



The Friends of

Putnoe Wood & Mowsbury Hillfort

Newsletter

Summer 2014

Bedford Local Plan 2032



The process has started for the preparation of the Bedford Local Plan 2032. This will determine the growth in jobs, new housing and infrastructure required between now and 2032 and identify development locations. Ravensden alone has eleven sites, Graze Hill being the largest for 500 to 600 houses. There are numerous other potential sites along the length of the green corridor between Clapham and Great Barford. The Borough has a responsibility to balance future needs of the town with full consideration for current residents, the local wild life and ecosystem. It is reported 98% of the UK's wildflower meadows have been destroyed since the 1930's and productive farm land is disappearing at an ever increasing rate. The change in designation from agricultural land to building land will greatly increase the value of farm land and will persuade some owners to sell off their green pastures. Sites considered for development a few years ago are not mentioned within this current plan but should still be considered at risk. The majority of current developments are to the south and west of Bedford and are supported by new roads and related infrastructure. There is a need to provide land for housing for future generations, but before we rush to dig up farm land, we should make better use of underused or derelict buildings and brown field sites. Further pressure is being applied by Luton Borough

because it has indicated that it is unable to meet its housing requirements within its own boundaries and will be asking Bedford Borough to meet some of this need. Discussions are ongoing, so watch this space. Further information at www.bedford.gov.uk



Putnoe Wood Interpretation Boards



Following eighteen months of design work, consultation, sweat, blood and tears the interpretation boards were installed in Putnoe Wood in early July. Our thanks to the Friends working group, Borough colleagues, Councillors Michael Headley and Sallyanne Smith for their ward funding and to everyone involved.



Tree Mapping



Another challenge for the group earlier this year was to start mapping the location and varieties of fruit trees in the orchard at Mowsbury Hillfort. Last year the trees produced a heavy crop, but early indications suggest this year the harvest will be more modest. If you do pick some of the fruit, we ask you to sample the different varieties and only take enough for personal use.

Pathing The Way



Before bird nesting began in Putnoe Wood two new green paths were cleared. The new paths meander through the heart of the wood and provide a new way for visitors to experience the wood. In addition they provide better access for essential maintenance work. When funding is available they will be surfaced. Adjustments to the width and profiling of existing path corners will allow vehicle access around the wood for management work. Unfortunately not everything runs smoothly, a minority of visitors expressed some concerns about the essential maintenance and seasonal clearance work in some parts of the Wood. The Beds on Sunday included an item about this work which we can report was not factually correct. A significant proportion of the trees in the wood have health issues and over the next few years some of these will be lost. Last year a re-planting regime was initiated and more new trees will be planted this year. Rest assured we only have the best interests at heart for Putnoe Wood.

Butterfly Survey 2014



The annual butterfly count at Mowsbury Hillfort began in April and will run through to the end of September. Last year twenty one different species of butterflies were recorded and on one occasion a total of three hundred were recorded. This year the seasons appear to be approximately advanced by one month with hedgerow plants and brambles flowering and fruiting early, it will be interesting to see what affect this has on the count. The Friends group have also taken a keener interest this year in bee and insect activity which we hope to incorporate into our ecology understanding of the site.



Ragwort today Gone Tomorrow



We looked into whether the grass on Mowsbury Hill meadow could be cut and baled, the answer was yes but it must be free of ragwort. Last year we made a big effort to remove as much ragwort as we could from the meadow. This year there seems to be fewer plants higher up the meadow, but on the lower area and around the perimeter there are still enough plants to support a healthy number of Cinnaba moth. Ragwort has been subjected to a number of campaigns recently because of its toxicity if eaten by livestock. Poisoning is a rare event and concerns have been raised that unnecessary overreaction to ragwort causes ecological damage, by encouraging agricultural intensification and unnecessary destruction of other ecological resources. It has been suggested pulling up ragwort can leave behind broken root fragments, each of which is capable of producing a new rosette the following year. Research indicates the best way to control ragwort is to fence against rabbits and let the plants go to seed. This will kill established plants and the seeds will not reproduce, provided there is no soil disturbance by rabbits. Removing the ragwort last year does appear to have controlled the spread. Perhaps we should review how we deal with ragwort in the future.. The Weeds Act 1959 does not require ragwort to be controlled, but allows the government to issue specific orders when necessary.

