

# CARING FOR THE HILL

The contents of the newsletters are always sparked by conversations I have with people on the hill, email or Facebook.

It also amazes me how many different ways people find to help do their bit to look after the hill, often without getting their hands dirty.

So let's celebrate the ways that people who cherish the hill help care for it.

Throughout the generations, from 7 to 70, (sorry Irvin but it was in the Bridport News) people do their bit to ensure the hill gets that little bit of T.L.C.

*Irvin by the way use to play on the hill as a child, as do his grandchildren today.*



## More than a volunteer group

For some the hill has become part of their life and for many that is the only thing they have in common with others within the community. So, I suppose it should not be too much of a surprise that the group has evolved into more of a community group with a common link.

The volunteer group was set up by the Woodland Trust manager Jonathan Burgess. It is ironic in a way that an outsider could see that local people were passionate about the hill, but there was no focal point to bring these people together.

He managed to create something that has expanded out of all proportion. Sometimes I feel that it is now more a community group than a volunteering group and all the better for it.



TEAS UP. LOCAL RESIDENT BRINGS  
TEA FOR THE WORKERS



HARD AT WORK



AN ARBOR FULL OF WISHES

# Behind the scenes

More work is done behind the scenes than on the hill. This is mainly due to the diversity of the volunteers interests and the way they wish to look after the hill.

We are supported by the Woodland Trust and anything we wish to do, we discuss with Jonathan Burgess the site manager.

A volunteer may come up with an idea such as starting a flower meadow. Firstly we find out from the Trust if they would support the idea. If the answer comes back as a yes, they advise us on what research we would have to do first, cost out the project and ensure that it is a project that the volunteers can self manage. This is even before we cut a blade of grass or sow a seed.

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## A LOT OF PLANNING GOES IN TO THE WORK CARRIED OUT ON THE HILL.

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### Ideas from afar

Another example is the Trust encouraged us to think about how Cooper's Wood could be developed. Jonathan came down and joined in several open meetings for local people to put their ideas across. After a lot of scribbles on the back of beer mats (sheet of A4 actually) the idea of the willow Arbor and paths crossing in the middle was born.

### Publicity

Everything from festivals, press coverage, gaining support from councils and businesses, newsletters and posters all takes time.

Just to put working party posters up can take me 1.5 hours to design, print and laminate them. It then takes a good hour to put them up around the area of Allington Hill.

Newsletters can take several hours an evening for several weeks.

Answering emails, at least half an hour every night.

Festivals, none-stop preparation for at least two weeks beforehand.

But we do it all for the love of the hill.

## STAN

SELF TAUGHT CARPENTER AND WOOD CARVER, STAN'S WORKMANSHIP PRODUCED THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SIGNS. HE ALSO MAKES THE DISKS FOR THE WISHING ARBOR AND SPENT MANY CHILLY DAYS OVER THE HILL RAISING THE CANOPY IN COOPER'S WOOD. HE IS NOW MAKING TWO HAY RAKES FOR US.

VERY GOOD WITH BBQ'S TOO!



## JON



HE SPENT HIS WORKING LIFE IN THE AIR FORCE AND POLICE. LAST YEAR HE WENT ON A SCYTHING COURSE AND HAS MADE A GREAT JOB ALONG THE HEDGE LINE. HE WAS THE INSPIRATION BEHIND THE ARBOR AND ENJOYS COPPICING WOOD ON THE HILL. ALSO A LONG SUFFERING ODD JOB MAN AS HE IS USUALLY SAT NEXT TO ME WHEN I GET AN EMAIL THAT A JOB NEEDS DOING ON THE HILL.

## IRVIN

OUR DRAW MASTER. HE HAS WONDERFUL MEMORIES OF PLAYING AS A CHILD ON THE HILL AND DRIVING HIS CAR UP IT! ENCOURAGES HIS GRANDCHILDREN TO VOLUNTEER AND PLAY ON THE HILL, AND THE WHOLE FAMILY HELP ORGANIZE THE FESTIVALS.

