



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

# NEWSLETTER

Free to members; non-members 25p

Issue 39 Summer 2012

**Welcome to the 2012 Summer FOLK newsletter.**

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## Countryside Recreation Network

### Wet and windy meeting of experts on the hill

On a stormy April 26<sup>th</sup> a dozen access experts from across the UK visited the hill to discuss the work being done for conservation and access. This visit was part of a meeting of the Countryside Recreation Network held in Cheltenham and hosted by Natural England.

This network began in 1968 as the Countryside Commissions for England and Scotland were created under the new Countryside Acts. The network dealt with sport, recreation and tourism. Today the network shares good practice across its members and runs seminars on subjects relevant to the outdoor recreational sector.

On Leckhampton Hill that wet and windy Thursday were representatives from: Natural England, British Waterways, the Peak District National Park, the Cairngorms National Park, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland, the National Trust, Forestry Commission, the Scottish Government and the Countryside Council for Wales. The meeting's theme was the future prospects for walking. We used the section of the Cotswolds Way on Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common to discuss the management of National Trails, future funding arrangements and management regimes proposed by Natural England. Details of these proposals are out for consultation and can be

found at:  
[http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about\\_us/news.2012/110512.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/news.2012/110512.aspx) .

James Blockley, the Cotswold Way National Trail Officer, described how circular walks from the Trail have been developed. A contribution to the funding of the new wall on the hill illustrates how the quality of the landscape through which the trail passes is part of the management need.

As we stood by the plaque, acknowledging the support for work on the drystone wall, I explained the role of the Cotswolds Conservation Board. As a Board Member with a particular interest in access to the countryside, I explained that Leckhampton Hill provides much for local people and walkers passing along the Cotswold Way.

Julius Marstrand (FOLK) and Wayne Sedgwick, Cheltenham Borough Council, gave us the local feel and flavour. This visit was just before the grazing awareness day so we discussed what the change in management would mean for people and conservation.

If you would like to learn more about the Network please visit the website:  
[www.countrysidecreation.org.uk](http://www.countrysidecreation.org.uk)

**Jo Burgon**

[jo.burgon@gmail.com](mailto:jo.burgon@gmail.com)



Countryside Recreation Network

## **Charlton Kings Common Grazing Awareness Information**

Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common have been a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) since 1954. Grazing is used as the sustainable method of maintaining the limestone grassland and allowing the more sensitive plants to survive resulting in a greatest diversity of limestone flora.

Management of the grassland was reintroduced in 2001. A programme of scrub removal has since been undertaken involving FOLK Working Parties, CBC Community Park Rangers and community service/payback personnel, local volunteers, work place and school groups. Grazing was reintroduced in 2003/4 after a break of several decades using temporary electrified paddocks. The cattle are the native breed Dexters, which cope better than modern farming breeds with the coarser grass and vegetation and help to reduce scrub encroachment.

From the evening of **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April**, the cattle were allowed to roam freely over the whole common, following restoration of the historic dry stone wall along the Southern boundary and completion of a perimeter fence around the rest of Charlton Kings Common. Erecting electric fences was very labour intensive and meant excluding visitors from up to ten per cent of the Common at a time. This will now only need to be done at certain times of the year to protect particular habitats and/or flora from the cattle and visitors.

**It is important to close all gates to ensure the cattle stay within the boundary.**

Please be aware that you may encounter cows at anytime, anywhere on Charlton Kings Common and may not always see them until you are quite close.

The cattle are not aggressive and will not be allowed to roam free when they have young calves, which may make them more protective. However, they may be inquisitive. Don't panic. Most cows will stop before they reach you. If they appear to follow you, just walk on quietly.

Dexters are less likely to be bothered by dogs than some, more sensitive breeds. You don't need to keep your dogs on a lead and you can allow them to run around, but keep them in sight and under control.

**Do not allow your dogs to chase cattle.** If you are near any of the cattle keep your dogs closer to you, but do not put them on a lead, unless you can't control them without a lead. If dogs attack the cattle, the cows may protect themselves.