Can't Get enough Of A Good Thing.



Park ranger Jane pictured here to the right of volunteer Lynn cannot keep away from Mowsbury Hill meadow even on her day off. Did the special ragwort tool do what it says on the tin?. Only Jane knows.

New BMX Area.



The new BMX area to the north of Mowsbury Park is well on the way to completion and will be a greater challenge for users compared to the present one. Using the disused council nursery is a far better option than trying to carve out a track within the wood. A nearby grassed area adjacent to the wood becomes badly waterlogged and has always been a problem, this will be allowed to grow over and become part of the wood.

If you are a keen BMXer and have tried out the new course let us know what you think of it. Email us at: contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.com



We Have Bin Here Before.



For some time we have argued the case for installing further dog poop bins at the exits to Putnoe Wood. In a perfect world, if there was a lack of litter and poop bins, you would expect people to take their litter home but sadly for many it is easier to dispose of it the wood. When we tried to negotiate for additional poop bins we were informed they had to be sited adjacent to a hard surface where the collection vehicle could reach them. A new wide path is being laid to give access the new BMX area, so we will try again and hope funding is available.

We carry out regular litter picks, so if you would like to lend a hand just let us know.

Dead Wood



Dead wood! No not us poor volunteers. We have contemplated carving some of the standing dead wood in Putnoe Wood to add interest to a walk. If we took a leaf out of Knebworth House's artistic carvings would we evoke more complaints, who said bird watching could not be fun. In the years ahead we are going to lose a number of mature trees due to disease. Instead of felling the trees at ground level when they become unsafe or cannot be left as standing dead wood, perhaps we could be a little more creative. Take a stroll around Harrold Country Park and you will see smaller less risqué carvings than at Knebworth. Let us know what you think.

On The Cards

As we approach autumn and the bird nesting season draws to a close, we can start to look at the long term projects for autumn and winter. This year we will start clearing the debris and scrub from the leat that runs from the top of Cleat Hill to the first pond within the perimeter of the Hillfort. This is needed to increase the volume of water along the length of the leat and in the ponds and ditches. Two reasons for this are, firstly to help preserve any archaeology that may be buried in the soil and secondly to encourage a greater diversity of wildlife. We still have the Hillfort nature sign to reinstate and the oak sleeper notice board to install at the lower end of Mowsbury Hill meadow. For Putnoe Wood we have a helpful long list from Danny the park ranger which includes planting two to three hundred saplings to replace those that will be lost due to age and disease.



Fund Raising

Great News. By using easyfundraising and easysearch this year £27.38 has been raised for the Friends coffers. Keep Up the good work. Thank You.

www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk

Ash Tag



Ash dieback disease has been rapidly spreading across the country since October 2012, and sightings have been confirmed from Edinburgh to Penzance. The race is now on to help scientists understand how the disease spreads and to identify potentially resistant trees.

Ten ash trees, five each at Mowsbury Hillfort and Putnoe Wood were tagged and the information uploaded to the ash tag site during June. Further information from: www.ashtag.org

Letter From A Friend.

Great to hear you're all well. So glad the boards have had a good response. Relieved they finally made it to site! I am really enjoying all the learning, even though my head does feel like it might explode sometimes! Everyday I learn something new or pick up another tip or idea for the future. 3 more deadlines looming in the next few weeks so head down cramming but at least with my practise clients and dog walks I do get to see some of this wonderful sunshine. I'm off to Dundee for a long weekend to visit a friend who has just had a baby so mini holiday - though I have already sussed out I can use the wifi to study for the 6 hour train journey each way!

Please say hi to Allison and the gang.

*Eye for now
Larissa*



ROW



The right of way that runs along part of the north side of the hillfort was a challenge this year. A great deal of manual labour and effort was needed to clear the path with assistance from a brushcutter and strimmer. Well done everyone.



The view across the fields was worthy of the effort.

