

# FRIENDS OF HAM HILL NEWSLETTER

Issue 20 | Spring 2023



This picture is from Community Tree Planting on a chilly but dry February morning planting over 300 trees in Pit Wood.

## COMMUNITY TREE PLANTING

A big thank you to everyone who helped at February's planting and to everyone who's played their part over the years.

As always, many of you, young, not-so-young two- and four-legged), gave up your time on a chilly but dry February morning to plant over 300 oak, field maple, beech, willow, hornbeam, crab apple, hawthorn, and hazel trees in Pit Wood. The trees were provided by the Tree Council through the Friends of Ham Hill, who were also on hand to keep the team topped up with tea, coffee & biscuits!!

And, if you're wondering how these trees may look in twenty years time, take a look at these two pictures. The first is of trees being planted in Pit Wood in 2003.



The second is looking at the same spot in October 2022. It warms the heart to see how well they have established themselves there and since 2003, a further 5,400 trees have been planted in the wood to increase biodiversity and capture CO2.





## DRY STONE WALLING TRAINING



Another way that the Friends of Ham Hill supports the conservation, protection, and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Ham Hill Country Park is through education. And not just school and college education: we recently secured funding from the Rural Skills Hub to deliver a dry stone walling training day at Ham Hill. The Rural Skills Hub (<https://ruralskillshub.org.uk/>) is a relatively new initiative, financed by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, offering a central point for advice, support, funded training, and information on traditional boundaries.

There is an existing experienced group, who meet weekly to restore the stone walls in the flat fields. The idea of this 'Taster Day' was to give the participants the skills to subsequently support the current group. Ten people took part, eight of whom were from Stoke Sub Hamdon.

A big thanks to the tutor, Geoff Rowland from the Dorset Dry Stonewalling Association, and his team.

## REMEMBERING MICHAEL ZAIR

Many of you will remember Michael Zair, a founder of the Tinkers Bubble community and a Friend of Ham Hill, who we sadly lost in 2019. For over 10 years he was a member of the Friends of Ham Hill and more recently a Trustee of the charity.



He was a man of many facets: teacher, activist, traveller, protester, ecologist, and forager. He was an environmentalist (in the '70s when it wasn't cool) passionate about the environment and Ham Hill, often writing letters to The Times if he thought an injustice had been done.

Ranger Paul fondly remembers getting an 8:00 a.m. phone call from Michael some years ago, asking for a hand with a tree branch that had hit his house. Winds were still high when the rangers arrived and they saw that it was a rather large ash tree, thicker than a man's chest. It went right through the middle of his cottage and if he hadn't been up lighting the fire he would have probably been squashed! He explained rather philosophically, that "I guess it was it's time [the tree's], thankfully it was not mine!". His memoirs would truly have made a rich read...



To honour his memory, the Friends and the Rangers commissioned a locally-hand-carved perching bench {insert pic}. In February this year, it was installed overlooking Witcombe Valley at a spot where he often paused on a stroll around Ham Hill. Students from Strode College in Street helped with the installation and folks from Tinkers Bubble and the Friends of Ham Hill joined the commemoration.

To read more about Tinkers Bubble, visit their website at <http://www.tinkersbubble.org/>

## TOUCHING DONATION

In the last year the Friends were generously chosen as the charity for donations in memory of a local resident who loved Ham Hill. We were genuinely touched by the family's gesture and by the generosity of the bereaved.

**Thank you**



## 2023 COMMUNITY PROJECT: DRAGONFLY SCRAPE

Last year, we announced our 2023 Community Project – 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.

The Rangers have almost finished digging the scrape with an excavator. They will now use shovels and rakes to manufacture some of the softer banking in readiness for autumn seeding.

Once the base works are completed, the plan is to have a community planting day. Keep an eye out (on our website, Facebook, and newsletters), for updates on when it will be and 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](mailto:info@friendsofhamhill.org)

## COME & SEE US AT:

- Party at the Cross - 5th August 2023
- The Dog Show, Ham Hill - 13th August
- Norton & Chiselborough Flower Show - 19th August

## AND FINALLY....

A huge thanks to one of our Trustees and ex-Chair - Mick Wooden. Mick has decided to stand down as a Trustee and Friend to focus on other projects. The Friends wouldn't be where they are now without Mick's input and enthusiasm over a long period of time

### FOHH CONTACT



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[friendsofhamhill.org](http://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

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