

It just kept on raining!

I have started writing the newsletter on the 19th of June and I am wondering where the saying "Flaming June" comes from. I always presumed it was the long day light hours, sunny days and the first real warmth of the year. Or is it because it never stops flaming raining! The green house door has been closed for two days to try and give the tomato plants some warmth and encourage them to grow. The Marsh Orchids in the field are obviously loving it and seem bigger and better than ever. It does not seem possible that only five years ago we only had one flowering orchid.

Even the spirit of the volunteers has been dampened, with low turn out to events, due to the weather and for the same reason the lack of working parties. We have though been busy over the last few months with fund raising. So much has happened I have had to trawl through the articles on the Facebook page as a reminder of all the events.

A huge benefit to me is that since Rose Thorpe read the last newsletter, she has volunteered to take on the responsibility of a lot of the admin work, including keeping the media updated with forthcoming events. It shows we do listen, one of the comments at the AGM was we are not good at advance notice via the media. Rose has already had several articles published in the newspapers and online sites.

This will give me more time to do what I really want to do and that is record and protect the wildlife on the hill. With the weather being so variable, we need to understand how it affects the wildlife and the environment they live in. The wildflower meadow for example is beginning to come into it's own, but there are some areas of grass that just want to be grass. There is nothing wrong with this, but it would be good to try and understand why. My other concern is the lack of butterflies on the wing this year. There was an early flurry of spring butterflies, but the lack of caterpillars is a worry, although there does seem to be a lot of moths at the moment.



The flower Meadow Project

What's growing?

It was good to see a quantity of Ragged Robin in the meadow. The Orange Hawkweed is also showing in abundance.

Due to the wet conditions this spring the grass has grown a lot higher than last year, so has the yellow rattle, which we will start harvesting its seed very shortly.

Those plants such as poppy which prefer much drier conditions have failed to show.



Fritillary

We knew that certain plants would thrive within the flower meadow. Although the field is North facing it does receive a good amount of sun. It does also benefit from water run off from the hill, meaning the soil is kept moist for longer. The plants that enjoy damp conditions such as the Snakes Head Fritillary, Cowslips and Marsh Orchids are thriving.

Funding boost for flower meadow

The approximate cost for funding the flower meadow project this year is £500. We are extremely grateful to The People's Postcode lottery for funding of £250 to help us with this project.

With the continued support of Allington Parish Council and the sale of yellow rattle seed, the meadow project, now in its four year is beginning to flourish. We are also grateful for all those in the local community that have grown plug plants this season.



Duncan the tractor has arrived



We again are so grateful to the People's Postcode Lottery for £1,500 of funding towards our Kubota tractor. We also received £1000 from Allington Parish Council and a £1000 donation from an anonymous beneficiary. The rest of the funding was taken from our general reserve fund. I did get the blame for going slightly over budget, but it did mean that we now have a quality machine. We are also grateful to Cowling Engineering who ensured that it was delivered A.S.A.P with full service, respray, new tyres and extra safety features at a discounted price.

The benefit of having a tractor over a ride on mower, is that it can help us with other jobs in the field as well as mowing the paths. We can maintain the flower meadow and cut the meadow when needed. We are looking at being able to rake grass and an attachment to move chippings. So this will help reduce costs to Allington Parish Council and ourselves in paying contractors and hiring of equipment. Possibly just as well as I have blown the budget. To raise extra cash we held a name the tractor competition and a local young girl's choice of Duncan was pulled out of the hat.

Aiden's Amble

Aiden's aim was to raise funds to provide more family activity days after he saw how much his younger brothers Finley and Riley enjoyed the two events earlier in the year.

To employ a professional for these events it costs approximately £165 per session. Aiden challenged himself to raise £500. To be honest I thought it was too high a total and warned him that he would more likely to raise between £200-£250 and not to be disheartened if he did not reach his goal.

