

Issue 10

July / Aug 2012



NEWSLETTER

Allington Hillbillies

The community celebrates

2012 will become one of those years that we will not forget in a hurry. It has been full of pomp, ceremony, fun and tragedy for the whole country. It has also been a hectic year for the hill.

The volunteer group was only set up eighteen months ago and has seen a lot of its wish list put into action. We have seen celebration with our big picnic on the hill. Also the ceremony of the blessing of the jubilee trees by Rev Peter Edwards. For those of you that have revisited this area, you can be nothing but amazed at the amount of growth on the new trees.

There was also tragedy as the old grand tree came crashing down, during one of the first storms of the year. It is determined to hold on to life and continues to grow from the base.

As always lots of people are having loads of fun on the hill. The scramble nets have been a great success and we are getting closer to having the play trail put in place. They are also making their own fun with more complex designs of den appearing all the time.

As for the pomp? well ok, I'm working on that one!



Waitrose tokens



I am very pleased to announce that for the month of September, the Waitrose Community Matters project have chosen us for one of the charities.

This is great news for us, as it will greatly help towards the play trail funding, for which the installation costs are more than we expected.

If you're not aware of how it works, you should receive a token every time you make a purchase. Before you leave place your token in the collection box (hopefully you will choose ours).

If you are a little bit absent minded, like myself, you will have a collection of them dotted around the house. This is the time to gather them all up. We had a token amnesty at work, emptying purses, lockers, pockets etc and found over twenty, so get hunting. It is also a good excuse when like me, you need a chocolate fix. Pop in and treat yourself, it is all in aid of a good cause. See you in Waitrose!

Path names

In the next few newsletters we will be looking at the story behind the names, the work involved and the importance they will have for the hill. All these names were chosen by local people, not just us hillbillies. Old names for the parts of the hill have been included as well as the new.



Why? We have many visitors, not just us locals who walk the hill. If they visit after the wonderful display of bluebells, they would have no idea they are there. Another reason is shortly after this sign was put in place a large branch fell across the path. People were instantly able to tell us where the branch had fallen and we were able to go straight to that point and unblock the path. Before now we have been wandering all over the place, following very vague pointing, with directions such as, around the bend in the path, past the big tree!



A lot of imagination went in to this one!. It is hard to believe, but this lane once was approximately ten foot wide and was used by horse and cart to remove the stone quarried from the top of the hill. It is also a right of way, which originally linked North with West Allington. The path now comes out at the top of Park road. This road was built about 100 years ago. For those romantics amongst you, there is a secret love message hidden in the sign. You will have to go and look at it, to work it out.



Money was readily donated for us to place all the signs on the hill, for the paths that we wished to name. Thankfully, we also have a very talented woodcarver in our midst. Not only have all these signs been carved by hand, but there was also the mammoth task of getting them in place on the hill. Not only the sign but the posts, dry post mix cement, water and bag of tools were man and woman handled up the hill for every path sign.

The craftsmanship and attention to detail has shone through and as one person said to me, " It shows visitors how much we care about the hill in the quality of the signs."

Well done Stan, your work has been admired and appreciated by many. His wife Chris also deserves a thank you. (In front of picture, pulling the trolley with the cement in it. There is equality for you.)

Open public access

The hill is enjoyed by many, from all walks of life. It is not only dog walkers that enjoy the hill. I am sorry to say that I have had repeated reports of unsociable behaviour on more than one occasion, spoiling other people's enjoyment of the hill.

The hill is open access to all, there are no, "no go" areas for people without dogs. Please dog owners, do not allow these people to spoil it for you and give all dog walkers a bad name. There is nowhere else with such easy access in the local area, that allows dogs to roam off the lead. We non-dog owners are very tolerant of paths covered in dog poo, dogs jumping up at people with muddy paws and dogs barking when you are trying to enjoy the quietness of the hill. It is not an area designated for dog walking. We are not trying to push you out. So please treat us with as much respect as we treat you and your dogs. If you see someone being disrespectful to others, remind them that is not how we behave on Allington Hill.

Way marked paths

While I am having a little moan on behalf of everyone else, it is with great sadness that I have to report a few of the way mark posts have been removed and most of the markings have also been removed. Again I would like to remind you the hill is open access, owned by the Woodland Trust. This means that visitors often enjoy the hill as much as we do.

