

FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

Minutes of the General Meeting held on 28 March 2023 via Zoom.

Members present: Lynn Caudrey, , Mick Lilliman, Anne Lilliman, Dave Parratt, Diana Readman, Peter Stathers, John Wallace, Marion Wallace, Helen Wilkie, Andy Wilkins, Allison Wilkins.

1 **Apologies for absence** were received from Jon Bishop, Martin Fannon, Sue Fannon, Chris Moss, Chris Wedge

2 **Minutes of last meeting held on Tuesday 31 January 2023 and Matters Arising.**

Item 6.3 Amend second sentence to read 'The Ravensden Plan will include the Butts, whereas the new boundary of the Mowsbury Hillfort County Wildlife Site does not.' With this amendment the minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

Re Item 2.1 Use of poles and other arisings from coppice sites. John Wallace had sent a message to Guy Lambourne and explained that taking into account the use of materials arising from coppicing by the Friends themselves, and at other Borough Council sites, there would be nothing left for him to use. John had thanked Guy for his interest and conveyed best wishes for his enterprise. Guy replied with thanks and best wishes.

3 **Update from Country Park Guardian.**

Jon had sent a report by email, attached at Appendix 1, from which Dave presented the main points. The work identified by Jon will be addressed, as appropriate, via the Friends' work plans for coming sessions. John Wallace added that the big log had been moved from the middle of Mowsbury Meadow to the side of the Driving Range fence. Subsequently Anne and Mick had split it so as to disable any further movement, and to encourage creation of a wildlife habitat in the decaying wood.

4 **Future Tasks and Events**

John Wallace presented his report.

Putnoe Wood. In addition to work identified by Jon Bishop in his report, tasks include:

- Checking the dens created in the wood for litter and other detritus
- Removing leaf mould from paths where this has accumulated to significant amounts.

Mowsbury Hillfort.

- Filling holes created by rabbits and badgers especially along paths where they present a safety hazard.
- Continue golf ball collections.
- Check fruit tree protection.
- Cover two fire sites below the southern boundary with brash.
- .Check neglected orchard.

5 **Financial Matters**

Peter presented a financial report as at 7 March 2023.

Category	Brought Forward	Current Balances	Change
Money held in bank	£444.67	£226.89	- £217.78
Petty cash	£24.85	£22.08	-£2.77
Total	£469.52	£248.97	- £220.55

Transactions since last report:

There were several transactions associated with the Wassail in the most recent period.

Start Total (b/f sum)	Received In	Paid out	
£469.52			
Petty Cash Start Total £24.85	-	£2.77 To Cash	End total £22.08
Banking Start Total	-		
£444.67		£217.78	End Total £226.89
Cash Wassail collection From Petty Cash	£201.00 £2.77	£53.77 To JW £150 To Food Bank (Total £203.77)	
TOTALS	£203.77	£424.32	End Total (Current Balance) £248.97

Accounts were audited by Martin Fannon on 20 February 2023.

Wassail profits were topped up to £150 from Petty Cash and presented to the Bedford Foodbank and a Thank-You was received from them.

There is currently no debit card associated with the Friends' Bank Account at this time – probably as a result of the requirement to have 2 x signatories for payments. Peter will investigate options.

6 Reports from members

6.1 Ward Funding. Dave reported that the Friends had been offered a Ward Fund Award of up to £902. We had been given very short notice to submit an application (closing date end of March) and the necessary supporting documentation, but a variety of tools had been requested. To date no formal approval has been received.

6.1 Red Mason Bees. Dave reported on an email offer from Mark Askew to donate Red Mason bee cocoons from his garden which are surplus to his needs. Chris has offered to contact him and arrange a site visit to the Hillfort to identify a potentially suitable location.

6.2 Green Flag Award. In Chris's absence, John reported that Tony Goodwin visited Putnoe Wood on 17 March. His report is awaited.

6.3 CPRE Awards 2023. Andy reported on CPRE requests for online applications for Grassroot and Green Shoots awards. Dave felt that the Friends' work would qualify us to apply for the award for either or both the Hillfort and Putnoe Wood, and suggested that a small group meet to make the applications which are due by 31 June. Chris has volunteered to get involved.

6.4 Schools Work. Marion had contacted Ravensden school who visited the Hillfort in 2022 offering our help with another visit, but to date had received no reply.

6.5 Borough Council Donated Trees. Marion suggested the newly planted trees on the edge of Mowsbury Meadow could be given frivolous names.

6.6 Putnoe Wood oak trees. Lynn reported that all 7 oak saplings that were planted in the wood last year are still alive.

6.7 Ravensden Neighbourhood Plan. Dave reported that the February 2023 Referendum had been in favour of adopting the Plan.

7 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8 Date of next General Meeting

Tuesday 23 May 2023 via Zoom.

APPENDIX 1

Report from Jon Bishop dated 28 March 2023

I have walked both sites today in the rain, and it was an enjoyable time with very few visitors to be seen. Both sites are springing into life, a riot of greens and bird song, and a good show of early Spring blooms.

In the wood the only issues I could see are some minor blockages in the brook, fallen branches, these can be removed by hand with a couple of people in wellies. There are some very wet muddy spots on the paths, these could be reduced by shovelling off the worst bits. A wheelbarrow would be useful to move the mud away from the paths and any arisings left clear of any ground flora. Quite a big job if you consider all the areas that need doing.

I inspected the fallen tree, which is in fact 4 or 5 trees. I will attend on Thursday morning with the Priory volunteers to attend to this. I will let Tom concentrate on finishing this Wednesday what was started last week. I noticed on my walk, that one of the trees that was on the list for the tree surgeons has been missed, the Oak over the path by this year's coppice plot. I have spoken with Malcolm and this should be done tomorrow.

The Hillfort is also looking good, the violets on the hillside meadow are a joy to behold. The trees planted along the fence all look healthy and most have some leaves showing, sadly some of the guards have been vandalized, only 2 or 3 at the moment. The golf course staff have cut back some scrub from inside the fence at the end of the driving range, and taken it upon themselves to throw it over the fence and left it in an untidy heap adjacent to the butts and the corner of the scrub area you have cleared; this will need tidying into the other piles that have been put under the more mature trees.

The bunnies and badgers have been busy, lots of scrapes all over. They have also created some serious health and safety issues in a couple of areas, quite deep holes, next to paths, potential ankle/leg breakers. There is a series of holes near where the path was levelled by Mick for the wassail, and some more on the far side of the pond on the far side of the orchard. I know I raised a point about filling holes last spring, but from a safety point of view, these should be filled and monitored.

Lastly, I have spoken with Keith Balmer about leaving some areas long for overwintering insects. His suggestion, particularly for the courtyard meadow, is to leave the area to the left of the path as you walk in, like we have done but all that side. He said leave that whole side long and then to cut and rake half one year and the other half the next, then alternate every March, so there will always be a long area. I hope that makes sense.

Keep up the good work, see you all soon.