

An early history of the Heath, written by the late mother of the current Chairman of the Conservators in 1988

On Therfield Heath there are several burial mounds and the mile ditches, all evidence of early man in the area, and for centuries since the land bordering the Icknield Way has provided summer grazing for sheep.

This grazing was managed by the Lord of the Manor, and a system of stint holders with grazing rights was well established. Manor Court records from 1690 show an agreement to allow 16 sheep to every 20 acres of heath. At the end of the next century 2500 sheep were being grazed between 15 April and 1 November each year. All animals had to be disease free and sheep dipping ditches were ordered to be kept dug out and clean. All sheep had to be removed from the Heath during the hours of darkness.

Not all the Therfield farmers had stint holders' rights. Those who held land under the Lords of the Rectory Manor and of Five House Manor had rights to the Heath. One stint represented four sheep. It was also a unit of voting power when stint holders met to appoint their representatives, later called Conservators.

This system worked well, but in 1795 neighbouring Kelshall was enclosed and its common land vanished.

50 years later Therfield was enclosed under a Public Enclosure Act and the Heath was given definite boundaries with stint holders continuing their rights - BUT Royston was growing and viewpoints differed even amongst families in the village. The Fordhams were anxious to protect the Heath and ensure the expanding town of Royston knew where to stop.

Therfield's parish boundary had already been moved several times to give Royston a larger civil parish.

By the 1880s it became necessary to take steps to further regulate the Heath. A provisional Act was drawn up under the then recently passed Commons Act. Land Commissioners advised stint holders and the Fordham, Phillips and Nash families of their rights.

Letters passed to and fro and often the reply from Mr Moore of the Land Commissioners began:

"In reply to your letter of yesterday..."

In March 1888 letters went between London and Royston daily, as the bylaws were written. Examples of similar Acts were taken when wording clauses and amongst the Conservators' papers are copies of these Acts, from Clapham and Mitcham in London and Cleeve Hill near Cheltenham.

It took five years to smooth out all the problems. Bundles of correspondence were kept by the Conservators which raised many interesting points. The stint holders wished to continue grazing their sheep. The Roystonians were seeking pleasure and recreation.

Stint holder, William Lees, took up his pen on several occasions. He was sharply critical of some of the Conservators, even doubting their intentions. One letter contained a proposal that part of the Heath should become a fine people's park, next to which should be a cemetery so that the pleasure seekers should never lose sight of their final resting place.

A year or so later Lees wrote again - the whole of the Heath should become a cemetery, it was so convenient, having the railway running close by. He added that this way cremation could be put off for another century or so.

Three Conservators were to be appointed by the stint holders. Three were to represent the rate payers of Royston and one would represent the Lord of the Manor. Eventually the final Act was passed in 1893. It covered all known aspects of Heath usage and looked to the future to protect it from then unknown threats. Provision was made for the golfers and the fair, the kite-fliers and the sheep.

Wild flowers had been studied and recorded by one of the Fordhams. Even in 1859 he had noted rare and disappearing varieties. All forms of wildlife are now protected and in these conditions flourish as never before. In 1954 the Heath became a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The long strip of land nearest to the main road, where the gallops are, was once used as a camp and training ground for the Bedfordshire Yeomanry. In a remote corner the rifle range attracted societies using ancient weapons, until recently when it was closed. Sheep are still grazed by stint holders.

In four years' time it will be 100 years since the Act was passed. We will be remembering those who worked hard then, their groundwork the guidelines by which its management continues.



SERVICE ABOVE SELF
DISTRICT No. 1080

ROTARY CLUB OF ROYSTON

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Inspector
The Planning Inspectorate

15th November 2017

Dear Inspector

Public Enquiry - APPLICATION REFERENCE: COM/3170236

I am writing on behalf of the Rotary Club of Royston to let you know about the part Therfield Heath plays in the life of the Club and its members.

