

# lets reminisce 2014



A year ago we could not have imagined what was about to unfold in front of us. It had only been a few months since Allington Parish Council had taken over the lease of Cooper's Wood and Field. We did not even know if the volunteer group would survive due to the nature of feeling towards the Woodland Trust at the time.

At the A.G.M in March we made the decision to have a quiet year, let things settle down, hopefully slowly encourage new volunteers to come forward. To mark the change, the official title of the group changed to Allington Hill, Cooper's Wood and Field Community Group. But we will always be known as the Allington Hillbillies.

So where did the plan go wrong? From memory it all started with an email. Which at the time seemed a good idea. This is my version of 2014 on the hill. I hope it brings back some happy memories for you. I'm not even going to predict 2015. only time will tell.



All new installations 2014

## My memories of 2014

The email was from the Woodland Trust.

To commemorate WWI they were sending out tree packs to communities so they could plant trees in memory of local people who had lost their lives in WWI.

Well that didn't sound too bad and we could get the local community to help plant the 106 trees, hopefully gaining a few more volunteers.

The next email from the Woodland Trust.

Due to a computer glitch we seem to have lost your details of the application for your tree pack. Please could you resend.

So I duly did.....Yes you've guessed it, the next email confirmed that the **"TWO"** packs we requested would arrive in early November. Great what on earth were we going to do with 212 trees?



January storms brought down a mighty Beech.



Restoring the old path Cooper's Field.

The 2nd test area of the flower meadow was our next concern. Yellow rattle needs hard winter frosts to encourage the seed to germinate. We had very few frosts and there was no sign of germination at the same time as the previous year. Three weeks later the first signs came through. This meant we needed to plan ahead on how we were going to raise the money for the wildflower seed we needed.

Well we could apply for a grant for wildflower seed and a WWI memorial bench from the West Bay Car Boot Fund. £900 greatly received. Now we just need to source a bench!

Sarah, one of our volunteers, nominated us for the Lloyds Bank Community fund. We were selected as one of the many groups to receive funding. But we needed a project. One frequent request was for better access to the Field and Hill. So a quote was submitted for pavers and a disabled picnic bench. We also applied for a grant from Bridport Town Council and requested funding from Allington Parish Council. Receiving £500 from each. Received with great thanks.

So our quiet year was going well! Six months after the A.G.M we have on the agenda 212 trees, a memorial bench, a picnic bench and grass pavers to keep us pottering along with. Oh, I forgot the 4 kilo of yellow rattle seed. Yes 4 Kilo! Collected mostly by Chris and myself on warm sunny afternoons.



First Layer of Chippings on The Drive go down in March.

Before we move on to the summer season, I had almost forgotten to mention one of the most important purchases. We persuaded Allington Parish Council earlier in the year to purchase two large poo bins and a rubbish bin. We are grateful for those that use the bins and sack trucks are needed to remove the waste. We still have people that do not pick up though.

Thanks for the bins and thanks to those that pick up all waste, in what ever shape or form.

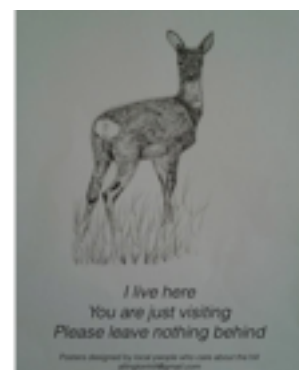


Work on the dead hedge Cooper's Wood



The other installation was the seesaw. The last piece of equipment for the play trail. Big enough to take four adults thankfully. Who said it was for the children? This was purchased from remaining 2013 funding. Thank you to all the local men that installed it.

The summer season was on us before we knew it and as usual we were a bit slow in organising our summer festival. We decided to keep it as simple as possible, with self service refreshments, old fashioned sports for the children. Such a wonderful afternoon. We also met up with Tim who has now become an enthusiastic member of the group. I won't forget that day in a hurry!



