

FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16 November 2021 via Zoom

Members present: Lynn Caudrey, Martin Fannon, Sue Fannon, Dave Parratt, Diana Readhead, Peter Slathers, John Wallace, Marion Wallace, Chris Wedge, Helen Wilkie, John Wilkie, Andy Wilkins.

1 **Apologies for absence** were received from Jon Bishop, Fiona Bucknall, Mick Lilliman, Anne Lilliman, Maggie West, Allison Wilkins.

2 **Minutes of meeting held on 20 October 2020 and matters arising**

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

3 **Chairman's Report on the work of the Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort for the year 2020/2021**

Dave presented the Chairman's report as below.

I would firstly like to thank all of the Friends (including new members, Peter, Philip, Paul and Geraldine), together with Jon and Tom, for all of your efforts over what has been a pretty challenging year due to COVID restrictions. By far the most important achievement is that we are all still here!

As in previous years, I intend to cherry pick the other main achievements in this report. Lynn has kindly kept a more detailed record of the group's activities, which will be appended to the minutes.

Mowsbury Hillfort

1. Mowsbury Hill Meadow was proposed for inclusion as a County Wildlife Site by the Wildlife Trust because of a notable increase in neutral grassland indicator species (due to the Friends' hard work over the last few years). This was approved in October 2021.

2. Ravensden Parish Council (PC) has proposed designating the site as a Local Green Space in their Neighbourhood Plan. If approved, this would afford the site protection comparable with Green Belt status. We have welcomed this, but suggested to the PC that they extend the proposed site boundary to include the scheduled area on the south of the site.

3. The Green Flag pennant was awarded to the site again this year.

4. Work on site was restricted by coronavirus lockdowns from 5 November 2020 to 2 December 2020 and again from 5 January 2021 to March 2021 and, as a result, we could not hold a Wassail. Nevertheless, the Friends (individually) continued to look after the site and deal with litter. Meetings were held via Zoom (thanks to Marion for organising) and the website and Facebook page were maintained (thanks go to Andy).

5. Work formally then resumed in March 2021. The seat was re-installed at the top of the meadow. New, and existing, gate posts were re-set at the entrance. Golf balls have been removed throughout the year to facilitate mowing and Martin has kindly written to Cllr Royden to recommend the Golf Course raise the height of fencing on the golf range to reduce risk to the public. The meadow was mowed on 14 Sept 2021 and the ramparts, leat, courtyard, and orchard have all been brush cut or mowed (especial thanks go to Martin, Mick and Tom). The weekly butterfly survey took place during the season.

6. Chris Wedge hosted a Wildlife Trust Walk at the site on 14 July. Some of the Friends attended a walk at Foster Hill Road Cemetery in July 2020 kindly hosted by Adrian Bean.

Putnoe Wood

1. Coppicing of Plot 1d, and the 10m strip south of the main ride opposite to it, continued through Nov/Dec 2020 and Jan/Feb 2021. Some of the Friends went in family pairs to continue coppicing during lockdown.
2. In April tasks started up again and general clearance of paths and fallen branches was undertaken.
3. In June small balsam was brush cut and pulled to try and reduce its spread.
4. Chris Wedge and John Wallace hosted a Green Flag visit on 19 August 2021 and the award was made in October 21 (thanks go to Chris and John for their work on this).
5. Gate post and fencing has been renewed at the east entrance gate and the damaged information board at the southeast entrance replaced.
6. Marion, Chris and Helen are taking forward a programme of educational visits for local schools for both sites.

Despite very much increased use during COVID lockdowns. Overall, both sites are now in great condition. This has been recognised in the feedback received, both on site and by external adjudicators. Well done!

4 Report of the accounts of the Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort for the year.

John Wilkie presented the annual report and accounts.

There had been little activity on the accounts. Total expenditure for the year was £67.71 leaving a balance of £320.10. In response to a query from Andy, John reported that we had received no income from Easy-Funding and did not anticipate any transfer until our account reached £15.

Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort						
Annual Accounts as at 16 November 2021						
		2019/20			2020/21	
Opening balances	bank	538.47			387.81	
	cash	0.00	538.47		0.00	387.81
Income		200.00		Borough funding	0.00	
		66.21		Sale of tea etc	0.00	
		150.00		Wassail visitors' donations	0.00	
		416.21	954.68	Total income	0.00	387.81
Expenditure		45.47		Web site	49.71	
		0.00		Tools and equipment	18.00	
		2.50		Photocopying	0.00	
		38.60		Wassail costs	0.00	
		111.40		Donation to wassail charity	0.00	
		17.77		Tea and sugar	0.00	
		63.60		Reinstate bench	0.00	
		287.53		Tree protection	0.00	
		566.87	387.81	Total expenditure	67.71	320.10
Closing balances	bank	387.81			320.10	
	cash	0.00	387.81		0.00	320.10

5 Election of Officers

Chairman

Proposed by
Seconded by

Dave Parratt
Martin Fannon
Marion Wallace

Secretary

Proposed by
Seconded by

Helen Wilkie
Andy Wilkins
Dave Parratt

Treasurer

Proposed by
Seconded by

Peter Stathers
Dave Parratt
Martin Fannon

Task and Events Co-ordinator

Proposed by
Seconded by

John Wallace
Helen Wilkie
Chris Wedge

All members present in agreement.

John Wilkie had decided to stand down as Treasurer. Dave thanked John Wilkie for his work as Treasurer since 2012.

6 Any Other Business

None

The Chairman closed the Annual General Meeting.

APPENDIX 1

ACTIVITIES AT PUTNOE WOOD 21 October 2020 to 16 Nov 2021

October 2020 21	Rained off
28	Brush cut coppice plot 1d in morning. Coppicing plot 1d. Litter pick. Rained off at 3.00pm
Nov 4	Coppicing in plot 1d
5	Lockdown for coronavirus from 5 Nov to 2 Dec. Some of the friends went to the wood separately to do coppicing during lockdown.
Dec 2	Coppicing in plot 1d. Litter pick
9	Coppicing plot 1d and 10 m strip south of the main ride opposite plot 1d. Litter pick.
16	Coppicing 10m strip opposite plot 1d
23	Corona virus tier 4 and wet
Jan 2021 5	Full lockdown for coronavirus. Some of the friends went separately on different days to complete the coppicing checking in with John W when on site. Litter picking was also undertaken.
April 2021 7	Clear fallen tree from stream. Clear cross paths. Litter pick. (moschatel noted on two cross paths)
14	Clear debris from fallen tree from the stream. Litter pick. Weed cross paths. Note tree species in coppice plots.
May 12	Clear debris from stream. Litter pick. Trim cross paths. Clean notice boards. Pull out some Spanish bluebells. Early purple orchids flowering north of new path and two in the glade.
19	Chain saw tree trunk to remove from stream. Clear debris from west ditch. Litter pick. Trim paths. Pull Spanish bluebells.
June 9	Brush cut and pull small balsam.
16	Brush cut green path and hand cut hard paths.
30	Brush cut green path. Brush cut and pull small balsam. Trim south path
August 11	Remove fallen tree from stream. Remove fallen oak from keeper's ditch. Trim paths. Wash notice boards and no cycling notices. Litter pick.
18	Litter pick and trim paths ready for Green Flag visit.
19	Chris Wedge and John Wallace host Green Flag assessment.
Nov 10	Coppice in plot 1e. Replace post on west entrance gate. Replace damaged information board at south-east entrance.

