



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common **FOLKtalk**

Free to members; non-members 25p

Issue 53 Spring 2017

Welcome to the 2017 Spring FOLK newsletter. In this issue:

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FOLK membership What does it mean for you in 2017? From the editor

As signs of spring bring cheer after the winter, thoughts turn to getting out into the fresh air. As FOLK members know, Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common are great places to walk with pauses to reflect on the views and enjoy the countryside. Recent efforts by the FOLK Executive Committee and members have resulted in a modest but healthy increase in membership and there has been discussion about how we can make membership a more active experience.



Charlton Kings Common

Active membership can mean joining in our regular work parties. As this is not for everybody, we would very much like to find ways of turning FOLK's aims into a wider range of things that FOLK do and hopefully encourage more members to get actively involved.

The Hill and Common has a range of features including: characteristic flora and fauna, nationally important geology, iron age and industrial archaeology, local historical significance and stunning landscape views. Visitors use the site for walking, running, dog walking, cycling, horse riding and even hang gliding. The site has potential for providing further educational, leisure and community based activities. A challenge for us now is to find ways that FOLK and its wider membership can contribute to a more varied enjoyment of all the Hill and Common can offer.

FOLK was formed over fifteen years ago by a group of concerned individuals who wanted to support the Borough Council with their management of the Hill and Common to avoid putting at risk the unique nature of the site. Over the years potential problems such as the excessive growth of scrub and the obscuring of views have been tackled making the Hill more attractive to visitors who use the site in large numbers.

So an invitation is extended to FOLK members to suggest ways that FOLK can broaden its appeal to young and old and families. Maybe a family friendly Sunday work party or introducing youngsters to spotting butterflies or



Evening stroll on the Hill

working more closely with other organisations or maybe more social events? This is also an appeal to members to come forward to help the Committee either directly or by providing support and expertise. We look forward to hearing from you.

Introducing Shirley Wood a founder member of FOLK

There was a group of individuals who were in at the formation of FOLK in the late 1990s. Shirley and her late husband Alan were in that group and it is always interesting to be able to share the views of founder members. Shirley and Alan moved to Cheltenham in the 1970s and set up home within sight of Leckhampton Hill, as new properties were built on some of the plots of land

around Leckhampton. Shirley has been a keen supporter of FOLK since its inception and members will remember the contribution made by Alan Wood to the physical work done on the Hill and Common.

When did you join FOLK? We joined FOLK when membership opened after attending the first public meetings and site visits in 1998 and 1999. At the time there was concern for the long term management of the Hill and the view was that there was a need to set up a group to support Cheltenham Borough in its work on the Hill.



Shirley at her favourite viewpoint

How do you (and your family) enjoy the Hill? As soon as we settled in Cheltenham we enjoyed walking on the Hill. Alan was a Londoner but was very happy to be away from the city when we moved to Leckhampton. As our two sons were growing up they used the Hill as their playground and we had birthday party picnics with hide & seek there for our daughter and her friends.

What are your earliest memories of the Hill? Our house in Leckhampton had a view of the Hill and I remember in the first months watching the Hill change colour as the greys and browns of winter were replaced with the green of spring.

What changes have you noticed over the years? Trees are now much more of a feature than they were when we first came to Cheltenham. I think there may be more scrub now. Our sons have commented that there seems to be

less of the Lime kilns now than in their boyhood visits there. When we joined FOLK it would have been amazing to think that we would have the cattle on the Common but they look completely at home there now.

What is your favourite view of or from the Hill? I have a swing seat in my garden from where I can see where the Topograph is sited and the view from the Topograph over the Severn valley is my favourite.

What is your favourite time of year on the Hill? Late spring has the wildflowers and early butterflies appearing and is a time I enjoy. There don't seem to be as many butterflies in recent years but that may be a rose tinted view of earlier times.

What aspect of the natural history, archaeology or geology of the Hill do you find most interesting? The wildflowers and butterflies have always been my favourites but I am also interested in the Industrial Archaeology. When we moved to Leckhampton, I think more of the industrial archaeology features were visible than today. Alan was very interested in the conventional archaeology of the hilltop fort and settlement.

What does membership of FOLK mean to you? I am happy to support FOLK and the work it does and I believe it is important to have a group who will look after the Hill and Common for the future.



Signs of spring on the Common

What would you hope that FOLK would have achieved on the Hill by its 25th anniversary in 2025? I would like to think that FOLK will still be actively looking after the Hill and will have a bigger membership with families and younger people carrying on the good work. I hope that the Hill and Common keep their natural character and avoid becoming a country park. I know that FOLK will work to achieve that result.

