



New group joins conservation work parties on the Hill

Conservation work has received a great boost by the recruitment of a small group of hard working individuals. They are all vegetarians, rarely complain and are prepared to carry out their duties 24 hours a day for months on end. They need careful management but are happy if they have a ready supply of water and freedom to roam over the areas made available to them.



They make short work of the coarse grasses that have been smothering out the beautiful limestone flowers. They also relish tackling new scrub growth such as bramble and gorse. They are now busy recruiting new members to their number.

Who are these paragons of virtue? Well, they are called Dexter cattle and they have been recruited under contract from a neighbouring farm run by the North family. The Dexter breed is ideal for grazing on rough terrain. They originated in south west Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth century where they were bred from the best of Celt cattle which roamed about mountainous areas. The breed was introduced to England in 1882 since when

they have been valued for their long life, good maternal qualities and the ability to produce both high quality milk and excellent beef whilst remaining happy to graze on poor quality pasture.

They stand just over a metre in height and weigh about 370 kg. Their small size and sturdy legs make them ideal for steep hills and rough terrain. They are usually black but may also be a reddish brown colour.

The present herd of 8 is grazed in temporary paddocks bounded by electric fencing which is moved on every month or so according to the impression they make on the grass. Over the course of a year they should have covered all the designated areas on the Hill described in the Site Management Plan. It is hoped that, if the assessment of their effectiveness is satisfactory, they will be available year on year to maintain the SSSI limestone grassland flora in this traditional manner.



Jack Shepherd September 2003

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Work Party Report - Summer 2003

During June and early July we concentrated our efforts on continuing the clearance of burnt scrub on Charlton Kings Common. We were approached by Dean Close School in conjunction with their Action Day in the Community, and about ten pupils joined us on the Hill for the day. In addition to helping with scrub clearance they were given a short talk on the importance of the limestone grassland by Julian Bendle from Crickley Hill Country Park, further background information by a ranger from Cheltenham Borough Council and a brief explanation of the history and objectives of FOLK. The project was very successful and our thanks go to all involved. I hope we will see similar sessions of this nature in the future.

We also obtained funding to assist in the clearance work, which enabled us to employ Glebe Contractors on further areas along the top and lower slopes of Charlton Kings Common. Whilst a considerable amount of work remains to be done the general picture is now much better than the situation we faced after the fire on 24th April.

Other seasonal tasks such as ragwort pulling, bench repairs, installation of a field gate and notice board have been attended to.

Our thanks go to all those members who regularly pick up litter in their walks on the hill. Please be careful what you handle. If you regularly do this unrewarding but unfortunately necessary task, I can supply black plastic sacks.

Finally, here is my usual plea for your assistance on our work parties. We have welcomed some new faces recently but we could always do with further help.

Midweek Work Parties

Thursday 9th October 2003
Thursday 13th November 2003
Thursday 11th December 2003
Thursday 8th January 2004

Weekend Work Parties

Sunday 26th October 2003
Sunday 23rd November 2003
Sunday 25th January 2004

Please note that there will be **no** work party on Sunday 28th December.
All work parties meet in Tramway Cottage car park, Daisybank Road at 9.30am.

Allan Wood

MOTH TRAPPING REPORT

"With excellent moth trapping conditions on Monday evening (4th August), I arrived at the turning circle in Daisybank Road at 9.15pm and set up one of my light-traps (using a 160W Blended MV bulb). I turned the light on at 9.30pm and for the first half hour caught nothing. At about this time I was joined by Anne and Annette North, who had heard the noise of my generator and came over to see what was going on. Not a lot was happening: no big showy moths, only micro-moths which look pretty uninteresting to the casual observer (and loads of flying ants).

Not many moths were flying and, once the Norths had left, I settled down to listen to the car radio. Within minutes, at about 10.15pm, the bombardment began: for the next hour and a half I did not stop recording! I only gave up at midnight because I had an early meeting next day. Although there were no exciting records among the list of macro-moths, a good healthy list of 45 species accumulated. Among the 35+ species of micro-moths, however, there were some good records, such as *Sitachroa verticalis* and *Evergestis pallidata*, and I also had to take three home to identify.

After a couple of hours with magnifying glass, microscope and reference books, I eventually tracked down the problem micros, two of which seem to be unrecorded in Gloucestershire for many years. I will have to let the County Recorder, Roger Gaunt, have a look at them for confirmation."

Jonathan Brock

GEOLOGY WALK ON AUGUST 3RD 2003

"It used to be the seaside here", said my youngest son aged 4yrs, as he kicked the stones along Daisybank Road on his way home. And so it was, a huge sea where now stands Leckhampton Hill, but in Jurassic times about 150-190 million years ago!

