



# Friends of Westcombe Nature Reserve

## Newsletter December 2014

Well, it's been a long time coming, but here is an update on activity at the nature reserve and burial ground over recent months.

Firstly, it is with great sadness that we announce that one of our Trustees - Hilary Gough - died early this year and is now buried alongside her husband in the burial field. Hilary had been a trustee for several years and her death was sudden and unexpected. Her enthusiasm for the site and willingness to help keep it special will be very much missed.

The winter of 2013/14 turned out to be the wettest on record and, consequently, maintenance work at the site was minimal - well actually virtually non-existent! By the time the weather had improved and the ground dried out, the birds were nesting and the orchids appearing and we were reluctant to undertake any major cutting back.

The gloriously warm and sunny weather that followed encouraged lush growth, especially of the brambles, which have been threatening to take over the burial field. All this is fine for the wildlife of course, but not so good for those wishing to visit the graves. Apologies to anyone who has found things a little overgrown this year, but our remit is to manage it as a nature reserve and this year Nature has had the upper hand.



At the end of the summer however, once the wild flowers had seeded and the birds finished nesting, a major attack was launched.

The burial field was mown and most of the brambles cut back and the area above the top hedge of the burial field reclaimed from potential Blackthorn thicket.



It was necessary to burn some of the scrub which has resulted in an area (rather larger than intended) of scorched earth towards the bottom of the burial field. Again, apologies to anyone who has found this disconcerting, but we are confident that nature will fill this bare area in time, and with a wider variety of plants than was able to survive under the encroaching bramble. This work took place over two hot and exhausting days and was carried out entirely by volunteers.



**Thank you to everyone who helped!**

At the beginning of December, we met again and spent a couple of (rather colder) hours tending to the trees, battling brambles and cutting the hedge in front of 'Arthur's' bench. If you visit the site over the next few weeks, do please sit and admire the vista that has been opened up. Fortunately, a couple of trees at the bottom of the field somewhat shield the view of the newly installed solar farm at Somerton Door .....opinions will vary on this one but here is not the place to debate!



The view towards Somerton Door as you will not see it again for at least twenty five years.

Further work is needed to clear encroaching brambles from beside the copse and this should be carried out over the next few weeks. At this point we will feel that we have regained some control - just in time for it all to start growing again!

It is because so much work is carried out on a voluntary basis that the Trust has continued to maintain a healthy financial position. Our only income is from burials and donations and a small amount annually from hay. Six burials have taken place in 2014 and there are now 73 occupied plots. Clearly this does not translate to a huge income, but by minimising our outgoings we manage to increase our capital a little each year and this is invested for future.

However, anyone visiting the site will, hopefully, approve of one item towards which the trust has recently contributed, namely the new gate at the entrance to End o Lane. Incorporating a small pedestrian gate, this makes access to the site much easier for everyone.

Finally, there is evidence of wildlife activity all over the site. At our last meeting, the trustees talked about the possibility of seeking out experts who might be interested in carrying out surveys of the fauna and flora. So, if you know of anyone who might be keen please let us know.



Badger track from the neighbouring woodland across the large meadow.

If you have any comments or suggestions or would like to share any thoughts/wildlife sightings etc. or you don't want to be included in future mailings please contact Sue - [suetoomer@hotmail.com](mailto:suetoomer@hotmail.com), Stert Drove, Park, Pitney, Langport TA10 9AT.

**The Fevin Nature Reserve Burial Ground** is run by the **Butler memorial Trust** and is a registered charity no. 1076810.