

BOOKER COMMON AND WOODS PROTECTION SOCIETY

MAY 1989

NEWSLETTER No. 24

(Registered Charity: No. 289871)

NOTICE
of
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
on
Monday 22 May 1989 at 8pm
at
Booker Memorial Hall
on Booker Common

MEMBERS ARE URGED TO MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO ATTEND.

OTHER RESIDENTS OF BOOKER & SANDS, who intend to become members this year, are also invited. (Present annual subscription is a minimum of £2.00 per household).

There will be an update of:-

- The Society's wide ranging activities in protection of your local environment.
- Latest information on the proposed Motorway Service Area at Booker.

Special Note: The Planning Inspectorate of Dept. of Environment has decreed that "...Mobiloil's Appeal (against Wycombe Council's refusal) is in order".

This means that a Public Inquiry is definitely on later this year

A NEW BATTLE FOR BOOKER HAS BEGUN. It will be a decisive battle; more crucial than the previous 14 attempts to breach the Greenbelt & AONB because the Dept. of Transport has an overriding interest in MSA sites. The outcome will provide a precedent for the future

Another Special Note: The 15th application to breach the Green Belt has occurred since the last Newsletter. Perhaps a loophole has been seen. If so we must seal the hole. If they were successful the precedent created would open the floodgates to a sea of concrete. This green heritage which has stood for 1,000 years will be lost for all time.

The Society stands firmly with Wycombe Council in its opposition to an MSA at Booker-or indeed anywhere else in this 14 mile stretch of M40 running through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

We ask all members of Society to give their full support. AND DONATE TO THE "FIGHTING FUND"

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES OF LAST AGM (23 May 1988) by Hon Secy.
3. MATTERS ARISING
4. ANNUAL REPORTS by Chairman and Hon Treasurer presenting 1988/9 Audited Accounts.
5. MEMBERS VOTE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION for 1989/90
6. QUESTION TIME ON THE ABOVE REPORTS
7. PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITY
8. VOTE OF THANKS to outgoing committee
9. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE & OFFICERS for 1989/90 (Rule 4; Committee consists of: Chairman; Hon Secy; Hon Treasurer; and seven active members plus co-options as required)
10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

NEW COMMITTEE for 1989/90

SUBSCRIBING MEMBERS are invited to offer themselves for election to Committee and the Offices for year 1989/90.

Please phone nominations to HW 25665 not later 14 May 1989. New blood is always welcome and replacements are required for retiring members.

Present candidates are:-

Mesdames: Rita Lurton; Lyn Pearce; Gaynor Taffurelli; Claire Wylot.

Messrs: Paul Baker; Syd Codling; David Crowther; Allan Duggin; Rodney Forrest; Tony Hall; Andrew Morgan; Richard Smith; Ronald Walker; Victor West.

(In addition representatives from the two Booker Women's Institutes attend as observers).

YOUR HERITAGE

(Historical contribution by Allan Duggin)

Residents of Booker and Sands are most favoured of people in living next to green countryside which has remained unspoiled for countless generations.

It is not for nothing that the land west and south of the main built-up area is designated both 'Green Belt' and an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'.

Both are statutory designations enforceable in law. Nevertheless the Property Developers are forever seeking legal loopholes to defeat the object and despoil the area for the profit involved. The value of the countryside is without price. But they could succeed unless we are vigilant.

Only 11% of all the land in England and Wales is designated an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. We are privileged in having 100%. But it could be lost unless it is constantly defended.

C O N T I N U I T Y

But that is not all. The 'Nature Conservancy Council record Booker Common as an 'Ancient Woodland'.

This means that the site has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD, and only cleared for underwood or timber production.

A woodland present in 1600 is likely to have been in existence for centuries. (In 1600 Elizabeth I was Queen-when the Spanish Armada was dealt with).

But Booker has even longer continuous history- and it was the 'Householders' who made that history by preserving the land from despoilation.

An early 13th Century Record (about the time of Magna Carta-1215AD) reveals 'BOKAR' (Booker) and 'BROOK' & 'BROOK END' (Sands & Mill End) as Tithings belonging to the Manor of West Wycombe.

Tithings came into being in Saxon times, and long before the last successful invasion of England by the Normans in 1066- from what is now known as France.

A Tithing comprised 10 Free 'Householders' living near together and bound over as sureties for each other's peaceable behaviour. i.e. for MUTUAL SELF PROTECTION.

Inevitably it would have been the 'Householders' of the many things belonging to the Manor of West Wycombe who manned the two ancient Hill forts in times of invasion. There was nobody else to do it.

The earth banks surrounding the parish Church on West Wycombe Hill and Desborough Castle at Castlefield are still visible to this day.

