

Here comes the STORMS Oh! and more rain.



I always look back at previous newsletters to refresh my mind of what has happened from one season to another. It was only back in issue 16 that we had wall to wall sunshine and no rain for months.

It is not just the rain which has taken it's toll on the the hill, but the strong gusts of wind throughout the last few months. We will look back at the weather throughout the year to see it's effect on nature around the hill.

The end to one of our mighty beech trees.

This is the second winter that we have been hampered by constant rain. There are so many jobs that need doing on the hill and our time has been taken up by clearing storm damage. So we need a plan of action and we will look in detail at what we wish to achieve.

We also have our A.G.M coming up shortly. It has been a difficult year for the group, in more ways than one. I feel that we have become stronger and more focused. We now need to start to plan ahead rather than always picking up the pieces. How do you think we should plan for the future?

The lease for Cooper's Wood/Field is now held by Allington Parish Council. Many are questioning what happens now. We have made sure firstly that we can work together and agree a way forward. Only fools rush in as they say! Open safe access for all and providing a healthy habitat for the wildlife.



FALLEN BEECH



CLOSURE NOTICE



CLEARANCE WORK

Winter Storms

Why has the hill been so badly affected this year by the storms? Or should we blame the weather at all?

It is often too easy to blame the obvious. So lets look at the facts a little closer.

We will start with the large beech tree. A sad loss and in fact a smaller beech tree fell in the same area about a week later. Another tree was also toppled. But none of the trees fell at the same time. The stormy weather was their final downfall. The beech trees have been affected by a fungus which eats into the root system and rots the tree from the base up. If you visit the remaining stump you can see the rot in the middle of the trunk.

This is not very good news. As the tree surgeon advised us, it is likely that all the beech trees are infected.

The other trees that were lost to the storms were down to the lack of management of the Woodland. We seem to forget that this is in fact a man made habitat and most of the trees are thirty years old or less. We have meddled with the habitat on the hill ever since man lived in the area and now is no exception. It frustrates me when people can't differentiate between habitat management and destruction.

Yes, some of the work we have had to do looks pretty drastic, basically because over the last thirty years we have not looked after the woodland we have created. Trying to restore some form of order, is not going to be an easy task. The benefits to nature can also be a benefit to us humans as well. A well managed healthy woodland, would be a benefit to all. The following pages look at the ways we can achieve this.



Fallen Oak Tree

This tree is still growing with the roots firmly in the ground. It has been swamped by bracken and bramble.

This is the before photo.



After about twenty minutes we had cleared away choking vegetation. This will be a great tree for children to scramble over in a few years time.



All this has also been cleared from a footpath in the same area.

TOP OF COOPER'S FIELD

YEARS OF NEGLECT ALONG THE TOP EDGE OF COOPER'S FIELD HAS CAUSED SEVERAL PROBLEMS.

PROBLEM: ORIGINAL HEDGE LINE NEGLECTED, CAUSING TREES SUCH AS HAZEL TO BECOME TOP HEAVY AND WEAKEN THE BANK. MANY TREES SLIPPING FORWARD INTO THE FIELD.

SOLUTION: TO COPPICE THE HAZEL AND RELAY THE HEDGE WHERE POSSIBLE, FILLING IN WITH DEAD HEDGE TO HELP STABILISE THE BANK.

PROBLEM: DENSE UNDERGROWTH CHOKING THE ORIGINAL HEDGEROW HABITAT.

SOLUTION: CLEAR UNDERGROWTH AND REINSTATE ORIGINAL PATH, OPENING UP AREA ALLOWING MORE LIGHT IN AND ENCOURAGE MORE DIVERSE RANGE OF PLANTS TO GROW.

PROBLEM: LARGE AREAS OF UNKEPT BRAMBLE UP TO THE HEIGHT OF 20FT SMOTHERING TREES.

SOLUTION: CUT BACK THE OLD BRAMBLE AND OPEN UP AREA ALLOWING LIGHT AND AIR TO REACH THE TREES. COPPICE TREES IF POSSIBLE TO REJUVENATE THEM OR PLANT NEW. CONTROL GROWTH OF BRAMBLE WHICH ALSO IS AN IMPORTANT HABITAT WHEN MAINTAINED.