Royston Rotary Club was formed in the early 60's and has about 35 members. We are a service club representing a wide range of trades and professions (and both sexes) within the town and its surrounding villages, and in most years we are able to donate, through a trust fund, sums typically in excess of £20,000 to £25,000 to a wide variety of local, national and international charitable causes. Those donations are generated by a number of large and small fund-raising events, and the most significant of these, both in terms of man/woman-power used and funds raised, is our annual Charity Kite Festival. This key event, now more than 15 years under Rotary management and expanded to incorporate a Historic Vehicle Show, produces a surplus of between £5,000 and £7,000, which the Club gives entirely to charitable causes. Equally important, from our perspective, is that the event provides Royston families with a wonderful day out, in the open air, at very little cost. We know that families really value the Kite Festival, because it always attracts attendances which year on year are reliably estimated at around 5,000 people.

What enables us to mount this great display is, of course, Therfield Heath. By courtesy of the Conservators, we have a large area of mown grass suitable for the display and for parking the hundreds of cars which it attracts. The site is exposed and reliably breezy, which kite fliers love, but it is still only ten minutes' walk from Royston town centre. The turf is soft and springy, just right for picnics or just strolling. Stalls for local traders and community organisations, a small funfair, and a tombola, kite workshop and face painting tent surround the central arena where expert kite fliers display their skills.

We do appreciate how incredibly lucky we are to have this resource at our doorstep. It must be unique in the country. Without the Heath, there would simply be no Kite Festival, and it's impossible to imagine what other fundraising strategies could be found to replace it.

We love the Heath, its wonderful views, its unique flora and fauna, and the opportunities it offers to every Roystonian for healthy exercise – from rugby and tennis to running or simply walking the dog. Most of our members use it regularly for these very purposes, and they have a deep appreciation of its value. But as a Rotary Club, we also have good reason to remember that we have a special relationship of our own with the Heath. We are pleased and proud have this means of generating thousands of pounds of charitable benefit every year, and it's the Heath which is the equal and wholly indispensable contributor to that success.

Yours faithfully

Rotarian Graeme Dargie





NOTE: This section contains the registration of every right of common registered under the Act as exercisable over the whole or any part of the land described in the land section of this register unit.

Official Stamp of the
Registration authority

Date: 24 Oct 2014

Register unit No. **CL092**
Edition No. **3**

Register of
Common Land

RIGHTS SECTION - Sheet No. 1

See Overleaf for Notes

1 No. and date of entry	2 No. date and cause of application	3 Name and address of every applicant For registration or amendment, and the capacity in which they applied	4 Particulars of the right of common and of the land over which it is exercisable	5 Particulars of the land (if any) to which the right is attached or details of the owner of any right held in gross	6 Declaration of entitlement to right and details of the right claimed
1 25/3/68 (see entry No. 6 below)	181 25/3/68	Mr F Litchfield, 71 High Street, Little Shelford, Cambs. Owner	The right entitles the owner to graze 574 sheep on the land commonly known as Therfield Heath, which comprises the whole this Register Unit, all the year round in accordance with the 1953 Allocation by the Clerk of the Therfield Regulation.	That land is known as Thrift and Winghall Farms, Therfield, Nr Royston, Herts.	
2 19/6/68 (see entry No. 6 below)	398 19/6/68	a) W. H. Darling, Greys, Therfield, Herts. (occupier under lease and joint Owner with (b) and (c) below)	The right entitles the owner to graze sheep over the whole of the land comprising this Register Unit to the extent of 121 ³ / ₄ stints (one stint equals 4 sheep or 8 lambs - the latter becoming sheep on 1 st July).	Part of the farm known as 'Greys', Therfield, Nr Royston, Herts O.S. Nos. 368, 370, 371, 373, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 382, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 390, 391, 393, 394, 395.	
	399 19/6/68	b) Dr. M. E. Soutar, 1, Somerville Place, Dundee (Joint Owner)			
	400 19/6/68	c) T. Y. Darling, 16 Hermitage Drive, Edinburgh 10 (Joint Owner)			

<i>No. and date of note</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>No. and date of note</i>	<i>Notes</i>

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Date: 24/ Oct. 2014.

