



The Friends of

# Putnoe Wood & Mowsbury Hillfort

## Newsletter

Issue 3 July 2012

### Through The looking Glass

The Friends Group now has a constitution and a structure, so looking forward it is perhaps the right time to reflect on our philosophy of approach for the Wood and the Hillfort. Of the two sites, it is the Hillfort that will generate the greater discussion. The issues for consideration will create a diversity of opinion within the Friends, so the discussion needs to be dealt with in a constructive manner. Some of the topics are: The Hillfort was purchased with public money so do we embark on a programme to promote the site to the public? Or should the public awareness of the Hillfort be restricted to protect the wildlife, flora and fauna? How far should we proceed with the cutting back and clearance of the scrub and self-set trees, should it kept to the very minimum or do we try to open up the interior for all to visit and explore? How do we generate funds to pay for the information boards?

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### If You Go Down To The Hillfort Today



Though the Courtyard has been ravaged by heavy rain and strong winds the orchids are abundant again this year. NOW's the chance to see them in all their glory.



### Jubilee Visitor

David Barnes reported a sighting of a Red Kite, over Mowsbury Hill as "SUPERB".

Once common the Red Kite was persecuted not that long ago and were reintroduced in the 1980's. Although a scavenger and not a predator, observations in Buckinghamshire where there is a large population appear to show a decrease in the visible count of other birds. We would probably take shelter as well if we had a five foot wing span bird regularly soaring above us.

### We DON'T Just Play Golf

A big thank you to everyone that participated in the evening litter pick up at the Hillfort. Our invitation to the golf club members to join us was not taken up, a great pity. We can only hope that litter blowing across the eighteenth green does not interfere with the winning putt for an important competition.

### Pile It On

Recreational users and walkers using Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort have praised the efforts of the Park Rangers and the Friends group for the ongoing work at both sites. Concerns have been raised over the piles of coppicing and brush that have been left at several locations. Whilst there are ecological reasons for some of the cut brush to be left in place, the common complaint is that the large piles are unsightly and should be removed.



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The left hand image is a photograph by Mr A W Guppy, chairman of The Bedfordshire Natural History Society, taken thirty years ago. The right hand one was taken in June this year from approximately the same position. The Hillfort so far has survived for over two thousand years, the ultimate question is how long will it survive if it is left to its own fate. More trees have grown over the years and the tree canopy has become much denser. Failure to act decisively will mean in time the leat, the fish ponds and the ditches will fill with even more debris, the scrub and self-setting trees will breakdown the historic defensive mounds and the scrub will form a dark and progressively impenetrable growth. A carefully constructed management plan and strategy is essential to enhance and protect the flora, fauna and wildlife. Equally a safe public access to this inspirational ancient monument is vital. If we do not promote public awareness of the area it becomes extremely difficult to raise funds. If the Friends fail to act now then “Who will take up the challenge in the future and bear the standard?”

## 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 August issue of the newsletter.

**Together Everyone Achieves More  
*Una Sulum Perficio Magis***

## Up-and-Coming Events and Tasks 2012

Friends Meeting  
 Mowsbury Golf Club, Tuesday July 3rd. 19.30

Opal, East of England Biodiversity in Orchards  
 at Mowsbury Hillfort  
 11.00 am until 2.00 pm Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> July.

## Evening Litter Pick.

The litter pick at Mowsbury Hill resulted in 12 sacks of litter plus an assortment of other items including part of a car bumper, a rubber tyre, a hose reel, the remains of a barbeque and lots of broken glass.



Apologies for the shaky photograph, unfortunately the low light levels that evening meant Jane and I had problems taking pictures with our mobiles or was it the thought of the glass of wine that was waiting.

## Bee Orchid

Two Bee orchids were discovered by Allison and Chris during the litter pick on the Hillforts outer meadow.



### BAP priority species found at Mowsbury

Breaking news!

The Liquorice Piercer moth has been found at Mowsbury Hillfort. Further information can be found at: [kbalmer.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/liquorice-piercer-grapholita.html](http://kbalmer.blogspot.co.uk/2012/06/liquorice-piercer-grapholita.html)

### The search is on for the Wild liquorice plant.

A member of the pea family, often found on calcareous grasslands



A sprawling plant, often quite large, with kinked stems. The flowers are creamy white or slightly green and have the typical 5-petalled pea or vetch-type flower.

### Waveney Green Jubilee Celebrations



If you had managed to attend the Jubilee celebrations at Brickhill's Waveney Green over the Bank Holiday you would have been able to see the excellent flying display from the Raptor Foundation Flying Display Team. Unfortunately the Parish Council could not run to the Spitfire, Hurricane and Lancaster bomber from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, another year perhaps.

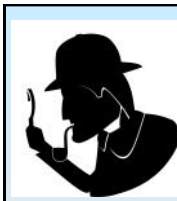
### Buzzard Cull

DEFRA, the Government department, has denied reports in the media that they propose to undertake a cull of Buzzards at a cost of £375,000. They also refute that they are planning to implement a new policy to control the numbers of Buzzards or any other raptors.

A statement from DEFRA said ... "we work on the basis of sound evidence. This is why we want to find out the true extent of buzzards preying on young pheasants and how best to discourage birds that may cause damage to legitimate businesses. This would be only in areas where there is a clear problem using non-lethal methods including increasing protective cover for young pheasants with vegetation, diversionary feeding of buzzards, moving the birds elsewhere or destroying empty nests. The results of this scientific research will help guide our policy on this issue in the future."

However, this statement of non intent from DEFRA does not prevent farmers, landowners and game keepers from taking matters into their own hands.

The RSPB have said..."the buzzard population has recovered wonderfully over the last few years and we want to see this continue."



### Thinking Caps On

At the Friends meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July we will be discussing the Council's Draft Management plans for both sites. They provide the framework for a conversation about our future objectives. In addition, we need to prioritise tasks into short term and long term all linked to a realistic timescale.

### Biodiversity in Orchards Workshop

The Upper Hall at Brickhill Community Centre has been booked for the Biodiversity in Orchards Workshop, this will be held on Tuesday 12th July from 11.00am to 2.00pm. The full address is Brickhill Community Centre, Avon Drive, Brickhill, Bedford, MK41 7AF. There is plenty of parking available in the car park for the hall. Please register online at: [www.opalexplornature.org/workshop-registration](http://www.opalexplornature.org/workshop-registration) This is essential so that we have a guide to the number of attendees.

Stay in touch.

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



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT



## Stinging Nettle

The Romans are credited with bringing seeds of this plant with them into Britain, by flogging themselves with the plants they apparently stimulated the blood flow to their limbs to keep themselves warm. I'm sure Boudicca would have found better ways of keeping their blood circulating.

### Location:

Mowsbury Hillfort

### Harvest/Pick

High levels of vitamins A and C and 5.5% of protein.

Pick between late February and early June.

### Uses

Flog your self with them.

Russell up Nettle puree, soup or Haggis.

## Elder Flower

### Location

Mowsbury Hillfort. Widespread in woods and hedgerows.

### Harvest/Pick

Flowers in summer. Berries: August to October.

### Uses

Berries: jelly, wine, Pontack Sauce.

Flowers: Fritters, Cordial, Preserve.



*Information taken from Food For Free. Richard Mabey*