

# *The Perfect Spring*



## **Allington Hill, Cooper's Wood and Field Community Group**

Firstly, just to remind you that we have changed the name of the group since Allington Parish Council has taken on the lease for Cooper's Wood and Field. At the A.G.M it was decided the committee, although reduced in numbers, would not actively look for new committee members until outstanding projects had been completed and we had a better idea of how volunteering for two landowners would work out.

If anyone would like to come forward as a committee member or a community representative, please get in touch.

April showers are perfect for wildlife, although we do seem to have had them right the way through May.

The very damp mild winter meant that flowers such as primroses, bluebells and wild garlic thrived. The ferns are growing in abundance, as well as honeysuckle.

For the first time, this year we are recording butterflies on the site throughout the year. I will go into a bit more detail later in the newsletter.

The main working parties have been scaled down due to the nesting season. This does not mean that we have not been busy. The month of May was a very hectic and productive month, finishing with the annual highlight of the Orchids flowering in the flower meadow. A lot of preparation has gone into this area to improve the habitat for wild flowers. For the orchids this has paid off. We had a single plant three years ago, last year five, now ten and counting.



# The Way Forward

Why are we changing Cooper's Wood and Field? The Field is a way of encouraging people to once again engage with nature, make it accessible for them to begin to understand how wonderful it is. For those reading this newsletter, you are all ready there. It is the people who can not name a tree, all birds are little brown ones and the only butterfly is the cabbage white!

Children are our best mentors, as parents suddenly have the need to know, as children learn about nature at school. Adults who have lived near and played on the hill as children are our main supporters and volunteers. Children are the future of the hill and we need to encourage them to have that connection. Many adults would not allow their children to play in the woods in this day and age, so we believe we have provided an acceptable alternative.

Many changes have taken place over the last thirty years on the hill.

Many remember it as farmland with allotments in Cooper's Field. Many object to mass planting of trees and human interference. So how do we move on from here?

With Allington Hill being one of the biggest accessible green spaces near the town centre, it needs to be a space for the community, at the same time protecting the habitats within it. With careful planning it can be achieved.

We are looking for Community representatives that can help look after peoples interests as well as the hill. Many (if not all,) do not wish to become committee members and spend a lot of time and commitment fund raising, liaising with landowners and organising events. We will look at how this role fits in with day to day life of the hill.



## What do the Committee Do?

We are very good at telling you what we have done or plan to do, but perhaps a bit shy of telling you how much hard work goes into keeping the group going.

A minimum of two committee members attend Allington Parish Council meeting each month.

In May we had a committee meeting after a walk around Cooper's Wood and Field with Pat our first Community representative.

We had a meeting with the Woodland Trust manager to discuss cut backs.

We also held an on site meeting with Pete West from Dorset County Council, who were looking at offering us funding through a Lottery Grant. Also to link us with A.O.N.B., who are funding free woodland management courses.

Sal our treasurer and myself worked on three separate grant applications.

**The West Bay Car Boot Fund.** Requesting funding for WWI commemorative bench and money for the wildflower meadow.

**Lloyds Bank Community Fund** To improve access at the main gate for Wheelchair and Pushchair access and suitable picnic table.

### The Post Code Lottery

Again to improve access to the entrance of Cooper's wood and Field.

*With help from volunteers we also installed the seesaw and two poo bins, cut the grass paths, litter picked, emptied poo bins, replaced the noticed boards and ran working parties.*

# COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE

SO MANY PEOPLE SAY THEY WANT TO BE INVOLVED "BUT". TIME IS VERY PRECIOUS TO US ALL AND DUE TO WORK AND FAMILY COMMITMENTS EVEN RETIRED PEOPLE THESE DAYS DO NOT HAVE SO MUCH TIME ON THEIR HANDS AS THEY DID A FEW YEARS AGO.

