

BOOKER COMMON AND WOODS PROTECTION SOCIETY

(Registered Charity: No 289871)

FEBRUARY 1987

RESTORATION & CONSERVATION WORK

RESTORATION WORK recently completed is as follows:-

- Wildflower & Grass Seed sown in 3,000 sq. yards of the open common.
- 420 Indigenous Tree Whips planted: (Beech; Wild Cherry; Hazel; Hawthorne; Field Maple; Wayfaring.) The Chairman of Bucks County Council Planning Sub-Committee - Councillor K Ross - planted the first ceremonial tree at the beginning of National Tree Week.
- Two Hedgerows were restored. One dilapidated hedge was 'laid' in order to rejuvenate and promote new growth; and one totally decayed hedge was replanted.
- Timber Posts were installed to protect the newly restored areas, and prevent unauthorised vehicles from penetrating into the woodlands.
- Four Pathways were raised with solid materials to enable pedestrians to walk dry-shod in wet muddy weather.
- 60 Tonnes of Rubbish was scraped up and taken to Booker Tip (where it should have been in the first place). This comprised - Building rubble; Garden waste; and miscellaneous rubbish.
- 60 Tonnes of good top-soil was brought in and surface spread.
- Preparatory Work: Before it was practicable to plant anything it was, of course, essential to prepare the ground. This entailed skimming off the accumulated rubbish and useless scrub and diseased trees.

Far more rubbish had been dumped than was visible to the eye. There was layer upon layer of it. As a result clearance work took longer than anticipated and was finally halted by the heavy rains. (The Tip Trucks could no longer move on the soft ground).

NEW RESTORED AREAS are:-

- The 'original' Booker Common (on the western side of Squirrel Lane and Glenister Road).
- Area adjoining Recreation Ground & Willow Avenue. (Both the above Areas required extensive rubbish clearance prior to planting trees and seeds).
- The Woodlands fronting Lane End Road (south of Rydal Way). Rubbish clearance here was not necessary so trees could be planted immediately. Beech Tree Whips were planted in gaps where natural regeneration was not taking place.

HEDGEROWS are living hurdles. Experts say they must be pruned from time to time to encourage rejuvenation and prolong the life of the trees. The 'Small Woodlands Project' adopted the age-old and now rare procedure of 'Hedge Laying'. This allows the new shoots to sprout upwards towards the light from the living stems that have been laid over.

If they are not pruned the trees grow high and leggy and tend to rot and develop disease - leading to gaps in the hedge getting wider and wider. Eventually it ceases to exist as a hedge, as has already happened to the hedge between the Common and Recreation Ground.

WOODLAND CONSERVATION: Clearance work of any kind usually produces an initial sense of shock. But nature does not stand still and quickly reasserts itself, as gardeners well know.

RECEIPTS for 1986/7

YOUR RECEIPT for your 1986/7 annual subscription/donation is attached. If you have paid but a receipt is not attached please phone Hon Treasurer (HW 21994) or if unavailable, phone HW 25665.

Members who kindly paid 4 years in advance, on covenant, last year will of course have already had a receipt. **THANKS** for your continuing financial support.

RESTORATION & CONSERVATION WORK (CONTINUED)

Between the various species there is a constant struggle for existence and competing for light. In early growth some plants grow faster than others and tend to stifle those of slower growth by obscuring their light. Unless controlled they eventually predominate and slow growth plants get lost.

The splendid Beech Woodlands are no accident of nature. What we enjoy today is the result of man-management in the distant past.

But woodland management is a highly specialised job. So any conservation work undertaken by this Society is under direction of Professionals, and only by express permission of the property owner, Sir Francis Dashwood.

This Society has been carrying out restoration work which otherwise is unlikely to get done at all. As can be seen, the areas which take the biggest beating are round the perimeter of Booker Common adjacent to highways and residential areas. Conservation is a never ending job - like painting the Forth Bridge.

T H A N K S

This latest Project was initiated at the Society's 1986 Annual General Meeting. Its purpose is Restoration of what was lost and Conservation of what remains.

After publication of the detailed proposals there was an astonishing response offering help of all kinds. This is surely a signal of the public awareness of the need to conserve the countryside both for the present and the future.

It is always invidious to particularize when so many have made their own crucial contribution. It is also invidious not to name those who made the major contributions, these are:-

- Sir Francis Dashwood, Bt., who agreed the Proposals in principle subject to our volunteers taking direction and technical advice from the Professionals, and to his final approval of their detailed recommendations.

Who also donated a total of £150 towards costs.

- The Professionals: Smith-Woolley, Landagents; Bucks County Council; Wycombe District Council; Economic Forestry Group; Chiltern Society-Small Woodlands Project Ashton Farm Partners, Seed Growers.

It is appreciated that they made time for us from their already busy working days.

- All Society Members who constantly support our local conservation effort through their annual subscriptions and extra donations.

- The Committee responsible for the Organisation; Fund Raising; and overall co-ordination of the Project.

- The 50 volunteers who gave up their week-ends and provided their free labour during the 3-months working period. (Labour costs usually account for a high proportion of total cost of any project).

- Bucks County Council - whose early contribution of up to £925 took the Proposals off the drawing board and made them into reality. In effect they are main sponsors.

- Wycombe District Council - for accepting ownership of protective bollards for insurance purposes. Also for taking steps to remedy flooding from the highways on to an area of open Common.

