



Woodsmen

The Booker Common & Woods Protection Society

Registered Charity No.289871

Newsletter No. 48 October 1999

Society News

We believe that all areas of the Common are covered by a member of our committee. If you don't know who your local member is, please contact Ron Walker on 444824 or leave a message on his answer phone.

The committee have met twice since the AGM in May. The AGM was poorly attended due to conflict with a particularly significant European Cup match. With the football season creeping steadily into summer, we hope to make a change to our AGM Wednesday meeting for something more accommodating to our members. We take this opportunity to again congratulate and thank Sally Wright from WDC who was our guest speaker on waste and waste disposal. Some of her statistics were quite frightening e.g. in UK every 9 months we produce enough waste to fill Lake Windermere, and the average family uses 6 trees worth of paper a year. Her basic message was "try to treat rubbish as a resource" not waste.

The constitution of the committee remains the same as a result of the AGM. We do feel, however, that although there is no complacency, fresh faces and attitudes are required. Anyone who can spare the time and energy is invited to attend a committee meeting to contribute.

The subjects discussed at these meetings, and the decisions reached by the committee comprise the majority of this newsletter.

Committee Actions.

Tony Hall attended a meeting of the Chiltern Commons group at Nettlebed Common on 15th May. This is a common almost 6 Kms from north to south of Nettlebed protected by act of Parliament since 1906 and administered by Nettlebed and District Commons Conservators, in close association with BBONT. His report has been censored by the committee, but basically it appears that many of the "Commons" groups are so diverse and esoteric that they contribute little of relevance to this society.

Our association with other groups, however, is a cornerstone of societies such as ours, so we do our best to conform. We also are affiliated to The Chiltern Society, High Wycombe Society, The Ramblers and the Open Spaces Society with a watching brief from The Federation of Stadium Communities.

The BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers), for instance, is a useful umbrella group which also arranges our insurance, supplies catalogues of tools, trees and other plants, and an opportunity for working holidays doing conservation throughout UK. (Details again from Ron).

On July 15th, Brian Petty, your JCC (Joint Consultative Committee of Wycombe Air Park) representative, and several other members of the society attended a meeting of the group at the Air Park. A quite extra-ordinary meeting it was; with the newly-elected Chairman of the WDC Transport Group, with associates, attempting to de-select the incumbent chairman of the JCC, then stamping out in high dudgeon with one of his colleagues when the move was thwarted. The chairman of this society felt constrained to write to the councillor concerned, regretting his actions and pointing out the objectives of the said JCC. The remainder of the meeting paled into insignificance.

There are, nonetheless, persistent complaints from members of the public relating to the operation of the Air Park, and WDC, the owner, is obliged to address these. To those who are troubled by the noise, please consider all alternatives to the Air Park, particularly ask yourself "has any ground co-opted for strategic use ever been returned to Green Belt?" This society's representative is Brian, and any long-term operational complaints should be addressed through him to the JCC.

Specific complaints should be made to the Air Park (01494 529261) as soon as possible after the event, with time and aircraft identification or description. If you would like to confirm the recording of, or the reaction to a specific complaint please keep details and pass to Brian.

Environment

Isn't it wonderful? Just when you thought that the motor-cycles were under control - ha ; along come the cars. Yes one was spotted driving in the woods recently, red BMW with a black spoiler - no registration unfortunately. He escaped on to Highwood Avenue, just by the electricity pylon (good driving), which we thought was restricted by bollards - it will be.

Since this incident a number of bollards have been replaced, filling up the holes which have been used as access for vandals, dumpers, car-thieves and pyromaniacs. If you are aware of any gaps which may constitute a threat, please inform Ron. (Bear in mind that we are currently unable to maintain posts adjacent to the highways due to lack of insurance cover and on instruction from WDC). We still have a number of re-cycled posts. A new sign-post was recently put in at the Arundel Road end of the common and later removed by vandals. We will be returning it to its proper place. Unfortunately this type of vandalism is still prevalent, and until attitudes change to make it socially unacceptable (as has happened with drinking and driving), then maintenance must continue. There seems little awareness that this is everyone's common and if we don't use it properly, we lose it. The re-cycled posts, alternatively, could be converted into a set of stocks.

Dog-mess continues to be a matter for concern among society members. While we accept the existence of dogs and their necessary habits, we would point out that the common is for the enjoyment of *all* residents, particularly children, for whom the pat and open spaces are becoming a serious health hazard. The committee is looking into the possibility of dog refuse bins to be situated in open areas of the common.

A number of complaints have also been received of vehicles mis-using the bridlepath between Glenister Road and the east of the common, either speeding or over-size vehicles using it as a "rat-run". The chairman has written to the local district councillor echoing this.

Planning

Development continues to be the greatest threat to our environment.

Recently, a developer produced a plan for a further industrial development just to the south of Handy Cross. There is the sop of course - they are going to resolve the current congestion by building more roads. It's regrettable that anyone sitting in front of a PC with an Ordnance Survey programme pushing his standard size "Business Park Plan" block along the country's main arteries and finding a bit of open green space is then allowed to apply for development, notwithstanding it is Green Belt, AONB, SSSI or any other status of protected land, nor whether there is an employment black spot, or any other perceived strategic necessity. Regrettably your local councils, and the rate-payer, are obliged to waste time and money to pay for the protection of that designated land and their local plan.

The MSA enquiry at Hedgerley continues. As yet, there is no decision. We may still have to keep up our guard where our local Green Belt is concerned, though why anyone would want to develop within 5 miles of Handy Cross escapes me. Did I hear someone suggest that it wasn't an MSA but a retail outlet? - well shame on you for saying so. Over 20 years ago, an informed local postulated that soon all of the Green Belt between High Wycombe and Stokenchurch would become nothing but a continuous warehouse and transfer centre, where large vehicles would disgorge goods to smaller vehicles for access to towns and the city of London. This was before anything larger than thirty-two tonners were on the road. I leave you to ponder that. Was he close?

Litter Clear up of the Woodland, Common and Verges

The bi-annual litter collection will be on Sunday 21st November, starting at 10 a.m. As usual bags will be supplied but sound boots/shoes and gloves are essential. More detail will be posted closer to the date.

Subscriptions.

Collecting begins at the end of October. Please give generously.