

MINUTES of the Court of Verderers held on Wednesday, 19th May 2004 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
Mrs K Heron Appointed Hampshire County Council Verderer
Mr J F Kitcher Elected Verderer
Miss D Macnair Elected Verderer
The Hon R Montagu Appointed Forestry Commission 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: None

IN COMMITTEE

The Head Agister was present for the first three items.

2004/884 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING DISCHARGE

The Minutes of the Court held on Wednesday, 21st April 2004 were approved and signed.

2004/885 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RESUME

All the Elected Verderers plus Mrs Thorne formally declared they have an interest in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

2004/886 ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS DISCHARGE

The Announcements and Decisions were approved.

2004/887 CONDITION OF STOCK & THE WELFARE TOUR RESUME

The Head Agister reported that he remains reasonably happy with the condition of stock on the Forest. He was pleased the Welfare Tour went well although admitted to some concern. Some mares near to foaling or which have recently foaled have dropped back very rapidly.

Fortunately, the grass is coming through slightly earlier this year and mares are picking up. Any that remain that need to be removed will be taken off as soon as possible.

Miss Macnair suggested that quite a number of the mares which have gone back in condition may have suffered from strangles or flu. It was agreed this is likely to be the reason for a sudden loss of condition as the illnesses seem to have had a huge effect although some ponies have shown no obvious symptoms.

Two ponies which had been removed in the past few months and which found their way back onto the Forest have been removed again by their owners.

Mr Kitcher remarked that the ponies went into the winter really well and as a lot of mares were not in foal it was disappointing that they fell back so much.

Mr Gerrelli commented that the younger ponies are picking up well although some of them look very scruffy as they are losing their winter coats.

The Head Agister left the meeting.

Mr Adams said he had nothing particular to add to the Head Agister's comments although he is also disappointed at some of the mares which are foaling. He felt that in a month's time things should be much better and the worst is hopefully past. Hopefully, also, the strangles outbreak has now abated.

The Official Verderer said that that one of the RSPCA Inspectors, who has been in the Forest for approximately 15 years, remarked that he is very pleased at the gradual improvement over the years in the condition of stock on the Forest. Neither the RSPCA or ILPH have received complaints about Forest ponies this winter.

Mr Gerrelli said the Agisters are to be thanked for keeping on top of things. Mr Adams said somehow the Court needs to get the message home to commoners that turning ponies back out which have not sufficiently improved in condition is unacceptable. He remarked that the practice does no good because the animals then take much longer to pick up.

2004/888 WORMERS

DISCHARGE

The Clerk reported that the Verderers' Veterinary Surgeon has obtained a paper from a representative of Merial (the manufacturers of one of the ivermectin based wormers) giving details of residual levels of the active ingredients in orally administered wormers. The information will be most useful, particularly for the Stewardship Scheme which requires animals which have been wormed to be kept off the Forest for a specified length of time. It will hopefully now be possible to agree a reasonable timescale with English Nature.

2004/889 DONKEYS

RESUME

A number of large donkeys were recently sold through Beaulieu Road and they have subsequently appeared on the Forest. Concern was expressed on two fronts.

Firstly, large Jack donkeys are quite capable of getting pony mares in foal, the result being mules! One has already been born in the north of the Forest. It was agreed to look at how the Court might control the turning out of entire male donkeys. The byelaws certainly give the Court the necessary power but a policy needs to be agreed and put into practice. The Official Verderer agreed to draft a paper for consideration in good time for the next Court.

Secondly there is a worry that proper health checks may not have been carried out on donkeys which may have been imported from places such as Morocco where there several exotic and infectious diseases are known to occur. At present there is no check on import papers or

passports before the animals are turned out on the Forest. The representative of the Donkey Sanctuary who attended the Tour also expressed concern. West Nile Fever and African Horse Sickness are diseases that could be devastating if they reach the United Kingdom. Mrs Thorne said she will check with DEFRA to see what controls are in place as respects the import of animals from affected countries. It was felt the Agisters can quite reasonably ask to see the passports for donkeys destined to be turned out, prior to marking them and accepting marking fees.

