



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

NEWSLETTER

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SPRING 2007

TAKE THE 'LITTLE DEVILS' TO THE CHIMNEY



Fifteen 'little devils' and twelve adults joined five Guides from the Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common [FOLK]'s Executive Committee and the Cotswold Volunteer Wardens Service and three of Cheltenham Borough Council's Community Park Ranger team for a Guided Walk on Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common on Tuesday 20 February 2007. Ages ranged from four to eighty years

old. This was one of a series of daily guided walks across the Cotswolds, co-ordinated by the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Conservation Board for half term.

The walk started in Brownstone Quarry, off Hartley Lane, on top of Leckhampton Hill. On the footpath to the Site, it passed an exposure of *Upper Trigonía Grit*, so called because of the numerous *trigonía* bivalve fossils and *Gryphyte Grit*, named after *Gryphaea*, another bivalve fossil, commonly known as 'Devils Toenail'. When the walk reached the edge of the Common it swung left towards the Iron Age Fort, pausing briefly to look at the unusual square barrow outside the ramparts near the East Gate. Across the Fort to the West Gate and down to 'The Devil's Chimney' - the stack, left by former quarrymen, is one of Cheltenham's best known and most loved landmarks, visited by thousands of people every year.

Contents:

FRONT PAGE - Take the little devils to the chimney PAGE 3 - January Work Party PAGE 5 - Work Party Report Winter 07 PAGE 6 - Area Map PAGE 7 - Work Programme PAGE 8 - Dates for your Diary PAGE 9 - Look the other Way

Back up into the Iron Age Fort and on to the Topograph above *Deadman's Quarry*, with a view over Cheltenham and Gloucester and the whole of the Severn Valley to the Forest and the Welsh mountains beyond. Along the Cotswold Way around the edge of the Fort and down onto one of the many tramways left by industrial quarrying from the late eighteen hundreds to the early twentieth century. Then out onto the open top of Charlton Kings Common. From the scarp slope there are wonderful views across Charlton Kings to Cleeve Common, Bredon Hill, the Vale of Evesham and the Malvern Hills.

In addition to its regular twice monthly conservation work, FOLK organises a series of guided walks and other events throughout the year to which the public are very welcome. The next is a 'Bird Song walk on Saturday 12th May. Members are kept informed of these through details published in FOLK's newsletter, but they are also advertised on notice boards on the Hill, in the Cotswold Lion and elsewhere. Anyone wanting more information, or wishing to join or support FOLK, can leave a message on: 01242 522767.



Your Executive Committee Members are:-

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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

January Work Party with Mountain Biking Assistance

In December, the committee asked me to organise some assistance from local mountain bikers at one of the forthcoming Sunday morning work parties in early 2007. As a group who regularly share the hill I thought it reasonable to pursue this request. Indeed, Cheltenham & County Cycling Club have previously helped FOLK with a work party some years ago on the clearing of the track leading up Windass Hill.

Through emails and meetings (okay, over drinks at the Jolly Brewmaster in Tivoli), I managed to stir up interest and I was somewhat surprised at the quantity of positive responses. Club members and other local riders recognise the need for the mountain biking community to assist in such work. However, saying you are going to attend is different to actually being there. Sunday mornings, the morning after the night before etc, etc, know what I mean?



I need not have worried as a dozen or so of us turned up in Tramway Cottage car park. Poor Allan Wood was starting to get concerned that we were going to be short on tools, but we just had enough. With additional FOLK members, our work party was some 20 or so.

The clearing area was on the footpath designated ZCK 65, situated on Hartley Hill. Using hand saws, loppers, elbow grease and our chain saw specialist John Paul, scrub, gauze, brambles and small trees went up in smoke on a very welcome fire as it was particularly cold in the wind. In only two and half hours the area was transformed.



All the mountain bikers enjoyed their involvement even though some came away with less than they came with in terms of singed eye brows and lashes. They'll learn next time.

And next time has provisionally been set out. We are planning another 3 such Sundays in 2007 where intensive and more physical work will be planned around a large contingent of mountain bikers attending.

Roger Smith.

***Come and explore Leckhampton looking for fossils.
" Tropical seas to Ice Ages - Fossils and the
Devils Chimney "***

***Saturday 14th April 2007 at 10 am
2.5 hours - 3 miles***

Suitable for families but not buggies.

***Starting point : Brownstone Car Park Hartley Lane
Leckhampton-GR 950 179***

***Leaders: Dave Owen, Glos Geological Trust & Colin Boulton,
Cotswold Voluntary Warden***

FOLK Work Party Report, Winter 2007

The majority of our work parties over the past few weeks have been connected with the grazing on the slopes of Charlton King's Common. This has included the onerous task of carrying the wooden posts, plastic stakes and electric cables up the steep slopes above Daisybank Road. Oh for a flat site, but I'm assured the exercise and fresh air are good for us.

