

# Looking forward 2016

Every year the November December issue of the newsletter has looked back at the events of the last year. But with so many of you following us on our Facebook page and you also have the old newsletters to look back through, I thought my energy would be better spent looking forward to 2016.

It is the Hillbillies 5th anniversary in January 2016. The first job was laying the hedge along Hospital Lane. Many said we made a right mess of it, but if proof is needed us rookie's did quite a good job, as it has faired well with no gaps and hopefully by 2017 it should have enough new material in it to lay again. I am sure the people in the bungalows would be pleased to be able to see the hill and field again.

During the last five years the hill and field has become a much more user friendly place. New steps, hand rails and seating, plus access improved to open up the area to as many people as possible, especially families with young children. They are the future of the hill and will take our place at looking after it in years to come.

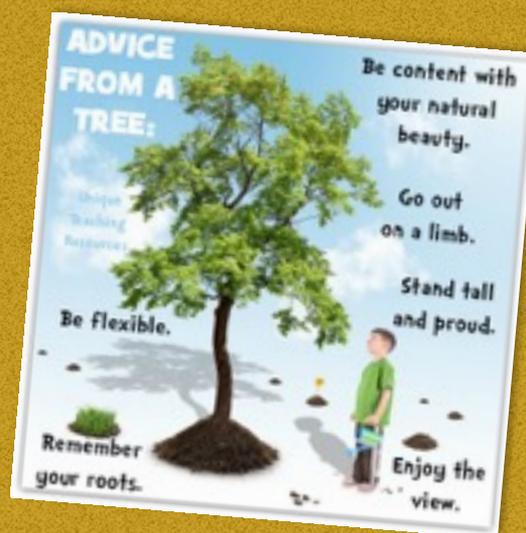
So where do we go from here.? We recently asked people on our Facebook page why they follow us. The overwhelming answer was because of the nature on the hill and their connection with the hill either on a daily basis or childhood memories.

The focus for 2016 is going to be all about nature and you can all get involved. The idea is that you all adopt a tree. Many of you have a tree that means a lot to you. A few names I have heard of are the Grandmother and Grandfather tree, the Witches tree, the Mother tree, which is also known by someone else as the Beer Belly tree!

By adopting a tree (no money changes hands) you can get up close and personal to the life of your tree throughout the seasons for the whole year. A simple survey form will help you record the life of the tree and a five meter area around it. This will give us in-depth information about the life cycle of things living on the hill. Don't leave it too late, apply for a survey pack today. Email [allingtonhill@gmail.com](mailto:allingtonhill@gmail.com)

## THANK YOU

Sometimes it seems as if it is the few that do all the work and we do not have many volunteers. I would like to say a huge thank you to the invisible army of people who help behind the scenes. The businesses who support us, the local, town and district council. The ladies who empty the poo bins, litter pick. our treasurer, facebook admin staff, fund raisers, cake bakers, those that lend us what we need. Also those that mend the tools, cut the grass and take the abandoned rubbish to the tip. We must not forget those that help to organise events, from publicity, to erecting marquees, organising entertainment and for all of you for just for being there and giving us your support.



# Tree hugging

## My Tree

When we were children sometimes all we wanted was a reassuring hug.

As adults sometimes all we want is a reassuring hug. It just seems to help heal the wounds, no words, no promises, no money, no other action can achieve as much as a simple hug.

Trees are the lungs of the earth. They provide shelter, food, and fires that keep us warm. They provide us with our garden sheds, our furniture, books, paper we write on and paper to clean our bums!

So please adopt a tree on the hill, give it a name and the most important thing of all, **GIVE IT A HUG.**

## I have hugged my tree now what?

When we started this we were not too sure if everyone would end up hugging the same tree. Amazingly so far everyone has picked their very own tree for all sorts of different reasons. So it seems that trees do have personalities. Perhaps that is a bit far fetched for some, but they all have a uniqueness about them.

This is why we want people to follow the life of their tree throughout the seasons for a whole year. The minimum of once a month spending 15 minutes with your tree. I have gone into more detail on the following page. We will be giving survey packs out with everything you need, you can download via the Facebook page, or request via email: [allingtonhill@gmail.com](mailto:allingtonhill@gmail.com)

We have had one of our youngest volunteers Daisy Smith road test the survey sheets and they seem to be child proof. If they are adult proof is another matter!



# My Tree Survey

We need to survey as many areas as possible. National surveys, (proper ones) need long term commitment and many request to be done in a very exact way. We are never going to get people involved if it is too complex and time consuming. Any form of survey gives vital information, so we have developed a survey which will make it interesting for families and individuals alike.

