



The Friends of

# Putnoe Wood & Mowsbury Hillfort

# Newsletter

Issue 4 August 2012

## A rolling stone gathers no moss

A rolling stone may not gather any moss, however, those who attended the Opal moss and lichen workshop at the Hillfort orchard found a few of the more common varieties. We learnt there are 1600 types of Lichens and 756 of Mosses. Viewed under the microscope and sprayed with a little water the mosses soon sprang to life. Further investigation and surveying of the orchard for mosses and lichens is planned for the near future.



For more information on this fascinating subject and other work being carried out by Opal go to: [www.opalexplornature.org/surveys](http://www.opalexplornature.org/surveys)

## Badger cull in the UK

This autumn, a pilot cull of badgers will begin in the United Kingdom. If approval is given for a general cull

it will involve the free-shooting of badgers. This would inevitably lead to horrific injuries and terrible suffering for many badgers. Scientists suggest the impact would be negligible, or more likely make matters worse. Badger vaccination could be a far more effective solution. Do we have a valid reason

to kill a large number of wild British animals? Have your say at: [www.thepetitionsite.com](http://www.thepetitionsite.com)



## Nettle Slashing



Although the wet weather has made tasks difficult at the Hillfort during the early months of this year the paths have been cleared of nettles and over hanging branches and the recreational routes are now clearly defined. The short range weather forecast predicts drier conditions for a while at least, so it may give us the opportunity to tackle some of the larger and more challenging projects.

## Even The Kitchen Sink

While working in Putnoe Wood, to clear paths of nettles and overhanging branches, the group also collected litter. Not only did they find the usual cans, bottles, glass, paper and of course the discarded dog poo bags but a kitchen sink. Who ever went to the trouble of carrying this across Mowsbury Park and then dumping it in the Wood should stand up and raise their hand. We think you should receive a special award for effort and inconsideration!

## **Up-and-Coming Events and Tasks 2012**

**Friends Meeting**

**Mowsbury Golf Club, September 4th. 19.00**

**Tasks:**

**Every Wednesday 1.30—4.00pm.**

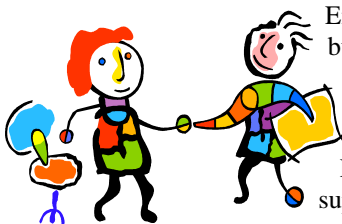
**Every other Saturday 1.30—4.00pm**

**Please checkout our Facebook page**

**[www.facebook.com/putnoemowsburyfriends](http://www.facebook.com/putnoemowsburyfriends)**

### English Heritage Meeting

Members of the Friends group and Jane and Ed from the Park Rangers had a meeting with David Kenny from English Heritage, at Mowsbury Hillfort, to discuss and seek advice on how we can proceed with our future ambitions for the Hillfort. David Kenny was supportive of our ideas and recommended that an environmental and management plan is prepared as a priority, he also suggested that any work should be planned over a ten year period or longer. So planning for the future, perhaps an early task for the Friends should be to provide wheel chair access with comfortable rest areas whilst we still have the energy. Hopefully, through our efforts and hard work we can encourage the next generation to take up the challenge and go forward.



### Picture Of The Month

The look on Park Ranger Jane's face when Dave from English Heritage suggested keeping sheep up at Mowsbury Hillfort to control the vegetation.



Would you not agree that Jane makes a great shepherdess. A whole new cottage industry springs to mind, weaving, spinning and not forgetting mint sauce.

### **Have Your Say!**

How would you like to see our group progress?  
How can we raise funds?  
What Tasks or Events would you like us to consider?

### **Let Us Know Your Views.**

Contribute to the September issue of the newsletter.

**Together Everyone Achieves More**

*Una Sulum Perficio Magis*

### 4.50 From Paddington.



Most of us will have heard or read about the Iceni and their warrior Queen Boudicca. Following the death of her husband Prasutagus she rebelled against Rome in AD 61. After unexpected victories using guerrilla tactics she agreed to fight the Romans in a set battle which predictably resulted in defeat. She took her own life shortly afterwards by way of poison.

Living in Bedford we may have heard of the Catuvellauni, their lands stretched from Kent all the way up through Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and west to Gloucestershire. Led by two brothers, Togodumnus and Caratacus, the Catuvellauni vehemently opposed the Roman occupation as well as two British client kings of the period, Verica and Cogidubnus. When Togodumnus was killed in a battle with the Legions of Vespasian, Caratacus was forced to travel westwards to the hinterlands of South Wales and then on to North Wales where he pursued guerrilla tactics until his fate was sealed when Queen Cartimandua betrayed him to the Romans.

Could the Catuvellauni on their retreat to the West have stood on Mowsbury Hillfort, watching over the Roman road which roughly follows the same route as the present Wentworth Drive or searching further out towards the River Ouse waiting for the advancing Roman legions? Was the Hillfort previously occupied by another tribal faction and the Catuvellauni ejected them or was the Hillfort abandoned before these dates and then rediscovered during medieval times? Fact, fiction or supposition, ask a scholar and they may joke that the retreating Catuvellauni escaped via the 4.50 from Paddington. What would history or archaeology be without a little poetic licence but what is fact, is that before Julius Caesar's invasion in 55BC and Claudius's conquest in AD43 and after the Romans departure from Britain in AD 410, we the British were continually at war with ourselves.

