing the owner of the common in respect of the illegal fence. Mr Pasmore will attend the next CDA meeting, together with the CDA's solicitor in order that more information can be provided to the committee.

VERDERERS' COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

2005/1595 APPLICATIONS RESUME

Approximately 64% of commoners have entered the scheme with 65% of the stock currently depastured.

The Verderers' Scheme Committee is meeting later today.

NATIONAL PARK

2005/1596 FIRST MEETING OF THE PARK AUTHORITY DISCHARGE

The first meeting of the authority took place recently at which Mr Ted Johnson was selected Chairman.

2005/1597 MEMBERS' TRAINING DAYS RESUME

A training day for all members of the authority, comprising a tour of the Forest is to take place shortly. Mr Frost will attend.

The National Park Authority will fund the cost of a training day for members to learn more about the Verderers and commoning. It is expected this will be arranged for late summer.

2005/1598 MINISTER'S ADVICE PAPER RESUME
June

Mr Pasmore commented that as the Verderers' Policies will form part of the paper providing advice, he has not yet begun the draft.

OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

2005/1599 WELFARE TOUR OF THE FOREST DISCHARGE

The Welfare Tour will take place on Monday, 16th May 2005.

REPORTS FROM EXTERNAL COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS

None

STAFF MATTERS (including the Staff Committee)

2005/1600 LYBURN CATTLE GRID DISCHARGE

Problems are still being experienced with ponies getting into Lyburn Estate.

2005/1601 HOT BRANDING DISCHARGE

Following the recent interest in hot branding by DEFRA, Mr Adams suggested a code of practice should be produced. This will be resumed at the next Staff Committee meeting and brought back to the Court when a draft has been prepared.

2005/1602 EQUIPMENT FOR POUND BUILDING DISCHARGE

Mr Adams suggested a post-hole digger should be purchased and that Leader + may be a source of finance. However, the Clerk expressed concern that attaching it to someone else's tractor may result in serious health and safety issues. At present a contractor is hired with the necessary equipment and it is the responsibility of that person to ensure everything is in safe working order.

Mrs Thorne agreed with the Clerk that Leader + does not usually provide money for capital purchases.

2005/1603 2 YEAR OLD COLT IN RUSHPOLE WOOD RESUME

The Agisters have now made several attempts to catch the colt presently at large in Rushpole Wood. Mr Adams suggested a drift be held at a weekend and Saturday week was proposed. However, concern was expressed regarding health and safety, given that the golf club is very busy at weekends. The Clerk said she will speak with the Club.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

There were no health and safety matters concerning employees to report at this meeting.

2005/1604 INCIDENT ON WILVERLEY PLAIN INVOLVING STALLION AND MARE(S) DISCHARGE

The Chairman of the Staff Committee advised the Court that he had read in the local paper that there had been an incident on Wilverley Plain recently where a lady was knocked down by some ponies which were racing around with the stallion. The Clerk confirmed one of the Agisters had come across the incident by accident and provided assistance to the injured lady who was taken to hospital with a broken hip and arm. The matter was reported to the Head Agister and the office and the Clerk said she had also a discussion with the lady's daughter who was seeking compensation. The Clerk had advised the lady's daughter that compensation was unlikely to be claimable, particularly as it is not possible to accurately identify which ponies were involved. The Clerk apologised to the Chairman of the Staff Committee that he had not been informed of the incident but this was because it was felt it had been dealt with and no-one expected a letter to appear

on the subject in the local press. The Clerk said she would speak with the Head Agister and that in future the Chairman of the Staff Committee would be informed of all incidents which may occur.

TRAINING

2005/1605 FIRST AID TRAINING DISCHARGE

Arrangements are being made for the Agisters to attend refresher courses.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2005/1606 UNOFFICIAL ROAD-SIDE PARKING AREAS RESUME

Concern was expressed at the increase in illegal road-side parking which damages the grass and is a hazard to stock. Near Wootton Stream, opposite the barrier, there are often a number of cars parked and the grass is all but worn away. The Court would be very supportive of any efforts the Forestry Commission might make in trying to resolve these problems – perhaps by the construction of banks or introduction of dragons teeth. The Official Verderer will speak with the Deputy Surveyor.

2005/1607 LAND EXCHANGES RESUME

It was requested whether the land exchanges in respect of the reservoir tops and Ashurst Lodge are going to be completed soon. This matter will be raised with the Forestry Commission.

2005/1608 TRAVELLERS AT BARTLEY CRICKET CLUB CAR PARK RESUME

Mr Pasmore reported that travellers have set up camp in this car park. It is assumed the Forestry Commission is aware and is dealing with it.

2005/1609 DUNCES ARCH – RESTORATION OF DAMAGE RESUME

Restoration was promised but has not yet been carried out. The Forestry Commission will be reminded.

2005/1610 HOT BRANDING DISCHARGE

The representatives, one of which is a Veterinary Surgeon, went back to London happy with what they saw and fully aware of how branding is carried out. They were surprised at how little stress the animals showed. It is hoped they will recommend a derogation for the Forest in order that hot branding may continue.

Miss Macnair commented that DEFRA is considering requiring microchip details to be included in passports. This will have a serious impact on the Forest run stock and Miss Macnair asked if the Clerk will contact DEFRA asking for hot branding to be accepted as an alternative to micro-chipping.

2005/1611 TRAIL HUNTING

DISCHARGE

Mrs Thorne declared an interest in this matter as she is a member of the New Forest Hunt.

Following a brief discussion, the Court expressed no firm views at this stage.

2005/1612 HOLLANDS WOOD & ROUNDHILL CAMPSITE PROPOSALS

RESUME
June

The Official Verderer explained that the Appropriate Assessment will take weeks. Mr Alan Betts who is a senior Forestry Commission official based in Guildford is leading the process.

It was agreed unanimously that the Verderers will not respond to the Deputy Surveyor's letter of the 15th April 2005, until such time as the Appropriate Assessment is completed.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.30 p.m.