Thanks to Shirley for sharing with readers her perspective on FOLK

FOLK AGM November 9th 2016 feedback

John Harvey, welcomed about 35 members and visitors to the Seventeenth AGM of FOLK held at the Leckhampton Primary School.

A new feature of the AGM was the tabling of an annual report. The chairman explained that FOLK had produced an Annual Report for the year ending 30th Sept 2016. This report includes all the reports from officers of FOLK. Additional comments are below.

The three newsletters produced during the year were the singlehanded work of Peter Whalley. The newsletters are always interesting and informative and are much appreciated by the members. Several members at the meeting endorsed this. The chairman thanked Peter for his valuable work on the newsletters.



Cotswold escarpment

A spring lecture given by Dr Ray Wilson was extremely well attended and much appreciated by those who attended. This event was organised by Mike Donnelly, and the chairman thanked him for this.

The chairman drew attention to the much improved FOLK website. Geoff Holt had led the work on developing this website over the

previous year and the chairman thanked him for this.

The annual report provided an analysis of the volunteer hours delivered by FOLK over the past year, but also stressed that this did not take account of much further work that had not been quantified. Several members emphasised the considerable value of this work and encouraged FOLK to try and include all the hours of work done in future reports. This could be of significant value when reporting to potential donors in the future.

Membership numbers have shown a steady but unspectacular increase over the past year and once again FOLK will seek to expand its membership during the coming year.

Geoff Holt explained that the work parties had continued throughout the year working to the plans produced for each successive 6 month period (these are published on the FOLK website). Peter Whalley commented that Natural England had inspected the site during the year and were pleased with the work done. They had also expressed interest in possibly surveying for the presence of Adders in the year ahead.

The Treasurer presented the Financial Report concluding that the finances of FOLK were in a healthy state.

Acceptance of the Annual Report (including the accounts) was proposed by Paul Ryder and seconded by Serena Meredith.

Motions for Discussion

In the absence of any formal motions from the membership, the Chairman explained that he would welcome the members views on whether FOLK should be involved in responding to planning applications and what should be FOLK's priorities for the year ahead.

Planning: The Chairman explained that the current constitution of FOLK did not have any reference to FOLK's



The View from the Hill

possible involvement in planning applications that might impact the Hill or Common. He asked whether FOLK should be involved in such applications and if so should the constitution of FOLK be amended to specifically refer to this. The Chairman had previously written an article for the FOLK newsletter on this subject and invited comment, but had received none. There then ensued a lively discussion on the topic. A representative of LEGLAG explained that they were actively involved in the planning process relating to the fields that can be viewed from Leckhampton Hill and he would welcome FOLK's support in this activity. However, several members expressed the view that FOLK does good work relating to conservation and improvement on the Hill and Common and it would be better to stick to that rather than become involved

in lobbying activities. The widespread view seemed to be that the constitution should not be amended and FOLK should confine itself to its current activities.

Priorities for 2017. The Chairman invited comments on what FOLK should prioritise in the year ahead.

Paul Ryder commented that he would welcome the installation of more bird boxes on the site and an increased focus on encouraging wildlife.



What we have of the Lime Kilns

A representative from LEGLAG commented that they would be willing to circulate their 1000+ members on topics that may be of common interest between FOLK and LEGLAG.

The Chairman explained that he would also like to increase the focus on Archaeology during the year ahead and include this in the work currently underway on mapping of the Hill and Common.

After election of Officers there was discussion on the awarding of life membership. The Chairman explained the constitution of FOLK allowed for the creation of up to 10 Honorary Life Members. These memberships are awarded to individuals who have made a substantial contribution to the work of FOLK. Life members are

nominated by the Exec Committee and elected at a general meeting. This year the Exec Committee has nominated two individuals to receive Honorary Life Membership in recognition of their outstanding work on the work parties over a number of years. The two members nominated to receive Life Membership are Malcolm Geddes and Tony Childs. Peter Niblett described

the enthusiastic work done by Malcolm and Tony over a long period and without any regard to their advancing years. The general meeting agreed unanimously to these nominations. The Chairman presented Malcolm Geddes with a letter from the Mayor of Cheltenham (Chris Ryder) thanking him for his dedicated support of FOLK. Tony was not present at the AGM, but a similar letter from the Mayor will be delivered to Tony

Following the formal business of the AGM, Toby Catchpole, Heritage Team Leader at Gloucestershire County Council gave an interesting illustrated talk on the Archaeology of Leckhampton Hill.

Subsequent to the AGM, the Executive Committee have discussed the format of future AGMs. It is hoped to attract more members to attend and improve the experience of those attending.

Spring around the corner. Get active with FOLK

FOLK has now chalked more than 15 years of actively working to protect, manage and promote Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common. There is a small group of members who get more directly involved in FOLK's activities. The Executive Committee are very keen to explore ways of attracting more people into a more active role with FOLK and invite Members to give their views on this challenge.