CLEARANCE WORK SHOWS HOW THE BANK IS SLIPPING AND TREES FALLING FORWARD.



COOPER'S WOOD

IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO THESE TREES WERE PLANTED. THEY WERE PLANTED CLOSE TOGETHER AS IT WAS EXPECTED THAT MANY WOULD NOT SURVIVE THE FIRST FEW YEARS. APPROXIMATELY 30% OF THE TREES ARE ASH. THE TREES ARE PLANTED IN STRAIGHT ROWS WHICH DOES NOT LOOK NATURAL.

PROBLEM: ASH DIE BACK COULD EFFECTIVELY WIPE OUT A THIRD OF THE WOOD.

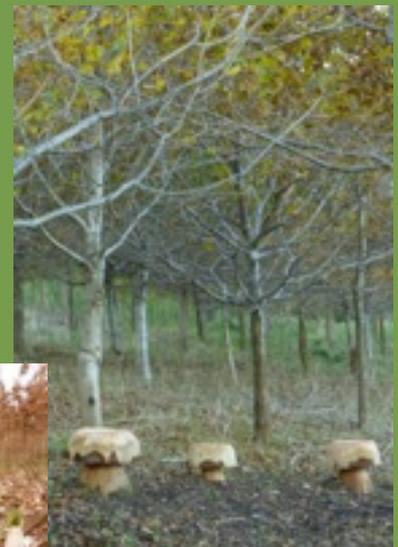
SOLUTION: OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS REMOVE THE WEAKER OF THE ASH TREES AND REPLANT WITH A MIX OF NATIVE TREES AND WOODLAND PLANTS. THIS WILL DECREASE THE IMPACT ON THE WOOD SHOULD WE GET ASH DIE BACK.

PROBLEM: ALTHOUGH IT IS MAINLY A COSMETIC ONE, THE TREE PLANTING LOOKS VERY UN-NATURAL.

SOLUTION: INTRODUCE A DEAD HEDGE TO WEAVE THROUGH THE TREES TO BREAK UP THE LINES. REMOVAL OF SMALL ASH TREES AND REPLANTING OTHER SPECIES OUT OF LINE.

PROBLEM: LACK OF GROUND LEVEL HABITAT FOR NATURE AS THE CANOPY BLOCKS OUT THE LIGHT. THERE IS NO NATURAL BOUNDARY OR HEDGE LINE.

SOLUTION: INCORPORATE THE DEAD HEDGE SO IT LINKS UP DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WOOD AND PLANTING, CREATING A CORRIDOR FOR WILDLIFE. CONTINUE TO COPPICE HAZEL AND WILLOW TO IMPROVE THE HABITAT AND ALLOW MORE LIGHT INTO THE WOODS EDGE.



We weaved the paths through the trees to help break up the straight lines. Features such as the wishing arbor and toadstool seats help to make it an exciting place for children to explore. Slowly we are introducing wildflowers to the area.

THE TOP OF THE HILL



We hope to bring back Kate and Kipp this year to help control the bracken. There has always been some bracken on the hill, but it was always controlled by the grazing cattle, when it was farm land. Over the last thirty years it has spread over large areas of the hill. The increase of ticks in recent years has been noted. The other job that we hope that Kipp will be able to do is move several of the large pieces of beech trunk. We are hoping that they can be moved to the top of the field on the North side of the hill to be used as seating. To reduce the weight of the trunks, we may need to carve them in situ before moving.

Other on going projects

Our first major project was to clear a large area of blackthorn which had taken over a large area along Old Orchard Avenue. The stumps of the trees are still there and each year we need to cut back the new growth, which thankfully is getting less and less each year. Last year a small amount of trees and shrubs were planted in this area. We need also to control the bracken. Once the trees get established they will help block out the light. The area closest to the path was planted with wild flowers including teasel, thistles and foxgloves. The scrubland of Elder behind is great cover for many birds, who feed in the open areas and fly back to the safety of the scrub. This whole area 30 years ago plus was a potato field, another new habitat made by man. The scrub area is also where the deer quite often hide out during the day.

The Jubilee Wood planting has been very successful and everyone surely can remember the fantastic display of foxgloves. This year we must control the bracken in this area and the bramble. The trees are still quite young, so will need protecting for a few years yet. It will be a while before the trees block out the light to stunt the growth of these plants. Can you remember how it looked a couple of years ago? We found this rather seasonal photograph which we thought would help jog the memory.



