



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

NEWSLETTER

Issue 32 Free to members, non members 25p

SUMMER 2009

Tramway Cottage saved (for now)

At its meeting on 17th March 2009, Cheltenham Borough Council's Cabinet reversed the provisional decision to sell Tramway Cottage which it had taken on 23rd September 2008, subject to a period of public consultation. The original intention was to allow only two weeks for public consultation, but following representations from FOLK, this was extended to three months and then again for a further month. The extended period of consultation allowed the Cabinet time to reconsider its original decision.

At its meeting on 10th April 2009 FOLK's Executive Committee welcomed the Cabinet's change of mind. The Committee is under no illusion that the decision was due partly, at least, to the current property market and the effect that this has had on the potential value of the property - rather than the public campaign waged by FOLK against the sale of this significant historic building being the deciding factor.

The 'stay of execution' provides an opportunity to consider ways in which the Tramway Cottage property can be integrated into the potential educational role of the site. It has long been a desire of FOLK, and some Councillors, to have some kind of educational, or interpretation centre on the site, to accommodate field trips and other educational visits and visitors to the site. The grounds of Tramway Cottage provide the only realistic location for such a centre.

Whilst this may not be realisable in the short term, the sale of Tramway Cottage would have made it far more difficult to **ever** achieve in the future, even if the necessary funding can be found. It seems extremely unlikely that the Council would be in a position to buy more land adjacent to the S.S.S.I., to accommodate such a centre, in the foreseeable future.

A Hill Warden, or more recently a member of the Council's Community Ranger Service, has lived in Tramway Cottage since the site was opened in 1929. One of these, in the 1950s, was apparently Bill Ballinger, who was almost certainly a relative of Walter Ballinger, one of the leaders of the Leckhampton Stalwarts and so called 'King of the Common' for his campaign for rights of public access to the site. This occupation and link to the site can now continue at least as long as the Council retains the Cottage.

Julius Marstrand

Contents:

FRONT PAGE – Tramway Cottage Update **PAGE 2** – High powered DEFRA visit **PAGE 3** – Work Party Report **PAGE 4** – Rodin Association **PAGE 5** – Bird Observation Walk

High Powered visit from Defra

On Friday May 15th, following a visit to Walmore Common and Painswick Beacon, FOLK welcomed a very high powered team from Defra and various other organisations to Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common. The purpose of the visit was to show the Defra Head Of Division for Environmental Land Management and his team the complex issues relating to the delivery of management of common land with multiple stakeholders on the ground.

Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common is an excellent example of registered common land where co-operation between land owners and different stakeholders is delivering environmental improvements. The site also highlights the importance of reconciling conflicting environmental and recreational interests.

Jenny Phelps of FWAG, who organised the visit, addressed the party about the conservation work being done on the site; Graham Bathe of Natural England, himself an old Cheltonian, talked about history of the site and the Leckhampton Riots; Rob Bell of CBC talked about the Council's role; Judith Frazer-Holland and Julius Marstrand talked of FOLK's involvement; Paul Hackman of Natural England talked about the grazing regime; and Chris Short of the University of Gloucester talked about the educational importance of the site.

Participants

Dan Osgood	Head of Defra Environmental Land management division
Neil Hornby	Defra Environmental Land management division
Hugh Craddock	Team leader Commons Land Registration and Protection team
Grant McPhee	Higher Executive Officer Common Land Registration and Protection Team
Andrew Saint	Executive Officer Common Land Registration and Protection Team
Jim Younger	HEO split between CLR & P team & the Uplands & Commons policy team
Peter Holmes	Natural England Gloucestershire Team Leader
Paul Hackman	Natural England Conservation & Land Management Advisor
Lisa Farnsworth	Natural England Advisor
Nicki Jameson	Natural England Land Management & Conservation Advisor
Graham Bathe	Natural England Common Land Major Project Manager
Chris Short	Senior Research Fellow Countryside and Community Research Institute
Tim Adkin	Director Severn and Avon Wetlands Partnership (Wetlands West)
Janet Smith	Senior Lawyer Gloucestershire County Council
Andy Ormiston	Managing Director Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)
Jenny Phelps	Farm Conservation and Education Advisor Gloucestershire FWAG
Jeni Pring	Farm Conservation Advisor Gloucestershire FWAG
Cate Haynes	Gloucestershire FWAG
Cllr Paul Massey	Cabinet Deputy Sustainability, CBC
Rob Bell	Assistant Director Operations, CBC
John Rees	Landscape Service Manager, CBC
Wayne Sedgwick	Community Park Ranger, CBC
Judith Frazer-Holland	Chairman, Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common
Julius Marstrand	Executive Committee Member of FOLK

Julius Marstrand

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

Work Party Report, Spring 2009

I often feel when writing this report that I might be accused of being like the BBC: too many repeats. I'm afraid this is unavoidable as our tasks on the hill are bound to be repeated on an annual basis. This report covers the period from December 2008 to May 2009.

We have continued to average about seven FOLK members on each of our three monthly work parties, but occasionally augmented by members of other organisations. On one party we had the additional support of the Cotswold Voluntary Warden Service, when sixteen wardens joined us on scrub clearance adjoining the Cotswold Way above Charlton King's Common. We were also helped, on two work parties, by a group of volunteers from Messrs. Wiggins, Solicitors, for further scrub clearance. Despite the bad weather, they said they enjoyed themselves. Our thanks go to both these groups, and staff from Cheltenham Borough Council, for their valuable help in protecting areas of grassland from encroaching scrub.