The Word from Wayne spring 2017

Wayne Sedgwick Senior Ranger. Cheltenham Borough Council

Progress has been good on clearing scrub and trees and installing a **new fence round the so called "Hopkins" land** at the eastern end of Charlton Kings common bordering the Cirencester Road. Work is expected to be complete by the end of February, adding nearly 20 acres of securely stock proof fenced land to the total available for grazing. This new area will allow the Council and the Grazier to move cattle from the Common in summer when the wild flowers are blooming; hopefully encouraging propagation of the wild flower population. The Grazier is continuing to build up a sustainable herd of cattle by matching the number of animals to the grazing available.

Work also continues on the derelict dry stone wall that forms a boundary of the above land with the track and Cotswold Way that joins Hartley Lane. Funding is available to start to renovate 30 metres of old wall. It is likely that

this will be a joint project with the Cotswold Wardens who organise courses in dry stone walling.

The Council's contractor has been busy clearing scrub and trees in the **area above the Bridge car park** on Daisybank road. Specimen trees are retained but work releases ground that will regrow as grassland. Reseeding of this ground as trialled last year as part of the Magnificent Meadows project will help in the re-establishment of a mixed plant community. An important aspect of this clearance will be the opening up of vistas from the Hill down Daisybank towards Cheltenham.



Litter at the bike jumps in Daisybank fields

Efforts are being made within the Council's budget to protect and restore the **archaeology** of the site. The Cotswold Voluntary Wardens will be clearing the ramparts of the Iron Age fort. Some clearance of scrub is planned for the butterfly motorway and the quarrying inclines.

Under the Environmental Stewardship Scheme that applies to the site, administered by Natural England, small scale **funding is available for scrub clearance**. FOLK, who carry out scrub clearance, and the Council, as landowner, will be able to take advantage of that facility to secure some useful additional funding. The Council have recently disposed of a package of land elsewhere in the area and some of the proceeds will also help with management of the Hill and Common.

The Borough Council have given permission for the staging of an **Orienteering** event on the Hill (details elsewhere in FOLKtalk).

Over a long period, attempts, mostly unsuccessful, have been made to establish contact with the biking community using the Hill. The need for this contact has been seen recently as serious problems of littering and creation of new mountain biking tracks has been seen on Daisybank field. FOLK has removed litter from this area on many occasions in the past but action to curtail biking activities in this area may be needed if the littering problems continue. As a footnote, contact has been made with a group of young people who have offered to remove litter from the area on a regular basis despite the fact that it is not their group who were responsible for the littering. This news is welcomed and the group will be supported.

Butterfly monitoring: what we saw in 2016

The total number of surveys done this year was 70, on 56 different days, giving an indication of the scarcity of suitable opportunities during the rather poor summer in general. 5 of them resulted in no sightings whatsoever.



Marbled White

As a whole the season was later than 2014 and 2015, but earlier than 2013. March was particularly cold and wet and with the last frost being recorded on 30th April, so it was no surprise that only 13 butterflies had been recorded by the end of that month. After an exceedingly wet June, during which there was a succession of torrential rain storms often accompanied by thunder and lightning, conditions in July improved markedly. This corresponded with a surge in butterfly numbers boosted as they were by the emergence of the common grassland species (Ringlet, Meadow Brown and Marbled White).

Abundance both on the best day and during the flight period were the lowest recorded for about half the species, despite the addition of two new survey sections. Some species numbers reduced by as much 90% from the peak recorded in 2014, but most were down by 30% to 50%. Green Hairstreak and Dark green Fritillary fared worst, though these have never been abundant or

widespread over the whole site. Of the grassland specialists, Common Blue numbers reduced by about 60%, and Meadow Brown and Small Heath were down by 50%, though Ringlet were less affected. A late surge in Speckled Wood sightings enabled them to buck the trend, recording the highest numbers in 2016 over the years of the survey period.

Once again, there appeared to be a further contraction in the distribution range of a number of species, particularly when the results from the additional sections added to the survey routes over the years are omitted. Common Blue, Small Heath, Dark green Fritillary, Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell and Comma seem to be the most affected. The last three all hibernate as adults over winter, and seemingly had a poor survival rate as few Small Tortoiseshell and Peacocks were seen in the spring and no Commas. By contrast, the number of different species seen in each section has remained



Common Blue on Bird's foot trefoil

more constant where there is limited management, with the wider variations occurring in the grazed parts of Charlton Kings Common.