PAT FOR EXAMPLE HAS ALWAYS WANTED TO BE MORE INVOLVED, BUT HAS MANY OTHER COMMITMENTS. WE INVITED HER TO AN ON SITE MEETING AROUND COOPER'S WOOD AND FIELD. IT TOOK ABOUT 45 MINUTES. LISTENING TO HER AS WE WALKED AROUND WITH HER DOGS. THE COMMITTEE WERE SO IMPRESSED WITH HER IDEAS AND OPINIONS, WE CAME AWAY FEELING IT WAS A VERY POSITIVE WAY FORWARD. PAT ALSO WAS ABLE TO ATTEND ANOTHER MEETING WITH OTHER DOG OWNERS TO DISCUSS WHERE THEY WANTED TO SITE THE POO BINS. AGAIN THIS WAS VERY USEFUL, AS THE COMMITTEE WOULD HAVE PUT THEM IN THE WRONG PLACE.

SO, IN JUST OVER 1.5 HRS IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS, PAT HAS PUT SOME VERY VALUABLE INPUT INTO LOOKING AFTER THE AREA, AND FEELS AS IF SHE HAS BEEN INCLUDED AND MADE A DIFFERENCE.

THERE WILL BE NO COMMITMENT TO ATTEND SUCH MEETINGS, BUT YOU WOULD ALWAYS BE INVITED TO ATTEND AND GIVE THE COMMUNITY A VOICE. YOU WOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO ASK US TO MEET YOU AND OTHER PEOPLE TO DISCUSS IDEAS THAT YOU FEEL WOULD MAKE DIFFERENCE.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE PLEASE LET US KNOW.



*Beryl and her friend Norma at last have the chance to plant a tree after they were unable to attend in 2012 to plant one in Jubilee Wood*

*Local resident Keith, gives a hand to dig out the holes for the seesaw and Poo bins.*

*Just visiting, Jill and Chris contacted me via email to say they wanted to get involved in a working party on a weekend visit to the area.*



# NEWS UP DATE

**BUDGET CUTS:** UNFORTUNATELY THE WOODLAND TRUST HAVE MADE FURTHER CUTS TO THE BUDGET FOR THE HILL. THEY HAVE ALREADY SAVED MONEY BY HANDING OVER THE LEASE OF COOPER'S WOOD AND FIELD TO THE PARISH COUNCIL. WE MET WITH THE WOODLAND TRUST MANAGER AND A STARK CHOICE HAD TO BE MADE. SADLY THE PROJECT TO CONTROL THE BRACKEN HAS HAD TO BE SCRAPPED. THIS MEANS THAT **ONE** SET OF STEPS CAN BE REPAIRED IN THIS FINANCIAL YEAR. UNFORTUNATELY THERE IS NOT THE BACKING OF LOCAL PEOPLE TO FUND RAISE ON BEHALF OF THE WOODLAND TRUST TO REPLACE THE STEPS AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED. MANY FEEL LET DOWN AFTER EVENTS OF LAST YEAR CONCERNING THE PLAY EQUIPMENT. IT HAS ALSO BEEN NOTED BY LOCAL PEOPLE THAT MONEY DONATED TO SPONSOR A BENCH ON THE HILL FOR EXAMPLE NEVER GETS ALLOCATED TO THE SITE.

**DONATIONS:** WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR TWO PRIVATE DONATIONS TOTTALLING £45.00

WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED £500 FROM ALLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL TO HELP RUN THE COMMUNITY GROUP AND MANAGE COOPER'S WOOD AND FIELD. WE ARE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

**COMPLAINT:** THIS WAS ANONYMOUS AND SENT TO THE WOODLAND TRUST COMPLAINING ABOUT TOO MUCH WORK BEING DONE ON THE HILL! AND CONSTANT USE OF CHAIN SAWS. WE ARE AWARE THAT AFTER THE RECENT STORMS LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE BEEN REMOVING FALLEN TREES FOR FIRE WOOD AND USING CHAIN SAWS. THEY DO NOT HAVE PERMISSION AND ONE PERSON HAS BEEN SPOKEN TO. THERE IS A LOCAL RESIDENT WHO USES A CHAINSAW REGULARLY IN HIS OWN BACK GARDEN, WHICH BACKS ON TO THE HILL. AS FAR AS I AM AWARE HE DOES NOT USE THIS ON THE HILL. THE WOODLAND TRUST ARE NOT TAKING THE COMPLAINT FURTHER.



Worth the wait. At last the see saw is put in place and poo bins are open for business.

