

Site Visit Report

Date of visit:	07/06/2013	Name of site	Rogate Parish Council (Various sites detailed below)
Site Location:	Rogate, Fyning, Rake	Grid reference: (Centre of wood)	SU 818248 Terwick Common Wood SU 813250 Fyning Common SU 804275 Rake Park SU 800275 Rake View Point SU 808236 Garbitts Wood
Representative on site:	Nil	Contact details:	Rogate Parish Council clerkrogateparishcouncil@hotmail.co.uk
Site Owner:	Rogate Parish Council / Woodland Trust	Contact details:	As above
Purpose of visit:	Initial site visit to assess the condition of woodland holdings in order to make recommendations for future management.		

Site Description

Rogate Parish Council has four woodland holdings totalling 9.62 ha in addition the Woodland Trust site of Garbitts Wood is also closely associated with the village of Rogate (this is a 2.45 ha young mixed broadleaf woodland). In order to give a detailed assessment of the condition of all these woodland holdings they will be reported on separately in the following report. The maps at Appendix 1 and 2 show the location of all the woods.

Terwick Common Wood. 5.59ha of mixed broadleaf and conifer woodland directly northeast of Terwick Common Estate. The majority of the wood is mature Scots Pine with an understory of Sweet Chestnut coppice and mixed broadleaf species including Silver Birch, Hazel, Holly and some Oak and Rowan. The site has some interesting archaeological features including wood banks and sunken paths/roads. The wood has a fairly rich understory and in some areas interesting ground flora which is likely to support a diverse range of wildlife. Details of the ground flora and wildlife habitats are limited due to the winter site visit. I can provide more detail from a full site survey in the spring and summer. The site is adjacent to the houses at Terwick Common so it is heavily used by the public for local amenity.

Fyning Common. 2.13ha of Sweet Chestnut and Scots Pine woodland. The trees are all mature and even aged. There is no understory and limited ground flora. The site is used for local public amenity. One of the main features of this site is the circular boundary wood bank. The main concern in this woodland is the over mature and even aged Scots Pine. There is evidence of recent wind throw and likely to be more, thinning the mature trees and allowing new regeneration or planting will improve the overall health of the woodland.

Rake View Point and small wooded park. The holdings in Rake consist of 1.2ha of steep sloping ground off the B2070 road. The site is used as a view point across the valley. It is heavily overgrown with Rhododendron which is suppressing the growth of native trees and flora. I looked at this site in the summer and noted a strong local population of adders. The small triangular wooded park (0.7ha) on the southern edge of Rake is also a Parish holding. This site is half glade/grassland and half native broadleaf woodland. There is evidence that the site is used for local amenity. Both the grassland and woodland do not require much management, however the creation of a small loop trail through the woodland would improve its amenity potential.

Garbitts Wood. 2.45ha of young native mixed broadleaf woodland located centrally within the village of Rogate. The site is owned by the Woodland Trust and designated open access land. It is used by the local public for amenity and by Rogate Primary School as a “Forest School”. The site has a good network of paths, rides and glades. It also has a small pond. The trees are all semi-mature and in need of thinning in order to allow the space to reach maturity. The site also supports a strong population of badgers. The key concern with this site is the access from the village. Currently the only access is from Garbitts Lane which forces users to walk through the village, crossing the A272 several times. The public use of this wood could be improved with the creation of a new access point off Habin Hill Road, directly opposite the school playing fields.

Summary of past management

Owners Objectives:

I have assumed the following management objectives for the woodland holdings. Should these vary considerably from the Parish Councils intentions I will be happy to amend and tailor the management advice accordingly:

- Ensure the longevity of the woodland holdings as an amenity resource for the community.
- Where possible keep management costs to a minimum through the sale of any profitable firewood and timber.
- Improve the wildlife habitat and biodiversity of the sites to link with the wider wooded landscape.
- Improve the access to Garbitts Wood to facilitate greater use by the school and local community.