Clearance work Jubilee Wood

Nor will I forget the hours sat with a calculator working out how big an area we would need for 4 kilo's of yellow rattle seed. Ok, actually most of the field. Better get raking then! We had to buy more rakes and Tim also made us a new one. We soon became known as The Land Army, raking day in day out. Then our Knight in shining armour came to our rescue. His girl friend had watched us rake the grass from afar and she mentioned it to her boyfriend. As a contract farmer he offered his time free and collected the hay, baled it to make it easier to move. Then later cut it again. Our next problem.....the grass would just not stop growing due to the mild weather. arghhh

I know what you are thinking, what has happened to the 212 trees, a memorial bench, a picnic bench and grass paver's and the 4 kg of yellow rattle seed. Can we add to that 4 kg of sand and £400 of wild flower seed. Not too many things to juggle all at once then! Like British Rail we are getting there ( well hopefully. )

While we were waiting for the grass to stop growing, we were still trying to find someone who would like to make our WWI memorial bench. Not an easy task. You think someone would have liked to take on the commission after all we had £500 to spend.



Stan decided to have a go at making a seat, and made a template from old pallets. It fitted perfectly around a tree. This could be the answer to our memorial bench, so Stan was sent out to source wood. I seem to remember making some throw away comment about scaffold boards. Sure enough you guessed it, Stan and Jon went up to Weller Scaffolding and got several old boards, cost £20. Except they forgot to get a receipt, so they paid for it out of their own pockets. So I make that .....£500 left to spend on a bench then! ( Thank you Weller Scaffolding, Stan and Jon, a bargain.)



Jack will return. We hope that he will be joined by a few more friends in 2015.

We are now in to mid October and the grass is still growing. On the 27th of October we had to cut the grass again. Our friends tractor mower was broken. Jon took up the challenge and spent 5 hours going backwards and forwards ( and round the bend ) on a ride on mower we had been able to hire.

Thankfully there was less grass to rake, being shorter. We had about a quarter still to rake when the heavens opened. Chris was out there in her mac and wellies all morning getting soaking wet, but she was not going to be beaten.

The next day was fine and we had many local people turn up to help scatter the seed.

Yes! at last we have removed two items from the list of to do's. Please refer back to the previous page, I really can't type it all out again.

I had without success tried to organise an autumn festival. With so many other things taking up our time and the arrival of the 212 trees due the first week in November, could we realistically hold an event on November 16th as planned to commemorate WWI.

The answer was no, which up set a lot of locals, because they were really looking forward to our annual bonfire.



Munching Caterpillar event



Allington Hill Snapper's first outing

We did feel that we needed to do something. Chris and myself set to work. So what can you make with three hoola hoops, a bed sheet, a ball of wool, a large plastic lid, felt and pipe cleaners.....

A big red poppy of course.

Local people also made 106 named rustic wooden crosses. We will remember them.

December was soon upon us and we had great fun decorating our "Golden Woodland" Christmas tree at the Christmas Tree Festival. With that and the sale of our calendars and Christmas draw, we raised over £200 to help us with on going projects for 2015.

The last hi light of the year. Christmas Eve, Mulled wine and mince pies in Cooper's Field watching Santa fly by, lit by out Christmas star.

## DOG BLOG by Pat North

I hope that you all had an enjoyable Christmas and that your dogs have all recovered from the altered state of their usual daily routines?.

In the last and first 'dog blog' of our Newsletter I asked that you may like to submit 'dog tales' or articles from the hill past or present.

Now, don't be shy.....I know that there are many stories to be told as we are constantly swapping antidotes etc. How many times do we meet on the hill, standing in huddled groups whilst our patient pooches sit and yawn, charge around like loonies or just disappear over the horizon whilst we stand and natter? So then, in the absence of said request I shall start the ball rolling.

### TALE OF MANY MOLES

Some of the more observant may have noticed a few weeks ago the sudden adornment on the lower branches in Coopers Wood of dead moles hanging prettily! Perhaps it was thought to be related to a weird Hillbilly ritual? Well sorry, no. The simple explanation is that my newly acquired Labrador puppy having more Terrier tendencies than Labrador became quite adept at sourcing and catching Moles in the couch grass either drowned ones or simply those poor creatures attempting to escape their wet burrows. In an effort to stop her from A. eating them and B. returning to eat them I hung the tiny corpses on the trees but sometimes forgot to collect and dispose of until the following day. Anyway she has now moved on to Shrews which can be swallowed before discovery and one Rat caught in top corner of field which was so stinky she gladly surrendered it to my plastic bag!!

### THE LOST LEADS

One evening a few months ago a few of us met to photograph the sunset on top of the hill. I inadvertently left my two dog leads on the lower bench as we set off.

