



Friends Of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

NEWSLETTER

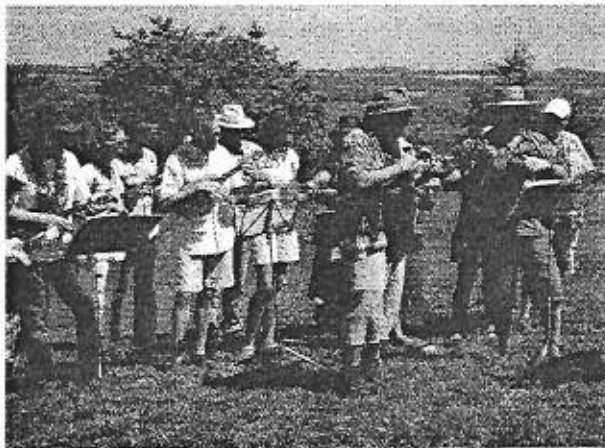
Free to members; non-members 25p

Issue 35

Autumn 2010

The BIG Picnic

To celebrate International Year of Biodiversity day Saturday 22nd May 2010 FWAG (Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group) with partners FOLK, Cotswold Way National Trail, Cotswold Wardens and Cheltenham Borough Council organised The BiG (Biodiversity in Gloucestershire) Picnic which took place on Charlton Kings Common adjacent to the new dry stone wall.



The weather was perfect for a picnic we set up in the morning with tents, flags and refreshments. Music was supplied by UKeGlos 15 Ukuleles which got the event off to a good start. As people settled down to their picnics, a number of walkers stopped from walking the Cotswold Way and enjoyed a glass of beer or an ice cream, both were on sale, and were very welcome in the hot weather. There were a number of display boards provided by Folk and the Cotswold Wardens and also face painting for the children.

After lunch walks were organised with leaders on agreed routes to points where specialists provided information about the new dry stone wall, the hills history, wild life, flowers and care of the hill and the organisations involved.



When the event on the hill was over and cleared and tided, we all went down to The Old Patesians Rugby Club Field and rounded off the day with a wonderful mass hot air balloon ascent the sky was clear and the balloons were very colourful as they rose into the sky at what seemed at times great speed. This event was very well attended and rounded off a perfect day

FOLK's AGM

7pm Wednesday
10th November 2010

*Leckhampton Primary School
Hall Road, Leckhampton*

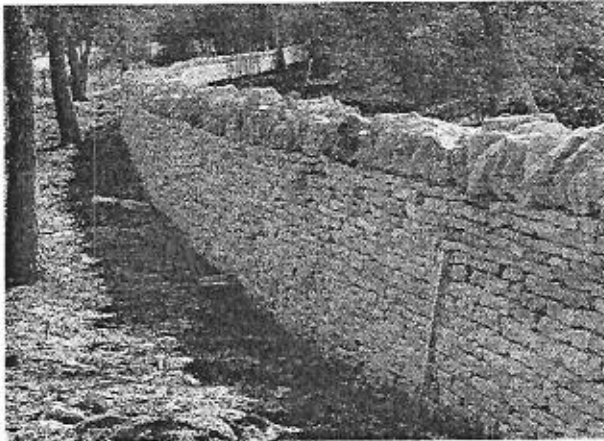
Speaker: PC John Palfrey

Policing the Hill

*If you would like to get more
involved in preserving the Hill,
why not put yourself forward
for the Committee?*

Higher Level Stewardship

Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common are currently under an Entry Level Stewardship scheme, which provides a limited amount of funding to help towards the cost of managing the Site. We now want to apply to raise the status to a Higher Level Stewardship scheme. This will significantly increase the amount of funding available, but will also impose much stricter requirements on the management of the Site.



