



The Friends of

# Putnoe Wood & Mowsbury Hillfort

## Newsletter

Spring 2016

### Wassail 2016



Over eighty 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 Morris, Green Space Officers Jon and Danny and of course the Friends Group for all of their enthusiasm and endeavours. Hopefully we will see all of our guests again next year. Further photographs on our image site: [Images.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk](http://Images.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk)

### Why Does It Always Rain on Me?



Don't Let The Rain Come Down, Raindrops Keep Fallin' On My Head, Here Comes The Rain Again, I Made It Through The Rain, Purple Rain, Just Walking In The Rain, Naked In The Rain, well no we shall draw the line here but in Putnoe Wood in March we were "Wet wet wet". We made sure though that the choccy bickies stayed dry.

### Defibrillators

Public access defibrillators (PADs) can be found in public spaces like your local shopping centre, gym, train station or village hall. That briefcase-sized box on the wall contains a PAD. It's there for anyone to use on someone in cardiac arrest. Marion Wallace, supported by the Friends group and other voluntary donations has raised enough funding for two defibrillators. One for Bedford Park and the other at the Four Seasons Café in Mowsbury Park. It was hoped that they would have been installed and up and running by Easter but there has been unforeseen problems with Bedford Borough granting permission to allow these two units to be installed. After a cardiac arrest, every minute without CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and defibrillation reduces someone's chance of survival by 10 per cent. We can only hope that the delay in getting these life saving units installed is not putting people's lives at risk and that by the time you read this newsletter the defibrillators will have been installed. If you would like more information on defibrillators and their use go to the British Heart Foundation Web page: [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk).



### Walk On The Wild side

Recent reports by the Wild Life Trust and Mind, support our campaign to argue against further developments of the Renhold Brook Green Corridor.

Being disconnected from nature is characteristic of an unhealthy lifestyle. In an increasingly urban society, there is recognition that humans are becoming more remote from the natural environment and as a consequence, are suffering from increased mental illnesses and obesity problems. Urban wildlife and access to green spaces can provide a range of positive values to humans, including opportunities for physical exercise, help coping with mental illnesses, historical values and can also change attitudes toward the environment. Research highlights that urban neighbourhoods containing better access to green spaces, on average, have lower levels of mental distress and higher wellbeing. Playing fields, small non-descript and recreational urban wild flower green spaces are not adequate to support the local community, humans and wildlife alike.

Special Feature.

Save our Meadows, Life without Insects, page 5.



## Another Nail

Another nail in the coffin for our wildlife and a few more quid in the coffers of the developers. Natural England, a government body in charge of protecting wildlife, is in the process of putting forward new proposals. These would make the current licensing system they say "more flexible and strategic". It would mean that councils and developers no longer have to move individual great crested newts as long as they protect the biggest colonies and the most important habitats. What else would you expect from a Government funded body.



## Canine Tick



## Happy Birthday



Five years of Harmony and bliss, well nearly. Not all of the group are photographed here but all of them should take pride in what has been achieved over the last five years. When we first started we were working with seven borough colleagues now there are only two. As the Borough's funding cuts bite the group are obliged to take on more responsibilities and working groups have been formed to spread the workload. Over the last few years our working groups have designed and installed the information boards in Putnoe Wood, the oak bench, information sleeper and monument sign at the Hillfort. A visitors information leaflet and map were designed, and printed. Notelets were also designed, printed and sold for funds over the festive season. This year we have several larger projects to keep us on our toes. There is no current management plan for the hillfort so for us to apply for a Community Green Flag we are having to produce a Friend's Vision which hopefully will fulfil the necessary requirements. This vision will also be submitted to Historic England and Natural England for Higher Level Stewardship commitments. All this on top of the weekly organisation and manual tasks.

## Save Our Magnificent Meadows

Today only 2% of the meadows that existed in the 1930's remain. Nearly 7.5 million acres of wildflower meadows have been lost so far and they are still being destroyed. Of those that do survive, around 75% occur in small fragments and remain vulnerable to destruction. *Continued on page 5.*

Dog owners in the UK are being warned about an outbreak of an animal disease that is carried by ticks. The ticks carrying the *Babesia canis* parasite have been found in fields in Harlow, Essex. The symptoms of babesiosis within dogs include weakness, lethargy, pale gums, red urine and fever. A serious problem is that *Babesia* can be mistaken for other less dangerous diseases. Vets are advising that the first thing that dog owners can do to protect their animals is to be aware of the problem.

