

# FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 20 October 2020 via Zoom

**Members present:** Jon Bishop, Lynn Caudrey, Martin Fannon, Sue Fannon, Anne Lilliman, Dave Parratt, Chris Moss, Diana Readhead, John Wallace, Marion Wallace, Helen Wilkie, John Wilkie, Allison Wilkins, Andy Wilkins,.

1 **Apologies for absence** were received from Mike Ayles, Sarah Ayles, Mick Lilliman and Chris Wedge.

2 **Minutes of meeting held on 10 September 2021 and matters arising**

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

3 **Report on the work of the Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort for the year**

Dave presented the Chairman's report. He thanked all the Friends for their work over the last, particularly challenging, year – supported by Jon and to a lesser extent Tom (due to his unfortunate injury). Despite the lockdown in March for around 4 months, both the Hillfort and Putnoe Wood had been maintained to their usual excellent condition. Particular thanks went to John Wallace for his management of the tasks, Helen for keeping the Friends on track in terms of the administration, John Wilkie for financial regulation and woodworking expertise, Andy for maintaining our digital presence, Chris Wedge for successfully supporting the Green Flag process, Martin for supporting the effective use of Ward funding to provide fruit tree protection, Mick for Health and Safety advice and machinery transport ,and Marion for Zooming support.

This year we also welcomed some new members to the group, Paul and Mikayla short-term (as they now have work commitments) and more recently Sarah and Mike Ayles.

Dave presented a selection of highlights from the fuller report of activities appended to the minutes, with thanks to Lynn for keeping a record of tasks.

### 3.1 **Mowsbury Hillfort**

3.1.1. The Wildlife Trust had confirmed that they would put Mowsbury meadow forward for County Wildlife status. This was delayed during lockdown. Lizzie Dobbie from the Trust has confirmed she will visit the meadow in 2021 with a view to putting the meadow forward.

3.1.2 In October 2019 some material was removed from the island and chipped for use in filling holes prior to the Wassail. More hillfort leaflets were printed to be given out at the Wassail in an effort to attract more people to the group.

3.1.3 The Wassail took place on 21 Jan 2020. £111.40 was donated to 'Just Us' a homelessness advocacy charity.

3.1.4 In January 2020 it was noticed that a number of fruit trees had been badly gnawed by rabbits. An application for Ward funding was made to purchase protection for the trees. £200 was awarded but not received until August. Martin obtained number tags, green mesh and chicken wire which was installed after lockdown in July.

3.1.5 A large ash blew down into the courtyard in February 2020 and was cleared.

3.1.6 In March 2020 a working group was set up to review the Health and Safety documents on the website.

**3.1.7** Lockdown for coronavirus started at end of March and tasks ceased. During lockdown Martin and Sue renumbered the fruit trees in the orchard and updated the plan. Members of the Friends group visited the hillfort separately to monitor the site and clear litter. The hillfort was used for illicit parties, with littering and burning taking place at the burn site and two other sites on the south east edge of the hillfort. A tent was erected on the island and there was some damage to trees and to the hillfort sign. Regular Zoom meetings were held by the Friends.

**3.1.8** The website required anti-virus update. Andy maintained the website during lockdown, continuing to write the Facebook page and uploading pictures.

**3.1.9.** Mick and John Wallace undertook to look at health and safety issues regarding COVID-19.

**3.1.10** Andy and Martin approached Charlie Royden to ask the golf course to remove old tyres from the approach to the hillfort.

**3.1.11** Work began again at the hillfort on 8 July after lockdown. Since then brush cutting, raking and burning of cuttings from the ramparts, courtyard and orchard has meant that the site has been maintained as usual. Mowsbury hill meadow was mown and cuttings removed. During lockdown more people visited the site for exercise and hopefully appreciated it.

**3.1.12** The bench is yet to be replaced as it was feared it would be damaged by partygoers.

**3.1.13** Green Flag was again awarded for 2020.

## **3.2 Putnoe Wood**

**3.2.1** Coppicing took place in plot 1c in Putnoe wood in November 2019.

**3.2.2** The Phase II National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Survey of Putnoe Wood was completed by the Wildlife Trust 12 February 2020 and delivered to Bedford Borough Council. This should inform the new management plan for the wood to be drawn up by the Borough Council.