As a good indicator species for unimproved limestone grassland, the distribution and abundance of Common Blue over the whole site

for each year surveys have been undertaken. This shows the

sections where the butterfly has been regularly recorded, so is in all likelihood breeding in those areas provided the larval food plant (Birdsfoot trefoil) is present. Interestingly, where it is most abundant, there is little or no grazing, other than on the lower slopes of Charlton Kings Common (W2 - just above Daisybank Road west of the turning circle and E3 - from Windass Hill east to half way along the Gallops). Sections L4a, L5, L6 (the top flat area on Leckhampton Hill from Salterley Quarry to the east of the hill fort), H1 (Hopkins field), E8 and E9 (Cowslip meadow) are managed by mowing (and the latter sometimes grazed for short autumn/winter periods) on rotation in order to curb the more rampant dominant grasses and scrub encroachment that outcompete the wild flowers.

In total 3589 butterflies were identified and recorded between 13 April and 8 September, whereas in 2014 the number was 6902. The weekly variation seen over the years most probably reflects poor weather, as periods of torrential rain can decimate adult populations, (numbers take a while to build up again from later emergences) or cloudy, cool and/or windy conditions that are unsuitable for surveying (butterflies will only fly of their volition in sunny or warm conditions). These are the sort of factors that, over time, are not as noticeable in the data set as a whole, or when longer periods (fortnightly or monthly) are considered.

The addition of a new survey area, known as Hopkins field, proved a boost to the overall figures, in so far as it had a reasonable number and variety of species, despite the lack of management (other than the occasional mow to reduce the scrub encroachment) over the last few years. Sightings included



Dark Green Fritillary

both Dark green and Silver washed fritillaries, Common blue, Brown argus, Dingy skipper and Marbled white.

Whilst the results of the survey indicate a reduction in butterfly numbers (despite the increased survey area), the decrease is unlikely to be caused solely by any particular management action (ash, scrub and gorse clearance) as other sites in the Cotswold on which regular monitoring is done showed

similar declines and variations in 2016. However grazing pressure, especially during peak flowering time (June and July) may well be having a detrimental effect, made worse by the north and easterly aspect of Charlton Kings Common and the generally less herb rich sward due to the dominance of Tor grass of which the cattle are not particularly fond. Action to remedy this situation is now being taken as more land owned by Cheltenham Borough Council adjacent to the common (Hopkins field mentioned above) has been fenced and will be used to reduce grazing pressure at times. Over the next couple of years it will be interesting to see whether and how butterfly numbers respond to this initiative, both on the common and in the field itself. In the meanwhile, with some cold winter weather (this appears to be beneficial to the survival of the early stages of butterfly development) and

the anticipation of a warm and sunny season to come, we can look forward to another season.

I would like to thank the following for their assistance with the surveys: Andrew Bishop, Pete Niblett, John and Jenny Palmer, Pat Raddon, Peter Sands and Peter Whalley. The dedication they have all shown in the face of often trying conditions and frustratingly uncooperative subjects that are reluctant to allow close examination for identification does them proud, and I am truly grateful to them all. Thanks to Russell Smith for pictures of the Marbled White and Common Blue and Butterfly Conservation for the picture of the Dark Green Fritillary

To be part of the team for 2017, please contact me by email gmeredith@btinternet.com or phone 01242 524138. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Serena Meredith FOLK Butterfly Surveying Co-ordinator January 2017

FOLK Work Party Report Spring 2017

Since the last newsletter the work parties have concentrated on our two main 'slash-and-burn' winter tasks: the removal of gorse and ash saplings.

The main area we have focused on for gorse removal has been on the top of Charlton Kings Common local to the top of the Windass track that leads up from '5-ways'. Here we have removed and burnt what was a thick patch of gorse that was encroaching on the various paths, shading out, and potentially killing off, the grassland that we are trying to conserve. This should allow the grasses and other flora to recover and enable the cattle to graze this area. Typical before and after photos are shown below.



Gorse clearance

We have also removed or thinned out other patches of gorse: along the top of the escarpment to the West of the top of Windass and along to the fence at the West end of Charlton Kings Common. This has been mainly old, leggy gorse that has limited ecological value. Some of it was also blocking the extensive views to the North from the main track. Those of you who have walked along here recently will have noticed that we have left some rather large piles of cut gorse. Don't worry, we will be returning to burn these, probably in April. It's just that we spent February focussing on cutting as much gorse as we could before we had to stop to avoid disturbing nesting birds.

The other prolific seeder and spreader, that we have to try and control is ash. This is mainly a problem on the Leckhampton Hill side of the site where there is more woodland, which is slowly spreading out and taking over the grassland. We have tended to neglect this side of the site over the last few years but now we are trying to redress the balance. As such we have been removing ash saplings, but not mature trees, from a number of areas above the 'Woodland Walk' that runs under the Devil's Chimney and, at the Southern end, climbs up to the top of the escarpment. These have opened up some clearings that connect with grassland above them with the hope that the grass will spread down into these areas. But, we will need to keep an eye



Clearing Ash on Leckhampton Hill

on the ivy that tends to occupy the lower levels to see that it doesn't compete too much with the grassland. We have also cut back ash saplings in a few other clearings on Leckhampton Hill where they had been encroaching too much. Again, we have left a few piles of cuttings which we will revisit and burn.

