

Issue 7

Jan/Feb 2012



NEWSLETTER

Allington Hillbillies

The Way Ahead

After our first successful year we need to look at the way ahead.

Firstly, we have received a donation through the Woodland Trust. It has been requested that this money is spent on providing way marked routes around the hill. If it is your first visit, it is easy to get lost amongst the maze of paths and many local people do not have the confidence to venture onto the hill. The money will cover enough way mark posts for three routes.

The first being a low level easy route, secondly one taking you to all the best view points and thirdly a slightly more challenging route, with more steep climbs and steps.

We are also producing a map to guide people around, many of the major paths will also be named. For those of you that attended any of our events last year, there was an opportunity

for you to help name some the paths. A lot of these ideas have been used. Sadly Dog Poo alley is not one of them, however appropriate it may have been, sorry.

The final touches to the maps will be added over the next few months, with extra information such as seating and view points also added.

This time of the year is the best time to explore the hill, get off the beaten track and walk through the trees. Why oh why do we all wallow through the mud on the main paths, when they are much drier tracks only feet away through the trees. There are over 40 acres of hill to explore. The paths would hold up to the challenge if we did not all follow the same foot steps.



Donations

Myself and Jon have been stopped on the hill several times in the last few months by visitors wishing to donate money. It has been painful to let them go without grabbing their cash first.

Sadly we cannot take cash, cheques, diamonds or any other form of valuables however tempting it may be. The best idea we have come up with is for people to be able to donate straight into the Allington Volunteers bank account held at Lloyds.

If you also wish to donate, please use the bank details below. If you wish the money to go towards a certain project then please email the details letting me know how much the donation was and what project you are supporting. All donations will be anonymous unless you would like us to mention it in the newsletter. You may wish to inspire others to help raise money. Holding a coffee morning, sponsored walk or asking for money instead of presents for a special celebration, are all ways to raise money and help us look after the hill.

Allington Hill Volunteer Group Lloyds 30-67-89 19597660

Working on the hill

Over a year ago the Woodland Trust invited local people to help look after Allington Hill. The idea was to involve the community in a way that would encourage people to take care of the hill. We aim to discourage litter, keep the paths clear and safe for all users and encourage the next generation to be involved in its transformation from farm land 30 years ago to wood and meadow land today.

All the work undertaken has been approved by the Woodland Trust. To recognise this 10 of the main volunteer now have green tabards with the wording "Woodland Volunteers". This is to give the general public reassurance that we are an official volunteer group.



Latest projects

Many years ago Coopers field used to be allotments. At the top of the field, at some time raspberry canes had been planted. These over the years had spread smothering several trees and spreading across the field onto the path and towards the area where the orchids flowered last year.

This is why the decision was taken to take out the canes and control their spread. We plan to continually mow/ strim this area to weaken the plants and allow natural vegetation to take over.

Several trees during the winter have fallen or become unsafe and they have been removed. We have worked in several areas along the top of the field, including the steps in the right hand corner. We have reinstated the original path and opened up the area to help combat the muddy path. Part of Coopers Wood willow have been coppiced this autumn and the remainder will be coppiced within the next 2 years.

Watch your step

Maintaining the paths is hard work. We have been able to source some chippings to help provide a better foot hold in some of the worst areas. Access is also a problem as we can only get so far in a 4x4 vehicle that a local resident is kindly letting us borrow. It then has to be carried by hand to the worst areas. Please whenever possible choose a safer route or join us and help us maintain the paths!

The Queens Jubilee

The Big Lunch

The big lunch is a nationwide celebration which will take place on

Sunday 3rd June midday

We are holding a picnic event for families to be able to come and join in the festivities. A bit like the old fashioned street parties but on a bigger scale. With lots of flag waving, traditional games, den building and hopefully sunshine.

Plans for the event are in the early stages. We aim to hold the event from midday and hope that families will stay as long as they wish, long after we have packed up and gone home.

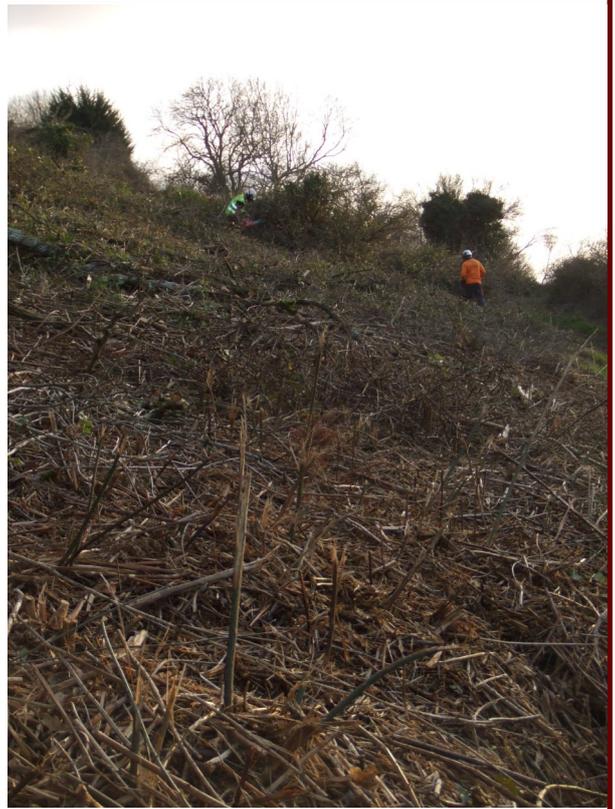
The Beacon

To finish of the celebrations we are having an **Official Beacon** on top of the hill on

Monday 4th June 9pm

We have registered the site and it will be linked with all the beacons nationwide. We will be lighting our Beacon between 10-10.30pm.

