



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

NEWSLETTER

www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk

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SPRING 2005

Belmont School

Belmont School caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural problems, and other complex needs such as language and communication problems. The school is suffering from falling roles as a result of the Local Education authority's policy of greater inclusion for pupils with SEN into mainstream settings. Currently under threat of closure, the staff and pupils are awaiting the final decision of the School's Adjudicator as to its future, expected within the next few weeks.

Pupils in their final two years of schooling take part in a Work Related curriculum which includes employability training, a programme of visits to industry and business, work experience placements and opportunities to develop their key skills through group work and team building exercises. As part of this programme a small group of seven pupils, aged 14 and 15 years, joined a FOLK work party, together with Cheltenham Borough Council Community Rangers, to work on Leckhampton Hill. Together they have been clearing scrub areas, sawing and clipping small trees and branches to prepare the area for spring grazing. Pupils have benefited from the knowledge and experience of the adults working alongside them who have taught them about the natural environment, working safely with tools and equipment, and helped them to understand the essential aspects of working successfully with others.

Pupils and staff have enjoyed their visits to the hill and look forward to future sessions.

Helen Dowell, Assistant Head Teacher, Belmont School

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY - Walks Hosted by FOLK & Cheltenham Borough Council

BIRD WALK

Date: Sat 23rd April 2005
Time: 9.00am for 9.15am departure
Topic: The Birds of the Hill
Guide: Cheltenham Bird Club
Meeting: Highlands Road (off Sandy Lane)
the end adjacent to Daisybank Fields

GEOLOGY WALK

Date: Sun 22nd May 2005
Time: 2.00pm
Topic: Following the new Geology Trail
Guide: Gloucestershire Geoconservation Trust
Meeting: Brownstones Quarry/Top Car Park, off
Hartley Lane near Hill Farm

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FOLK Work Party Report Winter 2004/5

Since my last report we have concentrated our efforts on further scrub clearance. This has mainly been on the lower slopes of Charlton King's Common in preparation for the erection of temporary electric fencing so the cattle can graze further areas of the hill.

On some recent Thursday work parties, pupils and staff from Belmont School joined us. This was a very successful venture and their help was very much appreciated. On one of the work parties a photographer from the Echo visited us and we hope the resulting photographs will be a pleasant reminder to the pupils of their day on the hill. They hope to join us again sometime in the coming months.

The fencing and gates alongside the bridge lay-by car park in Daisybank Road have been completed and we hope to be able to carry out some re-surfacing work by the gates in the coming weeks. We must thank the Cotswold Voluntary Warden Service, BTCV and Cheltenham Borough Council Rangers who helped with this work. Our thanks also to James Blockley (CBC) for his success in obtaining funding for some contract work for scrub clearance, and for his personal contribution to the work. Thank you James – between us we are making real progress.

During 2004 FOLK members completed more than 600 man-hours work on the hill. In addition there were many unrecorded hours of work, mostly in connection with the grazing project and care of the cattle. This of course falls to the North family; thank you all for your efforts.

We were recently successful in obtaining a grant of £200 from Cheltenham Borough Council for tools, including pitchforks, grass rakes, and a knapsack sprayer, to help with control of ragwort. We now have some display boards that we hope to set up in suitable locations in the area to advertise our group and its conservation work on the hill. By the time we issue this newsletter some of you may have already seen the display at the LEGLAG AGM to which we were invited. Suitable places for the display would be local libraries and schools. If anyone has any suggestions or contacts for venues, please let us know.

As usual, I conclude with a list of forthcoming work parties – we hope to see you there!

Future Work Parties

Midweek Work Parties

Thursday 14 April 2005
Thursday 12 May 2005
Thursday 9 June 2005
Thursday 14 July 2005
Thursday 11 August 2005

Weekend Work Parties

Sunday 27 March 2005
Sunday 24 April 2005
Sunday 22 May 2005
Sunday 26 June 2005
Sunday 24 July 2005
Sunday 28 August 2005

Meet at Tramway Cottage car park, Daisybank Road at 9.30am. We provide the tools but wear stout footwear and bring your own gloves.

