



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

FOLKtalk

Free to members; non-members 25p

Issue 50 Spring
2016

Welcome to the 2016 Spring FOLK newsletter. In this issue:

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Page 3 – Some well-chosen words by FOLK Chair John Harvey; Page 4 – Impact of grazing on flowers and invertebrates; Page 5 – Word from Wayne; Page 7. – AGM report; Page 10 – FOLK work party report; Page 12. – Smokesignals, short items.



Chris in traditional robes with former Mayor Councillor Anne Regan

Introducing Councillor Chris Ryder, Cheltenham's next Mayor

In this 50th issue of FOLKtalk we have particular pleasure in introducing a founding member and passionate supporter of FOLK. Chris Ryder lives and works in the area and has represented local people as both a Parish and Borough Councillor for nearly twenty years. In May Chris will be inaugurated as the Borough's new Mayor after serving as the current deputy Mayor. Chris's husband Paul will be her official consort and former Mayor Anne Regan will accompany Chris on some of her official duties.

When did you join FOLK? FOLK was set up in March 2000 by a group of like-minded individuals, including myself, who wanted to look after the Hill and Common for the benefit of all people using the Hill. This followed discussions with a range of advisors for example the Woodland Trust and site visits in 1998 and 1999. I was elected to the Borough Council in 1999 and was nominated as a representative of the Council. In 2000 I become the Cabinet member for the Green Environment and voluntary sector so FOLK then had an influential supporter in the Council Offices. Boundary changes and elections resulted in me losing my seat in 2002 when Lloyd Surgenor took up the FOLK advocacy reins. I continued to serve on the FOLK Committee between 2002 and 2004 when attention was focussed on producing a detailed Site Management published in 2003. In 2004 I returned to the Council as the member for Charlton Kings.

How do you (and your family) enjoy the Hill? My enjoyment of the Hill has mostly been through my children and grandchildren. My daughter took her children walking on the hill even getting lost on one trip and having to call home for directions to find the path to familiar territory. My son has been in the ranks of bikers experiencing the thrills of navigating the paths and obstacles on the Hill.

What are your earliest memories of the Hill? When I was 11 or 12 my mum and dad took us up to the Hill and we stopped at an old shop that was on the left hand side at the end of the Old Bath road. This was where we bought sweets and drinks to keep us going on our walks. My dad drove us there in our Austin Somerset. I remember my Nan being in Salterley Grange when it was a hospital in the 1960's.

Question from the editor: does anybody remember this shop?

What changes have you noticed over the years? Despite the growth of trees and scrub on the Hill and Common, I think the site and its roads and paths have been improved for a wider range of users. We now have walkers, conservationists, bikers, hang-gliders, dog walkers and others all able to enjoy the Hill.

What is your favourite view of or from the Hill? Every time I drive up Hatherley Way, when the sun is shining, I love to see the outline of the Hill and feel proud that this is an asset for the people of Cheltenham and its many visitors. When I was a Councillor in Charlton Kings I always enjoyed looking over to the Common from Little Herberts and Ravensgate.

What is your favourite time of year on the Hill? I think my favourite time is when I first notice the change of colour of the trees in the late summer and early autumn. This is usually when we have a clear and bright day.

What aspect of the natural history, archaeology or geology of the Hill do you find most interesting? I find the history of the Hill, story of the I also have a great kilns and quarrying of involved with the when the work on the done and this was important. Of course interest in floristry I always of the wild flowers in



View of Leckhampton Hill from Hatherley

with the dramatic protesters fascinating. interest in the lime the limestone. I was Cotswolds wardens new wall was being interesting and with my professional horticulture and appreciate the beauty the grassland.

What does mean to you? I am member of a group so much to improve

membership of FOLK happy to be a like FOLK that does the Hill and I very

much appreciate the work of all the members. I hope I have been able to do my bit with my work on the Council. I have been involved with the Cheltenham in Bloom group for many years and when the town entered the Britain in Bloom competition in 2003, FOLK volunteers played an important part. The Britain in Bloom judges were visiting and FOLK had a stand at the Croquet Club and accompanied the judges on a site visit to the Hill. Cheltenham won a major award that year and the judges included comments on horticultural excellence and the work of volunteers in the town.

What would you hope that FOLK would have achieved on the Hill by its 25th anniversary in 2025? I just hope and I am sure that the Hill and Common will continue to be managed well so that the residents of Cheltenham and the many visitors to the town will be able to continue to enjoy such a beautiful facility on the edge of the town.

