

HERTFORDSHIRE GARDENS TRUST
LOCAL LIST: **DACORUM**

Present Name of Site
BOXMOOR

Historic Name

Parish/Town: **Hemel Hempstead and Bovingdon**

National Grid Reference of Principal Building: TL045 161

Present Area (approximate) 460 Acres

Brief Description

The Boxmoor Trust started in 26 April 1594 with the conveyance of meadow land in the Bulbourne Valley to 67 feoffees to hold in trust for the inhabitants of Bovingdon and Boxmoor. This safeguarded the grazing rights of the inhabitants on land which had been part of the College of the Bonhommes at Ashridge until c.1539. The Boxmoor Act of 1809 set up the modern Trust with 12 active trustees to manage the land for grazing and, increasingly, public amenity. A major concern now is the maintenance of the natural habitats found in the Bulbourne Valley in which most of the moors lie.

Land holdings have fluctuated over the years with 25 acres of common ground being purchased by the Grand Junction Canal Company in 1794 which crossed the land. Land was also purchased by the railway in the 19th century which also crosses the land. Further land was lost to the New Town and the Water Gardens (q.v.) and Kodak were built on Trust meadows in the 20th century. In recent years the Trust has increased its holdings by the lease, then freehold purchase (in 2003) of 400 acres of the Westbrook Hay estate (q.v.) and by the purchase of 45 acres of the old Bovingdon Brickfields in 2000.

The land is managed as a public amenity and for grazing rare breeds such as the Norfolk Horn sheep and Belted Galloway cattle. Sports such as Boxmoor and Hemel Hempstead Cricket Clubs, the Rugby Club and the Golf Club have grounds on Trust lands.

The Trust owns cottages and other properties in Hemel Hempstead, Boxmoor and Bovingdon, some of which have metal Grazing Rights Plaques still attached to them. These Grazing Plaques were put up as a result of the 1809 Act and were affixed to the houses in 1834.

Trees: Historically the Bat Willow (*Salix Caerulea* (female)) has proved an important element in the landscape as it was grown commercially for the production of cricket bats. English Willow being particularly suited to cricket bats over 300,000 bats were made until the onset of disease and the losses caused by the Great Storm of 1987. On Boxmoor willow sets were planted near the Plough Inn at Moor End in 1928 and by 1931 there were 300 trees next to the watercress beds at Two Waters. There are still a number of willows both on the moors and on the banks of the canal.

Avenues: These are the main design element on Boxmoor and several have been planted **Coronation Avenue.** 40 Horse Chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) were set from Picton's Bridge to the Three Blackbirds for the 1937 coronation of George VI.

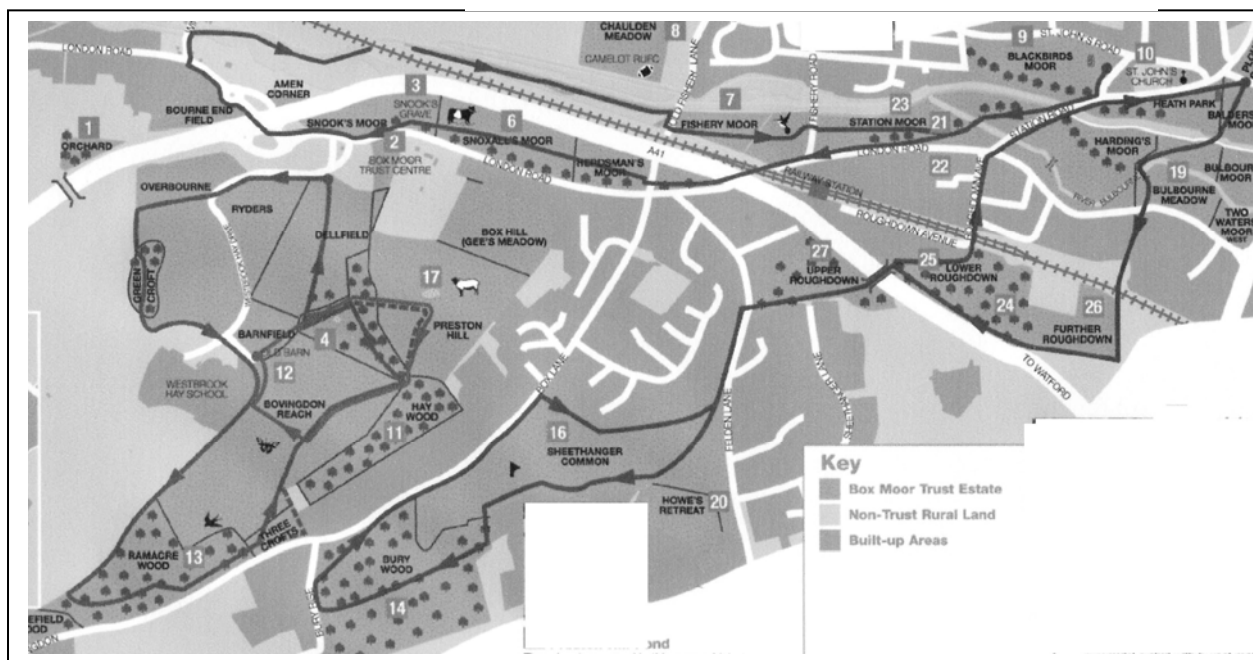
Avenue for Queen Mother. 80 red and white chestnuts were placed alongside the old A41 leading to Bourne End to mark the 80th birthday of the Queen Mother in 1980.

