

Brimming with Life



Turning the existing Cooper's Field into a flower meadow is now into it's third year. The project was inspired by one solitary orchid that had decided to make it's home in the field four years ago, or was it the last one standing! The management of the grass has been the key to encourage not only the orchids, which this year we have 15, but other wildflowers to grow in the field. The woodland margins are also important and a different mix of woodland flowers are taking these areas over, such as the foxglove, teasel and thistle. The mixes of different grasses within the meadow is also very important. Many people tend to forget that a grass head is actually a flower providing pollen and food for a large selection of insects. Their seed heads then provide seed for birds and small mammals, such as the field mouse, that in turn provide food for larger mammals and birds of prey.



Walk on the wild side

Cooper's Field has many wide grass paths for all to enjoy, but we continue to strive to give a more personal wildlife experience by walking through the meadow and woodland margins. Two years ago we re-instated the original path at the top of the field. We have now to encourage more to use it and help to keep it clear we have laid wood chippings along it's length.

We had people from the local community from tiny tots to grandma helping us out. A huge thank you to Andrew yet again, that made the task a little easier for us.



On your next visit, take this path and walk through flowering foxgloves growing on either side of you. Throughout the summer the variety of flowers will change, giving you a new experience each time.

A wide selection of wild plants is very important for all insects as many depend on different plants throughout their lives. The photo below is showing small tortoiseshell caterpillars feeding off the common nettle. This butterfly overwinters (hibernates) in this country and lays eggs early spring on the fresh new growth of nettles.



The photo below shows the butterflies feeding on celandine late Feb early March. During the summer the butterflies will be feeding from flowers within the meadow, such as buttercup, clover and oxeye daisy.

We continue to do butterfly surveys, which give us a good indication of how the flower meadow is maturing.



WWI Memorial bench



The WWI memorial bench has been put in place. We asked local people to help us decide the final place for the seat, which sits at the top of the flower meadow, facing the setting sun.

This has already become a popular meeting place and it has been a joy to see so many people using it. It is made of solid english oak and handmade by Stan Toombs one of our volunteers.

In 2014 we received £900 in funding from West Bay Car Boot Fund to pay for the bench and wildflower seed for the meadow. We are really extremely appreciative of their support and the benefit it has given to those who visit the flower meadow and rest awhile and remember.



New Woodland Trust Manager

Allington Hill has been without a Woodland Trust manager since last September. This has not caused too many problems, as the out going manager had put in place a list of jobs for the winter months so the volunteers could continue to hold working parties throughout the winter.

Joe Middleton is meeting with the regular volunteers within the next couple of weeks for a walk around the hill. This will give us the opportunity to inform him of on going projects, on going problems and to discuss our hopes for how the area will be managed for the foreseeable future.

The five year management plan for the site is overdue for renewal and we (the volunteers) aim to work with the Woodland Trust, Allington Parish Council and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, to put a comprehensive management plan in place.

Roly Boughton who is the volunteers Project Manager for Cooper's Wood and Field has already had a one to one meeting with Ian Rees from A.O.N.B to put in place a management plan for this area which is now leased by Allington Parish Council.

Summer picnic event

Our Summer picnic event was held on mid Summers day. There were several reasons for this. It was national picnic week and we were expecting a lot more national publicity about the joys of a family picnic in the countryside. We had also held the event the same weekend last year but on the Saturday.

Our forward planning missed one important fact, it was also Fathers Day. We now realise that this was possibly a mistake as the numbers to the event were about half of that last year. Afterwards we had feedback that the event was not widely advertised. The event was advertised to the same degree as previous events and in fact we managed to get more posters and handbills distributed than before. The only thing that we did not do was to put the banner up at the Town Hall. We have done this for the last three events, but it does not seem to bring new visitors to the festivals. We will review the best way to publicise events on a zero budget!

The most important thing was that everyone had a wonderful time with the children even finding two gorillas on their wildlife walk through the woods. The children and adults joined in the traditional sports and fun was had by all. To top it all we managed to make £68.65 to help fund the different projects on the hill.



The 1st West Bay Beavers came back to see how the flower meadow had blossomed after they had helped seed bomb the area last year. The group were assisted by Roly Boughton and his son Isaac who spends many happy hours over the hill looking out for wildlife. They found more than we bargained for with the discovery of an unusual plant we had not seen before. We took some photos that our Project Manager for the flower meadow Chris Toombs sent to Dorset Wildlife Trust expert Nick Gray. It turns out to be Crow Garlic. Something that we have never heard of before.



Isaac Boughton who helped the Beavers on their wildlife hunt standing in front of the crow garlic.

Request for more bins

Why can't we have some dog poo bins at the top of Cooper's Field, especially as there are two close together in the lower part of the field? Pat North and Chris Toombs have written the following reply. They voluntarily empty the bins weekly, with little thanks may I say. I personally would like to thank them as it is not the most pleasant of tasks.