Over the last few years it has become obvious that people like to get involved in certain projects. Some will only turn out if they know that we are going to have a good bonfire, others wish to be involved projects such as the flower meadow.

The dead hedge project has caught the imagination of a few occasion volunteers and we welcome anyone who feels that they would be interested in helping in any of the projects mentioned in the previous pages.

We are now desperate for some dry weather and in fact now with time running out before the nesting season we really do need some extra help, even if it is only for an hour.

Working parties will now also be held on Monday mornings for the rest of February and the beginning of March. We will be making the dead hedge and relaying the hedge along the top of the field.

We are also indebted to volunteers who show a keen interest in the nature on the hill and it will not be long before when our experts such as Alan will be looking for the first butterflies on the hill.

A new A3 poster will be going up on the main gate, where I will update the times of the next working parties for the week ahead. I hope I may be able to get a similar poster up on the Park rd entrance as well.

There are always opportunities for families to help too. So bring the children along. Please make sure that you are all wearing good foot wear, gloves and if possible bring some gardening tools with you.



COOPER'S FIELD

WE ARE TWO THIRDS OF THE WAY THERE. WE HAVE CLEARED THE WORST SO A FINAL PUSH WOULD SEE IT ALL DONE BEFORE THE NESTING SEASON.

PLEASE HELP. LOOK OUT FOR THE POSTERS, OR SIGN UP TO TEXT, EMAIL, OR FACEBOOK ALERTS.

HEDGE LAYING

MANY OF YOU LEARNT THIS SKILL AT ONE OF THE VERY FIRST VOLUNTEER WORKING PARTIES. SOME WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE ON THE HEDGE ALONG HOSPITAL LANE, BUT ALSO TO START LAYING THE HEDGE ALONG THE TOP OF THE FIELD. SOME OF THIS AREA CAN ALSO BE FIELD IN WITH SOME DEAD MATERIAL AS WELL, TO SUPPORT THE BANK.

VERY SATISFYING WORK, SO IF YOU FEEL LIKE A CHALLENGE AND LIKE A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT, THEN THIS IS FOR YOU. WE WILL PAIR YOU UP WITH A REGULAR VOLUNTEER TO GET YOU STARTED. CONTACT ME ON THE EMAIL ADDRESS TO ARRANGE A TIME.



DEAD HEDGE PROJECT

SO IMPORTANT FOR WILDLIFE AND YET SO EASY TO MAKE. MOST OF THE MATERIAL HAS ALREADY BEEN CUT, SO WE JUST NEED TO USE HAZEL STAKES AND PLACE THE MATERIAL IN BETWEEN.

WE HOPE TO HAVE STARTED THIS PROJECT BEFORE YOU GET THIS NEWSLETTER. SO JUST PICK UP STICKS AND PLACE IN THE HEDGE EVERY TIME GO FOR A WALK.

THE OLD BOUNDARY WALL



THIS IS ALL THAT IS LEFT OF THE OLD BOUNDARY WALL THAT SO MANY CAN REMEMBER STRETCHING OVER THE TOP OF THE HILL, DIVIDING IT INTO TWO.

AS PART OF OUR RESTORATION PROJECT FOR THE HEDGE LINE AT THE TOP OF THE FIELD, WE ALSO WOULD LIKE TO RESTORE THIS REMAINING SECTION

ALL THE STONE INCLUDING CAPPING STONES ARE LAYING AROUND THE BOTTOM OF THE WALL. WE HAVE A VOLUNTEER WHO IS KEEN TO HAVE A GO AT RESTORING IT, BUT WOULD LIKE SOME HELP.

HAVE ANY OF YOU GOT ANY EXPERIENCE IN STONE WALL OR EVEN BRICK LAYING AND WOULD LIKE TO HELP? IF SO PLEASE LET US KNOW BY CONTACTING US ON OUR EMAIL ADDRESS.

WWI COMMEMORATIONS

WE HAVE HAD MANY REQUESTS FROM PEOPLE TO MARK THE COMMEMORATIONS OF WWI IN SOME WAY.

