



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

NEWSLETTER

Issue 29 Free to members, non members 25p

WINTER 2007

FOLK AGM 2007 CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

The last year had been one of highs and lows.

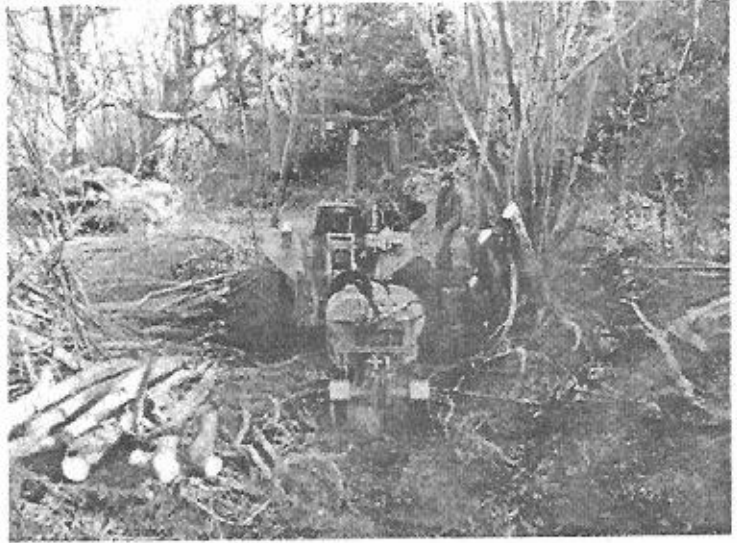
Some of THE HIGHS.

- o The Hill and Common lie within three parishes: Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Shurdington and Charlton Kings. Each has given funds to FOLK towards the cost of production and distribution of the Newsletter.
- o The Cotswolds Conservation Board's Sustainable Development Fund has paid for two stone walling courses.
- o Scrub control by a contractor was funded by Defra's ESA Conservation Plan payments.
- o The BBC Open Country programme featured the Hill and Common (we do have a recording of the programme that you can borrow if you missed it) and so did BBC Radio Gloucestershire.
- o Individual guided walks have featured the birds, flowers, geology and trees. We also took some little devils to the chimney - a family walk.
- o Wayne Sedgwick, Cheltenham Borough Council's Community Parks Officer has moved into Tramway Cottage- this has really helped him to understand some of our problems.
- o BTCV- British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, the Cotswold Wardens Service and the Community Service Unit have all organised work parties.
- o FOLK conservation work parties (sometimes joined by some very energetic cyclists) take place on the second Thursday and the fourth Sunday of each month- starting at Tramway Cottage car park at 9.30 for about 3 hours. Everyone is welcome to come to do as much, or as little, as they want. Extra work parties have been organised on the third Tuesday of the month during the winter. Each hour put in by a volunteer is worth £10 that can be used as match funding for grant aid.

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- o B and Q have given tools for the volunteers to use.
- o Natural England continues to be happy with the work the cattle are doing by grazing the grass.
- o The highest point of the year was receiving a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery fund through the Cotswold Conservation Board to supply piped drinking water for the cattle. Cheltenham Borough Council gave match funding and FOLK volunteer hours contributed a further £10,000. This will make the grazing project more sustainable.



Work on the pipeline along the Gallops (east end of the common)

Some of THE LOWS.

- o Many hours of work went into a grant application to SITA to get funding for a project officer for the Hill but it was unsuccessful. The committee will continue to look for other sources of funding for this vital role.
- o We have been hoping to get a 5 year grazing agreement between the grazier and CBC but this hasn't been possible so a series of 1 year agreements will continue.
- o Fly tipping has been a problem and if CBC ever charges households for the amount of rubbish that is taken to landfill then this will only get worse.
- o Litter
- o Vandalism to cattle fences and drinkers.
- o The hay that was to be fed to the cattle was destroyed by arson.
- o Camping- fires endangered the grassland and the trees.
- o Motorcycles and cars being driven on footpaths-please try to get the registration numbers.
- o Stolen car raced around and set alight.
- o Drug taking.
- o Theft from parked vehicles

Please report any problems to Wayne Sedgwick 07733014743

or the police on their non-emergency number 08450901234

THE COMING YEAR.

