

BOOKER COMMON AND WOODS

PROTECTION SOCIETY

FEBRUARY 1986

(Registered Charity: No 289871)

CLEAN-UP: PRE-XMAS 1985

Thirty volunteers responded to the appeal in the November Newsletter, and between them cleared an incredible 5½ tonnes of rubbish from the perimeter of woodland and open grassland of the 60 acres of Booker commonland, and from Newmer Common.

The good news is:-

- that it was no longer necessary to grub around inside the woodland because the bollards at the vulnerable points are doing the job of preventing quick in-and-out dumping by the truck load.
- Despite the inclement weather on Sunday December 8 1985, sufficient volunteers turned out to clear away all the rubbish in sight.

Thanks are due to all who made the effort to keep Booker a good place to live in. But special mention made of Tony Hall and Brian Pearce who provided the vehicles and trundled the 5½ TONNES to Booker Tip where it should have been dumped in the first place.

THE IAN DASHPER TRUST FUND

Members may like to know that the Trust Fund has not yet been closed. Contributions can still be made through Barclays Bank Plc, 197 New Road, Booker (sorting code 20 10 76 and Account No. 21142933)

It will be recalled that Ian Dashper was involved in a fatal railway accident shortly before Christmas, and leaves a widow and two children.

The family were among the original members of this Society.

QUESTIONS OF HISTORY!

(This item is contributed by Allan Daggin -and carried over from Newsletter 15).

From time to time the questions are asked: "How old is Booker Common?" and "Is it an Ancient Woodland?" These are best answered by tracing the ownership of Booker Common back through the ages.

An early 13th Century record (around the time of Magna Carta) shows that 'Bokar' (Booker) was one of the 10 Tithings belonging to the Manor of West Wycombe. Another Tithing was 'Brook & Brook End' (Now Mill End & Sands).

Tithings came into being in Saxon times - before 1066. A Tithing comprised 10 'Free' Householdiers living near together and bound over as sureties for each other's peaceable behaviour. i.e. for mutual self-protection.

Reference is made in Domesday Book 1086 (the name given to the Book as-the final authority). Here it is stated that 'STIGAND' the Saxon held the Manor of West Wycombe in King Edward the Confessor's reign (1042-1066).

When 'STIGAND' was promoted to the See of Canterbury he was succeeded by 'WALCHELIN' as representative of the Bishops of Winchester who owned the Manor of West Wycombe at that time. The Bishops held the Manor until 1550 when it was surrendered to King Edward VI. (3 years after succeeding Henry VIII).

Until 1550 West Wycombe Manorial lands, including Booker, were administered by a representative of the Bishops of Winchester at two levels:-

- i) Secular- administering the everyday life of of the 10 Tithings in the Manor
- ii) Ecclesiastical- administering the Monastic Foundation sited in West Wycombe which was roughly in the centre of the Manorial Lands.

The Church Loft still remains in West Wycombe village and formed part of a much larger complex of ecclesiastical buildings. The ground floor was used as a hostel for the large wayfaring population. (People were extraordinarily mobile in the Middle Ages) -The upper floor was the Manorial Hall of the Bishops of Winchester. This room was the centre of administration in all respects for the whole of the Manor lands. It is here that tenants on Booker Common would have had to go to pay their dues.

It follows that the boundaries of the Manor of West Wycombe and the Ecclesiastical Parish of West Wycombe were the same. The Parish Church for Booker and all other Manor Tithings was St. Lawrence on West Wycombe Hill. Thus Booker people were recorded as born in the Parish of West Wycombe.

The Parish boundary was changed some 10 years ago when Booker became part of High Wycombe Parish. But the Manorial boundaries remained and Booker Common is still part of the Manor of West Wycombe.

1066 and all that.'

When King William I (The Conqueror) invaded England in 1066 one of his followers, 'WILLIAM DORMER', became Lord of the Manor of West Wycombe. But as Tenant of the Bishops of Winchester who still owned the property.

The DORMER family remained in occupation for 600 years until 1670, after the Civil War.

ROBERT DORMER, the 23rd in descent from 1066, became Earl of Camarvon in 1628. In the Civil War he sided with King Charles I and in 1623 commanded a Regiment of Horse under Prince Rupert, and later became General of Horse. He was killed at the Battle of Newbury.

He would likely have raised his Regiment of Yeoman from among his Tenants of the Manor, as was the custom of the time. It follows that some Booker men would have fought alongside him at Newbury.

Folklore has it that a branch of the Dormer family resided at Booker Farm sited on what is now Barbers Wood Close, but this is not verified. However the construction and style of building, which was destroyed 20 years ago, exceeded that of the usual run of farmhouses. So perhaps there is something in the story.

In 1670 the Manorial Lands were sold to THOMAS LEWIS. He held them for almost 30 years and then sold the Estate to SIR SAMUEL AND FRANCIS DASHWOOD in 1698.

The DASHWOOD family has held the Estate for nearly 300 years and the present owner and Lord of the Manor is SIR FRANCIS DASHWOOD, Bt., - first Baronet of England.

Above is traced the evidence of continuous unbroken existence of the Manor of West Wycombe including Booker through 5 owners since Saxon times. This clearly indicates the answer to the first question - Booker Common is at least 900 years old. -Ancient Woodlands are defined as woodland that has existed continuously on the site at least since 1600AD so the answer to question 2 must be YES.