Register unit No. CL092
Edition No. 3

Register of Common Land

RIGHTS SECTION - Sheet No. 2

See Overleaf for Notes

1 No. and date of entry	2 No., date and cause of application	3 Name and address of every applicant For registration or amendment, and the capacity in which they applied	4 Particulars of the right of common and of the land over which it is exercisable	5 Particulars of the land (if any) to which the right is attached or details of the owner of any right held in gross	6 Declaration of entitlement to right and details of the right claimed
3 28/06/68 (see entry no.9 below)	505 28/06/68	Mrs J I C Bailey Slate Hall Farm Therfield Royston, Herts. Owner	The owner of the right is entitled to 30 stints each stint or right of pasture which may be exercised from 15 th April to 1 st November in every year as defined - 4 sheep are equivalent to one full stint and 2 lambs shall be deemed equivalent to one sheep up to the 1 st July in each year.	Slate Hall Farm Therfield, Herts	
4 28/6/68 (see entry no. 12 below)	507 28/6/68	Thomas W. Hodge and Margaret E. Hodge, Park Farm, Therfield, Herts. Tenant	The right entitles the owner to graze 534 sheep - i.e. 133 1/2 stints from 15 th April until 1 st November each year over the whole of the land comprising this Register Unit.	Park Farm and Holborn Farm, Therfield, Herts.	
5 28/6/68 (see entry nos. 6, 11 & 12 below)	508 28/6/68	F.C.J. Peary, Rooks Nest Farm Therfield, Nr Royston, Herts. Owner	The right entitles the owner to 26 1/4 stints when 4 sheep are equivalent to one stint over the whole of the land comprising this Register Unit No.	Rooks Nest Farm, Therfield, Nr Royston, Herts.	
6 7/5/71		The registration at entries nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 above, being undisputed became final on 5 th May 1971			

NOTE: This section contains the registration of every right of common registered under the Act as exercisable over the whole or any part of the land described in the lad section of this register unit.

Date... 28/10/2014

CL092

3

Register unit No.

Edition No.

See Overleaf for Notes

Register of Common Land

RIGHTS SECTION - Sheet No. 3

1 No. and date of entry	2 No., date and cause of application	3 Name and address of every applicant For registration or amendment, and the capacity in which they applied	4 Particulars of the right of common and of the land over which it is exercisable	5 Particulars of the land (if any) to which the right is attached or details of the owner of any right held in gross	6 Declaration of entitlement to right and details of the right claimed
7 24/08/2011 (see entries 3 & 9)	CLP019 10/12/2010	Mr CAC & Mrs CH Gleister Slate Hall Farm, Therfield, Royston, Herts. SG8 9RB Owner	The owner of the right is entitled to 30 stints each stint of right of pasture which may be exercised from 1 st April to 1 st November in every year as defined - 4 sheep are equivalent to one full stint and 2 lambs shall be deemed equivalent to one sheep up to the 1 st July in each year.	Slate Hall Farm, Therfield, Herts.	
8 04/03/2014	CLP024 27/11/2012	Registration amendment: a declaration registered at entry no. 5 above has	of partial entitlement to exercise the	right of common	The applicants claim the right to 5 1/4 stints over the whole of the land comprised in the register unit.
(See entries 5 and 6 above)	Regulation 44 of The Commons Registration (England) Regulations 2008	Mr & Mrs J Williams of Rooks Nest Farm, Therfield, Herts. SG8 9QX			

NOTE: This section contains the registration of every right of common registered under the Act as exercisable over the whole or any part of the land described in the lad section of this register unit.