Best wishes to Chris for her busy year as Mayor

Word from the Chair Friends in the Future?

The Borough Council has recently organised two meetings for the “Friends of” groups that work with it in various ways to help with the management of green spaces that it owns; such as Pittville and Hatherley Parks and the Pilley Bridge Nature Reserve in the town and the Common and Hill just outside it. The first gathering was a social and introductory event, whilst the second concentrated on the nitty-gritty of running a group and organising work parties. FOLK is the oldest, but not the largest of the groups. It deals with the largest area, but does not have the most members. It was gratifying that at the recent meeting FOLK was held up as an exemplar for some aspects of its work. However, there were some lessons for us to learn and the Executive will be exploring these over the summer.



Charlton Kings Common 1968



Charlton Kings Common 1975

Learning that FOLK might need to examine some aspects of how we operate was valuable, but this was not necessarily the most powerful message that I brought away from the meeting in early March. What were some of the others?



Charlton Kings Common 2006

Most groups, even some in densely populated parts of the town where their site is an important and heavily used local focus, seem to have difficulty in attracting new members, in some cases despite intensive recruiting drives. No group seems to have the ideal answer to this issue.

Linked to recruiting is the social and age structure of a Group’s membership. Most Groups seem to draw their members from a limited range of backgrounds and ethnic groups and to have only a few members below

middle age. FOLK seems to be an unfortunate outlier here, with the highest average age of members, but this is based on very limited evidence. It is obviously important to have replacements for those who have to give up active involvement because of age, but the desirability of having a good social mix and being fully representative of the wider community of users of a site was stressed to us.

The range of skills represented in the membership is also important. We were given examples of a group that has a person dedicated to fund raising and of another that generated massive interest on electronic social media because of the specialist skills of one of its members. FOLK has not previously sought to raise funds itself, but has recently developed its website and this newsletter is being sent to many of you electronically. But neither FOLK, nor I, have yet ventured into the newest means of communication, but that probably cuts us off from an increasing percentage of the population.

An issue very evident at the last meeting, but not formally raised, was the significant extent to which the Council now relies on voluntary groups for the management of its open spaces, at least in terms of providing both a labour force and specialist expertise. What will be the response of Friends groups if the Council needs to make even more cuts to its budget for open spaces? Might the Council be forced to consider divesting itself of responsibility for these assets, as it did some years ago for the Lido, in the hope that Friends groups will step in and take full responsibility for *their* sites? The recent meeting made clear the major administrative burdens and legal and financial responsibilities that such a transfer would carry. The financial issue could be critical, as open spaces have few sources of revenue and grants are generally only available for short-term projects, which in themselves are likely to increase expenditure on maintenance, which is presently one of the main foci of the work of Groups. The future could be interesting.

John Harvey FOLK Chair

Cattle Grazing on the Common and the effect on Flower Numbers and Insect Abundance? VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Common, like many other unimproved grasslands in the Cotswolds, has been identified as being of conservation importance because they are the few remnants of a type of vegetation that was formerly abundant in the region. In their original state these areas had a flora rich in plant species and an important accompanying suite of animals, notably invertebrates such as butterflies. The principle underlying the recent introduction of cattle to the Common, and the reason that the Borough Council gets funding to help with the management of the site, is that grazing is judged to be the best way to ensure that as many as possible of these characteristic plants and animals survive.

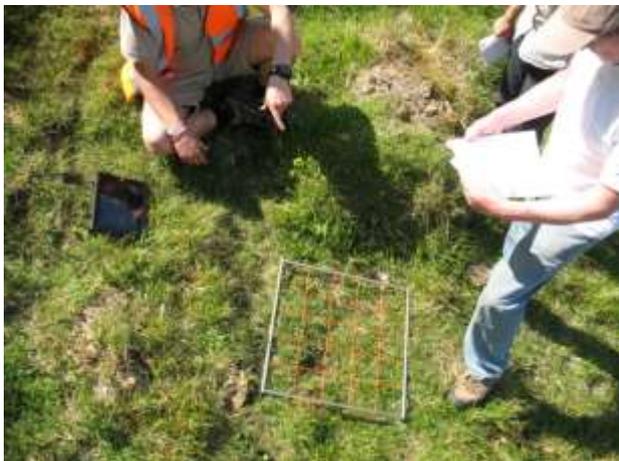


Charlton Kings Common looking down to the Gallops

Grazing of the Common has resulted in much progress in restoring the vegetation to the state that the Council's funders judge to be desirable, with many of the areas where there were formerly dense stands of grass with much dead material being replaced by shorter swards where flowering plants are much more evident, at least in their vegetative form. But has there been a cost to this apparent success? It has recently been suggested that the amount of grazing in the last two years has resulted in many of the flowers produced by dicotyledons being eaten, such that food sources for invertebrates, such as nectar and pollen, have been

removed, with consequent adverse effects on some animal species. Further, if no seeds are produced, then will all the plant species survive?