## A First For Putnoe Wood

The spring bird survey by Dave Barnes in Putnoe Wood recorded 3 Siskins, which is a first for the site since he has been surveying there. Also sighted was a large flock of Redwings, 73 were recorded but the numbers could have been higher as it was difficult counting them high in the tops of trees. That is also Dave's highest Redwing count for the site. You can find further information on bird and other flora and fauna surveys on our website. Or as things happen on our facebook page.



## Its Just Not only For The Kiddies



It's not only the kiddies that get time to play in the spring sunshine! Only after all the chores have been done of course. March saw us clearing the cross paths in Putnoe Wood. Renhold Brook was back to normal levels after heavy rain, localised flooding and high winds the previous week.

## Bedford Borough Dog Control Order



Bedford Borough Council aims to promote responsible dog ownership and reduce complaints for dog issues such as dog fouling. This allows the public and especially children access to dog-free or dog-controlled areas intended for recreational purposes to improve health and well being, making Bedford a safe and enjoyable place to live. For the introduction of this order there is a public consultation. The period of this consultation is 18 April 2016 - 31 May 2016. For further information on the dog control order and consultation go to: [www. Bedford.gov.uk](http://www.Bedford.gov.uk).

## Not For The Faint Hearted



One of the ongoing projects for 2016 is the clearance of scrub and the improvement of the water quality of the first pond where the leat enters the Hillfort. Not only will our work benefit the wildlife but also allows interrupted views between the first and second ponds. A pair of common newts were recorded here in April, another welcome addition to our species list for Mowsbury Hillfort.



## A Sight for Sore Eyes



Another wonderful display from the Snowdrops in Putnoe Wood this year especially where the fallen trees had been cleared.



Bluebells, Wood Anemones and Primroses were also in abundance in the recently coppiced areas.

## Higher Level Stewardship



This will be our second year of working with Natural England and the Higher Level Stewardship. The Borough receives funding for work and management being carried out within this scheme at Mowsbury Hillfort. We will endeavour to ensure this funding benefits the scheduled monument. At the beginning of the year a meeting was held with Natural England, Historic England and Bedford Borough to discuss ongoing work and future priorities. We are still waiting for feedback from these organisations and look forward to their advice and comments.

## Spot Light On The Courtyard Meadow



The Courtyard Meadow formed part of the Iron Age Hillfort. It is not certain what it would have been used for during the Iron Age period. In medieval times it was probably part of the manor house gardens with the higher mound to the south allowing a promenading view over the courtyard meadow and magnificent views across the valley below towards the River Great Ouse. In the 1700s it was recorded as a milking yard and then during the 1900s as allotments. The smaller mounds you can see in the photograph are ant hills, age is not known. In the spring and summer many wild flowers grow here including a large population of spotted orchids. In recent years the perimeter encroaching scrub has been cut back. Each autumn the grass is cut and raked to encourage the wild flower population. We are committed under the Higher Level Stewardship and the Friend's Vision plan to maintain the biodiversity and the ambience of the meadow. Beyond the trees in blossom is the Inner Island. This is where Ralf Morrin's manor house, the Manor of Morinsbury, is thought to have stood, a timber framed house which has long gone. The only signs of a structure here is a robbed out ditch, where stone or brick supports for the timber frame have been removed. A story for another time perhaps



## Multitasking



January was a very busy time for us at the Hillfort. Not only did we have to complete the apple and pear pruning in the orchard but also prepare the site for the Wassail. The heavy cropping last year caused a few problems with branches being damaged and braking so we have had to be a little more ruthless with our pruning. As we have Laxton fruit trees possibly in both orchards we have added information and recognition data to our website together with other useful information and links on birds, butterflies and wild flowers. There are also useful links to the Laxton's family history.

## Nothing Ventured



If you had ventured into Putnoe Wood over Christmas and New Year you would have found us doing our best to tidy up the fallen and felled trees. Habitat piling with the smaller debris and stacking the larger limbs together. Because of acute oak, honey fungus, other fungal attacks and diseases, tree loss has become a common site in the wood. High winds will bring down the diseased trees especially if their root balls have been destroyed by fungal attack, this is why some trees have to be felled if they are near paths or are a danger to recreational users of the wood.