2004/890 FINANCIAL STATEMENT RESUME

The Clerk circulated a new version of the April 2004 Financial Statement. The Official Verderer ran through the Statements for March and April and they were approved.

2004/891 BYELAW ENFORCEMENT RESUME

The Clerk reported on the present situation. A number of letters have been written or notices issued for breaches of the byelaws. All breaches appear to have now been remedied except for two commoners who continue to decline to pay their marking fees for last year. Legal advice will be sought as to the best way forward in this respect.

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

2004/892 VERDERERS' BYELAWS

The Thames and Solent Regional Committee of the National trust has given its consent to the Verderers' byelaws, and formal ratification of their decision will be provided in the minutes of their meeting, held on May 7th, which will be published imminently. The byelaws therefore now apply to all the National Trust's New Forest properties, and the Agisters have been instructed accordingly.

2004/893 NATIONAL FALLEN STOCK SCHEME

Having met with both our Forest MPs last month, Desmond Swayne and Dr Lewis have now written a joint letter to Ben Bradshaw MP, who is the Minister at DEFRA responsible for these matters, urging him to change his mind and allow practising New Forest Commoners to subscribe to this heavily subsidised national scheme. If the Minister is not persuaded by the arguments presented in their letter, then we have requested a face to face meeting with him in order to discuss the problem and present our case on behalf of the commoners.

2004/894 COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME

We believe it is important at this early stage in the life of the scheme to make it clear that the way it is run may change from year to year. In order to fulfil our own contractual obligations to DEFRA both the level of payments and the number of animals that are allowed in the scheme may fluctuate. Accordingly it would be most unwise for anyone to decide to increase the number of stock that they own in any given year purely on the assumption that all those extra animals can join the scheme in the following year.

Commoners must please therefore remember that there is no guarantee that extra animals that are bought and depastured this year will automatically be accepted into the scheme next year.

We are pleased to say that very nearly 70% of the commoners on our marking fee register have asked to join the scheme. We have now begun to process those applications, and the next step is for contracts to be sent out to all successful applicants for their signature.

We are still looking for a Project Manager. The closing date for applications is the 4th June.

2004/895 WELFARE TOUR

The spring welfare tour of the Forest took place on Monday 17th May, and was attended by representatives from the RSPCA, the British Horse Society, the International League for the Protection of Horses, the Blue Cross Animal Welfare Society and The Donkey Sanctuary. Over four hundred ponies were seen, as well as 50 foals, in both the north and the south of the forest. We are once again very pleased to report that all those who joined the inspection agreed that the animals looked very well and that their the condition is good, despite the prolonged periods of wet weather in April which took their toll on some of the mares with foals. In particular those present unanimously expressed their praise for both the ongoing overall improvement in the condition of the animals on the Forest, and for the excellent work of the Agisters in their vital and effective welfare monitoring and management.

2004/896 COUNTRYSIDE AGENCY VERDERER

I am delighted to announce that, at the invitation of the Countryside Agency, Peter Frost has agreed to continue in office as their appointed Verderer for a further three year term until January 31st 2007.

ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT

2004/897 ANIMAL ACCIDENT REPORT FOR APRIL 2004

Total Accidents for the Period: 11 (5) (two ponies killed in one incident in April 2003)

	Killed		Collar		Injured		Collar		Uninjured		Collar		Not Found	
Ponies	3	(4)	0	(0)	2	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	3	(1)
Cattle	1	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	1	(0)
Donkeys	0	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(0)
Pigs	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)
Sheep	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)	N/a	N/a	0	(0)
Totals	4	(5)	0	(0)	2	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)	5	(2)

TOTAL KILLED & INJURED	6	(6)
Accidents During the Hours of Darkness	7	(3)
Vehicles Involved		
Private Cars / Light Commercials	6	(4)
Motor Cycles	0	(0)
Heavy Vehicles	0	(0)
Bicycles	0	(0)
Number of Local Motorists	5	(3)
Number of Accidents Not Reported	5	(1)
Total Killed and Injured for the Year to date	28	(23)
Number of Deer Killed	-	(-)

Figures in brackets () show previous year's totals.