There will be an exact time to light the beacon by royal appointment!



Jubilee Trees

In 2012 the Woodland Trust are hoping to plant six million trees nationwide. One of the ways they hope to achieve this is get local volunteer groups such as ourselves to plant trees.

We are receiving a Jubilee pack of trees, 105 in total. There will also be a Royal Oak grown from one of the Royal estates.

To be involved in planting our very own Jubilee Wood, please come along on.

SATURDAY

MARCH 17TH

12.30 PM for 2 PM

Arrive early to pick your tree and advice on where to plant it. Each tree will be numbered so you can watch it grow.



Jubilee Bench

Allington Parish Council are marking the Queens Jubilee by providing a much needed bench by the main gate. This will be very welcome for those who wish to enjoy the hill but are unable to walk very far.

Bench donated

Not officially linked with the jubilee, but we have been donated another bench through the Woodland Trust, by Classic Cottages. This bench will be sited either near the Jubilee trees or on the South side of the hill.

Nature's Playground

Many people ask "Should we be putting man's mark on the hill, why not leave it to nature?" Talk to anyone that has lived here since the 1950's and you will have your answer. It was farm land with cattle grazing on the top and potato fields on the northern slopes. When the farm land was put up for sale, the community clubbed together and bought the hill, which is now looked after by the Woodland Trust. Most of the trees are less than 30 years old and planted by man. The main path "The Drive" was put in by man to give access to the top of the hill.

Before the farm it was a Quarry and there was a working lime kiln on top. An important source of lime to put on the crops of hemp and flax, for rope making. It has evolved through time to fit in with the needs of the local community, including a home guard lookout post in the war. The only playground children knew fifty or sixty years ago, was Allington Hill.

So it is now our turn to develop the hill to suit this generation. The fact that we are more aware of the needs of nature, protecting their habitat and value this magnificent hill, means that within its 40 acres we can carefully manage the area to suit all needs. Suitable for dog walkers, nature enthusiasts, quiet areas, children's play trail, outdoor classroom and a safe environment for all. I wonder what the needs of the future generations will be?

If we leave it to nature, I'm sure it will be very overgrown within the next 20 years or so.

What to look out for



This tree fell down in the gales. We are leaving it for the children/ adults to climb. Some of the branches will be removed to make it safe.

These steps that were dangerous were taken out back in the summer. It is now the perfect place to put one of the play trail items for all the family to use. Hucks Nets are in the process of dreaming up something for us.



This is the best den I have seen so far. Built by a father and two sons. I think we may have to have a den building competition.

New Pathways

Coopers Wood has matured in the last few years and animals such a Deer, Badger and Fox have made so many tracks through the wood. On one of our Volunteer days we asked people to mark out two paths through the Wood, crossing at a meeting point, which will be at the willow arbor.

To open up these paths we need to use them and the track will soon become defined. I did not have the pleasure of mapping out the paths, so recently had a great time following the way markers. We have tied coloured plastic plant labels to the trees so that you can follow the route. We choose these as we feared anything more organic would soon fade, rot or be taken by the birds as nesting material.

There are four colours yellow, red, blue and green. Children will have great fun following the labels and I hope they will like the arbor in the middle. The more people that walk the routes the quicker the paths will become established. So join in the fun and see a different part of the hill. We hope in the near future to trim these paths.



Avoid the mud

As usual, mud has become the major issue at this time of year. A mixture of clay a few inches beneath the soil, run off from the top of the hill and path ways with poor drainage all add to the misery.

We are going to mark another path that is a very small detour, which will miss the main muddy area on the lower path, just above the field.

A few people have said that the hill is getting very crowded these days. There do seem to be two rush hours, the one before you all go off to work and the later one in the evening. I often go up on the hill and can spend a whole hour or more wandering around on lovely sunny days and never see a soul.

If you are a walker or a family who wish to enjoy the hill, just avoid the main dog walking times if possible. You are more likely to see and enjoy the wildlife. Although many people are only too happy to spend time chatting and meeting people, that's why they enjoy the hill so much.



Marked routes

Above is a sneak preview of one of the marked routes that are being planned for the hill. This is the high level walk and is just shy of a mile long.

We have tried to use as many of the main paths as possible to cover the whole of the hill. It is nice to see an aerial view, it gives a better idea of how big it is and how little space the paths take up.

Notice that this path goes through Coopers Wood.

