



The Friends of

**Putnoe Wood
& Mowsbury Hillfort**

The History Of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort



Putnoe Wood

On the edge of the Ravensdon parish, Putnoe Wood is a Local Nature Reserve. Ravensden 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 Asketill 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.

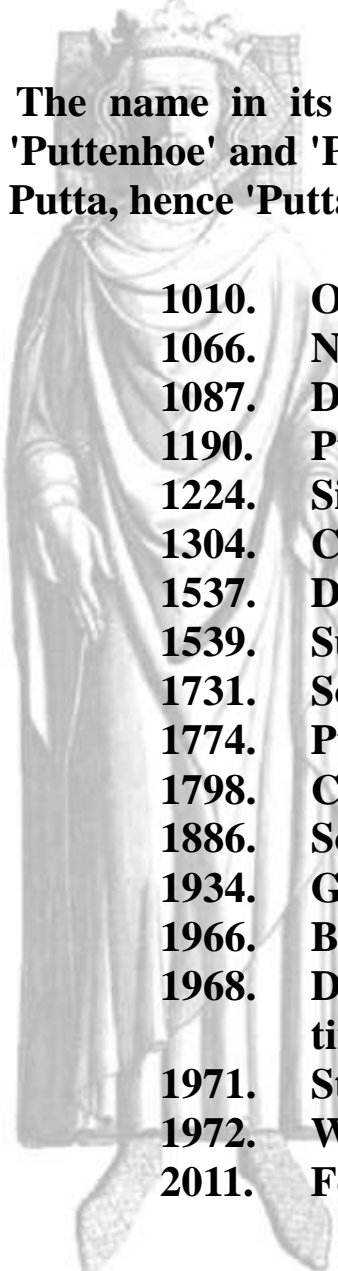
Up until 1934 the wood had been part of Goldington Parish but when Goldington village was absorbed into Bedford it was transferred to Ravensden.

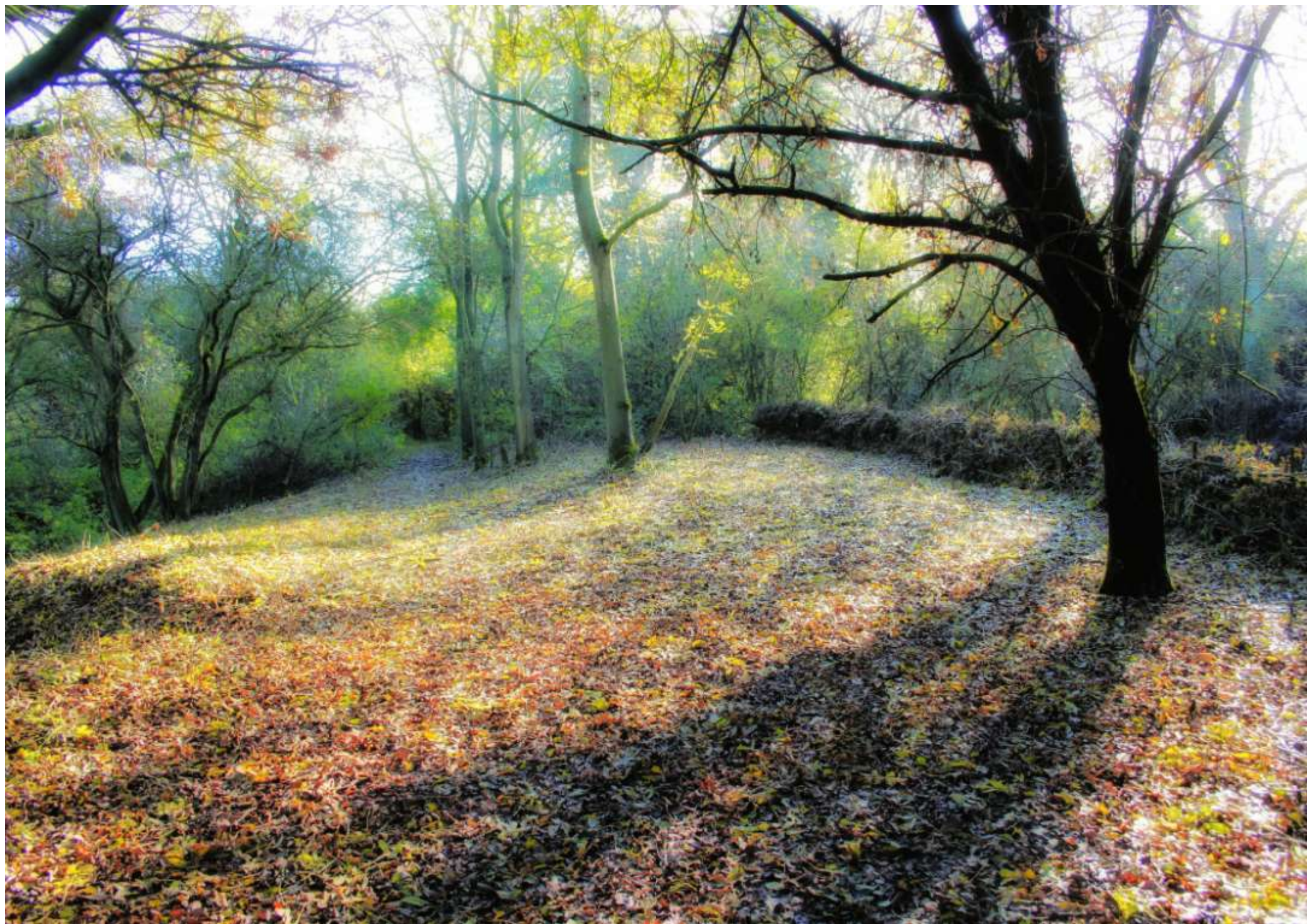
The demolition of Putnoe Farm in 1968 ended a continuous period of over nine hundred years during which the area had been occupied by a succession of farm buildings at the centre of a manorial estate.



