

Dr N Gilbert
Wychbury
Great Witcombe
Gloucestershire
GL3 4TS

Miss Burge

01452 425522

573/11/101(1)

15th November 2005

E-Mail: sarah.burge@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Dear Dr Gilbert

**Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Section 53
Application for a Modification Order for an Additional Public Footpath
through Witcombe Farm, Parish of Great Witcombe**

Thank you for your letter and enclosures received on the 14th of November 2005. Your comments will be included in the report that will be presented to the Commons and Rights of Way Committee.

Regarding consultations, there is a specific list of people and organisations we consult depending on what the Modification Order Application is for. When there is an application to add a new footpath we consult the Parish and District Councils of whatever Parish and District the claimed path lies in, the County Councillor for that area and the Ramblers Association. We generally do not consult other Parish Councils other than those directly affected by the application. Although we welcome any comments and include all comments in our report, the decision as to whether an order is made to add the path to the Definitive Map is solely based on the evidence, and should not be affected by opinions.

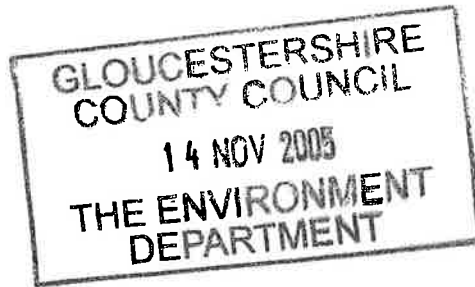
A copy of the photographs and list of problems with the alternative footpaths that you enclosed with your letter has been passed to Dave Graham, Area Officer for West Tewkesbury and Gloucester, who deals with such complaints.

I will keep you updated as the application progresses. If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Burge
Public Rights of Way

Wychbury
Great Witcombe
Glos. GL3 4TS
11/11/05



Dear Miss Burge,

RE: Application for a modification order for a footpath through
Witcombe Farm. Ref: 573/11/101(1)

I have been sent a letter, which you posted to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Their Reserves Warden, Mr. Pete Bradshaw has replied in the form of a Public Path Evidence Form (which I had sent to him previously). I don't know why he has sent it to me but I am forwarding it on to you.

I am aware that Great Witcombe Parish have been asked for their opinion on this proposal for a Public Right Of Way and I wonder whether the neighbouring parishes of Brockworth and Badgeworth will be consulted, on the grounds that many of the people submitting evidence, and others who walk to the reservoirs, come from those parishes and therefore ought to have a chance to give a view. Indeed, some of them live closer to the reservoirs than some of the residents of Great Witcombe.

When I submitted the Public Path Evidence Forms I did not include a letter because I was told that a decision would be made solely on the evidence, rather than on opinion. However, since opinions are being sought from various bodies I would like to include a letter in support of the proposed right of way and some photographs and pamphlets, which I enclose.

Thank you

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Nick Gilbert

Wychbury
Great Witcombe
Glos. GL3 4TS

██████████
11/11/05

Dear Miss Burge,

Supporting letter for the application for a modification order for a public right of way through Witcombe Farm Ref: 573/11/101(1)

This issue has only arisen because myself, my family and other people in the village and beyond have been told that we can no longer walk a route that we have hitherto taken without hindrance for over thirty years.

This access took place on many hundreds of occasions and with the full knowledge of the landowners and without any objection by them.

The significance of the closure of this road to some people (but not all) is that the alternative routes are sometimes difficult or impassable for myself and others, due to any combination of mud and groundwater, overgrown styles or gateways, and boisterous horses, and are practically impossible for the elderly or less able. (See enclosed photographs)

Of the forty-eight people who have completed a public path evidence form to testify to their use of this way, twenty are over the age of sixty-eight, most of these ladies. Many of them find the alternative routes impossible and are therefore prevented from accessing the reservoirs.

It has been said that the landowner may allow needy cases discretionary permission. This puts people who are physically limited in a disadvantageous and potentially humiliating position (needy) which they would not be in if there was a public right of way.