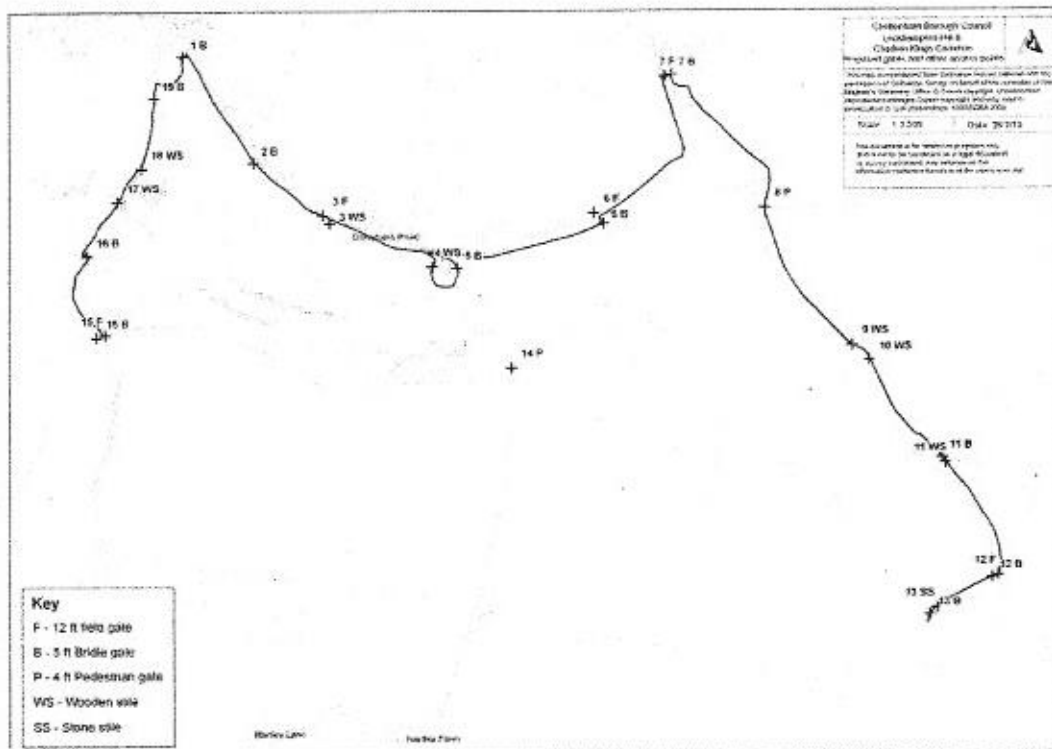
To qualify for this a Farm Environment Plan (or FEP) has to be prepared. This was done last year. The proposed management regime also has to be considered sustainable. The current temporary grazing scheme has been very successful, but it is very labour intensive and this

is not considered sustainable. The amount of time working parties spend erecting and moving electric fences also detracts from other conservation work on the Site.

In order to move to HLS status, we need to introduce a more sustainable grazing regime and this involves allowing the cattle to roam more extensively over Charlton Kings Common. We don't want permanent fences to break up the Common, so the intention is to fence around the perimeter of the whole site.

Where possible, this will be done by restoring the historic dry stone boundary wall, as is in the process of being done along the Southern boundary. Elsewhere, fencing will be used until funding can be found to restore more of the boundary wall.

The fencing will not be barbed, or electrified, but will involve six strands of high tensile wire, to produce the minimum possible visual intrusion. Only along Daisybank Road will the fence deviate from the Common boundary. To allow access to private properties the fence will run along the Southern side of the Daisybank Road until just beyond the last private gate. It will then return to the Common's boundary, with a field gate and brideway gate across the track. There will be a similar arrangement at the top of Sandy Lane and at the far Eastern End of the Common.



FOLK Work Party Report

Spring, Summer and Autumn 2010

After the disruption of work parties due to the bad weather during the early part of the year, normal service resumed with the arrival of spring. Fencing paddocks have been erected and cattle have returned to grazing the hill. Ash clearance has taken place, grass cutting on Daisy Bank car park and other areas carried out, clearance of the Cotswold Way above Salterly Quarry completed, and the annual ragwort pulling season has been started. My thanks to Mike Donnelly who has been organising the work in my absence.