PRESENTMENTS BY THE DEPUTY SURVEYOR OF THE NEW FOREST

There were no Presentments by the Deputy Surveyor.

PRESENTMENTS

2004/898 LIFE 3 - HIGHLAND WATER
Presentment by Mr Bob Cooper - Minstead Manor Commoner

Mr Cooper complained about six separate dams which he believes have been deliberately placed in Highland Water to restrict the flow and which are causing the water to back up and overflow onto grazing land during recent heavy rainfall. He requested the Court to require the offending obstructions to be removed within 7 days. In default the Court was asked to issue summonses against those who have caused the obstruction contrary to the Forestry byelaws.

The Official Verderer responded by saying that this subject is not new and it will be discussed in Committee.

IN COMMITTEE in the Library

CONSIDERATION OF PRESENTMENTS

2004/899 LIFE 3 - HIGHLAND WATER DISCHARGE

The Forestry Commission was asked who might have placed the logs in the watercourse, to which the Deputy Surveyor responded that they are believed to be natural dams which should not be removed. The suggestion that either the Forestry Commission or the Environment Agency was responsible was strongly refuted. He added that the Environment Agency has not done any work for months as the Environmental Assessment is awaited. It is expected to be received within the next few weeks.

The Clerk was requested to write to Mr Cooper explaining that it is believed the dams are natural and that no authorised work has taken place. The Forestry Commission will not remove the dams and the Court will not be taking any action.

SUBMISSIONS BY THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2004/900 CHURCH LANE - BURLEY DISCHARGE

At the request of the majority of the residents who front Church Lane or have direct access from it, the Forestry Commission is investigating the possibility of preventing it being used as a through road by those who live elsewhere in the village. It is proposed to put barriers across Church Lane and a lane leading from it. The barriers would be fitted with standard FC padlocks for which local staff have keys. The proposal is intended to return this part of the village to its original peaceful character. The Verderers were invited to comment.

Several members of the Court who have personal knowledge of the area expressed reservations as they felt the barriers may simply move the problem to a different track or people with four-wheel drive vehicles will simply drive round them or try to take an alternative route up from the Golf Course. After a detailed discussion and exchange of views,

the Court' decided that generally it does not believe the proposals are ideal but will take note that the majority of residents agree with the idea. Mr Parke said that so far he has the agreement of the Parish Council and the Police as well as the Gas, Water and Sewage companies. He explained he is waiting for comments from the Post Office, Ambulance and Fire Services as well as the Wagon Rides. If there are no serious objections the barriers will be installed.

2004/901 HIGHLAND WATER INCLOSURE

DISCHARGE

This inclosure was recently thrown open by retiring long term Forestry Commission employee, Mr Richard Mihalop. The Court had been asked for approval for the inclosure to be opened up without the usual 30 days notice and this had been agreed. The Court was, therefore, asked to now ratify the decision which it confirmed it was happy to do.

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

2004/902 PROPOSED SALE OF SWAN GREEN COTTAGE

DISCHARGE

The Deputy Surveyor said that he had taken careful account of the views expressed by the Court on the proposal to sell Swan Green Cottage. Despite the concerns of the Court, the Forestry Commission decided that the cottage did not meet the criteria for retention and sought the Minister's consent for its sale. The Minister duly gave his consent and the cottage will be sold by public auction on 24th June at the New Forest Inn, Emery Down.

The Court expressed regret at this decision but the Official Verderer thanked the Deputy Surveyor for keeping the Court informed and inviting the Verderers' views.

There was some concern that the character of the cottage might be altered by its new owners, as there will be no restrictive covenants imposed. The Deputy Surveyor, however, felt confident that the fact that the cottage is a Listed Grade 2 Building within a Conservation Area will protect its future. He added that the thatched cottage to the left was sold in 1988 and it's character has been retained.

