



100 Years of the Wytham Estate – A Centenary of Inspirational Education

EMBARGOED until 6 January 2020

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Wytham Estate - a joint celebration of the University of Oxford's Wytham Woods and the Hill End Outdoor Education Centre.

A special programme of events will celebrate the rich history of these much-loved places, whilst looking forward to a future of inspirational outdoor education for new generations of learners.

The Wytham Estate was purchased in 1920 by the philanthropic ffennell family, who established Hill End 'Camp' and later gifted the whole Estate to the University of Oxford.

Generations of Oxfordshire children have visited Hill End for school trips, and these memories are a very special part of the Estate's history. Wytham Woods became the 'laboratory with leaves' - one of the most researched pieces of woodland in the world, which combines public access with world-class ecological research.

The need to engage young people with nature and the environment has never been more pressing, and the Estate is committed to developing the ffennell legacy for future generations. This year will see new fundraising activities and new partnerships to secure the work of the Estate for the future.

Anniversary events start on 22 January 2020 when the Estate will plant the first of 100 new trees to mark 100 years. These will create a new woodland wildlife corridor between the two sides of the Estate and demonstrate a lasting commitment to their partnership. We will be encouraging 100 visiting schools to get involved in this project.

This year also sees a new joint ffennell Ranger initiative. This encapsulates the past, present and future of the Estate, and is dedicated to developing joint land management across the estate and promoting outdoor skills in young people.

The Estate is calling on the local community and supporters to get involved this year, to donate to fundraising campaigns or volunteer their time. The public will also be invited to join celebratory events, including a special anniversary summer festival on 6 June 2020 organised by the 'Friends of Hill End'. More details will be published online throughout the year.

Quotes

Hill End Centre Director Selby Dickinson said: *"We're delighted to be celebrating this important anniversary with our partners at Wytham Woods, and also excited about what we can achieve as a new charity. As a society we now recognise all the many benefits of outdoor learning – and that's been happening here for a century. This year is all about making sure we can do that for the next 100 as well"*

The Conservator of Wytham Woods, Nigel Fisher, said: *"If future generations are inspired to gaze in wonder at a butterfly, simply sit under a tree and meditate, or buy an organic apple from a local orchard, then the Wytham Estate has achieved its aims."*



Notes to editors

History of the Wytham Estate

- Wytham Woods and Hill End together make up the Wytham Estate, a beautiful and unique educational resource.
- In 1920, the Wytham Estate was purchased by Raymond and Hope ffennell, a wealthy couple who enjoyed the outdoors. They used the Estate as a holiday camping site, and to entertain.
- The ffennells were also a philanthropic family, committed to outdoor education and influenced by the philosophy of Steiner. Over the next decades they created innovative outdoor classrooms and dormitories at Hill End.
- Following the death of their only daughter Hazel as a young woman, the ffennells continued to fund opportunities for disadvantaged children to come and visit and learn at Hill End in her memory.
- In the 1930s, up to 300 children a day from London and Oxford came to Hill End 'Camp'.
- During the Second World War, hundreds of evacuees visited the site, many hosted by the Scouts.
- In 1944, Raymond ffennell died, and the estate passed into the ownership of the University for the purposes of education.
- For more on the history of the estate, including Pathe film footage from the 1930s, please visit the Hill End website: <https://hill-end.org/about/history>

Why is this year important?

- As we face the challenge of climate change and other threats to our environment, it is essential that young people understand and value the natural world.
- Outdoor learning plays a huge part in re-engaging children and adults with nature, improves mental and physical health, and offers a great opportunity to promote practical change.
- At the Wytham Estate, outdoor education has been valued for 100 years. The ffennells embraced new and innovative educational methods in the 1920s to get children outdoors - in 2020 we celebrate this ffennell legacy, which is just as relevant today.
- Wytham Woods and Hill End have shared educational aims, and this year is a great opportunity to focus on moving forward together to deliver the highest quality outdoor education for future generations.
- The Estate has ambitious plans to develop this offering, secure its future for the next 100 years, and are seeking partners and donors to work with them.

Wytham Woods

- Wytham Woods' 1,000 acres are a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and are one of the most researched pieces of woodland in the world, exceptionally rich in flora and fauna, with over 500 species of plants, a wealth of woodland habitats, and 800 species of butterflies and moths.



- The Woods can often be seen cropping up in various television documentaries, such as George McGavin's 'Oak Tree: Nature's Greatest Survivor', and Sir David Attenborough's 'Wonder of Eggs'!
- Please visit the Wytham Woods website for more details: www.wythamwoods.ox.ac.uk

The Hill End Centre

- Hill End's vision is to provide a unique space and opportunities for high-quality and inspirational outdoor learning to a diverse range of young people.
- It offers a wide range of outdoor learning opportunities for schools and organised groups in a beautiful 67-acre Oxfordshire site.
- Hill End was under local authority management for many years from the 1950s, until becoming a Charitable Trust in 2017.
- Hill End relies on support from its customers, local community, fundraisers and volunteers, and is always looking to involve more Friends of Hill End in its work.
- Please visit the Hill End website for more details: www.hill-end.org

Further information

For further information, and details of how to attend the launch event on 22 January - please contact: Lucy Crittenden at Hill End on 01865 863510 / lucy.crittenden@hill-end.org