This winter we have tried a new regime for chemically treating cut stumps. In the past we have used chemicals to treat and kill off stumps where we don't want regrowth. This has been done by one of the small number of volunteers

who have had the necessary training and been certified to use chemicals. They have followed up behind the volunteers who are cutting and sprayed the cut stumps. However, because of the difficulty of seeing the cut stumps amongst the grass and detritus on the floor only a limited proportion of stumps were actually being treated meaning that we have to revisit some areas to cut regrowth again. As it is allowable for others to use chemicals, provided they are being supervised by a certified person, we have purchased a number of sprayers so that volunteers can spray stumps as they cut. This has proved to be much more successful at treating the vast majority of the stumps.

Of course, we don't chemically treat everything we cut. There are some areas where, for example, we are doing rotational cutting where we cut back an area but want regrowth so that we can maintain a good mix of new, mature and old plants. Even though we do treat some areas to try and keep them clear of the likes of gorse and ash, there is no way that we could, or would want to, remove them entirely. Everything has its value and needs to be retained, but we



Renovating steps on Charlton Kings Common

do need to try to control the spread of some species to stop them becoming too dominant.

One other small job we have done this winter is to repair some steps that had got quite worn and awkward to use. This was by the Cotswold stone wall on top of the site at the start of the path to Hartley Farm. We replaced the wood in a number of places, and built up the steps where they had been eroded, as can be seen in the photo below.

As well as the efforts of the FOLK volunteers we are lucky to have occasional assistance from the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens. This winter they have done quite a lot of work to clear the growth around the ramparts of the iron-age fort on the top of Leckhampton Hill.

The Wardens have also done clearance work to open up some of the old trackways that were used in the quarrying days. They have opened up the 'Top Incline' that starts by the limekiln ruins and also the horizontal trackway that runs from the top of this incline to the 'sidings'. (If you are not sure



Clearance of Iron Age site ramparts

where these are then have a look at the old maps on the FOLK website - address below). They have also been doing some Cotswold stone walling on the site.

In addition, Cheltenham Borough Council have had contractors working in a couple of areas. The main job has been to clear and put up fencing around what are known as 'Hopkins Fields' which are located at the East end of the site between the Gallops track and the old Cirencester road. This has been done to provide extra secure grazing for when the cattle need to be taken off Charlton Kings Common.



Improving the outlook from the Hill

Contractors have also been used to further open up the area above Bridge Car Park on Daisybank Road by the removal of more trees and scrub. It is hoped that this open space, close to the car parks, will encourage families and other visitors to use it, e.g. for picnics and games.

As always you are welcome to join us on any of our FOLK work parties. We are a friendly, mixed group of male and female volunteers. You can work at your own pace and take a break as and when you wish. We meet at 9.30am at Tramway Cottage Car Park, Daisybank Road, and are on the hill for approximately 3 hours. Tools

are provided by FOLK. For your own safety we ask you to wear stout footwear and bring tough gardening gloves. We have three FOLK work parties a month. Dates for the next 6 months are printed below.

For further information you can contact Geoff on 01242 244165 or Mike on 01242 238790, or you can look at the 'Work Party' page on our website (www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk) or send an email to folk.workparty@gmail.com.

Work party dates for Spring 2017 to Autumn 2017

April 2017	Thursday 13 th	Tuesday 18 th	Sunday 23 rd
May 2017	Thursday 11 th	Tuesday 16 th	Sunday 28 th
June 2017	Thursday 8 th	Tuesday 20 th	Sunday 25 th
July 2017	Thursday 13 th	Tuesday 18 th	Sunday 23 rd
August 2017	Thursday 10 th	Tuesday 15 th	Sunday 27 th
September 2017	Thursday 14 th	Tuesday 19 th	Sunday 24 th

SMOKE SIGNALS other news from the Hill and Common and the conservation scene.

Mayor's tea party

Chris Ryder, Cheltenham's current mayor and founding FOLK member, invited Executive Committee members to tea in the Mayoral Parlour in January 2017. As members will know Chris is an enthusiastic supporter of FOLK in her capacity as a local Councillor and she showed her appreciation of our work in her invitation. Members were given a mini guided tour of the Council Chamber, associated rooms and the many artefacts on display. Tea and cakes were taken whilst Chris described her time in office and her many interests in local issues such as Cheltenham in Bloom, our Twin Towns programme and facilities for disabled people.