The Viking and Danish invasions of the 9th Century penetrated no further south than the Thames Valley. So the local 'Householders' must have done well.

Life never changes. MUTUAL SELF PROTECTION is still the key to protecting our life style and the amenities.

Today there are thousands more 'Householders' so, given the will to win, we too can sort out the Mobiloil Multi-national.

The written record is evidence that these local lands have remained green countryside for at least 1,000 years.

Domesday Book (1086) the first census of England by William the Conqueror puts the question beyond all doubt.

It records that 'STIGAND the SAXON' (why is no pub named after him?) held the Manor of West Wycombe in King Edward the Confessor's reign (1042-1066). Booker Common and the proposed MSA site remain an integral part of the Manor of West Wycombe to this day.

After the Norman Conquest "WAKELIN" Bishop of Winchester held 'WICUMBE' (Manor of West Wycombe) for the purpose of supplies for the Monks of the Church of Winchester."

In effect it was business as usual for the 'Householders'. They continued with the same job cultivating the land and producing the food for themselves and the Monks.

The principle change was in 'Top Management' the upper ruling structure.

Most historians emphasise the continuities of life following the example of the Conqueror who when becoming King of England "promised to respect and maintain ancient customs".

The Conqueror is not most revered for his velvet glove style of management, but even he refrained from devastating this bit of green countryside.

His census further records that "Manor of West Wycombe held.....Woodlands and 1,000 pigs." The two things went together. The pigs fed on the fallen beech mast in the woodlands.

Clearly this ancient custom was maintained by the Conqueror as he promised, because it continued down the centuries until recent years. Prior to the 1965 Commons Registration Act 'Common Right of Pannage' attached to the property now known as Woodside Cottage, Booker Common.

The late beloved Phoebe Webb who lived there assured the writer that her Grandmother maintained the family by supplying pork to local butchers. When a child Phoebe Webb's job was to herd Grandma's pigs on Booker Common to feed on the beechmast.

Thus is seen continuity of custom from King William 1st of England, through the Manor of West Wycombe, to Phoebe Webb of Booker. Although it is a specific aspect in a specific area, it illustrates continuity of 'Amenity' for over 1,000 years.

But continuity is lost unless maintained, and THAT MEANS FIGHTING FOR IT.

'Mobiloil the Multi-national' would destroy this 1,000 year old heritage with their 80 acres of buildings and vehicle parks. Among the horrors would be parking areas for 1,122 vehicles.

But that is just for starters. They also plan expansion areas for additional vehicles, but modestly avoid specifying how many more.

Perhaps their 'Statement of Case' gives the clue to the ultimate number of vehicles, i.e. "...M40..." following its improvement and extension and the opening of the Channel Tunnel it will become one of the most important strategic routes in the country....it should be provided with services (MSA's)

Could it be that their eventual plan is a massive Transit Depot of Vehicles and Personnel between the Continent and the North, and sited among the Beech Trees of Booker?

Last time round in 1966 the Transit depot from the Continent was on the Beach at Hastings.

The completed M40 will be approx 88 miles in length most of which is through 'Undesignated' land. Yet, perversely, they would site an MSA within the designated Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' which carries only 14 mile length of M40.

Since Mobiloil appear to lack the sensibility of William (Jackboot) the Conqueror', it is up to us all in MUTUAL SELF-PROTECTION to fight them off and preserve this green countryside for another 1,000 years, as did our predecessors.

1988/9 CONSERVATION WORK

Volunteers have recently cleared the remaining rubble and scrub from the derelict area near the northeast entrance to Booker Common Woodlands (by Arundel Road and Highwood Avenue).

This area has now been ^{cleared} of rubble, restored and replanted with 600 indigenous trees. This brings the total number planted to 1,200 trees. In addition the area has been seeded with indigenous wildflowers and varieties of grasses.

Other areas restored in previous years have been partially recultivated and re-seeded with varieties of annual wildflowers. This summer a resultant red and purple of the poppy and corn-cockle should contrast well with the yellow and white perennial wildflowers planted in earlier years.

It is particularly encouraging that the Society has successfully re-established wildflower species which had disappeared. 'Cowslips' for example are returning, living proof that they are wildflowers and not accidents happening to animals.

All are asked to give the wildflowers a chance and never to pick them. (In any case they are now protected by Statute and it is an offence to pick them).

THE FIGHTING FUND

We need more money to conduct this long drawn out fight. Please Help and donate to the "Fighting Fund"
Please either pay-in direct to Barclays Bank,
197/9 New Road Booker, High Wycombe HP12 4RQ into
the Society's No. 2 Account-10178047.
OR -Phone High Wycombe 25665 and
your donation will be collected.