

FRIENDS OF HAM HILL NEWSLETTER

Issue 19 | Autumn 2022



This picture is from the recent folklore/nature art-themed event and depicts elder wood keeping a farmer's cattle safe from evil spirits!

WOODLAND WELLBEING PROJECT

Thanks to the generous help of the Co-op, our "Woodland Wellbeing at Ham Hill" initiative is continuing with Ranger led community and family events at Ham Hill. The focus has been on mental and physical health/wellbeing and the sessions have been well received by those taking part.

The sessions have been run by Edd Chilcott, Community Heritage Officer/Ranger at SSDC (to whom we are hugely grateful) for the following groups: Yeovil 4 Family, MIND, Martock Community Services, and The Huddle Group.

Whilst we have covered all the expenses involved, it is fair to say that the major expenditure is for the groups that have required a community transport minibus to access Ham Hill.

The feedback from the groups has been very positive and the activities provided have included a fossil scavenger hunt, a talk on the Celts and Romans settling on the hillfort, how to use a slingshot, practising outdoor fire lighting, history and nature walks around Ham Hill, story reading, berry picking, bird feeder making, clay modelling, bug hunting, and building minibeast mansions.

some sessions included making items and paint from natural materials to create personal items to remind them of their day.

Refreshments have also been provided, sometimes prepared on an open fire.

We have been pleased with the outcome of this initiative. If you are part of, or represent, a group that may benefit from such a day, we may be able to provide further sessions so please get in touch.

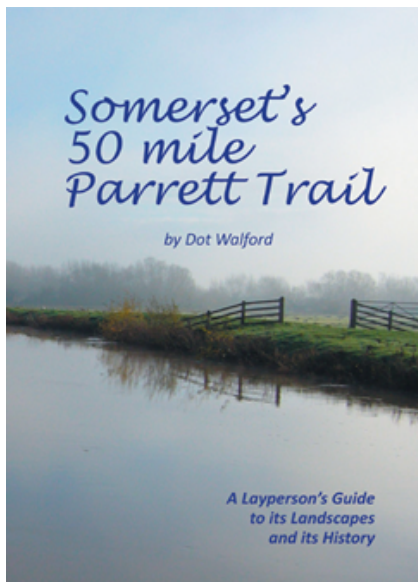


GUIDED WALKS

In July, renowned local guide and author, Dot Walford, led a series of guided walks entitled "Ham Hill, its Past and Present". Dot's infectious enthusiasm and deep knowledge gave everyone a new insight to places across the park, including the line kiln, the Time Stones and the diverse plant life.

A HUGE thank you to Dot for giving her time and experience to support the Friends of Ham Hill. All being well, Dot is hoping to do more walks next year.

If you're interested in Dot's book "Somerset's 50 Mile Parrett Trail", you can contact her directly at westcountrywalkingtrails@btinternet.com or via the Friends' website.



NORTON & CHISELBOROUGH FLOWER SHOW



It was great to see many of you at the Norton & Chiselborough Flower Show in August. Many folks, young and old, had a go at our Ham Hill Pairs Challenge. A variation of the traditional children's game of matching pairs of cards, all the hand-made cards depicted wildlife and plantlife that can be found in the park.

Contestants had to find as many pairs of cards in 60 seconds; it became quite competitive, especially within families!!

Our stall was next to that of Tinkers Bubble, who were showcasing their skills and lifestyle. Tinkers Bubble have been a long-standing friend of the Friends.

QUIZ NIGHT AT THE PRINCE OF WALES

The Prince of Wales pub is a long-standing friend of the Friends of Ham Hill, and, in October, their regular monthly Sunday Quiz Night was in aid of our charity. Thank you to everyone at the pub, Chris the Quizmaster and, of course, everyone that came and supported us on the night adding over £60 to our coffers.

Rather awkwardly, "Team FoHH" actually won on the night – oops!!

The pub's quiz is the third Sunday of every month, check out their Facebook page for details.



BAT BOXES



Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, folks continued to pop their small change into our collection boxes in local shops, pubs, and other public buildings. We wanted to do something specific and enduring with the £600 collected during this time.

After consulting with Ranger Paul, we purchased ten bat boxes.

A bat box provides a safe environment for bats to roost and gives females a safe, warm place to raise their young. The rangers will be placing the bat boxes at carefully selected locations in the park over the winter.

The bat boxes purchased are backed by conservation organisations, government agencies and forestry experts and have the highest occupation rates of all nest boxes.

Your donations are directly helping to preserve this protected species – thank you!

2023 COMMUNITY PROJECT: DRAGONFLY SCRAPE

Next year, we're hoping to progress an idea originally conceived over a year ago, delayed by the pandemic. Intriguingly entitled "Dragonfly Scrape", it is a project that will improve the biodiversity of a damp habitat at the southern end of Witcombe Valley, hold back the flow of water to the adjacent stream and provide a new area of interest to visitors.

A "Scrape" is a shallow depression with gently sloping edges, which seasonally holds water. A scrape creates in-field wet features that are very attractive to wildlife, including dragonflies, damselflies, pond skaters and water boatmen.

