

FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 12 July 2016 at Mowsbury Clubhouse

Members present: Robert Bright, Lynn Caudrey, Martin Fannon, Sue Fannon, Dave Parratt, Diana Readhead, John Wallace, Marion Wallace, Chris Wedge, Helen Wilkie, John Wilkie, Andy Wilkins (Chair), Allison Wilkins,

1 **Apologies for absence.**

Apologies were received from Jon Bishop, Danny Fellman, Helen Miller and Jane Warner.

2 **Minutes of meetings held on Tuesday 10 May 2016**

These were agreed as an accurate record.

3 **Update from Country Park Guardians**

Country Park Guardians were unable to attend but the following was noted.

3.1 **Mowsbury Hillfort**

3.1.1 Grass cutting Mowsbury Hill Meadow. Jon Bishop had confirmed that Ray Burleigh would cut, bale and remove grass. This would be financed by HLS Stewardship Agreement funding. Jon had confirmed it would be necessary to move one of the gate posts at the entrance to the Meadow in order to widen the entrance to allow machinery in.

3.1.2 Hogweed removal - Jon had requested selective removal of this from the Orchard before it goes to seed.

3.1.3 Interpretation Boards. Discussion took place and the following agreed:

- To set up a Working Group to explore possibilities of number, size, content and location of boards and report back to Friends. Chris Wedge, Lynn Caudrey, Dave Parratt and Andy Wilkins agreed to constitute the group.
- To email James Lynch to request a Job Number in anticipation of production of the board(s). It was noted that Natural England will need to approve final proposals in order to qualify for HLS funding.

3.1.4 Archaeological investigation. Jon Bishop was due to contact Natural England, Historic England and the Borough Council Archaeology Officer to progress this. Report awaited.

3.1.5 Management Plan. Information awaited from Jon.

3.1.6 Old Butts. Permission was needed from the Golf Club to gain access in order to carry out restorative measures to the site. The scheduled boundary ends just a few metres north of the Butts embankment. Any work carried out would not be intrusive to the operations of the golf course. Jon Bishop and James Lynch to be asked if they can progress this. Report awaited.

3.2 **Putnoe Wood**

3.2.1 Gates, fence, wheelchair access. Discussion required with Danny to progress this work as identified at the last meeting.

3.2.2 Disused BMX site. James Lynch to be contacted regarding Borough Council plans for the future of this site as it has fallen into disrepair.

4 **Updates**

4.1 Mowsbury Hillfort Vision Document & Marketing Strategy. Dave reported that Natural England had received a copy of the Vision Document. An accompanying Marketing Strategy has been drawn up – copy appended to these minutes and available on the Friends website.

4.2 CPRE Living Countryside Awards 2016. The 5-member Judging Panel had visited the Hillfort and Woods, met and guided by Dave and John Wallace. Regarding Mowsbury Hillfort, they had been impressed by the Vision Document, the information leaflet, and the work carried out on the site. Time allowed for only a brief visit to the Woods where the panel was impressed by the work being done, including coppicing, and that the interpretation boards including a QR bar code link to the Friends website. The Award winners will be announced at a ceremony on Tuesday 4th October 2016.

4.3 Meadow Flora Survey. Chris and Lynn reported that this is nearly complete with only quadrants on the ramparts outstanding. Laura Taylor from the Wildlife Trust had visited and been impressed by improvements in quantity and variety of flora. The site was approaching the minimum threshold for neutral grassland with good populations of strong indicator species. She recommended the removal of creeping thistle and common ragwort, an early spring cut of dogwood and ash, and commented on the importance of maintaining the current management regime for the meadow, including annual cut and removal of grass.

4.4 Butterfly Transect. Chris reported that this continues but had been affected by recent wet and windy weather.

4.5 Defibrillator Installation. Marion reported on progress. An electrician was on standby to make the necessary connections once metal storage cases were delivered from Bostock. The defibrillator machines had arrived and been registered. The first of 3 training sessions had taken place. Paul Nash is to organise a plaque to acknowledge donations to purchase the equipment.

4.6 Ravensden WI Hillfort Walk, 14 June. Andy and Chris had guided over 20 members on their visit which had been well received.

5 Future Tasks and events

5.1 Tasks - John Wallace made proposals.

Putnoe Wood: path clearance and small balsam removal.

Hillfort: removal of common ragwort, hogweed and hemlock; maintenance of the line of the southern boundary by strimming and/or foot tramping.

5.2 Autumn school assembly talks and walks. Marion reported on a meeting with the Headteacher of Scott Lower School to arrange to visit a school assembly prior to an assembly about the Hillfort on 5 October. Members of the School Council (8 pupils from Years 2, 3 & 4) will visit the Hillfort on 7 October for which age-appropriate worksheets will be created. Other local schools are interested in visits including The Hills, Hazeldean, Brickhill, Livingstone and Edith Cavell Lower Schools, and Putnoe Primary.

6 Financial Matters

John Wilkie presented the latest figures.

Cash in Bank	£480.23
Petty Cash	£0.00
TOTAL	£480.23

Income	
TOTAL	£00.00

Outgoings	
Donation Prebend Day Centre	£66.00
Tools	£274.13
TOTAL	£340.13

Liabilities	
Unused Ward Funding	£63.24

7 Any Other Business

7.1 John Wallace reported on a visit by some of the Friends to Ravensburgh Castle Hillfort on 25 June as part of group led by Dr Ian Brown of the Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford.

