



The Friends of

# Putnoe Wood & Mowsbury Hillfort

## Newsletter

Summer 2015 Issue 17

### Don't Shoot The Messenger



We are not normally prone to getting embroiled in national or local politics but the effects of the latest government Council funding cutbacks could have a serious detrimental effect on volunteer groups. Brutal funding cuts threatened by the government will mean Bedford Borough Council must save an estimated £25 million more each year from its budget by 2019. With vast savings of £81 million a year made already since 2010, focused away from front line services, the scope for protecting important services for local people is disappearing rapidly. Realistically, if Libraries, public conveniences, bin collections and reduced funding for charities etc are to be ditched or reduced what hope is there for our meagre rations, let alone any larger project funding. Our only saving grace is that we are not entirely dependant on monetary funding but it is essential that support from the Green Space Officers and the Borough Parks Department is adequately staffed and funded. We shall have to see how far the cuts bite, cut our coat according to our cloth and hope our Voluntary tea money supports our needs.

[www.bedford.gov.uk/council\\_and\\_democracy/](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/)

### OUCH! Ash Chalara?

One of our favourite ash trees with the red algae trunk that stands on the northern edge of the hillfort orchard was showing signs of die back on its upper branches. We had ash tagged the tree last year so we asked AJ from the Borough to check it out for us. The symptoms at this time are inconclusive so we have decided not to update the ash tag database at this time and to monitor the tree over the coming months.



### Save Freemans Common



Freemans Common is located at the lower end of Cleat Hill and stretches in a north westerly direction towards Woodlands and Graze Hill. In 2008 The Freeman's Common Charity trustees came under pressure to sell off this south facing meadow for housing, this threat has now been resurrected. Bedford does not need to rape the green corridor to satisfy their development commitments. The Friends group at their October meeting agreed to support the campaign to prevent the development of this meadow.

### Don't have a 'poop scoop' bag, No Excuse!

Dog walkers who are caught without a bag to clear up their pets mess face a £100 on-the-spot fine. The new measure is being piloted in some areas under a law passed last year, the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime And Policing Act. The measure has been introduced after public outrage over negligent owners allowing their dogs to foul public areas.

Dog waste has become a widespread nuisance in parks, woods and beaches and poses a serious health risk, particularly to young children. Dog walkers should carry enough bags to cover their expected walk. The excuse that they have just used their last bag will not wash as this would mean that if your dog pooped again you may just walk on and leave it. The Friends group have a reserve supply of poop bags when we are at Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort. If you get caught short come and see us and we will let you have one, if you promise, when used, it is disposed of properly and not discarded as a tree decoration.

**Please Be A Responsible Dog Owner**



## Banned Neonicotinoids



Neonicotinoids are currently banned in the EU because of concerns over their impact on bee health. However, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire will be using Neonicotinoid seed treatments the NFU has announced. The rape grower who suffered flea beetle damage last year farms in Essex, a county not in the four counties chosen by Defra.

## Picture This



For many the sight of Ragwort gently swaying on a summers breeze paints a pretty picture but to us it paints a picture of continuous backbreaking digging and pulling with the unfortunate outcome that it will be another year before we will be able to cut, collect and remove the hay from site.



## Wake Up Call

“...We should cherish life on Earth in all its forms. As a species become extinct, so the mysteries of their lives are lost for ever. We are destroying our children's inheritance, stealing from them the joy of discovery and exploration of the natural world. What is more, we are undermining the ability of our planet to support us; although we understand very little about the myriad complex interactions between the many creatures on this earth, we do have good evidence to suggest that these interactions are vital to the health of the planet and hence are vital for our own well-being and perhaps for our survival...”

Extract from A Buzz in the Meadow by Dave Goulson.  
Published by Jonathan Cape. [www.vintage-books.co.uk](http://www.vintage-books.co.uk).

## Fly-tip



During the summer there were numerous cases of fly-tipped newspapers in Mowsbury Park and Putnoe Wood and we jokingly posted on Facebook that if the residents of Putnoe had not received their copy of The Times & Citizen they could pop down to the wood and collect a copy. We received over four thousand hits and numerous comments. On a serious note this type of fly-tipping has become more prevalent across the whole of the Borough, as comments on our Facebook page showed. If you see a fly-tip of this nature and it involves newspapers please let the newspaper concerned know and as with all fly-tipping you can report it via the Boroughs Clean Street app, Clean Street webpage or by phone. The litter can then be cleared up.

[cleanstreets.bedford.gov.uk/account/logon](http://cleanstreets.bedford.gov.uk/account/logon)

Phone: 01234 267422

Time & Citizen: [editorial@timesandcitizen.co.uk](mailto:editorial@timesandcitizen.co.uk)

Phone: 01234 409100

Bedfordshire on Sunday: [sarah.cox@bedsonSunday.com](mailto:sarah.cox@bedsonSunday.com)

Phone: 01234 300888

Other useful numbers.

Green Space Officers: 01234211182

Volunteering enquiries: 01234718276

General Park enquiries: 01234228759

Environmental Services: 01234718060

Highways Help Line: 01234 718003

[www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk](http://www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk)

## Alien Invasion at Mowsbury Hillfort

We would normally welcome all visitors onto our patch but our insect monitoring this year picked up a few that should be sent packing.



A German wasp speeding through Mowsbury Orchard.



A Harlequin ladybird. Both of these out compete our native species. The German wasp can be identified by the three lumps at the back of its head and the Harlequin usually by the prominent “W” or “M” head markings.

## Spring Clean



We take great pride in the tasks we carry out, in Putnoe Wood not only do we try to get things spick-and-span but we also move the furniture and clean beneath. Many of the tasks this year have been to consolidate the work carried out in previous years which included keeping the path network clear of encroaching vegetation, as Sue and Martin are demonstrating.

## Wet! Not Us!



We have only been sent packing back to our nests by the weather once. This day was not the one. We regrouped after the rain had subsided and continued with the Ragwort digging.

## Birds Of Prey



Usually on a warm autumnal day a stroll to the hillfort would have you admiring the soaring antics of the buzzards but they were keeping a low profile as a pair of spiffires provided the afternoons entertainment.

## Island Blues



It was heads down and bottoms up as we tackled this years nettle and dogs mercury growth on the Inner Island during a very wet August afternoon. This area was once completely covered by a impenetrable blanket of blackthorn, elder, slimy algae and moss. It maybe a little while before we can whittle away the unwanted growth.

## Facebook Update



Our Facebook cover image was updated recently to reflect the change in seasons. This winter photograph of Mowsbury Hill Meadow is also one of the subjects in our winter notelet pack.

## Bin It



An extra dog poop bin was installed at the northern entrance to Putnoe Wood and the second red dog poop bin at the main entrance was replaced with a normal black rubbish bin which can also be used for dog waste. It has been reported that due to funding cuts in the future there may well be just one collection for both types of bin. Whether the bin is red or black that is where the dog waste bags go, as both types of waste ends up in land fill it should not be too much of a problem.

## Seasonal Canine Illness

Seasonal Canine Illness is a mystery illness that affects dogs during the autumn and can prove to be fatal. The most common clinical signs are sickness, diarrhoea and lethargy typically experienced within 72 hours of walking in woodland. The cause of SCI is unknown and there are no known preventive measures. One explanation could involve the dog eating or even simply touching something that the owner is unaware of. Mushrooms or fungi can potentially be poisonous as can leaf piles. Remember that leaf piles are essentially humps of rotting vegetation, which could contain bacteria, fungi and other disease-causing elements. If you suspect your dog is showing signs of SCI then please contact your vet immediately. Find out more at: [www.aht.org.uk/sci](http://www.aht.org.uk/sci)



## Not For The Faint Hearted



This was not a day for the faint hearted as we got to grips with the manicuring of the forgotten orchard, not so much a manicure but amputation. Where to start!, thankfully Ed Burnett from the Borough was there to keep us motivated and we made good progress.

## A-Mazed



We always welcome comments and constructive criticism but we were a little mystified with a comment about dead hedge construction.