This concern has been sufficient for the Council and FOLK to agree to run a trial to try to measure the effects on flower and invertebrate numbers of an area not being grazed during part of the summer. This study will run during the summers of this year and 2017. It will involve erecting a fence to exclude cattle from an area for the months of May, June and July, and comparing flower production and insect numbers inside and outside the enclosure. The experimental site, alongside The Gallops, has been agreed and the first fence posts will soon be put in place. A FOLK Work Party will then erect the electric fence.



Surveying wildflowers

Guy Meredith will be monitoring the invertebrates using net samples, counting the number of larger individuals caught and assessing the quantity of smaller species (which can be very numerous). I am organising the flower part of the study. This will be quite different from

the botanical survey carried out in 2013 and 2104, and brought to an early end by family illness in 2015. Given the importance of this new study, it is more important to get its results recorded than to restart the old survey.

The survey of flowering will involve looking at number of small frames (quadrats) placed on the ground and recording which species are flowering within each. We need volunteers to help with this work. It is **only flowers that will be of interest**, so, unlike the earlier survey, it will not be necessary to know the appearance of other parts of a species. Training will be provided and all involved will be given a pictorial guide to the chief flowers of Limestone Grassland. We suspect that there will be good flowering in the un-grazed plot, but little in the adjacent control plot. Part of the study area is steep, but not as steep as the top of the scarp slope. Recording will be easiest if it is done in pairs, one looking at the quadrats and one recording the results. We will try to keep the time commitment of volunteers as low as possible. Only if we have this data will we know whether or not we need to adjust the grazing regime.

Could anyone willing to help with the flower recording please get in touch with John Harvey (henry.harvey1@btinternet.com or Tel 01242 520053) or Wayne Sedgwick (waynesedgwick@cheltenham.gov.uk or Tel 01242 774511). Thanks in anticipation of your support.

John Harvey

The Word from Wayne

Wayne Sedgwick Senior Ranger. Cheltenham Borough Council

Grazing of Charlton Kings Common continues to be effective in improving the grassland. The best way to manage the herd to get the best all round results develops as each year passes and 2016 marks the half way point of the Higher Level Stewardship agreement that the Council has with Natural England. There is a need to take the cows off the Common at certain times and this puts pressure on land available to house them. To help this situation, it has been decided to bring into use land at the eastern end of the site, the so-called Hopkins fields. Resources have been made available to fence the land and remove unwanted trees and scrub.

This work will start in September this year. As this land is not in the SSSI it will be possible to provide supplementary feed to the cattle and it is expected that grazing will help to restore habitat for wildflowers and associated invertebrates. Progress will be reported later.

Following discussion with Natural England and receiving their approval, an area on the Common will be fenced temporarily this year to investigate whether the exclusion of cattle during the flowering season helps to encourage the growth and spreading of grassland plants. The area fenced has been selected to minimise the impact on the users of the Common. Results of the experiment will be reported on.

Anne North, the Grazier, has been asked to host the County Dexter group AGM locally. Around 60 people who are all expert Dexter owners and breeders will congregate on the Hill and Common for their annual get together. Congratulations to Anne for being asked to host this prestigious event.

In 2015 FOLK had a limited but valuable involvement in the **Magnificent Meadows** project. In June this year we are organising an Open Day, with the working title of “Bees, Butterflies and Botany” in cooperation with Eleanor Reast from the Cotswold Conservation Board and the local Magnificent Meadows project officer. A fun day will be the theme of the event with 4 Play Rangers from the Council overseeing a jungle workshop, face painting, a mini beast hunt and maybe a Ukulele band. Tim Sugrue from FOLK will be leading a brisk walk around the site.