Putnoe Wood Timeline

The name in its present form has been around since the 16th Century, but was formerly known as 'Puttenhoe' and 'Putenho' indicating the spur or 'hoh' of land belonging to an unknown Anglo-Saxon settler Putta, hence 'Puttas-hoe' (*History of area still being researched*)

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- 1010. Original Saxon Settler named PUTTA**
 - 1066. Norman Conquest. Anschil or Asketill. Scandinavian Origin.**
 - 1087. Domesday Book. Hugh de Beauchamp, first Baron of Bedford.**
 - 1190. Putnoe Woods endowed to Cisterdan Abbey of Warden.**
 - 1224. Siege of Bedford Castle. Putnoe Woods devastated by the Royal Forces of Henry III.**
 - 1304. Compensation received by Warden Abbey up to this date for the ravaged woodland.**
 - 1537. Dissolution of monasteries ended Warden Abbeys ownership.**
 - 1539. Surrender of Warden Abby to Crown Estate passed to the Gostwick Family of Willington.**
 - 1731. Sold to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough.**
 - 1774. Purchased for Francis, fifth Duke of Bedford.**
 - 1798. Charles Abbot's "Flora Bedfordiensis". First botanical records of Putnoe Woods.**
 - 1886. Sold piece meal.**
 - 1934. Goldington Village absorbed into Bedford and Putnoe Wood transferred to Ravensden.**
 - 1966. Boundary extensions brought the wood within Bedford Borough.**
 - 1968. Demolition of Putnoe Farm ended a continuous period of nine hundred years during which time the site had been at the centre of a manorial estate.**
 - 1971. Start of detailed eco-surveys printed in the Journal of The Bedfordshire Naturalist.**
 - 1972. Woods form part of Mowsbury Park**
 - 2011. Formation of Friends of Putnoe Woods and Mowsbury Hillfort. March 2011.**



Mowsbury Hillfort

Located on the south eastern tip of a long spur of chalky boulder clay to the north of Bedford. Archaeological evidence indicates two major phases of occupation - a univallate hillfort constructed in the early Iron Age, and a medieval moated site adapted from and situated within the earlier ramparts.

Fragments of Iron Age and Romano-British pottery had been reported from the site since the late 19th century but it had been thought to be a Danish camp, or possibly of prehistoric origin.

Archaeological trenching in 1971-1972 confirmed the presence of a single ditch encircling the tip of the spur, and measuring approx 4.3m wide and 2m deep; it had been completely in filled, incorporating material from the internal bank. The bank had been supported by a timber framework which had burnt down, leaving clear impressions of the timbers in the semi-fired clay of the bank; a fragment of human skull was found in association with the destruction.

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.



Mowsbury Hillfort Timeline

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- 700BC. Early Iron Age. Catuvellauni Tribal area.**
- AD43. Roman Invasion. End of Iron Age in England.**
- AD410. Romans Leave.**
- AD450. Anglo Saxons Arrive. (German, Danish, Dutch).**
- AD876. Vikings settle in Britain (Scandinavian).**
- 1066. Norman Invasion. (Probable same ownership and overlord as Putnoe Wood).**
- 1086. Domesday Book. (Anschil or Asketill, forfeited to Hugh de Beauchamp, First Baron of Bedford).**
- 1195. Recorded as site owned by Ralph Morin.**
- 1207. Recorded in ownership of the Tyringham Family.**
- 1302. Recorded as site owned by Roger Tyringham.**
- 1405. Sold to John Prior of Newnham.**
- 1416. In ownership of John Tyringham.**
- 1465. Passed to son John Tyringham.**
- 1539. Surrender of Warden Abby to Crown Estate. Passed to the Gostwick Family of Willington.**
- 1700. Under Gostwicks ownership.**
- 1778. Map shows area as moated site.**
- 1864. Maps show evidence of brickworks and kilns in local area.**
- 1884. Immediate area used as rifle range.**
- 1926. Orchards Planted.**
- 1946. Photograph shows area called Courtyard meadow as clear**
- 2000. Additional fruit trees planted in orchard.**

Every effort has been made to provide accurate information. The history of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort is still being researched and will be updated as further data becomes available. If you can assist us in any way please contact us at: contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk.

Acknowledgements and further Information:

The Bedfordshire Naturalist: www.bnhs.org.uk

Megalithic Portal: www.megalithic.co.uk

The Heritage gateway: www.heritagegateway.org.uk

www.putnoe.org.uk/putnoe/history

Domesday Book: www.domesdaybook.co.uk.