

The Friends of

Putnoe Wood & Mowsbury Hillfort

Newsletter

Spring 2015

Wassail 2015



Over sixty guests enjoyed the Wassail, hot apple juice and apple pies at Mowsbury Hillfort in January. Everyone who attended enjoyed the very special ambiance of the night. Our thanks to the Hemlock and Redbornestoke Morris, Green Space Officers, Jon and Jane and of course the Friends Group for all of their enthusiasm and endeavours. Hopefully we will see you again next year. Further photographs at our image site "Tasks and Events 2015": images.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk/

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The hillfort has been without a designated monument sign for over 2 years. After seeking permission to reinstall the sign because of the areas protected status we were overjoyed to be able to see it again at the main entrance to the hillfort. The sign was constructed out of oak that had been recycled and sourced from within the Parks Dept, the text carving was commissioned by the Borough and the Friends Group installed and supplied the sundries.

Muntjac Ahoy!



We have glimpsed or heard the Muntjac many times but in late January we did get the chance to get a photograph before they light footed it away for cover. Muntjac were first introduced to Woburn Park in Bedfordshire from China in the early 20th century. Should we allow its seductive, doe eyes, glossy russet coat and Bambi looks fool us, maybe not, the Muntjac is a deer in wolves clothing. Alongside such villains as the Chinese mitten crab, the Russian zebra mussel and South American creeping water primrose, the Asian Muntjac has been named Britain's most dangerous and destructive deer. They devour native woodland plants at a terrifying rate and destroy vital bird habitats but you have to admire these, furtive, canny and clever little beasts. Apart from a few nibbles at the fruit trees before we staked and guarded them the deer have not been troublesome at Mowsbury Hillfort so far. We will have to keep a wary eye on the little critters.



38 Degrees

Chairman: *Andy Wilkins*, Secretary: *Helen Wilkie*, Treasurer: *John Wilkie*, Events and Tasks Coordinator: *John Wallace*.



4th Birthday Celebrations.

The Friends Group enjoyed their 4th birthday dinner at The Four Seasons, Mowsbury Park in April. Nicky and Sandra put on an excellent meal and the venue worked well. As Putnoe and Mowsbury Hillfort Friends gets another year older I think you would agree the volunteers appear to be looking younger. Must be the fresh air, enthusiasm and exercise.

Mr or Mrs Briar Fox?.



Briar or Foxy Loxley? offered up some of their rabbit burger but it was a little under done for us. With all the publicity about the possible vote on the repealing of the fox hunting ban it was great to see her controlling the rabbit population at the hillfort.

Perm or just a cut and Blow Dry



We were a little deflated the day after the Wassail but we struggled through what may appear as a mundane task of pruning the fruit trees in the orchard but there was a kind of charm about pruning the trees in the snow flurries. Unfortunately we got a bit carried away with the charm aspect of the task and had to return the following week to complete the work.

The Hills Are Alive



Spring arrived approximately two weeks later this year and the buzzards could not wait to celebrate with a few mating acrobatics

Let Us Know Your Views and News.
 Contribute to the Summer issue of the newsletter.
contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk
 Check out images@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk
 For the latest Flora and fauna photographs

Woodland Coppice



First group photo of 2015 completing the coppicing in Putnoe Wood, and yes! we are still drinking tea BUT we deserved it.

Unfortunately the tally for the pollarding and felling of diseased and unsafe trees last year totalled 27. Inonotus Fungus 3, Acute Oak Decline 4, Honey Fungus 9, Dead 4, Other reasons 7. We hope the tree planting carried out this year will be successful and fill in the bare areas and any other diseases take pity on us.

There is Life After All



There has been concerns and complaints raised from members of the public, of which the Friends group have taken some of the brunt of the outcry, about the amount of tree felling and coppicing that has had to be carried out recently in Putnoe Wood. We would like to assure the concerned parties that no trees were felled in anger, No one, not the Friends group, the Rangers or the Borough wish to see trees felled or pollarded unless it absolutely necessary.