- o Wayne has suggested that one of the ways of combating some of these antisocial problems maybe the closing of the gate into Tramway Cottage car park at dusk and reopening it at dawn. *(At the AGM it was agreed by members that this should be trialled. These trials will begin shortly)*
- o Peter Jenner is giving up the tenancy of the land he farms at Hill Farm. CBC has agreed that approximately 8 hectares of the land, next to the Common, can be used as extra grazing for the cattle. This land will be seeded with grass, fenced and supplied with water so that the cattle can have somewhere to go in winter, so that the Common is not overgrazed or damaged, by their feet when it's wet. Supplementary feeding can take place here in bad weather, if required, and there will be a place for handling the animals for the TB test etc.
- o There are still a few more areas that need habitat restoration as agreed in the Management Plan.

This is a complicated site with many groups interested in its management from the users, to the owners and the statutory bodies. There has been a lot of talking! But this has really helped to resolve many of the conflicts of interest.

Finally I would like to thank the FOLK Committee and all the other volunteers for all the hard work that they have put in during the past year.

Judy Frazer-Holland

CAN YOU HELP WITH MONITORING?

We would like members to help with monitoring of species on the hill. Included separately with this newsletter you will find a sheet with a list of BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan) Species. We would like members to indicate on the form where they have seen these on the hill and to indicate which area/s they have been seen in. Please can you indicate on the form the area number from the attached map or mark on the map the location of the sighting.

This monitoring helps with the

1. Management of Species
2. Important in helping to obtain grants
3. and for display at the AGM.

If you are in any doubt as to what some of the species look like on the list then please email myself anorth@leckhampton.fsnet.co.uk and I will forward you some information with images of some of the species.

It is important that you try to be as accurate as possible with your indication of sighting, as it is hoped these sightings will be checked and monitored in the future years, for increases/decreases in numbers, etc.

Completed forms should be returned to Geoffrey Jenkins at Chelt. Bor. Council during the next few months if possible. Although it is recognized that some of the species will only be seen during the spring/summer months.

Mountain Bike Matters

As the Executive Committee's mountain bike representative, and a very keen rider myself, I have been working hard to try and bring some harmony between our group and others who use Leckhampton Hill. This doesn't mean there is some kind of continuous battle going on, but I, and other local bikers, recognise that our activity on the hill has evolved over recent years and some aspects are causing real concern to certain groups, including the landowner Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC). Before continuing on that track, I'd like to make FOLK members aware of the positive actions that I and fellow bikers have implemented over the last few years:

- A communication network exists through me that enables information to pass from FOLK / CBC to bikers and vice-versa. This might involve informing riders of complaints received by CBC, for instance, and thus starting a process of investigation and solution finding.
- Mountain bikers have attended numerous FOLK work parties over the last few years and this obviously adds vital muscle to activities and their presence also helps towards raising funds for FOLK.
- Many members of Cheltenham & County Cycling Club (CC-CC) are now aware of what FOLK is and why it exists. I have written several articles for our club magazine with specific reference to the Hill and the importance of our partnership with FOLK and CBC.
- CC-CC donated £250 to FOLK last year. This was part of funds raised by the club through an event it holds annually called The Hell Of The North Cotswolds. I will be pushing for similar donations in 2008.
- There was a major track diversion a couple of years ago that eliminated what was, agreed by all, a very dangerous bike crossing point over the path leading up from Tramway Cottage Car Park.

There is an honest and open approach to my work with FOLK and CBC and I think I have managed to keep both Riders and FOLK / CBC on side at the same time. What people not close to the mountain bike community need to understand is that some riders may get the impression that having a fellow rider working closely with the local authority is a bad thing, where as I have all parties interests at heart. One thing is absolutely clear though, only by working closely together can we have a hope of resolving whatever issues arise.

I am the first to acknowledge that over the last couple of years there has been a distinct increase in the volumes of riders (primarily Down Hill riders) and where they are coming from. Riders are coming from as far away as South Wales, Bristol and Oxford for a days riding on the hill. This obviously leads to more riders on the hill and more vehicles taking up spaces in the car parks. So, how has this come about?

- The steep nature of the bike tracks are a challenge to riders.
- Internet websites and Mountain Bike internet Forum allow the easy passage of information to many riders about the existence of Leckhampton Hill as a good place to come and ride.