The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust warden has stated in his evidence that, "GWT has a right of access through our agreement with Severn Trent. However our members have been refused access".

The GWT was established at the reservoirs in 1971 and at one time they made information available about the reservoirs history, flora, fauna and bird life. I enclose copies of two old pamphlets. They also moored nesting trays for Grebes in the reservoirs. These have now disappeared, and the reservoirs are not featured on The GWT website. One can hardly blame them from losing interest if access is made difficult for them.

With regard to the owners contention that a public right of way would affect privacy: there are so many people using the stables and fishing facilities that the footpath itself can hardly be described as affording privacy even if it is not a public right of way.

The argument that granting public access along the road would cause a security issue is difficult to sustain because I cannot imagine that prospective burglars would be in the slightest bit interested whether the roadway is designated as a public right of way or not.

The insurance and safety issue is puzzling since, once again, there are so many people using the roadway and stables anyway that one wonders how a few more people would make any difference and it begs the question: Why is safety and insurance not a problem for those people that the owner decides to allow through at present? The question also arises as to why these were not considered problems over the last thirty years and more?

Furthermore, in allowing some people to use this route, but at the same time preventing others, I feel that the landowner is acting in a discriminating way and, it is only by applying to make this a public right of way, in perpetuity, that one can ensure equality.

Enclosures: photographs taken by myself at various points along the alternative routes, demonstrating their hazards and impassability at times. Also; copies of GWT pamphlets as mentioned above.

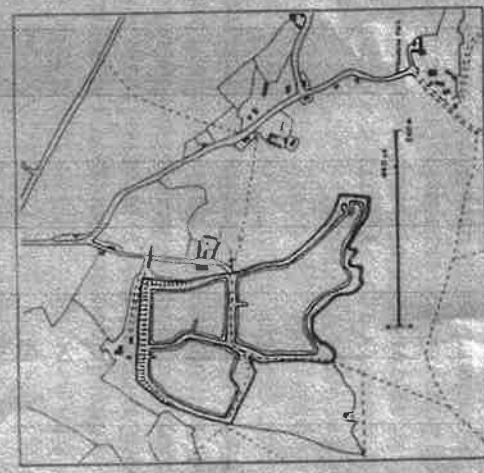
Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.



Gloucestershire
Wildlife Trust

**How to get to
Witcombe Reservoirs Nature Reserve**
Witcombe Reservoirs are near Brockworth, Gloucester. Follow the OLD A417 to the Twelve
Belis Pub, turn right for Birdlip. Do not take cars beyond farm entrance. Footpaths always
open but permit needed from Trust for rest of Reserve.



Witcombe Reservoirs
Map Ref: ST0600151
A Free Handbook
covering Water Birds,
Semi-Palmipedes, Amphibians,
Insects, Mammals, Reptiles,
Fish, and the
Habitats of the
Reservoirs
Book
Purchase Agreement with Severn-Tem
Water
Labels: Hooley, Twelve Belis, Great
Witcombe, Whitbread

*The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has over 80 Nature Reserves covering all the
major habitat types in the county. The majority of these are open to the public and
are marvellous places for young and old alike to discover the excitement and beauty of
nature and to remind ourselves of what we are losing. Our Nature Reserves
Handbook can be purchased from the Conservation Centre.*

The Wildlife Trust is a Charity which depends entirely on
members to continue its work of conserving wildlife
habitats and providing wildlife events. Please ask for a
membership leaflet - **we need your support!**

*Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Dulverton Building, Robinswood Hill
Country Park, Reservoir Rd, Gloucester GL4 6SX
Tel. 01452-383333 Fax 01452-383334*

The Wildflowers of Witcombe Reservoirs Nature Reserve



Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Dulverton Building,
Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Rd, Gloucester
GL4 6SX Tel. 01452-383333



The Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation is registered in England as a Charity No. 232580

GLOUCESTERSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST

WITCOMBE RESERVOIRS NATURE RESERVE

Witcombe Reservoirs were built in the 1860's and are owned by Severn Trent Water. They have been held as a Nature Reserve by the Trust since 1971 and are of particular importance for breeding and wintering waterfowl. There is a fine invertebrate fauna, as well as reptiles, amphibians and fish. The grassy banks of the Reservoirs contain many flowers typical of neutral grassland.