We also appreciate that managed coppicing can appear to leave areas of desolation. The task of coppicing hazel has been carried since medieval times and as you can see from the photograph the woodland soon recovers and the wild plants are allowed to flourish. Please check the notice board at the entrance to the wood for task updates.

Sign Of The Times



Our thanks to Councillor Michael Headley for the Ward Funding for the Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort portable warning signs where members of the public will have advance notice of the areas that we are working in and directions to the tea and biscuits for their dogs. We would also like to thank Councillor Headley for actioning the removal of one of the red dog poop bins at the main entrance to Putnoe Wood to the west end of the centre path, to be replaced by a standard black bin. No shock and horror please this bin can be used for dog poop bags as well as other litter.

Oak Sleeper at Hillfort



The new Mowsbury Hillfort information sleeper was installed at the lower end of Mowsbury Hill Meadow, our thanks to the Parks Department for the text carving and a few of the Friends group for struggling through the asphalt and concrete that lay beneath what we thought was turf. The A4 indentation allows us to affix a map and information on the Hillfort. The oak sleeper had been lazing about Priory park in retirement for a while which gave us the opportunity to recycle it at Mowsbury Hill Meadow.

Our next project is hopefully to obtain funding for one or two rustic benches to be sited at the top of the meadow on the periphery of the scheduled hillfort area .

www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk

So long, farewell Auf Wiedersehen, adieu



Nature is a strange beast. Some plants spend eleven months of the year preparing for that exquisite moment and then by chance or by some superior lottery they give a fleeting glimpse of their beauty. This year the cowslips excelled on Mowsbury Hill Meadow and we were chasing shadows for the other supreme specimens.

Away Day



Its not all toil and trouble for the Friends group, early May saw us escape for the day over to the RSPB Centre at Sandy for a little tree hugging and a stroll around the RSPB Centre and Galley Hill Hillfort. Even the inclement weather could not dampen our spirits.



Choices



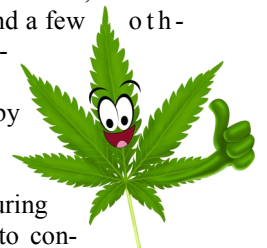
Choices” Not the hit song by The Hoosiers but a choice of task. Ranger Jane did a little skinny dipping, whoops!, sorry pond dipping at the Hillfort for those that were interested in what lurks beneath the waves. There was plant surveying, cataloguing on the Inner Island and courtyard Meadow and a litter pick.



Indiana Fannon led the way in search of the crystal thingsies. I'm afraid, the camera was at the ready all afternoon to capture that defining moment when someone plunges into the depths of the murky pool but alas!, otherwise a very enjoyable afternoon. Our dipping in the last pool was cut short and we left for home because a spotted woodpecker was trying to feed her brood in a nearby tree hollow.

The pond life discovered was: shrimps, water mites, daphnia, cyclops, bloodworm, lesser boatman, anopheles larvae, water louse, leach and a few others that we have not been able to identify at this time.

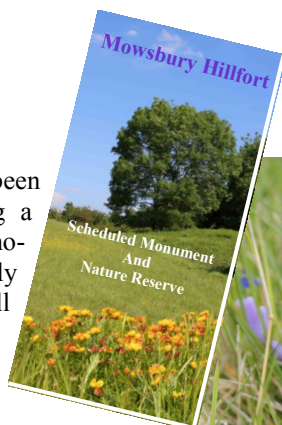
Whoops! The secret cannabis garden by the way is no more, what you would call green waste!



If the water level holds in the ponds during the rest of the year we will be back to continue the pond dipping. Memories came flooding back from youthful days, a very enjoyable and informative afternoon.

Hillfort Leaflet

Lynne Caudrey and Dave Parrot have been leading a working group on developing a leaflet for Mowsbury Hillfort. At the moment it is a work in progress but hopefully in the near future all of their hard work will see a finished article.