AS A COMMITTEE MEMBER HE KEEPS US ON THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW WITH HIS NO NONSENSE APPROACH.



# PAUL



committee member

## JOBS PAUL DID LAST YEAR

CUT THE PATHS THROUGH  
COOPER'S WOOD

HELPED CLEAR JUBILEE WOOD  
AREA

SOURCED CHIPPINGS TO MAKE  
PATHS SAFER

SOURCED MATERIALS AND MADE  
THE BIGGEST BEACON AROUND.

PUT UP SCRAMBLE NETS FOR THE  
CHILDREN

ERECTED MARQUES FOR BOTH  
FESTIVALS

CUT THE PATHS THROUGHOUT THE  
SUMMER

PREPARED THE GROUND FOR THE  
FLOWER MEADOW

## Thirty years of volunteering

Paul's links with the hill goes back to his childhood. Like so many children their only playground was the hill. When the land was put up for sale in the 1980's he helped raise funds for its purchase, to ensure that it would be held in Trust for generations to come.

In the early days there was a small group of volunteers that helped look after the hill. As the years went by they fell to the wayside. Three people, Paul and Humphrey and Jane Dibden continued to look after the hill, year in year out. Sometimes it must have felt like a thankless task, with no one coming forward to help volunteer.

Almost thirty years later, he now does more than ever and has a great ability to encourage the rest of us to knuckle down and get dirty. He has a better knowledge of the hill than anyone I know. Twice a day he can be found walking his dogs, then comes regularly to cut the paths, including the first cut through Cooper's Wood. He is also actively involved in all the working parties. Weekends he's playing with his Grandchild on the hill.

His wife tells me he does go home for meals!

# Jonathan Burgess, Woodland Trust manager and more of the gang!

## (Allington Hillbilly committee members)

Jonathan



"I have worked for the Trust for five and a half years. Joining them from the Forestry Commission who I started with after finishing a forestry degree. I was bought up on the very edge of Dartmoor so always loved being out in the countryside and fresh air. After taking a misguided path in my earlier years (which led me into managing restaurants) I eventually saw that my true vocation would be working with trees and wildlife. The love of climbing trees has now spilled over to a hobby of climbing anything that it there - mostly rocks when the weather allows, although since the birth of my little boy I get precious little time for any sort of hobby."

A quick introduction to five of the group's committee members. I think you will all have guessed that is a picture of me at the top. I work in Specsavers in Bridport. I also used to be in catering and had my own coffee shop. I would love to be able to be outside more and feel I have missed my vocation in life. I would have loved a similar job to Jonathan's. Where I work now has its benefits. One man last year came in for a pair of glasses and left agreeing to play free at our Autumn festival.

Anne-Marie, Deanne and Kevin have young families and their children are keen junior hillbillies. Many of the activities for the children at the festivals are thought up by them. Jade, Toby, Laura and Ben have all won junior hillbilly awards.

Adam is studying at Kingston Maurward college. A keen volunteer and has many great ideas for young people to get involved in looking after the hill. He can't wait for his 18th birthday so that he can take his seat on the committee. He has enthused the rest of his family including his Nan to help on the hill.

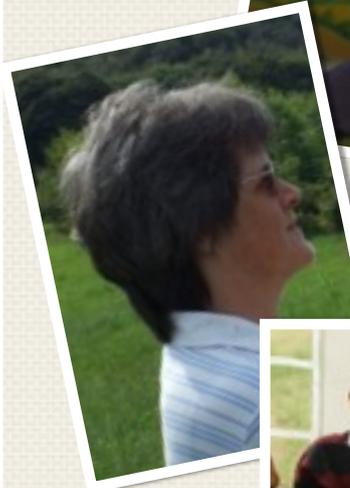
## MORE OF THE GANG

all committee members



Cathy  
Co-ordinator and  
Chairperson

Anne-Marie  
Festival organizer



Deanna and  
Kevin  
festival  
organizers



Adam  
Junior  
Representative



## SAL

Treasurer

Sal has lived in North Allington for 6 years and is also the treasurer for Chideock Parish Council. With her help and knowledge we set up the committee last year to raise funds for the play equipment. This enabled us to apply for grants.

