

Issue 6

Nov/Dec 2011



NEWSLETTER

Allington Hillbillies

Down Memory lane



What a year! Who would have guessed a year ago, that for many of us life would change so much. It was full of challenges, steep learning curves, new friends and immense achievements, with very satisfying results. This is just the start of what we all hope will be a lasting legacy, not only for the community of Bridport, but the wildlife on the hill.

For a few volunteers it also has been a difficult year, losing loved ones who have been greatly missed. I know that Allington Hill has been a part of their healing, as it was for us, as two close friends and a family member are no longer with us.

The hill does seem to have a certain power and provokes many memories of times past. It would be lovely to unearth some of its secrets, but perhaps that's what makes this place so special.

This is always the time of year to reminisce. So let's look back at 2011 and Allington Hill. I always get comments about the pictures. So my editor will be relieved that there may be many pages, but not too many words.

We will also have a brief look into the future and plans for next year. Please take time out and have a walk on Allington Hill this New Year and appreciate how lucky we are. Don't forget your wellies!

Seasons Greetings



Work on the hill



23rd JANUARY Hedge laying

Our very first volunteer day. With the guidance of Jon Burgess we bravely took saws and loppers to the trees and laid the hedge along hospital lane.

We were greatly surprised when most of it survived this brutality and a year later some of the re-growth must be 3 to 4 ft high in places.

A nice little job this winter, will be to weave all this growth back in a thicken up the hedge line.



6TH FEBRUARY Our first group photo



A day on the hill
19th Feb 2011



Time MARCHES on

Elder Tree

Coppiced
to allow more
light and air on
to the drive

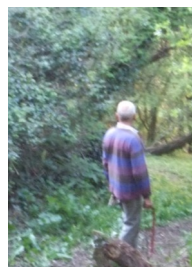


It was not until later in the year that I appreciated what a useful tool my camera was going to be. It is like a visual diary. When I look at the details on my computer my camera has recorded, day, date and time as well the visual information it is giving me. For example the tree on the right was felled on the 23rd of March. On the same day the Elder tree was coppiced. By the 17th of April shoots several inches long had grown, as shown in the picture above. The next photo was taken on the 13th of June, showing lots of healthy new growth.

Diseased

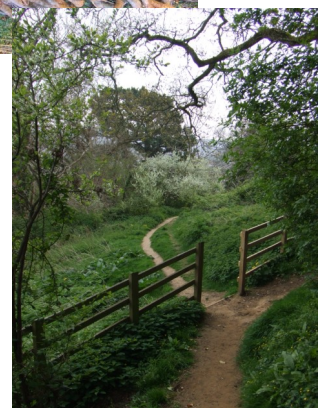
This tree could
have spread
disease to
other trees so

APRIL where have the showers gone?



This month we welcomed our newest recruits. Toby and Jade, who went on to win Junior Volunteer of the year awards. Laura Trott also won the award.

Gordon and his little dog Teddy also joined us and Teddy has become a popular mascot for the Hillbillies. They all put hours of work in each week during the



What else MAY we wish for?



Digital cameras



I am in no way an expert, I just thought some of you may like to know what camera I use. It is a small pocket Finepix Z5 camera.

I just wanted to show you what a simple camera it is. I was surprised to find that it is still being made, as I purchased mine 5 years ago, so it must be a popular design. I am sure many of you have cameras such as this and always leave the setting on Auto.

The internal battery is rechargeable and lasts a long time. You can take hundreds of photos, just delete the ones that are no good. I take up to six photos of one subject at different angles and zoom. So I delete a lot. Uploading them onto the computer stores them in date order, you can also add a title to the picture. A little bit like writing in pencil on the back of the photo, as we all used to do in the good old days.

TOP TIPS

Sit at home for half an hour and just run through all the camera settings. The more you do this, you will quickly learn the best features of your camera.

Wherever possible stand with the sun behind you. Photos of flowers are always best taken on cloudy days or early morning or late afternoon. You then do not get dark shadows.

Practice taking a photo close up, then hold the camera further back and zoom in, instead. You will get completely different results. Afterwards try the macro setting or the sports mode.

Don't be shy! Sometimes you can feel silly kneeling down or climbing up to get a better shot. NEVER step back. I did this once and went straight down a Badger hole.

Find the sports mode and use it. In nature nothing is still. With the sports mode, you will get a much sharper picture. I use this setting more and more.

All the pictures in the newsletters have been taken with this lightweight camera that fits in my trouser pocket. As you know I never go anywhere without it. Sadly I even take photos of posters of events I would like to go to. Otherwise by the time I get home, I can't remember where, when or what time. I do now, it's all on my camera.

JUNE What's missing



It did not seem that many years ago, that I could walk around the hill in June and see colourful display of foxgloves. It is not until you start recording what you see, you are aware of what's missing. I could not believe that they had all disappeared under the bracken and other invasive plants. It was on my third time of looking that I eventually found a small area where there were six flowering plants. So one of the projects is to re-introduce foxgloves to the hill. After clearing the blackthorn, the children that help on the hill, scattered some foxglove seed the second week in September. Five weeks later this was the result. Hopefully a few of these plants will make it through to next spring.



The other project will be to slowly introduce more meadow flowers to the hill. There are several areas that would be suitable. Some of our flowering plants are only found in a few locations on the hill, and this does not have to be the case. We hope to obtain some wild flower seeds and prepare an area that is hopefully suitable. Over the years they will naturally self seed.