Keep The Pressure On



Please do not allow any exemptions to the European ban on bee killing pesticides known as Neonicotinoids. If the time comes for us to tell you that we told you so it will be to late. So do the right thing!

Bugs Hotel



Even before we had completed The Bugs Hotel complex our first guest was trying to register, Ok a slug is not what you would call a bug or a beetle but there are always queue jumpers and "he who dares!". At this point we will do our educational bit, "what's the difference between a bug and a beetle we hear you say? Very simply, bugs and beetles have different mouthparts. Bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts while beetles possess chewing mouthparts. Another question raised today was "Why construct insect habitats when there are plenty of dead hedges and other suitable habitats at the hillfort". Our hope is that by constructing these insect hotels in a visible location children and of course adults will look beyond the creepy crawly image and begin to appreciate the importance to the ecology of these small creatures. There are now three new insect complexes, Bugs Hotel, Bugs Motel and Bee Hostel.



Ground Control.



Phone home ET. On the weekly walkabout at the hillfort we usually check the site, record and snap the flora and fauna if we find something interesting or just because we have trigger happy snappy fingers but in early May two lonely lost aliens materialized. So if you have lost in space a couple of extraterrestrials let us know and we will beam them back to your mother ship.



Sign Of The Times



On April 1st, fools day, we carried out an emergency task in Putnoe Wood to refix two information boards back into the ground from where as they came as they had decided to take a stroll. Hopefully a little concrete will put paid to their ardour. There has been some concerns made about the cut hazel tepee type structures constructed at the back of the recently coppiced area by some younger folk. As long as we do not get any illicit smoking and drug dens and they clear up after their pow wows we hope they enjoy their time in the wood.

Friends AGM 9th June 2015:

The positions of Chairmen, Secretary, Treasurer, and Task and Event Coordinator were re-elected unopposed. The next meeting will be on August 11th 2015.

Keep up to date with our tasks and events at:
www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk
www.facebook.com/putnoemowsburyfriends

That's What Friends Are For

Records tell us that Mowsbury Hillfort is one of only 10 univallate hillforts, and the best preserved in Bedfordshire and it appears the only hillfort in Bedford Borough but where are the others. These scheduled and other green areas of importance deserve to have their stories documented and easily accessible to the public. At present we have a list of possible sites:

Billington Camp: The banks of the earthwork were bulldozed down in 1959, and although the ground presents an uneven appearance, no recognisable features are apparent.

Caesars Camp Sandy: Iron Age hillfort on a spur above the River Ivel. Much damaged. Original extent uncertain.

Craddocks Camp: An Iron Age enclosure once occupied a thirty acre area, on what is now largely Leighton Buzzard Golf Club land.

Danesborough Camp, Apsley Heath: The remains of the hill fort can be found in the woods to the west of Apsley Heath. Not much can be seen on the ground today, as there are only vague ditches and mounds visible.

Galley Hill, Sandy: A slight univallate iron age hillfort occupying a prominent position on the tip of Galley hill, a narrow spur extending southwards from the Greensand. A scheduled ancient monument it is situated on the RSPB nature reserve.

Maiden Bower: The earthwork rampart is the most prominent surviving feature of the site. The bank forms an almost complete circuit, except along the north west side where quarrying and erosion have encroached.

Overendgreen: Earthworks mostly limited to pockets of ridge and furrow. Medieval settlement earthworks have been recorded as an island largely surrounded by sand quarrying.

Ravensbough Castle: Access to the site is strictly limited. an Iron Age scheduled ancient monument which straddles a hilltop near to Ravensbough.

Sharpenhoe Clappers: A promontory fort of about 9 acres, now covered by a beechwood.

The Lodge, Sandy: Situated on the RSPB nature reserve. Remains of an oval Iron Age promontory fort.