Spotted, Bee and Pyramid Orchids



You cannot keep a good orchid down. This season we saw common spotted, bee and pyramid orchids on Mowsbury Hill meadow and in the Courtyard Meadow, with more common spotted orchids in the Orchard.

Urban Wild Flower Beds



Six sites across Bedford were planted in 2013 with different mixes of perennial grasses and wildflowers. These were monitored by experts from Cranfield and Sheffield Universities, to find out how changes to urban green spaces can affect local people and wildlife. There were two other sites on Waveney Green and Mallard Hill in Brickhill, which were not part of the trial. Some residents asked for the beds to be removed because at times they looked messy and untidy. Since the 1930's we have lost 98% of the UK's wildflower meadows and by taking part in this national research project Bedford is helping to find out how urban parks and open spaces can help to compensate for this enormous loss.

Gardening Duties



The grass and scrub at the Hillfort has been growing faster than we can control it and we have had to spend several sessions keeping the paths clear and checking the fruit trees to ensure that they are not overloaded.

Love Clean Streets

Bedford, Clean Streets is an intuitive that allows you, by smart phone, via phone, the web site, text or mms to review and submit environmental issues and have Clean Streets Bedford deal with it, they will then let you know how they got on and if or when the issue has been resolved. Whether it is an abandoned car, litter, fly-tipping, graffiti etc. For further information:
<http://cleanstreets.bedford.gov.uk/help>



What A Whopper



Not a common site at the Hillfort. This Morchella Semilibera (half-free morel) was photographed by Keith Balmer © at the rear of the orchard during April.

Path Finders



Last year we cleared all three cross paths between the south side of Putta's Path and Gostwick Ride, this year they required further maintenance to limit the encroaching scrub and weeds.

Tasks, Activities and Friends Meetings

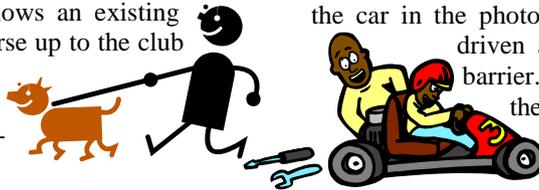
Please checkout the Diary on our websites what's on page for times and dates:

www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk
contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk

Path Finder



For some time we have been looking for a suitable path between Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort, to allow the Friends to organise nature, history, archaeological and foraging walks encompassing both sites. The construction of a new BMX area on the site of the derelict council nursery gives us the opportunity to negotiate with the Borough and the Golf course. One possibility starts in the BMX site and follows an existing track on the edge of the golf course up to the club house, possibility here for refreshments and then on to the Hillfort. We will keep you updated of our progress.



Just Not Cricket



We have had marauding cyclists scattering walkers in the wood, packs of dogs worrying picnickers, cars practising in the car parks for Santa Pod and now motorised mini-carts racing across the cricket pitches and beyond. Neither the adult nor the young boy in the photo are wearing a helmet or other protective clothing and was insurance ever considered! What is also worrying is that the car in the photo was not left in the car park but driven across the grass and parked by a barrier. What ever next, motor cross on the BMX track?

Not Just For Christmas.



Not all butterflies perish before Christmas. Some such as the Clouded Yellow, Painted Lady and the Red Admiral, which come from North Africa and the Mediterranean coast, migrate northwards each year arriving in Britain in May or early June. In contrast, the Brimstone, the Comma, the Small Tortoiseshell and the Peacock hibernate here over the winter and make an early appearance at the first signs of spring.

Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort.

Our next meeting:

Tuesday 14th October,

7.00pm. Trophy Room / Function Room
Mowsbury Golf Club.

Check out the What's On page on the website for tasks and events.



Friends AGM Meeting August

The Friends AGM was held on Tuesday 11th at Mowsbury Golf Club. Andy Wilkins was re-elected as chairman, John Wilkie as Treasurer and John Wallace as Task and events Coordinator. Chris Wedge stood down from her role as secretary. Helen Wilkie was nominated and elected as secretary. We would like to thank Chris Wedge for all her hard work over the last three years, to Helen for stepping into the breach and to the other re-elected members for their continued efforts.

Bug or Beetle.