I love this photo of Paul, as for once in his life he is actually not doing anything! But sweated off a few pounds later on mixing many bags of concrete to cement the see saw in place.



Myself Sal and Sarah had a pleasant walk in the sunshine around the hill, which was showing it self off at it's best, with the new Woodland Trust manager Tim Russell.

He was impressed to hear why local people are so passionate about the hill. We also voiced our concerns about more budget cuts.



## ***Green Veined White***

As I mentioned earlier, telling one white butterfly from another when in flight is very difficult. We have never been able to positively identify this being on the hill, until I captured it on camera.

Once you study the whites, they often have different flight patterns and the Large white is a lot bigger than the others. The time of year can also give you a hint to which one it is. To confuse things further the female orange tip, does not have orange tips, so looks similar to the veined white in flight.



## ***Oak Eggar moth***

A moth that we may never see, but know they are there, as the caterpillar can often be seen marching across the footpaths on the hill. This one took a liking to my gardening bag.

The moth as shown in the picture actually has no connection to Oak trees at all.

The male can some times be seen during sunny days flying, but is usually nocturnal. The female drops eggs on to vegetation one at a time while in flight.

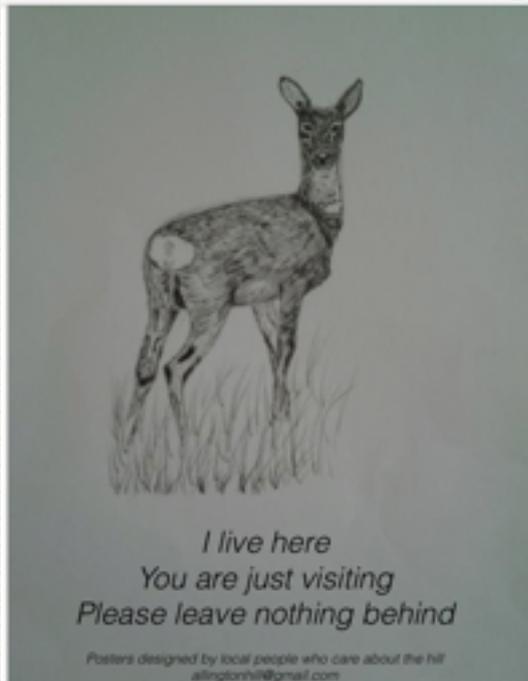


## ***Honey suckle***

This is one of the most beneficial plants for insects, butterflies and mammals. It flowers early in the year, produces berries, and the leaves are used by birds and mammals for nesting material, including the dormouse. It does not have a dense growth as does ivy or bramble which will eventually smother and kill the host plant. Do we need any other reasons to increase the amount of honey suckle on the hill? They need a lot of water, so growing them in oasis is the easiest way.



## YOU ARE ONLY A VISITOR!



The latest idea to combat litter and dog poo on the hill has come from people just like you.

We asked people to take pictures of their dogs on the hill and one lady also provided us with some lovely drawings.

This proactive approach in the first few weeks of the posters and the bins appearing, has made a huge difference.

Can you draw? or have photo's of your dogs taken on the hill? We would be grateful to have copies to make into posters. Your dog could become a star! We need plenty of different posters so we can keep swapping them around. No one takes notice of old posters. They will be changed about every two weeks.

## POO FREE PATHS

One thing there is no excuse for is dog poo on paths. It is just not acceptable and not fair on others who wish to walk on the hill.

**Bag it and bin it!** I had several comments on why the poo bins are so big. Is it really necessary? We had hoped that the volunteers would only have to empty them every two weeks. Not so, they are being so well used we are having to empty them weekly.

**Stick and flick!** Within the Wood and on the hill flick it off the path with a stick. It will biodegrade within days. It may be harmful to humans and cattle, but insects especially slugs love it.

**Wood chip poo area.** An area just inside the small gate in Hospital Lane will be left as wood chip, for those for personal reasons are not able to pick up can use. This is regularly raked.





Yellow rattle seed heads. We collected 1.5 kilos of seed last year. We would like, with your help to double that amount.

### *The Wildflower Meadow*

I believe we do not need to explain this importance of this project. Two areas have now been successful pilots, showing that well managed grass can be turned into a wildflower meadow. The hardest part is preparing the grass in late summer. We hope that we will be able to hire a special grass cutting machine that will also collect the cuttings. The grass will also be cut twice, the second cut a short as possible.