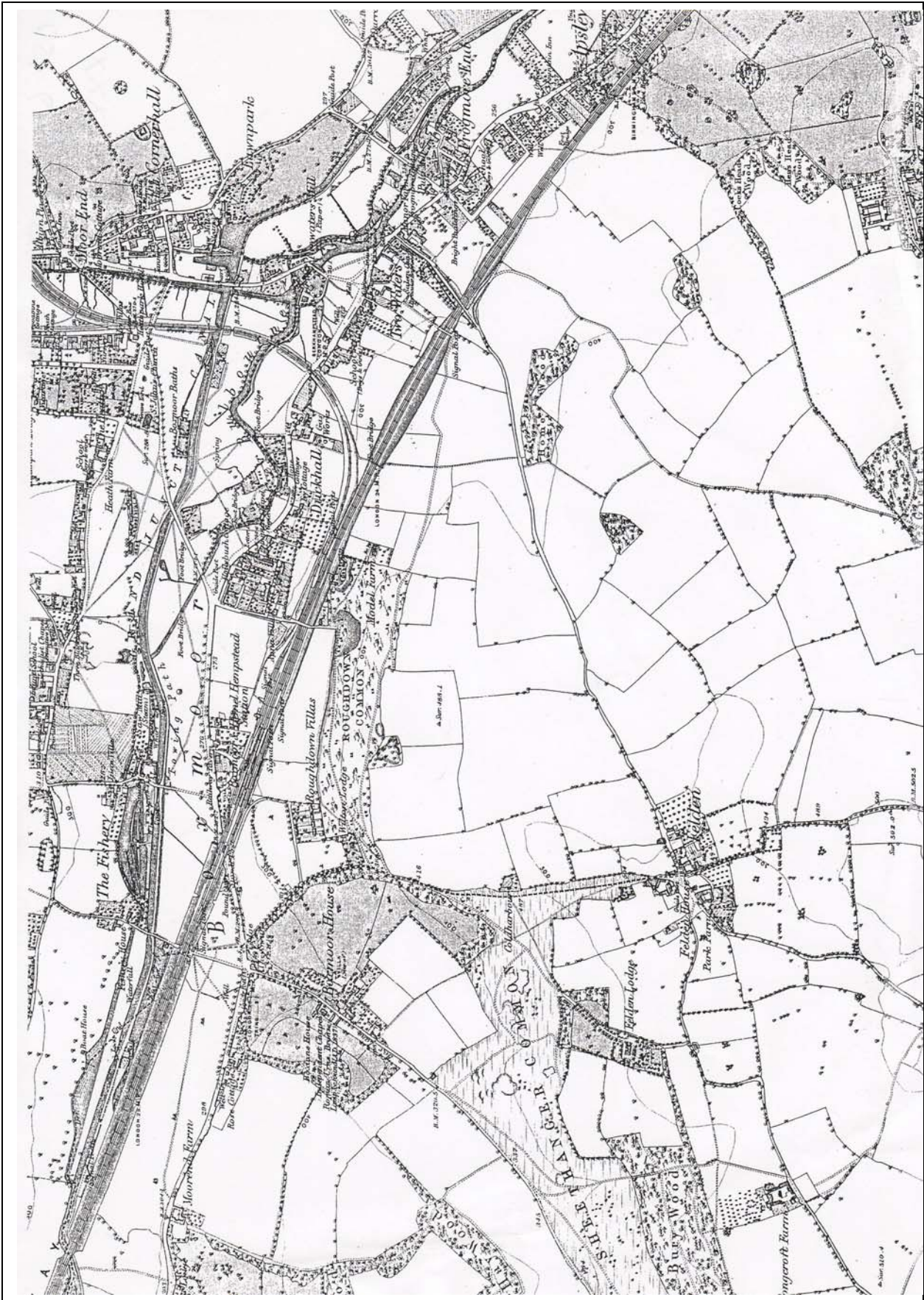
An existing copse of mixed varieties adjoining Station Road was dedicated on the occasion of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in 1977.

Orchard: An orchard has been set up on land at Westbrook Hay for old species such as Lane's Prince Albert and Oakland Seedling apples which were raised at John Lane's Potten End Nurseries in the 19th century.

Important people associated with site:
Assessment of significance. A historic open space with the chestnut avenues giving a semi-formal entrance to Hemel Hempstead along the Bulbourne Corridor from Berkhamsted and Kings Langley. Together with Gadebridge Park (q.v.) this open area defines and provides a semi-rural setting for the new town of Hemel Hempstead and a transitional area from urban to countryside.
Principal Uses: Open access, sports, grazing.
Public Access/Rights of Way: A network of footpaths and bridleways, provided by the Trust cross the moors, which are open land.
Designations: Grazing Rights Plaques: Grade II and II* in Bovington Lampost and Pump at Boxmoor Hall: Grade II Registered Common Land (Boxmoor and Dew Green Commons) Landscape Character Area: 118 Lower Bulbourne Valley
Sources of information: Hands, R&J (1994) <i>The Book of Boxmoor</i> , Baron. Hands, J&R (2004) <i>Royalty to Commons: 400 Years of the Boxmoor Trust</i>
Site visited by: Hertfordshire Gardens Trust Date: 2009

Boxmoor Trust Estate Plan





Ordnance Survey , First Edition, 1897 Sheet XXXIII Scale: 6" to 1 mile