Unfortunately the vandals have struck again, this time burning about 50% of the winter-feed and the barn in which it was stored on Anne North's property. Replacement feed has had to be bought in from other local sites, which has meant additional unexpected costs. The electric fencing has also suffered from mindless vandalism, with posts being torn out and thrown down the hillside.

As I mentioned in our previous newsletter, there was a considerable amount of contract work in the winter programme. This consisted of limited clearance on both sides of the track above the golf course and at the southern end of Charlton King's Common. This work was completed by John Paul North and his team in January. The resulting clear-up of the cut material took place on our Sunday work party of 28th January when we had a record turn out of volunteers: 13 FOLK members supported by 11 mountain bikers, recruited by their leader Roger Smith. With such a large workforce we were able to tidy up most of the cut areas. Roger has offered to ask his colleagues to join us on a work party once every three months: their support will be most welcome.

Those of you who walk along Daisybank road will be aware of the churned-up state of the unmade section of track adjoining the building site overlooking Cheltenham. The builder has assured us that the surface of the track will be re-instated when the building work has been completed. The poor state of the surface of the car park in Brownstone Quarry is also being looked at with a view to resurfacing it with a more suitable material at some time in the future.

Dates of Future Work Parties

Midweek Work Parties

Thursday 12 April 2007
Thursday 10 May 2007
Thursday 14 June 2007
Thursday 12 July 2007