The money for the way mark posts was a gift donated through the Woodland Trust by a family who wished to provide the hill with a permanent legacy from them, as they love walking. They were going to visit the site in September, to walk the way mark routes. I'm asking if we deserve such generosity, when we show such little respect?

The new bench

The good news is that Allington Parish Council have donated a lovely bench, situated just inside the main gate. Which has been warmly welcomed.

We are hoping that a plaque will appear on it soon as the donation was to commemorate the Queen's diamond jubilee.

The grass area in front of the bench has been cut by Paul on a regular basis. This is to allow us to use this area for our Autumn festival and allow people to picnic or families to play games if they wish too.



Butterfly count 2012

I was really looking forward to doing the butterfly count, as last year there was an abundance of butterflies. I was confident that our survey would show how diverse and rich the hill's habitat is.



Speckled Wood: Very common on the hill, especially on The Drive, from Jubilee Wood up to the junction of Lyme Kiln Way.



Gatekeeper: Not as common on the hill as some of the others and tends to enjoy the grassy slopes on the top.



Meadow Brown: This I have seen mostly on the long grass in and around the edges of Coopers Wood. Difficult to count, as from a distance looks similar to the Ringlet. This one is also looking a little worse for wear and the colours are fading.



Small Skipper. This butterfly loves the south west facing grass slopes at the top of the hill. These are rich in wild flowers. It seems to fly very fast and I felt giddy trying to count them. There is also a rare Lulworth Skipper, which is found along the coast. Is this one below?



Ringlet. Usually is a lot darker in colour than this one. This photo does show the ringlet markings on the wings clearly. The most common butterfly on the hill at this time of year, especially in the long grass in the field.

We did several surveys on the hill in different places.

Why not log onto

www.bigbutterflycount.org

and see the results for yourself.



Also seen on the hill.

Painted Lady, Comma, Marbled White, Peacock, Red Admiral, Large White and possibly the Common Blue.

All seen in smaller numbers than last year.

Jonathan (Cathy) says

I must admit I forgot to ask Jonathan for his Woodland Trust article this month and he has gone on holiday. I am sure that he will make up for it on the next newsletter.

For those of you that are Woodland Trust members, you will soon be receiving your autumn magazine. This includes an article about Allington Hill. Apparently with some stunning photos of the hill. Not taken by me, may I hasten to add. So it will be interesting to see the hill through someone else's lens. I'm sure it is not too late to join and receive your copy. So please log on to Woodland Trust and click on the membership link. Don't forget by joining the Trust you are also supporting the work done on the hill.

Perhaps I ought to take this opportunity to thank Jonathan for his whole hearted support of the volunteer group. I know he opens my emails with some anticipation, wondering what on earth we are going to get up to next. Always enthusiastic, supportive and very forgiving of some of our novel ideas. I have yet to tell him I plan to bomb Allington Hill. **NOT** the exploding type, the wild flower seed variety.

Plant survey

How many plants on the hill can you name? Why is it so important for us to know this information. The last two years the weather has been very trying for plants, animals and insects alike. We need to protect their food source.

The food chain starts at the bottom and works up. Without the plants most insects would have nothing to feed on. With no insects the small mammals and birds would not be able to survive. Larger birds and mammals would not live on the hill, as they would have nothing to feed on.

Last year we collected wild flower seed to scattered in areas that had been cleared of scrub, to improve the diversity of plant life. We also wanted to create a continual profusion of flowers, for pollen feeding insects on the hill. This is very important, providing food for our resident bees nest and the insects that rely on them. With such poor weather limiting time to forage for food, this project became more important than we ever imagined. It is not just to make the hill look pretty.

The butterfly count proved that some butterflies had survived our awful summer better than others. Mostly, those which rely on grasses, rather than flowers. There was a steep decline in Red Admirals and Peacocks for example, even though the blackberry flower was in abundance this year.

With the plant survey we will be more aware of which flowers and plants we should try and increase on the hill, to provide a year round larder.