Interpretation board at the lime Kilns

A survey of the plants in Cowslip Meadow was carried out in 2014 by Susanne Bird, of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. This survey was part of the **Key Wildlife Sites scheme**, which aims to give a nationally agreed designation to sites with important wildlife be that animal or plant. Susanne’s conclusion was that Cowslip Meadow had enough species to warrant having the designation and the designation has now been formalised. This will enhance the status of the site as the national list of Key Wildlife Sites is published.

A new **interpretation board introducing the Lime Kilns** and industrial archaeology of the Hill has been installed at the entrance to the Lime Kilns and is attracting attention from visitors.

A footnote on the long running subject of commemorative benches on the Hill and Common is that the maximum agreed number of benches has been reached. It is unlikely that further requests to install benches on the site will be approved in the medium term.

It continues to be difficult to engage with the biking community on the Hill although it appears that the tracks that have been constructed are not as well used as in previous years. There is a fairly new bikers' facility below Barrow Wake and the Air Balloon by the A417 where there are proposals to have a "ski lift" (no more detail is available) to make the site more attractive to bikers and this may further reduce the use of Leckhampton Hill as a venue for downhill bikers.

Discussions have taken place between FOLK and the Borough's mapping team in order to explore how the Borough can help FOLK with the provision of a range of maps. There is the opportunity for FOLK to use the Council's computerised mapping system.

Midland Dexter Group 2015 Herd Competition

Towards the end of last year we were very excited to receive the news that Anne North, the owner of the Dexter herd that do such a splendid job in grazing the Charlton Kings Common had received an award for her work. This news was covered by the Gloucestershire Echo and other media but it is worth broadcasting the story again. Anne also acknowledges the invaluable work with the grazing done by Annette and John-Paul North. Below are a few words from Anne about the competition.



John-Paul North tending the cattle

“Earlier in 2015 we decided to enter our Dexter herd in the Midlands Dexter group Herd competition. In August the judging took place when judge Mike Bancroft (a well-known figure in Dexter circles as breeder and judge) visited Charlton Kings Common and Daisybank Fields to view the cows at pasture. He travelled all round the Midlands to see all the herds entered in the competition.

The results were announced at the Midland Dexter group AGM at Stoneleigh (*this is the National Agricultural & Exhibition Centre Ed*) on 6th December and we were astounded to learn that we had been awarded First place in the Small Herd category. We were the only herd engaged in conservation grazing amongst the herds he visited and he was most impressed with the condition and presence of the cows in their somewhat wild and rugged environment.”

Well done and congratulations from FOLK to Anne, Annette and John-Paul. Keep up the good work.

Annual General Meeting 2015

The following is an extract of the minutes of the 2015 AGM.

The Chair, John Harvey, welcomed about 45 members and visitors to the Sixteenth AGM of FOLK. The Chair noted that both long term and new members of FOLK were present.

Treasurer's Report. Geoff Holt

The Treasurer presented the audited accounts which showed a surplus of £746 for the year ended 30 September 2015 compared with a loss of £431 in the previous year. The balance in the bank accounts stood at £3479.

Membership income was up, due to the variations caused by the 5 year membership cycle plus increased membership, and income was boosted by a one-off Community Pride grant of £300

Expenditure was down, largely due to CBC taking over responsibility for maintaining, replacing and insuring our tools, and the large saving in newsletter production costs now that a majority of members have accepted delivery of the newsletter by e-mail.

The Treasurer thanked the local Parish Councils and the Cycling Club for their regular donations, the CBC for its flexibility shown in finding ways to help our funding, and to Paul Stefanoski for auditing the accounts free of charge.

The audited accounts were accepted at the meeting:

Work Party Coordinator's Report. Geoff Holt

During the year 929 volunteer hours were logged at our regular work parties, with attendance averaging 8.5 people. Tasks were varied, including Gorse and scrub clearance to open up the cattle grazing, burning brash from tree clearance, pulling ash saplings and Hemp Agrimony, footpath maintenance, grass mowing, litter clearance etc. There is lots to do to meet FOLK's plans, which are generated in liaison with CBC based on Natural England's SSSI requirements. The large work-load means that new volunteers are always welcome, even if they are only able to come occasionally.

The Chair pointed out that that the practical work is the most publicly visible and a very important part of our work, and on behalf of the meeting, thanked Geoff and all the volunteers for their efforts.

A comment from one of the regular work party members mentioned that when working on the Hill, many passers-by ask what we are doing, and sometimes voice complaints. Every effort should be made to encourage such people to join FOLK, which has an important role in representing all users of the Hill. Complaints should be addressed to the CBC.

