



BONFIRE 2015

**Welcome** to the first quarterly issue of the Friends of Ham Hill (FoHH) newsletter which will inform you of the work which is carried out at Ham Hill, with information and pictures which we feel will be of interest to you and enable you to understand the work carried out by the Rangers and the Volunteers.

The main picture shows the volunteers building the bonfire for 5th November. We spent two days collecting the timber which we had cut down over the summer. Despite unfortunate weather we had a good turn out on the evening, around 180 adults and children. We started with a candlelight procession from the Ranger's Office. Everyone enjoyed spiced apple juice kindly donated by Michael at Tinker's Bubble, and toasted marshmallows. This is a child and dog friendly event, with sparklers only and as it is a free event we accepted kind donations which amounted to just under £100.

## WHO ARE WE?

The Volunteers are a very jovial bunch who turn up on Wednesdays and carry out the tasks needed to keep Ham Hill, and sometimes other SSDC sites, under control. If you like working outside (in all weathers) and are interested in joining our group please contact Jon or Paul on the telephone numbers at the end of the newsletter.



The Friends of Ham Hill (FoHH) are a mixed group of Volunteers, employees of SSDC and others who meet about once a month to try and arrange funding and activities for schools and other groups to further their knowledge and history of Ham Hill.

# FoHH NEWSLETTER



## Winter 2016

## TREE PLANTING UPDATE

On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December approximately 25 people, Rangers, Volunteers and families and dogs helped to plant 435 saplings to an area previously cleared in Pitt Wood by the volunteers and Rangers. These trees were donated by the Woodland Trust and consisted of a mix of hazel, crab apple, rowan, down birch and oak. The task was completed in a few hours as the Rangers had already started to prepare the holes for planting. It will be a joy to watch these trees develop over the next few years.

The Rangers, John and Paul assisted by either Andrew or Kristy.



## NIGHTINGALE PROJECT

*This project was planned and delivered by Apprentice Ranger Andy Painting who will be moving on in spring: We wish him good luck!*

*The Nightingale is one of Britain's most loved and fastest declining bird species. Back in the 1980s the birds used to breed at Ham Hill, but nowadays their beautiful song is only very occasionally heard here. With the help of the volunteers, we are running an ambitious project to see whether we can entice them back to breed on Ham Hill.*

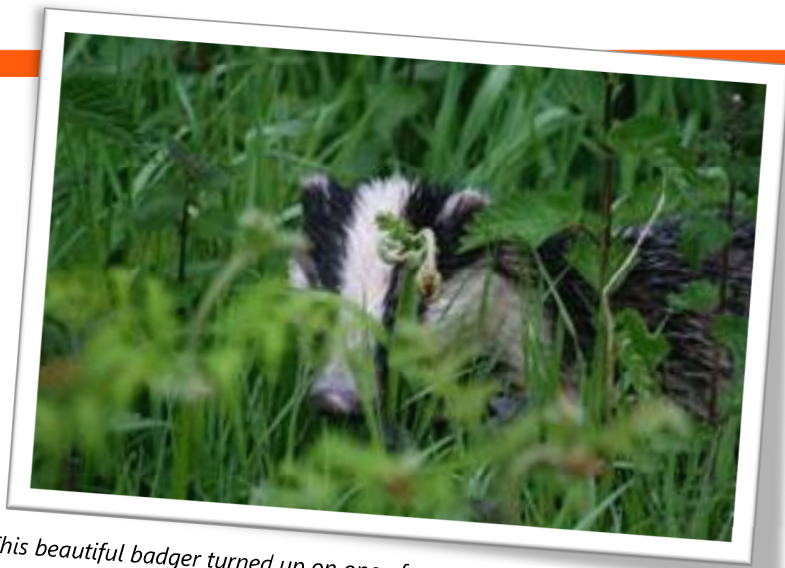
*British Nightingales are notoriously fussy about where they live, so we've got our work cut out. We are using a mixture of experimental habitat management techniques in our woods and extensive surveys across the Country Park to give us the best chance of success.*

*Back in February the volunteers spent a day helping out with the project. Their help with cutting bramble, removing invasive laurel, moving logs and planting new hazel saplings ready for the spring was invaluable.*

*The survey results for the first year of the project were really encouraging.*

*We didn't find any Nightingales, but we got some excellent records of other Wildlife that the project is helping. The area of woodland that we are working in had 25% more bird species and 29% more plant species than a comparable area that was not managed. This work is not only helping Nightingales: Bluebells, Blackcaps, Badgers and Oil Beetles have all benefitted from the volunteers' hard work.*

*Money raised from selling the wood that we have felled is going straight*



*This beautiful badger turned up on one of our (very) early morning surveys*

*back into the project, meaning it has a sustainable future ahead of it.*

*The volunteers will be doing another day of work at the site this year –*

*planting trees, clearing paths and moving logs. It will be a couple more years until the area is perfect for attracting Nightingales, but in the meantime we are looking forward to seeing more and more rare species enjoying the fruits of our labours!*

*On Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December we started to clear ground for new trees. This was our last work day before the Christmas break so for lunch the Rangers cooked jacket potatoes on the bonfire, with plenty of butter and cheese to accompany them. We also had sausage rolls, mince pies with brandy butter and chocolate chilli tart with teas and coffee. It was a bit of a struggle going back to work after lunch!*



**Oil Beetle** – a rare, spectacular mini beast found where the volunteers had been working

### Blue

**bells** benefitted greatly from the volunteers' work – we had a great show of them




**Our Volunteers from Lufton College**

### CONTACT

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[www.visitsouthsomerset.com/hamhill](http://www.visitsouthsomerset.com/hamhill)

Find us on  Ham Hill Country Park

**FoHH working in partnership with SSDC Countryside**