“Those hedges are why I stopped going to Putnoe Orchard. You've made it into a maze and the fruit trees are inaccessible. Took me ages to find my way out last time thanks to all the new live hedges. Are you TRYING to stop people visiting?”

We do not task at Putnoe Orchard. At Mowsbury Hillfort there are two orchards, the main fruiting orchard does not have any dead hedges and the forgotten orchard, as we call it, has been derelict for years, that is why we are trying to bring it back to life. We only build what is known as dead hedges, this enables us to use at least some of the cut debris as we are not permitted to burn on site or remove this waste as it is a scheduled monument. We would love to be able to clear debris from both Mowsbury Hillfort and Putnoe Wood but there is not a big fat wedge of cash and we have to abide by rules, regulations and management strategies.



Summer and Winter Notelets

Summer and winter scenes of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort should be available by the end of October. Please contact us if you would like to purchase packs of notlets. You will not find these in shops. All proceeds go to supporting our work at both sites.

New Bench for Mowsbury Hill Meadow



A new oak bench is on order from Celtic Forest. The bespoke Monmouth oak bench is due for delivery mid October and we should be able to install it shortly after that, weather permitting. The bench will be positioned at the top of Mowsbury Hill Meadow where there is wide ranging views over Putnoe Wood, Bedford and beyond. Our thanks to Councillors Charlie Royden and Wendy Rider for their ward funding.

A Time For Reflection



Thank you for taking the time to browse this news letter. Keep up to date with our antics on Facebook or for information on either site check out the web site. [www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk](http://www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk) or

Mowsbury Hillfort Leaflet

A new leaflet for Mowsbury Hillfort has been produced by Lynn Caudrey and the Friends working group in cooperation with the Boroughs graphic design department. The leaflet has now been printed and is ready for distribution.

Music While You Work



Not quite the “Last Night of the Proms” but with a little conducting by Ranger Danny we got stuck into this years coppicing plot. We could have sung 10 green bottles as we found enough of them. We didn't however come up with a song to go with the discarded dirty baby nappies, the dog poop bags and other litter.

Cut Above The Rest



# Putnoe Wood

On the edge of the Ravensdon parish, Putnoe Wood is a Local Nature Reserve. Renhold Brook runs through the valley and is an important wildlife corridor. Animals move from one part of the countryside to another along the brook, and the larger trees, grasses and scrub provide places to nest, food for birds and a home to many insects.

Putnoe wood has a long history and was once part of a much larger wooded landscape. The area was first recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 as Salf End and Buckelowe (Putnoe) with the tenant in chief being named as Hugh of Beauchamp.

Before this date there is evidence that a Saxon named Putta had settled here and then later in 1066 being the property of Anschil or Asketil a name of Scandinavian origin.

During the 12th century Putnoe Manor and its lands was endowed to the Cistercian Abbey of Warden and remained in the possession of the monastery until the dissolution in 1537.

In 1224, Considerable damage was done to Putnoe Wood during the nine weeks siege of Bedford Castle. The Royal forces of Henry III using the wood as a convenient source of timber. Warden Abbey demanded and received annual compensation for their ravaged woodland during the remainder of the King's lifetime. This was renewed in 1304 for a further 20 years. A full century was needed for the complete recovery of the wood.

The estate passed to the Gostwick family of Willington in 1539 and they retained it for two hundred years.

Later owners include The Dukes of Bedford one of whom in 1871 held the title of Lord of the Manor of Putnoe. In 1798, the first botanical records of Putnoe Wood were recorded in Charles Abbot's 'Flora Bedfordiensis', Charles Abbot was a well known local parson and botanist.

Up until 1934 the wood had been part of Goldington Parish but when Goldington village was absorbed into Bedford it was transferred to Ravensden.

The demolition of Putnoe Farm in 1968 ended a continuous period of over nine hundred years during which the area had been occupied by a succession of farm buildings at the centre of a manorial estate.

If you would like to know more about Putnoe Wood check out our websites or keep in touch with Facebook and twitter:  
[www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk](http://www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk) or mobile site [www.pwmhfriends.com](http://www.pwmhfriends.com)