Secretary's Report. Rick Plummer

The Secretary reported that there had been 7 well-attended Executive Committee meetings. In addition there had been a structured inspection walk around the Hill in the summer.

The Committee made good progress on a number of fronts, most notably the construction of a working website, which is hosted by the Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Whilst it was a team effort, thanks were expressed to Geoff Holt, who actually carried out most of the work. The website needs to grow and remain live, so any contributions of articles, links, photographs and current information for the What's New section are requested. The existence of the website has allowed us to introduce a simple business card for handing out to anyone on the Hill.

A data policy is now in place so that members' information can be effectively used and protected. The policy can be viewed on the website.

Planning applications which could affect the site are considered. Relevant ones this year were in Hartley Lane and on the golf course.

FOLK had a stand at the Midsummer Fiesta in Montpellier Gardens, which was good for publicity, and attracted some new members.

Regular discussion points at committee meetings include the environment of the Hill such as tree clearance and coppicing, scrub, grass sward height and grazing, footpaths, wildlife, litter, information boards, benches etc.

Membership Secretary's Report. Anne North

18 new members have joined FOLK this year, bringing us to 125 memberships representing about 150 people.



Abundance of wildflowers in summer

A number of people are currently renewing, and often need some chasing up! Members were reminded that renewal forms should be completed and returned to ensure that our records are kept up-to-date.

The Chair noted that Anne North was not only a founder member of FOLK, but has been Membership Secretary for all of that time. Recruiting members is important in several ways. A larger membership makes our voice more powerful in discussions about the future of the Hill.

We need to build up the number of our active volunteers

to replace those who are getting older, to increase the range of skills available, and to maintain the numbers in work parties.

Members are encouraged to recruit others from family, friends and neighbours, by telling them about FOLK's work and persuading them to join.

Newsletter Editor's Report. Peter Whalley

Apart from the actual creation of three Newsletters this year, the big change was e-mail distribution of the Newsletters to some 75% of the membership. This has helped our finances greatly with a much smaller printing and distribution requirement. Some of the required paper copies were kindly printed by CBC. All contributions of articles, letters or photographs are welcome for the coming issues.

The meeting expressed its thanks to Peter for producing all the high quality newsletters.

Chair's Report. John Harvey

The Work Parties are only one element of the management of the site, there are two other players; the grazier, Anne North, whose animals play a critical role in grazing part of the site, and the Borough Council, which carries out or funds most of the larger works. For all practical purposes, the Council takes the form of

Wayne Sedgwick, the site manager and a frequent co-worker with the work parties.

A significant proportion of the Officers' time is spent liaising with Wayne, to agree work programmes, to advise on proposals he makes, making suggestions, making site visits and the like.

Some of the major works commissioned by the Council during the year included scrub clearance on parts of the Hill Fort, tree clearance at the top of the Common to reopen views down into Cheltenham, resurfacing car parks

and a number of footpaths, tree felling on Leckhampton Hill, fencing off the remains of the former Lime Kilns and creating an interpretation board to be installed nearby. What neither Wayne nor FOLK have been able to

tackle effectively is the amount of litter that can be left in some locations and use of the site for late night summer parties involving large fires.

Visitor to the Hill, who has lived in Cheltenham for over 20 years but only recently discovered the pleasures of the Hill



At its last meeting the Executive discussed what projects we might like to develop in 2016. Our list in no particular order was:

- Producing a new, more informative map of the site

- Further developing the website.
- Exploring the best way to store both FOLK's history and papers and the site's management data.
- Collaborating with the Magnificent Meadows project about which we heard at last year's AGM.
- Organising a public meeting in March with a speaker on the Industrial Archaeology of the site.
- Getting an accurate estimate of visitor numbers.
- Being represented at next year's Fiesta in the park, the source of several new members this year.
- Replacing the tool store, which is currently on loan.
- And, of course, recruiting more members.

Election of Officers

Chair, John Harvey continues

Treasurer, Geoff Holt continues



Waiting for a weary walker

Secretary, Rick Plummer has reached 3 years and is therefore retiring from the position of Secretary. The constitution allows him to be automatically co-opted as a committee member for a further year and he has accepted this.

There was one nominee for the position of Secretary, Andrew Ross

There being no other nominees, Andrew Ross becomes our new Secretary.