Past Management:

From the condition of the woodland sites it is unlikely that they have been managed other than access maintenance in the last 10-15 years. The mature conifers at Fyning Common and Terwick Common Wood have been thinned in the past and are reaching maturity in terms of timber potential. The Sweet Chestnut coppice at Terwick Common also shows some evidence of historic management. I have checked with the Forestry Commission and there are no records of any previous grant applications or felling licences. Garbitts Wood has been actively managed by the Woodland Trust through tree planting and the management of rides and glades. However it shows no evidence of thinning works and the current stock of young trees will need to be thinned in the near future

Suggested Future Management

Recommended Action:

The Parish woodland holdings are diverse in terms of location, species and use. I strongly suggest that all the woodland holdings are assessed together in one Woodland Management Plan. This plan will assess the current condition of the woods and forecast future management, costs and returns in line with the Parish Councils objectives. By managing all the holdings together the Council will be able to better take advantage of grant funding opportunities and potentially save on any contractor costs with a greater economy of scale. The good news is that there is funding available from the Forestry Commission which should cover the cost of commissioning a forester to write a detailed management plan.

Following the commission of a management plan, I recommend that the Council apply for

English Woodland Grant Scheme funding under a Woodland Improvement Grant. This grant would contribute towards clearing the Rhododendron at the Rake view point and any thinning works to the remaining woodlands.

Finally in the long term it is worth considering if the Parish Council wish to manage Garbitts Wood as well. It is a community asset and I recommend that the parish council leases it from the Woodland Trust for a peppercorn rent. This will allow the Parish to manage it in accordance with its own objectives, it will also bring the Parish holding over 10 ha which is the likely cut off for future Forestry Commission funding in 2015. In my conversations with the Woodland Trust they are very supportive of this idea and will continue to offer management support if necessary.

Potential funding options and link to foresters

The following is a brief summary of the Forestry Commission Grants that may be applicable:

Woodland Planning Grant. Supports the costs associated with the preparation of a Management Plan. £1000 one off payment claimed retrospectively. The grant is for the commission of a management plan. There is no enduring contract or requirement to follow any recommended actions within the plan.

Woodland Improvement Grant. This grant will potentially be most beneficial. It is designed to support capital projects such as track maintenance and uneconomic thinning operations, deer control and the removal of Rhododendron. Each grant is site specific depending on the planned works. The good news is that as a woodland holding within the National Park, the woods will attract funding up to 80% of capital costs.

Register the Land. In order to apply for any European funding such as Forestry Commission Grants the Parish woodland holdings must be registered on the Rural Land Register. This is a simple process, which takes on average 4-6 weeks to complete. Further details can be found on the <https://www.gov.uk/register-land-rural-land-register/how-to-register-land-or-change-a-registration>

I am also happy to help with the registry paperwork if necessary.

South Downs National Park funding. Garbitts Wood is designated open access land, improvement to open access land can be supported by the National Park. For the creation of the new access I have secured a grant of £4,800.

Some forest agents that may be suitable to commission a woodland management plan:

RC Forestry
Roger Coolbear
Email: rcforestry@gmail.com
Tel: 07702 272847

Mr Ben Chick
Managed Acres
Tel: 0845 6806 735
Email: ben.chick@managedacres.com
Web: www.managedacres.com

Mr Kevin Penfold
Penfold's Woodland & Environmental Land Management Services
Tel: 07780 450945 or 01428 724868
Email: info@penfolds.org.uk
Web: www.penfolds.org.uk

Mr Roger Fitter
Tel: 01428 644538 or 07885 444669

Links and Further Reading

Small Woods Association - <http://smallwoods.org.uk/> - a useful site for management information and general reference.

MyForest – Useful site for woodland management info and to search for local contractors and potential timber buyers - <http://www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/>

Woodlots – Useful site for local contractors and timber markets - <http://www.woodnet.org.uk/woodlots/>

English Woodlands Grant Scheme – The Forestry Commission website gives more detail on the grants available to the Parish - <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/infd-6dccen>

This document is a summary of my initial findings and recommendations. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch, I remain happy to help in any way that I can.

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