Allan Wood

The views expressed in the articles are of those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FOLK or its Executive Committee



WILDLIFE COLLECTIVE



BY JAMES BLOCKLEY

THE USE OF COLLECTIVE NOUNS, PARTICULARLY FOR WILDLIFE, GOES BACK A LONG WAY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE. THERE WERE MANUSCRIPT LISTS OF GROUP NAMES AS EARLY AS THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY, SOME OF WHICH APPEAR IN THE FIRST BOOKS EVER PRINTED SUCH AS JOHN LYDGATES *DEBATE BETWEEN THE HORSE, GOOSE AND SHEEP* (1440). THERE ARE MANY OF THE ANIMALS BELOW THRIVING ON LECKHAMPTON HILL, SOME OF WHICH YOU MAY WELL HAVE SEEN OR HEARD RECENTLY IN GROUPS, BUT DO YOU KNOW THEIR *COLLECTIVE NOUNS*?

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON THE BACK PAGE!

	COLLECTIVE NOUN	CLUE
1.	A... OF LAPWINGS (6)	A DRY SANDY AREA.
2.	A... OF STARLINGS (11)	OF TALKING INDISTINCTLY.
3.	A... OF HERONS OR BITTERNS (5)	A GRASS-LIKE PLANT.
4.	A... OF ROOKS (8)	HOUSE, STABLE ETC.
5.	A... OF NIGHTINGALES (5)	REGARD!
6.	A... OF HAWKS (4)	THOSE IN A PLAY.
7.	A... OF COOTS (6)	THE NATURE OF SPIES.
8.	A... OF SWALLOWS OR DOVES (6)	THE DREAM OF ICARUS.
9.	A... OF JAYS (5)	LABOUR ETC.
10.	A... OF CROWS (6)	HOMICIDE.
11.	A... OF CATERPILLARS (4)	A NEW MODEL OF CROMWELL?
12.	A... OF DUCKS (4)	MEAT (ANAG.).
13.	A... OF GOLDFINCHES (5)	AS FOUND ON A BRACELET.
14.	A... OF GEESE (6)	CAKLE.
15.	A... OF CUBS (6)	KING CARRIER.
16.	A... OF FOXES (5)	LURK.
17.	A... OF HARES (4)	DUCK WARMER.
18.	A... OF GULLS (6)	SETTLEMENT.
19.	A... OF RABBITS (4)	SENT (ANAG.)
20.	A... OF SWANS (4)	GATHER TOGETHER.

WITH KIND REGARDS TO BRUCE TANNER!

Managing the Industrial Archaeology of Leckhampton Hill

The Management Plan for Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common was formally adopted in 2003 and made a series of detailed recommendations for various aspects of the area. The recommendations for landscape, biodiversity, geoconservation, access and recreation were fairly specific as these topics were evaluated as part of the production of the plan. However, the archaeology, including industrial archaeology (IA), could not be evaluated at that time and therefore the recommendations for the historic environment suggested further work be carried out in this area. These included commissioning of a base-line archaeological survey and a geophysical survey of Leckhampton Camp. Unfortunately to date, the necessary resources to carry out this work have not been forthcoming, although it is hoped that the archaeological survey may be carried out relatively soon.

During the consultation period The Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology made a set of detailed proposals for the management of the IA of the hill. These were published in the management plan with the recommendation to "research and consult on GSIA proposals". Since that date a detailed survey of the IA of the hill was published in the 2001 GSIA Journal and this is obtainable from the GSIA web site at www.gsia.org.uk/leckia.pdf. In the following year our updated proposals for the management of the IA, particularly the tramroads and inclines, were published in the Journal. More recently we requested a review of our proposals by Dr John van Laun from Hereford who is a leading authority on tramroads having written the definitive work on the South Wales tramroads.