At the beginning of the year we will be asking people to adopt a tree ( no money changes hands!). It can be within the wood, stand alone, ancient and anywhere within our boundaries. We can suggest certain trees to ensure we get a good coverage of the hill. The survey will include a 5 meter area around the tree.

The "My Tree" survey form will follow the life of the tree throughout the year. The idea being at least once a month you visit your tree and record what you find. If you wish to visit once a week that is fine. At worst we will have twelve records surveying the different stages of the tree and the wildlife around it. Every couple of months we will ask you to look for different things in and around your tree as the seasons progress.

Not all national events fit in sadly, for example national bird watch weekend is the last weekend in January.

## **Jan-Feb: Trees, survey workshops**

During these months, adopt your tree. What type of tree is it?  
Measure the trunk, take a picture, bark rubbings etc. What is growing in your 5 meter area.

## **March-April: Birds and bees and bugs**

Record how many birds visit your tree in 15 minutes. Identify them if possible.  
Are they nesting, collecting nesting material. (advice on not disturbing the birds).  
Dawn Chorus.  
Any Bees, Hover flies, bugs?  
Is your tree coming into leaf? What is growing in your 5 meter area?

## **May-June: Flowers, insects and animals,**

Has your tree flowered? Are there flowers within your 5 meter area?  
What are they?  
Signs of animals, mammals, look for tracks, latrines, damage to the bark etc.  
What can you forage from your area?

## **July-Aug: Butterflies, moths, bats**

Has your tree a bat roost?  
Record butterflies and insects in 15 minutes within your 5 meter area.  
Complete national butterfly survey.

## **Sept-Oct: Berries, nuts and fungi or lichens**

Has your tree berries? Has your tree any fungi growing on it, or within the 5 meter area?

## **Nov-Dec: Winter**

When did you tree lose it's last leaves. Measure the trunk of the tree.  
Anything still growing in your 5 meter area. Tell the story of "The year of my tree."

## A TREE IS FOR LIFE NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS

We as a volunteer group really enjoy thinking up a theme for our Christmas Tree for the United Church Christmas Tree Festival. This year the theme was "Food for Free." we are aware that many local people have foraged on the hill for years. Many gallons of wine, pies, jams and of course sloe gin have been consumed from produce from the hill. We replicated 18 different types of plant, flower, nut, fungi and berry that are easily found on the hill. Of course there are many more.

Should we promote foraging? Most people are too scared to try wild foods. The blackberry is about as far as they may dare go. Some people will try crab apples, sloes and perhaps wild garlic, as these will need very little preparation and are deemed safe. Home brew enthusiasts will pick the elderflower and elderberry, but these people are far and few between. As for hazelnuts they come in a plastic bag from the supermarket, so why bother picking them.

If we could get a few more people interested in foraging they will soon be much more aware of the plant life and wildlife on the hill. They will also become aware that most of the foods you can forage are there because they grow on the trees or the trees provide them with the perfect growing conditions of light, shade and protection from the extremes the weather can throw at them.

The tree is one of the most under valued plants on earth. Yet we exploit it without a second thought for our own gain all around the world. The idea of "sustainable woodlands" are the buzz words of the decade. " Look at this new idea!" Sorry, but it is not new. For hundreds of years men worked the woods, coppicing, pollarding and foraging, as well as providing a perfect home for wildlife such as rabbit and deer, staple food in days gone by. In our mad, crazy materialistic lives, perhaps we should just take some time out and relearn these skills which sadly have but all disappeared. **AND HUG THAT TREE!**



Always a fun time of year. It usually takes four winter evenings to make the decorations. This year we had to cheat a little as many of the plants were no longer in season. Our crab apple baubles, were sugar glazed and sprinkled with glitter. We had to use a lot of imagination to recreate other berries and flowers, but I hope you were all able to interpret them. This years decoration makers were Tim, Chris, Sal, Elaine, Kitty, Daisy, Lora, Jo and myself. The tree raises awareness of the work that we do on the hill and our donation box helps cover the cost of the tree and decorations. This years grand total of donations came to £56.51. Thank you all so much.

## Are you a gorilla gardener?

How often have you seen a piece of waste ground and thought if only? It could be transformed into a veg patch, orchard, wildlife oasis or a riot of colourful flowers to cheer everyone up. But then you start to find all sort of reasons why not. You have no idea who owns the land, trespass, funding, up keep and then you think, well it was a lovely dream.