THE MOST POPULAR REQUEST HAS BEEN TO PLANT POPPIES. WE HAVE TRIED THIS OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS AND THE SOIL CONDITIONS ARE NOT THE BEST, PLUS THEY PREFER DISTURBED SOIL AND FULL SUN.

WE ARE GOING TO HAVE ONE MORE GO AND ARE SOWING IN THREE AREAS, THE BONFIRE SITE NEAR THE MAIN GATE, JUBILEE WOOD AREA AND AT THE TOP OF COOPER'S FIELD.

WE HAVE ALSO APPLIED FOR A FREE TREE PACK FROM THE WOODLAND TRUST. THEY ARE GIVING OUT PACKS TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO PLANT A HEDGE OR TREES IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO FELL IN WWI. WE WILL NOT KNOW IF WE HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL UNTIL LATE SEPTEMBER. IF NOT WE HAVE A SMALL AMOUNT OF FUNDING THAT WILL ALLOW US TO PURCHASE SOME.

WE WISH TO INVITE PEOPLE FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WHO LOST AN ANCESTOR IN WWI TO COME AND PLANT A TREE. ALONG THE RESTORED AREA AT THE TOP OF COOPER'S FIELD. WE WOULD HOPE THAT WE HAVE RESTORED IT AS IT WAS 100 YEARS AGO.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT OR HAVE ANY IDEAS HOW YOU FEEL WE SHOULD COMMEMORATE THE OCCASION, WE WOULD WELCOME YOUR IDEAS. THE SAPLINGS WOULD BE READY TO PLANT IN NOVEMBER.

PLEASE CONTACT ME ON OUR EMAIL ADDRESS allingtonhill@gmail.com

COLLECTING WILDFLOWER SEED



WE HAVE HAD GREAT SUCCESS IN COLLECTING SEED FROM THE WILD. ANYONE THAT REMEMBERS THE WONDERFUL DISPLAY OF FOX GLOVES LAST YEAR, WILL APPRECIATE OUR SUCCESS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO COLLECT THEM THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

DORSET WILDLIFE TRUST ARE OFFERING A PACKET OF WILDFLOWER SEED TO ANYONE THAT SIGNS UP TO THEIR E-NEWSLETTER(SEE LINK BELOW.) JUST PASTE THIS LINK INTO YOUR WEB SEARCH. YOU CAN UN-SUBSCRIBE TO THIS AT ANYTIME. THEY THE IDEAL SEEDS FOR THE HILL. IF YOU WISH TO SCATTER THEM ON BARE SOIL OR ON VERY SHORT GRASS IN A SUNNY POSITION ON THE HILL AND SEE WHAT GROWS, PLEASE DO. A WORD OF WARNING THOUGH. PLEASE DO NOT PURCHASE WILDFLOWER SEED FROM GARDEN CENTRES OR SUPERMARKETS, AS THESE OFTEN ARE NOT TRUE WILDFLOWER SEED, EVEN IF THEY SAY THEY ARE, MOST ARE NOT SUITABLE TYPE OF WILDFLOWERS FOR THE HILL. [HTTP://WWW.DORSETWILDLIFETRUST.ORG.UK/HELP_DORSETS_POLLINATORS_FREE_SEEDS.HTML](http://WWW.DORSETWILDLIFETRUST.ORG.UK/HELP_DORSETS_POLLINATORS_FREE_SEEDS.HTML)

A.G.M.2014

THIS YEARS A.G.M. WILL BE ON FRIDAY MARCH 14TH AT ST SWITHUN'S CHURCH HALL, 7.15PM FOR 7.30PM.

WE WILL HAVE A SHORT MEETING, THEN I WILL BE DOING A TALK ON THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF HABITAT ON THE HILL AND HOW IT EFFECTS THE WILDLIFE.

WE ALSO WISH TO WELCOME ANY NEWCOMERS TO THE COMMITTEE. WE WOULD LIKE TO KEEP THINGS FRESH, WITH NEW IDEAS AND EXPERTISE. WE WOULD ALSO LIKE ANYONE THAT HAS A KEEN INTEREST IN NATURE AND A COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE, TO REFLECT THE INFLUENCE THE HILL HAS ON PEOPLE THAT LIVE IN THE AREA. WE USUALLY HAVE SIX COMMITTEE MEETINGS A YEAR (PLUS A FEW MORE SOCIALS IN THE PUB!) IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE A LITTLE BIT MORE INVOLVED PLEASE EMAIL ME FOR MORE INFO.