Happily, the ongoing review of the industrial archaeology has not actually delayed work on the hill. In February 2002 GSIA held a very successful working party which cleared the Top Incline (the tramroad which runs up from the old lime kilns to the summit level) of scrub and small trees. This work was continued in February 2004 when a 15-strong

work party from GSIA, FOLK and Cheltenham Borough Council cleared the level stretch of tramroad from the top of Top Incline to the tramroad sidings near to Brownstone Quarry. Visiting both these sites last month showed just how effective simple clearance of the line of these important features has been. The eye can now readily appreciate these works constructed 175 years ago and yet with a minimum impact on the biodiversity.

We feel that the time is now right to put the package of the survey, proposals and outline work programme before the Consultative Committee – hopefully at the same time as a review of the archaeology. As with the production of the 2001 Management Plan, which was largely carried out by specialist consultants, it is vital that the Committee first makes an objective assessment of the IA of the area based on our submission, their own expertise and whatever expert advice is available to them. Only then as a separate exercise can specific recommendations be made for the management of the IA. In short, the first part, the assessment of the industrial archaeology, is just that and should not take account of factors such as the geology and the natural history of the area, while the second stage must of course take full account of these factors.

At the end of the day the GSIA proposals for management of the IA are very simple. The underlying theme for most of the proposals is to safeguard the line of the tramroads and inclines by means of scrub clearance and limited tree removal as appropriate. In addition to affording protection to the sites, from further damage, the clearance work will make it much easier for future users of the hill to understand the ingenious, and complex, railway network, that was created by the 19th century workers to transport the stone from the quarries down to Cheltenham.

In some locations stone tramroad 'sleeper' blocks are known to lie just below the present ground levels. It is therefore proposed that

some of these blocks are re-exposed so that the public will be aware of their existence. Again this will greatly assist the public in their understanding of the nature of these very early 'railways'.

The Society considers that it is very important to propose projects that are achievable with relatively limited resources. Some of the projects could be carried out by GSIA in a similar manner to the scrub clearance carried out on the Top Incline in February 2002. In some instances, small trees have grown up on the line of the tramroads and inclines, and the initial felling may need to be carried out by professional contractors, but voluntary groups could be used to complete the task. Since

scrub clearance will be restricted to the line of the tramroads the actual area affected is relatively small.

On Saturday 9 April 2005 GSIA is hosting as it does every nine years the Annual Regional IA Conference. This year's meeting, (the 36th in the series), will be held in Gloucester and will include a talk on the IA of Leckhampton Hill. There will be seven talks during the day and an optional field trip in the Gloucester area afterwards. The meeting is open to all and costs just £15 including lunch. Full details and a booking form are available at www.gsia.org.uk/conference or contact the author.

Dr Ray Wilson ray.wilson@freeuk.com 01453 860595
Honorary Secretary, Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology

ANOTHER DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

ARCHAEOLOGY WALK

on

Sunday 10th July 2005
at 2pm

Topic: Industrial Archaeology - Quarrying on the Hill
Organised by: Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology
Meet at Tramway Cottage/Daisybank Road Car Park

Your Executive Committee Members are:-

CHAIRMAN - Julius Marstrand (01242 518846)
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TREASURER - Tony Meredith (01242 516393)
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Stuart Bond	Tony Clifford
Judy Frazer-Holland	John North
Christine Ryder	Jack Shepherd
Wendy Twist	Allan Wood

Co-opted Anne North
CBC Ex Officio

Articles for the newsletter can be sent to the Editor, Annette North, Shackleton, Daisybank Road, Charlton Kings Common, CHELTENHAM, GL53 9QQ or email anorth@leckhampton.fsnet.co.uk