The next time you are up at the Hillfort, slashing nettles or clearing scrub take a step back and come to your own conclusion. Why was Mowsbury Hillfort built in such a strategic position? Why go to all the trouble of digging ditches, establishing defensive mounds and later creating a moated island? What is the change in circumstances that a once important site has seen history pass it by? Perhaps opening up the interior and further archaeological studies will provide a better understanding of the site.

The area's history does not end here but then that is another story.





## Bedford River Festival



Thousands of people joined in the fun at the Bedford river festival and amongst other attractions saw Mayor Dave at the head of the cruiser parade. Thankfully the Friends group did not volunteer to participate in the litter pick at the end of the celebrations. At the Heritage Village on top of the Castle Mound you would have found Spartans, ancient Greeks and Romans. On seeing the flimsy outfits of the Romans, it is quite understandable why the British climate had them scurrying back to Rome.

## Fire-Raiser

For sometime the Friends group and the Park Rangers have been discussing the options for using, removing or recycling the cut scrub, coppicing and debris from the Wood and the Hillfort. As our work progresses the problem is becoming more acute. There is of course good ecological reasons for leaving some of this waste to provide insect and bird habitat or to erect barriers to protect the flora and wildlife. An alternative is to chip, but then there is the logistical problem of getting the chipper close to the waste or we have to drag or carry the waste to the chipper. In a perfect world we would probably like to remove the waste to the green recycling unit, as well as being an expensive option and funding is at a premium there are similar logistical restrictions.



Burning is another option, however, there are concerns that this could damage the underlying soil and any archaeological remnants. During our recent meeting with David Kenny from English Heritage, he suggested we consider the option of a raised fire stand which English Heritage is trialling at several sites throughout the country. This is constructed in metal with a ground clearance of a metre and is demountable for ease of transporting. Definitely worth considering if we can obtain the funding.

## The Quest

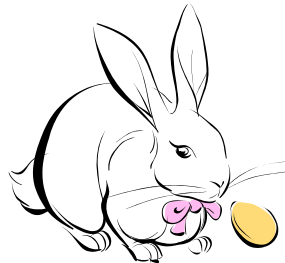
In a time not long ago, in a wood not far away, a small band of men and women embarked on a nature quest led by Park Ranger OB Jon Kenobi. Little did they know at the time where this quest would take them and the future was neither clear nor defined.

Now eighteen months later we can look back on our achievements. From humble beginnings our numbers have increased and as our confidence has grown we have taken on more responsibilities at Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort. In May 2012, we became a formally constituted group and the members elected a chairman, secretary, treasurer and task & event coordinator. We are actively forging working relationships and friendships with other groups and experts in their fields so that we always have the best possible advice and guidance. As well as the manual tasks, we are actively trying to get local people interested in the two sites by organising and promoting nature and wildlife walks, foraging, archaeological and history events.

Life does not stand still and we are always looking for new opportunities to promote the Wood and the Hillfort but not at the expense of the eco-environment or the wildlife. Over the last couple of months we have been busy organising short and long term task strategies and events. For the latest information keep an eye on our Facebook page.

## Hop it.

Love them or hate them rabbits can be destructive. These furry hoppers dig holes and burrows without heed to man or archaeological sites. Not one of us that have visited the Hillfort has failed to circumnavigate all of their excavations. In the near future we will have to consider how we are to control their numbers whether by ferreting or by other means. Let us know what your views are on this subject.



## Memories

Please contact us if you have memories or information of any kind on Putnoe Wood or Mowsbury Hillfort. If your family and friends have had connections with either the Wood or the Hillfort or you have old photographs, articles or diary excerpts.

We are always trying to expand our knowledge and understanding of these two sites and record our findings for future generations.

contact@putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk  
www.facebook.com/#!/putnoemowsburyfriends

Stay in touch.

Find Us on FaceBook and Twitter or  
[Www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk](http://www.putnoemowsburyfriends.org.uk)



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT



## Wild liquorice

*Astragalus glycyphyllos*.  
Widespread but thinly distributed throughout England.  
Is a member of the pea family

Location:  
Mowsbury Hillfort

Harvest/Pick  
Leave to the liquorice piercer moth.

Uses  
*Astragalus* root extract is also known as milk vetch or *huang qi*.  
The herb is used to treat a number of different medical conditions.

## Oxeye Daisy

Location  
Mowsbury Hillfort. Widespread in woods and hedgerows.

Harvest/Pick  
May to October.

Uses  
Despite having a bitter taste, young leaves of Ox-eye Daisy are eaten in salads. The root is also edible and can be either cooked or eaten raw. The flower petals are edible and make interesting garnishes for salads and desserts. The unopened flower buds have traditionally, been pickled as a caper substitute.



*Information taken from Food For Free. Richard Mabey*

This Newsletter is independently published by Andy Wilkins and edited and proof read by John Wallace on behalf of The Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort but does not necessary reflect the views of all members, Priory Park Rangers or Bedford Borough Council.

*Una Sulum Perficio Magis*