

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010

Dean Forest to wit

Before

At a Special Court of Attachment  
of our Sovereign Lady the Queen at  
The Speech House on the Twenty Second  
day of October in the Fifty Eighth year  
of the reign of our Lady Queen Elizabeth  
the Second by the Grace of God , etc in  
the year of our Lord Two Thousand and Ten  
R. W. Jenkins Esq., J.P.  
Ray Wright, Esq.  
M.V. Bent Esq.

K.G.Stannard Esq., Deputy Surveyor, Forestry  
Commission  
R.W. Davies Esq., F.R.I.C.S., Land Agent,  
Forestry Commission

K. P. Griffin B.A. Solicitor, Steward

Prior to the commencement of the Court, Mr Jenkins was appointed as the Senior Verderer by his colleagues and to replace Mr Watts who sadly had passed away since the last Court.

The Court stood for a minute of silence as a mark of respect and in memory of Melville Watts.

The Senior Verderer then welcomed to the Court the High Sheriff, Ceri Evans and his wife, Sheila. He thanked them for gracing the Court with their presence.

## **APOLOGIES**

None.

## **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Court held on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010 were approved after slight amendment and signed.

## **MATTERS ARISING**

### **(1) Election of a Verderer**

The Steward produced a draft Procedure for Election and this was discussed by the Court.

### **(2) Speech House**

Mr Davies advised that the new tenants had decided to keep the beams black.

**(3) Cannop**

Mr Davies advised that the planning permission for the bridge had been obtained and the work would be commenced in 2011.

**(4) Sheep Liaison Group**

The Court heard that the former Queen's Remembrancer, Senior Master Robert Turner had now taken up the post as Chairman of the Group.

**MINERALS**

Mr Davies reported that the micro-hydro system at Cannop Ponds was in course of construction and was due to be completed in November.

He added that although small specialist quarries were doing well, the large quarries had been severely hit by the lack of road-building and operations had been scaled down accordingly.

**COMMONING**

The Deputy Surveyor reported that there had been a steady stream of complaints received by the Commission since the last Court.

He added that he had attended the Sheep Liaison Group meeting chaired by Robert Turner and attended by Mark Harper, MP. He advised that the discussions had been very interesting and progress had been made

The Court heard that 22 unmarked sheep had been lifted in Bream and impounded, in a joint operation with Trading Standards. The owner, Mr Awdry, had paid the required sum to have the sheep released. In addition, 17 sheep had no ear tags and the owner was cautioned. All the animals have now been marked.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that the monies obtained from the impounding would be used by the Commoners Association in connection with the removal of dead sheep from the roadside.

Mr Bent commented that the Ruardean Parish Council had approached him regarding the issue of sheep in The Pludds. The Deputy Surveyor advised this was a complex problem, but progress had been made and it would be resolved in time.

**DEER**

The Deputy Surveyor advised that final figures were now available for the year and some 416 had been culled in the Forest District, as well as a reported 56 deaths due to RTAs.

He added that in the present year, some 81 deer had been culled and there had been 31 RTA deaths to date.

## **BOAR AND FERAL PIGS**

The Court heard 60 animals had been culled so far in the current financial year, in accordance with the management strategy to keep the population to 90 or under. He added that it is believed the population is presently in the region of 250 animals.

The Deputy Surveyor commented that culling itself is challenging as high seats cannot be used and the present economic conditions prevent additional resources becoming available, although rangers have been called in from other regions to assist.

The Court was advised that trapping is considered to be the best option and the Commission's research department is involved in technical development work to produce improved designs. He added that keeping boar numbers down is a major problem and there is no shortage of food for the animals, following an exceptional acorn crop. However, there has been significant damage to roadside verges as the boar need grubs and other insects to balance the acorn intake

Mr Bent mentioned the damage to gardens and verges in the Ruardean Hill area. He produced letters of complaint from various members of the public and added that some 50 or more animals had been counted at any one time.

## **CINDERFORD REGENERATION FUNDS**

Mr Davies advised that the funds for the proposed development at Cinderford are in doubt due to the economic climate. He added that the parts of the Princess Royal site that had not been developed had been transferred back to the Commission, including the old baths site. This had been demolished and was now a bat roost.

## **DEPUTY SURVEYOR'S REPORT**

### **(1) Phytopthera Ramorum**

The Court heard that significant areas of larch in the South West and in South Wales are being removed. There may have to be sanitation fellings in the Forest.

### **(2) Sculpture Trail**

The Court was advised that the new sculpture, Hill 33, was in place.

### **(3) Forest Holidays**

The development is now fully open and bookings are very encouraging.

### **(4) Public Spending**

There is a recruitment freeze and early retirement scheme in place. The Commission is likely to be significantly restructured and there is a woodland disposals programme. There will be a 5% reduction in funding from central Government, so higher income will be required, including higher car parking fees, to allow work programmes to be delivered effectively.

Bircham Wood near Coleford is on the market for sale, and other woods will be identified for sale in 2011/12 during the Winter.

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Horse Chestnut**

The High Sheriff asked about disease affecting trees and causing bark “bleeding” and defoliation. This is due to bacterial infection spread by moths and appears to be yet another problem caused indirectly by climate change.

### **Verderer’s Election**

The Court heard that the Steward is awaiting certification before the paperwork for the Election can be prepared..

### **Royal Charter**

Mr Bent advised that the copy of Edward 1’s Charter from 1282 will be framed and will be donated to the Court for display in the Court Room.

### **Notepaper**

It was agreed this would be changed after the Election.

## **DATES OF NEXT TWO COURT SITTINGS**

The date for the next Court will be Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011. The following Court date will be the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

The High Sheriff thanked the Verderers for inviting him and his wife to the Court. He commented that the proceedings had been both interesting and informative, and he was comforted that the Forest was in safe hands. He was presented with a copy of the late Cyril Hart’s “Verderers and the Forest Laws of Dean” by the Senior Verderer.

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Verderers

Deputy Surveyor  
Forestry Commission

Steward