An hour or so later in the gloom of dusk I discovered that the leads were no longer there. One of the leads was a leather slip which I had had made for Taylor 10 years ago from the rein of a much cherished horse bridle. This lead, Taylor had had all his adult life and had accompanied us on many, many adventures.

I was ridiculously more upset than I thought possible that evening.

BUT, the power of Facebook came good when as late as 11pm I received a message from Sharron Leader (thank you again Sharron) to tell me that she had my dog leads safe and sound. Ahhhhh

Three Cheers for Facebook...

*Now, I have been trying to find a local venue at which to hold puppy only classes. But sadly nothing suitable has arisen as yet. So Sarah who recently organised a successful weekend training event on Coopers Field with Jim Greenwood suggested we perhaps use said field in the Summer?*

*I envisage a class of no more than Eight or less puppies aged from no less than 10 weeks and no more than 16 weeks old. All pups must produce a valid vaccination certificate showing a completed primary course of vaccine. Up to date parasite control is also recommended.*

*The class that I would like to hold will be more to do with behavioural problem avoidance rather than 'training lessons'. Simple understanding of how the canine mind works plus the guidance required by a young dog can often be overlooked in the owners desire to teach sit, stay, recall, heel etc is a subject I feel quite passionate about. I often have conversations with people who have been at a loss to understand their adolescent's dogs behaviour. I would love to help the youngsters of the Hill and beyond.*

*Which leads me to say thank you to people met out walking when my liit'un sometimes forgets her manners. She is, of course a work in progress and does try hard to get it right but sometimes makes mistakes. Now 6 months old her puppy licence has expired!*

*Have a Happy New Year*

*Pat, Taylor, Carys and Lula*

## Why I owe a lot to the humble mole

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My father was one of twelve children and his father was a wealthy farmer and owned a prize herd of cows. They lived at Lufton Manor on the edge of Yeovil. Sadly in 1924 the eldest son Alan died after receiving a leg injury playing football. No NHS in those days. Within 18 months my grandfather also lost his herd to foot and mouth. There was very little compensation ( if any ) in those days. They lost everything, all the furniture had to be sold and they moved to a very small rented farm at Kilmington, Devon.

There was only two bedrooms. The boys slept top to toe, four in a bed. The three girls slept on the large landing at the top of the stairs. My Grandparents slept in the attic. My father now the eldest boy had to grow up very quickly. With his brother Bill they were taught to poach by their father. After all, if the father got caught he would have been sent to prison, the boys would not. The girls helped their mother make cheese and look after the chickens. They. Elsie became very good at catching eels and other fish from the local river. They also snared rabbits and birds such as pheasant, pigeon and rook which were often served at the table. The rook pie being the favourite of the whole family.

Most days they did not go hungry, but they rarely had any surplus to sell and found it difficult to build up the prize herd that had been lost. During this time my Dad found he had a talent for catching moles. In those days it was acceptable to wear mole skin and was very fashionable. My Dad found a buyer who traded in London and would pay him between 1d and 3d per mole skin dependant on the quality, a lot of money in those days.

So instead of being a pest it was the family's saviour and after about five years, the herd had outgrown the small farm and they moved to Pipsford Farm at Hooke. But that's another story! I had the pleasure of taking a couple of my Uncles back to Kilmington several years ago. The owners of the house were so kind offering us all afternoon tea. She even let my Uncles sit on her bed and look out the window, so they could reminisce. The old cattle shed is still there with the nails that my grandfather had hammered into the wall to tie up the cows for milking. Where their mother made the cheese, is now the kitchen and in the dining room it still has the open fire with bread oven to one side. This reminded them of when their Mum's sister and husband would come and stay at Christmas. I have no idea where they slept, but they always bought presents for the children and food for the table. The children always looked forward to their present of an orange, the highlight of Christmas. Oh how times have changed!

I hope this will just make you stop and think how lucky we all are. The NHS, compensation available for farmers and the generosity of people who give to food banks, sadly still needed in this day and age. But the fight to survive shaped their lives and they were there for each other to their dying days. They nearly all lived into their late 80's and 90's. They all remembered their childhood with great fondness and no bitterness of what fate dealt them. I wonder how we would all cope in this day and age? I must admit I often wonder about the delights of rook pie.

