

A welcome break

The weather sure has been a welcome break from all the rain through the spring and at last being able to feel the warmth of the sun.

It has also been a welcome break for the volunteers, getting back to doing what we enjoy most and that is looking after the area and the wildlife.

We are extremely grateful that we have been able to gain so much funding for projects, such as the flower meadow, purchasing Duncan the tractor and being involved in the pilot fuel poverty scheme, headed by Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The down side is the constant form filling and proving that the money is being well spent. Several months this year as we have several funding programmes running at once, I spent more time on the computer than volunteering on the hill.

I am very glad to say that we now have our finances under control again, thanks to the Yellow Rattle, which I will explain later.

We have been able to get out and record the wildlife on the hill. These walks have been spontaneous due to the weather. We have advertised them on the Facebook page, trying to give several days notice, but we have had low turn outs. For the butterfly counts and the bat walks we only had three people turn up. This is such a shame as the area is visited by so many, but people seem to have little interest of the actual nature that resides there.

If you would have liked to come along, but it was the wrong day, time, meeting point, please let us know. We wish to include as many people as possible.

In this issue we will be looking at how the wildlife as coped with the unusual weather this year and the usual round up of all the events that has happened over the last few months.

Please note, sadly we are unable to hold our Autumn festival this year. We are looking at what other community events we could hold which would not be such hard work for the few volunteers we have.



This sign will soon appear on the main gate. There has been several instances during the summer of vehicles being left in front of the gate, once blocking contractors in. Access was also needed a few days later for an ambulance to drive up to the air ambulance which had landed in the field, for a man who had suffered a heart attack. Allington Parish Council who lease the land will be installing the sign.

The flower meadow

Chris and myself were a little concerned with how the flower meadow would do this year. The constant rain during the spring meant that even with the Yellow Rattle the grass was growing vigorously, crowding out the wild flowers.

As the Yellow Rattle parasitises the roots of grasses, it meant we had a bumper crop of seed.

Thankfully this year we have had a mainly dry warm sunny summer and it did not take long for the grasses to start to die back and the wildflowers to push through.

The meadow filled with wildlife many sightings have been seen for the first time. We are hoping with the help of Duncan our tractor the meadow will flourish as we will be able to cut the meadow more often.



Yellow Rattle Harvest

This is the past time that Chris and myself love and look forward to each year. In fact it can get a bit addictive. Collecting the seed this year was easier than previous years as it was very prolific. We easily collected 6 kilos of seed and decided to stop collecting, celebrating the fact by drinking Pimm's while watching the sun setting as we sat on the WWI bench. We have been able to supply Askers Meadow, Woodland Trust, Emorsgate Seeds and a few local people who have their own private meadows.



We soon found that supply had outstripped demand, so we started picking again and in total collected over 7 kilos. We have kept a small amount for ourselves. The profit £904 from the seed will fund the group we hope until the next harvest. The main expenditure being garage rental for the tractor and Duncan's maintenance.



After extracting as much seed as possible we spread the seed heads throughout the meadow to allow the rest of seed to self seed.

The flower meadow cont...



We have learnt over the last few years that nature will always have the upper hand and patience is needed when trying to create a traditional flower meadow, not being able to always use traditional methods.

Some have questioned the fact that the meadow is not grazed. Sadly this is not possible, but would be the ideal way to maintain the area.



With the tractor we will be able to maintain the meadow area, cutting several extra times during late summer and once in early spring.

We have had great success planting plug plants within the meadow rather than seeding. We have another 6 trays of plants to go in during the Autumn and will be recruiting more volunteers to grow plug plants for next Spring. If you would like to be involved in raising plants, please contact us, allingtonhill@gmail.com.



As with Duncan the tractor the meadow project this year is being partially funded by the Peoples Postcode Lottery. We will also as part of the funding package be able to complete the new hedge line in Cooper's Field.



