

Downley Common Newsletter

Quarterly Newsletter of the Downley Common Preservation Society - Issue 4. September 1997

The Travellers

As you all will be aware, the Common was invaded by travellers on Sunday, 17 August in 15 vehicles with 15 caravans who encamped on the cricket pitch and proceeded to indulge their usual habits of making a mess. Naturally, the local residents, together with the police and the Dashwood Estate, reacted rather rapidly, such that by Monday evening they had all moved out. One of the travellers was heard to ask if there was a local stream or river where they could get some water. It was pointed out that he was in fact on top of a hill and he would be more successful if they went down to the bottom of the hill. Perhaps this suggestion was successful in inducing them to leave, for they were next heard of in Hughenden Park, next to the stream.

Their visit has however, revived the issue of installing posts around the edge of the Common. As a result of the invasion of their pitches, the cricket and football clubs have now dropped their objection to posts around the cricket pitch. The prevailing opinion seems to be that this action should be taken to prevent a repeat invasion. The suggestion has also been made to install posts along Commonsides, although



John Brandon's Seat

The day after Downley Day, a group of willing volunteers pictured above, gathered to move John Brandon's tree trunk from its starting position outside the Le De to the final spot on the edge of the cricket pitch. With the help of the tractor and large quantities of tea, it was rolled into position and was subsequently inscribed with the words "John Brandon - Woodsman" by Norman Belson.

there is a view that as travellers have not so far camped there, they are not likely to start now. This is a more contentious issue and the Society would like to canvass the opinions of its members on this issue. There is a reply slip at the bottom of the page; if you want your voice to be heard, fill it in and return it to John Willson or Don Murray. This Newsletter was also distributed at the AGM on 1 October 1997.

Downley Day

Downley Day was held on 28 June this year and by general agreement the Society's stall was one of the main attractions on Commonsides, largely thanks to Don Murray who erected a bodger's pole lathe. A long queue of local children formed to each have a turn at turning a chair leg with the proper tools (under close supervision). The queue lasted all afternoon and

Member's Survey Reply Form

Return to John Willson, Woodland View, The Common or Don Murray, 31 Plomer Green Avenue, Downley.

Name

Please indicate the statements below that you agree with:

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. Do not install any more posts on the Common | Yes/No |
| 2. Install posts around the cricket pitch | Yes/No |
| 3. Install posts along Commonsides | Yes/No |

attracted a good number of people to purchase Don's woodturning pieces, much of which was from wood recovered from the common. To all those who supported the society, we thank you.

Bonfire

It's coming up to that time of year again, and as you know, bonfires do grow on trees. So we are appealing for volunteers to help collect wood and transport it to the bonfire site in the middle of the common. It is the Society's intention this year to try and clear some of the brushwood left at the top of the Common adjacent to Naphill. As this is some distance from the bonfire, the more pairs of hands available, the better. Also if you wish to help in other ways, such as in the making of the torches for use in the procession, please contact Mark Wilkinson on 01494 442982, who is coordinating the bonfire event.

Botanical Survey

During this last summer, the Society commissioned a botanical survey of the Common. The purpose of this survey was two-fold; firstly to form the basis of a monitoring programme and secondly to produce a record of the vegetation within Downley Common. The two aims may sound a little contradictory but they are each important in their own right.

Firstly, the species list for each compartment may be used as a

which vegetation changes may be observed over time in an objective fashion.

Such changes are natural, however management of a particular habitat or compartment may aim to stop the succession of scrub, in which case the monitoring system will be able to tell us if the management is working and more importantly whether it is having the desired effect on the vegetation or not.

A comprehensive listing of the species found in each compartment defined by the recent management plan was prepared, the species being recorded using Staces New Flora of the British Isles and an assessment made of whether the species is dominant (D), abundant (A), frequent (F), occasional (O), or rare (R), the so-called DAFOR scale.

Two sites of particular interest were described, being found in compartment 1 (east part of Commonsides) and compartment 4

growth that was out of reach of grazing animals and therefore the oaks were presumably either protected from the animals or they were planted before grazing commenced. If so what was the land used for before grazing. The presence of shallow banks within compartment 1 suggests possible evidence of ploughing, in which case the oaks may have been used as ploughing markers.

Between the bonfire site and the cricket pitch is an area of acid grassland that supports a patch of heather that is under pressure from an invasive area of bracken. It was recommended that the bracken be kept in check to prevent it overwhelming the heather.

Diary

1 Oct 1997, 8.00pm	AGM, Sunnybank Methodist Hall
5 Oct 1997, 10.00am	Bonfire wood collection, Le De
15 Oct 1997, 1.30pm	Bonfire wood collection, Le De
19 Oct 1997, 10.00am	Bonfire wood collection, Le De
26 Oct 1997, 10.00am	Bonfire building, Bonfire site
1 Nov 1997, 10.00am	Bonfire building, Bonfire site
2 Nov 1997, 10.00am	Bonfire building, Bonfire site
5 Nov 1997, 6.30pm	THE BONFIRE
9 Nov 1997, 10.00am	Bonfire clear-up, Bonfire site
19 Nov 1997, 1.30pm	Mid-week working party, Le De
7 Dec 1997, 10.00am	Working party, Le De
17 Dec 1997, 1.30pm	Mid-week working party, Le De
4 Jan 1998, 10.00am	Working party, Le De
7 Jan 1998, 8.00pm	Quarterly Mtg, Sunnybank Methodist Hall

Telephone cables

It's good to see the telephone poles are being removed from the Common and the cables being run underground.

Thank you British Telecom.

Guided Walk

John Willson will be conducting a guided walk for the Wycombe Wildlife Group on 22 November 1997 at 10.00am for about 2 hours. The walk will start at the Le De and will tour the Common and its environs. All are welcome.

source of reference when carrying out management or for general background information and as an education resource for the site. Secondly, the monitoring system is a means by

(around the bonfire site). It was noted that the presence of standard oaks in compartment 1 was quite unusual given that the area was originally used for grazing. The trees were pollarded to produce