- Chiltern Society's 'Small Woodlands Project' for producing a Tree Planting and Ground Clearance Plan. Also for laying a Hedge - in the old fashioned way.

- John Geggus & Son (Contractor of Booker) who at their own expense and without charge on Society funds:-

- With their 'Drott' cleared unsightly scrub and rubbish from the open area below Squirrel Lane.

- Delivered 60 Tonnes of top-soil and spread it, and finally graded the ground ready for seed planting.

- Brian Pearce (Five Oaks Builders of Booker) - who at his own expense delivered materials for raising the pathways. Also for the free loan of a Tip-Truck for taking rubbish to Booker Tip.

- Anthony Muddiman & Sons (Contractor of Booker) who at greatly reduced fee scraped up the rubbish with his 'Yubota' from the wooded areas and took it to Booker Tip.

- David Stocks (Agricultural Contractor of West Wycombe) who rammed the protective bollards 2'6" deep, at a highly preferential fee.

- Booker Garden Centre for supplying all the timber at a highly preferential rate.

- and to ASDA an extra special thanks for their magnificent donation of £1,200 to help ensure the continuation of conservation work in Booker.

Donations of this magnitude enable long term conservation plans to be made with reasonable certainty of successful completion.

ASDA has given a lead by so generously contributing to the well-being of the community and demonstrating a 'care' for the environment.

WYCOMBE AIR PARK

DURING RECENT TIMES many of our members have complained, with good reason, about:-

- The substantial increase in flying activity.
 - Persistent breaches of 'Noise Abatement Procedures'.
 - Overflying built-up areas, and flying at low altitude.
- (The air crash on a Booker roof-top, and another near Spring Coppice residential area are still fresh in many minds; as the Glider-Tug tow-ropes often trailing dangerously low over the residential area).

REPRESENTATIONS continue to be made to the responsible authorities by the Society as required by members at the last Annual General Meeting.

EVEN MORE FLYING ACTIVITY IS TO COME - according to recent public announcements:-

SKYLINE HELICOPTERS LTD have announced a further development programme through the December 1986 issue of a Business News Magazine:-

They claim their fleet of helicopters has been increased to 14 in the last 2/3 years; and they have every intention of purchasing more helicopters. (This is only the tip of the iceberg because the number based at Booker takes no account of visiting helicopters).

It is stated that in order to cope with the increased traffic a new hanger will become operational early this year. This provides 5,000 feet of extra space and a 12,000 gallon capacity underground refuelling system.

The feature goes on to promote the following flying activity: 'Charter Services'; 'Business Trips'; 'Shuttle Taxi Service'; and Flying Lessons - to meet, they say, an ever-increasing demand.

SPRING-CLEAN THE COMMON

On Sunday morning 26 April 1987 from 10am to 12pm.

FIXED WING AIRCRAFT: In December last Planning Application was made to erect 6 hangers - for 15 Aircraft, existingly based at Booker.

But the proposed hanger site is not in fact in the existing parking area. It is on the north-west side of the Air Park and would open up a whole new development area.

This would leave space for 15 additional aircraft to be brought in to the vacated parking space. In this event it would lead, inevitably to increased flying activity.

For this reason the Society supported the complainants and formally opposed this Application to The Planning Officer, Wycombe District Council. Other Environmental Societies also opposed.

THESE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS are clearly contrary to the spirit of the 'Draft Marlow Area Local Plan'. (below)

WYCOMBE COUNCIL'S DRAFT PLAN relating to the Air Park indicates the Council's concern at the potential dangers. Their POLICY TR9 reads "Developments at Wycombe Air Park..... which would NOT result in an increase in flying activities will in principle be acceptable".

This Policy appears to be effective only in the case of new planning applications. So our Elected Councillors have the muscle to refuse the application for hangers for 15 aircraft.

THE LOOPHOLE is that there is nothing to prevent existing Operators increasing flying activities regardless of additional buildings which require the Council's Planning Consent. Members have experienced the recent increase in flying activity and are aware that a high proportion of the aircraft are not housed in hangers.

Furthermore, the number of aircraft based at Booker is not the only criterion. The question is how many should be permitted to take the air at the same time.

THE FUTURE: Wycombe Council's Environmental Services Committee Agenda for 27 January 1987 records a statement by the Air Park Management to the effect that the Air Park was near to saturation point.

Local residents who have been able to live in reasonable amity with the Air Park for the past 50 years feel that saturation point has already been passed and approaching danger point.

AN AUTHORITY BUT INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION seems to be the commonsense answer.

There has been no definitive and authoritative statement as to what is 'Saturation Point'. Who is to decide this crucial matter? Who is to recommend a reasonable balance between commercial aviation requirements and the protection of the local community within its environment? And above all who will enforce the agreed rules?

Commonsense says that these are not decisions which can be taken by any one vitally affected party.

THIS SOCIETY on behalf of its members has begun making formal representations for an Authoritative BUT Independent Investigation. The purpose to define the limitations on flying activity at any one time. Among other things it is to be expected that considerations would include:- The wisdom of 3 aircraft types operating at the same time over built-up areas: An acceptable balance between the economic gain against the environmental loss and danger to local residents: that it would have little credence unless it were a PUBLIC INQUIRY.

Members are indebted to Councillor Mrs Janet Riddington for voicing their concern and supporting their interests in the Council Chamber.

IF YOU or any member of your family are prepared to help make the Common look a better place, please phone for details to High Wycombe 25665.