



NEW WEB SITE LAUNCHED IN DECEMBER <http://leckhamptonhill.homestead.com/FOLK.html>

## TIME FOR ACTION?

The first AGM in October saw the election of the new executive committee and the completion of the foundation work for FOLK. A report on the AGM and an introduction to the executive committee is on page 2.

Now the work of deciding what we are going to tackle is underway. There have been a number of comments relating to both lack of action and queries about what the group are hoping to achieve. All these issues are covered in our objectives and we now need to turn these into positive plans.

**The first two objectives** relate to the conservation of the lands and a group of executive committee members are now set up as a working party to help formulate a *Site Management Plan*. They will be using the report already completed by English Nature and will be working in conjunction with Cheltenham Borough Council's own plans. However, there have already been some lively debates about some of the recommendations contained in English Nature's report and the money that the Council is planning to spend on preparing a plan rather than implementing it.

As a group we must ensure that all interested parties have an input into the Site Management Plan as it could have a major impact on both conservation and recreation. It will also form the foundation for all future work and action undertaken by FOLK.

**The third objective** relates to recreational use of the hill. This caused some heated debate at the inaugural meeting, which has since diminished. However, we must be aware that dog walking, mountain biking, horse riding and hang gliding, to name but a few, all have their place on the Hill and Common and must be considered in the future plans of FOLK.

**The fourth objective** relates to the promotion of public awareness. Some work has already begun on information boards in the hill car parks and we now have a web site which will be an excellent form of communication and promotion. Address at top of page.

**The fifth objective** relates to consultation with the owners and trustees of the land and we are pleased to welcome David Elsey of C B C onto the committee as an ex officio member. This will speed up communications between both parties.

Whilst the committee will do their best to keep all members informed of developments, it is essential that members inform their committee of their own views. We had hoped to have some letters to publish in this edition, but to date none have been forthcoming.

Please use this as a two-way communication tool by writing to:

**Andy Gilbert, 212 Old Bath Road, Cheltenham, GL53 9EQ or e-mail: [andygilbert@btinternet.com](mailto:andygilbert@btinternet.com).**

### WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO DATE?

- 10<sup>th</sup> Sept. Guided walk
- 24<sup>th</sup> Sept. Working party
- Oct. Working party
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct AGM (report page 2)
- 14<sup>th</sup> Nov. First meeting of Exec Committee
- 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. Second meeting of the Exec Committee

### WHAT IS PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

- 28<sup>th</sup> Jan. Working party – meeting at Tramway Cottage car park at 2pm.
- Further working parties are planned for the fourth Sunday every month, again meeting at Tramway Cottage car park.
- 11<sup>th</sup> March. Geological walk.

For further information, please visit the web site.

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## CONTACTS & ADMINISTRATION

Listed below are the Executive Committee members and a brief summary of beliefs and interests

### Julius Marstrand

Position: Chairman

Has a clear understanding of the conflicting views and believes in working together with ALL interest groups to protect the SSSI & AONB whilst ensuring that this is done in conjunction with all interested parties. Assisted in amendments to the constitution and the objectives of the group.

### Anne North

Position: Treasurer.

Has actively supported the setting up of the FOLK through banking arrangements and the administration of the membership database.

### Tony Meredith

Position: Committee member

A keen bird watcher, dog walker and a member of Glos Wildlife Trust, Glos Naturalist Society, RSPB and Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. Believes in maintaining biodiversity and providing the widest possible public use and access to the hill. Has a keen interest in the history and particularly the railways.

### Shelagh Hallaway

Position: Committee member

A keen user of the hill for many years with both friends and family. Actively involved with young people and youth groups, which will be a useful link with furthering the objectives of FOLK.

### Andy Gilbert

Position: Committee member

Strongly supports the recreational use of the hill and believes that there is room for all interest groups within the boundaries of the FOLK objectives. Has also produced the Newsletter and believes in communication as the key to FOLK's success through maintaining the area as we have come to know it.

### Maureen Peirce

Position: Committee member

A regular walker on the hill, interested in preserving the natural amenities of the area and exploring how this can best be undertaken in the interest of all users. Is also helping to organise information events for members.

### Jack Shepherd

Position: Secretary

Believes strongly in any proposals made by FOLK being thoroughly discussed to ensure that all members have the opportunity to become involved in the important task ahead. Has acted as secretary and is committed to supporting both the stated objectives and the views of the overall membership.

### Allan Wood

Position: Committee member

An active member of the Cotswold Wardens with a wide background of many countryside skills. A useful link to the Warden Service and has arranged the first FOLK working party, with many more to come.

### Sheila Chaplin

Position: Committee member

Has taken an active role in establishing the FOLK group since becoming a parish councillor for Shurdington. As a regular hill walker is concerned about access for the less mobile and to see the biodiversity enhanced. Would also like information about this and the hill's ancient history and industrial archaeology made available in a leaflet.

### Judy Frazer-Holland

Position: Committee member

A supporter of the land's status as an SSSI and AONB (but not to the detriment of free public access). Also supports the recreational use of the hill by all interest groups in conjunction with the objectives of FOLK.

### Dianne James

Position: Committee member

As a resident and user of Leckhampton Hill for over 30 years I have a keen interest in promoting FOLK's aims and objectives to maintain the AONB and SSSI status whilst working together with all interest groups and recreational users of the hill.

## CONTACTS

Chairman:

Julius Marstrand

Tel: 01386 701543

e-mail: julius@marstrand.co.uk

Secretary:

Jack Shepherd

Tel: 01242 515902

e-mail: jack.shepherd@btinternet.com

Treasurer:

Anne North

Tel: 01242 522767

Media & Communication:

Andy Gilbert

Tel: 01242 527135

e-mail: andygilbert@btinternet.com

## First Annual General Meeting

The following is a brief summary of the First Annual General Meeting held at 7 pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2000 at Leckhampton Primary School.

**Present:** Approximately 90 members were present together with Simon Lee, Head of Parks and Landscape Department and David Elsey, Community Parks Officer both of Cheltenham Borough Council.

**The Chairman** hoped that members would find the meeting interesting and take the opportunity to express views on matters concerning them. He thought that the Friends had got off to a good start. The committee had considered many aspects of the tasks facing the Friends. Now that the society had held its first annual general meeting it was going to be vital that all members should be fully consulted over any activities or policies that the newly elected committee may wish to propose.

**Secretary's Report:** The interim committee had met four times since the inaugural meeting and had considered many matters including some of the following:

- The site management plan for the Hill as produced by English Nature for Cheltenham Borough Council. Paul Hackman from English Nature addressed one committee meeting. It was clear that there would be a need for a Friend's general meeting to discuss these matters.
- Planned and carried out a site visit accompanied by Geoff Jenkins to become aware of the main features and problem areas.
- Organised a walk for members on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2000.
- Organised scrub clearance working parties under the guidance of Cotswold Warden and Committee Member, Allan Wood.
- Committee member Judy Frazer-Holland had attended a demonstration of brushcutters and other machinery.
- Promoted organisation membership of the Friends which now included Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology, British Horse Society, Friends of Naunton Park, Cheltenham and County Cycling Club, Shurdington Parish Council, Southfield Manor Park Residents Association and Malvern Hang Gliding Club.
- The need for monitoring the pressures on the Hill and to survey the current variety of users.
- The need to organise a programme of events and activities for the benefit of members.

### Any other business

Simon Lee introduced David Elsey, Community Parks Officer. His background was in Countryside management. He would be the link between the Friends and the Council and sit as the ex officio member of the Friends Committee.

In answer to a question about the budgeting for management of the Hill Simon Lee said that £15000 had been allowed for the development of a site management plan but that none of it had been spent so far and it is possible for the full amount to be carried over to the following financial year. The Friends would be fully consulted over how a management plan would be implemented. It was hoped that an agreed plan would be developed over the next 18 months.

In answer to a question about grazing on the Hill Simon Lee stated that no money had been allocated for fencing at present.

Andy Gilbert asked for reassurance that the Friends would be fully consulted over any developments. He hoped that the Friend's Newsletter could be used as a useful forum for discussion in this respect.

Allan Wood reported on the scrub clearance activities (see Page 4). Allan announced that the Cotswold Wardens will be working on Charlton Kings Common during December.

A question was raised about the need for a signboard for the Devil's Chimney as many visitors had difficulties in finding it.

Members generally indicated that they did not wish developments to go in the direction Crickley Hill. It was accepted that some management would be required. Andy Gilbert suggested that members submitted to him items for the newsletter. These might include matters concerned with proposals for managing the Hill.

The chairman concluded the general discussion by saying that the committee had planned to set up a working party (sub-committee) to consider the Site Management Statement in detail and produce a report. The new committee would make this matter of some priority.

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm.



## CONSERVATION

### Bird Observation on Leckhampton Hill.

An article by Tony Meredith

A favourite walk taken regularly over the last seven years by my wife and myself has been a circular one covering the lower slopes on the north and east sides. It provides good bird watching as well as good exercise for ourselves and our dog. We walk up Old Bath Road, turn left into Pilford Road, climb the stile and ascend to Daisy Bank. Turning left along Daisy Bank we eventually reach the T junction where the track from Sandy Lane runs towards Seven Springs. We then turn right along this old track through Charlton Common for about ½ a mile before turning back and descending to Sandy Lane and thence home.

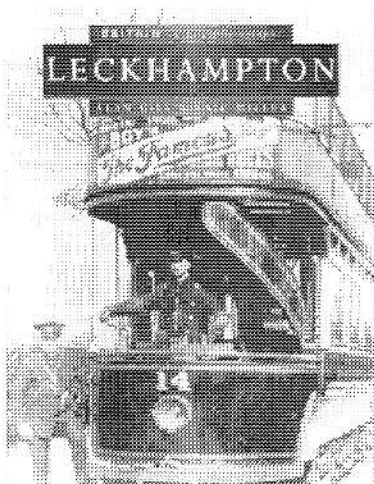
This walk provides a diversity of habitat and a very good variety of birds. Starting with the sloping field between Pilford Road and Daisy Bank, the scrub, hawthorn and blackberry bushes provide regular sightings of Goldfinch, Bullfinch, Greenfinch and Chaffinch. In spring and summer incoming migrants include many Warblers, particularly Chiffchaff, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcaps and the (so-called) Garden Warbler. All of these find this habitat very suitable for nesting.

In winter one can see flocks of Redwings and small numbers of Linnets and Redpolls. Along Daisy Bank itself and into Charlton Common, Spring / Summer arrivals include good numbers of Willow Warblers and Chiffchaffs. However, the real highlights are the chances to see and hear Tree Pipitts and Grasshopper Warblers. Both species are rare local breeders and the importance of the Hill for these birds is established in County Records. Usually several Tree Pipitts can be seen perching on small saplings on the slopes above Daisy Bank and Charlton Common. They then rise a bit like a Skylark, singing as they go, before "parachuting" down to the ground. Usually just one or two Grasshopper Warblers skulk in the scrub and shrub at the lower part of the slopes, but the male courts the female by singing his almost endless "reeling" song which is sometimes described as the noise made by reeling in a fishing line. Sadly their numbers continue to decline nationally.

Raptors can be seen regularly. Sparrowhawks and Kestrels range the lower slopes and Buzzards soar and glide along the edge. The latter pick off some of the many rabbits, whilst Kestrels hunt smaller mammals and the Sparrowhawks look for unprotected fledglings.

The descent to Sandy Lane shows up the more usual garden birds such as Dunnock, Robin, Blackbird but in one glorious year (1996) a site close to Sandy Lane was occupied by a pair of Nightingales. The male's beautiful song could be heard day and night and the pair successfully raised 2 young. Other unusual highlights have been Waterrail, resident on a tiny trickle of water near Sandy Lane for 6 weeks (1995), Stonechat at Southfield Manor for a week (1999), Woodcock below Daisy Bank (twice in 1998) and the rare Tree Sparrow between Pilford Road and Daisy Bank (December 1998).

Many other birds can be regularly seen including both Green and Great-Spotted Woodpeckers, Jays, Little Owls, Tawny Owls, Song Thrushes, Mistle Thrushes, Yellow Hammers and Spotted Flycatchers. In all we have recorded over 65 species on these northern and eastern slopes and have passed the more interesting records to the County Recorder. Whatever the season there are always good reasons to carry a pair of binoculars on this walk.



## HISTORY

We thought we must tell you about an excellent new book called 'Leckhampton', in the 'Britain in Old Photographs' series. This book has recently been produced by the Leckhampton Local History Society and contains 220 old pictures of Leckhampton, together with much historical information. It is a must for anyone interested in the area.

Chapters are devoted to the old village, the newer areas, the Court, churches, the Hill, the Naunton Park area, the rural scene, sports and leisure activities and local people. The book is the result of 3 years work collecting, copying and researching the photographs, most of which were lent or given by local people. The co-authors are Alan Gill and Eric Miller and the book, published by Suttons, is on sale in the local shops and main bookshops for £9.99.