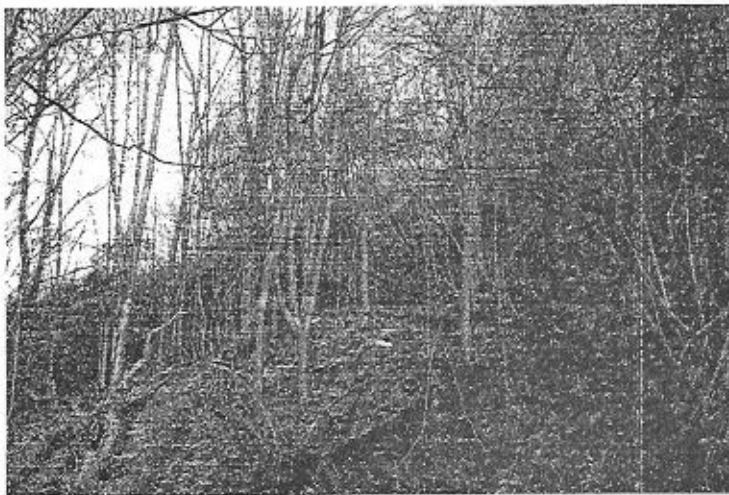
All new membership applications and renewals should be sent to Anne North C/O Shackleton, Daisybank Road.

BLOOMING ASH TREES

During April the common Ash Tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*) will be coming into 'flower' well before the leaves break out. You can hardly call the Ash flowers 'blooms' for they are adapted to wind pollination and hence have no brightly coloured petals or scent to attract pollinating insects. The flowers are in clusters and have exposed anthers and stigmas to afford easy pollination. Their early appearance means that the wind has good access to the flowers before any sheltering effect from their leaves which do not usually appear until late May to June.

Ash trees are most interesting from a sexual point of view. Some trees have only male clusters of flowers and others only female clusters. These same trees can change sex from year to year or become bi-sexual. Some branches of some Ash trees have only male clusters of flowers and other branches on the same tree only female clusters. On other trees and branches clusters may have both male and female flowers. It's all rather strange. Later the female flowers mature to form wind dispersed fruits called 'keys' which may hang on the trees throughout mild winters. The 'keys' are an important source of food for animals such as squirrels and wood mice.

The timber of Ash is really quite useful. It burns well even when green. The seasoned timber is valued as it is both tough and elastic. This has made it useful for tool handles, walking sticks, oars, hockey sticks and even police truncheons. The word Ash is thought to come from the Anglo-Saxon word '*aesc*' which also meant spear. Sapling Ash or Ash-plants form very straight stalks – just right for spears and lances. However the wood is no good for fencing or posts since it quickly rots in the ground. Cultivated varieties of Ash include the fine-looking Weeping Ash.



The Ash is a native tree and is found throughout Europe and is extremely common. The Ash tree is in the Olive family which also includes Lilac and Privet. It is easily identified in winter by its black buds arranged in opposite pairs. The leaves are compound with three to six pairs of opposite leaflets up a central stalk. The bark is a smooth grey colour. The mature tree is quite pleasing to the eye in all seasons. In summer Ash trees cast only a light shade allowing some ground flora and shrubs such as blackthorn and hazel. This is quite

unlike the Beech which casts a heavy summer shade permitting little ground flora. During natural succession Ash usually gives way to Beech with which it cannot compete.

The mature Ash produces much seed and self-sows readily. Ash thrives on light non-acid soils and even on screes and limestone rocky areas. It is, of course, this characteristic which makes it rather infuriating for conservation workers on the Hill who are trying to clear scrub to promote the development of limestone grassland. Ash is one of the most successful first pioneer trees in scrub and will quickly re-grow if not treated soon after cutting. Another reason for calling them 'Blooming Ash Trees'

Jack Shepherd February 2005

ANSWERS TO 'WILDLIFE COLLECTIVE':

1. DESERT; 2. MURMURATION; 3. SEDGE; 4. BUILDING; 5. WATCH; 6. CAST; 7. COVERT; 8. FLIGHT; 9. PARTY; 10. MURDER; 11. ARMY; 12. TEAM; 13. CHARM; 14. GAGGLE; 15. LITTER; 16. SKULK; 17. DOWN; 18. COLONY; 19. NEST; 20. HERD;