Thank you to members of FOLK who carry out personal litter picks when walking on the hill. There is a separate article in this newsletter on a proposed Litter Team which I hope you will support.

Dates of Future Work Parties

Midweek Work Parties

Weekend Work Parties

Tuesday 21st September 2010

Sunday 26th September 2010

Thursday 14th October 2010

Tuesday 19th October 2010

Sunday 24th October 2010

Thursday 11th November 2010

Tuesday 16th November 2010

Sunday 28th November 2010

Thursday 9th December 2010

Tuesday 21st December 2010

NO WORK PARTY - Sunday 26th December

Thursday 13th January 2011

Tuesday 18th January 2011

Sunday 23rd January 2011

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

Proposed Litter Team

Litter on the hill is always a problem. The normal work parties do not have sufficient numbers to respond to every report of camping, fires and littering. Community park rangers, particularly if they are alone, are not allowed to approach offenders on health and safety grounds. FOLK members are similarly restricted and only clear up abandoned sites. Our C.B.C. Ranger has been working closely with the Gloucestershire Constabulary and the new Force and Rural Environmental Crime Officer about these problems. The contact numbers for reporting all types of incidents are now displayed on notice boards.

I have suggested that FOLK would have an improved response to litter clearance by the following actions:

1. A member of the FOLK work party is prepared to act as a 'litter chief' and hold a list of volunteers who he can contact to arrange an early response to a reported litter problem. As a volunteer, you will be given his telephone number as a contact point. We already have a couple of volunteers but need several more to offer their support.
2. This team would probably only need to operate between May and October, the main litter season. Requests for call-outs would I hope be fairly infrequent and involve only part of the team to be available for a couple of hours on each occasion.
3. FOLK will supply the litter pickers, gloves and rubbish bags.

If you are prepared to help, or would like any further information, pick up the phone and speak to me, Allan Wood on 01242 233116.

WE NEED YOUR HELP – THANK YOU

Allan Wood

Trees – Fact and Folklore

Throughout human history trees have played an important part in our development. They supplied fruits for food, wood for tools and weapons, fuel for fires, and timber for building dwellings. It is not surprising that, over the centuries, they have also become the subject of myths and legends. Here are a few examples of tree facts and folklore.

Ash has a mineral rich foliage and makes excellent fodder for animals, though an excess can cause lethargy (known as 'wood evil.') It certainly doesn't appear to affect our Dexters. It also had a use in treating diseases of cattle, which were supposed to have been caused by the malign activities of the common shrew. A live shrew would be buried in a hole in the branch of the ash, which could then be applied to the afflicted cattle. Trees so used were called 'shrew ashes.' I trust our grazier is aware of these facts! Until the 19th century it was also believed that sick children could be cured by passage through a split in the ash.

Sycamore probably arrived in this country as far back as the Roman occupation and soon became widely established. It has become closely associated with our cultural and justice systems. The Tolpuddle Martyrs first met under a Dorset sycamore in 1834. This tree still exists, but is heavily pollarded. The sycamore became known as 'dool' or 'grief tree' in parts of the West Country and Scotland as it was favoured for use as a public gallows because of its strength of timber. Another famous sycamore is the one at Peel Gap on Hadrian's Wall, which features in many photographs, and appeared in the 1991 film 'Robin Hood Prince of Thieves.' I doubt Robin ventured this far, but having walked the wall myself, I can vouch for the tree's superb location.

Oak has for centuries been used as a building material for churches, barns and houses. Oak charcoal was used for smelting and glass blowing, and oak bark for tanning, dye fixing and ink. Oaks provided the Navy with the massive twisted limbs needed for shipbuilding. In the 16th century it took 2,000 oaks, or 50 acres of trees to build a ship. During Elizabeth 1st's reign, a total

of around 34,220 tons of oak were cut for the navy, nearly 30,000 mature oaks, which caused a genuine fear of a shortage. It wasn't until late in the 18th century that it was decided to plant 11,000 acres of mainly oak in the Forest of Dean to supply the Royal navy. However, with the arrival of the iron-clad ships, these were not required and many still remain in our forests.