- As Down Hill racing grows in the UK, so more riders meet new contacts and pass on information about areas they regularly ride.

With respect to the site itself, there are also fears that uncontrolled track constructions may be impacting on the fragile eco structure that may be present in certain areas.

Another ongoing issue is that some tracks cross paths used by pedestrians, and there is a risk that one day a collision may occur.

Both of these two issues have the potential to worsen if more riders are visiting the hill. So what are we going to do about it? By we, I initially mean us riders. I am absolutely committed to being at the centre of any initiatives and I believe that riders sharing these concerns should initiate some form of solution finding. This has already started and we are now looking at bringing in FOLK and CBC to support our ideas and then work on combining these with realistic and workable proposals for them. However, it is important that under no circumstance should any form of Mountain Bike ban be considered by either FOLK or CBC. Alienating our community would be a PR disaster on a big scale. Only by close co-operation can we have a chance of success.

So what initiatives have been started?

- CC-CC now has a new website under its main banner that is directed more at mountain biking only' as opposed to all cycling disciplines. Go to www.thecorrective.com. This has a page dedicated purely to FOLK and making riders aware of its SSSI status, the issues we have and simple guidelines on being responsible on the hill.
- I have proposed to FOLK and CBC that a full "Audit" of the hill is completed with all 3 parties represented. This would identify all constructions and crossing points of concern.
- I am seeking out websites that make specific reference to Leckhampton Hill and requesting these references are removed, or a link is made to our new website.
- We have designed an awareness leaflet that will be given to any Down Hill rider we meet on the hill or in the car park that are not sure about our concerns. (Please see next page:)

Roger Smith



Mountain Bikers help with cattle fencing

DOWNHILL RIDING ON LECKHAMPTON HILL

Please take a few minutes to read the following information and requests regarding the use of the hill for MTB and DH activity.

This leaflet has been compiled by fellow MTBers who also use Leckhampton Hill for biking, some XC and some DH. Some of us are members of Cheltenham and County CC, others are local riders not affiliated to the club.

We actually have a MTB representative on the Executive Committee of the local conservation group who manage the hill, FOLK (Friends Of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common). This has helped with communications between bikers, FOLK and the landowner, Cheltenham Borough Council. Although the hill is amazing for riding, it is actually a **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** and essentially activities we are involved in are sometimes perceived to be bad for the site. Particular issues that the Council and FOLK are faced with are:

- Bike tracks crossing paths often used by those on foot or horse back.
- Unauthorised digging / construction of tracks.
- Litter left on the hill (bottles, cans, food wrappings etc.)

There has been an increase in the use of the hill by bikers in recent years. However, with use of the hill comes responsibility. With this in mind, we urge all riders to follow some very simple rules when using the hill:

- If you are on a track that crosses or merges onto a path, ensure you have sufficient visibility and moderate your speed accordingly. A bike suddenly dropping down onto a path in front of an unsuspecting pedestrian can be very dangerous.**
- Only track construction that has been specifically agreed with CBC / FOLK may take place on the hill. It is not always the actual nature of a track that is of concern, but also where it is taking place. If you have plans for a track or a modification to an existing one, you must consult first. Contact details below.**
- Whatever you bring onto the hill, please take it home with you. There is also a bin provided in the main car park if you need to use that. There is no excuse for littering our hill.**

We all enjoy riding on the hill and to ensure we can continue doing so in harmony with other users, please heed the information above and remember we are just one group among many who visit the hill for enjoyment.

Some useful contact details:

MTB representative (FOLK) - Roger Smith corrective@blueyonder.co.uk
Cheltenham & County CC MTB representative - Paul Walsh cccmtb@btinternet.com

As we begin to understand more about the exact make up of riders using the hill then we can adapt our strategy. Personally I believe that the numbers of riders are approaching a critical point now and if I'm really honest, we could do with a lot less.

Measuring success of these initiatives will be hard initially. This is quite a long term strategy. I cannot wave a magic wand and stop riders turning up. What we can continue to do though is engage with them and make them aware of the situation.

I welcome all feed back from both riders and non riders. If you have specific concerns about our activity, please get in contact with me. I will always try and make myself available to meet on the hill if this is easier to look at areas of concern to you.