**3.2.3** During the lockdown for coronavirus some trees and branches blew down. One tree fell into the stream. Overall, the wood did not fare too badly during lockdown.

**3.2.4** Clearing of paths and fallen trees in the wood began in October. Preparation for coppicing of plot 1d has commenced.

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

John Wilkie presented the annual report which was dominated, unsurprisingly, by the impact of COVID-19.

The bank balance at the time of the report stands at £387.81; down from £538.47. A reduction of £150.66.

After the Friends stopped working in March income ceased. The annual accounts show that, if Council grants and Wassail contributions are excluded, our underlying income for the year was £66.21, all of which came from the sale of tea and biscuits. This compares with £232.81 for the previous year.

Our expenditure this year, again excluding Council grants and Wassail contributions, was £216.87. If spending continues at this rate, we will have used all our funds after 1 year and 9 months. Given that our funds should last in excess of a year, John concluded that there is

no reason to panic, but the Friends may wish to consider how we are going to finance the group in the future. One solution would be to ask for a voluntary contribution, now, or at some time in the future. If we defer the decision until, say, next Easter we may be able to return to our tea and biscuit based economy, obviating the need for contributions. The general consensus of members present was to take no action for the immediate future. John will continue to monitor funds.

<b>Friends of Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort</b>					
<b>Annual Accounts as at 20 October 2020</b>					
		<b>2018/19</b>		<b>2019/20</b>	
<b>Opening balances</b>	<b>bank</b>	433.55		538.47	
	<b>cash</b>	0.00	<b>433.55</b>	0.00	<b>538.47</b>
<b>Income</b>		46.00		Sale of notelets	0.00
		450.00		Borough funding	200.00
		186.81		Sale of tea etc	66.21
		249.36		Wassail visitors' donations	150.00
		932.17	<b>1365.72</b>	Total income	416.21
					<b>954.68</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		34.74		Web site	45.47
		489.17		Tools and equipment	0.00
		5.00		Photocopying	2.50
		80.19		Wassail costs	38.60
		191.66		Donation to wassail charity	111.40
		0.00		Tea and sugar	17.77
		0.00		Reinstate bench	63.60
		0.00		Tree protection	287.53
		827.25	<b>538.47</b>	Total expenditure	566.87
					<b>387.81</b>
<b>Closing balances</b>	<b>bank</b>	538.47		387.81	
	<b>cash</b>	0.00	<b>538.47</b>	0.00	<b>387.81</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>			<b>Date:</b>		
<b>Audited by:</b>			<b>Date:</b>		

## 5 Election of Officers

### Chairman

Proposed by  
Seconded by

Dave Parratt  
Martin Fannon  
John Wallace

### Secretary

Proposed by  
Seconded by

Helen Wilkie  
Andy Wilkins  
Allison Wilkins

### Treasurer

Proposed by  
Seconded by

John Wilkie  
Marion Wallace  
John Wallace

### Task and Events Co-ordinator

Proposed by  
Seconded by

John Wallace  
Martin Fannon  
Sue Fannon

All members present in agreement.

**6 Any Other Business**

None

The Chairman closed the Annual General Meeting at 6.17pm.

## APPENDIX 1

### ACTIVITIES AT PUTNOE WOOD 1 Jan 2020 to 14 Oct 2020

January 8	Litter pick (some litter recycled). Snowdrops out.
February 12	Litter pick. Cleared paths of fallen twigs. Moved fallen branch in central ride.
March 4	Litter pick. Tidied coppice plot 1c.
	Lockdown for coronavirus from the end of March interrupted activities. Work began again on 7 Oct.
August 27	A walk around the wood noted a fallen branch encroaching on cross path 1. A fallen branch on the edge of the main ride. A tree fallen across the stream.
October 7	Brush cut edges of central ride and one of the cross paths. Move fallen branches from paths. Litter pick.
14	Brush cut around coppice plot 1d in preparation for coppicing. Clear bramble by hand on coppice plot 1d and on the 5-metre strip opposite the plot on the south of the main ride. Identify trees to be retained during coppicing. Identified a self-seeded oak sapling on a rotting log in the 5 metre strip.