The moles are yet again playing a role in my life. You all love the poppies and demand more. They will only grow on disturbed earth. yes you have guessed it. We have a few volunteers who have a small container of poppy seed in their pocket. Every time there is a fresh mole hill, it gets sprinkled with poppy seed. So when you see a patch of poppies on the hill in the summer, thank the moles. They are doing a grand job.

# What did the weather bring in 2014

At the beginning of the year the hill was hit by storm after storm. We feared after the Beech was felled we would have a lot more casualties. It was not in fact until late summer and very little rain that the trees started to drop damaged boughs. The warmer weather in spring gave an abundance of blossom and with out the usual high winds and hail storms it lead to a huge crop of crab apples in the Autumn.

The lovely summer weather and Cooper's Field now more flower rich attracted a wider range of butterflies including the common blue and skipper. It almost seemed likes swarms of dragonflies were also seen. They had been attracted by the increase in butterflies and insects.

Autumn seemed to go on for ever. We all enjoyed the extended good weather, but it did cause us problems with the flower meadow in the fact that the grass just did not stop growing. We broadcasted wildflower seed a month later than normal.

The leaves on the tree eventually were blown off, with some holding on to leaf until the first week in December. This may not be good for the trees if we have a short mild winter. They will be forced into to bud early, without their usual long dormant period.

Jon has kindly worked out the statistics for the weather in 2014. With ever changing weather patterns, we can only guess what 2015 will bring. It would be lovely if it snowed at half term for the children. So they can at least once in their childhood experience the wonders of sledging and making a snowman. Most of us of course would love another summer like last year.

The statistics in the chart below show that most of the year 2013 and 2014 were very similar. The exceptions I have highlighted in red, which are the figures for 2013.

2014	Min Temp C	Max Temp C	Rainfall mm	Total rainfall
Jan	-1.6	12.3	(123)	220.5
February	-1.2	14	125	345.75
March	-1.7	(15.1)	48.5	394.25
April	(-2.1)	2.2	20.3	72.5
May	2.5	22.5	41	507.75
June	9.9	26.4	40	547.75
July	8.8	27.6	41	588.75
August	(8.8)	4.6	23.8	118.5
Sept	5.6	23.7	(57)	0
Oct	3.1	20	101.75	809
Nov	0.5	16.8	115.5	924.5
Dec	(-2.2)	-5.5	12.3	(173)
			28.5	(837)

A couple more facts. The Facebook page now has 91 followers. During this year a small group called Allington Hill snappers have also informally meet on the hill to learn more about their cameras. To find out more visit our Facebook page for up to date goings on on the hill.

*My lasting memories of 2014*

*One crazy week in the middle of summer, you had to be there.  
Personal memories for myself and Chris, never to be shared.  
But it had a lot to do with raking grass!*

*Making wild seed bombs with the Beavers, an unforgettable  
lovely mess.*

*All the new people I have met, with the same passion, the hill.  
Such fond memories of so many special moments, such as*



The Poppy



.....and finally thank you

We couldn't have done it without you and the special support from the following.

- Allington Parish Council
- Bridport Town Council
- District County Council
- Rights of Way Team
- A.O.N.B
- BLAP
- Andrew, from Elwell Farm ( moving chippings )
- Ryan, contract farmer ( help with flower meadow )
- Phillips Gravel Yard ( free sand for flower meadow )
- Weller Scaffold ( old scaffold boards )
- Evans Plant (special delivery of equipment )

Special thanks to the committee, community officer and volunteers who without all their hard work none of the above would have happened.

**Committee**

- Cathy Harvey Chair
- Sal Robinson Treasurer
- Chris Toombs my PA, flower meadow project
- Paul Bowditch
- Kevin and Dee Trott

**Community Officer**

Pat North ( social events )

**Volunteers**

- Paul Bowditch ( cutting grass paths )
- Chris Toombs and Pat North ( weekly emptying dog waste bins )
- Chris Toombs ( organiser of litter picking rota and all those who helped her throughout the year.)
- Sarah Worner ( admin Facebook page )
- Jon Harvey, ( always helps me with everything that needs doing, which has been an awful lot this year.)

**Special help from**

- West Bay Beavers
- Bridport team ministry

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

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

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01308 423202