Roger Smith
Email: corrective@blueyonder.co.uk Or Visit: www.thecorrective.com

FOLK Work Party Report Autumn/Winter 2007

The last few months have been a very busy time on the hill. The introduction of an additional work party, on the third Tuesday of the month during the winter, has proved popular. It has enabled us to get on with conservation work other than servicing the grazing project. In comparison with the last three months of 2006, which accounted for 123 man-hours worked, the same period for 2007 was 326 man-hours. We also welcomed the help of two additional work parties by the Cotswold Warden Service, with a further 99 man-hours. The overall result has been that areas of grassland and scrub that can't be grazed, such as parts of the hill fort bank, round barrow etc., have now been cut.

The installation of mains water supply and cattle troughs, which was front-page news on our last newsletter, is proceeding slowly due to problems with the trenching for the pipeline. This trenching has left parts of the track leading around the hill to Daisybank Road in a very poor condition. We apologise to hill users for this but hope to see improvements in the near future.



Work on the pipeline along the Gallops (east end of the common)

Several members who were happy to work off some of their Christmas excess were able to join us for an additional work party on Sunday 30th December to reposition a grazing paddock. We have enclosed a larger area than usual, to avoid the grassland getting too "poached" by the cattle. Fewer cattle are being grazed, so we hope this situation won't arise.

Due to the success of the additional Tuesday work parties that we introduced in the winter months, these will continue through the spring and summer. With such a choice of dates, we hope to see you sometime!

Dates of Future Work Parties

Midweek Work Parties

Thursday 13 March 2008

Tuesday 18 March 2008

Thursday 10 April 2008

Tuesday 15 April 2008

Thursday 8 May 2008

Tuesday 20 May 2008

Thursday 12 June 2008

Tuesday 17 June 2008

Weekend Work Parties

Easter Sunday 23 March 2008 - *NO Work Party*
-This is transferred to Sunday 30th March

Sunday 27 April 2008

Sunday 25 May 2008

Sunday 22 June 2008

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

PROVISIONAL WORK PROGRAMME MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2008

	FOLK		CBC		Others	
	Administrative 1	Conservation 2	Administrative 3	Conservation 4	Administrative 5	Conservation 6
A	Discuss increase of downhill mountain biking with CBC.	Spray ragwort April/May. Pull ragwort June/July.	Discuss increase of downhill mountain biking 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 area 19 and small part of area 13.		3. Conduct Geophysical Survey of Iron Age Fort
D	Discuss possibility of "Quiet Lanes" over the gallops, Sandy Lane, Db 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 2B 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		Erect fencing between Tramway Cottage Car Park and Daisybank Road. CBC to provide materials.	Review Job Description for Project Officer & discuss possible sources of funding, in consultation with FOLK & LHCG. Apply for funding when a suitable grant fund has been identified. WS.	Organise cropping and fencing of arable reversion fields and look into provision of water.	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 1 year grazing agreement (well before February).	Complete provision of water to grazing animals on Charlton Kings Common.		
I	Keep records of where & when grassland is grazed.		Continue to 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	Fix date for AGM and organise amplifier.	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 & BAP species (GJ)		
L	Organise walks/talks for members & general public. With CBC organise a LNR designation event. Spring bird song walk Sat. 17 May, 9.15am, Hill end of Highland Road.	Litter picking	Discuss what to spend ESA acreage payments on with FOLK.	Install gate/barrier at entrance to Tramway Cottage Car Park & supply materials for FOLK to erect fencing.		

SPRING WALK FOR BIRDSONG

SATURDAY 17th MAY 2008

Starting at 9.15 am

Led by Tony & Francis Meredith

ALL WELCOME

Meet: End of Highland Road immediately adjoining Hill.
Bring your binoculars.

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

Your Executive Committee Members are:-

CHAIRMAN - Judy Frazer-Holland (01242 580026)
Highfield, Leckhampton Hill, Cheltenham, GL53 9QJ

SECRETARY - James Blockley (07881 432077)
5 Gravel Walk, Tewkesbury GL20 5NH

TREASURER - Tony Meredith (01242 516393)
14 Greatfield Drive, Cheltenham, GL53 9BU

Tony Clifford	Serena Meredith
Anne North	Christine Ryder
Jack Shepherd	Roger Smith
Julius Marstrand	Allan Wood

Co-opted Vic Ellis
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

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