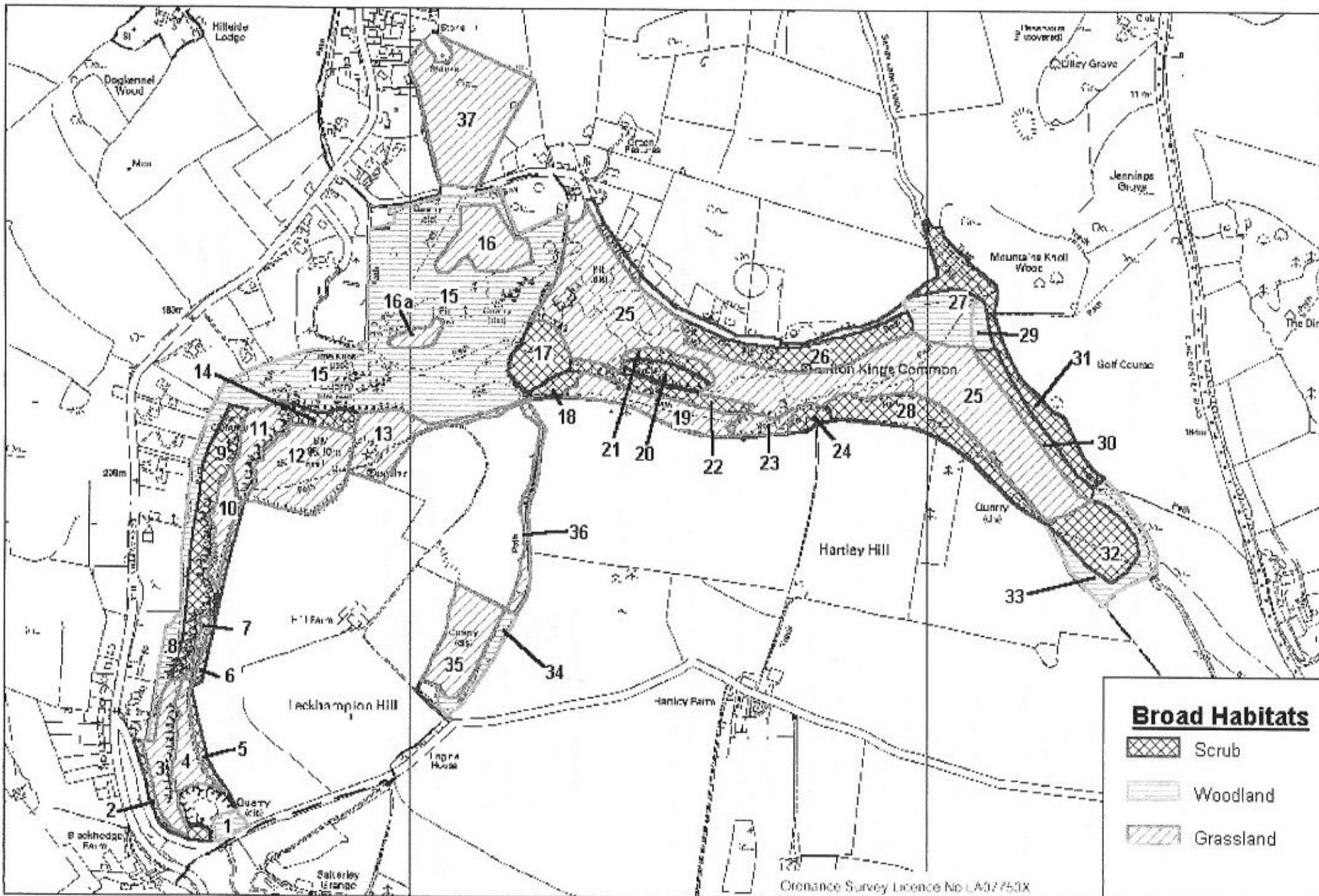
Weekend Work Parties

Sunday 22 April 2007
Sunday 27 May 2007
Sunday 24 June 2007
Sunday 22 July 2007




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

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



Broad Habitats

-  Scrub
-  Woodland
-  Grassland

Ordnance Survey Licence No LA37751X

	FOLK		CBC		Others	
	Administrative	Conservation	Administrative	Conservation	Administrative	Conservation
	1	2	3	4	5	6
A	Discuss mountain bike slalom course	Spray ragwort April/May. Pull ragwort June/July.	Discuss mountain bike slalom course with FOLK	Erect 2 remaining warning/no fires/no motorbikes/no camping signs.	Seek funding for 1, 2, & 3 adjacent.	1. Carry out Baseline Archaeological Survey
B	Membership drive with a new leaflet & interpretation leaflet delivered to local residents.	Investigate areas of hazel for coppicing next winter.	Organise with FOLK a LNR designation event. (Photos in paper with Mayor & show interpretation leaflets and boards.)			2. Carry out structural survey of Limekilns
C		FOLK experts - Species monitoring of plants, birds etc.	Continue consultation & investigation over wheelchair access	Cut hay July/August areas 12 & 13.		3. Conduct Geophysical Survey of Iron Age Fort
D	Discuss possibility of "Quiet Lanes" over the gallops, Sandy Lane, Do Road & Hartley Lane. See CPRE web site.	Remove Giant Hogweed from top of Top Incline.	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 Turnpike Road)	Mow grass over barrow & remove arisings (July/August)	CBC or FOLK to liaise with GSIA re possibility of exposing stone blocks that supported the tram rails in the depression next to DB Road.	
E	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.	Decide on positions for Fixed Point Photography for biodiversity monitoring.	Arrange for Fixed Point Photographic Survey of the Site covering: a) Vegetation; b) Geoconservation; c) Historical. Especially in grazed & mown areas.	DB Fields - Top before thistles seed (July/August) & area 28 if required.		
F			Report on progress of DEFRA HLF scheme.	Take photos for Fixed Point Photographic Survey in July & collate photos from other sources.		
G			Review Job Description for Project Officer & discuss possible sources of funding, in consultation with FOLK & LHCG. Apply to SITA for funding. WS.		MS to prepare plan for repair of eroded area of rampart & surface round Topograph. Plan to be discussed with FOLK together with possible sources of funding (?DEFRA Conservation Plan)	
H	Identify trees & scrub obscuring Devils Chimney with view to removal from September onwards - areas 8, 9 & 15.	Assist grazier with erection/dismantling of electric fence & maintain a monthly review of the grazing regime.	Grant a 5 year grazing agreement (well before February).			
I	Keep records of where & when grassland is grazed.		Discuss with owners, management of & footpath maintenance in DB2 & adjacent land.	Investigate the best materials (type 1 hardcore?) & supply stone to finish repair of large pot holes/puddles at Brownstone Quarry Car Park & other gateways. Spreading to be done by FOLK & CWS.	Develop & publicise guidance on the collection of specimens of rock & fossils. LHCG & Geo cons.	
J		Re-erect notice board Hartley Lane.	Contact local schools with a view to trying to get Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates to participate in conservation work. Send CD of SMP & interpretation leaflets.	Continue repair of stone boundary walls as required under ESA agreement. Priority: 1. On rampart 2. Salterley to CKC 3. Others.	LHCG to review action plan. Develop revised 5 year plan & roll forward by 1 year	
K		Cut & treat or pull ash seedlings anywhere.	Contact Cotswold Way National Trail organisers and ask them to consult CBC & FOLK before replacing the 2 missing posts on CK Common.	Species monitoring - butterflies (GJ)		
L	Organise walks/talks for members & general public. With CBC organise a LNR designation event.	Litter picking	Discuss what to spend ESA acreage payments on with FOLK.			
M			Continue to investigate possibility of extra winter grazing at Hill Farm			

Date for your diary
WALK FOR SPRING BIRD SONG

SATURDAY 12TH MAY at 9.15 am

Bring your binoculars

Leaders: Tony & Frances Meredith

STARTING POINT: HIGHLAND ROAD

Date for your diary
WALK IN THE WOODS

WEDNESDAY 30TH MAY 10.30am to 1.30pm

Bring your own lunch

Leaders: Cheltenham Borough Council - Tree Officer

**STARTING POINT: TRAMWAY COTTAGE CAR PARK,
DAISYBANK ROAD**

Date for your diary
COTSWOLD BLOOMS WALK

SATURDAY 2ND JUNE 2007

*Time to be confirmed, possibly 2pm (please
check notice boards on hill nearer time.)*

