

FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

Minutes of the General Meeting held on 23 January 2024 via Zoom.

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

1 Apologies for absence were received from Marion Wallace (joined meeting during item 4).

2 Minutes of last meeting held on Tuesday 7 November 2023 and Matters Arising.

The minutes were amended to record Sue Fannon and Martin Fannon as attending. With this amendment they were agreed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

3 Update from Country Park Guardian.

Jon thanked the Friends for their work in preparing for and running the Wassail. Good feedback had been received from attendees including via social media. The gluten-free apple pies made by Allison were particularly welcomed.

There is a need to recruit new volunteers to the group. The Friends agreed to run a Saturday afternoon 2-hour taster session on 10 February from 1pm to 3pm. This will take place in Putnoe Wood working in the current coppicing area. Jon Bishop will attend. The following tasks were agreed.

- Andy to advertise the session on Facebook.
- Jon to produce wording for a poster which Andy will draw up, Jon will print, laminate and put up posters at entrances to wood.
- John will inform Alison Myers of Ravensden Parish Council and send e-mail of the poster to publicise the event locally.
- Chris Wedge will advertise via CVS and Beds Life.
- Jon mentioned hot drinks and biscuits will be provided for visitors.

Discussion took place concerning Ravensden Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Implementation Group's consideration of improving awareness of Mowsbury Hillfort. This includes a proposal to improve signposting to the site by means of installing two footpath finger-posts, and the possibility of a 'Brown Tourism' sign about which the Council has been in touch with the Highways Department. John attended a drop-in event on the subject on 20 January. In principle the Friends welcomed footpath signage for the Hillfort, recognising its status as a Scheduled Monument, County Wildlife Site and Local Green Space. However, concerns were raised that the proposed brown sign from the road could result in significantly increased visitor numbers and that this could have an adverse effect on the site and its ambience. Dave was to attend a site meeting on 24 January with Allison Nelson the Borough Footpath Officer and Alison Myers Ravensden PC. Jon Bishop will attend.

Jon left the meeting at the end of this item.

4 Future Tasks and Events

John Wallace presented his report and identified future tasks.

Putnoe Wood

- Coppicing continues and will include the 'scallops' on the opposite side of the main drive. The site will require brush cutting and raking after the coppicing is completed to tidy it up.
- Checks will continue to identify site debris following high winds which may require attention, including any blockages to the brook.
- Replacing rotten bench in due course.

Mowsbury Hillfort

- Re-hanging gate at entrance to Mowsbury Meadow. Mick identified that this would require digging out the hanging post and packing the hole with concrete before re-hanging. Dave suggested fixing a dolly wheel to the gate to take some of the weight. It was noted that this work will not be carried out for at least 3 months to allow time for the currently high water-table to reduce.
- Pruning trees in the orchard will take place once coppicing in Putnoe Wood is completed.
- Remove manageable parts of the ash tree that has fallen into the moat. It was acknowledged that this will be a big task and cannot be addressed until the moat has dried out.

5 Financial Matters

Peter presented his Financial Report as at 11 January 2024.

Category	Brought Forward	Current Balances	Change
Money held in bank	476.89	£397.81	- 79.08
Petty cash	22.08	22.08	0
Total	498.97	419.89	- 79.08

Transactions since last report:

The only transaction made in the last period was a payment made for the web site (thanks to Andy Wilkins)

Income:

Total Income £00.00

Outgoings:

Website cost £79.08

Total outgoings: £79.08

Month Net change £79.08

Comments:

The donation of £250 given to the group in September by Airedale Nursing Home has not as yet been spent (intended for 2 x benches for the Hillfort area)

The Wassail was delayed due to the condition of the hillfort site after a spell of poor weather. Peter presented costs concerning this activity. Funding of purchases were discussed and agreed. It was also unanimously agreed by Friends present that profits from the event will be donated to the Bedford Food Bank.

There is still currently no debit card associated with the Bank Account. Peter reported that he is investigating options but will try to make formal application through the bank which will include an on-line form signed by 2 signatories. Past history has not proven this to be easy, and Peter extended his apologies for not having resolved this matter to date.

Peter also raised the issue of funding the Friends' work now that Friends provided their own refreshments at tasks. Various options were discussed, and it was agreed that this will be an agenda item at the next meeting.

2024 WASSAIL ACCOUNTS

Wassail Purchases

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Amazon	
Paper cups (200)	£25.98
Totals	£25.98

Group Purchases

<u>Item</u>	<u>Group Cost</u>
Paper cups (150)	£19.48
Totals	£19.48
LIDL	
Apple pies (20 boxes)	£25.02
Apple Juice (14x pack)	£20.86
Bread (2 x Loaves)	£2.18
Totals	£48.06
Wickes	
Incinerator (£30.00)	£30.00

Distribution of monies

Donations Received at Wassail	£211.45
Expenses from Wassail funds (Paid by J Wallace)	£67.54
Donation due to Food Bank (from Wassail funds)	<u>£143.91</u>
Incinerator payment (from Group funds – J Wallace)	£30.00
<u>Total of payments due to J Wallace</u>	<u>£97.54</u>

6 Reports from members

6.1. John reported his attendance at the **Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan**

Implementation Group's drop-in session on Saturday 20 January at the village hall where visitors could find out more about various environmental and other projects identified through the Neighbourhood Plan, including improving awareness of Mowsbury Hillfort as reported under item 3. He suggested that residents in the parish may be a source of new volunteers to the Friends, and it was agreed that posters advertising the taster session on the afternoon of Saturday 10 February will be sent to the Council.

6.2 Chris Wedge reported that she was working on this year's applications for Green Flag awards which need to be submitted by the end of January. The need for a 10-year Vision Plan for the Hillfort was noted, the last one being dated 2016. Dave said he would produce a revised version to include in this year's application.

6.3 Anne raised the issue of Personal Protection Equipment and whether the Friends should make wearing of items such as hard hats compulsory while coppicing; if so, the Friends would need to provide these. It was agreed that this will be an agenda item at the next meeting.

6.4 Marion volunteered to contact local primary schools to offer the Friends' help with guided visits to the Hillfort or Wood.

- 7** **Date of next General Meeting**
7.00pm Tuesday 19 March 2024 via Zoom.