POO BINS

We have approached Allington Parish Council, to request the purchase of some dog waste bins.

Two bins will be placed inside the main Hospital lane entrance area.

Although there is a stick and flick policy on the site, many families wish to use the cut grass area for games, picnics etc. We feel it is not unreasonable to ask people to pick up in this area and make it easier to dispose of the waste, with the bins in the field.

10TH ANNIVERSARY

WE ARE STILL IN THE EARLY STAGES OF PLANNING THE CELEBRATIONS FOR THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF COPPERS WOOD. IT NOW LOOKS AS IF THIS WILL BE IN JULY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS.

THE CELEBRATIONS WILL BE BASED AROUND THE WOOD ITSELF, WITH PLENTY OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE CHILDREN.

IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE THAT PLANTED A TREE TEN YEARS AGO, PLEASE ASK THEM TO CONTACT US BY FACEBOOK OR EMAIL.

POPPY'S

OUR THOUGHT'S THIS YEAR WILL BE THE COMMEMORATION OF WW1. WE ARE HOPING THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO GET SOME POPPY'S TO GROW ON THE HILL. ALSO ON THE BONFIRE AREA JUST INSIDE THE MAIN GATE.

MANY FAMILIES LOST ANCESTORS IN WW1 AND WE HOPE PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO COME TO THE HILL AND QUIETLY REFLECT IN THEIR OWN WAY. WE DO NOT PLAN TO HOLD AN EVENT AS SUCH UNLESS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY WISH TO. WE WELCOME ANY THOUGHT'S ON THE MATTER.

The Weather

As I write this there is another raging storm outside. The date is the 4th of Feb. I fear that I will receive emails and calls tomorrow to say that there is more damage on the hill, trees that have already been weakened by the previous storms.

We have so far had none of the bitterly cold weather we had last winter and many plants have already started to break bud. From the 1st of Feb until the end of the month day light hours increase from 9hrs 12 minutes to 10 hrs 52 minutes.

So we should all be benefiting from the extra day light.

We all know it has rained a lot, but can any of you remember how dry it was in January 2012. Jon has a keen interest in the local weather, which I in turn take note on how it effects nature and how it manages to cope.

My fears for this year, is that the mild winter will in fact not be good for the trees. They lost their leaves very late, due to the mild Autumn. Saturated roots, ground eroded away and many already coming into bud, means they have not had a good time through the last few months.

Rain for January over the last three years

Jan 2012	40mm
Jan 2013	123.5mm
Jan 2014	220mm

Chat from the hill

“ That beech tree has been down two days now blocking the path, why haven't you removed it”

I think people forget we are a small volunteer group who work with hand tools. We would have never been able to deal with this tree. Plus it was in a very dangerous position.

“Was there any need to close the path.”

We and the Trust care about the safety of all those that enjoy the hill. One lady actually heard the tree fall. Only a few seconds after she had decided to take the path towards Oak Tree Cross, rather than down through the beech trees. She counts herself very lucky. It fell before the wind had reached it's full strength. They can fall at anytime. Two further trees fell along that path within a week.

“ I would like to keep one of the old badger tracks open which is getting overgrown, can I borrow some tools”

We are happy for anyone to get involved in looking after the hill and in projects that they personally wish to be involved in. Several volunteers are available most week days and would be happy to help. We would need to know what you intend to do and ensure it is within the ethos of looking after the area.

“Have you any plans to plant more trees on the hill.”

The policy is if we loose a tree we plant a new one. We wish to increase the diversity of the trees in certain areas, but this will be done over many years, so we end up with a more natural woodland, rather than a plantations of trees. A few trees may be thinned out and planted with more shrub type planting to give a wider diversity of habitat.

“How can we have a say in what happens to the hill”

Get involved! There are plenty of opportunities to put forward ideas. The Facebook page, by email and we will hold a public open meeting in the next few months. It would be nice for some of you to attend. Only one person turned up last time. If you wished to address the Parish Council about Cooper's Wood/Field rather than us, they hold a meeting once a month. We have had situations in the past where people have not agreed with decisions made but they had not let their voice be heard in the first place.

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

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