**If your dog has disturbed the cattle and they chase after it, do not try to hold on to your dog, or let it try to hide behind you. Let it go, a dog can outrun the cows, you can't!**

Be prepared for cattle to react to your presence, particularly if you are with a dog. Generally it is any potential threat from dogs that cows may be trying to see off, not people.

When near the cattle, keep walking and try not to disturb them by making loud noises. Walk around groups of cattle, rather than through the middle.

For more information, or to report problems relating to the cattle, please contact:

**Wayne Sedgwick Cheltenham Borough Council Senior Ranger**

**Cheltenham Borough Council** on 01242 250019 or 07733014743

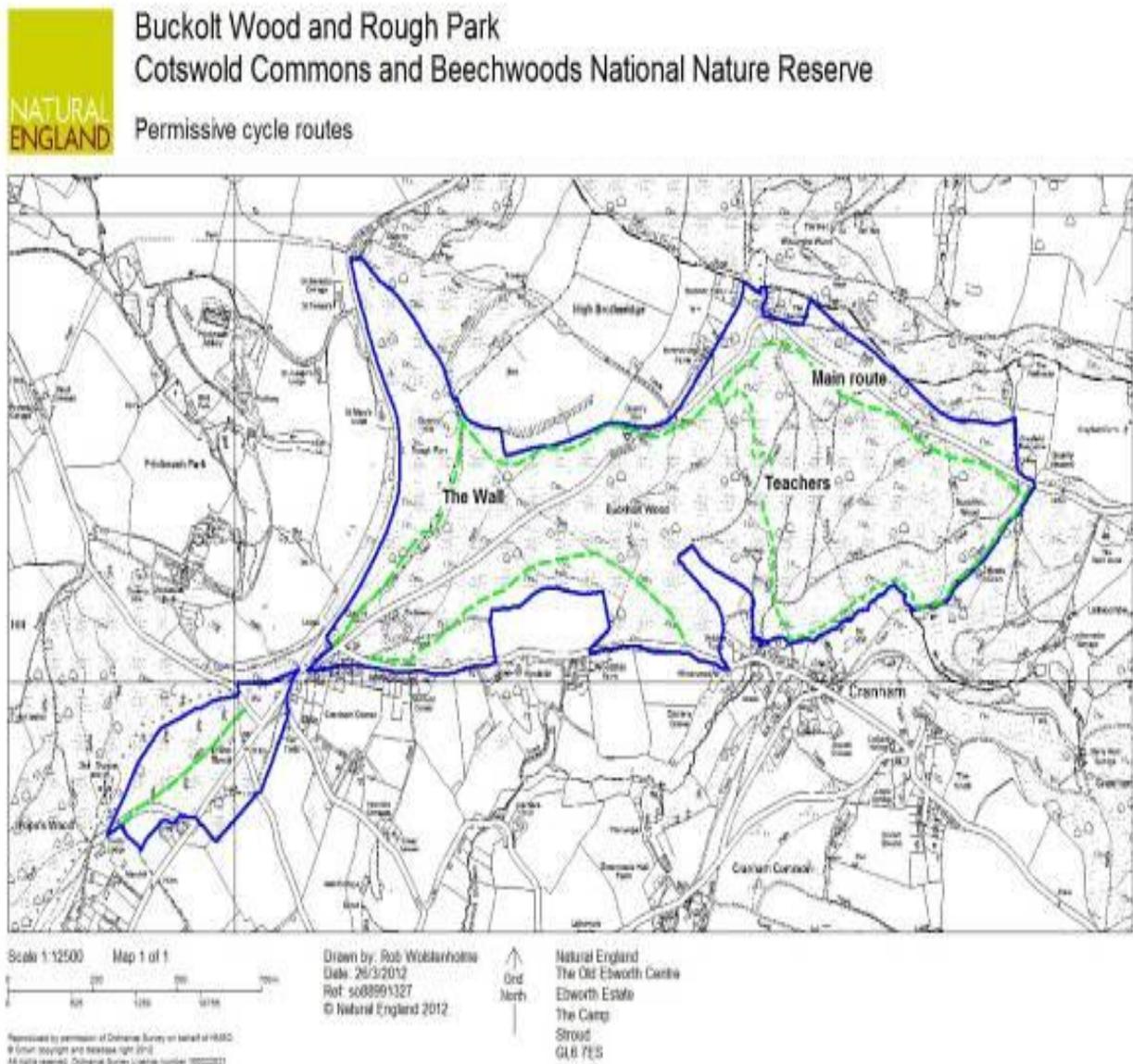
**For escaped cattle** please contact 01242 522767

**Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common** on 01242 522767 or [folk@marstrand.co.uk](mailto:folk@marstrand.co.uk)

## Agreement reached for cycling in Buckholt Wood near Cranham.

In the last newsletter I gave an account of a cycling ban put in place by Natural England in October 2011 within the woods near Cranham Village, specifically Buckholt and Rough Woods. In March there was a rider consultation meeting held at the Royal William public house in Cranham where over 80 attended and there have been subsequent meetings with Natural England.

and the landowner of Buckholt Woods. There are other woods near Cranham where cyclists regularly ride. Formal agreements for these sites are not as yet in place and riders have been requested to only use the current rights of way. There may be some reading this thinking, "what has this got to do with Leckhampton Hill?", well, indirectly any off road cycling restriction in the local area can potentially increase use in the areas where cycling is permitted. Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common is one such place. So it was important to FOLK that an agreement was reached in Cranham.



I am pleased to report that at the end of March an agreement was reached between rider representatives (from Cheltenham & County CC and Bigfoot MBC), Natural England, the land agent

The landowner is allowing mountain bike riding within Buckholt Wood based on a set of best practice rules that riders have been informed about. Riding is only to take place on a select number of

routes. Responsible riding and care for the environment is being actively promoted and it is the intention that riders will volunteer to help support future conservation work over the winter



months, similar to the work done by FOLK. The riding agreement includes a map showing the agreed routes within the wood. This map was backed up with signage on trees showing the tracks.

We are now in a period of seeing how this all settles down. There will inevitably be a few riders who will carry on riding trails not covered by the agreement. As long as a majority of riders are aware of the situation and respect the agreement, we see no reason why this should not continue for the foreseeable future.

**Roger Smith.**

**Cheltenham & County Cycling Club.**



## **FOLK Work Party Spring Report 2012**

**Michael Donnelly FOLK work party co-ordinator**

The last of the boundary fence line was cleared before the end of March; this work has been a joint effort by FOLK work parties and the Community

Service team. The temporary paddocks were finally removed at the end of April and the cattle were allowed to roam the Charlton Kings Common area. Now that we should not have to put up temporary paddocks for the cattle, we are hoping we will be able to devote more time to conservation work on the hill.

As part of the programme of works to allow the cattle to roam the common, a Grazing Awareness Day was planned for 28<sup>th</sup> April. FOLK members were part of the team that were on the hill on that wet and cold day, talking to the public and giving out information. An important message to the public and all users when on Charlton Kings Common is that the gates on the common must be kept closed as they are there to keep the cattle on the common.