2004/903 BRAMSHAW TELEGRAPH ROAD SIGNING

RESUME

Mr Frost expressed the view that all the signage in the Forest should be reviewed. Many signs are too large and he felt those carrying warnings about thefts from cars are inappropriate. He went on to say that he had been unable to find the paper on the Lake District signing policy but had found an article in which it was stated that the Lake District is developing a policy to reduce clutter. He queried why the Lake District can have finger posts on B roads but the New Forest cannot.

Mr Montagu felt it is important to establish with Hampshire Highways what can and cannot be done. Mr Martin Wiltshire at HCC says there have been no changes to the regulations regarding finger posts. He asked whether it would be possible to get the County to accept more sympathetic signing. Mr Montagu then suggested Mr Wiltshire or an appropriate officer should be invited to the Court to discuss the issues. Mrs Heron agreed to see if she could arrange a meeting.

The Deputy Surveyor added that the Forestry Commission will support a signage policy which is sympathetic to the Forest environment.

It was suggested that photographic examples of good and bad signs would be useful and members of the Court were asked to take pictures.

2004/904 ORIENTEERING

RESUME

The Deputy Surveyor reported that Mr Bruce Rothnie is currently writing a further draft agreement. Various clubs have come back with different comments. Hopefully a final agreement will be sent out this week.

Details of the type of equipment that may be used for large events will be incorporated. The Orienteerers would like to keep the option to run 16 events on the Forest rather than 12 which has been suggested. However, there will be a limit of 600 competitors at each C3 event. The Deputy Surveyor confirmed that the Verderers' advice has been carefully considered and most has been incorporated.

On the subject of dates for events, the Deputy Surveyor said that Forestry Commission personnel will liaise closely with the Agisters and the Clerk (and vice versa) to try to ensure that orienteering does not clash with pony drifts.

2004/905 PICKET POST - FENCE BEHIND THE LITTLE CHEF

DISCHARGE

After four years, the fence has now been replaced and is satisfactory.

2004/906 BRAMSHAW TELEGRAPH TO WINDYEATS ROAD HAUNCHING & RUBBISH

RESUME

Mr Parke said he has been unable to contact the right person to discuss the road haunching issue.

Concerning the rubbish, Mr Pasmore commented that there is a piece of rubbish which has been on the verge since February. Clearly the person employed by the Hamptworth tip to keep the road clear is unable to cope with the task in hand. Travelling North from Telegraph, someone has been along the road with a digger and pulled soil onto the carriageway. The soil is now being spread all over the road. In a nearby tarmac lay-by there is a large quantity of windscreen glass and on the opposite side there is a 50' length of heavy steel pipe that has been on the verge for years. The problems need to be brought to the attention of the Tip whose responsibility it is to keep the verges clear of their litter. The rubbish collection needs to be done more regularly and further along the road as rubbish is accumulating as far back as Longcross. Mr Parke said he will take the necessary action.

2004/907 BURLEY STREET GARAGE PARKING

RESUME

Mr Parke arranged a meeting with the Parish Council and Garage proprietor. The Forestry Commission will take protective measures to reduce damage to the grass and the gravel road will be narrowed.

2004/908 ASHURST TO LYNDHURST CYCLE WAY RESUME

The Clerk apologised that she had not had time to obtain the additional information from the County concerning signing. This will be done by the next Court.

2004/909 ENCROACHMENT AT & TRACK TO THE HIGH CORNER INN DISCHARGE

The issue of the encroachment has been resolved. Forestry Commission engineers are to put right the damage done by the hotel. A contract is being drawn up for Forestry Commission to maintain the track on behalf of the hotel. The remaining piece of fencing is not on Crown Land. The erection of a very large marquee on hotel land has resulted in parking pressure on the track. Vehicles are frequently parked on both sides of the track making access difficult. Mr Parke said he was surprised that problem has resurfaced and will contact the hotel.

OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN TO THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

2004/910 BOLDERWOOD TRAIL MARKERS DISCHARGE

The Deputy Surveyor produced some pictures of a proposed new trail marker at Bolderwood which took the form of a modern wooden sculpture. It was intended that it should be erected in place of the present sign on the gravelled car park area, directing people to the deer viewing platform. The issue is how to safely manage people crossing the road from the car park to the Deer Sanctuary. Unfortunately for the designer, the Court was unanimous in its view that the waymarker is of an inappropriate design. Something more in keeping with the New Forest was suggested.

2004/911 THE ROYAL OAK AT FRITHAM RESUME

It is considered that the marquee which is frequently erected at the Royal Oak probably exceeds the 28 day rule. The unfortunate result of the marquee's presence is that a small pub is made into a large pub with inevitable detrimental effects on the surrounding verges which have become badly eroded by parked vehicles. Mr Parke said the Forestry Commission will have a look at the problem.

2004/912 CROCKFORD CAR PARK DISCHARGE

It was reported that there is a dangerous drop off the tarmac road onto the gravel car park entrance. The Deputy Surveyor said the Forestry Commission will look at the problem which, he added, is also occurring elsewhere in the Forest. He remarked that the answer maybe to tarmac and surface dress the entrances to the car parks. The damage is done by vehicles pulling away on the gravel and so a short length of tarmac would probably resolve the problem.

2004/913 JOY RIDERS AT BEAULIEU AERODROME DISCHARGE

There appears to have been an increase in joy riding on the area used by the Model Aircraft club. The Deputy Surveyor said some more dragons teeth will be installed.

2004/914 COPPICE OF LINWOOD & LONG CROSS COTTAGE - RUBBISH RESUME

Mr Pasmore said he was sorry to have to return to this subject. He circulated some pictures of the rubbish outside the cottages which he felt was totally unacceptable. The Forestry Commission promised to take action.

2004/915 REPLACEMENT OF GRID 56, PILLEY STREET RESUME

The County Highway Authority proposes to install temporary traffic lights with a nightwatchman rather than close the road whilst this grid is replaced. There was concern as it is thought someone would need to be present 24 hours a day to ensure stock do not get through the open bypass gate. The Forestry Commission will discuss the matter further with the County.

2004/916 CYCLE STANDS AT BURLEY RESUME

Mr Parke met with Mr Sorrell from Hampshire County Council who understands the concerns about the amount of clutter in Burley village and is looking at the whole area to see if it can be improved.

Litter bins will be removed, and the present two fingerpost signs replaced by a single one. The new sign will be more in keeping with the surrounding area. The Millennium Stone will be repositioned close to the fence line and the seats and associated paving will also be repositioned. The small yellow no parking signs which are redundant because the road has double yellow lines will also be taken away. The Forestry Commission will come back to the Verderers for approval a final plan for the installation of the cycle rack and the removal of other items.

The Deputy Surveyor and Mr Parke left the meeting

OTHER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS COURTS

2004/917 HIGHWAY WARNING SIGNS AT GATEWOOD AND EXBURY DISCHARGE

Mrs Heron reported that the County sees no reason why signs warning motorists of stock on the roads should not be erected at these two locations. Such signs are a HCC/NFDC partnership. The County will now contact Mr Alan Ellis at NFDC to see if the matter can be progressed.

2004/918 MR COOPER'S RUBBISH DUMP RESUME

A number of photographs were circulated which show a collection of rubbish, including wire, discarded white goods, rubbish bins and general detritus has been dumped on the common at Acres Down. English Nature has previously sought the support of the Court in pursuing Mr Cooper who is believed to be responsible for the dump. As the items are considered to represent a hazard to stock, it was agreed a letter of support should now be written.

2004/919 PROSECUTIONS FOR NON-PAYMENT OF MARKING FEES RESUME
July 2004

The Official Verderer said there is nothing more to report at present. Matters are proceedings. Skeleton arguments should be ready soon.

The papers will be circulated when they are received. In the meantime it was agreed this matter should be resumed in July.