Tea with the Mayor

Thank you Madame Mayor.

New Orienteering event on the Hill.

Andrew Ross FOLK secretary has received details about an event on the Hill. This has been briefly discussed by the Executive Committee after Wayne Sedgwick informed FOLK that a request had been made to the Borough Council. This is the information: *The first ever orienteering event (to our knowledge!) to be held on Leckhampton Hill will be on Saturday 22nd April. This will be organised by North Gloucestershire Orienteering Club, and will use the newly produced orienteering map of the hill, which shows every path and crag, every niche and knoll.*

Orienteering involves using map and compass to navigate between a number of control points which are marked on the map. The winner is the fastest one! Hence, to be successful, you need to move quickly and make good route

choices. However, not everybody is so concerned about winning and many are happy just to be outdoors, finding their way about in a pleasant area.

There will be 4 courses on offer. Yellow is the shortest and easiest and is aimed at children. Orange is suitable for adult beginners. Green and Blue are quite a bit harder (with Blue being the longer of the two) and are only really suitable for experienced orienteers. Typically, courses will take between 30 and 90 minutes to complete.

Parking will be by Hartley Farm on Hartley Lane. People are allowed to start off between 11.30 and 13.30, and courses will close at 15:00. The entry fee is £5 for adults and £2 for children. In addition, there is a £1 fee to hire a timing chip if you don't have your own. The chip is used to record which controls you have visited and your time.



Orienteers in the Forest of Dean

f you think you know Leckhampton Hill well, then come and put that to the test! We expect there to be at least 100 people taking part, and these will be of all ages, from primary school children to pensioners. Newcomers are very welcome to come and give it a try. Help and advice will be on hand. Incidentally, this event is likely to become a (more-or-less) annual fixture.

For more information about this event and orienteering in general, consult our club website, www.ngoc.org.uk

Threatening behaviour on the Hill

Earlier in February reports appeared on social media that an unidentified man had been threatening women walking dogs on Leckhampton Hill. This involved the man making aggressive moves towards the dog, which responded defensively as would be expected of any dog. At this point the man turned his aggressive attitude to the dog owner demanding that they controlled their dogs. Police have been informed and a picture of the man was supplied to police. The incidents have been reported in Gloucestershire

Live <http://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk> One Facebook user posted: "For any women walking their dogs at Leckhampton hill please be careful. There have been a few incidences of a man being aggressive and threatening toward women and dogs. He has silver hair and a silver beard, looks to be in his 50's or 60's.

"He carries a stick in his backpack and will pull the stick out and threaten to hit your dog. Share with anyone who walks their beloved dogs at Leckhampton Hill."

Adam Reynolds, Green Space Manager, with Cheltenham Borough Council advised that for anyone that feels threatened or has experienced aggressive behaviour to contact the police at the earliest opportunity and provide them with as much information as possible



New desirable residence

Owl Boxes introduced to Leckhampton Hill

Good news has been received from Wayne Sedgwick, Borough Council Ranger and echoed by Councillor Paul Baker. Wayne says in a recent email: "I thought I would make you aware that I have been contacted by the Owl Conservation Trust regarding erecting some owl boxes in and around the hill area. We are

able to receive some funding through Natural England for each installed box. The intention is that 10 boxes will be put up around the site over the next month. A Barn Owl box was installed in the Stone Barn at Hill farm last Thursday and there will be up to 9 Tawny and Small Owl boxes within the next month. The group will be monitoring them for use. If anyone is interested I will let you know when they are about to go up. FOLK members using the Hill will be looking out for signs of any new residents in the boxes and updates will be provided in FOLKtalk.

Butterfly Walks in Gloucestershire

Our very own patch is featured in the 2nd edition of Butterfly Walks in Gloucestershire recently produced by the local branch of Butterfly Conservation, the charity dedicated to 'Saving butterflies, moths and our environment'. A route, starting from Salterley (also known as Wagon) Quarry takes you through one of the best (but by no means the only) areas of the hill for viewing these delicate beauties, as well as guiding you to the local landmark of the Devil's Chimney and for much of the route, affording excellent views out over the Severn Vale to the Malvern Hills and beyond.