COMMON WILDFLOWERS FOUND IN THE RESERVE

some information on families, names, history and usage.

Self-heal (Mint family)

Its signature "was the hooked upper lip of the flower - a healer of wounds. Known as the "Carpenters herb".

Hedge woundwort (Mint family)

From the ancient Greeks onward, used to treat wounds and stem bleeding.

Bugle (Mint family)

A medieval cure-all to deal with stabs, ulcers and broken bones. Also helped with the delirious tremblings brought on by excessive drinking. Has been described as one of the mildest but best narcotics in the world. None of the foregoing have been tested by the author!

White dead-nettle (Mint family)

An important food source for bees, especially early in the year, and they in turn pollinate the flower. The flowers should prevent any confusion with the similar, but quite unrelated, nettle.



Bee orchid

Looks as if a bee is resting on the flower, and gives off the scent of a female bee, thus encouraging a male bee to mate with it. In doing so, the pollen is transferred to the bee's head, and then on to another flower.

Common spotted orchid

Attracts a variety of insects to the sugary liquid in the spur of the flower, getting pollen on their heads in the process.

Pyramidal orchid

Twayblade (orchid family)

"Tway" is an archaic form of "two" (leaves).

Common mouse-ear (Pink family)

Gets its name from the short downy hairs on the leaves, which make them feel like a mouse's ear.

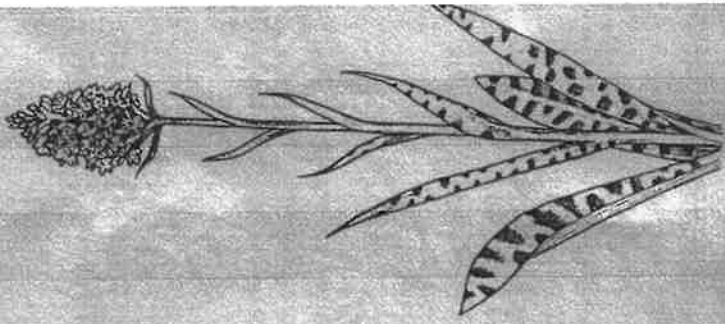
White campion (Pink family)

Greater stitchwort (Pink family)

Its signature** is based on the fact that its stems snap easily, and so it was thought that it must help heal broken bones. The botanical name for the species, *Stellaria holostea*, contains the Greek words *holos* and *osteon*, which mean "whole" and "bone". The common name however comes from the belief that a preparation of stitchwort and acorns taken in wine is a cure for "stitch" in the side. It also, along with poppies and white campion, used to be known as a "thunder flower", in that picking it would cause thunder and lightning!

Bittersweet (Nightshade family)

Also known as woody nightshade, distinguished from its relative deadly nightshade by its red berries, rather than black. However, the berries are toxic nevertheless. Latin name "*Dulcamara*" means "sweet" and "bitter", because it allegedly tastes bitter at first, then sweet. Best left untested!



Tufted vetch (Pea family)
climbs by use of tendrils.

Grass vetchling (Pea family)

Meadow vetchling (Pea family)
Also known as "Lady's slippers"

Birds-foot trefoll (Pea family)
Also known as Lady's shoes and stockings, bacon and eggs, crow's toes, and seventy other localised names.

Black medick (Pea family)
Its name means that it is a plant of the Medes, the ancient Middle Eastern people. Sometimes sold on St. Patrick's Day as Shamrock.

Meadow buttercup
Various medicinal beliefs have been attributed to them, including hanging them around the neck in a bag as a cure for lunacy. This provides an answer to the question of what to give someone for Christmas? Prior to the 18th. century it was known as butterflower or crowfoot.

