



The Friends of

Putnoe Wood & Mowsbury Hillfort

Newsletter

Spring 2013

Wassailed



With great reluctance, the seasonal Wassail event that had been planned for January had to be postponed due to the wintery weather a few days before. A 40mm blanket of snow on the Hillfort looked very picturesque, but unfortunately the sloping golf club car park was covered in ice and snow and unsafe to use. We rearranged the event for the beginning of February, but once again the weather intervened as heavy rain meant the walk up to the Hillfort and the paths inside were badly waterlogged and covered in 20mm of melting snow. A Wassail is traditionally held in January, so after two abortive attempts we decided to abandon the event for this year. However, we hope to be able to organise a similar event in the orchard, either when the trees are in blossom or perhaps later at harvest time. Of course, the Hemlock Morris will be invited to dance at the next event.

Ward Funding for Putnoe Wood

Excellent news - Cllr Michael Headley and Cllr Sallyanne Smith have contributed a large portion of their combined ward member fund towards new interpretation boards for Putnoe Wood. The Friends are greatly appreciative for their generosity and will ensure the money is used wisely.



A small working group of Friends and Borough officers will put together the text and illustrations for the boards and prepare a timetable for installation. The first meeting of the group will be held later in March.

The Hobbits Tale

While we were wrapped up warm and cosy at the time of the cancelled Wassail, a Borough colleague and a friend decided to go for a stroll in the snow covered Cairngorms, Scotland. Their accommodation for the night was a 'bothy', something that looked with stone walls and a tiled roof, no heating because the chimney was blocked and the only loo was the hole that you dug for yourself. In the morning they awoke to conditions that were very severe, my bootlaces so frozen, along with one set of gloves, hat, coat etc, that I could have because of the freezing temperatures, they had slept in most of their clothes which was a blessing because it would have been a difficult to get dressed in the morning with all their clothes frozen stiff and no heating available to thaw them out.



We find a few centimetres of snow a major problem, so how about this for bad conditions in parts I kept disappearing every few steps! In the end I had to resort to hands and knees. I am pleased to be able to report that the intrepid ones returned home safe and sound.

Replacement Fruit Trees

English Heritage has agreed that we can replace the dead fruit trees in the Hillfort orchard. Six apple trees have been acquired and it is planned to plant them very soon. In the meantime, the trees are being given shelter in one of the Friends' garden.

Saplings for Putnoe Wood

We can announce that 30 trees (small whips) are to be planted in Putnoe Wood. To protect the structural diversity of the Wood, some new species of tree are being introduced, such as Hornbeam and small-leaved Lime. The planting is scheduled for Wednesday 13th March 2013 and related work will include clearance of the planting locations and fitting of tree guards.

Dead Hedging

Our dead hedging at the Hillfort is generating interest and has been complimented on.



The dead hedges have been constructed out of necessity and the method we use has evolved over the last two years. Mowsbury Hillfort is an Ancient Monument site under the guardianship of English Heritage and it is fairly inaccessible for vehicles. The issue we faced early on was what to do with the huge quantity of cuttings and waste material that was being generated by the clearance of the overgrown scrub and removing dead trees. English Heritage would not permit any burning of the waste unless we used a raised metal fire-bed in an open space; this was not a realistic or practical option. Chipping the waste was equally problematic and impractical. Funding and moving the large quantity of waste material were other disadvantages with both of these options.

We did consider piling the cut material into random stacks, which would provide a good habitat for the wildlife, but on such a small site it would not look very pleasing to visitors. The restrictions of the Ancient Monument site meant we could not drive supporting stakes into the ground. In addition, most of the waste was dead and brittle or just rotten. Establishing a stable dead hedge with this material initially proved very difficult, particularly when working adjacent to the ditches or ponds. The solution that evolved was to utilise the stumps of cut elder and blackthorn, these were used in place of stakes as supports for the dead hedges. This method proved very successful, however, using of the dead hedges do not run in straight lines. This provides character and informality to the site. We trust you agree.

Banner

The Borough has provided the Friends with a publicity banner for use at events, fairs and shows. It measures 85cm x 200 cm has a central supporting pole and can be used inside or outside. We hope it will attract extra helping hands to join us and explain our aims to those who are not already aware of our existence.