On a hot, sunny morning, a group of over 20 walked up from Tramway Car Park to the newly exposed rock behind the lime kilns. Here began a very informative tour led enthusiastically by the geologist Mark Campbell. We first saw a small exposure of the huge thickness of grey Liassic Clays which were laid down in the deep seas, and these now underlie the vast thickness of the Lower Inferior Oolite Limestone which characterises Leckhampton Hill. At this location, no sandstone was laid down on top of the clay, as it was at Dursley and Moreton. This represented a gap of 4-5 million years when no sedimentation occurred in this area.

The changing nature of the ancient sea, and of the rivers that fed into it, created the variation in the layers of sediments which became rock beds or strata on drying out and under compression.

The 'Leckhampton Limestone' is a rubbly layer of rock, laid in much shallower seas, and is distinctive enough to be used as the basal unit in comparing rocks across Middle England. We saw the fragmented fossil remains of mollusc-type sea creatures and evidence of 'bio-turbation' where they left there trails in the sediments. Other beds of limestone had an orange colour due to the high concentration of iron caused by the period of slow sedimentation into the sea.

The greatest part of Leckhampton Hill is made up of 'oolitic limestone', consisting of 'pin-head' sized concentric balls of 50% lime and mud. It signifies shallower seas where wave action has caused small grains to roll and become coated with lime. A 'pea-grit' bed of 2-3 metres thick is an exaggerated version of oolite due to storms and an algal presence in deeper water. Sometimes the limestone sea became muddied to form an 'oolitic marl'.

The top of the hill near the trig point revealed a footpath full of 'Gryphaea', fossilised sea molluscs also known as 'Devil's Toenails', which are embedded in a gritty layer of rock. This layer is distinctive to Leckhampton Hill and has been used as capping stones on Cotswold stone walls. Here also is the surface expression of a fault line in the rocks, which has been incorporated into the Iron Age Settlement as a defensive ditch.

Descending through the woods back to Tramway are contours indicating 'rotational slip', which is caused by the softer underlying Liassic Clays bending under the heavy limestone cap of Leckhampton Hill. Other features represent the floundered ground left after the Ice Age.

It was an excellent guided tour. All we need now is a guided map of the geological features and we can have fun checking it all out again!

Brenda Ainscow

Date for your diary

Friends of Leckhampton Hill and
Charlton Kings Common

AGM

7pm Monday 20th October 2003

At Leckhampton Primary School, Half
Road

Your Executive Committee Members are:-

CHAIRMAN - Julius Marstrand (01242 518846)
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TREASURER - Anne North (01242 522767)
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Pam Brookes	Tony Clifford
Vic Ellis	Judy Frazer-Holland
Shelagh Hallaway	Tony Meredith
John North	Allan Wood
	Co-opted Sue Barrett

FOLK BIRD-WATCH WALK

A small group of people met at the end of Highland Road at 9.15am on 4th May in expectation of seeing a fair selection of typical "Birds of the Limestone Grassland and Scrub". It was a lovely sunny morning and walk leaders Frances and Tony Meredith had already made a recce of the route earlier that morning and were hopeful of a good variety of birdsong, including the possibility of a "vagrant" CHIFFCHAFF which had been singing a completely different song from that of the usual British Species.

Walking slowly up through the footpath from Highland Road to Daisybank we quickly spotted and heard ROBIN, WREN, BLACKBIRD, DUNNOCK and BLACKCAP. At the top of the first rise a GARDEN WARBLER was singing its heart out in a sustained song and provided an opportunity to recognise the difference its and the more usually heard BLACKCAP song. In the middle field WHITETHROATS were singing and displaying in the area of distant bramble bushes which, unfortunately, made it harder to pick them out.

On reaching the top of the slope, just in front of the "muddy steps" which descend into Daisybank field we found two "twitchers" who were there to listen to the "vagrant" CHIFFCHAFF which was obligingly singing and perching in the branches of small trees growing in the hedgerow. Both agreed the bird was undoubtedly a CHIFFCHAFF despite its strange song. Moving on down the steps into the tree-shaded standard gauge incline, there were more songs from BLACKCAPS, and conventional CHIFFCHAFFS, two LINNETS flew overhead.

In Daisybank field there were MISTLE THRUSHES, SONG THRUSHES, SWALLOWS, WHITETHROATS, GREENFINCHES and BULLFINCHES. Turning into Daisybank Road, we could hear the high-pitched notes of GOLDCRESTS and could occasionally catch sight of these busy little birds, high up in the conifers. Further along Daisybank we met another bird-watcher who reported that he had heard a GRASSHOPPER WARBLER giving its distinctive "reeling" (like a fishing-line reel) just past Underscar cottage.