The area will then be seeded with yellow rattle seed. This we will not need to buy, we just need to harvest it. This is the most relaxing, satisfying summer evening occupation I have come across.

We usually start the 2nd or 3rd week in July. Late afternoons or early evening is the best time to collect the seed, to ensure it is dry. Chris and I will then prepare the collected seed ready to sow in the Autumn.

Since I originally wrote this piece, the harvesting started early and we have already collected almost 3 kilos, Yes, 3 kilos of seed, which some we plan to sell.

## *10th Anniversary Cooper's Wood*

This will be held on Saturday 2nd August from 12.00 to 4pm.

The event will be help around and in Cooper's Wood. It will focus mainly on fun events for children. To help keep the work load down for the volunteers, it will be a picnic event. We would like people to just come along, relax and have a pleasant afternoon.

Due to limited space in the newsletter, I will be sending out a mini newsletter shortly with the final details of the event.

### **Our next open meeting**

We would like to give people the opportunity to come along and chat of a cup of tea about the projects on the hill. Typically due to my work commitments we are having to change the date we had planned. Another reason for the mini newsletter to up date you all. We will of course all be at the picnic event, so why not come along and see us then.

### last minute news

It has just been confirmed that we have been chosen from 4,500 entries as one of the groups to receive funding from Lloyds Bank Community Fund. More details to follow on how we can increase the grant from £500 up to a possible £3000, with your support.

We have a new hillbilly member called Jack. Jack can be found in Cooper's Wood. Most people have given our first scarecrow ( who has a very big smile ) a warm welcome. I have also been told by a certain lady, that she has fallen in love with him.

The next parish council meeting is on Tuesday July 8th. Cooper's Field/Wood is on the agenda as always. Cherry Tree Community Hall 7.30pm

### The weather

I am sure you have all made the most of the weather. There has been an almost perfect balance of sun, warmth and rain for the last two to three months. The hill has certainly benefited and so has it's wildlife.

The grass seems taller than ever and there has been calls to have it cut already. Please remember this is nature's larder and so many insects, birds and small mammals depend on the seeds of the grasses.

It will be interesting to see what the end of the summer brings.

### Chat from the hill

**"The cowslips were nice, but there is nothing else growing in the flower meadow"**

*We can buy anything at any time of year these days and we are totally out of tune with the seasons. There will be times when it looks very bare, just like grass and then suddenly 10 orchids will appear. Please give nature a chance. Some seed was also perennial, so will not flower until next year.*

**" You said that you would have an information stall at the rope fair, what happened?"**

*An overload of commitments on the hill, in a short period of time. I had four meetings to attend the same week and with other volunteers unable to attend, we had to pull out. I occasionally have to find time for house work too!*

**"Why have the paths not been cut on the hill."**

*This was done two weeks later than usual, due to the contractor not being well. Due to the perfect growing conditions the grass had grown a lot taller and quicker than usual.*

**"Is it safe to walk on the hill in the evening, it was reported men were shooting on the hill?"**

*Rabbiting happens ever year on the hill. I have never known it to be reported before. I doubt very much they were shooting for deer as there is no easy access to remove them if shot. I often walk the hill late evening and always feel safe. Perhaps walk with someone or carry a mobile phone and make people aware that you are there.*

**"On Facebook you reported that youths were using a four wheel motorised bike on the hill, how can you stop them?"**

*Not by approaching them as we did. Jon was lucky not to be hurt when he drove straight at him and rammed the gate open. We have reported it to the police. Also a very heavy duty lock and chain has replaced the one that had been removed.*

**"There are reports of travellers in the area. The field is very venerable to occupation. There is little to stop them."**

*Community people power, is the best way. They often cut chains off gates during the night, for quick access the following day. We have an army of dog walkers that check the gate early every morning, before I am even out of bed.*

**"Why are some people so thoughtless and walk all over the flower meadow areas"**

*I wish I knew, one lady even purposely walks across it in front of me. I have even seen a couple having a picnic in the middle of one area. We can only politely ask people to refrain from doing so and hope they do not do too much damage.*

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

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