Meadow cranesbill (Geranium family)
Also known as crowfoot cranesbill.

Cut leaf cranesbill (Geranium family)

Herb Robert (Geranium family)
The leaves and stem turn red in dry conditions or in Autumn, and this forms its signature ** indicating that it was to be used to treat blood disorders and to staunch the flow of blood. The leaves smell, and it is also known as "Stinking Bob"!

Hogweed (Carrot family)
Was used as pig fodder (hence name), and young leaves when boiled are said to taste like asparagus. Look for bright orange soldier beetles feeding and mating on the flowers.

Horsetail
Not a flower at all, but related to the ancient plants that formed the coal-bearing layers 250 million years ago. Also known as "scouring-rushes" as they contain silica and were used to scour pans (before the advent of brillo pads!)

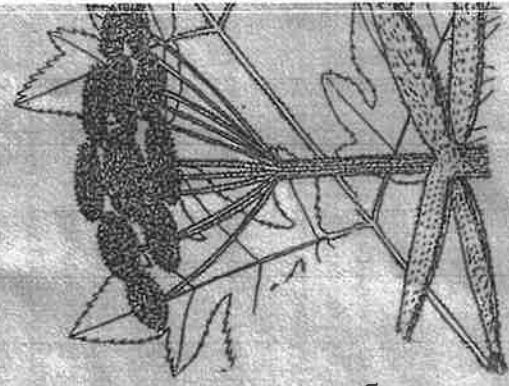
Meadowsweet (Rose family)
In Tudor times was spread, freshly cut, over the floor to mask unpleasant smells. As an infusion it is said to have medicinal properties such as reducing pain and easing fevers, and its sap contains chemicals from the same group as salicylic acid, which is an ingredient of aspirin. Its name may appear to be self-evident, but in fact it was originally "mede-sweete" as it was used to flavour mead, the drink made from fermenting honey. In Yorkshire it was known as "courtship and marriage", due to the fact that it has two contrasting smells - the sweet smell of the flowers being courtship, and the sharp smell of the crushed flowers being the reality of marriage!

Tormentil (Rose family)
In the book "Country Farme" (1616) a powder of the root was recommended to "appease the torment of the teeth".

Silverweed (Rose family)
Its starchy roots, said to taste like spinach, were eaten raw, boiled, baked, or ground to make bread and porridge.

Cuckoo flower (Cabbage family)
Said to resemble St. Peter's bunch of keys to Heaven.

Cats Ear (Daisy family)
Blooms when the cuckoo sings. Also known as "lady's smock".



Goats beard (Daisy family)

Also known as "Jack go to bed at noon" from its habit of having flowers that open early in the day and close around mid-day. In olden times its roots were boiled in milk and eaten - said to be sweet tasting and to have a tonic effect.

Hoary plantain

This is the only plantain that is pollinated by insects, the others relying on the wind. Note the colour and the delicate scent. Also known as "birds meat" and "canary flower", as the birds like the seeds. The flower spike leads to its other name of "rats-tail".

Black knapweed (Daisy family)

The scientific name is "centaurea nigra" because one of the Centaurs of Greek mythology was said to use the plant to heal wounds.

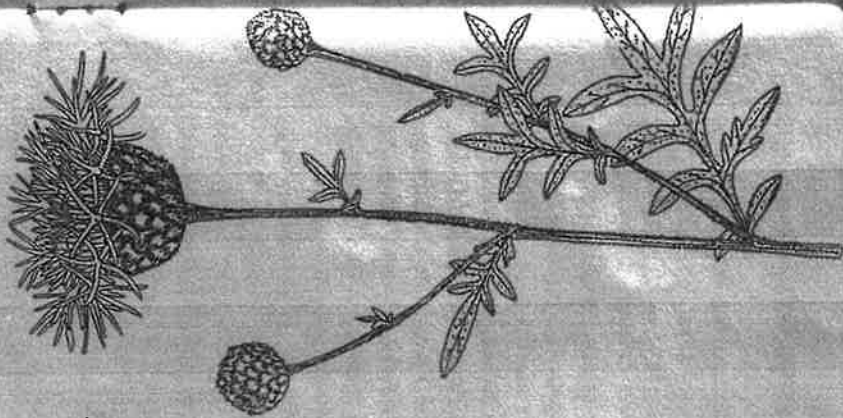
Common cleaver (Bedstraw family)