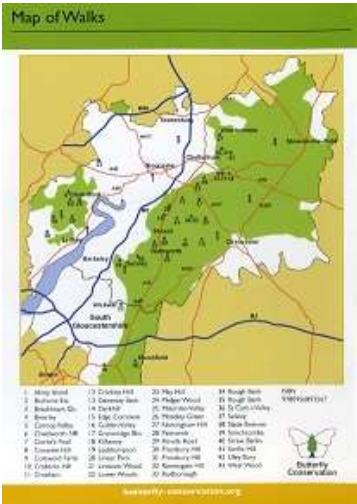
In total, 43 walks throughout the length and breadth of Gloucestershire are described as well as 3 in South Gloucestershire. 9 are west of the Severn, 2 in the Vale itself and the remainder in or close to the Cotswolds, ranging from in the north east, the Cotswold Farm Park (situated 8km west of Stow-on-the-Wold and home of Adam Henson from the BBC programme Countryfile) to Golden Valley just east of Wick in the south west. All the information you might need on such things as opening times, access and conditions, getting there, parking, key species, best time to visit and distance are provided for each route. Brief details of a further 13 additional sites of interest are also given, but even these do not include all the parts of the county worthy of visits by a butterfly enthusiast. However, for those who are not familiar with the locality, all walks and sites represent a good starting point for further exploration.

The booklet is richly illustrated with colour photographs of the sites covered, species likely to be encountered, as well as a map showing the general location of each walk and individual maps of each walk described. To help with timing your visit, a butterfly flight period chart based on local records has been included.



This 2nd edition has been produced because over the years a few of the walks contained in the original publication had become unsuitable or unavailable

while new walks had been suggested. This new version of the booklet still contains a few of the old walks, others have been revised where necessary and new walks added. Since 2008 Butterfly Conservation has bought and opened Rough Bank. This is a magnificent site for butterflies and moths as well as a wide range of other flora and fauna. There are two Rough Bank walks in the booklet – one for butterflies and one for scarce moths. Another of the new walks is Alney Island. For those working in central Gloucester this is a very pleasant lunchtime outing. (It's also a good place to see the Severn Bore.)



Copies of the booklet are available at a cost of £6.00 each (or 2 for £10) plus postage and packing £2.00, though if you live in either Leckhampton or Charlton Kings, hand delivery is offered for free. Alternatively, phone or email to arrange collection at a FOLK work party or from the address below. Please send a cheque made payable to Butterfly Conservation, Gloucestershire Branch to

Serena Meredith, 23 Highland Road, Cheltenham, GL53 9LU. Tel 01242 524138. gmeredith308@btinternet.com

Yet more butterfly matters

Serena Meredith FOLK's resident butterfly suprema would like to publicise new additions to the FOLK website <http://www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk/> Included are: results from the 2016 butterfly monitoring exercise on the Hill and Common and new butterfly pages.

Serena is also advertising an event: "An introduction to the butterflies of Brownstone Quarry for Beginners" to be held on Saturday 3 June 2017: Brownstone Quarry, Leckhampton Hill

Places must be booked in advance as numbers will be limited (sorry no children under the age of 12 and no dogs). This is a joint meeting with Gloucestershire Branch, Butterfly Conservation. Contact Serena Meredith as above for information on time and venue and to reserve your place.



Tyres dumped in Daisybank road

Fly tipping on the Hill and Common

The subject of Fly Tipping has been receiving a lot of coverage in the press and on TV recently. Unfortunately this is something that we are not immune from on the hill. Only this week someone decided to dump some old car wheels and tyres in the bushes along Daisy Bank Road. In the past there has been builder's waste, carpets, general rubbish and all sorts dumped on the hill, and the problem across the country seems to be getting worse. If visitors see any signs of fly tipping they are asked to contact the Council.



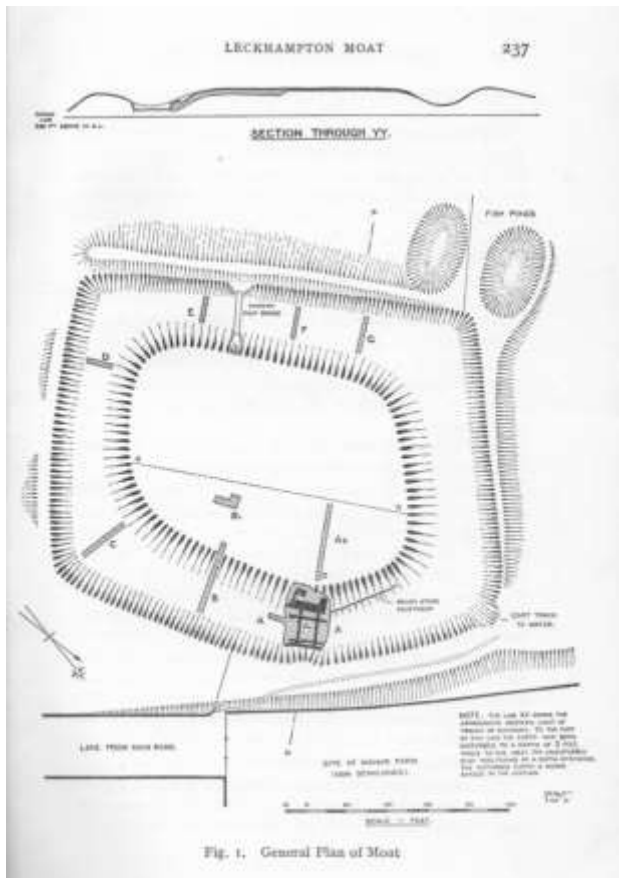
Work in progress

Bridge Car park drainage works

People using the Bridge car park on Daisy bank road to access the Hill via the standard gauge incline will be familiar with the flooding problems there. Work has been carried out by the Borough's contractor to alleviate the problem.