Election of Executive Committee Members

There are now 5 vacancies, and we have 5 nominations:

Anne North (for a second term); Peter Whalley (for a second term); Julius Marstrand (for a first term); Mike Donnelly (for a first term); Alistair McKenzie (for a first term)

There being no other nominees, all these are elected to the committee.

Other elected members continuing on the committee are:

Chris Ryder, Tim Sugrue and David Browning

The Chair noted that the committee is looking for potential members with skills in the following areas: archaeology, horse riding, drone flying etc. Any members having or knowing of such skills should contact us.

Other Business

Councillor Rob Reid noted that he was impressed by the expertise on the Executive, and on behalf of Cheltenham Borough Council, he thanked everyone involved. He believed that CBC could not achieve what FOLK currently do.

The formal AGM closed at around 8.05 pm, followed by an interesting, but somewhat worrying talk by Chris Chavasse on how Ash Dieback is likely to affect the Hill.

FOLK Work Party Report spring 2016

The work we have done over the autumn and winter period went according to the plan suggested in the last newsletter, i.e. our main focus has been on gorse clearance. We did this in a number of areas around the site, including revisiting some areas we had cleared a few years ago to remove regrowth and tackling some new areas. Overall, we have cleared a large volume of gorse, although it didn't go quietly...we all suffered various scratches and prickles from the **** stuff!

Wearing thick gloves, which only work to a degree, we started by clearing a dense stand of gorse at the top of the Windass path on a ledge which some members remembered as being quite clear some years ago. This clearance work married up with tree and scrub clearance work that was being done by Cheltenham Borough Council's (CBC's) contractors along the ridge. (They had also cleared a wide strip of gorse westwards from part way up Windass.) The views from the ridge are now much more open.



Before and after tackling gorse

The next area we tackled was above the Gallops track just to the West of Five-Ways. Here the gorse had spread down from the top of the hill, where it is most prolific, and we wanted to knock it back to keep the grassland open. We also worked further along the Gallops, adjacent to Cowslip Meadow, to remove some old leggy gorse which was of limited ecological value.



Getting a fire going to dispose of the cleared scrub

The final area we worked on was just above the untarmaced end of Daisybank Road, past the houses. Here we worked on removing dispersed, more recent, gorse regrowth as well as cutting a wide fire break through a thick stand of gorse.



Gorse clearance continues

However, we have had the occasional rest from gorse (to let our scratches heal!). We spent a couple of work parties in the Salterley Quarry Car Park area. We removed ash and other saplings, and some Golden Rod, as well as litter picking inside the Quarry to tidy it up. We also removed an area of ash saplings on the bank just outside the Quarry (this tied up with further tree and scrub clearance work along here done by CBC's contractors). We also worked in an area above Bridge Car Park to remove ash saplings that were beginning to dominate in a small clearing that features in the butterfly survey work that is done annually.

As well as our regular band of volunteers we have had support from other groups during this period. In October we were joined by a number of CBC's office workers who helped us with the mowing and trimming of new growth in the area just above Bridge Car Park that we are trying to keep as an inviting open space. They also helped with the seeding of a bare patch of earth here where trees had been cut down and cleared previously. We have also had help at a number of work parties from people associated with the Home Group. We are very grateful for such support – there is always plenty of work to do – and are happy for any groups or organisations that might like to join us at any of our work parties to get in touch with us.

Finally, just a reminder that we are happy to receive feedback from members on what we have been doing, and especially what you think we should be doing, on our work parties. Are you happy or unhappy about what

we have done? Would you like us to do more, or less, of something? Is there a particular job, or jobs, you would like us to do? Please do let us know, e.g. by using the email addresses below.

As always you are welcome to join us on one of our work parties. We are a friendly mixed group of male and female members. You can work at your own pace and take a break as and when you wish. We meet at 9.30am at Tramway Cottage Car Park, Daisybank Road, and are on the hill for approximately 3 hours. Tools are provided by FOLK. For your own safety we ask you to bring and wear stout footwear and tough gardening gloves. We have three FOLK work parties a month. Dates for the next 6 months are printed below.



Photo: Geoff Holt



Photo: Geoff Holt

Preparing the ground for sowing wildflower seeds

Borough Council volunteers line up for a photocall

For further information you can contact Mike on 01242 238790 or Geoff on 01242 244165, or you can look at the 'Work Party' page on our website www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk or send an email to folk.workparty@gmail.com.

