

A Beautiful Spring



Most regular readers of The Allington Hill Newsletter will know that it is bi-monthly, give a week or two and is usually governed by the weather. So you can imagine how I have struggled to make a start this time as April almost seems to have been wall to wall sunshine. I have been praying for rain, not only for the sake of our garden and the wildlife but also to encourage me to make a start on the newsletter.

It is also a quiet time for the volunteers as the winter working parties have finished because of the nesting season and the grass, brambles and other plants we try and control to keep the paths open are only just springing in to life.

In this issue we will be recapping on the work done over the winter months and how on going projects are developing.

We will try to deal with a few misconceptions about work done on the hill and explain why certain areas are maintained and why.

Chris Toombs and myself have also been working hard on a book about the history of the hill and the area within it's shadows. It has turned out to be a fascinating project. One that we hope will be on sale for Christmas this year. Now I have told you all it will make us press on and hopefully get the job done. So you may see a shorter newsletter than usual for the next few issues while we concentrate on the book.

Please visit the hill in the next few weeks if you can, the Bluebells will be in flower, which is a stunning site. The butterflies are back too.



SPECKLED WOOD



PEACOCK BUTTERFLY



SMALL TORTOISESHELL

The Play Trail

The Easter school holidays saw more families than ever enjoying the play trail field and woods. Some are concerned that all the play equipment is not getting used, with the see saw being the main attraction. We have spoken to local families and they say that their children do play on all the equipment, it is the adults that feel it is the only piece of equipment that they can use too. You see family groups around the see saw as Mum and Dad are playing too. The other equipment is more suited to 10 years and younger with older children venturing off into the woods to explore and make dens. The play equipment is regularly checked and has an annual independent check paid for by Allington Parish Council. The areas around the equipment is maintained by the volunteers.



Jubilee Wood



*First ever Cherry blossom in Jubilee Wood
2015*

Over 100 trees were planted in 2012 to commemorate the Queens Golden Jubilee on the west side of the hill. The area was previously scrub, trees that had died from being smothered by bramble.

In the Autumn we surveyed the trees and only a handful had died and were replaced. We also ensured that the trees would not be smothered by bramble and bracken growth. This will need to be done for several more years but as the trees grow and shade the ground below, each year less work will need to be done. The undergrowth that is cleared is moved to the bottom of the slope, to help stabilise the bank. As it rots down it provides an important habitat for many small mammals and insects.

The clearance work has also the benefit of allowing flowering plants such as cowslips, bluebells and foxgloves that have thrived in this area since the area was cleared to grow again.

The area has become a magnet for wildlife especially butterflies who enjoy the warmer slopes of the hill.

The Dog Waste Bins

There as been many letters yet again in the Bridport News about dog waste. Many have asked why we have not responded and that dog waste is worst than ever on the hill. Perhaps these people would like to join Chris and Pat when they empty the dog waste bins every Sunday to see how full the bins are and that they often need sack trucks to remove the waste as it is too heavy to carry. The bins were paid for by Allington Parish Council and have been in place now for nearly a year. Yes there is still a lot of dog waste which is not picked up. We still believe a positive campaign is more effective way to encourage people to pick up .When was the last time you thanked someone for picking up after there dog? We will continue to encourage people with our new posters which will hopefully encourage the few who don't pick up to be responsible and use the bins, or alternatively find a stick and flick it off the path.

The Flower Meadow

The flower meadow project has been quite a journey. In 2012 we sowed the first yellow rattle seed in a test area to see if the field would be suitable to develop as a wild flower meadow.

The grass area is hard to maintain as it is not grazed to keep the grass short. A flower meadow has a rich mix of plants and the grass becomes less dominant. Grass growth becomes stunted and therefore easier to maintain.

It meant that after the annual cut, the cuttings would have to be removed. Wild plants prefer less fertile soil, so we did not want the cuttings to be left in place. For this we had to either rake by hand or bale it to remove it to the edge of the field. This makes a wonderful habitat for a host of different fungi.

The flower meadow will be high maintenance until it gets established. As with Jubilee Wood, as it matures it will start to look after itself, it will support a lot more insects and small mammals, which supports other birds and animals further up the food chain.

There has been concern about the damage done by badgers digging for leather jackets and earth worms. The area seems to be healing well, with cowslips and other flowers surviving the soils being turned over. So we will wait and see what else has survived.

On the wild side.
We are so lucky to have such diverse wildlife on our doorstep. Within an hours walk in the next couple of weeks you will see all of this and more.
Cowslips, primroses, bluebells and wild garlic. blackthorn, hawthorn, cherry and apple blossom.
These will be quickly followed by red campion and fox glove.
Can you name the plants in the photos?