With her skill and knowledge every grant she applied for, we were successful. She has also recently attended a day course to help find out more about applying for grants and what grants are out there.

I am also very reliant on her for her advice and it is always appreciated.

## CHRIS

Committee member

A very talented lady. She is very good at handicrafts and made all the flags for Jubilee Wood last year. She is also the project manager for the flower meadow. It was her idea and she has spent a lot of time researching and seeking advice from Dorset Wildlife Trust before we prepared the ground last Autumn.

She is also a keen historian and has spent many hours compiling a history of Allington Hill. She hopes to be able to publish the book later this year.

Chris loves actively getting involved in organizing the festivals and attends as many of the working parties as she can. To top it all she is also a very good cook and often turns up to our meetings with a freshly baked cake.



## AND MORE OF THE REST



Just to name a few more of the regulars including those who get their hands dirty.

**Christine:** Editor in chief. She deserves a gold medal.

**Sarah:** Facebook fan and regular working party volunteer.

**Sue:** Regular hardworking volunteer.

**Cliff:** New, very welcome volunteer, attends working parties.

**Mark, Jill and Daisy:** Firstly volunteered as I.T experts and have since helped with projects over the hill.

**Clare:** One of our new committee members. Has many links with the local community and has volunteered her catering skills for future events.

**Alan:** Wildlife expert and passionate about butterflies. Took part in the butterfly survey last summer. Will also be providing nature notes for future newsletters.

**Pat:** Dog training expert and nature lover; keeps a keen eye on the hill and also often litter picks. Looking at managing a wildlife project on the hill soon.

# FROM THE HILLBILLY PHOTO ALBUM



## It all started with a poem

HAVE YOU EVER WRITTEN A POEM ABOUT THE HILL OR LOCAL AREA?

THEY WOULD LIKE ANY POEM OR PROSE WRITTEN BY LOCAL PEOPLE TO BE ADDED TO THE BOOK.

I HOPE THIS YOUNG LADY HAS INSPIRED YOU TO JOT DOWN A FEW THOUGHTS.

I AM ONLY TOO HAPPY TO PASS THESE ON AND IF IT ABOUT THE HILL THEN I CAN PUBLISH IT IN THE NEWS LETTER ALSO.

### Jade's Diary

*Jade last year wrote a poem for one of the newsletters, to let everyone know how much she enjoyed the hill. This is what happened afterwards.*

I went to collect a cheque from the Mayor at which I presented him with the poem I had written and Cathy had framed for me.

Four of us from Salway Ash school had our photo in the paper with the Mayor.

With the play equipment installed we had an open day, to which the Mayor came. The opening had to be scaled down because of the muddy state of the hill.

The poem is going in the "Book of Days", which is going in the museum (when finished) to celebrate the Bridport Charter.

Us children are enjoying the play equipment.

Jade

# Nature notes by Alan Ashpool

I would just like to thank Alan for allowing me to freely cut and paste this article to fit into the newsletter.

Early entomologists coined the word aristocrats for the largest and most colorful of butterflies seen in this country, to which they gave splendid names such as Purple Emperor, Painted Lady, and Red Admiral. Others include the Peacock, Comma, White Admiral, Small Tortoiseshell and the very rare Large Tortoiseshell and Camberwell Beauty.

The majority of these aristocrats are able to live through the winter as hibernating butterflies but the Red Admiral and Painted Lady are usually unable to survive other than the mildest of winters. These mostly come to us from the continent and North Africa each year.

The caterpillars of the aristocrats may be split in to two groups i.e. those who mainly feed on stinging nettles and those that eat the leaves of other plants. Those feeding on nettles include the Peacock, Red Admiral, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell and some times the Painted Lady. Stinging nettles do not only provide food for caterpillars but also provide protection as both grazing animals and predators will be deterred by the stinging quality of the plant. Although the adult butterflies of each kind of nettle feeder differ a great deal, there are many similarities in the eggs, caterpillars and chrysalises of each species. There are differences however in the way the eggs of each species are laid and how the young caterpillars colonize the nettles, which can help in identification. The egg of the Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock are laid in clusters, whilst the others lay their eggs singly. The caterpillars of these two species live in groups feeding on the new shoots at the top of the plant and protect themselves with individual silk tents in the case of Commas and Painted Ladies, whilst Red admirals make leaf tents.

