

COCKSHERD WOOD
and the
EVERGREEN 2000 TRUST

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COCKSHERD WOOD AND EVERGREEN 2000 TRUST

1. INTRODUCTION

Cocksherd Wood, classified as an ancient woodland, and officially designated as a Local Nature Reserve, is one of seven linked sites, which form a vital biodiversity corridor in northwest Slough.

These sites, which comprise meadows and woodlands, run from the 'Great Western' railway line in the south to Cocksherd Wood on the Berkshire and Buckinghamshire County border in the north, with open countryside and Burnham Beeches beyond.

This green open space is adjacent to dense industrial and residential development and represents the last vestiges of the Burnham Grove Estate remaining in the Borough of Slough.

Evergreen 2000 Trust is a voluntary community initiative, with its roots in the 1960's. Most members of the trust have been actively involved in the management and maintenance of the Cocksherd Wood since the 1960's, however it was officially founded 13 September 1999, and in the process extended the conservation work to include other sites in the local area. Through mergers with other voluntary conservation groups, Friends and Neighbours of Cocksherd Wood (FANs) and the Haymill Valley Volunteers, the Evergreen 2000 Trust is now the sole voluntary conservation group operating in this area.

In addition to Cocksherd Wood (4.85 Ha) these sites include Cocksherd Green (1.67 Ha), Bangle's Spinney (1.80 Ha), Bangle's Green (0.30 Ha), Lynch Valley (5.90 Ha), Lammas Meadow (3.35 Ha) and Haymill Nature Reserve (9.17 Ha) (Appendix I).

These sites now form a circuit of open spaces and woodlands, covering in total an area of 27.04 hectares (66.81 acres) and providing a continuous corridor for easier movement of plant and animal species. The sites are partly linked by the Millennium Nature Trail, a 2000 metre signposted path, providing easier public access to this important amenity for the local population.

Consultation and planning is now taking place to seek Local Nature Reserve status to the whole area, and for this to be conserved as one entity as the Burnham Grove Nature Park (Appendix II).

2. AIMS

The following discussion describes the partnership between Cocksherd Wood and Evergreen 2000 Trust and the efforts to manage and maintain this ancient woodland site for the benefit of the future generations.

3. HISTORY

In the Burnham Parish Title Map/Schedule 1839/42 Cocksherd Wood is marked as belonging to Lower Britwell Farm, which was in the ownership of Britwell Court Estate. Bayley family, tenant farmers of the Lower Britwell Farm, are known to have been farming the land from 17th into 19th century. Records of Britwell Court date back to 14th Century.

By 1842 Lower Britwell Farm, including Cocksherd Wood, was in the ownership of Lord Godolphin (Ninth Duke of Leeds) and had been separated from Britwell Court. The farm was tenanted during this period by William Bayley Junior and formed part of Lord Godolphin's estate together with Baylis House and Stoke Poges Lane and the surrounding area.

Lord Godolphin sold the Lower Britwell Farm in 1895 to Christie-Miller family, by then owners of Britwell Court, so the farm was returned to the original ownership of the Britwell Court estate. In 1920 the farm, now merged with Upper Britwell Farm, was sold by Sidney Richardson Christie-Miller to Edward Clifton Brown of Burnham Grove estate.

E. Clifton-Brown, a merchant banker, had purchased Burnham Grove estate in 1903 (Burnham Grove is nowadays Burnham Beeches Hotel) and since continued to acquire nearby farmland such as the Britwell Farms, Lynch Hill Farm (once part of Lower Britwell Farm), Britwell Court (excluding the main house), Leas Farm and Littlejohns Wood.

On 25th January, 1951 Cocksherd Wood was included in the sale of land by representatives of E. Clifton-Brown to London County Council, who purchased the land under the powers given by 1936 Housing Act. This area formed the basis for the Britwell Housing Estate. Cocksherd Wood remained as an amenity for the estate.

In 1963 London County Council became Greater London Council and in 1979 the authority transferred the Britwell Housing Estate area to Slough Borough Council. (Appendix III).

The influx of new residents in the 1950's and early 1960's to the mainly rural farming community created a variety of problems. The new residents, mainly homeless from Central London, didn't settle easily and there was resentment from local people towards the incomers. During this time the first signs of urban vandalism emerged.

By 1965 the Cocksherd Wood had become a dumping ground of old cars, washing machines, refrigerators, prams and other household rubbish.

Local residents, in conjunction with the West Slough Group Ministry, initiated a survey to establish what form of social activity and facilities were needed to stimulate and interest young people. This survey was conducted by local youth organisations together with a team of boys from Eton College and as a result the first ever Evergreen Project was launched in June 1965 to clean up Cocksherd Wood and the local area (Appendix IV – Selected Press Cuttings).

In spite of individual efforts of local residents, by 1990 Cocksherd Wood was again in danger of falling into 'poor repair'. The Dove House Residents Association initiated the action for a management committee (later known as Friends and Neighbours of Cocksherd Wood, FANs).