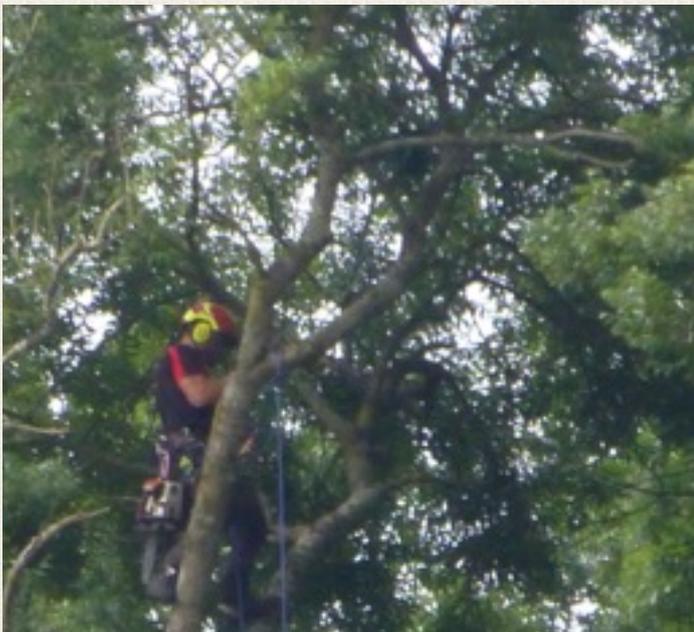
Fuel Poverty Scheme

We first became involved with the Fuel Poverty Scheme through the Big Lottery funded "Community Living Sustainably in Dorset" project., managed by Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We are continuing to work with the AONB team on this, but now supported through the British Gas Energy Trust "Healthy Homes" project. The timber has now been removed from Cooper's Wood to be stored and seasoned and processed before the fire wood will benefit people in fuel poverty. This is a long term project that we hope to be involved in, extracting small amounts of wood from Cooper's Wood over the next few years. This will also benefit the wood allowing more room for remaining trees to grow. As many people say, the removal of 90 trees in the spring has had little impact on the look of the wood. Many have also noticed that some trees are still suffering due to the lack of light, with up to a third of the branches dying back. More thinning is needed for the benefit of the remaining trees.

We were grateful for the help of Dorset County Councils Countryside Management Team in providing the man power and transport, which was funded by the project.



They were rewarded with a cream tea at the end. Thanks to Pat who brought her Camper van over to provide the cups of tea. Although one little boy did tell her off as "You are NOT allowed to camp over here." We praised him for telling us off, as he was right.



Ash crown lowered

Many of you remember back in the spring when a huge bough broke away from a tree along Dog Holes. The Woodland Trust believed that it was worth spending the money on it to try and save it and paid tree surgeons to lower the crown. This should protect it from further storm damage.

It is important that we look after the older trees in the wood as they are few and far between. We believe that there may be a bat roost in one of the cracks in another bough.

The annual tree survey undertaken by the Woodland Trust will be done hopefully next month.

FAMILY ACTIVITY DAYS

Our first family activity day took place on Monday August 15th. This was led by Tilda from Magdalen Farm who is trained as a leader for Forest Schools.



Popcorn cooked over a camp fire, bug hunt and making natural bunting as well as games and making a hay den were all on the agenda. The event ran over by an hour as they were having such fun and did not want to go home.