The old blackthorn area

This area was originally cleared of dense Blackthorn thicket which had taken over the area. Sadly last winter this area was neglected due to the bad weather and constant rain that we had. This meant that the newly planted saplings became smothered with bracken and bracken. Some of the trees had reached 5ft tall but were still dragged down by the weight of bracken and were snapped in half.

With better weather this winter we were able to spend time clearing the area around the surviving trees.

This is another project that for the next few years will need some tender loving care. As the remaining trees grow, it will suppress the bracken and bramble and allow woodland plants such as celandine, bluebell and fox gloves to thrive. It has opened the area up allowing a lot more light in and plants have since flourished.



Cooper's Wood and Field

When Allington Parish Council took the 25 year lease for Coopers Field, two years ago this coming August, they asked the volunteer Group to look after the Field and Wood. There are certain requirements within the lease to maintain the boundary's of the Field and of course tree management. The Council were keen to make the field a community area suitable for all age groups. We as a group also wished to improve the area for wildlife. We put together a basic three year plan to help us focus on all these needs. We feel now that it has already become outdated, we have ticked most of the boxes and are starting the process of putting a more comprehensive 5 year plan in place. The Woodland Trust also need a new five year plan for the hill. We hope we will be able to work together so they compliment each other for the benefit of both sites.

One of the most used areas on the site is Cooper's Field.

Many a dog walker can be found doing the circuit around the field first thing in the morning. If we see things every day we do not appreciate how much they change until perhaps we see an old photo or we talk about times past.

The west side of the hill was slowly being taken over with a mixture of willow and bramble scrub. This meant we had lost approximately an acre of field. Most of us never think about what is directly under our feet as we walk around. It is just grass. But that grass areas are possibly one of the most densely populated habitats and any loss of grassland can have a huge knock on effect to the wildlife that depends on it.

You very rarely think about the wildlife hidden within the grass and other plants that grow amongst it. We all take grass for granted and do not give it a second thought until it's an inconvenience. If it does not grow on the paths, we end up with a slippery muddy mess (we have worn the grass away) and an inconvenience when it grows too tall and after it has rained we get soaking wet as we walk past (we have not managed the grass to maintain it's growth.) And when Paul has cut the grass people moan about the cuttings. Just give a thought for the wildlife, they love it!

WW1 Bench

Many of you may remember that we received funding last year from West Bay Car Boot fund for a bench in commemoration of WW1. We approached many local people who work in wood but none wished to take on the challenge. Our very own Stan Toombs came to the rescue. This is a much bigger project than he would usually take on but after many months hard work has nearly finished the project. We hope you agree that we feel it would be appropriate to invite such organisations as the British Legion to dedicate the bench. The exact place for the bench has yet to be chosen as we will have to prepare the area first. We hope it will go at the top of the field on the east side which give a lovely view of Cooper's Wood and the valley beyond.



Making the final touches to the bench.

Tolerance

I was horrified several weeks ago when I met a man with a walking stick, who claimed to be armed and ready if he saw any cyclists on the footpaths and he would hit them with such force to knock them off. We do discourage cycling, especially if they are showing no respect for walkers or even dogs for that matter. There is no by law banning cycling and since the cycle path signs on the Symondsburry estate have been vandalised many seem to be losing their way and ending up on the hill. We ask for tolerance on both sides. Perhaps if you see a cyclist on the hill, you could politely ask if they are are lost and point them in the right direction. If you are a cyclist please dismount if you see a person in front of you . There is plenty of space for to allow everyone to experience of this space to be enjoyable.

This is your last chance to see your name in print! If you have any memories of the hill as a child, romantic memories, or funny moments then please let us know. Photos from the past will also be welcome. Please email any information to allingtonhill@gmail.com

Litter picking Rota

The following dedicated litter pickers will work through the rest of the year to ensure that litter does not become a problem on the hill.

