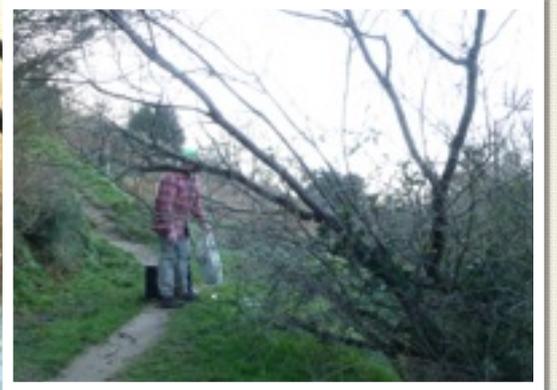


Winter storms



THIS HAS BEEN THE WORST WINTER FOR YEARS FOR STORM DAMAGE ON THE HILL. WE LOOK AT THE IMPACT ON THE HILL.

Calm before the storm, and after.

The Autumn seemed to drag on and on. Many nature watchers wondered when the trees would ever lose their leaves. They eventually were ripped of by the gales that hit the area from early December onwards. Our hedgehogs in the garden were very late to hibernate and delicate insects such as butterflies were still seen in abundance into late November.

We need to cast our minds back to earlier in the year when the trees did not come into leaf until well into May. They then seemed to go into over drive as it was the perfect weather conditions for them to flower and set seed, with an abundance of fruits, berries and nuts. This has been a welcome winter larder for all the residents on the hill. We so far have had very few birds visit our garden, as the countryside is still full of food. I can't remember the last time I have been able to pick holly with berries late in December.



Damage Done

The beech trees on the south side of the hill are one of the favourite landmarks for many. They have stood up to the storms for over 100 years, originally planted to provide a wind break for the farm land.

The question now is what brought down a mighty beech. There are many other older trees that we have been monitoring on the hill, that are much more at risk of storm damage.

The contractors are calling in the experts, not only to give advice about it's removal or otherwise, but also to survey the other trees in the area.

The Woodland Trust is in the middle of surveying all their woods looking for trees that are in danger of falling. Allington Hill's survey was suppose to happen on the 19th of December. This had to be cancelled due to the bad weather. It was only a few days later in another storm that the tree fell.

The next date has been pencilled in for the 6th of January. But we must be aware that as the tree is not on a public highway or endangering property, we may have been put at the bottom of the list for work to go ahead on reopening the pathway. This is due to the fact that the specialist contractors are very much in demand.

To try and put things into perspective, many people over the festive period have been flooded out of their homes, spent days without electricity and been stranded on the wrong side of land slips. The fact that a tree, which unfortunately has not completely fallen onto the ground and is in

danger of slipping backwards down the slope, closing a path seems minor in comparison.

Many of the volunteers gave up their time during the festive period, to clear other small fallen trees and clear paths of debris.

The beech tree is far too big for us to tackle. Yet we can help the Trust make the area safe and warn people of the danger.

In doing this we seemed to anger many who insisted on ripping down posters and warning tape making people aware of the danger. Not only risking injuring themselves but putting others at risk.

Their view is that we are restricting their right to walk the same path as they do day in day out. Ask the same people to give an hour to help keep the paths clear for everyones benefit and they respond they are too busy, or they feel it is not their business to do so. A shame that they can not find as much energy or time to volunteer, as they do moan!

The active volunteers work closely with the Trust and also Allington Parish Council. This is the first time that a pathway has been closed for many years. Several trees have fallen in the past and we have acted quickly to make safe or clear paths for everyones safety and convenience.

It's a little bit like house work, the more often you clean up, the less likely that anyone notices you have done it. As if like magic the obstruction has gone and no one thinks anything of it.

Thankfully the previously mentioned individuals are few and far between and well known by us thick skinned volunteers.



FALLEN BEACH TREE



ELDER BLOCKING PATH



BLACKTHORN ACROSS PATH



AFTER CLEARANCE

Celebrating the festive season



Making the wreaths for the Christmas tree on the hill.



We had the privilege again this year of having a Christmas tree at the United Church Christmas Tree festival. Your tree is chosen by lucky draw and it was a very pleasant surprise when I picked out the number for the tree to the left of the nativity in the main lobby.

The hard work of all the children and adults that helped make the decorations did not go un-noticed and we raised almost £60 in donations which was more than last year.

For the first time also we held a special Christmas Eve event on the hill, lighting up a large Christmas tree shape in the field and for those that gathered, shared mulled wine and mince pies, it was bit of fun. The decoration stood up to all the wind, rain and gales. For those who enjoyed the event, they are already planning for next year.

Happy New Year

One of the many messages that we received over Christmas

Once again, you and your team can be very proud of all your achievements for the Hill this year .

