

The funding is over

I try not to take things for granted, but when you first get involved in projects that run for two years, it is almost like a comfort blanket, always there when you need it. The end of March sadly sees the lottery funding we were receiving through A.O.N.B "Communities Living Sustainably" project come to an end. As a volunteer group we received guidance, tools and a management plan for Cooper's Wood and Field. Funding was also received to thin the trees in Cooper's Wood and work on the hedge line along Hospital Lane. The other benefit which has made such a difference was to provide family workshops. I would estimate that the total funding we received was close to £3000.

But as I often remind people it is not all about money. We have built a network of contacts within the nature conservation groups, been inspired by others and there has been benefits to the local community. So what next?

I actually feel a great loss. I was in weekly contact with Ian Rees from A.O.N.B who has been a wealth of knowledge, very understanding of our aim to improve the area for nature and the local community. Ian really understood the group's aims and has vowed to continue to source funding for us.

We also have been inspired to actively try to continue with projects that were started through this funding.

Lottery funding is wonderful but it suddenly stops. Often such great projects are launched, are a huge success, yet they struggle to find further funding to continue.

This means also that the "munching caterpillars" lottery funded project which was under the umbrella of Butterfly Conservation Group, has also come to an end. The children loved the activity event they did over the hill and I now have to tell them that they won't be coming back.

I also had to tell them that Dan from Magdalen Farm also would not be coming back. We just do not have the funds ourselves to pay for these activity days.

Most children would have said ok and possibly gone home and quite happily played on the computer instead. Never under estimate children! Later that evening I had a phone call from one of the mothers to say that the children want to raise money to buy outdoor play equipment to use over the hill and they also want to pay for Dan to come back.

This will be no fun run! They are out to get your money. Aiden Cooper aged 14 seems to have all the arrangements in hand and anyone between one and ninety will be able to take part. All the information you need is in the newsletter.



Aiden's Allington Hill Amble

Saturday June 4th 2016 from 2pm

Hi, my name is Aiden. To complete a course to become a certified young martial arts instructor I have to organise community based projects. My family spend so much time playing on Allington Hill, I thought it would be good to encourage more children to use this wonderful outdoor space.



Please help me. If I can raise £200, it will fund a box full of outdoor play equipment that families can borrow. If I raise £500 we can fund some children's activity days.

On the day we will start with a demonstration by my martial arts group Team Fear from Matt Fiddes Martial Arts Bridport.

I want to get as many people involved as possible, so I have planned three different events so all age groups can take part.

Aiden's Mini Amble, for children aged 4 and under.

Aiden's Adventure Trail, for children aged 12 and under.

Aiden's Ultra Allington Hill Amble, for all children under 90!

Please support and encourage Aiden and the local children in making this possible. There are three ways in which you can help.

1. Please enter one of the ambles. We ask for a minimum donation of £5 for up to four family members. Or you can collect sponsorship. To enter, please register by emailing your details to: allingtonhill@gmail.com
2. Visit the "Just Giving" web site and give a donation to Aidens-allingtonamble
3. Help is needed on the day to marshall the event.

Aiden is asking that people bring entry and sponsorship money with them on the day. The "Just Giving" page will be available on the web site from May 6th to June the 4th. There will also be refreshments and tombola to help raise funds. To offer help please contact allingtonhill@gmail.com or via our Facebook page.

PLEASE HELP AIDEN BY JOINING IN

STORM DAMANGE

With one Beech tree already hit by the winter storms, sadly we lost part of another well loved tree. Most people either called it the mother tree, or the beer belly tree, due to its arched trunk. It fell across the right of way path along Dog Holes and great thanks must go to local resident Chris Toombs who in my absence contacted the Woodland Trust and the rights of way team (Dorset Countryside Management.) This meant that within two days the path was reopened. The tree has been inspected by Joe the Woodland Trust manager and it is going to be a close call if the tree will survive or if it will be felled. To add to the concern, it has been believed that bats roost in the a large crack in one of the boughs of the tree.



