

Piney Copse

‘My Wood’

Piney Copse (4.4 acres – 1.7 ha) was acquired by the National Trust from the estate of the novelist E. M. Forster following his death in 1970.

When the wood was under threat of development, Forster, a local resident, purchased it with funds from the sales of his novel ‘A Passage to India’.

In his essay ‘My Wood’, Forster discussed his feelings regarding ownership of Piney Copse (see extract, right). The full text can be found in Forster’s book of essays ‘A Passage to India’.

Due to the purchase of this wood and its protection, we can still enjoy it today.

**For further information
contact the Ranger’s office:
01306 887485 / 07901 511345**

Thank you



It is not a large wood – it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected, blast it, by a public foot-path. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate in my shame, and should ask themselves, in accents that will vary in horror, this very important question: What is the effect of property upon the character? ... What’s the effect on me of my wood?

In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have this effect. Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven.....

In the second place, it makes me feel it ought to be larger.... In the third place, property makes its owner feel that he ought to do something to it. Yet he isn’t sure what. A restlessness comes over him, a vague sense that he has a personality to express – the same sense which, without any vagueness, leads the artist to an act of creation. Sometimes I think I will cut down such trees as remain in the wood, at other times I want to fill up the gaps between them with new trees. Both impulses are pretentious and empty. They are not honest movements towards moneymaking or beauty. They spring from a foolish desire to express myself and from an inability to enjoy what I have got.

(E M Forster, ‘My Wood’, 1926)

*(Left) E M Forster as a young man.
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*(Above) ‘My Wood’ extracts from the book of essays entitled ‘A Passage to India’ (1926).
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