The hill is special for many in our community and with your active promotion in recent years it is now a truly important destination for country lovers !.

Thank you for keeping me in the loop and up to speed with all your events and activities.

I hope that your Christmas Eve event goes well and here attach my seasonal greetings .

Kind Regards

Linda Bridport Town Council

Facebook chatter

We are now going to go over the hill tomorrow (Sunday) at 10 am. Meet by the main gate. Please bring saws and pruners etc to clear small fallen trees across pathways, thanks.

This was viewed by 14 people and five turned up to help. Which was a fantastic response as it was the Sunday after Christmas.

A large beech tree has fallen on the south side of the hill. The Woodland Trust manager has visited the site and with further gales on the way he has decided to close the path and lock the gate giving access to that area. The tree is resting on two others and supporting its weight. He hopes that the contractors will be able to come next week to make it safe. PLEASE do not risk walking underneath it or trees nearby before they are surveyed to ensure they are safe. We do not want any accidents especially at this time of year.

The Facebook page is updated nearly everyday. Check it out for up to date information.

Anyone going on top of the hill tonight? It will be a clear starry night and they predict the best shower of shooting stars for a long time, approx 120 per hour after midnight. Might stand out in my garden for a while first, to see if it will be worth the while. Although I always feel perfectly safe on the hill, please don't go up there on your own, just in case.

Join others on the hill. Perhaps you would also like to go star gazing, watch for nocturnal residence on the hill, or team up to go bird watching during the day.



If you get a chance to go up on the hill tomorrow and it's sunny mid - day, head for the area around Oak Tree Cross. Magical display of Red Admiral butterflies. Must be 20 or 30 dancing skyward chasing each other. I have never seen so many in one place and in Mid November. They then settle on the nettles sunning themselves. Just breath taking.

I posted this and it was just magical. I hope someone else was able to witness it.

COOPER'S FIELD/WOOD PLANNING AHEAD

WE NOW HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAN AHEAD AND DECIDE WHAT WE WISH TO ACHIEVE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

THIS IS IMPORTANT AS IT GIVES FOCUS ON PROJECTS THAT MAY OTHERWISE NEVER BE FINISHED OR DISCARD THOSE THAT ARE JUST TOO AMBITIOUS.

IF YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO PUT FORWARD, PLEASE LET US KNOW. IDEAS SO FAR ARE, FOUR POO BINS FOR THE FIELD AREA. RE-LAYING THE ORIGINAL HEDGE LINE ALONG THE TOP OF THE FIELD. REINSTATING THE ORIGINAL PATH AT THE TOP OF THE FIELD (THIS HAS ALREADY BEGAN.)WE ALSO STILL NEED TO INSTALL ONE MORE PEICE OF PLAY EQUIPMENT. FINDING A SEE SAW HAS ALMOST BEEN IMPOSSIBLE. THEY SEEM TO BE OUT OF FASHION. ALSO A PLAN OF ACTION IF THE DREADED ASH DIE BACK HITS. OVER 30% OF COOPERS WOOD IS ASH. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN WITH THIS AREA?

WORKING PARTIES

THESE LAST FEW WEEKS THE HILL HAS BEEN RAVAGED BY REPETITIVE STORMS. ALTHOUGH THE LOCAL VOLUNTEERS TO THE SITE HAVE BEEN OUT TO CLEAR STORM DAMAGE, A LOT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE.

WE ARE ALREADY ON THE COUNT DOWN TO HOW MANY DAYS WE CAN WORK ON THE HILL BEFORE THE NESTING SEASON.

THE MAIN FOCUS WILL BE ON THE TOP LINE OF THE FIELD TO CONTINUE TO RESTORE THE ORIGINAL PATH. WORK WILL ALSO CONTINUE ON THE OLD BLACKTHORN AREA AND JUBILEE WOOD.

WE NEED TO WORK WITH THE WEATHER, SO WORKING PARTIES ARE OFTEN ORGANISED A FEW DAYS IN ADVANCE. THIS IS DONE BY TEXT, FACEBOOK, OR EMAIL. I HAVE ALSO AGREED BY REQUEST TO PUT POSTERS UP ON THE TWO GATES IN HOSPITAL LANE. PLEASE LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE A PREFERENCE TO HOW YOU ARE CONTACTED. I'M SORRY I CAN NOT INDIVIDUALLY PHONE PEOPLE.

COOPER'S WOOD ANNIVERSARY

THIS YEAR IS THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PLANTING OF COOPER'S WOOD. THE TREES WERE PLANTED BY SCHOOL CHILDREN AND WE PLAN TO INVITE THEM BACK TO CELEBRATE AND SEE HOW THEIR TREES HAVE GROWN. THE WOOD SHOULD BE A SPECIAL PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND WE PLAN TO EXPAND THE IDEA OF IT BEING A PLACE FOR THEM TO LEARN, EXPLORE AND PLAY.