Photo courtesy of Chris Toombs

STORM TROOPERS

This has been a bad winter for tree damage on the hill. The volunteer group have done great work keeping the paths open. I joined the storm troopers on one of their outings to clear yet more storm damage.

The winter working parties finished at the end of March and after a few weeks break we are now looking at the summer jobs that need doing.

With the lighter evenings it also means that at least once a week we can hold an evening working party. It will not be long before we will be planting out the plug plants in the flower meadow as well as keeping paths clear of bramble. The most enjoyable for me is the annual seed collection from the flower meadow.



For alerts on future working parties please visit the Allington Hillbillies Facebook page. We hold them as and when required, weather permitting.

THE PICNIC BENCH

We are very grateful to J. Bright's for designing this bespoke picnic bench, specially designed for wheelchair and buggy access.



The picnic table has already been well used. We were even treated to tea from a china tea pot by Taz a local resident. The countryside Management Team were laying part of the hedge along Hospital Lane.



Our next project is to tidy up the area where the chippings are.

SUSPICIOUS!

Our Community officer Pat is always on the case. With a clear view of the field and hill she does not miss much. So what were these two suspicious characters up to?
I have it on good authority that it was not day light



robbery, but two volunteers on their way to replace the rope swing. Well, that is what I have been told anyway.

Photo courtesy of Pat North.



Not everyone was fooled by the photo of the first eggs of the season. Well it was Easter. Sadly I had the duty to eat the rest of the packet.

GETTING BACK TO NATURE

The last several years the programme of events has been very focused on raising funds to improve steps, paths, seating and access, as well as funding the flower meadow project. Back in the Autumn the committee made the decision that we needed to get back to nature and that would be our main focus.

This plan was immediately put on hold when we realised that realistically we needed to raise nearly £4000 for a new mower/ride on tractor. With most of the funding in place we hope that we will be able to purchase one within the next couple of months. Our main focus then will be recording and surveying wildlife, the flower meadow project and wildlife events for children and families.

THE FLOWER MEADOW

There has been a huge increase in the amount of spring wildflowers in the meadow. The cowslips have started to self seed and we have had wild daffodils and fritillaries flowering for the first time.



WHAT IS IT?

A fresh wasp gall, or better known as Oak Apple. It will shrink and harden to the size of a cherry as the wasp developed inside.



JUBILEEWOOD

This area planted in 2012 is now beginning to mature. The saplings are beginning to look like trees and with Rowen last year being the first trees to have fruit this year the Cherry trees have



trees have blossom. In the next few years the area will begin to blend in with the rest of the surrounding woodland.



Don't be tempted. No thank you. Unwanted garden plants are not welcome. Please do not plant anything without permission.

National Volunteering Week

The National Volunteering Week runs from June 1st to the 12th. I always thought a week had 7 days in it, but perhaps I'm old fashioned and out of date with modern thinking! We will be hosting several events so that you can meet the volunteers and find out more about our projects and the work that we do.

Most people also like to help out at our special events and we happen to have two. Aiden would be very grateful for help on Saturday June 4th and we would appreciate help with the Queens picnic event on Sunday June 12th.

I will send out a separate flyer with all the details.



Evening Walks

We now own a bat detector and were surprised to find bats on the wing during the cold weather the last week in April.

We will be continuing our dusk walks and they will be advertised on the Facebook page as they will be weather dependant. We now have over 170 people following us on Facebook, so why don't you?

On our rambles we have also seen Fox and Deer as well as wonderful sunsets.

We hope to hold a ramble one evening during half term so the children can join in too.



Thinning of Cooper's Wood

It has at last happened, almost two years in the planning. There is a five year management plan in place for Cooper's Wood and Field. Part of which is to thin Cooper's Wood and use the wood sustainably. Some of the wood is being removed for storage, as part of a fuel poverty scheme. Also a small amount is being purchased for personal use and a local wood turner has also applied to use some of the timber. You can't just take the wood. Please contact the group by emailing allingtonhill@gmail.com for further information.

The management plan can be viewed on our Allington Hillbillies Facebook page under the file section.