Date: ...
P.H. / D.C.T. / 2014

Register unit No. CL092
Edition No. 3

See Overleaf for Notes

Register of Common Land

RIGHTS SECTION - Sheet No. 4

¹ No. and date of entry	² No., date and cause of application	³ Name and address of every applicant For registration or amendment, and the capacity in which they applied	⁴ Particulars of the right of common and of the land over which it is exercisable	⁵ Particulars of the land (if any) to which the right is attached or details of the owner of any right held in gross	⁶ Declaration of entitlement to right and details of the right claimed
9. 24/10/14 (See entries 3 & 7 above)	CLP026 Proposal Regulation 44 of The Commons Registration (England) Regulations 2008	Registration amendment: a declaration registered at entry no. 3 above has Mr CAC & Mrs CH Glaister Slate Hall Farm, Therfield, Royston, Herts. SG8 9RB Owner	of partial entitlement to exercise the right of common been made.		The applicants claim the right to 3 ¼ stints over the whole of the land comprised in the register unit.
10. 24/10/14 (See entry 2)	CLP030 02/12/13 Regulation 44 of The Commons Registration (England) Regulations 2008	Registration amendment: a declaration registered at entry no. 2 above has Mr E A D Darling Greys Farm, Therfield, Royston, Herts. SG8 9NW Owner	of partial entitlement to exercise the right of common been made.		The applicant claims the right to 121 stints over the whole of the land comprised in the register unit.

Official Stamp of the
 Registration authority

NOTE: This section contains the registration of every right of common registered under the Act as exercisable over the whole or any part of the land described in the 1st section of this register unit.

Date: 24/01/2014

Form 3

Register unit No. **CL092**
 Edition No. 3

Register of Common Land

RIGHTS SECTION - Sheet No. 5

See Overleaf for Notes

1 No. and date of entry	2 No., date and cause of application	3 Name and address of every applicant For registration or amendment, and the capacity in which they applied	4 Particulars of the right of common and of the land over which it is exercisable	5 Particulars of the land (if any) to which the right is attached or details of the owner of any right held in gross	6 Declaration of entitlement to right and details of the right claimed
11. 24/10/14	CLP027 31/01/14	Registration amendment: a declaration registered at entry no. 5 above has	of partial entitlement to exercise the right of common been made.	right of common	The applicants claim the right to 17 stints over the whole of the land comprised in the register unit.
See entries 5, 6 & 12	Regulation 44 of The Commons (England) Regulations 2008	Mr H J Faure Walker Mill House, Stoke Doyle, Peterborough PE8 5TG Owner			
		Mr E W Faure Walker Roe Green House Sandon Bury, Sandon Buntingford, Herts. SG9 0QY Owner			
		Mrs E A Bamford 21 Market Place Ely, Cambs. CB7 4NP Owner			

<i>No. and date of note</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>No. and date of note</i>	<i>Notes</i>

Register of

Common Land

RIGHTS SECTION - Sheet No. 6

See Overleaf for Notes

¹ No. and date of entry	² No., date and cause of application	³ Name and address of every applicant For registration or amendment, and the capacity in which they applied	⁴ Particulars of the right of common and of the land over which it is exercisable	⁵ Particulars of the land (if any) to which the right is attached or details of the owner of any right held in gross	⁶ Declaration of entitlement to right and details of the right claimed
12. 24/10/14	CLP025 05/12/12	Registration amendment: a declaration registered at entry no. 4 above has	of partial entitlement to exercise the been made.	right of common	The applicants claim the right to 97 stints over the whole of the land comprised in the register unit.
See entry 4	Regulation 44 of The Commons Registration (England) Regulations 2008	Mrs M E Hodge Park Farm Therfield, Herts Owner Mrs T J Crowhurst Poole Farm Westley Waterless, Newmarket Suffolk Owner Mrs S B Pearce 4 Chipping Hall Cottages Chipping, Buntingford Hertfordshire Owner			

<i>No. and date of note</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>No. and date of note</i>	<i>Notes</i>