Beech woods, until the mid 1900s, were the workplace of 'bodgers' who coppiced the timber and cut and shaped it for furniture. The woods around the High Wycombe area supplied beech for the flourishing furniture industries. Beech was also used in making plywood, which, together with balsa wood, went into the construction of the De Havilland Mosquito, one of the most successful aircraft of the 2nd World War. The Mosquito became known as the 'Wooden Wonder,' due to its lightweight construction and superior speed, outperforming all other aircraft in production.

Hawthorn. You've probably admired the blossom, but did you know it attracts flies as well as bees and other pollinators? This is due to the fact that it secretes a chemical found in the first stage of putrefaction of corpses. The flies are looking for carrion on which to feed and lay their eggs. Will you now still find the blossom so attractive?

Allan Wood

Acknowledgement

Restoration of historic dry stone wall

FOLK is grateful to the following for donations towards restoration of the historic dry stone boundary wall of Charlton Kings Common (see page 2):

- *Natural England with funds from the European Union*
- *Gloucestershire Environmental Trust with funds from Cory Environmental*
- *Cotswold Way National Trail (for training of dry stone wallers)*
- *Cheltenham Borough Council*
- *Anonymous Charity*
- *Anonymous Member of FOLK*

FOLK is still seeking further grants and donations to start Phase 3 of the project.

Pride of Gloucestershire Community Awards 2010

These awards are run by the Echo and its sister newspaper the Citizen. The presentation was held in The Star Suite at Gloucester Rugby Club in June this year. Folk had a special interest as Judith Frazer-Holland, founder member and FOLK Chair for four years, had been nominated for an award in the Environmental Hero category.

There were seven awards for people who give their time and effort in the voluntary sector without receiving or looking for thanks. Approximately 35,000 people work as volunteers in Gloucestershire helping others, raising funds or putting their skills to jobs that would not otherwise be done by the paid sector.

Unfortunately Judith wasn't well enough to attend the ceremony, so Mike Donnelly represented her and FOLK. Three people were short-listed in the category Judith was nominated for and there was a short video of each showing their work in the voluntary sector.

For all the work and enormous effort that Judith has put into FOLK over the years, she won the award as the Gloucestershire 2010 Environmental Hero. The award was sponsored by Cory Environmental and presented to Mike by Steve Rogers of Cory Environmental.

This award to Judith was well deserved for all her time and effort put into FOLK now and over many years, we look forward to Judith enjoying better health and being part of the work parties once again.

Cotswold Wild Flower Week Walk

On a fine sunny and dry evening in the middle of June 20 people (some of whom were members of FOLK) joined leaders Mark and Clare Kitchen, the Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) recorders for this area, for a 2 hour amble.

Our route took us around Brownstones Quarry and via the arable reversion fields to Charlton Kings Common. From there we walked along the top of the hill to the footpath to Hartley Farm before returning to the Hill Fort, all the while looking at the rare, unusual as well as common flora.

This proved to be an interesting and informative experience for the participants, as Mark and Clare not only identified a selection of plants but regaled us with anecdotes about the origin of their common names and historic or medicinal uses.

For the more competent botanists amongst us, a rare and poorly recorded grass was found in the Quarry, as well as Basil Thyme and Bee Orchid, together with a beautiful bluish Iris, presumably a garden escape but not one that will cause problems, was growing on the top of the slope by the field edge. Unfortunately, the other alien species, Montbretia and Golden Rod, established in the quarry are potentially invasive, and these will need management in due course.

Whilst green flowered plants are not numerous, several were in evidence, including Common Twayblade (from the Orchid family), Crosswort and other Bedstraws. Although not on the hill proper, a short deviation was taken on to the path to Hartley Farm where a (locally) very rare umbellifer, *Anthriscus caucalis* (Bur Chervil) was growing as an arable weed. Unfortunately, it was suffering from the crop weed-killing efforts, but it may have survived long enough to set seed.