Picture courtesy of Tim Smith



New Hedge Row

Mixed hedging, over 100 plants in total has been planted along the East side of Cooper's Field. We incorporated this with an event for the children who made wild seed bombs for the flower meadow. We also awarded the Junior Hillbillies awards and Community award to Riley and Finley and their Mum Sharron Leader. Other prizes were awarded to Daisy Smith and Laura Trott.



News in brief

As usual our AGM was poorly attended, which was a shame as you all missed most inspiring talks. Not only by Ian Rees from A.O.N.B, but also David Hutchinson on art work of trees. We said goodbye to Chris Toombs who stood down from the committee and has now become a community officer for the Hillbillies. Jo George was elected on to the committee in her place. We can co-opt committee members throughout the year, so if you are interested please contact us. We also updated the constitution, which a copy will soon be available on the Facebook page.

We have already received an order for 2 kilos of yellow rattle seed. This is a cost effective way of raising funds for the volunteer group and most pleasurable. We will be looking for volunteers who wish to sit in the flower meadow and collect seeds on a warm summer evening surrounded by wildlife. Yes, it really is that good. If you can help us we would be grateful.

Kate will be back with her horses to bash the bracken, we think late June. It will depend on the growth of the bracken and the weather. She has a horse in training, so there may be three horses this year.

I am grateful to Taz for taking over the responsibility of checking the play equipment weekly and more in depth monthly checks. I have done this since the play equipment was put in place. It will be a further reduction to my work load which is much appreciated.

The Weather

Oak before Ash we are in for a splash. Ash before Oak we are in for a soak. I am not sure how true that is, but the Oak is several weeks ahead of the Ash on the hill. We have had many short sharp showers over the last few weeks including hail. We have had no long periods of rain as we did in March.

The total rain fall in March was 70mm, with only 39mm in April. The minimum temperature for both months was very similar, dipping down just below zero both months. With the increase in daylight, gaining an extra 1 hour 15 minutes the maximum temperature rose from 13 celsius in March to 16 celsius in April.

The variable weather patterns, have also given us some wonderful sunsets over the last few weeks. The winds have been mainly from the North, North West or North East, very unusual for this time of year.

Due to the cold weather the leaves on the trees are reluctant to come out. It has been a wonderful opportunity to see many birds over the hill that have returned to nest. There has been a record number of Blackcaps sighted. They are often heard but not seen. Also Tree Creepers and wrens have been very visible. We have also started to put our wildlife camera out, which has caught Badger, Deer, Rabbit and Fox. These clips have been superbly edited by Tim and can be viewed on our Facebook page.

Chat from the hill.

"I wish to plant a tree in memory of a loved one and have a dedication plaque, who do I talk to?"

Allington Hill has many dedicated benches and marker posts. It has now almost become overwhelming, with several visitors asking me if this was a natural burial ground! If you visit the Woodland Trust web site it will give you all the information you require. We have no intention of allowing memorial plaques in Cooper's Wood or Field, but tree planting will take place in the next few years.

"I see that you have acquired a small marquee, will you be renting it out?"

Yes we will be renting it out. The daily charge will be £20. You will have to sign an agreement form and any damage must be paid for. Please contact me for details.

"I have been told that someone has been feeding the wildlife over in Cooper's Field."

This has become a problem. Allington Parish Council will be discussing this at their next meeting. The food is of good quality, but not suitable for wildlife, cats or dogs. One dog had to receive medical attention.

" Why are so many of your events only advertised on your Facebook page. It is very frustrating as I do not do Facebook and only here about it afterwards."

We have no one who wishes to help with admin. For example phone, text or email individuals. It is very time consuming. One phone call to a person who wishes to chat can take 20 minutes. I can reach over 170 people via Facebook and it only takes a couple of minutes. Main events are advertised on the main gates.

"What are we allowed to plant on the hill, we always see the volunteers are planting things and sowing seeds?"

We have full permission from the landowners and all plants and seeds have to come from an accredited source. Basically they have to have their own passport, just like cattle. This is to insure that they have not been imported from abroad, they have grown in a controlled environment to reduce the risk of spreading evasive plants and diseases.

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