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**Putnoe Wood
& Mowsbury Hillfort**

- Ecology
- Environment
- Wildlife
- Flora and Fauna
- Archaeology
- History
- Woodland Skills
- Volunteering

Find out more about us at:

- www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk
- contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk
- Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort
- friends@mowshillfort

 BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



English Litter Count

A thirty minute litter count and pick-up was carried out at Putnoe Wood as part of the *Keep Britain Tidy Great Litter Count*. The result was seven sacks of litter, a bicycle



tyre, a chair and numerous pieces of wood and metal, a selection of deodorant cans, shaving foam cans and eighteen larger cans. Was this left by the gang of clean shaven, sweet smelling and thirsty squirrels seen playing in the Wood? Sadly, the Top of the Picks went to forty dog poop bags, obviously the message has not got through to some dog owners. We have learnt there have been numerous

complaints concerning the lack of dog bins from users of the Wood. There is one bin at the main entrance and another in Mowsbury Park near the tennis courts. Yet these often overflow at peak times. We have asked for additional bins to be installed at some of the other six exits to the Wood, but have been informed they are not suitable because of there is no vehicular access to these locations. Despite this, the lack of bins should not be an excuse for decorating the Wood with the poop bags, so this is something we must try to improve.

Funds for Tools

Another good news story. The Friends have always had to borrow suitable tools and equipment from the Priory Park Rangers for our tasks in the Wood and at the Hillfort. The increasing number of volunteers has outgrown the tools available. We have been given a modest amount of money to buy a selection of the day to day tools we need. No chain saws or shredders this time, but everyone must live in hope!

Let Us Know Your Views.

Contribute to the next issue of the newsletter.

Together Everyone Achieves More

Nostalgia

Richard from Kent, who was born in Bedford and lived in Putnoe until 2004, has contacted us with some of his childhood memories of Putnoe Wood. He remembers early in the Second World War, a Blenheim bomber crashing into the south east corner of the Wood and a Hurricane which crashed into the stream halfway between the Wood and Kimbolton Road. Richard has also told us about Bill Allen, who farmed the Cleat Hill area and lost a leg in First World War. He was helped by his brother Ted, who lived in a wooden hut erected inside the medieval moated area at the Hillfort. It was interesting to learn that Bill Allen was an amateur archaeologist who had a collection of pottery he



had gathered from the Hillfort, one wonders where this is now! Bill Allen gets a mention in G J Dring's article on Iron Age pottery from the Hillfort. Another local resident who frequents the Hillfort remembers Bill Allen drinking at the Park Inn.

If you can expand on this knowledge please contact us,

English Apples and Orchards Project

Three members of the Friends group joined other volunteers from around Bedford for a fascinating fruit tree



pruning day, this covered the pruning methodology needed to cultivate and restore fruit trees. The day was led by Bob Lever from the England Apples and Orchards Project and he has provided us with the confidence to tackle the restorative work needed at the Hillforts orchards.

For more information go to: www.woodland-trust.org.uk/ancient-tree-forum/fruittree.htm.

Dog Control Order

Within the Bedford Borough area, the Dog Control Order for Fouling covers the following:

‘Any land within the administrative area of Bedford Borough Council, including covered land which is open to the air on at least one side, and to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access with or without payment. Two descriptions of land it does not apply to are designated in the Order is Land that is placed at the disposal of the Forestry Commissioners under Section 29 of the Forestry Act 1967 in respect of the making of any dog control order under Section 55 of the Clean neighbourhoods; and any land which forms part of a road, in respect of the making of a dog control order which provides for the exclusion of dogs.’

One wonders what resources are available to monitor and issue dog control penalty notices.

Shrine at Mowsbury Hillfort



While working in the Courtyard meadow we have discovered what appears to be a shrine. The items have not been disturbed for the time being but may need to be in the future. If anyone can shed some light on this matter it would be very much appreciated.

The Carry on Gang



The Friends team carried on where they left off last year. The clearance work in the neglected orchard has progressed well but has been halted for the time being, they moved on to scrub clearance around the medieval ponds before the start of the bird nesting season.

Spring Is In The Air



Snowdrops in Putnoe Wood and the Bluebells will be hot on their heels.

A Picture Says a Thousand Words



Until recently the area around the medieval ponds was heavily overgrown by scrub, blackthorn and elder. Thanks to the Friends, this area has now been cleared and the archaeological features are much more clearly defined. The cutting back of the blackthorn and elder will protect the banks from further damage and the dead hedging will provide habitat for the wildlife. It is surprising what a few hours of enthusiasm and effort can achieve.

Spent Shell Casings.



During the nineteenth century the fields to the north of Putnoe Wood running up towards the Hillfort, as shown on maps dated 1886 to 1888 were two rifle ranges. We often find spent cartridges in this area.

Waxwings



Not a frequent visitor to Mowsbury this flock of Waxwings were photographed just outside of Putnoe Wood. The first British arrivals each winter are usually seen on the east coast from Scotland to East Anglia, but birds move inland in search of food, particularly rowan and hawthorn.