Food for thought. This year many of us including ourselves have had crops ruined by the appalling weather. Although it was heart breaking digging up rows of rotting potatoes, the next day we popped up to Washingpool farm and bought some. If the food you rely on is devastated by the weather and you are a insect, bird or mammal, you can't just pop down to the corner shop. Wildlife programmes always tell us how it will effect us, if the bees do not pollinate our crops. Perhaps it is about time we thought about providing a sustainable crop of food to feed the bees, rather than just for us.

We will do our first plant surveys before the end of September. They will not be too in depth, but will be used as a learning tool, to provide us with the skills to do a full survey next year.

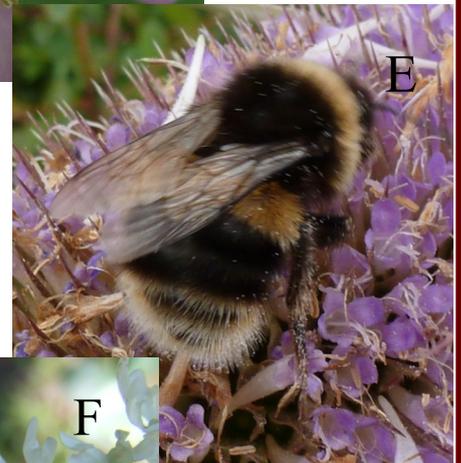
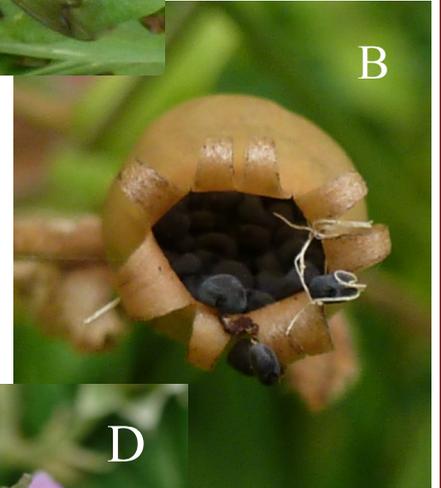


Nature's Diary

A few people have asked why the contractors seem to do a shoddy job of cutting the grass in the field this year, leaving large areas uncut.

We asked them to do this. Usually by the end of July the seed has set and it is the right time to cut the grass. This year, many of the flowering plants had not even set seed and were about four weeks later in flowering than last year.

It also meant that the butterflies and insects still had flowers to feed from. Cosmetically we may not have liked the untidy look. We must remember it is like a huge hypermarket of food for the residents of the hill. You know how much we panic when there is a hint of snow in the forecast and supermarket shelves are emptied. Effectively that is what we would have done if all the grass had been cut at once.



- A. Hoverfly (*volucella pellucens*). Resembles a bee, lays eggs in wasps nests and feeds mostly on bramble flower.
- B. Red Campion seed head.
- C. Stinking Iris. Rather an unfortunate name for this beautiful flower. If the plant is crushed it smells of rotting meat.
- D. I haven't been able to find a common name for this beautifully coloured fly. The photo enlarged shows it as it's best and will be included in this year's calendar.
- E. Is it a buff-tailed or white-tailed bumble bee?
- F. Longhorn beetle. Lava lives in rotten wood, lives off nectar.

All photographed on the hill in the last two months.

Do you have any photos you would like to see in the newsletter? If so please send them in.

Autumn festival

It is always daunting organising these events. The first one was such a success and with glorious Autumn weather, you feel that it just can't be the same again.

The workshops for the children were so popular that all the adults joined in as well. We hope to be more organised this year and will use the whole of the marquee for the children's workshops.

We will be making wicker lanterns again and will be cutting willow in preparation on the working party before the event.

