

Birchmere Campsite 2015/2016

“A Proper Little Campsite”

Birchmere may, to some, be a little District campsite compared to other much larger, local sites. However that might not be such a bad thing as, over the past year, it has been visited by over 3000 young people. To ensure that the campsite is a valued experience for them, the campsite is managed by an active Management Committee. However this team of enthusiasts constantly has to deal with unexpected situations to ensure that the campsite provides the best possible outdoor experience.

Take Woolgars Wood, for example. This is an area of woodland at the end of the camping field. After some heavy storms there was considerable tree damage. So much so that our landlords stated that they could not afford to deal with this situation and that it should be shut to users unless we took over the management of this area. After four visits from tree surgeons this is once again open to us.

Our long term wish is that the campsite is the safest and best experience possible and so after our past major improvements, we turned our attention to the DRT Activity Room. This is an old second-hand wooden school room from Guildford. A set of plans have been drawn after much consultation regarding its replacement. However it is the District Executive and Management Committee's consideration that to obtain grants and donations and to put District finances into the project we need a longer lease with Surrey Wildlife Trust, along with an option of continued use after this. At the moment this is not in place and we are seeking these rights with our landlords or with the land owners, Surrey County Council.

Bookings continue to be very positive with pretty well all week ends booked. We are now looking to increase our mid-week regular bookings and as a result we now have a Pre-school woodcraft group as regular users. Other regular midweek group bookings are being sought.

The campsite would certainly not be so well used if it were not for the enthusiasm of the management Committee and our team of Wardens. Duncan Flack and Gary Chessman have, with the help of present and past members, spent many weekends at the site making necessary improvements, deepening ditches, erecting safety fences, laying planings in areas of busy use or cutting the grass in that fast growing field. Our on-line bookings are again professionally handled by Judi Oakley and the campsite annual newsletter and web site kindly managed by Andy Dolan and Ivor Morgan. Andy is also the site Health and Safety adviser and regularly makes constructive suggestions for change. The campsite activities of Orienteering, Geocaching and Pioneering are managed by the committee and, in particular, may I thank Robin Dougherty for constantly marshalling the Orienteering to keep the many courses up to a good working standard. Nigel Longley kindly tested all our portable electrical appliances and our overworked and overheating tractor is regularly serviced by Alan Lopez. Finally our thanks go to John Brown for his help in advising the campsite on all things financial and to Jean Smith for the use of The Resource Centre for meetings.

So, as you can see, to make this campsite what it is, a huge amount of time and energy is needed. Thank you to all those who make this campsite what it is...

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Richard Mackie, Birchmere Campsite Chairman.