2004/920 STALLION SCHEME RESUME

The Commoners' Defence Association is to present a draft proposal for a revised scheme, effective from 2005. The Chairman of the CDA, Mr Rick Manley, has requested a meeting with Verderers and Commoners. Mr Adams will progress this. It is felt a scheme needs to be drawn up ready for announcement at the July Court.

2004/921 KINGSTON GREAT COMMON DISCHARGE

There is nothing further to report. English Nature is pursuing the owner of the common.

2004/922 VERDERERS' PONY IDENTITY LIST AND REGISTERED PONIES RESUME

The Clerk reported she is waiting for a letter from the New Forest Pony Breeding and Cattle Society setting out the information they require commoners to provide in order to ensure ponies on the Verderers' List do not lose their registration status.

2004/923 FALLEN STOCK DISCHARGE

There is nothing further to add to the Announcement made by the Official Verderer in Open Court. The matter will be discharged for the time being.

2004/924 VERDERERS' COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME RESUME

The list of commoners who have not entered the scheme was circulated to all Elected Verderers and the Agisters who are encouraging commoners to join.

The Clerk said that as the office is working on the applications various queries are arising. A small sub-committee of Verderers needs to be set up who can be consulted when problems arise and agree solutions. The Official Verderer felt the committee should consist of no more than 4 Verderers and members of the Court were asked to let the Clerk know if they wish to be included.

A meeting with DEFRA and English Nature has been arranged for the 27th May in order that the work on the scheme can be taken forward.

The Official Verderer asked the Court to approve a loan from the Railway Fund to be paid into a new account to be set up for the CSS. This will make accounting very much simpler and the money will be repaid once funds are received from DEFRA at the end of the first scheme year. It was agreed £35,000 should be transferred into the new account with immediate effect.

One further point was raised and that is the issue of animal identification. In some cases, more than one member of a commoning family use the same brand. This is going to lead to serious confusion and the commoners will be advised that everyone who enters the scheme must have their own brand.

2004/925 VERDERERS' COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP SCHEME - SCHEME MANAGER RESUME

The Official Verderer explained that unfortunately the gentleman who was offered the position of Scheme Manager, turned it down. New advertisements have been placed and in the meantime the Clerk and her assistants are getting on with sorting the scheme applications. It is hoped someone will be found to run the scheme in the near future.

2004/926 FIVE YEAR PLAN DISCHARGE

The five year plan had been circulated to the Court. It was accepted by everyone and Mr Pasmore kindly remarked that he thought it is well written and clearly laid out.

2004/927 HORSETAILS DISCHARGE

The Court approved the request by Horsetails TV to film a drift and for their Presenter to ride provided she and the film crew are fully insured. The Clerk remarked that her riding is dependent upon someone being willing to lend her a suitable horse. The Clerk was instructed to seek payment in the form of a donation to the Welfare Fund of £500.00.

2004/928 FOOT & MOUTH DISEASE CONTINGENCY PLAN DISCHARGE

The Official Verderer reported that the Contingency Plan has now been finalised.

The Court has a number of responsibilities under the plan and these are set out in Schedule E. Mr Adams was tasked with ensuring the Court maintains the necessary records.

REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

2004/929 NEW FOREST COMMITTEE WAY AHEAD GROUP DISCHARGE

Mr Montagu attended this group which mostly discussed what the New Forest Committee should be doing in the next two years. The Chairman of the Committee apparently personally feels there will still be a place for the Committee once the New Forest National Park Authority is in place. His reasoning is that the Committee is a forum for use by all those with an interest in the Forest. The Court took the view that the Consultative Panel may well have a role but there were not quite so sure about the Committee.

2004/930 CONSULTATIVE PANEL DISCHARGE

Mr Kitcher attended the Panel meeting where a paper on the Stewardship Scheme was tabled. Mr Kitcher was questioned on various aspects of the scheme and it is thought the Panel may ask the Official Verderer to attend next time.