Also known as goosegrass. The backwards facing hooks on the angles of the stems and the backs of the leaves cleave, i.e. cling to things. During the 16th century it was believed that the juices were a slimming aid, and more recently the seeds were roasted as a coffee substitute (it is related to coffee and quinine). Shepherds were said to have used the stems and leaves to strain hair out of sheep's milk.

Crosswort (Bedstraw family)

Yellow wort (Gentian family)

Flowers close up in the early afternoon. A 17th century herbalist said it was a cure for bad temper and nervous disorders. Again, untested by the author, as those who know him will testify.



Biting stonecrop

Gets its name from its peppery tasting leaves. Has been used to cure ulcers and prevent fevers. Superstition holds that it wards off thunderstorms if planted on the roof of a house.

Comfrey (Borage family)

Can be boiled like spinach and eaten as a vegetable, although health concerns have been expressed. A great favourite of herbalists, and used to be known as "knot bone" and "bone set", as its roots were dug up, ground into a sludge, and packed around the broken limb. This would then set, just like Plaster of Paris. The root, if mixed with ale, was said to cure back pain.

Mallow

As long ago as 8th. century B.C. the shoots were eaten as a vegetable. Various properties have been attributed to it, such as its use as an anti-phrodisiac, and to promote calm and sober conduct. Do you know anyone to test it on? The leaves have also been used to draw out wasp stings. The round fruit leads to many folk names, e.g. billy buttons, cheese flower.

Forget-me-not

Associated with true love, it gained its legendary name from the story of a medieval knight who bent down on a river bank to pick a bunch of flowers for his lady. However, he lost his balance, fell in, and because he was weighed down by his armour could not save himself. As he was drowning he threw the posy to his beloved and cried "forget-me-not"!

"Doctrina of signatures": During the middle-ages there was a widespread belief that every plant bore a God-given outward sign of its value to mankind - its "signature", by which it could be known.



Witcombe Reservoirs Nature Reserve

Witcombe Reservoirs is managed as a nature reserve by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust under agreement with Severn Trent Water. Work carried out on the reserve is done by Gloucestershire Wildlife Management together with the Wildlife Trust Conservation volunteers and by the volunteer members of the Reserve Management Committee. All of these people work together to help improve the wildlife value of the reserve and are committed to caring for the countryside and wildlife of Gloucestershire.

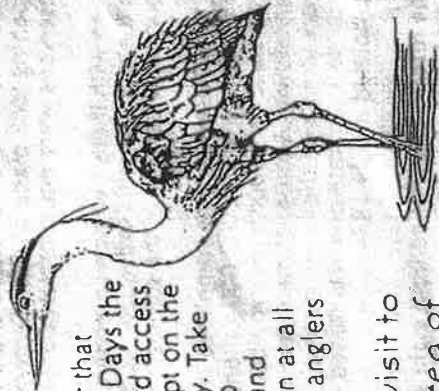
The Reserve Management Committee always welcome new members to their team, if you would like to join them please contact:

Mr Geoff Gidley, Secretary, Witcombe Reservoirs Reserve Management Committee,
C/O Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust,
Dulverton Building, Robinswood Hill Country Park, Reservoir Road, Gloucester, GL4 9SX

Your visit...

Please remember that other than Open Days the area is private and access is restricted except on the Central causeway. Take care around deep unfenced water and supervise children at all times. Beware of anglers back-casting.

Enjoy your visit to this lovely area of countryside.