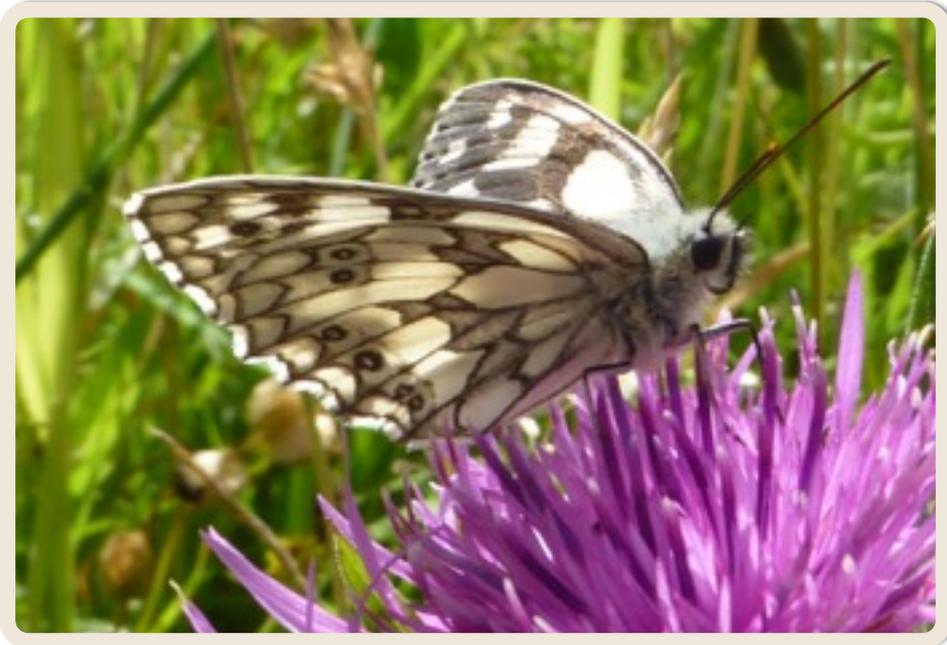
Six activity days have been funded by Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Aiden's Amble, which was held earlier in the year by local lad Aiden Cooper. This means that local children can attend free of charge. The activity events are run to a high standard by professionally trained staff from Magdalen Farm.

The next event will be held on Saturday November 19th. The activities are free, we just ask that the children are accompanied by an adult. More information will be available in the local press and our Facebook page nearer the time, or book a space now by emailing allingtonhill@gmail.com



Although the grass has been cut by the contractor on top of the hill there are some places he just can't reach. For the first time Jon has scythed one area on the hill just down from Devil's Bowl. He has also scythed Hollow Way which is the traditional path up to the top of the hill.

We have been given permission by the Woodland Trust to seed the area with Yellow Rattle that Jon is raking in the photograph, then leave to see if any wildflowers come through naturally. This will mean that the area will need to be scythed for several years to come, but hopefully will be worth the effort.



This was one of many firsts for the flower meadow this year. We do have a colony of Marbled White butterflies on the hill, but usually only seen in and around Devil's Bowl. It was the first time one was recorded in the meadow, Also a grass snake was videoed in the field and a Buzzard clearly hunting for small mammals in the meadow. The number of small and large skippers found in this area has also increased.

There has been a huge decline in Small Tortoiseshell butterflies this was due to the very wet spring.

We are very grateful to the Bridport Carnival Committee for naming us as one of their beneficiaries this year.

We entered the Carnival with Duncan the tractor was the main attraction having his flayer disguised as a flower meadow.

We did win a prize, but sadly did not get back into town to receive it. Thank you to those that dressed up and supported us. I have had lots of comments since. I not quite sure why a woman driving a tractor should be quite so a novelty, but it did not go unnoticed.



Autumn, Winter working parties

We have a lot on the agenda for this Autumn and Winter. With some grant funding and money we have raised we plan to ask the Countryside Management Team to help us with two projects.

Firstly re-laying the hedge line along Hospital Lane. They were only able to complete one section of it this spring and will be coming back to complete the last part.

Secondly to continue the project to thin some more trees from Cooper's Wood. We plan this time to leave the trunks whole, which we hope will stop people helping themselves, although we only lost a small amount of wood, once people were aware that it was for a fuel poverty scheme. We will use the brush to restore the original dead hedge that runs through Cooper's Wood.



We will also have some more tree saplings coming to complete the hedge line along the East side of Cooper's Field. As well as starting to plant a selection of trees to improve the diversity of Cooper's Wood.

