



Woking District Scout Council

[Reg. Charity No. 308258]

BIRCHMERE CAMP SITE

Wisley Common

Map Ref. (OS 187) 074593

Campsite Warden: Terry Oakley



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The idea of writing an article about a small District Scout Campsite could give the opinion that there probably wasn't really too much to talk about. Well Birchmere is a small District Scout campsite and in the year 2009/2010 there was a great deal to talk about. In fact this year was probably one of the most important years for quite a while!

Our most important event of the year was the finalisation of our long overdue Lease agreement with our landlords Surrey Wildlife Trust. This gives Woking District a campsite in a leasing agreement that expires on 31st May 2029. Also it gives the security that will allow for long term improvements and a much greater chance of financial support from grants. Our solicitors over these protracted matters were Morrison's solicitors and we would like to thank them for their long term support and advice throughout these negotiations.

Birchmere has been a campsite since 1978 and throughout this time it has had to live with the potential danger of overhead high voltage power lines that crossed our field. For many years Campsite Management Committees have suggested that they be repositioned or removed but with no success. However, following a recent campaign, we finally obtained the support of EDF to do this. Not only were the overhead lines submerged but also the supply was modernised and upgraded for the future. Fortunately, we were also able to lay new water supply piping to the field alongside the new power cable so that the opportunity now existed for greater amount of water use in future years. With a new long lease and a new modern energy and increased water supply the management committee considered they were building a strong base for future improvements.

So, on the face of it, a very busy year for the campsite. We are, however, very fortunate to have an enthusiastic and effective Warden team. In Terry Oakley, our Warden and Duncan Flack, Assistant Warden, the site runs smoothly on a day to day basis. There are always parts that stop working or bits that get lost or broken but Terry and Duncan manage to find the time and the enthusiasm to repair, replace or maintain.

The Campsite Management Committee is also second to none. It is good for the District to have such a team that work so well together to update and improve campsite facilities. However, a special thank you also should go to Tony Knight, our secretary, and more importantly Birchmere's campsite booking contact. Tony is the man behind all the paperwork and the campsite simply could not run without his input. Incidentally, he was also a major activist when it came to pushing for the overhead power line removal.

A campsite such as ours relies heavily on out of District bookings for extra income so getting our name known in distant places can be of major importance. Our new web site designed and run by Ivor Morgan is certainly a brilliant way of getting our "Proper little Campsite" known. It is a totally professional site and, together with our previously printed very classy brochure, the campsite is very effectively shown to its potential visitors. Visit www.birchmerescoutcampsite.org, you'll see what I mean. It's so good!

Now that we could think in terms of at least another twenty years on the site should we wish, the opportunity for major campsite improvements now existed. The DRT building, for example, came to Birchmere after a long life as a school building in Guildford. Concern was expressed that it really failed to match up to modern ideals of heat insulation and health and safety and scouting rules. Two independent surveys were undertaken of the building and both offered the opinion that it was outdated, inadequate and should be replaced. It is the long term aim of the committee to substitute this old wooden building with a larger and more modern structure which will conform

Chairman: Birchmere Campsite Management Committee

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more closely to scouting and safety rules. The Committee has decided at the same time to seek to build a new toilet/shower facility for ladies to use and to reuse their existing structure for scout showers.

Other ideas for the future are to improve and replace the waste water management of the campsite by changing the existing cess pit with an ecologically more sound and cheaper to run, septic tank. A generous grant was obtained from the Youth Capital Fund assisting us with this arranged improvement and our thanks must go to Surrey County Council and to Sam Croft for his successful application. Our aim is also to improve the activities available for campsite visitors with the provision of a greater choice of pioneering equipment and to make available at the campsite more wet weather indoor games. We plan also to introduce Woking District Scouts to Geocaching with the proposed purchasing of new hand held GPS systems. The campsite activities will also be improved with further orienteering activities in and around the campsite. These new campsite activities have been funded with a successful grant application from the High Sheriffs Award scheme for which the committee is very grateful.

That really seems quite a lot to write about for a year at a small District Scout Campsite!

Thank you for your continued support.

Richard Mackie
Birchmere Campsite Chairman,
20th May 2010