

During the late autumn, the authorities continued the replanting of the southern hedge, a measure strongly advocated by the Society nearly three years ago, and a split chestnut paling fence will be erected along the whole of the southern boundary of the wood to protect the quickthorn sets until they are fully established.

Action has been taken within the southern edge of the woodland itself to block some of the numerous tracks which have been recently formed by the growing reluctance of some people to restrict themselves to the existing foot-paths. This is being attempted by laying a number of overgrown hawthorns which will eventually form impenetrable living barriers in certain parts of the wood.

The future of Putnoe Lane gives cause for considerable anxiety. The Society has, from the first, pressed for the retention of this old green lane, with its rich grassland and hedge flora, but our satisfaction that its survival has been accepted by the authorities has been more than offset by the treatment which it is now receiving. Hundreds of tons of soil have been dumped on it during the year in an effort to raise and camber its surface prior to re-seeding, and there are plans to clean out the ditches on both sides. This tidying-up will, no doubt, eventually produce a pleasant grassy lane, but one quite different from the rutted and overgrown track we once knew and devoid of much of its natural history interest. It is unlikely that such uncommon species as the attractive little Grass Pea will have survived the current upheaval.

## Mowsbury Hill 1971-2

Mowsbury Hill forms the extremity of a long narrow ridge which extends south-south-eastwards from the north Bedfordshire plateau for nearly two miles. Its National Grid Reference is TL 066532 thus bringing it into tetrad 05/R. It lies about three hundred yards south-east of the summit of Cleat Hill on the Bedford-Kimbolton road, B. 660, which here crosses the ridge, and is about five hundred yards north of Putnoe Wood. The summit is slightly in excess of 200 feet A.O.D. and hence about 100 feet above the surrounding countryside, but this apparently slight super-elevation is sufficient to make it a superb view-point to the east and south and must have given it considerable strategic value in earlier times.

The present name is a corruption of 'Morinsbury', since it was the site in the early 13th century of a moated manor-house owned by Ralph de Morins. That the site was an important one in the Iron Age has now been demonstrated by the excavations carried out by Mr G. Dring during the summer of 1971 along the southern ramparts. Remains have been found of a ditch and of a double wooden stockade which had been destroyed by a fire of sufficient intensity to turn the clay infilling of the walls into brick-like fragments. The later moats in the interior, which enclosed the medieval manor, are now overgrown with dense scrub, while at the eastern end of the hill there is a derelict orchard.

Although outside the present Borough boundary, the land lying between Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hill is the property of the Bedford Corporation, having been bought in the mid-nineteenth century with the proceeds of the sale of the site of the present Midland Road station to the railway company. This land is in process of being laid out as a municipal golf-course, but this will not affect the actual Mowsbury Hill enclosure of about seven acres, which is, of course, scheduled as an ancient monument and will be left untouched.

From a botanical point of view the site has long been known for various unusual plant species which favour the chalky Boulder Clay of which the hill top is

composed; these include the Hairy Violet Viola hirta, Dyer's Rocket Reseda luteola, Wild Licorice Astragalus glycyphylus, Hound's-tongue Cynoglossum officinale and the Woolly Thistle Cirsium eriophorum. Many other chalk-loving species were formerly to be found on the southern slopes of both Cleat Hill and Mowsbury Hill but housing developments on much of the area have now probably caused their complete disappearance. Earlier in the century one could find the Dropwort Filipendula vulgaris, Milkwort Polygala vulgaris, Yellow-wort Blackstonia perfoliata and Marjoram Origanum vulgare all growing quite plentifully, while the Bee Orchid Ophrys apifera was sometimes abundant.

During the summer of 1971 the Society approached the Corporation for permission to undertake the minimum amount of conservation work necessary to safeguard the perpetuation of the five species first mentioned, and this was willingly given. Accordingly, a length of the ramparts on the south-western side of the summit was completely cleared of encroaching scrub during the following autumn, while during 1972 a more thorough survey of the area was carried out. The preliminary list appended gives two dozen of the more interesting species out of a total of over sixty recorded. The five species with which we are most concerned all flourished and maintained their numbers; the Hound's-tongue, in particular, found the conditions produced by the golf-course contractors very much to its liking and was especially abundant in the disturbed ground surrounding the old butts half-way up the hill.

<u>Clematis vitalba</u>	Traveller's Joy
<u>Reseda luteola</u>	Dyer's Rocket
<u>Viola hirta</u>	Hairy Violet
<u>Hypericum hirsutum</u>	Hairy St. John's Wort
<u>Trifolium medium</u>	Zigzag Clover
<u>Astragalus glycyphylus</u>	Sweet Milk-vetch
<u>Vicia cracca</u>	Tufted Vetch
<u>Vicia sepium</u>	Bush Vetch
<u>Agrimonia eupatoria</u>	Agrimony
<u>Chamaenerion angustifolium</u>	Rose-Bay Willow-herb
<u>Conium maculatum</u>	Hemlock
<u>Daucus carota</u>	Wild Carrot
<u>Primula veris</u>	Cowslip
<u>Cynoglossum officinale</u>	Hound's-tongue
<u>Scrophularia nodosa</u>	Figwort
<u>Clinopodium vulgare</u>	Wild Basil
<u>Prunella vulgaris</u>	Self-heal
<u>Dipsacus fullonum</u>	Teasel
<u>Cirsium eriophorum</u>	Woolly Thistle
<u>Cirsium acaulon</u>	Stemless Thistle
<u>Leotodon hispidus</u>	Rough Hawkbit
<u>Picris echioides</u>	Bristly Ox-tongue
<u>Crepis taraxacifolia</u>	Beaked Hawk's-beard
<u>Iris foetidissima</u>	Gladdon