SHOOTING ON BOOKER COMMON

ANY SHOOTING is dangerous unless properly supervised.

IT IS UNLAWFUL for anybody to carry a Shotgun, Airweapon, or any other weapon (whether loaded or unloaded) on Booker Common - UNLESS they have been granted Lawful Authority to do so.

LAWFUL AUTHORITY can be granted only by West Wycombe Estate - the Legal Owner of the Common.

THE ESTATE has granted a Shooting Lease over the Grove End and Hellbottom Shoot Areas. For conservation purposes, the Lease also carries the requirement to control grey squirrels and other vermin on Booker Common Woodlands. This is necessary because they damage and destroy the trees.

VERMIN SHOOTING occurs on the common only rarely. But because of the public presence on and around the common, West Wycombe Estate requires the Shoot Lessee to follow proper safety precautions.

THE ESTATE requirement of the Shoot Lessee is reprinted below. (X below BASC is British Association for Shooting & Conservation - Safety Code).

IT IS IN THE INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC that any Unlawful Shooting be reported to Police - because unsupervised shooting is a public danger.

SMITH-WOOLLEY

CHARTERED SURVEYORS
LAND AGENTS AND VALUERS
BUILDING SURVEYORS

M. R. ANDLER, FRICS
R. H. SANDFORD, A.A. FRICS
E. R. WARDE-ALDAM, M.A. FRICS
J. P. WOOLLARD, FRICS
C. R. PETERS, M.A. FRICS
W. H. R. J. GARDING, FRICS
P. C. A. WHITTLE, M.A. FRICS
R. J. P. GILLINGHAM, FRICS
T. H. O. COOPER, FRICS
T. G. B. MCCAM, FRICS
D. J. SCOTT, FRICS (Building Surveyor)
A. L. PYLE, FRICS
T. M. O. GRAY, FRICS
R. D. BAKER, FRICS

ASSOCIATES
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AGENTS

BATH.
CAMBRIDGE.
COLLINGTON (NOTTS).
LONDON.
NORWICH.

PUBLIC PATHS ACROSS PRIVATE LAND

We take this opportunity to remind that on the private and enclosed lands 'shooting parties' are out very frequently - unlike their rare visits to the woodlands on the common.

It follows that when leaving the common and entering the adjacent private property, it is prudent to put dogs on leashes and walk only on the designated public paths.

Public paths on private property can be identified either by sign posts, or by 'Way-Marks' which are white arrows often painted on trees.

If dogs are allowed to run free they are at risk, by:-

- getting in the line of fire
- harassment of Game & Farm Animals, which legally entitles farmers to shoot them. (BASC statistics show that, on average, 81 dogs are shot each year in the U.K. None have been reported in Booker - so far - so let us keep it that way).
- illness from pesticides which are sprayed on cultivated farmland.

But, of course dogs have always been off leashes and running free in the common woodlands and long may they continue to do so. However dog owners are asked again not to allow them to foul the open grassland area. This open area is used intensively by the public, and particularly by children's play groups and by the cricketers. Most of the common is woodland and dogs can be well exercised chasing squirrels among the trees.

Our ref: TMGG/LAB/4/107/A2(086) 7 February 1986

D G Norton Esq
Towerage Farmhouse
Towerage Lane
West Wycombe
HIGH WYCOMBE
Bucks

Dear Mr Norton

WEST WYCOMBE ESTATE
Hellbottom and Grove End Shoots
Booker Common

I am writing to confirm our agreement that you should observe the following procedure when any shooting takes place at Booker Common.

- 1 I explained to you that it was difficult for wardens of the Booker Common and Woods Protection Society to distinguish between those people legitimately shooting at Booker on your authority, and those others who may be shooting unlawfully. It is clear that, if your shoot and the Booker Common and Woods Protection Society can work in close liaison, then benefits will accrue to you, the Estate, the Society and the general public.

You will therefore issue personal formal authority to each Gun before shooting takes place at Booker. Guns must carry this authority with them and they must also carry their Gun Licences and, in view of the public's presence on and around a Common, they must at all times observe the 'Shotgun Safety Code' as prepared by the BASC.

- 2 Additionally, it was agreed that, since you shot at Booker so rarely, you would be happy to inform Allan Duggin, the Chairman of the Booker Common and Woods Protection Society, of those dates when you knew you would be shooting on the Common. Mr Duggin's address is: Orchard House, 6 Barbers Wood Close, Booker, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 4EW; and his telephone number is: High Wycombe 25665.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Allan Duggin so that he and his members are aware of this arrangement.

Yours sincerely

Allan Duggin Esq, Chairman,
Booker Common and Woods Protection Society

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1986

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 21 May 1986 Wednesday in Booker Memorial Hall at 8 pm.

Members are asked to make the effort to attend the meeting in order to:-

- Put forward their views
- Hear detailed reports from the 1985/6 committee, and ask questions.
- Elect a new committee for 1986/7 and suggest ideas for future action.

1985/6 SUBSCRIPTIONS & RECEIPTS

Our members give their time voluntarily; but getting things done incurs actual payments out. These are paid from annual subscriptions and extra donations, as shown in the Annual Audited Accounts published in Newsletters.

RECEIPTS for the last of the 1985/6 subscriptions are attached below. But most members have already received their receipts in earlier Newsletters. If anybody has still not received their receipt for 1985/6 payment please phone: The Hon. Treasurer (H.W. 21994) or The Chairman (H.W. 25665)