

Booker Common & Woods Protection Society

(Registered Charity : No. 289871)

If You have paid your Annual Subscription and / or have donated to the Fighting Fund in 1992/3 and no receipt is attached, please telephone HW. 0494 525665 or 521994

If you are not already a member of the Society and would like to help us to protect your environment, why not support us? The minimum annual subscription is £2.00 per household, but extra donations are essential. The minimum subscription has not been increased during the past ten years

Receipt for 1992/3 fighting fund donation

Receipt for 1992/3 Annual Subscription

This Society operates in accordance with the rules of the Charity Commission who scrutinise our audited accounts.

RARE PLANTS

Since the high winds of 1990 cleared out vast areas of the woodland, many species of plants have been able to see the light of day again. In time they should spread and bring pleasure to many woodland walkers.

One such plant is the Great Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) which would have been quite popular around this area at one time. This biennial likes the dry, chalky soil, heat and plenty of sunlight - hence the furry leaves.

Its large, broad, greyish, basal leaves develop in a tight rosette. The tall spike of yellow flowers approximately 1" across appear from June - August. It will not transplant, so please - if you see it and other rare plants, leave them where they can self-seed and give everyone pleasure.

PLANTINGS & MAINTENANCE

A Progress Report

Despite the droughts of the last three years, the tree planting can only be described as a success. Overall losses of 4 and 6 year olds are less than 10% with the novelties like chestnut and cherry flourishing. Losses amongst the younger planting of 2 year olds (which were largely experimental) are about 15% with a fair proportion falling to vandalism.

Hopefully the smaller, fancy varieties along the woodland edge will survive to break up the general aspect of Beech. Hedging has been less successful and any further additions will have to be selective. Whitebeam have been poor, but Field Maple has been the best grower and should be used to fill in the gaps.

Since the fence was erected along Glenister Road, the Hazel and Hawthorn has flourished and are now in need of a good pruning. The 'Common' has been roller cut and needs raking. We hope to keep it shorter this year with a motorised cutter to curtail the Melilot and the Mugwort (Ironweed) that have become over-powering in the last two years. A conspicuous success has been the pale-blue chicory (don't eat it, please).

The Common tidy was quite successful in spite of the weather. We had a turnout of 22 and Jeff Harvey did his usual sterling job in a very messy situation. Thanks to all who turned up.

On the other side of the motorway the shooting ground management are making strenuous efforts to build the bank around the shooting butts to reduce gunshot noise. The work was delayed by wet weather which bogged down all the earth moving equipment.



Ronald Walker

NEWSLETTER No. 32 - APRIL 1993

This work is carried out by volunteers. If you would like to help by giving 2 hours on a few occasional Sundays in the year, please add your name to the volunteer roster by phoning (0494) 525665 now! And if you cannot give your time, please donate as generously as you possibly can!

History Shows-

People talk of Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as if they were a modern policies. The concept of preserving broad swathes of green fields around towns and built up areas is not new. Queen Elizabeth the first made a Royal Proclamation in 1580, forbidding any new building within 3 miles of the gates of the City of London.

This, and similar subsequent legislation, failed and much of the green areas they were intended to protect have been lost forever. Probably the most concentrated period of development took place in the 30's which resulted in the passing of the Green Belt Act of 1938.

The objective of the Green Belt was to check the growth of large built-up areas and prevent neighbouring towns and villages from merging into one another. We have since had both County Structure Plans and Local District Plans to reinforce this basic intention. In spite of these, the Green Belt is forever being eroded.

The question is whether the policies to enforce the plans are so written as to be sufficiently precise or clearly spelt out. The debates in the Council Chamber make it clear that current Policies leave much to the personal interpretation of our Councillors. Our Councillors have demonstrated on numerous occasions their willingness to vote contrary to the principle behind the protective legislation when it suits them.

A 'Gilbertian' spectacle arose recently. Both Bucks County Council and Wycombe District Council voted to breach Green Belt/AONB policies at two different sites on this side of the town. But strangely, each Authority objected strongly to the other's blatant transgression of policy.

NEW WYCOMBE DISTRICT PLAN

The 1993 version offers some opportunity to prevent this history from repeating itself. The environmental implications involved are of crucial importance and will directly affect our lives for years ahead. The ambiguity and convenient misinterpretations, revealed by experiences of the past, that lead to legal loopholes must be stopped. Future policy must therefore be clear, concise and above all, understandable.

This Society will argue for greater precision and clarity of wording at the Public Inquiry in June 1993 on the new Wycombe District Local Plan.

For this reason, the Society sought the support of the same Advocate who so ably and successfully represented us at the Mobil-Booker MSA Public Inquiry in 1990. He is a retired solicitor with experience in both planning matters and Public Inquiries. He has been advising the Society on its response to the Wycombe District Plan for several months and has already acted as our Advocate at the Dept of Environment Pre-Inquiry on 22 and 23 March 1993.

The new Wycombe Local plan is a lengthy, complex document and the Council should be congratulated on the presentation of its basic policies to which much thought has been given. The Society is pleased to be able to support the Council's basic policies in principle, but object where legal loopholes remain.

Accordingly, the Society made 11 submissions for an oral hearing at the Public Inquiry which begins 15 June 1993 for 3 months. These submissions relate only to preservation of the countryside west of Booker and Sands, and to local traffic problems. In 3 cases the Society supported both the basic policy and Explanatory Text. These relate to MSAs; Aircraft Noise; and Development Briefing for Housing.

In 5 other cases the Society supported the basic policies but objected to omissions in the Explanatory Text that would remove exploitable loopholes. In a further 2 cases the Society made outright objections. One was the failure to include in the Green Belt the green fields at Sands, already designated an AONB. The other being the failure to fully address the problem of traffic in Sands area.

Wycombe District Council contended that 5 of the Society's objections should not be heard at the June Inquiry to which, the Society's Advocate responded strongly in a 25 minute oral and written address. His statements will now stand on record whatever the Inspector's decision as to whether our objections can be heard orally in June or not.

The Society's Advocate also took the opportunity to ask the Inspector's permission to cross-examine Mobil Oil Company's witnesses at the public enquiry. His decision is still pending. It is now likely that Mobil Oil will appeal again to develop an Motorway Service Area in Booker since the D.o.T. has now moved the goal posts in their favour.

All of these inquiries put extra demand on the Society's already overburdened funds. Members give their time freely, but continuous campaigning is expensive in terms of printing, postage, and legal fees. So please give generously to the Society's Green Belt/AONB Fighting Fund.

**NOTICE OF
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Monday 24 May 1993 at 8pm
Booker Memorial Hall
Booker Common**

Guest Speaker - Mr David Lewry, General
Manager of Wycombe Air Park, speaking on
Aircraft noise and the environment
Plus - Up-to-date information on Public
Inquiries - The Wycombe District Local Plan
and Booker Tip Extension.