Work party dates for Spring to autumn 2016

April 2016	Thursday 14th	Tuesday 19th	Sunday 24th
May 2016	Thursday 12th	Tuesday 17th	Sunday 22nd
June 2016	Thursday 9th	Tuesday 21st	Sunday 26th
July 2016	Thursday 14th	Tuesday 19th	Sunday 24th
August 2016	Thursday 11th	Tuesday 16th	Sunday 28th
September 2016	Thursday 8th	Tuesday 20th	Sunday 25th



Eager volunteers at Tommy Taylors Lane for the litter pick

SMOKE SIGNALS other news from the Hill and Common and the conservation scene.

Queen’s birthday litter pick March 21st 2016

As part of our plan to put on more events for FOLK members this year, Mike Donnelly organised a litter pick as part of national celebrations for the forthcoming 90th birthday of the Queen. We hope to raise the profile of FOLK in the town. An enthusiastic band of 18 or more volunteers rendezvoused at the Prince of Wales stadium

in the cool spring sunshine to do clearance work on the Honeybourne line between the stadium and Waitrose

and around Pittville Park. It was expected that the recent race week crowds may have left reminders of their presence. As it happened the Honeybourne line path itself was reasonably clean but determined volunteers brought their skills to bear on the embankment as access paths. Much bulky rubbish was cleared and the CBC truck sent to take the production away had to return for extra pick ups.

Janice Peacey, Community Ranger with Cheltenham Borough declared herself very happy with the results of the mornings spring clean and thanked all volunteers. The morning was rounded off with drinks and high energy snacks.



Collected rubbish

Butterfly Monitoring 2016: additional volunteers required

2016 will be the 4th year of recording butterfly numbers and locations on Leckhampton Hill, Charlton Kings Common and the Cowslip field. This year I would like to enlarge this survey to include another area, known as Hopkins field. This is north of the eastern side of Charlton Kings Common, adjacent to the golf course extending to the Cirencester Road, and is also owned by Cheltenham Borough Council. On initial observation, the field appears to be unimproved limestone grassland, with good populations of cowslips and orchids amongst other plants, but has been the subject of little, no or spasmodic management over many years. The survey could therefore give an indication of its value to wildlife in general and butterflies in particular, and be of interest when comparing the relative abundance and diversity of species with the Common itself. This in

itself is to be the subject of the eastern slopes of being temporarily fenced period during the compare the relative flowers (inflorescences) adjacent



Spot the Common Blue butterfly picture from Russell Smith

So would you be willing this project? There are could help. It would not you were assigned the monitor, as the routes to

modified to suit. Guidance on how the surveys are conducted is included on the FOLK website <http://www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk/surveys/butterflies>. Charts for help with identification, site maps showing survey routes and forms for recording results are provided as needed, and any practical assistance required is available, including an initial site/route introduction and hints on butterfly identification.

of a trial, with an area on Charlton Kings Common off to exclude cattle for a summer in order to absence/abundance of and insects in the grazed/ungrazed areas.

and able to assist with several ways in which you necessarily mean that area mentioned above to be surveyed can be

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Russell Smith for his help with the monitoring since its inception, and wish him well with his new project(s)! We will miss his enthusiasm and dedication, not to mention all the photos!

For more information, please contact me, Serena Meredith on 01242 524138 or gmeredith308@btinternet.com with butterfly survey in the subject line.

By-pass for Cheltenham via Charlton Kings Common; a local history flash back

Around the country there have been many examples of proposals and schemes to build by-passes to ease traffic problems on our highways. These proposals are often met with local opposition. Thanks to Mary Paterson, a FOLK member whose family have a long association with Leckhampton Hill, we have documents referring to our very own proposed by-pass.

Mary has unearthed an undated document produced by the Leckhampton Hill Residents' Association informing their members of the proposal. It is likely that the document dates from the mid-1960s. The 1965 Commons Registration Act would have applied to Leckhampton Hill and the 2003 Management Plan notes that a tract of about 72 acres known as Leckhampton Hill in the parish of Leckhampton Gloucestershire was registered pursuant to application number 470 made 14th May 1968 by Harry Long and Mrs Muriel Alicia Long."

Below is a transcript of that document, which was foolscap so pre-computer:

"The Residents Association feels that every person liable to be affected by the proposal of a by-pass road along Leckhampton Hill should be informed of the current position. They will at least have an opportunity of forming their own opinions and acting upon them before such proposals become fact and quite irrevocable.