7.2 John Wallace thanked the Friends' First Aiders who had provided assistance following a mishap at Putnoe Wood on 6 July. The first aid he had received had been praised by staff at Putnoe Medical Centre and Bedford A&E.

10 Date of next meeting

7.00pm, Tuesday 6 September at Mowsbury Clubhouse.

APPEDIX 1

Mowsbury Hillfort – Marketing Strategy

Introduction

1. This document sets out the Friend's strategy for marketing the Scheduled Mowsbury Hillfort site.

Site location, features and characteristics

2. The site is located to the north-east of Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex, Cleat Hill, Ravensden (TL06610 53189) and measures approximately 4ha in area. The Hillfort is a scheduled monument (list entry no.1015588) and county wildlife site in the ownership of Bedford Borough Council and is managed as a public amenity area. The monument is situated on a spur of chalky boulder clay overlooking the Ouse Valley. It comprises an early Iron Age slight univallate hillfort, within which a Medieval Moated Site was constructed in the Middle Ages. The habitat on site includes lowland wildflower meadow on boulder clay, broadleaf woodland, traditional orchards, scrub areas and ephemeral ponds.

3. The main remaining archaeological features are Iron Age ramparts on the south and the west of the monument; a Medieval ditch some 2 metres deep and 10 metres wide within the Iron Age ramparts which encloses an inner island and partially encloses an outer island; medieval fishponds north of the islands and north of the traditional orchard (east); and a leat stream north of Mowsbury Hill Meadow.

4. A public footpath runs west of Mowsbury Hill Meadow and turns east to run along part of the monument's northern boundary.

Habitat and wildlife

5. The site contains a wide variety of habitats including semi-improved and species rich neutral grassland, traditional orchards, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and a series of moats and ponds. The courtyard meadow especially contains a good diversity of herbs including common spotted orchid, wild liquorice, and yellow rattle. The orchard contains a mix of fruit trees including apple, pear, plum and medlar. There is also a wild service tree. In summer there is a wide variety of butterflies, bumblebees and other invertebrates. Mammals include rabbits, badgers and muntjac deer.

The Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort

6. The Friends are a formally constituted local community group with an active task membership of 20, with many more non-active supporters. The Mission of the Friends is to promote Mowsbury Hillfort and Putnoe Wood for the benefit and the wellbeing of the local people and wildlife. The

Friends web site is at www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk. The Friends produce a web based and emailed newsletter three times per year with an e-mailed circulation of 60+. Facebook and twitter updates regularly receive between 150 to 3000+ hits dependant on subject.

Aims/Objectives of the Strategy

7. The main aim of the Strategy is to promote the Hillfort to the wider local community, explaining its Historical and Wildlife importance, which will hopefully help to ensure the long term preservation and protection of the site. The Strategy, in particular, aims to engage with interested community groups, such as Parish Councils, WI, Wildlife Trusts and with local Schools. The Strategy is informed by the SWOT analysis undertaken for the Friends Mowsbury Hillfort Vision.

Access and Accessibility

8. The site is accessed via a public footpath running from the south-eastern corner of the car park belonging to the Mowsbury Golf and Squash Complex, Cleat Hill, Ravensden. The Friends' web site gives location information, history and photographs, together with details of the Friends Group and its activities.

9. The site is wholly owned by Bedford Borough Council and is accessible all year round. The site is accessible to the disabled over unmade footpaths, however, some paths within the Scheduled monument may be challenging in terms of wheelchair access.

Site promotion

10. The site is promoted through the Friend's web site. A leaflet (copy attached) has also been prepared covering the history and ecology of the site, copies of which are available at local libraries, Higgins Museum and through the web site. There is an information board at the bottom of the hill by an entrance gate. A signage board at the entrance the monument indicates its status as a Scheduled Monument and Local Nature Reserve.

Public engagement

11. The Friend's group has, in addition to making the leaflet widely available, for a number of years, organised an annual winter Wassail. This has proved very popular and opened up awareness of the site to hundreds of local residents. The Friends have, on request, taken groups of people around the site to explain its archaeological and wildlife significance. The Friends have also spoken at local events, giving presentations to WI and Church groups in Putnoe about the site.

12. The Friends are currently in discussion with local Schools about the opportunity to build access to the site into their curriculum. A visit by Ravensden WI is planned for 14 June. It is also proposed to include visits to the site as part of the local Archaeology week in July.

Site management

13. The site is maintained jointly by the Friends and Bedford Borough Council. The Friends meet one afternoon a week (split between Mowsbury Hillfort and Putnoe Woods) to undertake tasks such as scrub management, grass cutting and litter picking.

Resources

14. The Scheduled Mowsbury Hillfort benefits from a Higher Level Stewardship agreement, which runs to 2023. This provides funding for a formal management plan, hydrological and archaeological surveys and ongoing maintenance. The agreement also contains funding for 3

interpretation boards on the site. The Friend's and Borough Council are in active discussion on the design and siting of these boards.

Implementation

15. The Friend's will lead on implementation of the Strategy, liaising as appropriate with Bedford Borough Council, Natural England and Historic England.

Monitoring

16. The Friend's will monitor and discuss progress against the Strategy with representatives from Bedford Borough Council at regular monthly meetings and, at less frequent meetings, with representatives from Natural England and Historic England.