Since Neolithic times c 4000bc man has introduced plants into the wild from outside the UK. They started to make clearings in the woods to grow crops. These crops were introduced from Europe and Africa, mostly grain, but within those seeds were also smaller seeds, descendants of many of our wild flowers we see today. Some were able to adapt to our climate and survive.

Perhaps nothing much changed for 4000 years until the Romans introduce many more species, such as Grape vines and Sweet Chestnut as well as other foods, some say they introduced rabbits. Move forward almost 2000 years and the Victorians who were avid plant collectors introduced more plants to the UK then at any other time in mans history. Many such as Rhododendron, escaped from private collections and has threatened to wipe out many native species.

How do we define native? If it has grown in the uk for 4000 years, 2000 years or 100 years? Sweet Chestnut is still looked upon as not being a native tree but it has been here 2000 years. Sycamore also is not native and most people look upon it as a weed and is one of least loved trees. Interestingly because it self seeds readily and seems resistant to many tree diseases, the new thinking is that, well perhaps it does have a place in our countryside as it will become the new Ash. Sycamore wood has many uses and is used from anything from pallets, flooring, furniture, tool handles and if favoured by wood turners. I wonder if in a few years time if people will still ask me when are we getting rid of the Sycamore coppice on the top of the hill, " it's not a native tree you know."

So Neolithic man, the Romans and the Victorians have a lot to answer too. But we unwittingly in our day today lives are gorilla gardeners and are introducing plants and spreading them around the UK at the fasted rate since the first seeds were bought in from the continent thousands of years ago.

Did you know that since the 1960's with the sudden increase in the road network certain plants have taken advantage of these new super highways and due to the constant air movement can now be found growing all over the country, where they were regional plants before. Also our habit of salting the roads in winter has killed off many native plants along verges of motorways. But because we all love to visit the seaside, a plant which is tolerant to salt has colonised motorway verges. How you ask? The fine seed is picked up on car tyres with damp sand and slowly disperses as you drive along.

Car tyres, muddy boots and dogs who visit many different sites with their owners are the three biggest culprits for spreading seed and diseases around the countryside. So without a thought we have all at some time transported seed from one place to another. How many apple trees do you see along motorway verges? Who lobbed that apple core out the car window? As a child I did many a time.

Wildlife also are very good at gorilla gardening. Most seeds will pass through birds without being damaged and come with their own little pack of fertiliser! Birds such as Jays will plant acorns for a past time, as do squirrels. Coal Tits are renowned for stashing seed away for the winter. So next time you pass that piece of waste ground, is it really going to be such a terrible thing if you lob a seed bomb over the fence, scatter some wildflower seed or throw an apple core on to the ground? As long as it's "native" seed and insects such as bees will benefit, what harm can it do? We humans have been gorilla gardening for over 6000 years.

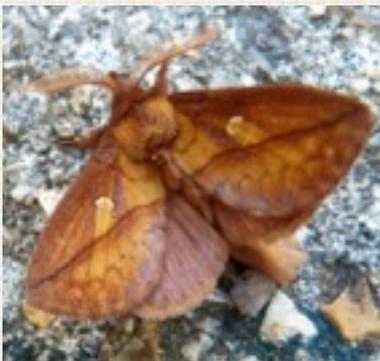
*P.S. Why have I not named the plant that colonised the motorway verges.? Well, you know sometimes you buy a friend a really nice book for Christmas and obviously have a good flick through it before you wrap it up. Yep, you've guessed it, I went back to buy myself a copy, sold out and have wrapped the book and given to my friend already!*

## Sad loss of another Beech

The Beech trees on the south side of the hill get a awful battering from the southerly winter gales. We will this winter loose another of our mighty Beeches. We think these were planted over 100 years ago. When it was first reported we took some photos. It is leaning into the hill away from the path, so not such a risk of falling on someone and the path for the mean time has been left open. The Woodland Trust have been informed and the contractors will come and assess.



## Caterpillars Hibernate!



It does sound a bit far fetched but after finding a caterpillar in the middle of winter I decided to do some research. This is the caterpillar of a drinker moth. It hibernates over winter when only partially grown and starts feeding again mainly at night in April until June, with the moth on the wing

## DEDICATION OF MEMORIAL BENCH

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK BRIDPORT MAYOR SANDRA BROWN AND HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN PHILIP RINGER FOR LEADING THE CEREMONY OF DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL BENCH ON THE 11TH OF NOVEMBER AT 11AM. REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE BRITISH LEGION, AIR FORCE AND ARMY WERE ALSO IN ATTENDANCE.



Greatly received. Ian Rees from A.O.N.B through lottery funding has been able to donate £600 worth of tools to the group. This early Christmas present was just the first consignment and will help greatly with the working parties.