When Aiden first contacted the committee with the idea, we realised that it needed to be Aiden's event not one run by the committee. I personally (not as part of the committee) offered to help him and his Mum with admin and advice for the event as they had never done this before. All the organisation, promotional work and planning was done by Aiden, supported by his Mum and I helped with advice and publicity through my contacts where ever I could. The actual format was all Aiden's ideas and all the hard work was down to Aiden and his Mum, not me. I feel this is an important message to get across as otherwise it undermines Aiden's achievements, as some seem to believe I had a lot more involvement than I did. On the day the volunteers helped with the event at the request of Aiden and we were proud to do so.

The end result of Aiden's hard work was a grand total of £737.59. The committee have never been able to raise more than £300 through an event, so we have certainly been put in our place by a 14 year old!



Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are passionate about involving local communities and especially young children in looking after and understanding the environment around them. With help through A.O.N.B and Communities Living Sustainably in Dorset, at the begging of this year we were able to hold two family activity events. These were well supported and the families requested that we hold more events in the future.

We fed this information back to A.O.N.B and we were made aware of their Sustainable Development Fund and were invited to send in an application.

We are very pleased to report that we have been successful with our application and have gained a further £467.29 towards Aiden's project to provide family activity events. This means we will be able to fund a total of six family events, with places free of charge.

We will be encouraging families to register for these fun and informal events to secure their free places. We hope to provide one session within the summer school holidays, another late in the Autumn and another four next year. If you wish to register please send an email to allingtonhill@gmail.com.



Beano conquers Allington Hill

Although we are very fond of Kipp the horse who was the first to roll the bracken on the hill a few years ago, she has been upstaged by Beano. I know nothing about horses, but the moment I met Beano I knew he was special.

It was fascinating to watch him work. he had no fear of walking into the depths of the bracken and was able to work at speed, with Will having to use some pretty impressive foot work to keep up. I am sure at times Will was air born.

Kate also bought along another horse called Solo who looked identical to Kipp except a different height.



Above: Will and Beano, Left: Solo. Right: Kate. Below: Kipp, who obviously prefers to buy the carrots at Morrisons!



Why control the bracken?

There were lots of people asking questions on the hill while watching the horses. For those that couldn't make it up there, I hope these few bits I have copied off the internet answer some of your questions. Bracken is a well-adapted pioneer plant which can colonise land quickly, with the potential to extend its area by as much as 1–3% per year. This ability to expand rapidly is at the expense of other plants and wildlife, can cause major problems for land users and managers. It colonises ground with an open vegetation structure but is slow to colonise healthy, well managed heather stands. It is toxic to cattle, dogs, sheep, pigs and horses (if eaten) and is linked to cancers in humans. It can harbour high levels of sheep ticks. Very little wildlife is dependant on bracken as a food source, mainly only a small selection of moths is dependant on it. Why control it with the use of horses? Back in the good old days before health and safety regulations were tightened, a local farmer use to cut the bracken on the steep slope. Although he was happy to continue, he is not allowed. The horses can easily access this area. We are grateful to the Woodland Trust for paying for this work to be done on the hill.

Hire of marquee

To help fund future projects, we now hire out our small marquee for £20 per day, longer term hire available at special rates. The marquee is 3 meters by 4 meters, with side and door panels.

Suitable for fetes, family gatherings and special events. Although it is not new, it is sturdy, robust and in good condition.

For more information please contact allingtonhill@gmail.com.

Sale of seed

To fund our flower meadow project and other running costs we will again this year be collecting yellow rattle seed to sell locally and hopefully to Emorsgate seeds.

We would be grateful for volunteers to help us collect the seed over the next four weeks.

It is just beginning to ripen. If you are not linked in with our Facebook page, but feel that you can help, please contact me direct on allingtonhill@gmail.com.

Carnival funding

We have been chosen this year by Bridport Carnival Committee to receive funding. In return they would like us to take part in any of the following. We are looking for people to take part in

Tuesday 16th August quiz night.

Wednesday 17th August bingo

Saturday 20th August carnival procession.

Sunday 21st August torch light.

If you would like to join us and able to help, please contact me at allingtonhill@gmail.com.

