

FRIENDS OF PUTNOE WOOD and MOWSBURY HILLFORT

Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 March 2020 at Cloverdale Retreat Café, Priory Country Park, Bedford

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

- 1 **Apologies for absence** were received from Robert Bright
- 2 **Minutes of last meeting held on Tuesday, 19 November 2019.** These were agreed as an accurate record.
- 3 **Update from Country Park Guardian**
Jon Bishop reported.

3.1 Putnoe Wood and Mowsbury Hillfort.— Jon commented that the work proposed for the wood the next day would complete scheduled winter work on both sites.

3.2 2020 Wassail – This had been another successful event with good reports from visitors and two new recruits for the Hemlock Dancers.

3.2.1 Sourcing wood for braziers. John Wilkie drew members' attention to the fact that sourcing wood for burning in the braziers was resulting in deadwood being cleared from wooded areas around the orchard. This was contrary to the guiding principles agreed at the meeting on 17 January 2017 which stated that deadwood should be left in place to rot to provide habitat for invertebrates etc and to return nutrients to the ground. Discussion ensued. It was agreed that the braziers formed an important part of the Wassail celebrations, but that the Friends should take care not to strip out established wildlife habitats. Suggestions for sourcing brazier wood for future events included: bringing in old pallets; utilising old fencing materials; using timber recently cut down under power lines on the southern edge of the hillfort; using timber from the fallen ash tree recently cleared from the courtyard and currently stored at the chipping site.

3.2.2 Profits from Wassail. John Wilkie reported as follows:

Total donations:	£150.00
Costs	£38.60
Surplus	£111.40

The Friends thanked Diana for collecting the donations. These were slightly lower than last year, but attendance had been lower, probably due to the event having to be re-scheduled at short notice.

It was agreed that the surplus £111.40 shall be donated to 'JustUs', a homelessness advocacy charity in Bedford.

Proposed by: Martin Fannon
Seconded by: Marion Wallace
Agreed by all members present

John Wilkie will contact the charity and send the agreed donation.

4 Review of activities carried out in 2019

Dave suggested that it would be more appropriate to present a review as part of the Chairman's report to the AGM. Friends present agreed with this proposal. Lynn had been keeping a record of the weekly tasks, and this will be circulated.

5 Future Tasks and Events

John Wallace reported as follows.

5.1 Hillfort.

- **Re-installation of the bench on Mowsbury Meadow.** This will require work over two sessions which will be weather dependent.
- **Bramble management** as required over the site.
- **Dogwood management.** Chris Wedge reported that Laura Downton, Wildlife Trust, recommended brush-cutting at times that would avoid damage to adjacent wildflowers.
- **New tree guards in the orchard.** It was agreed that plastic guards would be most durable. An audit of the trees will be required to estimate meterage required and the need for any supports.
- **Replacing numbers on trees in the orchard.** It was agreed that any new system would need to be vandal-proof.

4.2 Putnoe Wood

- **West ditch fencing** Three new sections are required to stop cyclists after which logs can be cleared from the ditch.
- **Path maintenance** including clearance along path edges and cutting back overhanging vegetation.

6 Financial Matters

John Wilkie presented figures as at 3 March 2020

Category	Brought Forward	Current Balances
Money held in bank	£538.47	£574.47
Petty cash	£10.00	£0.00
Total	£548.47	£574.47

Transactions since last report:

Income:

Tea sales	£12.94
Wassail donations	£150.00

Total Income **£162.94**

Outgoings:

Web site	£34.74
Wassail	38.60
Bench (re-installation materials)	63.60

Total outgoings: **£136.94**

Retrospective agreement to the purchase of materials for the re-installation of the bench was

Proposed by: Martin Fannon
Seconded by Sue Fannon
Agreed by all members present.

7 Recruitment of new members

Mick noted that on occasion there were only a few Friends available for tasks and spoke about the need to recruit new volunteers. It was agreed that we should advertise our work and invite new volunteers via local free papers and magazines. Andy agreed to create a poster for the Putnoe Wood noticeboard.

8 Review of Health and Safety documentation

Mick had reviewed the Wassail Health and Safety Plan prior to the January 2020 event and suggested that all similar documents are reviewed. It was noted that most Health and Safety documents that affect the Friends' work are those issued by the Borough Council. Jon Bishop said that these were currently under review and will forward electronic copies once available.

It was agreed that a working group be set up to review all information and health and safety documents covering the work of the Friends. The following agreed to form this group: Dave, Mick, John Wallace, Helen. Helen will convene an initial meeting.

9 Reports from members

9.1 Green Flag. Chris reported that the 2020 application for the Hillfort had been accepted. Judging will take place between March and June. Discussion took place regarding making a Community Award application for Putnoe Wood. It was agreed that supporting documents would be gathered over the next year with a view potentially to submit an application in 2021.

9.2 Mowsbury Meadow. Chris reported that Liz Dobbie from the Wildlife Trust is due to visit the site in the late spring or early summer. It is hoped that she will be able to submit an application to the County Wildlife Panel to extend the current boundary of the designated Wildlife Site at the Hillfort to include the meadow and ramparts.

9.3 Hazeldene School. Marion reported that the school had expressed a wish to visit Putnoe Wood in connection with International Earth Day on 22 April 2020 – date to be agreed.

9.4 Honeysuckle on Mowsbury Hillfort. Dave reported a request from Robert Bright to re-introduce honeysuckle which used to grow on the hillfort. Robert had honeysuckle roots which originated from those plants. Discussion took place and it was agreed that it would be inappropriate to re-introduce a plant which had died out naturally and not regenerated itself. Dave will write to Robert to thank him for his offer and explain the Friends' decision.

7 Any Other Business

Target on golf driving range. Members discussed the old car body currently being used as a target on the driving range which was regarded as an eyesore. Concern was also voiced about the height of the fencing alongside the range which was insufficient to stop balls being hit onto the meadow, thus constituting a danger to walkers and posing a problem to machinery used for the annual cut of the meadow. Members agreed initially to address the matter as they individually saw fit. The matter will be reviewed at a later date.

8 Date of next meeting

7.00pm Tuesday 12 May 2020 at Cloverdale Retreat Café, Priory Park.