On behalf of a family who's mother had left a bequest to the Woodland Trust, an Oak tree was planted by our youngest volunteers. Joe Middleton the manager for the site suggested that it should be planted near the old Grand parent tree, in the hope that it will grow up to give local people as much pleasure as the old tree did.

## Right of Way

Adam Butcher from the Countryside Management Team on the 24th of November cleared an area on the eastern boundary of Cooper's Field. With help from one member of his team and one of their volunteers, it took less than half a day to do the work. Three volunteers from the Hillbillies were also able to assist.



Clare who lives in the bungalow along side the right of way which runs up Allington Hill Lane was overjoyed that all the scrub was being cleared and a proper wildlife hedge line would replace it. We were rewarded with a lovely cup of tea for all our hard work.

We were very envious of Adams mini machine, with attachments! Chris and myself did try to work out a distraction technique, to obtain this little gem for ourselves. Sadly, Father Christmas didn't seem to receive our letter either, as no gleaming little red tractor was left on our doorstep. So we just stare at the photo longingly.

The new saplings to plant the hedge line should arrive in March, when we will be holding a working party to plant them. The mix of hedging has been carefully chosen to ensure a good mix to provide food and shelter for the wildlife in that area.

## Mild weather

We all know by now that our weather is controlled by the jet stream. It has also been pointed out that since in their wisdom they have now decided to name these storms, they have got worse. We are on "F" already and good old Frank is rattling the rafters as I type.

What effect has it on nature and wildlife. Most peoples concerns are for hedgehogs as it is just too warm for them to hibernate. We have been feeding our Hedgehogs and we were also amazed to find a very active slow worm on our door step Boxing day. We went out for a walk on Sunday and got eaten alive by gnat's.

The Celandines on the hill are out in flower a month early and there are lots of dandelions as well as daisies in the field. The daffodils on the road verge are also in flower, so what on earth are we going to look forward to in spring? We have reduced the working parties as it is quite obvious that sap is still rising, as leaf bud is bursting open already. Some Hazel in sheltered areas still have green leaves and Holly is coming into flower. It has also been so wet, muddy and with high winds, it has not been safe to work anyway. Last year between January to the end of March we only missed one Sunday working party due to bad weather. I have already cancelled the first one for this January.

Please get involved in our survey for the coming year, as it will be interesting to see what effect this weather will have and what happens if we have a sudden cold spell. We need people to volunteer in this important survey, so why not make it your New Years resolution to adopt a tree and survey it for a year. I think you will be rewarded many times over throughout the year, as I'm sure there will be many surprises in store.

# 2016 DATES FOR THE DIARY

WORK SHOP  
FEB SUNDAY 14TH 10AM

BIRD BOXES AND BUG  
HOTELS  
FAMILY ACTIVITIES

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW

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

EVENTS  
AT  
EASTER

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

JUNE

DATE TO BE ARRANGE

SUMMER  
FAMILY PICNIC EVENT

FUN FOR ALL THE FAMILY

KATE AND KIPP

WILL BE BACK IN

JULY

BRACKEN ROLLING  
AND  
DEMONSTRATIONS

WORKING PARTIES

THROUGHOUT THE WINTER

FOR UPDATES

VISIT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

ALLINGTON HILLBILLIES

## *Chat from the hill*

I have been told that contractors are going to clear parts of Cooper's Wood, is this true?

*A management plan is being implemented for the wood and this is being drafted by Alex Butler from FWAG. This is being paid for through the lottery grant funding via A.O.N.B. This will be a long term management plan introducing new species of trees and understory and there will be NO mass felling of trees. Any trees removed will mostly be ash to allow other species to take a foot hold if and when we lose trees to ash die back. The work should start in the spring.*

The three ash trees that were cut down a few months ago, was that due to ash die back?

*These trees actually came from one main trunk. We believe they originally were part of the old hedge line which would have been traditionally laid as a hedge. Disease had weakened the trees over many years, there was no sign of ash die back.*

A lot of work seems to be done by contractors now rather than volunteers, why is this?

*All the work recently done by contractors needed specialist skills and equipment. Under the site insurance volunteers are only allowed to use hand tools. Several of our volunteers are qualified to use brush cutters and chain saws. Even though this is the case, we are not allowed to use them on the hill. The Woodland Trust insurance will not even allow Joe the manger to use power tools!, although this is being looked into.*

The paths are covered with mud and dangerous.

*Well don't walk on them then. Walk off piste. Walk across the field on the grass, walk through the woods. Walk with a stick, shoes that can cope with muddy conditions and use your common sense.*

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