The Gas Fired Lime Kilns on Leckhampton Hill were built in 1924; the steel construction was 77 feet high and cost £15,000 to build. After the quarry closed, the Kilns were sold in 1927 by auction at the Plough Hotel for £700. Although the Kilns are no more, we do however have the large bases that they stood on. We have recently devoted two work party sessions to clearing ash tree growth and ivy from the Lime Kiln bases. We hope this is the start of a long term programme of works to stop the decay of the Kiln bases and possibly to repair some of the more recent damage. The objective is to preserve this important part of the industrial history of the hill and maintain it for the future



The winter and spring work parties have been very successful in the boundary fence clearance and achieving objectives set out by the Management Plan. My thanks to all the volunteers who turn out month after month in all weathers. I am sure you

have noticed some of the work we have completed, if you think there are areas on the hill that need attention please let us know. We will always try to act on suggestions that fit into the management plans for the hill and our works programme

You are always welcome to join us on one of our work parties, Tools are provided by FOLK and we start at 9.30, working for approximately 3hrs. For your own safety please wear stout footwear and

tough gardening gloves. We meet at Tramway Cottage Car Park, Daisy Bank Road, at 9.30am on the dates below. (Please note the August Bank Holiday date change to 1<sup>st</sup> September)

Dates for work parties are listed in the table below. For further information Contact Mike (01242 238790) or Serena (01242 524138)

### Work parties for 2012

July 2012	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>
August 2012	Thursday 9 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday is Bank Holiday Move to Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> September
September 2012	Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup>
October 2012	Thursday 11 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 28 <sup>th</sup>
November 2012	Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup>
December 2012	Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday 23 <sup>rd</sup>

(Please note the August Bank Holiday date change to 1<sup>st</sup> September)

### FOLKtalk

#### Continued support from our local Parish Councils

At the copy date of the last newsletter, news on the grant application to Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council was pending. I am pleased to say that at their February meeting our application was approved, and the funds allocated have now been received. On behalf of FOLK, I would like to thank them for their continued support.

If you know of or run a local business who would like to support FOLK by way of grants, volunteering days or the like, please get in touch with any committee member to discuss the various options available.

**Serena Meredith, Treasurer**

### Grassland management plan

Work is underway on a draft of a new management plan for the grassland parts of the Hill and Common. This work is being done by John Harvey in cooperation with the Borough Council which is formally responsible for the management of the Hill. Watch out for details of the draft.

### Grassland monitoring

As featured in the last newsletter, the monitoring of selected indicator species of plants in the limestone grassland habitat of the hill, is about to start. Teams of volunteers have been recruited and trained. Sites have been selected and the technology has been road tested. Pairs of volunteers may be spotted with their noses close to the ground in the next few weeks. Results will be published in the autumn.

## **Name that calf**

Regular visitors to the Hill and Common will have seen the cattle taking full advantage of their new spacious accommodation. The more observant Dexter watchers will have noticed that there is at least one expectant mother in the herd. We are now looking for a name for the new calves that will be born in the herd. Small prize for the names selected.

Naming suggestions (for boys and girls) please to **Ann North** [anorth@leckhampton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:anorth@leckhampton.fsnet.co.uk)

## **Immigrant reptiles and amphibians**

Echo readers may have spotted an article in March about the rehoming of slow worms and newts that were living on land near the so called railway triangle in Gloucester. This land, which has been

derelict for many years, is to be redeveloped. FOLK have worked with the Cheltenham and Gloucester councils to find suitable sites on the Hill to give the animals a fresh start. It is hoped that their arrival will bolster the populations of the Leckhampton natives

## **And Finally, spotted on the Cotswold Way**

Amongst the many visitors to the Hill, Dame Janet Trotter, Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, was recently spotted with a companion, her sister visiting from Canada, enjoying the views over the Severn Vale. Stopping for a breather, Dame Janet said: "we were both very impressed by what you were doing and by the hard work of the volunteer group". Dame Janet is an enthusiastic walker along the escarpment, in breaks from her official duties.

If you have any comments on the Newsletter or would like to contribute an article to the next edition later in 2012 please contact Peter Whalley on 01242 517024 or email to: [whalley-p@o2.co.uk](mailto:whalley-p@o2.co.uk)

### **Contact FOLK**

Membership and Grazier: 01242 522767      Working Parties: 01242 238790  
Chairman: 07717 326610 [folk@marstrand.co.uk](mailto:folk@marstrand.co.uk)      Treasurer: 01242 524138  
Find the Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common 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*