Memories

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

Winter Walk



In early January, some Friends enjoyed a pleasant walk in the snow through Putnoe Wood and onto the Hillfort. The aim was to explore whether there was a short and direct route connecting the Wood with the Hillfort, to allow walks and events to be organised which combine both sites.

Epiphytic Bryophytes and Lichens List

Bryophytes

Amblystegium serpens
Brachythecium rutabulum
Campylopus introflexus
Homalothecium sericeum
Hypnum cupressiforme
Orthotrichum spp.
Rhynchostegium confertum
Zygodon sp.
Ulota crispa/bruchii

Lichens

Evernia
Melanelixia
Parmelia
Physcia
Leafy Xanthoria

Recorded with OPAL East of England, 14th August 2012 at Mowsbury Hillforts orchard.

Second Year Celebrations



Bring and Share
7.00pm Tuesday 9th April
Priory Park Visitors Centre.

You can help to protect healthy oak trees and prevent spreading Acute Oak Decline:



Avoid contact with trees showing symptoms such as stem bleeds and dead or dying branches.

Do not touch the bleeding areas on tree stems.

If you have been walking or cycling in an area where there are diseased trees, clean soles of walking shoes and bicycle tyres before entering areas where trees are not yet affected.

Do not remove dead wood, branches or infected bark from the wooded area.

For the latest information please go to the Forestry Commission web site at:

www.forestry.gov.uk/

Future Activities and Events

**Wildlife Trust, Botanical/biodiversity walk.
Mowsbury Hillfort.**

**Mowsbury Hillfort. Guided Walk
With Jeremy Oetgen of Albion Archaeology.**

**Putnoe Wood, Mowsbury Hillfort Bird Walks.
With Dave Barnes.**

**Opal tree health survey.
Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort.**

**Plant ID's and surveys.
Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort.**

Friends group second year birthday celebrations.

**Tasks every Wednesday and alternate Saturdays
1.30—4.00pm.**

**Please check out the Diary on the web site or our
Facebook page for confirmed dates and times.**



The Friends of

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The Friends Group are actively researching the pre 1970's history, archaeology and ecology of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort. If you have memories, stories, images or information concerning either of these sites we would like to hear from you. Do you remember or have information on the Blenheim bomber or the Hurricane that came down in Putnoe Wood or know of Mr Bill Allen and his brother who farmed the Cleat Hill area? All information and nostalgia would be very much appreciated.

Please contact us on:

contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk



Priority Diary Spring 2013

2 nd	2pm-4pm WT Wildlife Watch ♀	March
3 rd	9am-3pm Volunteer Task	
13 th	7.30pm WT Talk: Protecting Bedfordshire's Wildlife	
30 th	2pm Guided Spring Walk	April
31 st	9am Guided Bird Walk ♂	
6 th	2pm-4pm WT Wildlife Watch ♀	
7 th	9am-3pm Volunteer Task	May
10 th	7.30pm WT Talk: AGM and Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire	
13-20 th	Exhibition of Designs for Labyrinth Centrepiece	
21 st	2pm-4pm WT Plant Sale	
28 th	9am Guided Bird Walk ♂	
4 th	2pm-4pm WT Wildlife Watch ♀	
5 th	9am-3pm Volunteer Task	
12 th	4.30am Dawn Chorus Bird Walk	
25 th	Faith Community Event	
26 th	9am Bird Walk ♂	
31 st	9pm Bat Walk	

Priority Country Park
Barkers Lane
Bedford
MK41 9DJ

Free car parking
Car park locked 9pm to 5am

Visitor Centre open:
9am to 5pm weekdays
11am to 4pm weekends

Information

For further information on Volunteer Tasks, Guided Walks or general park information please ring Priority Rangers on 01234 211182 or email priorityrangers@bedford.gov.uk

Guided walks start from the Visitor Centre. **Booking essential**

Wildlife Trust talks and Wildlife Watch are held at the Visitor Centre. For talks and Wildlife Watch a donation of £2 is suggested. For more information please ring 01234 364213 or email Bedfordshire@wildlifebon.org

Wildlife Watch is aimed at 8-12 year olds interested in nature and the outdoors. Younger children are welcome if accompanied by an adult. **Booking essential.**

Please bring along your binoculars for the Bird Walks. ♂

Useful Telephone Numbers

Larissa Clarke Parks Officer	01234 718350
Priority Park Rangers	01234 211182
Bedford Borough Council	01234 267422
Pride in Bedford	01234 718276
Bedford Police (non emergency)	101
Environmental Services Help Line	0800 121 8888
Highways Help Line	01234 718003
Bedford Citizens Advice Bureau	0844 245 1290
NHS Direct	08454647