The Hill Fort produced some Adders Tongue Ferns, which previously had only been recorded close to the Gallops. This plant was another one for the enthusiasts, being small, green and with spathe-like fronds and spike of spores making them look like diminutive arums. The Yellow Rattle, which is semi-parasitic on grasses, was living up to its name in the breeze and as it was disturbed by our passage.

By this time, the light was beginning to fade and there was a distinct chill in the air so we called it a day. I think all the participants thoroughly enjoyed the evening, and I hope all learnt something from the meeting – I know I did. My thanks to Mark and Clare for a very enjoyable and entertaining walk.

Serena Meredith

Draft Tourism & Marketing Strategy

Sitting on the Social & Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Cheltenham Borough Council Chris was selected along with fellow colleagues to sit on a working group of folk who had an interest in the Towns Tourism. Ever since Cheltenham developed and grew as a Spa town in the 18th Century, visitors have been a very important part of its life. Today they remain a crucial part of the economic life of the town, it is important for CBC to have a clear strategy for maintaining and enhancing the characteristics that make Cheltenham attractive to visitors, and for marketing its attractions regionally, nationally and internationally.

The strategy aims are to evaluate the importance of visitors to Cheltenham and its local economy, to assess the strengths and weaknesses that Cheltenham offer to visitors, to consider what needs to be done to promote Cheltenham more effectively. The Cheltenham Borough Tourism Economic Impact Assessment for 2006 estimated that Cheltenham had a total of 1.8million visitors in that year. Total expenditure by visitors was £121 million. Of this spend, 32% was on retail goods and services, 30% was on catering, 13% on accommodation and 11% on entertainment. At the same time a total of 2.874 jobs in the borough were directly or indirectly related to tourism. These figures will have changed with the onset of the recession, but the point remains that tourism is a vital part of our prosperity.

Why do visitors come to Cheltenham? Cheltenham does not have a single dominant attraction, but visitors come here for a number of reasons. One being the Town's historic architecture and beautiful gardens which are a major draw. Cheltenham has a valid claim to be one of England's major garden towns. 'A Town within a Park', a phrase coined by a visitor from overseas, aptly describes Cheltenham's unique landscape, beautiful Regency and Victorian buildings enhanced by tree-lined streets and the extensive open spaces of our parks and gardens.

The excellence of the town's parks and gardens does not rest exclusively on the efforts of the Borough Council but on the many voluntary organisations, friend's groups and businesses

that help maintain Cheltenham's green recreational areas to a high standard. This partnership working has enabled the town to win national acclaim in the RHS Britain in Bloom Competition and many gold accolades from the Heart of England in Bloom along with the coveted Green Flag status for Parks.

The town also has a huge countryside recreational area at Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common, owned by the Borough Council and situated within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Formerly used for quarrying and agricultural purposes, it now lends itself to all kinds of activities, including walking, hiking, bird and butterfly watching, horse riding, hang gliding and mountain biking. A designated triple Site of Special Scientific Interest, the land is rich in ecology, geology and archaeology value, with wild flowers/grassland, deciduous and coniferous woodland and scrub which are all of national importance. It also offers spectacular views over the town and Severn Vale, which is fantastic as this is all free!

I was pleased to be able to have had an input with this document (which at present is 27 pages long) so that this fine recreational area did not get missed out! Business and Tourism Stakeholders will be consulted on this Draft Strategy before going forward to Cabinet for approval, I do hope FOLK will be consulted.

Chris Ryder

Acknowledgement

Continued support from Parish Councils

FOLK would once again like to thank Leckhampton with Warden Hill as well as Shurdington Parish Councils for their continued and generous sponsorship, which is greatly appreciated, especially given the current economic climate. As a result the cost of producing and distributing this newsletter for and to the FOLK membership in 2010 will be covered.