Flowers such as poppy, oxeye daisy and cowslips could be a common sight on the hill.



JULY it's all gone!

I love long meadow grass and flowers dancing in the breeze, against a deep blue sky, so magical, that I easily find myself lost in fantasy day dreams, in imaginary places.

I suddenly get lots of emails saying they've made a good job of cutting the grass. So on my next day off I stride up the hill and turn the corner and.....oh no! brown stubble grey skies, no flowers and broken dreams, my magical place has disappeared.

Yes I know, it needs to be done, the seeds have scattered, it keeps the invasive plants under control. This is how you should manage grass land. It is all part of nature's cycle and I should know better.

It is now December, I have calmed down. Peace is restored, and like Christmas it is all going to happen again next year. Perhaps that's part of the magic, if it was like that every day we would just take it for granted.



Two different areas but both cut on the same day. The photo on the right was taken eight days later. In many places the grass had already grown two inches or



AUGUST Work, rest and play



One of the most talked about projects on the hill. Thanks to Jordon, who climbed the tree, to put the rope swing up. It has become one of the most popular things on the hill.

It was supposed to be for the children though!



Laura, who won a volunteer of the year award, is determined to master the tools of the trade.



Our first event for the children.

Not a lot scares me, but when you see thirty excited children run towards you at great speed, I could feel myself shaking with fear. But I survived!



There is light at the end of the tunnel of darkness. Two thirds of the way through the blackthorn.

History of the hill

We have had some great responses for Chris's project of recording the history of the hill. I still feel that many people think that their memories are not important, or that someone else may have told the story.

We still need stories from the past. Several have told us of war year memories. Was it the home guard on top of the hill or the Americans? Can anyone remember a plane crash? Or the great fire. All things that have been mentioned but we would love more information.

So your memories of the hill past or present are very important and must be recorded. Chris would rather hear the same story ten times, than not at all. Photos taken of the hill, we also would really like to see.

Please contact us through the email address and give us contact details of others who you think may be able to help.



An old map of Allington Hill

September still working hard



**When the going gets tough,
the tough get going.**

I never knew that Dinosaurs
love eating mushrooms. Oh
well, something else I've learnt.

Nature project

My passion or obsession (I'm not sure which), to record the nature on the hill will eventually I hope be an important document.

We have on many occasions been accused of destroying habitat. But what habitat, whose habitat and what is worth saving, enhancing or destroying?.

We cannot answer these questions without knowing what makes its home on the hill, where and why.

I watched a programme on restoring the habitat of the chalk downs, where they were ripping out huge areas of mature woodland. Ouch, how can you justify removing acres of habitat that has been there for years.

Allington Hill as we know it today is a very new habitat. Most of the planting has been there only 25 years or less and it is very much a man made habitat. So it still needs our help to grow and mature into prime habitat for everything that has made it's home there.



Celandine
19/02/2011
woodland



Comma
10/07/2011
Quarry area



Bank vole
24/07/2011
Hill lane



Cardinal Beetle
22/05/2011
Top of drive.



Orchid
22/05/2011
Coopers field



Dryad's
Saddle
24/04/2011
Pixie
George's tree!



Toad
20/11/2011
Old hedge
bank



Barbastelle Bat
17/11/2011
Edge of Beech
tree plantation

Just a few of the hundreds of records I will have to catalogue.

October Autumn splendor



Wild flower project, our first fox glove seedlings

Before and after photos. Nerve racking times, as the contractors clear the area ready for replanting next year. The after that photo, you will have to wait for until next year.

November December



There was a late flourish of fungi, once the rain set in. Leaves were on the trees, still in late November. With very mild weather, is this good or bad for nature? I guess we will have to wait until next year to see what will flourish and what has suffered in the very unseasonal weather we have had throughout the year.

We mustn't forget.....



What to look forward too

Events

The family social events on the hill have been the most popular and we hope to repeat again in 2012.

We are looking at doing a festival in May. A heady mix of traditional May celebrations with a little bit of Jubilee magic thrown in. An event for the whole family.

An Autumn festival we hope will be on the agenda also, it will be a hard act to follow after the last one.

Working Parties

The main working parties will be held through out the year on the 3rd Sunday of the month.

January Sunday 15th 10am to 1pm

Coppice willow.

February Sunday 19th 10am to 1pm

Marking out paths in Coopers wood.

If you would like to take part in working parties during the week, usually Wednesdays and Saturdays, please forward your mobile phone number to

allingtonhill@gmail.com

Queen's Jubilee

We will be marking the Queen's Jubilee, by planting new trees and the Parish Council are hoping to provide a commemorative seat for the hill.

If you would like to plant a tree, we have over 100 to plant. I have started a list of names if you, friends or family would like to plant a tree. Please send me your details to *allingtonhill@gmail.com*

Photo competition

The original idea was to hold the photo competition at the end of January. We are now moving it to later in the year. This will give you all the chance to take some fantastic photos for our new project, to produce a Allington Hill calendar for 2013. This will help raise funds for the hill. The winning photos will be used in the calendar and each photo used accredited to the winner.

Work shops

We hope to run several work shops during the year. Several people have asked for a photography work shop. A forestry workshop for the children will also be on offer. We plan to have some craft demonstrations also during the year.

Children's play area

The idea for a play area is still in the planning stage. It will be an on going project with items added as time goes by.

The children will be encouraged to get involved in the project.

We hope to have several things in place for the summer holiday.