SCHOOL CHILDREN OF TODAY WILL ALSO BE INVITED TO THE EVENT AND WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE PART IN ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE WOOD.

WE ARE HOPING TO HOLD THIS EVENT AT THE END OF APRIL WHEN RELATIVES OF THE COOPER FAMILY WILL BE VISITING THE AREA.

IT WILL ALSO BE A TIME TO PLAN AHEAD AND LOOK AT IMPROVING THE DIVERSITY OF THE PLANT LIFE AND INTRODUCING A BROADER RANGE OF TREE SPECIES.

WHAT NEXT?

THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS THAT PEOPLE LOOK AFTER THE HILL AND ACTIVITIES THAT GO ON BEHIND THE SCENES. WE COULD ALWAYS DO WITH MORE HELP. THESE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU MAY BE ABLE TO DO YOUR BIT.

WE ARE LOOKING FOR SOMEONE THAT MAY BE ABLE TO HELP ILLUSTRATE A BOOK ABOUT ALLINGTON HILL. OR MAY LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE A PAINTING, DRAWING OR OTHER PIECE OF ART WORK TO ADORN IT'S PAGES. THEY WOULD BE FULLY ACCREDITED AND MONEY RAISED WILL GO TOWARDS THE UP KEEP OF THE HILL.

FRESH IDEAS FOR OUR ANNUAL FESTIVALS. WE WANT THE EVENT IN APRIL TO BE CHILDREN ORIENTATED. WHAT WOULD YOUR CHILDREN LIKE TO DO?

THE A.G.M IS IN MARCH. DO YOU THINK THAT YOU WOULD BE ABLE TO GIVE YOUR PERSONAL SKILLS TO HELP PROMOTE THE VOLUNTEER GROUP AND THE WORK IT DOES AND BECOME A COMMITTEE MEMBER?

THE WEATHER

When I write this article we always seem to be going through an extreme weather pattern. I have now lost count of how many storms have blown through. It has been at least one every other day. We have been blessed with mild sunny weather in between. I am not sure this is good news for hibernating animals or butterflies, the latter I seem to be seeing on an almost weekly basis.

Rain fall for December was 173mm. With a total of 788mm for the year, which is about average for the hill. In 2012, rain fall was almost double the average. The maximum day time temperature was 12.8, with a low of -2.2. with only three days temperatures reaching below zero.

DORSET LIFE MAGAZINE JANUARY EDITION 2014

We were contacted back in October from Dorset Life magazine, asking if they could do a small article on the group. Ironically the first storm of the year cut their electricity off and the article did not meet the deadline. They were so impressed with the ethos of the group and what we achieved, they decided to make it one of the features of the next edition. I am pleased the the hard work of all the volunteers and people associated with the hill have been recognised in this way. You all deserve it.

Chat from the hill

“Why do you not put posters up about working parties anymore?”

This was actually mentioned in the last news letter. After feed back, I have agreed to put notices on the main gates about up and coming working parties and on the day, where we are on the hill. I'm sorry but the weather really does not allow us to do regular working parties. We have tried it and it doesn't work.

“Why did you not finish off laying chipping's on The Drive?”

It cost the group £50 to hire a mini digger and Steve very kindly gave up his day off so we could use his Four by Four and trailer. We used all the available chippings at the time. We can do this again, but the new Woodland Trust manager has not yet been available to visit the site to discuss doing this. He has over 40 Woodlands to look after. We can't just do as we please!

“Can you put chippings underneath the swing, to stop it getting so muddy?”

I believe the response was. “There are plenty of chippings by the main gate. We are quite happy for you to do it yourself. We can provide a wheelbarrow if you like” That was from a quick witted volunteer, but they are right. So many people also complain about the mud inside the main gates. Well, just get a spade and put down the chippings yourself, simple!

“You seem to have started a project at the top of the field but have not worked on it for weeks, whats going on?”

Like most people, in December none of the volunteers had any free time. We did manage a few hours work but that was all. As soon as there are any dry days, we plan to hold a working weekend, so people can volunteer for a few hours, at a time that suits them. A chipper will be hired so we can also clear up and put chippings down on the paths as we go along. But we do need as many people as possible to help.

“Can we cut some Hazel sticks?”

We have given several people permission to cut a few from the area where we have been working. Please ask permission first. Ideally if you come along to a working party you can take any cut wood from that day, for kindling, or stakes for the garden. You can also take wood from the piles where we have been working.

“Why has nothing changed since they handed over the lease”

All this happened so quickly. We need the community to get involved in projects for this area and we are planning the best way to move forward. We need to get it right, 25 years is a long time.

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

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