The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has 80 nature reserves covering all the major habitat types to be found in the county. The majority of our reserves are open to the public. They are marvellous places for young and old alike to discover the excitement and beauty of nature and to remind ourselves of what has been lost from much of our countryside.



The Wildlife Trust is a charity and relies on the support of people like you to continue its valuable work. You can help us to help wildlife by becoming a member of the Trust. For a small annual subscription you can support the conservation of wildlife in Gloucestershire. Please do telephone or write to us for a membership leaflet. **WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.**

The Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
Dulverton Building
Robinswood Hill Country Park,
Reservoir Road,
Gloucester. GL4 9SX
Tel: 01452 383333

AN INTRODUCTION TO Witcombe Reservoirs Nature Reserve

A Wildlife Haven



Great Crested Grebe



Gloucestershire
Wildlife Trust

Witcombe Reservoirs Nature Reserve

In 1971 the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and North West Gloucestershire Water board entered into an 'Agreement' under which the Trust would manage the area as a Nature Reserve. This has continued under Severn Trent Water plc.

The main objective in making the area a Nature Reserve was to conserve the existing aquatic plants and birdlife, to conduct studies and research, and to supply the owner with any copy or list of fauna and flora.



The Great Crested Grebe is of particular interest on the Reserve. Although these shy water birds always inhabit the reserve, their breeding success is irregular. Even so since 1987 at least one or two young birds have been reared each year. The Little Grebe visits the Reserve during the summer and often three or four can be spotted out on the water.

Other residents or visitors to the reserve include Coot, Moorhen, Mallard, Heron, Grey Wagtail, Blue Tit and Yellow Hammer. There is also the usual variety of wintering ducks including Teal, Gadwall, Widgeon and Tufted Duck. Rarer visits are made by Goldeneye, Snipe and Little Owl.



Studies have been carried out on the flora of the reserve and mowing regimes have been changed to encourage more wild flowers. Cowslip, Pyramidal Orchid, Bee Orchid and Cuckoo Flower have all benefited and increased in number. Over 120 flowering plants are to be found on the site.

Ongoing conservation projects help to provide a diversity of habitats from which many different plants and animals will benefit. Recent projects include:

- The siting of nesting boxes for birds.
- The planting of an orchard with old Gloucestershire varieties of fruit trees in Orchard Point meadow.
- The planting of further oak trees in another part of the Reserve.

A Short History of the Site

Gloucester City's water supply, from around 1638, was provided from the Reservoir at Robinswood Hill (site of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust headquarters). Following the Industrial Revolution the general population increased rapidly and by 1850 the population of Gloucester was 17,572. The Robinswood Hill source was now clearly inadequate and in August 1854 a severe drought caused the supply to fail completely. The Water Company was unable to provide a supply even for two days a week. Serious health problems developed and in September of that year a cholera epidemic swept through the city.

New water sources were investigated in late 1854 and three alternatives identified - the River Severn at Over, the Huntley/May Hill catchment and the Witcombe catchment, which resulted in a recommendation that the latter be adopted. As a result, in 1855 Gloucester corporation promoted a bill in parliament for the acquisition of the Water Company and the construction of the Witcombe scheme. One of the first jobs was to divert the springs at Witcombe Brook and lay a 12" diameter main into the existing system.

The Witcombe scheme was slow in starting due to high costs and it was not until 5th November 1858 that construction works commenced on the earth embankment for two reservoirs. Considerable problems were experienced and although the formal opening took place on 20th September 1860 the reservoirs were not completed until 1863.

Even with these two new reservoirs the water supply to the city was still inadequate, as it was restricted to four hours per day in the summer.

A third Reservoir was completed in 1870, giving a total storage of 116,000,000 gallons. In 1873 a start was made on a fourth reservoir but work progressed very slowly. Additional men were employed and work to enlarge the lower reservoir rather than provide a separate one was started - and finally completed in July 1874.

The reservoirs are filled from eight streams, namely Little Witcombe, Witcombe School, Witcombe Court, Copse, Capel's, Roman Villa, Coopers Hill and Abbotts Wood.