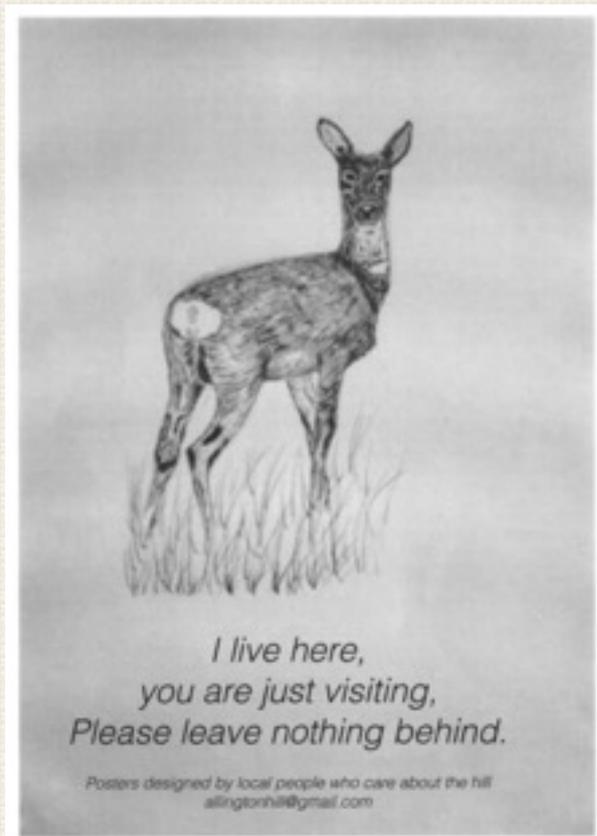
We must not forget other members of the community that do this when they are walking around the hill.

One lady was stopped and asked what she was doing? "You do not need to do that they have a team of people that pick the litter up."

We hope that everyone would firstly not drop the litter and secondly if they see litter pick it up.

May	Pat
June	Sue
July	Kevin,Dee,Laura
August	Chris
September	Sarah
Oct.	Pat
Nov.	Cathy
Dec.	Sarah

Please help them keep the area special.



Picnic event

This year summer picnic with our traditional children sports day will be held on Sunday June 21st

Bat Walk

We have teamed up with the A.O.N.B and the Bat Conservation Trust for a bat walk on the hill. The best time is August time when the youngsters have fledged and their population is at it's highest.

Mon 17th August 8pm. Meet at the main gate. Will remind you nearer the time. Pencil it in on your calendars.

Mad Hatters Tea Party

We are teaming up with the hat festival and holding an event on September Saturday 5th, starting late afternoon.

Live music, bonfire, food and children activities. The perfect way to round off the hat festival.

We are hoping to hold our "munching caterpillars" event again for the children in the summer.

All events advertised and updated on our Facebookbook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/allingtonhillbillies/>

In brief

The second dog training event was held on the hill in April. Dog trainer Jim Greenwood revisited by popular demand after the first training session during last Autumn.

We have been informed that a new Woodland Trust manager will be in place managing the hill in the next few months.

At the A.G.M two new members were elected to the Committee. Roly Boughton will take over the management of Cooper's Wood, he has a very good understanding of countryside management, a lot more than me. We also welcomed Tim Smith who with a change of commitments now has a little more time to dedicate to the volunteer group, which is most welcome.

The Young Volunteer of the year award was given to Laura Trott, who put many adult volunteers to shame when working so hard on the flower meadow. Junior award was given to Daisy Smith for her enthusiasm in getting involved in projects such as the flower meadow.

The air ambulance landed in the Cooper's Field to attend an emergency at the hospital. This is the dedicated landing area for the Bridport Community hospital.

Our weather expert is feeling rather under the weather, so sadly has not been able to do the usual round up of statistics for March and April. Guess I should have hung the sea weed out instead!

Chat on the hill.

I have recently seen a Sparrow Hawk flying in the area. I have not seen one here before.

There has been a Sparrow Hawk in the area for three or four years. With the amount of sighting this year we are led to believe that in fact there may be two pairs of Sparrow Hawks in the area.

Are you holding any special events this year for the children?

Ideally we need someone who could take on the challenge of organising children's events. At the moment it is down to me and working almost full time and school holiday weather usually against us, I struggle to organise anything. I have started to put Children's things to do on the Facebook page.

Why have the working parties stopped, are the volunteers no longer looking after the area?

The volunteers met every Sunday throughout the winter months as well as during the week. It is now the nesting season and we do not wish to disturb any birds. We also are enjoying a well earned rest!

Why can't people respect others and keep their dogs under control.

Sadly there is no law that says owners have to train

their dog to a certain standard, or train their dog at all. Many dogs also have their pet hates. One dog owner has to put their dog on a lead when they pass the swing. Another dog apparently went for me because I did not have a dog! The owner seemed as shocked as the dog to see someone walking without one. Putting the blame on me for the dogs reaction. Perhaps I ought to get a dog?

I wanted to have a family picnic on the hill, but someone has told me they had seen on the Facebook page you are very anti picnics and B.B.Q's.

We are very anti those that do not take their rubbish home, set fire to the habitat and have no respect for the place they have come along to enjoy. Inviting friends and family to a picnic on the hill is a wonderful idea. Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints and treasure the happy memories.

I was saddened to see a lot of litter on the hill the other day.

Join the rest of us and just pick it up. It is then no longer a problem.

allingtonhill@gmail.com

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