Future events

The committee are the first to admit that we are not getting any younger and doing large events such as our autumn festival is no longer an option. This does not mean that new blood who are interested in doing such an event can't take up the reigns. If you are inspired, as was Aiden to encourage others and get involved, please let us know. We may be able to provide a small amount of financial backing if the aim is to raise funds for the group and or support a group within Allington Parish. Email allingtonhill@gmail.com

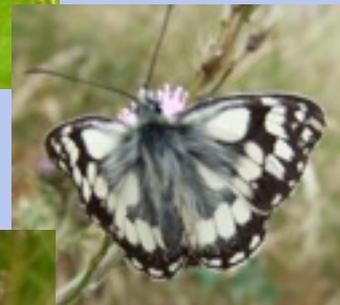
National Butterfly Count

We need your help. This years annual Butterfly count is more important than ever. With the awful weather in June many butterflies and caterpillars will have suffered. I certainly haven't seen so many this year. Last year only 4% of the 52,000 counts in the uk were in Woodland, yet it is a very important habitat for them. You can send in your sightings online at www.bigbutterflycount.org or by using their FREE big butterfly count smartphone apps available for iOS and Android. But we also need to know the results of your count, so we can improve and protect their habitats on the hill and in Cooper's Wood and Field. Give 15 minutes to help protect our butterflies. Please send your results to allingtonhill@gmail.com or load on to our Facebook page.



Large Skipper

Marbled White



Common Blue

News in Brief

Sadly support for our volunteering week (I sent a flyer around advertising this as well as Aiden's event and the annual picnic event.) was very poorly supported. Only one person turned up for the litter pick. The ancient tree hunt was also a none starter, but I have been asked to re organise this.

Although Aiden raised a lot of money we were disappointed of the lack of family involvement on the day, especially from families that will benefit from this scheme.

The weather forecast for the picnic event looked as though it was going to be a wash out and although we braved the weather, we had to cancel the children's activities and packed up early.

With the lack of feedback from people to find out why such a varied calendar of events attracts so few, we are stumped to know how to move forward. We are obviously not ticking the right boxes. What do you want for future events?

Beyond Events have contacted the Woodland Trust requesting the use of the hill for several forth coming events. The first being on Sunday Sept 4th. This is an opportunity to see an endurance race in full swing or take part. Details can be found at

http://www.beyondevents.org.uk/3_trig

It may also be a day if you do not like to walk your dog on a lead or avoid the area.

We would like to remind people that the wood within Cooper's Wood is for a fuel poverty scheme, not a help yourself scheme! The wood will be removed for storage, but we have had difficulties in arranging this. The volunteers will approach anyone seen removing timber, this has happened to several people, do not let it be you.

We are revising the way we run our working parties throughout the winter, with at least one fixed date each month. People say that we do not give enough notice. Forward planning is not always beneficial as we are so weather dependant.

Chat on the hill

How do we borrow the play equipment purchased with Aiden's money?

There has been a delay in sorting this out due to other commitments taking priority. It will be up and running in the next few weeks. There will be details on the notice board and Facebook page, or just contact me.

Why do you not involve the dog warden, to encourage people to pick up?

We as a committee do encourage people to pick up and requests from people, photographs and reports come to me on a weekly basis. We cannot deal with these third party and will not action on them as we did not witness the event, nor do we wish to become involved in individual incidents. You can though, as a witness, report this directly to the dog warden, which I believe this has happened recently.

Why has there been no summer working parties?

The regular team do have a life outside the Hillbillies and with the poor weather conditions it has given us a chance to take a breather. This does not mean that individuals have not continued to litter pick, empty the poo bins and cut the grass paths.

Yet again the paths on the hill do not seem to be well maintained?

The Woodland Trust pay contractors to cut the grass paths at certain times of year. I contacted the W.T to request that they were cut early as they were impassable in some places. This request was actioned within one week of me sending the email.

I am thinking of holding a birthday party for my daughter on the hill, who do I contact to get permission?

You do not have to ask permission if you are holding a private birthday party, picnic or family gathering. You do have to ask permission if you are inviting members of the public to an event. You would then have to give full details of the event to Allington Parish Council and the Woodland Trust. If given permission you would have to fill out a risk assessment form and take into consideration if you would need a music licence etc. for more guidance please contact me direct.

allingtonhill@gmail.com

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