Natures Diary



Nature detective

I have set myself a challenge to find something each month that I have never seen before, identify it and report back. I do see some strange things sometimes over the hill, but I really did think this time someone had scattered yellow split peas all over the place. I have zoomed in on the photo at home and with close inspection you can see these tiny black hairs around the edge of the fungi. I am still not quite sure how you would name this as “ eye lash” fungus, but that is what it is called. It can be seen in spring and late Autumn (that’s why I saw it in January then!) and grows on damp rotting wood. A lot of interesting things have been coming up in the area where we cut all the blackthorn down.

For those with sharp eyes you may have spotted this crystallis in the photo.

JANUARY?

All these photos were taken in the first week of January.

Even the celandine should not be flowering this early. With this cold snap in February all these have stopped flowering

Many of you may have also noticed the amount of insects active on the hill. .



Volunteer Profile



ADAM SHERRING

Adam is at Kingston Maurward college and is part way through completing a level 3 arboriculture course. He excels at his theory work and wishes to build up his confidence in practical skills. He finds it a lot easier working alongside people of our generation than his own, so has really fitted in with the Hillbillies.

Next year he plans to do the level 3 countryside management course, so we will be tapping into all that knowledge he will have.

Adam is also a talented horse rider. While helping his Auntie he was introduced to a pure bred Arab horse called Alphina. Horse and rider were a perfect match and Adam trained the horse to take part in the Arab Horse Society Marathon and they won. Now he is at college full time, Adam has had to make the heart breaking decision to sell her as he cannot give her the time she deserves.

We have given Adam an important role within the Hillbillies and he will be checking the hill on a regular basis looking for jobs that need doing. Steps repairing, unsafe paths, over hanging branches etc will all be noted by Adam and if he is not able to sort it out there and then, he will send in a report to go on the next working party or to the Woodland Trust for action. So if you see Adam on your walk around the hill then please do stop and say hello.

You will also see him sporting our new working jackets which have been given out to 10 of the most regular volunteers. This is just to reassure passers by that we have permission to be on the hill working as a volunteer group.

Adam would like to add if you know of anyone looking for a horse that has good temperament and suitable for novice-advanced riders please contact Adam . The asking price is £4,000 tackle is also for sale.

adamsherring@hotmail.co.uk Tel: 07814757181 after 6pm



Play trail

We are still in the planning stage of looking at equipment suitable for a low key, fun play trail to encourage families to enjoy the hill. One Sunday when I walked past the swing it was being well used.

The idea is to make them look as natural as possible and they will be made of wood and rope. Items will be added as and when .

We are applying for funding from several different organisations and we would like the children to help us raise some money too. There several ideas how they can do this, it is just working out the best, fun way for them to get involved.

If you wish to donate to the play trail, please donate direct to the Lloyds bank account. We will also have a donation bucket on the hill the day we plant the trees. Lloyds account 30-67-89 19597660



HILLBILLIES CONTACT DETAILS

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

Mobile
07789705345

*Facebook
Allington Hillbillies*

Dates for your Diary

MARCH

SATURDAY 17TH
Jubilee Tree planting

APRIL

SUNDAY 15TH
Working Party

EVENING WORKING

PARTIES

RETURN IN

MAY

Your News and Views

Why have you cleared this area?

We have been a bit slow about putting up posters informing people that we have cleared the area ready to plant the Jubilee trees. Sorry, you should have been better informed.

The steps around the hill are getting dangerous, when are they going to be repaired.

When we have volunteers available and the weather allows us to do it. We have started on this project and have re-cut and resurfaced about 10 steps so far.

Thank you for clearing the area at the top of the field and re opening the old pathway.

We hope that people will now find this area more accessible. Some people find the steps very hard work, so you now have an option. It was also a nice project to reinstate the old pathway.

This is the first time we have walked on the hill. We are not sure where we are and how do we find a route back to Symondsbury.

We have had a few problems marking out the routes around the hill and entrance/exit points. We would rather take our time and get it right than rush it. We pointed them in the right direction

What's happened about the stick and flick campaign?

New posters will appear soon , not only about poo, but also rubbish. We seem to have had some very untidy guests recently. Please take your rubbish home.

The Weather

What can we say about the weather? I should be writing about the unusually warm mild winter and spring being so early. We have now been hit by this very dry cold air, with very little wind and glorious sunshine. Non of this weather fits our usual winter pattern. But why have we not had six inches of snow, so we can all go over the hill sledging. It is just not fair. If anyone wishes to donate some money for a snow machine for next year I would only be too happy.

December we had only four days where the temperature dropped below zero at night and only five days in January. This was also a very dry month with ten days of rain with a total of 40.5mm

Did you know

Alfred the Great died in 899 and left parcels of land including Allington to one of his sons. Athelward the Atheling. Translated means Athelward the prince. The town (ton) of the prince would read Athelington. The spelling over many hundreds of years developed into Allington. So, did Alfred the Great's son actually walk the footpaths of Allington Hill?

Look at.....

If you watch Countryfile and enjoyed the article about the hand made rakes made in Cumbria, look at this web site. It's good

www.thenaturalgardener.co.uk

If you are unable to come along and plant a tree, visit the woodland Trust site to find out how you can get involved in planting a tree for the Jubilee.

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk