

## New Site Management Plan Adopted

**FOLK and Cheltenham Borough Council have both adopted the new Site Management Plan.**

Around 80 people attended FOLK's AGM, in Leckhampton Primary School on 21st October. All the Objectives and Recommendations of the Plan were presented and the most controversial issues were discussed. Around 75% of the members present voted for the Plan, but most significantly not a single member voted against it.

Cheltenham Borough Council's Cabinet subsequently adopted the Plan at its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> November.

The Key Issues discussed at FOLK's AGM were:

- **Sustainable methods of grassland management**, including proposals for grazing trials on Charlton Kings Common [reported on elsewhere in this issue].
- **Further Geoconservation work.**
- **Ancient archaeology** and the proposed clearance of scrub from the Iron Age Fort to protect the archaeology from further root damage.
- **Industrial Archaeology** and the deterioration of the Limekilns and proposals to open up more of the old incline railways and tramways.
- **Rights of Way** and proposals to extend the Bridleway network and allow a mountain bike slalom course to divert mountain bikers away from courses which endanger other users of the Site.
- **Motorised vehicles** and the 'higher rights' which may still exist along the ancient Turnpike Road.

Work has already started to implement the Plan – something that was missing after the last Site Management Plan was published.

### Grassland Funding

Grant funding may be made available from Cotswold AONB for the maintenance and restoration of some of the unimproved limestone grassland on the Site.

The funding may enable us to bring forward some of the maintenance projects, including the grazing trials. By the time this issue is circulated we should know what projects the funding will pay for.

### Daisybank Fields

Almost since FOLK was founded we have been repeatedly asked to do more to reduce the scrub in Daisybank Fields – not least to restore the famous toboggan runs.

At the start of this year one of our Working Parties cleared a lot of scrub using brush-cutters, but we realised that it would take more than a few Working Parties to really make an impression on the extensive scrub. Consequently it was agreed with the Council that mechanical cutting would be introduced.

Earlier this year the Parks & Landscapes Department applied for Planning Permission to make an access ramp into the Fields from Daisybank Road, to allow cutting equipment to get in. By the time permission had been granted, it was into the breeding season and work had to be postponed until the autumn. That work has now been done and the new access route will be used to get maintenance equipment into the Fields.

The scrub does provide an important habitat for wildlife, particularly birds, so whilst some scrub will be cleared, selective 'islands' of scrub will be retained to provide a continued habitat for the wildlife.

**Julius Marstrand – FOLK Chairman**

#### WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO DATE?

- New Site Management Plan Adopted
- 21<sup>st</sup> October 2002 FOLK AGM

#### WHAT IS PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE?

- Work Parties continue on a regular basis.  
Second Thursday each month – 9.30am  
Fourth Sunday each month – 9.30am  
Meet Tramway Cottage Car Park

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## Work Party Report-Autumn/Winter 2002

I had hoped that as we are now in the midst of our winter programme that we might by now have been able to purchase the self-propelled brush cutter I mentioned in my last work party report. There have however been delays in obtaining the necessary funding. I hope that these problems will be resolved in the near future as this machine will be a great asset in the coming months.

Many of you will have noticed that a start has been made on opening up an access to Daisybank Fields from Daisybank Road. This will enable machinery to be brought in to manage the scrub in this area. However, due to the present waterlogged state of the area, this work will probably be delayed until Autumn 2003.

We have also recently made a start preventing further encroachment of scrub into areas of grassland adjoining the Cotswold Way above Charlton Kings Common. This is very labour intensive and, although we have a nucleus of work party members, newcomers are always welcome.

I know that we often stress in our Newsletter that our purpose is not to remove vast swathes of scrub in the hope that the grass and flowers will recolonise these areas. Last winter several members attended a talk given by Dr. David Sheppard about the management of scrub. A copy of the handout we were given is reproduced in this Newsletter. This clearly illustrates the importance of scrub as a natural part of the habitat of the hill and serves as a guideline for what we are trying to achieve. I hope to contact Dr. Sheppard with a view to giving his talk to FOLK next year.

### Midweek Work Parties

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2002  
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2003  
Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2003  
Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2003  
Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2003

### Weekend Work Parties

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2002  
Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2003  
Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2003  
Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2003  
Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2003

All work parties meet in Tramway Cottage car park at 9.30am.

Allan Wood

## **Not Just Neglect: Invertebrates and Grassland and Scrub Management**

### **1. Introduction**

Scrub is wrongly thought of as a near monoculture of mature shrubs with almost no ground flora and slowly progressing towards poor secondary woodland. This is true of abandoned scrub but a properly managed scrub system is nothing like that.

Scrub is a dynamical equilibrium of an uneven aged, but predominately low, open-structured canopy of shrub and tree species over a mosaic of partially shaded and exposed ground floras.

Scrub is a natural part of a grassland. Its presence does not indicate poor or improper management but its absence suggests a stressed, over-grazed site subject to blinkered management attitudes.

### **2. Features of a Managed Scrub System**

- **Shelter**  
Scrub provides a shelter from wind and rain. Insects can be active for much longer periods than is possible on an over-grazed site where they could be forced to hide away for hours or days at a time.
- **Warmth**  
Insects need to absorb warmth from the air in order to raise their body temperature sufficiently for movement, digestion, food assimilation, sperm and egg production/maturation etc. Scrub provides sun-traps in every direction so that the ground and vegetation warms up quickly and stays warm longer.

- Continuity of conditions throughout the day  
Scrub provides suitable conditions throughout the day, not just for a few hours while the sun passes.
- Structure  
Scrub provides a variety of physical structure from exposed soils and short turf through tussocky grassland, tall grass, tall herb stands, low shrubs, shrub canopy and occasional standard trees. All occur in a mosaic which is very important for wingless or weakly mobile species.
- Edges/Ecotones  
Insect like junctions between differently structured vegetation, although it often does not matter very much which vegetations are represented. Scrub has edges everywhere in a variety of combinations.
- Continuity of habitat from year to year  
Scrub is basically the same from year to year. In this it differs from a coppice system where the ground flora is periodically suppressed until the cutting cycle is repeated, or the scrub layer removed abruptly and over a large area, regenerating evenly and densely. A managed scrub system supports habitat features which are represented evenly and densely. A managed scrub system supports habitat features which are represented every year, usually close to where they were the year before.
- Food/Prey  
Scrub systems encourage a great variety in vegetation structure, plant species composition, growth stage, age, orientation etc. Consequently there are lots of food sources for the herbivore fauna. The variety of shelter, edges, food etc encourages lots of predators and parasitoids as well.
- Territory and Mates  
Territories are defined by physical markers. These are rare in a heavily grazed grassland but are in plenty in a scrub system. Other maker plants provide vantage points for territories and landing pads for courtship, copulation or to check on the passing possibilities and competition.
- Needs of the entire life-cycle  
Unlike in the suppressed and stressed environment of an over-grazed grassland, scrub provides the needs of the entire life-

cycle from oviposition sites, larval/nymphal host (plant or animal), adult food, dormancy/hibernation sites, territory makers and mating areas.

### 3. Restoration of Abandoned Scrub

Check for shade demanding vegetation before removing large areas of shrubs or trees.

Cut in at the edges, forming deep scallops.

Cut wide paths through the scrub block.

Cut out the glades within the scrub block.

Always follow up with grazing/browsing by stock suitable for the highest quality of natural heritage landscape (ie) appropriate old breeds of sheep, cattle, goats). Do not use sappy downland breeds or those bred for fattening on degraded agricultural land.

Allow 10% regeneration.

### 4. Management of a Scrub system

Check for shade demanding vegetation before removing large areas of shrubs or trees.

Weed out the unwanted species eg Turkey Oak, Sycamore.

Cut out those bushes needed for other management or whose timber is saleable.

Cut out single bushes or groups of bushes in an otherwise random pattern.

Thin out large or coalescing stands.

Always follow up with grazing/browsing by stock suitable for the highest quality of natural heritage landscape (ie) appropriate old breeds of sheep, cattle, goats). Do not use sappy downland breeds or those bred for fattening on degraded agricultural land.

Maintain a varied age class of scrub and tree species.

Practice RAH (Raging Ad-Hockery) whenever possible.

### 5. Summary

Scrub is a natural part of the grassland ecosystem.

Managed scrub is a sign of a dynamic living grassland.

Scrub will improve most sites, not deteriorate them.

Control of scrub is not impossible, management of scrub is a challenge.

Dr David Sheppard

10 February 1997

## Letter from Local Resident

I have walked on Leckhampton Hill for about forty years and have always enjoyed its special character.

It is almost unique among Cheltenham's green spaces in that it has very few signs of being managed or manicured. The main tracks, although now increased by smaller byways made by bikes, seem largely unchanged over the course of many years.

However, signs of so-called management have been very noticeable this year, and my main concern is that this trend is not helpful to wildlife. There seems to have been little thought about destroying environments for insects and birds. Large swatches of cover have been cleared, presumably to create more viewpoints. Are these really necessary when there are so many places on the hill which afford marvellous views? To create more open spaces detracts from the character of the hill.

Surely it is not sensible to destroy native trees which are needed for our general well-being as well as enriching the diversity of the hill. Trees are already being threatened by climate change, should we not preserve as many as we can?

The hill is so popular that in all the years I have walked there I never remember seeing an empty car park on Daisybank. I always see other people walking the paths there. Presumably this is because they do not want a controlled environment and appreciate the hill as it is.

There is a sign in Daisybank car park saying 'take nothing; leave only footprints'. In my book, that's good advice.

Alan Coulon  
10A Oldfield Crescent  
Cheltenham GL51 7BA  
Tel 01242 513 916

We welcome two new members onto the committee Pam Brookes and John North who were elected at the AGM.

### Your New Executive Committee Members are:-

CHAIRMAN - Julius Marstrand (01242 518846)  
E-mail [julius@marstrand.co.uk](mailto:julius@marstrand.co.uk)

SECRETARY - Jack Shepherd (01242 515902)  
E-mail [jack.shepherd@btinternet.com](mailto:jack.shepherd@btinternet.com)

TREASURER - Anne North (01242 522767)  
E-mail [anorth@leckhampton.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:anorth@leckhampton.fsnet.co.uk)

Sue Barrett	Pam Brookes
Tony Clifford	Vic Ellis
Judy Frazer-Holland	Shelagh Hallaway
Tony Meredith	John North
Allan Wood	

### Membership Renewal Reminder

For those of you who have not yet renewed your membership, please send your subscription to

Mrs A. North  
Shackleton  
Daisybank Road  
Charlton Kings Common  
CHELTENHAM  
GL53 9QQ



Have you viewed our new look Website

# GRAZING TRIALS PROPOSED FOR CHARLTON KINGS COMMON

## Grazing is preferred method of managing grassland

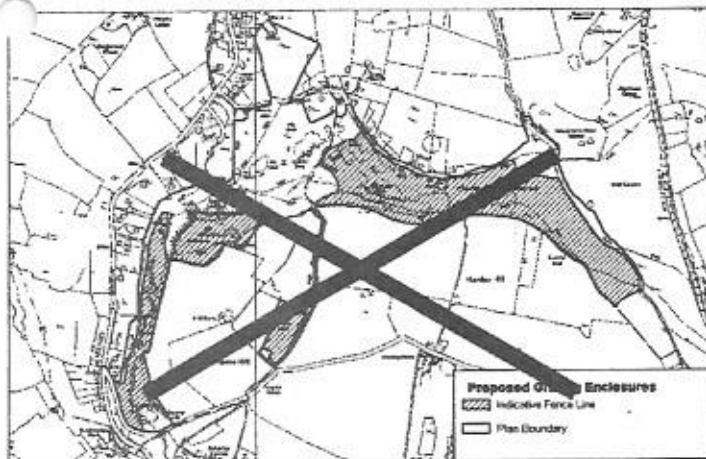
Grazing is English Nature & Cotswolds AONB's preferred method of limestone grassland management. There are many reasons for this:

- It is the 'traditional' form of management for Cotswold grassland;
- It is not dependent on the nature of the terrain, if appropriate stock is introduced;
- It creates a 'mosaic' of grassland habitats which benefits a range of species;
- It controls the encroachment of scrub & gorse;
- It is more 'sustainable' than other forms of management;
- It is more cost effective than other forms of management.

## Grazing Proposed

Consequently the initial draft of the Site Management Plan recommended extensive grazing on the Site.

This involved the setting up of four 'grazing enclosures', bordered by an 'indicative fence line'. It was not clear whether this fence line would consist of 'permanent' or temporary fencing, but it appeared that the idea would be to graze small areas enclosed by temporary electric fencing, within an overall area within permanent fencing.



## Proposal rejected by FOLK

This proposal was rejected by FOLK on several grounds:

- We felt that any such enclosures would inevitably detract from the 'wild & open nature' of the Site that is almost universally supported; we were particularly opposed to any proposal to erect permanent fencing;
- We were concerned that some of the areas where grazing was proposed, the flat areas on top of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common and the Iron Age Fort, were some of the most frequently visited areas of the Site; there were likely to be conflicts between users and their pets and grazing livestock;
- The flat areas on top of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common and the area inside the Iron Age Fort have been successfully managed by a mixture of mowing and grazing by rabbits for several years and there is no need to introduce livestock;
- Proposed fence lines would inevitably cross designated public rights of way and other well used tracks on the Site;
- Even if gates, or stiles were used, access particularly for horses and mountain bikes would inevitably be restricted;
- Whilst cattle are not bothered by most dogs, we wanted to minimise the risk of conflicts between pets and livestock.

## Limited Grazing Trials Proposed

FOLK recognises the advantages of grazing, but would not like to see grazing along the lines originally proposed.

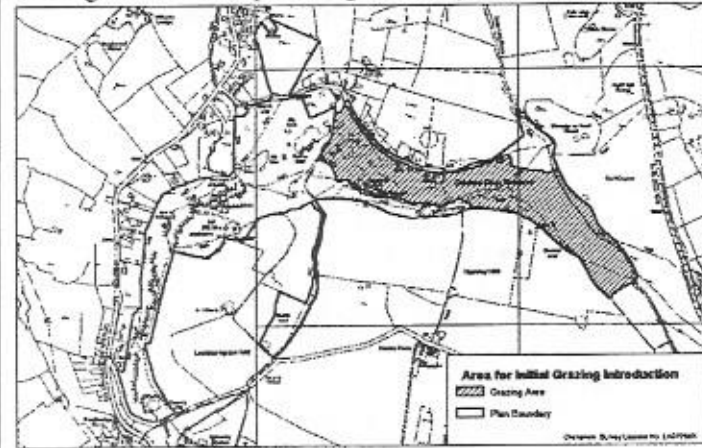
Following several visits to Cranham Common, where grazing is already well established, the Executive felt that a similar scheme would be much more appropriate on our Site. This involves grazing only small areas at a time, between one and one and a half acres, enclosed by a temporary electric fence and involving only five cows within any one enclosure.

These temporary paddocks can be moved around to create a 'patchwork mosaic' of different lengths of grass, ideally suited to encouraging a variety of wildlife.

Unlike Cranham Common, our Site is not intersected by country roads and yet the temporary fencing has not been a problem there.

On Cranham Common grazing can be used almost anywhere within the site, but on Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common, at least initially, the intention would be to restrict grazing to a limited area of the Site, as shown on the map below. This is an area that gets relatively little use, so the grazing should have a minimal impact on users of the Site.

As far as possible, temporary enclosures would be kept between existing tracks and no public rights of way would be obstructed.



It is not intended to graze the whole area at the same time, the small temporary enclosures would be moved around within the area shown.

This is what was proposed in the final Site Management Plan adopted by FOLK's AGM and CBC's Cabinet.

Initially trials would be held on the lower slopes of Charlton Kings Common only, along Daisybank Road and 'The Gallops', but gradually this would be extended up the steep scarp slope to the extent shown on the map.

## Future Plans

If and only if, grazing trials are successful and are found to be acceptable to the majority of users, grazing may be extended in future years, but would still be excluded from the most heavily used areas of the Site.

For example, one area that might be considered for future grazing is the steep scarp slope below the top of Leckhampton Hill, where scrub and ash wood is gradually spreading over the grass slopes.

Where alternative methods of grassland management are viable, like the flatter areas of the Site, these would be continue to be used.

Any extension of grazing beyond the area designated in the Site Management Plan would be subject to further public consultation.

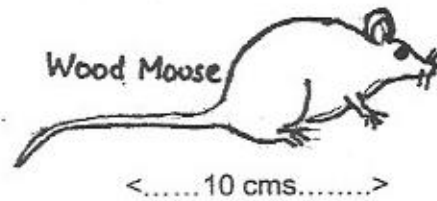
**Julius Marstrand - Chairman FOLK**

# Invisible Foragers on the Hill

A very important element in the food web of the grassland, scrub and wooded areas on the Hill is made up of large populations of two native small mammals -the Field Vole (sometimes called the Short-tailed Vole) *Microtus agrestis* and the Wood Mouse (also known as the Long-tailed Field mouse) *Apodemus sylvaticus*. Although larger herbivores such as rabbits and deer are also present the sheer numbers of the little mouse-like creatures mean that they consume a large amount of plant material. In their turn they provide a significant amount of food for predators such as owls, kestrels, buzzards, stoats, weasels, hedgehogs, foxes, badgers and adders.

They each occupy different food niches and somewhat different habitats. Field Voles are essentially grass-eaters and they have continuously growing teeth to deal with the hard work of biting and mashing up tough grasses among which they live. You may have seen holes and runways in and under long grass. These provide voles not only access to their food (even under snow) but also some protection from their enemies. Field Voles are limited to grassland habitats and grassy verges of hedges, scrub and woodland fringes. When you see a kestrel hovering by a motor way it is usually watching for the movement of a Field Vole to provide its next meal.

The Wood Mouse is mainly a seed eater but it will also take fruits, buds, young seedlings, snails, caterpillars and other insects. They eat so many seeds and seedlings that they form an important check on the growth of shrubs and trees near which they prefer to live. Wood Mice avoid open grassland. They are mainly nocturnal explaining why they are frequently preyed upon by tawny owls, foxes and cats from local houses. Wood Mice often enter country and suburban properties in their exploration for food.



Field Voles and Wood Mice are small - weighing about 20 - 25 grams (about an ounce) and they are easily told apart. The Field Vole has a rounded face, small eyes and small rounded ears. The tail is shorter than the body. It moves with a scurrying movement.

The Wood Mouse is slightly smaller, has large ears and eyes, a pointed face and a tail longer than the total body length. It has a definite white-cream colour to the underside with a patch of yellow fur on the chest. It moves in a quick jumpy sort of way. It is really not at all like its cousin the House Mouse which is dark brownish-grey in colour with a thick, almost hairless tail. Other less common mice include the larger Yellow-necked Mouse, the tiny Harvest Mouse and the Dormouse.

Field Voles and Wood Mice do not usually live for more than just over a year. The older ones die in late summer through hunger or predation soon after providing several broods of young. Some of the young survive the following winter and continue the life cycle. Population sizes of both these animals show big annual variations depending on the weather, food availability and predation pressures.

If you spot one of these creatures count yourself lucky. They are some of the more invisible of the animals that forage on the Hill.

Jack Shepherd December 2002

*The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Executive Committee of F.O.L.K.  
News, views and general comments are always welcomed and should be addressed to:-  
The Hon. Secretary, Mr Jack Shepherd, Rainbow Cottage, Leckhampton Hill, Cheltenham, GL53 9QJ.*

**And Finally.....The FOLK committee would like to wish all its members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.**