Answer:

- 1) The bins have been specifically placed as it has been found that dogs do their business within 300 yards of entering the field and people tend to use these two paths the most.
- 2) Volunteers give up their free time in all weathers to empty the bins every week. The bags are so heavy that they have to use a sack truck. It would be unreasonable to expect them to struggle up the hill and back down with heavy smelly leaking bags. It would also be quite time consuming.
- 3) It is not difficult for people to pick up after their dog and just bin the bag when they leave the field. It is not a great distance. Alternately they could stick and flick.

The same question has been asked about having bins on the hill. We will ask the new Woodland Trust Manager his thoughts on this idea. But if we increase the number of bins someone has to empty them. We have repeatedly requested people to step forward to offer to do this, strangely no one has. This means that somehow the bins would need to be funded to pay someone to empty them. If anyone has any idea how to achieve this then please let us know. Of course the answer would be to carry it or flick it, but please do not hang it in bags from the trees. Not only is it unsightly but any form of plastic bag is harmful to wildlife.

Munching Caterpillars event

This is for children in the main but adults are very welcome too. The event will be held on Monday August 10th. Last year the children had great fun with two moth traps and butterfly activities. The grass in the meadow will not be cut until after the event to ensure there are plenty of butterflies present.

The times has yet to be confirmed, but hopefully will start at 10am, so if your children would like to come please look at our Facebook page for more details or posters on the main entrance gates.

Bat Walk

The Bat Conservation Trust are holding a Bat walk on the hill on **WED AUGUST 19TH** from 8.30pm. We will be meeting at the main gate in Hospital Lane, North allington. The date has been changed since last advertised.

If you have a bat detector hidden in the cupboard and have no idea how to use it please bring it along. We have never surveyed the area for bats before, so it will be an interesting walk around to discover what bats make it their home. Bat detectors will be provided.

Big Butterfly Count

This is an annual event held by the Butterfly Conservation Group. We will be holding surveys on the hill over the next few weeks. We do this in two ways. Stay in one area for 15 minutes and record what we see. The other method which I prefer as you can cover the whole area in one survey, is a linear walk, following the same path each time.

If you would like to help with a butterfly survey and how to identify butterflies, please contact me on allingtonhill@gmail.com

MAD HATTERS TEA PARTY

SEPTEMBER SATURDAY 5TH

FREE ENTRY

The next big event is our Mad Hatter's tea party. This has been planned in association with The Hat Festival. It will be on Saturday September 5th, the entertainment will start at 5pm. Funds raised will not only go to the volunteer group to help look after the area but also "Brain Tumour Research" and "The Brain Injury Rehabilitation Trust."

We have a good line up of entertainment, children's workshops, refreshments and bonfire. Live music will start from 5pm. People are welcome to come along earlier to bag your pitch for the evening.

There is a catch nothing in life is free. All the entertainers are giving their time for free, in return for donations from the crowds. We will be shaking the donation buckets throughout the evening and will be holding a Tombola and providing refreshments. So please make sure that you bring plenty of money with you.

We do expect people to wear their hats for the occasion to help add to the atmosphere. We are still looking for extra helpers for the event that could be available throughout the day. If anyone is able to help with the catering we would be extremely grateful. Please contact Cathy allingtonhill@gmail.com

Chat from the Hill

When is the grass going to be cut it looks very untidy?

Untidy or not it is a vital food source for a broad spectrum of wildlife especially the butterflies. It is not a hay meadow, which is usually cut much earlier in the year. A flower meadow is not usually cut until mid August once all the flowers have gone to seed.

What is the policy of foraging on the hill?

There is no policy in place as it would be impossible to enforce. The rule of thumb is usually pick a small amount from different plants. Pick a third, leave a third for wildlife and the other third to set seed. If you can see that someone has already foraged in an area, don't take more.

Can anyone hold events on the hill?

Any event which you are inviting members of the public to the event would need permission from Allington Parish Council and the Woodland Trust. Small private children's birthday parties or family picnics would not need permission. Contact allingtonhill@gmail.com for more information.

What happened to the attempts to control the bracken?

The lack of funding has been the problem. We will in the future see if we can get funding. The problem being it

would have to be the minimum of a three year project. Most funding is only available for annual projects. In very small areas we have been bruising the bracken to try and control its growth were it is destroying other native wild plants.

The trees in Cooper's Wood are looking as if they are struggling for light.

Our project manager for Cooper's Wood and Field Roly Boughton has been working closely with the A.O.N.B to complete a management plan for the wood, which will include some of the trees being felled to allow other trees more room to grow.

Can we have another rope swing?

We have been told of squabbles over the rope swing and we have seen some very dangerous looking rope swings appearing around the hill. These have been cut down to ensure that no children come to harm. There is one possible tree that is suitable but clearance work needs to be done. We are looking into the problem.

allingtonhill@gmail.com

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

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

01308 423202