Leaders: Cheltenham Borough Council - Geoff Jenkins

**STARTING POINT: TRAMWAY COTTAGE CAR PARK,
DAISYBANK ROAD**

LOOK THE OTHER WAY

In the spring issue of the 2006 newsletter we were looking east at the field patterns and hedgerows of the Vale of Gloucester. In this article we look west towards the rolling hills of the Cotswolds. Of course, due to the nature of the land, we don't have the extensive views westwards from Leckhampton Hill as we had across the valley. But, if we had, we would see a change in the composition of the field boundaries in that many of them are dry stone walls. This has happened over the centuries due to the availability of walling stone from small local quarries in the Cotswolds, and, until recently, the relatively low transport and labour costs.

If we look across the country at the wider picture of dry stone walls, we find that a survey in 1994 revealed an estimated 70,000 miles of stone walls in England, 4,000 of these in the Cotswolds, though many of them are in a poor condition. One of the earliest confirmed uses of stone as a building material is in Scotland, at the Neolithic village of Skara Brae in the Orkney Islands, which was built in around 3,000BC. The village, which was buried in sand for centuries, has dry stone walled buildings with stone furniture. The Cotswolds has some ancient dry stone walling too, at the Neolithic barrow of Belas Knapp, which it is estimated was constructed around 2,500BC.

The earliest stone field boundaries were built with a mixture of rough stones gathered when clearing land for agricultural purposes. As time passed, quarries were opened up which provided better quality stone, which was used for housing as well as walls. As with hedgerows, the passing of the Enclosures Acts in the mid 18th and early 19th centuries caused a similar expansion of wall building, so by 1820 the wall pattern we see today was largely complete. This period was the heyday for the dry stone waller's craft, but, as with many countryside skills, it had almost disappeared by the 1960s. This fact was recognised in 1968 when the Dry Stone Walling Association was formed. There is now a resurgence of qualified wallers throughout the UK and courses are also run for amateurs. Grants are now available to encourage landowners to restore their walls.

Dry stone walls are found over the whole of the British Isles but there are considerable differences in local styles, mainly due to the variety of local materials. In the Cotswolds they consist of Jurassic limestone, but other areas use gritstone, sandstone, slate, water-worn boulders, or even stone flags set on edge. Where good walling stone is in short supply, turf is combined with the stone in the construction of the wall. The current position when repairing any of these walls is to retain the local characteristics. The cost of building

and repairing dry stone walls now is high due to the transport and labour costs. However, the life expectancy of a well-built wall is over 100 years and, if any damage is repaired quickly, the wall can last for several hundred years, so the cost becomes more acceptable. For example, a metre of Cotswold dry stone wall will need around a ton of stone, which at current prices is about £70 per ton, plus transport and labour costs. In some exposed and wet areas of Britain, such as the Lake District, there is no alternative other than a stone wall for a field boundary as the terrain is too rocky for fence posts to be driven in and in any case they would soon rot. A stone wall is the only option that can withstand the elements with very little maintenance.

Why *dry* stone wall? Why not use mortar? There are various reasons. A wall settles after it is built and, as this happens, every stone moves into the closest position to its neighbours resulting in a tighter and stronger wall. Mortar pointing would eventually crack and fall out, and repointing would be required, adding to costs. Water drains freely through dry walls whereas mortar can trap rainwater, which may dislodge stones when it freezes. Another benefit is that a dry stone wall provides a habitat for plants, insects, birds and small mammals.

A few brief comments on how a wall is constructed: most Cotswold dry stone walls taper from the foundation to the coping stone; this is called the *batter*. This angle is guided by setting wooden *batter frames* at both ends of the wall with lines along both faces, which are moved up as courses progress. All walls have a foundation of large stones while smaller stones, called *heartings* are packed in the centre of the wall. As the wall is built up, large stones, called *throughstones*, are set in at intervals to tie in both outer courses to prevent the wall from *bellying out*. When the desired height is reached, *coping stones* are added to straddle the wall to hold and protect the upper course. If you want to learn the basic skills of dry stone walling, the Cotswold Conservation Board will be running courses in 2007, several of them on Leckhampton Hill. (Please contact Allan Wood for Dates if you are interested in attending).

A final thought: if you build your own wall and want to give it a mature look and encourage mosses and lichens to colonise it, I'm told that painting it with a slurry of cow manure will hasten the process. An alternative, which will cost more but might be more acceptable, is to paint it with yoghurt. I haven't tried either; the choice is yours.

Allan Wood

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Parish Councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill, and
Shurdington