Bugs can be confused with beetles but their mouthparts are different. Bugs have a tube called a rostrum for piercing and sucking, beetles mouthparts are adapted for biting, cutting and chewing. If you need help identifying British wildlife try www.uksafari.com/wildfiles.htm.

Will They Ever Learn



We do our best to try and make Putnoe Wood a more enjoyable place for people to visit. Within a week of installing the new information boards they were being used by inconsiderate dog walkers as a place to dispose of dog poop bags. As we mentioned on the front page we are hoping to get an extra poop bin installed at the wood. Whether another bin will quell some people's desire to deposit poop bags in the wood is anyone's guess. We live in hope.



A Walk on Wild side With Dave Barnes



Dave Barnes visited the Hillfort on the morning of Sunday June 3rd and was rewarded with a host of butterflies including an abundance of Marbled Whites and Ringlets. The meadow was alive with insects of various types and the bird life was plentiful. The highlight being a Lesser Whitethroat in song on the edge of the car park. On the mammal front, he disturbed a couple of Muntjac in the orchard and came across two Shrews on the orchard path. You can follow Dave on twitter, Facebook or on the priorycountrypark.blogspot.com.

We need your guidance at Mowsbury Hillfort. Please help us by completing the questionnaire overleaf. Just print out, fill in and drop it in to Priory visitor centre or hand to a member of the Friends group. A copy of the questionnaire is available from the office page of the web site.

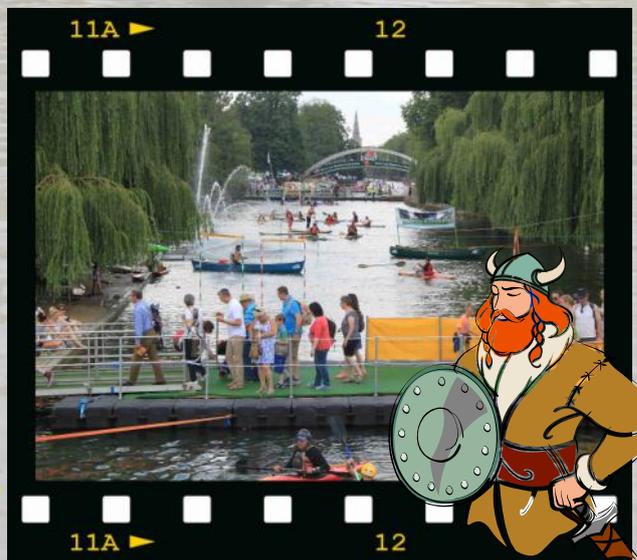
Your support and opinions are important to us.



Bedford River Festival



Not strictly related to Putnoe Wood or Mowsbury Hillfort. It was lovely to see the joyful faces of happy people enjoying the river festival and of course it showcases Bedford. Getting involved in voluntary work in the local community can be enjoyable and rewarding. However, we do get time off for good behaviour so here are a few snaps of the festival if you did not manage to get down to the embankment. You can also find further images on the web site under Photo Album or our image site <http://images.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk/>



What would you like to see happen at MOWSBURY HILL ANCIENT MONUMENT?



WE NEED YOUR GUIDANCE – Your support and opinions are important to us.
Please help us by completing this questionnaire.

Please answer on a scale of 1 to 10. 1 = being I strongly disagree and 10 = I strongly agree.

In general I think that...

If the countryside must change it is still important to preserve some things for future generations.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

It is important to preserve archaeological sites in the countryside.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

It is important for the public to be able to visit archaeological sites.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

It is important to conserve natural habitats to encourage a wide range of wildlife.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

It is important for the public to be able to visit wild places.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Wildlife is more important than archaeological remains.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Protect the archaeological remains and try to make them more visible (e.g. by clearing undergrowth).

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Protect rare wildlife and seek to attract a wider range of species to the site.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Make it easier for people to visit the site and explore it.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Enable people to find out more about the archaeology and cultural history of the site.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Enable people to find out more about the natural history of the site.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Help ordinary people to become actively involved in the management of the site.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

Care for old orchard trees and maintain the orchard by planting new fruit trees where possible.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.

The Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort are an asset working with Bedford Borough.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10.