In Witcombe Valley, there is an existing species-rich area with an old silted-up scrape. Semi-aquatic plants are present as well as large numbers of butterflies and dragonflies.

As a natural extension of the Woodlands Wellbeing initiative, we hope to make the creation of the Dragonfly Scrape our 2023 community project, involving individuals and community groups, led by the Ranger team and the volunteer rangers. The work will include digging out a new scrape, removing silt, planting, providing a pedestrian path, construction of a small, stoned viewing area, two perching benches and erecting an information board.

Look out for further information in the new year (on our website, Facebook and newsletters), including how you can get involved.

WAYS TO SUPPORT THE FRIENDS



Pop your change into our collection boxes at:

- Norton Community Shop
- Prince of Wales pub
- The Priory Café in Stoke
- The Fleur de Lys Pub in Stoke

If you are a local business who would like a collection box, get in touch: info@friendsofhamhill.org



Choose "Friends of Ham Hill" when you shop with Amazon. AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support us every time you shop, at no cost to you. Find out more at <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/gp/ch/pf/about>

You can also help us by offering your time or expertise. For example: The new look to our newsletter is thanks to Jade and the team at Mindshare Creative, a boutique creative marketing studio who is helping us enhance our brand and identity.



CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

INTRODUCTION

The fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Friends' activities and the ability to raise funds during the financial year.

However, the volunteer rangers started to get back to normal with increased numbers on Wednesdays and an additional "Monday Club". The Friends met more regularly, once allowed to, to pick up our projects.

The Friends of Ham Hill continues to work closely with SSDC on its National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) project, 'Uncovering Ham Hill's past for its future'. We support the Council's application for Lottery funding and their related planning application and, where possible, will seek additional funding for aspects of the Project that meet our own aims and objectives.

PROJECTS

Last year's Annual Report referred to the Woodland Wellbeing Project which aimed at improving access to green spaces and offering sessions to improve mental health and promote mindfulness, skills, and confidence for community groups. We were fortunate to receive funding of just over £4,000 from the local Co-op Community Fund which was well in excess of our expectations.

Our thanks go to Mick Wooden, our project leader for making the successful submission and to SSDC Countryside for providing session leaders. Four different community groups have benefited so far from this scheme. As the money was more than we had hoped, we hope to spend some of the money on a broader 'wellbeing' theme.

We used a donation from the Flying Fox Running Club and spent around £200 on top quality hand saws for the Volunteer Group who have expressed their gratitude.

Following last year's extension to the Wildwood Playzone, a Go Wild event for children of all ages was held as an opening celebration to use the balance of the Grant for Playzone Phase Two from the Somerset Community Foundation.

As part of National Tree Week, we secured a grant from The Conservation Volunteers to plant 500 trees and alongside this SSDC Countryside received a donation from Florence's Street Clean Mission of £1500 to plant a further 250 trees in Pit Wood. Despite the best efforts of the Weather this work was completed by Ham Hill Rangers and volunteers from the community.

As in previous years, we funded a seasonal park ranger based at the Ranger Centre on Ham Hill to run children's activities during the school holidays.

NEW WEBSITE

Our new website www.friendsofhamhill.org has now been fully operational for a while. Helped by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, it has full information on what we do, what we've achieved, what we're planning and how you can support us. Many thanks to NHLF and to Neil Dutton and Jaine Leaning, our Secretary and Treasurer respectively for making this happen.

FORWARD PLANS AND EVENTS

Apart from working with the Rangers at Ham Hill, we are making plans for potential projects from our own list which could include a Dragonfly Scrape at the bottom of Witcombe Valley, wildflower meadow planting and funding a seasonal ranger during the summer as in previous years.

Unfortunately, a couple of planned events that we reported on before have had to be cancelled. Firstly, the Ham Hill Dog Show due to take place in August had to be postponed because of the hot weather and then had to be cancelled on its alternative date because of the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The Friends had offered their assistance with the event.



Secondly, our photo competition for our 2023 calendar had to be cancelled for a number of reasons. Our thanks to the would-be sponsors who had stepped up and we shall consider alternative competitions in the future.

We shall also seek out local events that we can use to raise both the profile of the Friends and attract funding for projects.

We expect it to be tough financially for various reasons, not least because there are more organisations bidding for smaller charitable funds but we go forward with confidence.


THANKS

Our thanks to everyone who contributes to the running and funding of activities on the Hill. You know who you are! My own thanks go to our Trustees and Friends for their continued commitment and giving their time so generously.

We also thank those using other ways to support us such as the DONATE buttons on our website, nominating us as a favoured charity when buying goods through Amazon Smile, using collection boxes in local villages or buying our leaflets, greetings cards etc.

Steve Poolman
Chair, Friends of Ham Hill

FOHH CONTACT

 info@friendsofhamhill.org

 friendsofhamhill.org

 Ham Hill Country Park





Scan the QR code to make a donation

By supporting the FOHH you enable us to continue our work with activities, conservation and projects in your local country park.

SSDC CONTACT

Paul McNeill, Countryside Ranger

 +44(0) 7973 887 129

 countryside@southsomerset.gov.uk

 www.visitsouthsomerset.com

 Ham Hill Country Park

 @hamhillcountrypark

 @SSDCcountryside