There are several proposals for the route of the by-pass road in the hands of the Ministry, one of which commences at Seven Springs, follows the escarpment above Lilleybrook golf Course joining up eventually with Daisy Bank road, crossing the road from Cheltenham to Birdlip, dropping across the fields behind Collum End Rise, skirting Warden Hill and l8inking up with the Golden Valley roundabout. The road is scheduled to be of four lanes with fly overs and quite obviously is expected to carry a considerable amount of traffic.

It would necessarily entail the compulsory purchase of a large number of properties along the scheduled route, and would destroy the present amenities of many other properties allowed to remain but only in the shadow of the road and within earshot of the traffic. The route of the proposed road would, however, pass through the registered commons of Leckhampton and Charlton Kings and should the Ministry decide on this route they would have two options:

1. They may endeavour to ‘compulsory purchase’ the common land, but if this course of action is taken, 28 days’ notice of their intention must be given in the local paper and the London Gazette, after which, should there be objections a Public Enquiry will take place. If, after holding this enquiry the Secretary of State confirms the order to precede with the road it must be made subject to a Special Act of Parliament which will give the necessary authority. At this stage the objectors have 21 days to petition Parliament. The Act will then be considered by a committee of 2 MPs and 2 Peers who will examine the facts of the case and present their findings to both houses of Parliament.
2. The Ministry may, on the other hand, endeavour to ‘compulsory purchase’ the common land and offer an equal area of land in exchange. The law is very definite, however that the alternative land must be of equal value to the public in amenity, have equivalent access and provide similar views; 28 days’ notice must be given in the local press, for public objection.

No action is necessary, or indeed could be taken at the present time, but should any notice of a compulsory purchase order appear, then it could reasonably appear the Ministry had decided on the Leckhampton Escarpment route.”

An interesting document of historical interest only but then again the Authorities are looking for a way to deal with the Nettleton Bottom and Air Balloon conundrum! Ed

Stepping out in style



Annette North at the reins in Daisybank fields

Annette and John-Paul North carting fence posts in Daisybank fields as a temporary paddock was removed.

Fenced in

Again thanks to the determined researches of Mary Paterson we have the photograph below (taken by the Gloucestershire Echo) and dating to the late 1950s or early 1960s as indicated by the fashions. It shows a group of Hill residents registering their disgruntlement that the posts and wire were blocking exit from a steep

scrambly climb up on to the top of the Hill. They felt the measures were more than was necessary to stop people falling over the edge.

Do any members recognise any of the faces or can they shed any light on this story. Ed



Local residents contemplating the new fencing (picture Gloucestershire Echo)

Contributions to the FOLK Website are always gratefully received. Contact:

webmaster.leckhamptonhill@gmail.com.

And finally:

Photographic competition 2016

FOLKtalk would like to invite members to send in their favourite photos of the Hill and Common. A small prize will be awarded to the member submitting a picture that best celebrates the site. The subject matter is open so you may like to capture the landscape, weather, ecology or the people.

The competition will run for a year from this year's AGM, which will be held at Leckhampton Primary School on Wednesday November 11th. Photos (up to three) can be submitted to the FOLKtalk editor as computer files or paper copies. So let's get snapping.

Thanks as ever to all our sponsoring organisations: Charlton Kings and Shurdington, Parish Councils from whom we have had financial support this year and the Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish Councils who have promised to provide financial support. Cheltenham and County Cycling Club provide financial support, and Cotswold Conservation Board and a special thanks to Cheltenham Borough Council in the shape of Wayne Sedgwick who gives cheerful and enthusiastic and continuous support for which we are very grateful.



Our own enchanted wood

About FOLK

FOLK is an organisation set up to work with landowners, to promote the conservation and management of the ecology, geology and archaeology of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common. We support sustainable recreational and agricultural use of the land.

We welcome new members to support and help us in this important work. If you wish to join (either as an individual or as a family) please contact any of the people listed below. Annual membership is £6 per year for an individual or £9 for a family.

If you have any comments on the Newsletter or would like to contribute an article to the next edition later in 2013 please contact Peter Whalley on 01242 517024 or email to: whalley-p@o2.co.uk Articles of around 500 words plus a photo at any time would be most welcome

Contact FOLK

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Find the Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common on
www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk and on Facebook

The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FOLK or its Executive Committee