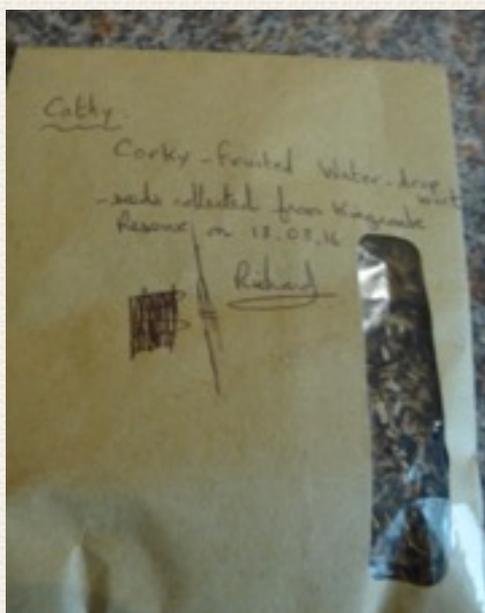


I have yet to meet up with Joe, the Woodland Trust Manager, to discuss work that needs to be done on the hill. But in the main this area is now well established and looks after itself.

We will be running events in November to promote working parties and the importance of woodland management. These will be advertised in the local press and on our Facebook page.

Wild seed

We have several people that collect wildflower seed for us and this time of year I start getting small packages of seed through my letter box, or dropped into my place of work. We would like to thank Nick Gray of Dorset Wildlife Trust and Richard from the the Pymore group for some Corky Fruited Water Drop Wort seed. This plant is I believe only found in Dorset, so very precious seed. We plan to grow them as plug plants to plant out in the spring.



A local father with his two boys started something when they built this hay den. I was able to sit in it and shelter from the rain.

Future Events

September Sunday 4th

Beyond Events will be using the hill for an endurance event. They have permission from the Woodland Trust. We would recommend that walkers keep any dogs on leads while runners are present.

September Wednesday 28th

The 1st West Bay Beaver group will be holding their meeting in Cooper's Field about 6pm. They are hoping someone with local knowledge of the wildlife would be able to help them. Sadly I will be away. Any volunteers please?

October Saturday 1st

The Community Hospital will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of the hospital opening. One of the events will be a dog show in Cooper's Field. They would be grateful for any help. They have permission from Allington Parish Council to hold this event.

November Saturday 19th

Family activity event with children activities. Booking essential. We may also hold a volunteering event the same weekend.

The Weather

How many of you remember the 1st of August? We had heavy rain for most of the day, in fact 33mm or rain. We all thought it a bad omen but thankfully the rest of the month mainly has been warm sunshine with only 24mm of rain the rest of the month.

The hottest day was August 23rd reaching 25.6c. The coldest day being the 1st when it only reached 17c.

Over the last month we have had 26 days out of 31 which have been over 20c during the day.

Do we have any other weather watchers out there? It would be interesting to compare some statistics as often it is raining one side of Bridport and sunny the other.

Chat on the hill

Why is the hay in the meadow not put to better use?

No farmer wants it due to the amount of dog waste in the hay. We would like to hear from anyone who knows a farmer with a biomass boiler that may be interested in using it in the future.

Can you not adapt the picnic table so that more people can sit around it?

The table was purposely funded with disabled access in mind. We do believe there is a way to improve the seating, but more funding may be needed.

Could we have a dog training area installed in the field as people will insist on using the football pitch which clearly says NO DOGS?

This has never been mentioned before. It has been noted that there are a lot of young dogs at the moment which have yet to be properly socialised/ trained and that they have been using the football pitch. We can always ask.

You call yourself a community group but you are making no effort this year in organising an Autumn event for the community. So what do you do for local people?

The title means "community" not committee. If the local community do not get involved then events won't happen. Only one family has come forward to help with events. This means people like yourself occasionally need to roll up your sleeves and make these things happen. The committee all have personal lives and commitments outside of the group. They are the first to admit that none of them are getting any younger. We possibly do more for the local environment and wildlife, but that is a benefit to the community, which is often overlooked. We need some younger volunteers to help to truly make it a community group. Get involved!

I was told that my children would not be allowed to use powered bikes on the hill and field?

We discourage this for their own safety and the safety of other users. Also where do you draw the line? Trail bikes and motor bikes have caused near accidents in recent months and the police have been called and a trail bike seized. Inconsiderate cyclists are another hazard and should dismount when approaching walkers and dogs. Common courtesy towards others should be paramount.

allingtonhill@gmail.com

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

[allingtonhillbillies/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/allingtonhillbillies/)

01308 423202