Totternhoe Castle: In the 19th and 20th centuries there was speculation concerning a pre-medieval origin for the castle, but small excavations in the early 20th century found no evidence. The castle does occupy a position similar to that of possible hillfort sites in the Chilterns, and the presence of earlier earthworks within the medieval fortification is not discounted.

We have included new pages on our web site to accommodate our research so if you can help us expand our knowledge of Iron Age Hillforts in Bedfordshire please contact us.

Please contact us if you have memories or information of any kind on Putnoe Wood or Mowsbury Hillfort. We are always trying to expand our knowledge and understanding of these two sites. Our volunteer researchers or the Green Space Officers would be only too pleased to talk with you.

Please get in touch:

Mobile site: www.pwmhfriends.com

www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk

Priorityrangers@bedford.gov.uk,

contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk.



Putnoe Wood Update.



We are still waiting for the dog poop bins to be reorganised at the southern end of the wood. At this time, (out of felling season), there are no plans for further diseased tree felling unless there is a danger to the public. We will start to tackle the small balsam problem with the Green Space Officers during June and July by brush cutting and hand removal. Path clearance and litter picking will continue as normal. Hopefully further tree planting in the autumn and we will continue to monitor the Flora and Flora throughout the year. Please checkout the notice board at the main entrance to the wood or on one of our media outputs.

Mowsbury Hillfort Update.



Work as per the HLS management plan continues. A new Oak information sleeper has been installed on Mowsbury Hill Meadow and the long awaited new Ancient Monument sign to the entrance to the hillfort has been reinstated. Our thanks to Ed Burnett for the wood engraving, both boards look fantastic and to John Wilkie for modifying the oak posts.

Chris Wedge continues the weekly butterfly transect supported by other members of the Friends group. Work will continue with maintaining the orchards and seeing if we can bring some of the older fruit trees back to life. Our first pond dipping exercise went well and we will continue to monitor the ponds inhabitants. There are hopefully plans for the local Albion youth archaeological group to carryout some investigations. Reptile, insect, mammal, bird and plant recognition and surveys as well as our research into the history and archaeology will continue. Check out our progress on the website.

Mowsbury Hillfort

Mowsbury Hillfort is an univallate hillfort constructed in the early Iron Age, and a medieval moated site adapted from and situated within the earlier ramparts.

Pottery found in association with the rampart indicates a construction date in the early Iron Age. Traces of a possible hut circle were also found in the form of a circle of cobbles. The complete outline of the perimeter forms a roughly oval plan measuring approx 290m by 200m. Pottery fragments show that the hillfort was again occupied in the later Iron Age and into the Roman period, probably as a small farmstead.

The next lasting mark made on the landscape is in the medieval period when a rectangular moated site, with two 'islands', an inner and an outer one, was developed. A wooden bridge would have allowed people to cross from the outer to the inner island. Parts of the moat may have reused the ditch of the original hillfort as part of the defensive structure and part was also adapted as a pair of fishponds for raising fish as a food source. The moat was filled with water, fed by a leat stream (an artificial watercourse or aqueduct dug into the ground).

The medieval site has been identified with the manor of Morinsbury mentioned in various documents before 1465. The name may have been retained as "Morsebury" a 16th century field name, which included the area of earthworks and presumably devolved to the present name of Mowsbury.

For further information please go to:

Main website: www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk

Mobile site: www.pwmhfriends.com



Mowsbury Hillfort

Iron Age Hillfort, Medieval Site and Nature Reserve.

0 50m



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|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Main Entrance. | 8. 3rd and 4th ponds |
| 2. Western rampart. | 9. Old Orchard east. |
| 3. Leat from Cleat Hill. | 10. Historic Parish boundary. |
| 4. Iron age ditch and first medieval pond. | 11. Medieval ditch and mound. |
| 5. Courtyard meadow. | 12. Old orchard south. |
| 6. Second medieval pond. | 13. 2nd entrance. |
| 7. Inner island. | 14. Wild flower meadow. |

Please Be A Responsible Dog Owner