### ACTIVITIES AT MOWSBURY HILLFORT 1 Jan 2020 to 14 Oct 2020

January 14	Wassail rained off
15	Task rained off
21	Wassail
22	Clear up after wassail
29	Prune apple trees. Bark has been eaten on the trees without green mesh – probably rabbits. Fallen tree removed from leat.
February 5	Tidied some ash cut at edge of golf course by southern access path. Cleared northern viewpoint. Pruned apple trees. Put up sign to indicate path by the entrance to the orchard has been moved away from the edge of the moat for safety reasons.
12	Putnoe wood. Large ash tree blown down into courtyard.
19	Jon Bishop had chain sawed the fallen ash in the courtyard so some debris was removed for chipping and some dead hedged. Some logs split for ease of removal. Large log rolled to courtyard entrance to act as a seat.
26	Continue clearing ash tree debris.
March 4	Putnoe wood
11	Moved some wood into orchard for wassail. Checked fruit trees to assess which need tree guards replaced and which need new guards where they have none. Estimating mesh, wire and palings required. 28 trees need repair and 9 more need chicken wire. A new bridge and gate were installed by the borough council at the top of the public footpath.
March	Martin renumbered the trees in the orchard and attached small identifying tags to the fruit trees. £200 of ward funding was awarded to the Friends for the tags and wire.

23 March	Corona virus lockdown halted work. During lockdown a large ash branch fell into pond 1. The site was used for illicit parties with fires set at the burn site and branches of trees pulled off. Fires were set on the path by the old field boundary and in the trees on the east of the site overlooking the golf course. Rubbish was also left. The friends visited the site separately and cleared rubbish on an add hock basis during lockdown. The Council cleared car tyres, cans and wheelbarrow from site. The wild flowers on the meadow and courtyard were unharmed and performed well. Bulbous buttercup and common centaury were identified on the meadow, both indicator species.
July 8	Cleared burn site to discourage vandalism. Brush cut around fruit trees in east orchard. Dead head hogweed. Jon Bishop brush cut path at back of orchard. Butterfly survey.
15	Clear new bonfire at burn site. Renew chicken wire round fruit trees in orchard. Decided all trees should have renewed protection. Butterfly survey.
22	Clear burn site. Renew chicken wire around fruit trees. Clear round fruit trees. Remove hogweed seeds in orchard. Remove hemlock on west rampart. Brush cut bramble on west rampart and south path. Butterfly survey.
29	Brush cut and rake island. Remove cuttings to burn site. Brush cut leat. Brush cut part of the footpath. Brush cut northern viewpoint. Litter pick. (looked at tree which fell in south orchard a few weeks previously. Poss cherry plum.)
August 5	Continue renewing chicken wire around fruit trees in orchard.
10	The cuttings from the island had been burned at the burn site by persons partying at the weekend. An old hawthorn had fallen by the east exit to the orchard. Litter pick.
12	Task cancelled due to heat
19	Task cancelled due to rain. Walked round site and noted fallen damson at edge of orchard.
26	Complete installing chicken wire round fruit trees. Butterfly survey.
29	Den built of logs and tarpaulin on island. Removed by Jon Bishop and John Wallace. Some wood hacked out of the hillfort sign and W B Yeats lines from The Second Coming written on the back of the sign.
September 2	Brush cut rampart. Rake and remove cuttings to burn site. Burn cuttings. John Wilkie made repairs to the hillfort sign.
9	Finish brush cutting rampart. Rake and burn cuttings. Clear debris from moat. Clear debris and some of the large ash branch that had fallen into pond 2.
15	Pick up golf balls. Mowsbury meadow mowed
16	Brush cut courtyard. Area to left of path in courtyard not cut to leave long grass for wildlife. Some bramble removed from this area by hand. Rake and remove some cuttings to burn site and some to spread on meadow. Burn cuttings.
23	Brush cut courtyard. Rake and remove cuttings to burn site. Remove some bramble by hand. Burn cuttings. Brush cut round pond 2. Brush cut orchard, some cuttings removed and some composted. Put seeds from courtyard on island as requested by Jon Bishop.
30	Brush cut orchard. Brush cut dogwood at top of meadow. Tree branch cleared from pond 2. Complete raking and clearing in courtyard. Rake orchard, some cuttings to burn site, some piled round edge of orchard. Some garlic mustard seed spread at edge of island. Burn cuttings.
October 7	Putnoe wood.
14	Putnoe wood.