Continuing along the track we heard, then saw, a TREE PIPIT soaring up from a perch near the top of the scarp, then parachuting down to the mid-scarp grass. Two more were seen as we turned the corner of the eastern scarp, both perching on semi-burnt scrub.

WILLOW WARBLERS were giving their melodious descending song along the Gallops and there were also GREAT TITS and BLUE TITS in evidence.

On the return journey we saw a BUZZARD and two KESTRELS hunting along the northern scarp, one of the latter being attacked by a ROOK. We also heard PHEASANT and, more unusually, a CUCKOO. Finally a family of LONG-TAILED TITS, a COAL TIT and the rather less exciting STARLINGS, MAGPIES, WOOD PIGEONS, FERAL PIGEON, COLLARED DOVE and a LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL brought our total to 37 species.

The identity of the "vagrant" CHIFFCHAFF is unresolved, despite submitting a recording for scrutiny by other bird-watchers. It will be interesting to see if it returns next Spring.

Tony Meredith

*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.*

BENEATH THE DEVILS CHIMNEY

Some time in the late 1870's, so the family tradition has it, a Mr Charles Marshall lived in the Shurdington Road. From his house he could see a white washed quarryman's cottage on Leckhampton Hill. His ninth child had been born a few months before, and finding that the cottage was up for sale, he brought it as a healthy summertime home for his large family.

His brother Richard, whose initials were R.E. (they were partners in the ironworking firm of R.E. & C. Marshall) joined in the venture. He began the construction of a smart house in part of the land that went with the cottage. Sadly, he died before Rockholme was completed, and that portion of the property passed out of the family. Charles Marshall's descendants, however, were to live in Craigside Cottage for about a hundred years: it was a happy coincidence that the 1979 purchasers, quite unrelated, should also bear the surname Marshall.

Set on a steep site directly underneath the Devil's Chimney, the cottage garden had a gate at the back opening on to the footpath running at the foot of the scarp. The little Marshalls ran and climbed and played both in the garden and beyond it. However, when Dale became the owner of the Hill, Charles Marshall received a letter – as did every householder with a gate leading out on to its inviting slopes – requesting the reason for such an arrangement, and pointing out in no uncertain terms that the Hill was private property. History does not relate whether Marshall was among those bowler-hatted rioters shown in the photos of the famous Leckhampton Riots. Most probably he was not: perhaps the riots took place during the 6 months when he was living in St George's Road, as he did each year in the wintertime, or perhaps he considered

it unsuitable conduct for a churchwarden of St Mary's in the town centre!

Charles's eldest daughter, Mary, was married in the 1890's to the solicitor son of a South Yorkshire boilermaker. Edith, the second daughter, married the boy next door at Ferncliffe, Louis Sharpe, who ran a high class bootmaking business with his brother Willie. (Their shop, in the lower end of the Promenade, still sells shoes today; Sharpes' leather warehouse, where personalised footwear was hand made on individual lasts, is now a restaurant and pub.) The young birds were flying the nest, and Charles himself was spending more time down in the town. Edith and Louis took over the cottage.

Meanwhile, on the corner of Daisybank Lane, an eccentric old spinster inhabited Ashmeade Lodge. She kept a number of horses in the stables (converted into Beech Cottage in the late 1950's), and a groom to see to their wants and take them out for daily exercise. Each evening she would go out to the stables and read the Bible to them: they must have been the most religious horses in the region! By day, she often enjoyed sitting on a high stool behind the stone wall in front of the house. People walking along the footpath would suddenly find themselves ambushed, as she surprised them from her lofty perch.

In 1910, after her death, Charles Marshall bought Ashmeade Lodge. Of his ten children (the last boy was born after he had bought Craigside Cottage), three had died in infancy, four were married. Until his death in 1923, Ashmeade Lodge was home to Charles and the three others – one bachelor and two spinsters. But by that date, his elder son-in-law was reaching retiring age. And the Hill was becoming a highly industrialised area.

Miss M. Paterson

to be continued.....