We are fortunate in this area to have access to fields and hedgerows which have lots of nettles growing freely to provide food for the caterpillars of these lovely creatures. Look out for the tell tale silken tents this summer to see how many you can identify.

Back in mid March I asked Alan what are the first butterflies he would expect to see this time of year and this was his reply.

*You asked about early butterflies. Normally I would expect to see some Brimstones by now and possibly some overwintered Red Admirals, Peacocks and Small Tortoiseshells but the current weather precludes this. In April these should be followed by some of the Whites e.g. Orange Tips, Green Veined and Large and Small Whites. I will start looking once Spring has sprung!*

I have been over the hill two or three days a week ( now the 6th of April), I still have not seen a single butterfly. It is not surprising as the temperatures are so low. I also fear for our colony of bees that nest in one of the big oak trees. They must be running out of food. I have been over on the sunniest of days and patiently waited for a signs of life. With even the celandines struggling to flower, if they had survived and searched for food they would have found very little. Overwintering butterflies will also suffer.

## THE ARISTOCRATS



PEACOCK



RED ADMIRAL



SMALL TORTOISESHELL



PAINTED LADY



WHITE ADMIRAL

# PIN BOARD

## HOMEWORK

Look at the photo competition on the Woodland Trust web site.  
Send a poem for the newsletter

## CONTACT DETAILS

### EMAIL

[allingtonhill@gmail.com](mailto:allingtonhill@gmail.com)

### FACEBOOK

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

### PHONE

01308 423202

## DATES FOR THE DIARY

1. EVERY THIRD SUNDAY OF THE MONTH WORKING PARTY OVER THE HILL.
2. WEDNESDAY EVENING 6.30PM WORKING PARTIES.
3. JUNE 22ND MID SUMMER FESTIVAL.

Take the kids over to the play trail  
keep up to date, join the Facebook page.

## Chat from the hill

### Why have you been raking up a lot of the dead bracken?

It makes a dense covering stopping other plants from getting established. It can grow up to 6 foot tall, as that falls forward it smothers other plants, destroying habitat as it takes over. We will endeavor to control this area throughout the season.

### I suppose you will be stopping us dog walkers from using Cooper's Field/Wood next?

Dog walkers have always been welcome on the hill, especially those who flick the dog poo off the path or pick up the poo. We would hope that people will respect the areas around the play equipment and not allow their dogs to foul these areas. There is no suggestion or wish to restrict dog walkers.

### Why are there no signs up saying where the play equipment is?

The whole idea of the trail is so that children explore the woods. One family spent two hours on the hill looking for the equipment, another said they could only find two. Yes, I was very good, I did not suggest that they went to Specsavers!!!

### Why has so much of the undergrowth been cleared?

This question threw me a little as we have done very little work on the hill. The winter conditions have meant that unlike other winters, vegetation has died back as it should. The prolonged cold weather has freeze dried vegetation, making it brittle and crumble. Also plants such as the celandine have struggled to flower. We have not seen the bright yellow carpet of flower as we have seen in previous years.

### Will the wishing Arbor remain?

Yes, Stan is doing his utmost to keep up with the demand for wooden disks for the arbor. New willow canes have also been put in place.

## The weather

I was so looking forward to walking over the hill and the evening working parties. The first one of the season was the coldest ever english summer time working party.

We still did not have any snow to speak of, but the bitter east winds have meant that the trees are only just beginning to come into leaf.

February was the driest month since last September, with March being the coldest although one day it did get up to 15.1c. April looks set to be more of a traditional month with april showers and nearer average temperatures.

Many animals, birds and insects are running out of food, as winter has been so harsh. Birds such as great tits have been a lot easier to spot, as have the tree creepers and wrens. It is more important for them to find food, than be wary of humans.