

Issue 3

June/ July 2011



NEWSLETTER

Allington Hillbillies

Changing Habitats



I have really enjoyed these last few months, wandering around the hill with like minded people, discussing the rights and wrongs of us humans trying to control nature. It does help you question your own knowledge and fuel your quest in finding the definitive answer.

The answer is that we can only ever make educated guesses and a lot of the time the answer will be balanced toward human need. We all love the birds and the butterflies and understand that they need insects and flowering plants to produce seeds and nectar. Like us they also need a balanced diet. So if one food source takes over (invades),

there becomes an imbalance in the food chain and it can start to go horribly wrong.

I have also had the opportunity whilst on holiday to visit two similar woods to our own. The first was boldly described as a Country Park and I walked several miles to visit it. There didn't seem to be any management scheme in place and no effort had been made to control the invasive plants. The first thing I noticed was the lack of birds and bird song, then the lack of insects and variety of flowering plants. I only had the heart to walk half the way round and actually was looking forward to my walk back.

My second visit I stumbled on by accident. A small wooded area, with a flower meadow. This was looked after by a small band of volunteers and their project was to reinstate the meadow flowers, coppice the hazel and willow and control the invasive plants. I wish I could transport you all there. The project was started three years ago. You could hardly hear yourself talk for the bird song, there were insects everywhere and the meadow flowers looked fantastic. The feeling of wellbeing was overwhelming, "my human need" in this instance was fulfilled.

My two visits made me really appreciate the urgent need to control the invasive plants and what human intervention can achieve.

Inside this issue



North /West Divide

Have your say on saving woodlands



Coppice work revisited



The Open Day
Sun July 17th

First Donation

Your news and views.

Great News

We have received our first donation of funds for the “Hillbilly Volunteers” from Allington Parish Council.

The sum of £250 will go a long way to help us with some of the projects we have in mind. I hope you will all be coming to our open day, where you will be able to find out more and help us decide what needs to be done first.

Allington Parish Council have been very supportive of our efforts to involve the local community in the future of Allington Hill.

The main aim is to protect this wonderful green space, which is so easily accessible to all people within the Bridport area. To achieve this we need to maintain and enhance the wildlife on the hill and provide access for young and old alike.

So if you would like a say on how you feel we can achieve this, write in to the newsletter. Email: allingtonhill@gmail.com



Six Spot Burnet



Grey Polypore



Scarlet Tiger



Comma

North/ West divide

North Allington and West Allington, might as well be miles apart. They are so different in character and have their own separate communities. Even on the hill itself the character changes, from the south facing slopes looking out towards the sea and suffering the worst of the prevailing gales. On the north side we have much more shaded, sheltered woodland and of course the field and Coopers Wood. We always look upon the access from Hospital Lane being the main entrance to the Hill.

This is also reflected in the Hillbilly Volunteers, as most come from the North Allington area with less than a quarter from West Allington. To overcome this will not be so easy. We can look at altering the meeting points for Volunteer days and move our meeting to alternate between the two communities.

We may also have to look at offering better facilities for those on the South side. It is quite a hike up the hill from West Allington, yet there are no seats available on that side until you reach the very top. There are no dog poo bins either, mainly because of the lack of vehicle access to empty them. This could be overcome and we are looking at ways to achieve this. This is how I see things from the north side of the hill. If you live in West Allington, let us know your point of view. Email: allingtonhill@gmail.com

What is a lichen?

Did you know that a lichen is in fact a fungus and an algae that grow together in harmony. The fungus protects the algae, which in turn feeds the fungus by producing nutrients. Sadly they do not have very imaginative names like many of the fungus that grow in the wood. I believe this lichen to be *Parmotrema perlatum* and is grouped in the foliose family of lichens. You will see it on many of the trees in the wood.



Coppice work revisited

With Spring starting so early this year and the birds keen to nest earlier than usual. It pricked our consciences where work urgently needed doing-and wondered if we should continue. I think the debate still rumbles on in the back of our minds. There were three areas tackled-a small area along the drive where the path gets very muddy and two areas by the path which runs parallel with the top of the field. We did ensure that there were no nesting birds where we were working. The only time a nest was disturbed was in Coopers Wood, which is another story covered a little bit later. I have taken some photographs to show what has happened where we have worked.



Look at the picture to the left. The path looks as if it disappears into a black hole. Notice how green the path is, where a lot of blackthorn has been cut back, allowing more light in and plants to grow. The picture on the right shows the path in the "black hole". No light, no plants just lots of sticky mud when it rains. Very few insects or plants to provide food for birds or animals.



Both of these pictures are where we have removed Blackthorn. The picture to the left shows where we last removed Blackthorn about four weeks ago. The picture to the right, the area was cleared just over eight weeks ago. Next time you walk past the Blackthorn, look into it. What can you see growing? Which do you think is the best habitat?