Denny Lodge Parish Council raised the perennial problem of cars parked on the verge near the now closed Ipley Bridge car park. The Forestry Commission is apparently giving it time to see whether people give up trying to stop by the stream. The Court felt the Commission is a bit optimistic because water is such an attraction to people.

2004/931 HIGHWAY STRATEGY MEETING DISCHARGE

Mr Frost attended this meeting which was attended by representatives from the County Council (John Sorrell), Forestry Commission and District Council. Richard Manley (CDA) was also present. In particular a possible strategy for the Mill Lane, Emery Down, Bolderwood area and the C17 may be considered. A traffic survey is to be carried out over the next 12 months.

2004/932 PROGRESS FORUM DISCHARGE

Mr Pasmore attended the Forum. He said there seems to be a lot of EU money available to spend on this. Draft Codes of Practice for the various types of Forest user (cyclists, dog walkers, horse-riders etc.) are being drawn up and considered.

STAFF MATTERS (including the Staff Committee)

2004/933 MILEAGE RATES RESUME

The Agisters have asked for an increase in their mileage allowance following the recent rise in fuel prices. It seems the County Council pays its office a higher mileage rate than it is understood is permitted by the Inland Revenue. The higher rate is reportedly tax and NI free. The Clerk was asked to check with the Inland Revenue to see if there is a way the Court can pay its Agisters more without incurring additional cost.

2004/934 STAFF COMMITTEE MEETINGS DISCHARGE

Mr Adams, the Chairman of the Staff Committee, had been asked by the Official Verderer to consider changing the date and time of the Staff Committee meetings. The reason was so that the Assistant Clerk could take the Minutes in place of the Clerk whose workload has increased with the Stewardship Scheme. Mr Adams said he would prefer not to hold the meeting at a different time because it fits conveniently with his work schedule. He is not paid for the time he spends on Verderers' business and so this argument was considered reasonable. The Assistant Clerk will, therefore, be asked if she would work some extra hours on the day of the meeting.

2004/935 STALLIONS & FOAL JUDGING RESUME

The suggestion contained in the Staff Committee Minutes that ex Head Agister Brian Ingram should again judge the foals has been considered. It was, however, felt that more than one person should be involved and that the Head Agister should judge foals in the north of the Forest and Agister Maton should judge foals in the south, possibly in conjunction with Mr Ingram. This idea will be given further consideration.

STAFF TRAINING

2004/936 CHAINSAW TRAINING DISCHARGE

Agister Lovell completed his training and passed the examination. A certificate should be issued shortly, a copy of which needs to be held in the office. The Court thanked Mr Kitcher for all his help in this matter.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

2004/937 HUMANE KILLERS

RESUME

Agister Napthine's humane killer has now been repaired.

The replacement humane killer for Agister Gerrelli has still not been received. Mr Adams has spoken with the shop and it is hoped the weapon may be available by the end of the week.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2004/938 HIGHWAY RE-SURFACING BETWEEN THE RED SHOOT AND DISCHARGE
MOYLES COURT

Concern was expressed that the recent road repairs and resurfacing that has been carried out on this road has resulted in a certain amount of widening of the carriageway. Where patches were repaired on the edges of the tarmac, they have been extended beyond their original boundaries. The surface dressing has then been sprayed on top with a resulting widening. The Highway Authority has been asked before to ensure this does not happen and Mrs Heron said she had spoken to the Authority before the top dressing was carried out asking them to ensure the patches were reduced. Clearly this did not happen. The Clerk was asked to write to Mr Richard Chinn, Chief Highway Engineer, requesting the original road width be restored as a matter of urgency.

2004/939 THE ROL KITCHER CUP

DISCHARGE

It is suggested that this trophy be presented each year in Open Court to the owner of the Stallion with the best foals. This was agreed.

2004/940 ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS - INSURANCE INFORMATION

DISCHARGE

The Agisters will be asked to ensure, as far as possible, that they obtain the insurance details of motorists involved in accidents with stock. In a recent case a commoner was able to obtain compensation direct from an insurance company despite the motorist being unwilling to pay.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1.15 p.m.