

The Sale of Ashdown Forest, or How the Forest was Saved.

In 1987 the tenth Earl De la Warr decided to sell the 6,400 acres of Ashdown Forest that he still owned, as had his family for centuries. He could have sold it privately, and piecemeal, but decided it would be better kept whole.



He therefore offered it to East Sussex County Council for a 'knock-down price' of £1.2 million. The earl died, tragically, before the deal could be completed, but his executors went ahead with the sale. East Sussex County Council provided £330,000, all they could manage, and the rest had to be raised elsewhere.

Thus was born the public campaign to save Ashdown Forest for the nation. It was

co-ordinated by the Friends and fronted by Christopher Milne, of Christopher Robin fame, and it was very successful. The full amount was raised by the deadline, and the sale went ahead.

To some extent we know who gave because there is a list of donors, albeit without the amounts, but we do not know why people were motivated to support the campaign. We would love to hear of any personal stories either from the donors themselves, or from their families.

The Ashdown Forest Research Group, dedicated to uncovering the histories of the Forest, and the people who lived there, will be presenting an exhibition in the Forest Centre this April. This will tell not only the story of the Forest through the centuries, but also how the Forest was saved by the generosity of so many donors.

If you have any information we would be immensely grateful if you could contact us to add to this wonderful story. Messages can be left at the Forest Centre, or please email us at: info@ashdownforestresearchgroup.uk

To find out more about the research group please visit their website at www.ashdownforestresearchgroup.uk, where you will also find the complete list of donors to the fundraising campaign.