FOLK		CBC		Others	
Administrative	Conservation	Administrative	Conservation	Administrative	Conservation
Discuss mountain bike slalom course	Routine Path Clearance	Discuss mountain bike slalom course with FOLK	Replace fence above Devil's Chimney	Seek funding for 1, 2, & 3 adjacent.	1. Carry out Baseline Archaeological Survey
Identify next parts of Charlton Kings Common & Delsybank Fields to be grazed in the winter & early spring (Jan-Mar) following their removal from the Common to be covered by the bull - using electric fenced paddocks not extensive grazing. Possibility of leaving in some remote corner posts?	Litter picking	Monitor application to GCC to move FP ASH40 to provide access to area 19 via headland gate.			2. Carry out structural survey of Limekiln
Apply to English Nature to extend rotational grazing to other areas on Charlton Kings Common.	Repair fence alongside Motorway ASH47 & Brownstone Quarry car park.	Continue consultation & investigation over wheelchair access	Supply 12' gate, hinges, catch, lock & chain for headland ASH 40 - FOLK to erect.		3. Conduct Geophysical Survey of Iron Age Fort
Contact local schools with a view to trying to get Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates to participate in conservation work. Send CD of SMP. CBC to supply CDs.	Site visit with CBC to agree: a) DBFields PROW clearance. b) DBRoad turning place for emergency vehicles. c) Scrub clearance areas 17 & 31. d) Horse & cycle route to bypass barriers.	Apply for combined Modification Order for Rights of Way: a) As recommended in the SMP b) To provide Bridleway access from South West of Site c) Progress or combine application for re-classification of Sandy Lane & 'The Gallops' by means of a Path Creation Order [without necessarily seeking a Traffic Restriction Order on the old Tumpke Road]	Footpath maintenance in DB Fields. Timing & widths to be agreed with FOLK	NR to prepare plan for removal of vegetation from ramparts and centre of Hill fort, repairing eroded areas of ramparts and surface round Topograph. To include industrial & ancient historic environment. Plan to be discussed together with possible sources of funding.	Industrial archaeologists to clear scrub from tramway & sidings - areas 13 & 15. October to March
Establish what fees, if any, may be payable for agreed Modification Orders for Rights of Way-meet on site with GlosCC Highways Dept. and CBC.	Burn debris left by contractors in area 28 & 25.	Arrange for Fixed Point Photographic Survey of the Site covering: a) Vegetation; b) Geoconservation; c) Historical. Especially in grazed & mown areas.	BTCV to clear bridleway ASH 33.	County Archaeological Service-Prepare a STATEMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE of site & get it approved by English Heritage.	CC-CC & BHS/riders to clear agreed scrub from horse/bicycle route to bypass barriers.
Write form to be signed by work party volunteers re safe practices. JM.		Advise on progress of LNR status.		AONB -design & purchase of interpretation boards.	
Agree on route of horse & cycle route to bypass horse barriers following Site visit by Site management Sub-Committee & agreement from CBC. CC-CC & horse riders to clear this autumn.	Continue clearance of burnt gorse on Charlton Kings Common.	Prepare Job Description for Project Officer & discuss possible sources of funding, in consultation with FOLK & LHCG. NB.	Continue trial grazing in Area 25.	Apply for SCHEDULING of site of quarrying as an Industrial Archaeological Site	
Discuss & agree SMP action plan with LHCG. JM & JF-H to meet with SB.	This autumn graze cattle on area 25 outside Shekleton. Scrub clearance in area 31 following cattle grazing.	Consult FOLK & others about widening the Cotswold Way at the Eastern end of the Site & removing the horse barriers to permit use in accordance with AR7 or provide an alternative route.	Widen part of Delsybank Road in autumn to improve access for emergency vehicles. Width to be increased on the downhill side with a turning bay created where the RUPP & FP divide.		
Prepare a report for FOLK AGM, an agreed work programme for the next 3 months & an outline one for the following 9 months. (5 year action plan will probably not be agreed before FOLK AGM)	Scrub clearance in areas 3, 18, 17 & 9.	Consult FOLK & others on sites for further AONB stonewalling training courses			
Membership drive with a new leaflet delivered to local residents.	Erect 12' gate on headland ASH 40. Gate, hinges, catch, lock & chain to be supplied by CBC.	CBC to discuss & agree a realistic work programme for the next year to be publicised at FOLK AGM in October.			
Agree ragwort control methods for next year.		Apply for ESA payments.			
Get set of updates for Lowland Grassland Management from English Nature.		Find out who owns which parts of DB Fields. Would grazing be suitable? Apply to PYE Developments to graze their part of DB Fields.			
Continue consultation over interpretation boards with AONB.		CBC to supply Management Plan CDs to be sent to schools with a view to getting D of E candidates to participate in conservation work.			
FOLK to write to TBC re poor repair of DB Road surface.					

KEY

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| CBC - Cheltenham Borough Council | AONB - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| TBC - Tewkesbury Borough Council | D of E - Duke of Edinburgh |
| GCC - Gloucestershire County Council | ESA - Environmentally Sensitive Area |
| LHCG - Leckhampton Hill Consultative Group | PROW - Public Rights of Way |
| BHS - British Horse Society | RUPP - Road Used as Public Path |
| BTCV - British Trust for Conservation Volunteers | SMP - Site Management Plan |
| CC-CC - Cheltenham & County Cycling Club | JM - Julius Marstrand |
| | NR - Nick Russell |
| | SB - Steve Brayshaw |