## Special Feature

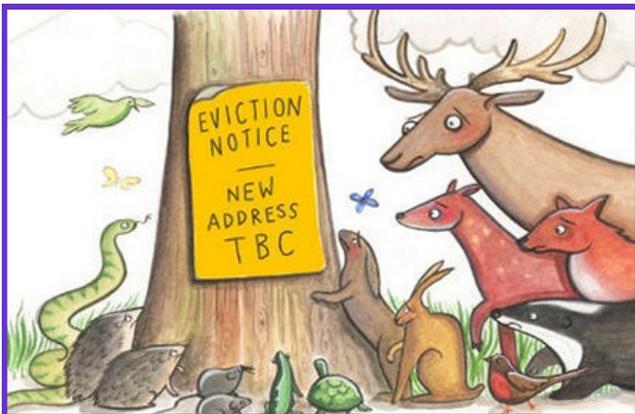
### Save Our Magnificent Meadows

Meadows and other species-rich grasslands are an intrinsic part of the UK's natural and cultural heritage - rich in landscape character, farming, folklore and history, they are as much a part of our heritage as the works of Shakespeare.



The UK's remaining species-rich grasslands now cover a minute fraction of the area they once covered, even relatively recently in the early 20th Century. There were once natural wildflower meadows in every parish – today only 2% of the meadows that existed in the 1930's remain. Nearly 7.5 million acres of wildflower meadow have been lost so far and they are still being destroyed. Of those that do survive, around 75% occur in small fragments and remain vulnerable to destruction.

Meadows and species-rich grasslands can support a huge range of wildlife including wildflowers, fungi, bees, flies, beetles, spiders, moths, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians, small mammals, bats and birds. In the UK, more priority species (for conservation attention) are associated with grasslands than with any other habitat type. Only 1% of the UK's land area now supports species-rich grassland and only 2% of the UK's grasslands are species-rich. Species-rich grasslands also provide other environmental benefits including carbon storage, water retention to prevent flooding and habitat for crop pollinators, they are also archaeologically important.



Culturally speaking grasslands have a long history of inspiring artists and writers such as Constable and Shakespeare, they are the landscape setting for many of our most important historical battles.

Village greens have long been the hub of rural community life, and many a common day phrase take their origin from grasslands..."off to pastures new" and "chalk and cheese".

The decline and loss of meadows and species-rich grasslands is without parallel in the history of nature conservation in the UK. What had been a widespread and ubiquitous part of agriculture and people's daily lives, disappeared altogether in the space of a single generation.

Six million acres of grassland was ploughed to grow cereals during the Second World War and this started a process which would see the area of lowland meadows decline by 97% in the following 40 years. Other species-rich grasslands met a similar, albeit marginally less catastrophic, fate.

### How To Protect A Meadow

Protecting a wildflower meadow that is not already notified as a statutory site is very difficult. It is a matter of providing evidence that the wildlife habitat would be irreversibly damaged by the activity of the development. Ideally, the best time to do this is when the local planning authority is consulting on its Development Plans for the area.

In the Bedford area decisions over which sites are included in the Local Plan 2032 will ultimately be taken by Bedford Borough Council's executive committee. A draft plan which will include the proposed allocation of sites to meet the development needs will be assessed and determined by an external party for public consultation by September 2016.

The National Planning Policy Framework represents the government's view of what sustainable development means in practice for the planning system. Chapter 11 refers to Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment and one of the core principles is to "contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution".

Information and maps on Bedford Borough's Local Plan 2032: [www.bedford.gov.uk/](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/)

Data, courtesy of [www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk](http://www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk)

### Food For Thought

"If all insects on Earth disappeared, within 50 years all life on Earth would end. If all human beings disappeared from the Earth, within 50 years all forms of life would flourish."

Jonas Salk.

Biologist discoverer of the polio vaccine

Information and data courtesy of [www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk](http://www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk), [www.quora.com](http://www.quora.com), [www.no\\_more\\_bricks.com](http://www.no_more_bricks.com), [www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)