

FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 November 2019 at Cloverdale Retreat Café, Priory Country Park, Bedford

Members present: Jon Bishop, Fiona Bucknall, Lynn Caudrey, Ann Lilliman, Mick Lilliman, Dave Parratt, Diana Readhead, John Wallace, Marion Wallace, Chris Wedge, Andy Wilkins, Allison Wilkins

- 1 **Apologies for absence** were received from Robert Bright, Martin Fannon, Sue Fannon, Jane Warner, Maggie West, Helen Wilkie and John Wilkie.
- 2 **Minutes of last meeting held on Tuesday, 10 September 2019.** These were agreed as an accurate record. Dave Parratt added, at the AGM meeting held last month, he had omitted to thank Andy Wilkins for his work over the year on the website.

3 **Update from Country Park Guardian**

Jon Bishop reported as follows:

3.1 Putnoe Wood – Coppicing in progress and nothing more to say.

3.2 Hillfort - Looking in pretty good order. Up to speed on all tasks, some fruit trees need to be pruned before the Wassail. He has been collecting woodchips to fill holes on the paths prior to the Wassail. The return of the refurbished rustic bench to the original site is a task for next Spring. As previously discussed extra security will be incorporated.

4 **Future Tasks and Events**

Jon Bishop and John Wallace reported as follows:

4.1 Wassail - Date for Wassail 2020 is Tuesday 14th January, with the same arrangements as used last year. Andy agreed to create a similar poster as previous years and the event will be advertised from the start of December. There will be 80 places for the public offered on a first come first served basis. The point of contact will be the Country Park Guardian's Office. Jon to appoint a Safety Officer. Purchase of pies and juice by Andy also as in previous years. Volunteers required to warm the juice and to dispense on the night.

Diana agreed to carry on her excellent work of collecting donations at the Wassail. In response to enquiries at previous Wassails regarding the charity we would be supporting, it was decided that this would be chosen beforehand.

Action: Members were asked to send in their suggestions to Dave for the local charity they feel would benefit from the Wassail donations.

An email has been received from Kelly Ellen Robinson, who offered to bring a traditional Welsh Wassailing beast known as Mari Lwyd to our Wassail. After a short discussion it was felt that this addition would detract from the atmosphere of the Mowsbury Wassail and we will politely decline her kind offer.

Action: Dave Parratt will reply to Kelly Ellen Robinson with the decision.

4.2 Putnoe Wood - complete the coppicing. In New Year, trim the glade off the southern path, tackle brambles generally and tidy the 3 cross paths. Jon will organise fencing material to close the gaps along the western ditch to restrict access by cyclists.

4.3 Hillfort – In December prepare for Wassail, prune fruit trees and gather fire wood. On 14th January, deal with path lights, the fairy lights and lay pale path chippings.

5 Reports from members

Schools

Mark Rutherford - Marion reported that there is a new head at Mark Rutherford Academy and Sam Baker is no longer responsible for the student volunteers. The person taking on this role is rather overburdened at the moment and does not have the time to oversee the volunteers. It is hoped that in the future students interested in biodiversity will again have the opportunity to continue with the Friends group.

Jon mentioned that Amy, one of the previous volunteers from Mark Rutherford, is now helping at Priory Country Park.

Hazeldene – Hazeldene School are keen to continue with their annual visit to Putnoe Wood, with a preparation visit to the school beforehand. The school visit in advance by Marion and Nicky Monsey has now increased to 1 hour. As before help from the Friends will be essential to help with the educational visit to the wood.

Following a recent training course, the Friends have collected additional material and information to add to current education resources.

6 Financial Matters

In John Wilkie's absence, Dave Parratt presented the latest figures as at 19 November 2019.

Category	Brought forward	£££.pp
Money held in bank	538.47	538.47
Petty cash	0.00	10.00
Total	538.47	548.47

Transactions since last report:

Income:

Tea sales 30.27

Total Income: 30.27

Outgoings:

Photocopying 2.50
Tea and sugar 17.77

Total Outgoings: 20.27

7 Any Other Business

7.1 Green Flag

Chris Wedge asked if the group were happy to apply for the Green Flag again next year. This was unanimously agreed and she will prepare the application which has to be submitted by 31st January 2020.

7.2 Mowsbury Hill Meadow

Recently Chris Wedge and Lynn Caudrey had met with Elizabeth Dobby of the Wildlife Trust. Chris reported that Elizabeth Dobby has reviewed the annual plant species survey results for Mowsbury Hill meadow. Elizabeth intends to submit the results to the Panel for consideration to extend the County Wildlife Site designation to include the hill meadow and ramparts. This was a very promising development and we hope for a positive outcome.

7.3 Butterfly Survey

We first started this survey in 2013. This year there was a notable drop in numbers, mainly during August and perhaps it was weather related. This followed a national trend for butterfly numbers. Fewer Green Veined Whites were observed and by contrast more Painted Ladies were recorded. Chris Wedge will update the master survey and the information will be added to the Friends' Website.

7.4 Trees in Putnoe Wood

An email has been received from Gregory Coppenhall, an Arboricultural Assistant at St Albans City and District Council. He was complimentary about the management of the woodlands and said he is a regular walker of the woods. He pointed out there are many dead trees, some of which overhang of the paths. He has offered his services as a tree surgeon for free to help with the dead trees. Jon Bishop will walk around the wood to assess the situation and respond accordingly.

7.5 Other matters

The Friends have been contacted by the National Parks Authority. The meeting agreed to retain our contact information on their data base.

Oak seedlings collected from the Riverside area in the Country Park are being tended by Fiona, who has agreed to look after these until they are big enough to be planted in the wood.

Diana attended the meeting after a period of ill health which has prevented her from supporting the tasks sessions. She is hoping to resume attending the Wednesday afternoon tasks, even for part of a session. Diana was told she was very welcome to attend as and when she could manage, even for a short time.

8 Date of next meeting

7.00pm Tuesday 21 January 2020 at Cloverdale Retreat Café, Priory Park.

27 November 2019