I'm afraid I missed a number of work parties earlier in the year when I was recovering from a hip replacement due to a fall on the ice during the snowy spell in February. My thanks go to Mike Donnelly for organising the work parties in my absence. I should also mention that, if you happen to see two individuals in white protective suits prowling around on the hill, they are not 'scene of crime officers', but Mike Donnelly and Malcolm Geddes who have recently completed their spraying courses. This spraying will enable us to treat the cut scrub to prevent its regrowth.

If you have walked on the hill and common this spring you will, no doubt, have enjoyed the excellent display of cowslips. This improvement is due in no small measure to the conservation programme carried out over the last few years. It's encouraging to see the fruits of our labour.

As I write this, the long-range forecast for the summer promises above average temperatures which will result in more camping, barbeques and litter on the hill. Our regular work parties spend a lot of time clearing litter, an endless task where we could do with extra help. If anyone has a free hour or so on our work party dates, we would welcome their assistance; we can supply gloves, litter pickers and bags.

Dates of Future Work Parties

Midweek Work Parties

Thursday 13th August

Tuesday 18th August

Thursday 10th September

Tuesday 15th September

Thursday 8th October

Tuesday 20th October

Thursday 12th November

Tuesday 17th November

Sunday Work Parties

Sunday 23rd August

Sunday 27th September

Sunday 25th October

Sunday 22nd November

Thursday 10th December

Tuesday 15th December

Sunday 26th December Cancelled

Meet at Tramway Cottage Car Park, Daisybank Road at 9.30am. We provide the tools but wear stout footwear and bring your own gloves. If you require any further information please contact me on 01242 233116. We'll look forward to seeing you there.

Allan Wood 01242 233116

Rodin association with local hills around Cheltenham

When the German troops marched on Paris early in the First World War, the renowned French sculptor, Auguste Rodin, fled to England. His close friend and biographer, Judith Cladell, recommended Cheltenham, where her sisters lived. Rodin settled into the Sussex House Hotel in Winchcombe Street.

In the mornings he went to the Town Hall to read communiqués on the progress of the war, but in the afternoons he strolled in Pittville Park, or **strode out on local hills**. Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common are the nearest 'local hills', so it is almost inevitable that he visited them on many occasions. Leckhampton Hill may have been fenced off at the time by the local quarry owner, but Charlton Kings Common was certainly open to the public.

One of Rodin's best known sculptures, 'The Kiss', was commissioned by Edward Perry Warren who lived in Lewes in Sussex. Warren originally donated it to Lewes Town Hall, but the people of Lewes were so shocked by its explicit nature that it was covered up and eventually returned to Warren. In 1933 Warren offered it to Cheltenham Art Gallery and, "despite the town's prim and proper reputation, people were delighted". It remained in the Clarence Street Gallery until 1939 when Rodin's Executors agreed to lend it to the Tate Gallery. In 1952 it was bought for the nation and is now displayed in the Tate Modern.

Taken, with thanks, by Julius Marstrand from an article in the *Gloucestershire Echo*.

Your Executive Committee Members are:-

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Julius Marstrand
Roger Smith

Co-opted Anne North, Tony Meredith, Tony Clifford
CBC Ex Officio

Articles for the newsletter can be sent to the Editor, Annette North, Shackleton, Daisybank Road, Charlton Kings Common, CHELTENHAM, GL53 9QQ or email anorth@leckhampton.fsnet.co.uk

BIRD OBSERVATION WALK

In response to a special request by Painswick Bird Club, Tony and Frances Meredith led a bird observation walk on 30 May. The Club had heard that Charlton Common was a food location for Tree Pipit and some members had been on previous FOLK walks for Bird Song.

The route taken was Tramway Cottage to the upper part of Daisybank Field, then along Daisybank Road to Five Ways and up Windass Hill. Although it was a beautiful sunny day, the trees and shrubs were already in full leaf, making it difficult to locate birds visually. Even so, the walk proved quite successful with 30 species firmly identified, including the hoped-for Tree Pipit. Very obligingly one Tree Pipit spent long periods perched on a bare branch to which it regularly returned after catching insects, enabling a telescope to be focused upon it and permitting all eight members to obtain very good views.

The total species observed were :-

Birds of Prey:	Kestrel and Buzzard
Pigeons:	Feral and Woodpigeons
Thrushes:	Blackbird, Chiffchaff, Goldcrest, Whitethroat and Willow Warbler
Tits:	Blue Tit, Coal Tit, and Great Tit
Corvids:	Carrion Crow, Jackdaw, Jay, Magpie and Raven
Finches:	Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch and Linnet
Pipits:	Tree Pipit
Others:	Dunnock, Pheasant, Swift and Wren

The value of these sites for conservation is clear.

Kestrel, Goldcrest, Willow Warbler, Tree Pipit and Dunnock are Amber listed, whilst Song Thrush, Bullfinch and Linnet are Red listed.

Painswick Club are making a donation to FOLK as a "thank you" for a most enjoyable walk.

Tony Meredith