RECYCLE

You will often see sawn logs by the side of the path. YES, they are there for anyone to take home for fuel. Help yourself.

One Sunday we cleared a small area along the drive. We coppiced several trees and also raised the canopy on several others to allow the light in. The object was to encourage ground covering plants and speed up the process of the path drying after it rains. I think you can guess where we had done the work? There is a lot of more that needs to be done in this area.



LEAVE FOR NATURE

The smaller branches and decaying wood is left for the insects, homes for small mammals and birds to forage. A great habitat for them.

NATURE ON THE HILL

So, what did you see on the hill today?

My library of reference books has grown a lot in the last few months, trying to put a name to all the fantastic plants, fungus and insects I see over the hill.

I was so glad when after many hours of searching, I at last found a few fox gloves. Did you see them? Their habitat has been destroyed as there is now too much shade and choked by bracken. Let's hope that we can get a lot more to flower next year.

The wonderful scent of the honeysuckle on my evening walks were just heavenly.

I could stand for hours looking at the insects on the thistles.



Ink Cap



Honeysuckle



Fox Glove



Woolly Thistle



Garden escapee !

What to look out for next



Hazelnuts



Hoverfly

Syrphus ribesii



Wild Rose



Lichens



Ringlets Butterfly



Silver Spotted Skipper



Hopefully you do not see Ragwort!

The Open Day (mark II)

Firstly, thank you to everyone who let us know that they were so looking forward to our first Open Day. Due to a little rain (over 30mm's in fact), we had made the right decision to cancel the event. I did go to bed the night before praying for rain and that the weather man had got it right.

We now have a better planned open day than the first

- **We have added a few more children's activities**
- **Vote on your favourite future project for the hill**
- **Help name all the paths and areas of the hill**
- **Down Memory Lane**
- **Nature Walks**
- **Bring the family, have a picnic on the hill**
- **Help plan our Autumn Festival**
- **Bacon Butties and cups of tea**
- **Tombola, Quiz, Prizes**
- **Free Entry.**
- **NO PARKING AVAILABLE PLEASE WALK**

Walks on the wild side

***Guided walks around the hill
looking at nature.***

Sunday 17th July

10.30am

12.00noon

1.30pm

3.00pm

***Families welcome, dogs on
leads please.***

***Full length trousers and
walking shoes recommended.***

Approx 1hr at a steady pace.

Down Memory Lane at the Open Day

One of the projects the group is working on is compiling information on the history of the hill and to get local people to contribute historical facts as well as their personal memories of the hill, before this information is lost forever.

Quite a lot of information has already been collected from records held at the Local History Centre in Bridport, as well as gleaning information from Hillbilly volunteers. It is amazing what you can find out just by chatting to people.

Chris Toombs has made up a memory board for the Open Day in order to encourage people to contribute their memories. On the day there will be cards available for people to record their memories, but members of the group are happy to spend time with people on a one to one basis to listen and write the information down for them. All they need to do is leave their name and phone number.

If you have knowledge you would like to include or know people who do, please can we encourage you to share this with us.

Many of you may also have old photographs or maps of the hill. If you would not mind sharing them with others, we can arrange to have a copy made. Please bring them along with you.

For instance, did you know that:

Allington Hill is an iron age hill fort rising to 90m above the village of Allington



There were medieval quarries on the summit of the hill and in 1265 stone from the quarry was used in the rebuilding of the leper colony of St. Mary Magdalen.

Allington Hill and Coopers Wood covers an area of 43.69 acres

Face Book



Why not add us as a friend. You will find us on our Facebook page,

“Allington Hillbillies”

We now have the site up and running. You can get involved with topics about the hill on the forum page. I have set a few topics to get you started. You can start your own topic and get chatting to like minded people. We plan to improve the page as we go along. There will be regular updates of forth coming events, photos, news and reviews.

Fly away birds, Fly away

Back in the Spring we removed the last of the protectors around the trees in Coopers Wood.

We had a bit of a shock when we found a bird nest in the bottom of a protector. Once the trees came into leaf, it was almost impossible for the adults to get in and out.

Pat watched at a distance, noted the day the eggs hatched and worked out when they should fledge. With a few leaves trimmed from the trees the parents were able to feed their young.

On the expected day of fledging, Pat crept in when the adults were away and cut a hole in the tree protector about six inches above the nest. The result was that all the Coal Tits fledged. We believe 7 in total.

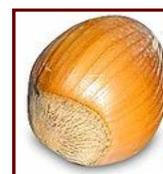


Hazel Nuts

Did you know that the anti-cancer drug Taxol is found in Hazel nut shells. Hazel nuts are grown commercially worldwide, an estimated 6000,000 tons a year. Scientists are now trying to find a commercially viable way to process the shells.