Leckhampton Moat, a follow up courtesy of Eric Miller Leckhampton Local History Society and FOLK member

Members who attended the AGM and heard Toby Catchpole in his talk about local archaeology mention the existence of a moat near Leckhampton Court,



Plan of Leckhampton Moat

details of a geophysical survey carried out on behalf of the Local History Society, in Leckhampton LHS Bulletin No 3 (2004). This is out of print, but will be appearing with text and illustrations on the society's website.

may like to know a bit more about the Moat. The plan included here (North is more or less at the bottom) is taken from the *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society's Transactions*, published in 1933. The excavations had been carried out by Major Clift. Also included is a drawing produced by Eric, showing how the settlement might have looked in the 14th century. The island in the centre was probably the site of another manor house (unconnected with the Court).

There is an article about the Moat, including

Leckhampton Local History Society Programme for 2016-2017

Meetings take place at Glebe Cottages, St Peter's Church
Church Road, Leckhampton on Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm.
Admission is FREE for members and £2 for visitors.

Forthcoming meetings:

19th April John Peters: Trying to photograph listed buildings for English Heritage;

8th May Sharon Himes: Cavalier's Adventure, voyage to Virginia in 1649 of Colonel Henry Norwood of Leckhampton Court;

17th May: AGM and Angela Applegate A life of Gustav Holst

A new programme will be included in the next Issue of FOLKtalk



Future residents of Leckhampton Hill

And finally: Poetry inspired by the Hill

In recent issues of FOLKtalk we were privileged to be able to publish poems by Angela France, Cheltenham's Poet in Residence. Angela's regular column: "Poetry Point", in the Echo recently featured Alicia Stubbersfield another local poet who draws inspiration for her work from the Hill and the local environment. A published author, *The Yellow Table* (Pindrop Press 2013), Alicia has kindly allowed us to publish some of her poetry.

Sunday Morning Below Leckhampton Hill

The church bells' soft clamour
rises into circles widening
like ripples from a stone.

Birdsong fills newly-hidden branches,
bands of light make geometry
on the woods' dry floor.

May sun touches my skin,
polishes the dog's fine fur
as we walk the white road.

One magpie tearing at road kill
is not necessarily an omen.

Alicia Stubbersfield

As a footnote Angela will also be publishing a new book of poetry in July and will have a launch event at the Wheatsheaf in July.

Contributions to the FOLK Website are always gratefully received. Contact:
webmaster.leckhamptonhill@gmail.com.



Artist's impression of the Leckhampton Moat by Eric Miller

Thanks as ever to all our sponsoring organisations: Charlton Kings and Shurdington, Parish Councils from whom we have had financial support this year and the Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish Councils who have promised to provide financial support. Cheltenham and County Cycling Club provide financial support, and Cotswold Conservation Board and a special thanks to Cheltenham Borough Council in the shape of Wayne Sedgwick who gives cheerful and enthusiastic and continuous support for which we are very grateful.

STOP PRESS. FOLK social evening June 16th Somerset Arms Leckhampton skittles and barbecue. Further details soon save the date in your diary

About FOLK

FOLK is an organisation set up to work with landowners, to promote the conservation and management of the ecology, geology and archaeology of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common. We support sustainable recreational and agricultural use of the land.

We welcome new members to support and help us in this important work. If you wish to join (either as an individual or as a family) please contact any of the people listed below. Annual membership is £6 per year for an individual or £9 for a family.

If you have any comments on the Newsletter or would like to contribute an article to the next edition later in 2013 please contact Peter Whalley on 01242 517024 or email to: norwoodpw1@gmail.com articles of around 500 words plus a photo at any time would be most welcome

Why not have a look at what is new on the FOLK website <http://www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk/> and look us up on Facebook Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common.

Contact FOLK

John Harvey, Chairman: 01242 520053

Geoff Holt Treasurer and Working Parties: 01242 244165

Mike Donnelly Working Parties 01242 238790

Anne North, Membership and Grazier: 01242 522767

Find the Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common on www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk and on Facebook

necessarily reflect the views of FOLK or its Executive Committee