# HELP!

## VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED – Scrub Clearance on the Hill.

We have already had 3 working parties on the hill to begin the task of clearing the grassland areas of encroaching scrub. However we need many more volunteers. It is proposed to continue the work on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in the months of January, February and March 2001. There will not be a work party in December. This work cannot usually be carried out beyond March as this will disturb nesting birds.

You may well ask why clear the scrub. If we do not, it will eventually colonise all remaining open limestone grassland areas and result in the loss of a very important and scarce wildlife habitat. Some large areas of scrub will be left as this in itself provides an alternative habitat. We will be clearing pockets of grassland and retain small clumps of scrub and single trees within these areas.

The work is currently being done by hand but we are actively investigating the possibility of using machinery on the more difficult sites. With this in view it is hoped to arrange a machinery demonstration in December. At this stage the hire charges would seem prohibitive but we may be able to attract additional funding for this purpose.

Our work parties meet at the Tramway Cottage car park in Daisy Bank Road at 2:00 pm. Some tools can be provided but, if possible, please bring secateurs, loppers and gloves. No experience is required and you can work at your own pace for as long as you wish. Instruction will be given on the day. Do try and join in for an enjoyable and vital task.

The dates arranged are: Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> Jan, Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> Feb and Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> Mar.

Allan Wood

## RECREATION

Firstly we would like to thank Cheltenham and County Cycle Club for their support on the working parties. This has been a great help and has also assisted in creating a better understand of how two quite different groups can work together for the same end goal.

We are also pleased to welcome Malvern Hang Gliding Club as new members of FOLK and I am looking forward to getting hold of some interesting photographs for our new web site!

I have spent some time over the last month walking all areas of the Hill and Common to look at the effects that mountain bikes and horses etc. are having on the hill and, although I may be a little biased, I am please to say that the effects are minimal. We would however welcome comments from anyone with concerns on the recreational use of the Hill to let us know so that we investigate and act where necessary.

Andy Gilbert

## And Finally.....

Don't forget to visit our new web site – <http://leckhamptonhill.homestead.com/FOLK.html> If there is anything you would like to add or alter on the web site, please e-mail: [andygilbert@btinternet.com](mailto:andygilbert@btinternet.com)

Please get actively involved wherever you can. Whether in helping out in working parties, getting new members or just letting us know your views. We need an active membership to ensure that the good word started can continue.

And the Executive Committee take great pleasure in wishing you all –

## A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS and A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

### LATEST NEWS

**Simon Lee**, Head of Parks and Landscape Department has stated that he will be making available £1,000 for some priority scrub clearance work on Charlton Kings Common as identified by the FOLK committee. It will involve several days' work by contractors using specialised machinery in the first few months of 2001.

**Also enclosed** in this Newsletter is a "pull out" Programme of Events / Talks for 2001

**Thank you** to KRONE (UK) Technique Ltd – Innovation Connectivity Solutions for Communications infrastructures – [www.krone.co.uk](http://www.krone.co.uk) for providing the printing of this Newsletter.

FRIENDS OF LECKHAMPTON HILL AND CHARLTON KINGS COMMON

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS/TALKS 2001

Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2001

“Leckhampton Hill – Cheltenham’s Country Park” an illustrated talk by **John Milner** on geology, industrial archeology of the Hill and why the area is designated a Country Park.

7.30 pm – Leckhampton Primary School Hall

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2001

“Grassland Butterflies on Leckhampton Hill” an illustrated talk by **Guy Meredith**; weather permitting, many of the butterflies illustrated will be seen on the Hill within the next few weeks

7.30 pm – Leckhampton Primary School Hall

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2001

**David Long** is leading a walk on the Hill focussing on the **geology** of the area. This is a Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust event but members of FOLK have been invited to participate

Meet in Daisybank Road car park, 10.00 am

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2001

**Frances and Tony Meredith** will lead a walk on the Hill to hear the **spring birdsong**.

Meet at the western end of Highland Road, Charlton Kings (at the dead end – parking available) 9.15 for 9.30 am.  
Stout footwear recommended

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2001

“Getting to Know the Flowers of Leckhampton Hill”. Talk by **Rosemary Westgate** with slides which will enable members to identify most flowers found on the Hill.

7.30pm – Leckhampton Primary School Hall

*A small charge will be made to cover costs of talks held at the Primary School*