They are not only used to feed live stock, but also used in confectionary to make praline. It can also be made into a strong cooking oil. The nut is full of protein, unsaturated fat, thiamine and vitamin B.

The nut is ready to eat after about 7 or eight months after pollination.



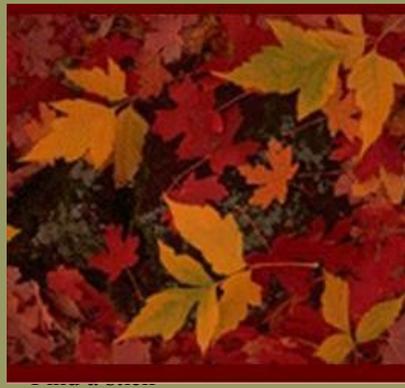
Words from the Woodland Trust

I am endlessly impressed by the enthusiasm shown by the volunteers and a reasonable turn out at the last meeting of those despite the absence of those who chose to watch Andy Murray fail in the tennis.

The biggest issue on the horizon is the repercussions of the governments attempt to sell-off the Public Forest Estate earlier in the year, with nearly half a million people signing petitions and showed their disapproval of the governments plans. The plans were swiftly put on hold and a panel of forestry experts was set-up to advise the government on the 'future of forest policy'. The panel is currently asking the public for its views - what they want to happen rather than what they don't want to happen. The window to express your views is open until the 31st of July and the Trust strongly recommends that everyone takes this opportunity to do so. In particular you may like to support our calls for continued public access and the restoration and protection of ancient woodland.

Go to the Woodland Trust website for more information.

Jon Burgess Woodland Trust Manager



**HILLBILLIES
CONTACT DETAILS**

To receive a newsletter
Send an email to
allingtonhill@gmail.com

Mobile
07789705345

*Facebook
Allington Hillbillies*

Your News and Views

COMMENTS FROM THE HILL

“ Thanks for clearing the few fallen branches so quickly after the storm the other day”.

“ The Hill is looking so much better. Keep up the good work”.

“ Can we replant the Elm trees that were once on the hill?”

Sadly the elm is still succumbs to the Dutch Elm Disease. They will grow but are short lived once the disease takes hold.

“ About time those dangerous steps were taken away. Thank you, who ever did it”.

“ They made a really good job of cutting the field”

“ There are hundreds of Butterflies on the hill at the moment. What are the ones that look almost Black?”

They are Ringlet’s. They certainly ran rings around me, when I was trying to take a photograph of one for the newsletter.

“ Why did they not spray the ragwort to kill it. They have done it before”

There is so little ragwort left on the hill now, it can easily be controlled by pulling up the few plants there are. Why use chemicals if we do not have too?

The Weather

A very topical subject after rain stopped us having our Open Day the other week. Jon Harvey collects daily weather readings from north of the hill. These are the statistics for rain in the last three months. Do you record the rain levels in West Allington?. It would be good to compare. It often is raining in North Allington, but the town is dry.

April: We had only 10mm of rain. It only rained on 5 days this month.

May: 51.5mm of rain this month in 6 days.

June: It rained 9 days giving us a total of 51mm, of which 31mm fell on the day of our first planned Open Day.

The rain fall for the first week of July has been 18mm. Lets keep our fingers crossed for a dry day on the 17th.

Dates for your Diary

Open Day

Sunday 17th July

10am– 4pm

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Working Parties

Wednesday 20th 6.30pm

Thursday 28th 6.30pm

Friday 5th Aug 6.30pm

Monday 8th Aug 6.30pm

Sunday 14th Aug 10am - 4pm

Tuesday 16th Aug 6.30pm

Wednesday 24th Aug 6.30pm

Thursday 1st Sept 6.30pm

Friday 9th September 6.30pm

Sunday 11th September

10am—4pm

Pixie George

Pixie George and his clan have had a very busy Spring. He is now looking forward to the lovely crop of Blackberries and Elderberries. The Acorn and Hazelnut crop are coming on very well too.

He is happy that we have been looking after the hill a little bit better than before and George may even join in our Autumn Festival. He says he is planning a little treat for us all.

Have any of the children found where Pixie George lives yet?

Well behaved

Allington Hill is a dog walkers paradise.

Dogs like humans all have their on Characters and misbehave when they want to. They also may not be as easy to train as you would wish.

Pat North, a Hillbilly member, is trained in helping you sort out behaviour problems in dogs when they are at home or out walking.

If you feel that you and your dog would benefit from some behaviour therapy, why not give Pat a phone call on 01308 423202.