ACTIVITIES AT MOWSBURY HILLFORT 21 Oct 2020 to 16 Nov 2021

Oct 2020 21	Rained off
28	Putnoe wood
Nov 4	Putnoe wood
5	Lockdown for corona virus from 5 Nov to 2 Dec 2020
Dec 2	Putnoe wood
9	Putnoe wood
16	Putnoe wood
Jan 2021 5	Full lockdown for corona virus from 5 Jan. Some litter picking done during lockdown.
March 2021 13	Brush cut patch on courtyard that was left uncut last year. Rake and remove cuttings to burn site.
31	Clear fallen branch from pond 2. Debris put on dead hedge. Cut down split tree across path by pond 4. Litter pick. Cut dead tree in the courtyard. Tidy dead wood into habitat piles in old orchard.
April 2021 7	Putnoe wood
13	Dismantle hut constructed in south orchard
14	Putnoe wood
21	Move some wood from dismantled hut to burn site. Litter pick. Jon Bishop removed metal waste bin and mesh used to construct the hut. Pick up golf balls
28	Cleared bonfire site at top of meadow. Litter pick. Moved some dead wood from south orchard to burn site on the truck. Build dead hedge with remaining wood. Cut part of tree that had fallen into leat. Pick up golf balls.
May 5	Clear fallen tree from leat. Cut logs in south orchard. Trim blackthorn at back of burn site. Clear golf balls. Walk site to note plants.
12	Putnoe wood. Butterfly survey
19	Putnoe wood. Butterfly survey and collect golf balls
26	Reinstall seat at top of meadow. Collect golf balls. Virtually no litter. Note plants growing on site. Too cold for butterflies.
June 2	Strim southern boundary. Strim viewpoint to island. Clear fire from rampart. Move large log from rampart. Clear fallen tree from footpath. Clip round sign and rustic seat. Pick up golf balls. Snip some ash and blackthorn on meadow. Litter pick. Butterfly survey.
9	Butterfly survey
16	Butterfly survey
23	Butterfly survey. Brush cut footpath. Brush cut paths round hillfort. Brush cut round trees in east orchard. Clear north viewpoint across pond 2. Remove fallen branch from top of pond 2. Clear round fruit trees by hand. Pick up golf balls.
July 7	Butterfly survey. Trim footpath. Trim south path. Jon Bishop and Tom chain sawed fallen ash on path by golf course. Cut seed heads from hogweed in east orchard. Pick up golf balls. Clear large cherry plum which had fallen onto 3 apple trees at edge of east orchard.
14	Jon Bishop chain sawed fallen cherry plum in east orchard. Trim bramble on south of hillfort. Butterfly survey. Pick up golf balls. Cut some dogwood on meadow. Pull common ragwort. Clear camp site adjacent to pond 4 with litter, pots of compost and tools under camouflage netting, possibly being prepared for growing cannabis.
21	Walk at Foster Hill Rd Cemetery.
25	Pear tree 47 fallen in orchard. Cherry plum tipped over in south orchard. Branch broken on ash in courtyard and hanging into south moat. Trees fallen blocking path by pond 3.

28	Butterfly survey. Pick up golf balls (148). Pull common ragwort. Clear fallen pear from the medlar. Clear fallen tree from path near pond 4. Take weight off broken branch on ash in courtyard. Stopped at 3pm because of thunderstorm.
August 4	Butterfly survey. Pick up golf balls (102). Cut hogweed seed heads in east orchard. Burn arisings.
11	Putnoe wood.
18	Putnoe wood. Butterfly survey
25	Brush cut leat and some dogwood on the meadow. Slash nettles round pond 2. Cut bramble fronds on south path. Pick up golf balls. Litter pick. Butterfly survey.
September 1	Brush cut nettles round pond 2, rake and remove some cuttings. Brush cut dogwood on meadow and remove cuttings. Trim leat and rake and remove some cuttings. Pick up golf balls. Butterfly survey.
7	Dave brush cut part of south rampart.
8	Burn cuttings. Collect cuttings from pond 2 and meadow. Butterfly survey. Pick up golf balls.
9	Dave and Lynn cleared cuttings from leat. Cuttings to burn site, but small compost heap made in wooded area at top of leat.
14	Mowsbury meadow cut
15	Brush cut part of rampart. Rake and remove cuttings to meadow to be picked up with meadow cuttings. Pick up golf balls (about 400). Butterfly survey.
22	Brush cut rampart and triangle of meadow left by mower (2 brush cutters). Move cuttings to burn site and some onto meadow. Pick up golf balls. Last butterfly survey of season.
24	Meadow baled
27	Bales picked up from meadow
28	Finish brush cutting rampart and begin courtyard. Top of meadow also brush cut. (3 brush cutters)
29	Finish raking rampart. Rake top of meadow and part of courtyard. Burn cuttings. Pick up golf balls.
Oct 6	Brush cut courtyard and part of the island. Rake and remove cuttings to burn site. Burn cuttings. Collect golf balls. Litter pick.
10	Dave brush cut part of courtyard.
11	Brush cut round anthills in courtyard.
12	Tom finished mowing the courtyard and mowed the east orchard.
13	Brush cut island. Brush cut round trees in east orchard. Brush cut north moat (three brush cutters). Rake courtyard and island, cuttings to burn site. Burn cuttings. Collect golf balls.
20	Replace wooden post at entrance gate. Rake east orchard. Cuttings to habitat pile at rear of orchard towards golf course and some to heaps round orchard. Brush cut uncut areas in orchard. Brush cut base of south moat and moat between island and courtyard.
26	Some cuttings burned
27	Brush cut south path round the scheduled area. Trim western rampart. Move grass cuttings from burn site to form habitat piles on edge of western tree belt. Litter pick. Move some fallen wood from north moat and island.
Nov 3	Re-set gate post. Trim blackthorn on south rampart. Clear debris round ponds 2 and 3. Clear dead elder near field boundary. Litter pick.
10	Putnoe wood