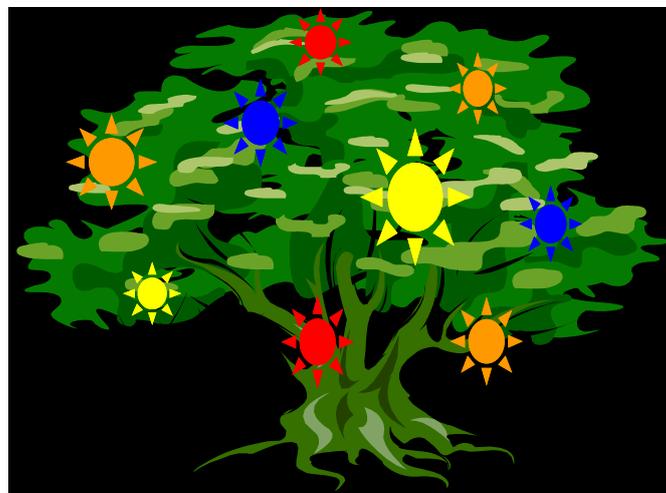
We will also be making seed bombs out of all the wild flower seeds we have collected. The children will love this and to make it more fun they will all receive a sticker saying "I seed BOMBED ALLINGTON HILL".

They will also have the opportunity to make a necklace made of wood, with their name on.

The usual favourites of the children's tombola, treasure hunt and other activities will be to hand. I'm not sure when they will find time to go on the bouncy castle.

As it gets dark the lantern parade will start and they will be welcomed back by the lighting of the bonfire.

There will be plenty for the Adults to do as well, so please bring the whole family along.



Allington Hill

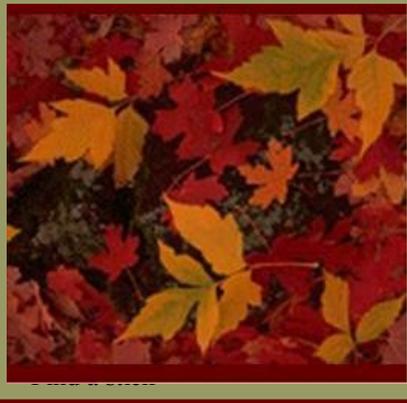
Autumn Festival of lights

September Saturday 29th

4pm-late

Children's work shops, lantern parade,
refreshments, entertainment, bonfire.

Please can people save egg cartons, these are ideal for holding the bombs! Can children also please bring something loud to rattle or blow, so they can make as much noise as they like on the parade.



**HILLBILLIES
CONTACT DETAILS**

To receive a newsletter
Send an email to
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Mobile
07789705345

*Facebook
Allington Hillbillies*

Dates for your Diary

WORKING PARTIES
WILL ALL BE NOTIFIED BY
EMAIL AND TEXT.
DUE TO
RECENT WEATHER CONDITIONS

SUNDAY 16th SEPTEMBER
10am
Clearing area right of Coopers Wood.
Preparation work for Festival

SATURDAY 29th
FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS
4pm to late

allingtonhill@gmail.com

Your News and Views

White foxgloves, garden poppies?

The foxglove seed was carefully collected from wild plants. It is a twist of nature that you will sometimes get albinos. The poppies came from a packet of wild flower seed that was given to us. A case of never believe what it says on the packet. These have been pulled before they set seed.

You never seem to do work on the South side of the hill.

In this area the trees are up to 100 years old and nature is doing the job quite nicely without us. We do some very subtle pruning and have removed several over hanging branches.

Why has the hollow way path not been cleared.

It should have been cut by the contractors, but was probably so overgrown they didn't see it! The weather has been so awful that we have not been able to arrange a group to clear it.

Can't you do something to stop the soil erosion from the hill.

It was a big problem during the floods blocking the drains in Cherry tree. Sadly there is not a lot we can do about it without allowing a lot more light onto to Allington Hill lane, which would encourage the grass to grow to stabilise the soil.

The Weather

I will keep this brief. Awful!

You will not be surprised if I told you that the plants and insects that prefer damp conditions are thriving on the hill.

I can only presume that the Beech trees have lost most their leaves due to the salt in the air blown in on the South Westerly gales, burning the leaves.

Our solar panels say it all, we generated less electricity in the last two months than earlier in the year.

Did you know

Did you know that water from Allington Hill feeds a small stream which runs through St Swithuns. It feeds into the river near the bell foundry.

When this area was all farm land the stream was used as a sheep dip and the stonework can still be clearly seen near the flats in Flaxhayes.

Look at.....

I'm always doing research for the hill and this web site is very informative.

www.plantlife.org.uk

I think I have mentioned this website before, but I just keep going back to it. Great for those who like to do things the traditional way.

www.thenaturalgardener.co.uk