



Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common

FOLKtalk

Free to members; non-members 25p

Issue 44 spring
2014

Welcome to the 2014 Spring FOLK newsletter. In this issue:

Front page – Report of the Annual General Meeting;

Page 4 – Update from Cheltenham Borough Council; Birds on the Hill article from the Cheltenham Bird Club.

Page 7 – Introducing a FOLK member; Spot those trees Page 9 – FOLK work party report. Page 10 – Smokesignals, short items.

FOLKtalk: A new name for the FOLK newsletter.

As part of plans to improve the newsletter, the FOLK Committee decided it would be a good idea to give it a more interesting title. **FOLKtalk** is the result of discussion of a number of suggested titles. We hope you like it.

AGM November 13th 2013

For those members who couldn't attend the AGM the following are the main bits of business of the meeting.

The Chair, Julius Marstrand, welcomed about 33 members to the fourteenth AGM of FOLK and then gave his account of the year's activities as follows.

2012/13 has been another year of progress for FOLK and Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common.

For the first three years, most conservation work on the site was carried out by FOLK volunteers, with occasional support of Working Parties from Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, Gloucestershire's Industrial Archaeological Society, Geoconservation, Cheltenham & County Cycling Club and others.

In 2004 cattle grazing was introduced on Charlton Kings Common, to help *improve* the 'unimproved limestone grassland'. By being on the site for most of the year, the cattle could achieve far more than FOLK's volunteers working a few hours, two or three times a month.



Dexters helping with scrub clearance

The paddock grazing system we adopted was because of historic opposition to fencing of the Commons, going back to the riots one hundred years before and more recent opposition to fencing of Common Land across the country.

The problem was that the paddock grazing regime was very labour intensive, so that up to 50% of FOLK volunteers' time was spent erecting, dismantling and moving the electric fencing. This was why, when the site was upgraded from Entry

to Higher Level Stewardship, Natural England required us to switch to a more sustainable 'extensive' grazing regime.

In fact, like all Common Land in Gloucestershire, the Commons on our site had historically been enclosed by a dry stone wall. We should have liked to have all 4.5 kilometres of dry stone wall restored, but could only afford to have 1.3 kilometres restored along the Southern boundary. The rest of the dry stone wall was replaced by a fence, with gates on all of the Public Rights of Way and many of the desire lines.

Extensive grazing was introduced on 25th April 2011 amidst widespread publicity and with volunteers on hand throughout the day to help regular visitors to the site, particularly those with dogs, become accustomed to the new regime, with loose cattle on Charlton Kings Common.

Since then there have been very few reports of any problems with the cattle, although the Council has recently received reports from one member of the public about three alleged incidents between dogs and cattle, which are currently being investigated.



Volunteers ready to get started

Even the paddock grazing was successful at improving the condition of the grassland, but because it was so labour-intensive, it was less effective than it might have been and not improving the condition of the site fast enough.

We now have over eighteen months of experience of extensive grazing and are adjusting the grazing regime as we see how it impacts on the Common. This is being done by gradually increasing the

number of cattle again. We are also considering the possibility of introducing native ponies to supplement the cattle grazing, but this will depend on the condition of the site and other factors.

At this point, we should thank **Ann North, the grazier and her family**, without whose support it would have been extremely difficult to have organised any of the grazing. Cattle grazing is not a commercial proposition on the Common, especially if you take account of the costs of doing it and the amount of time the North family (and FOLK volunteers) have had to spend on it.

There are others I should also thank, on behalf of members of FOLK:

In particular, **Wayne Sedgwick, the Community Ranger**, who is our primary link with Cheltenham Borough Council, who own the site. Wayne has always had boundless enthusiasm for the site and been a great support for FOLK. We haven't always agreed with him, or the Council, but we have always managed to reach mutually acceptable ways of proceeding.

Wayne has also organised other groups, including **Cotswold Voluntary Wardens** and **Community Service groups** and contractors to support the conservation work on the site, particularly this year removing scrub from the ramparts of the Iron Age Fort.

I should also like to thank ALL the members of **FOLK's Executive Committee** for their support during the year. Similarly **FOLK's Site Management Sub-Committee** is the group which does most of the detailed work of translating the Management Plans into Action Plans.

In particular, I should like to thank **Mike Donnelly**, who has taken on Alan Wood's mantle as Co-ordinator of FOLK's Working Parties. With the need to erect and dismantle electric fencing massively reduced – although we did do this in Daisybank Fields recently - the Working Parties have been able to concentrate on scrub clearance and other conservation work. This has helped to increase the numbers turning out for Working

Parties and this has enabled them to achieve even more.

Anyone who has been up on the Hill recently will have seen the difference they are making. I should like to take this opportunity to thank **all those who have supported any of the Working Parties** and particularly those who turn out regularly on behalf of all of the users of the site.



Work party in action on the Common

I also want to thank **John Harvey** for the contribution he has made to developing Management Plans for different aspects of the site: Grassland, Scrub and Trees and Woodland. Following the original 2003 Management Plan, these more detailed Management Plans provide a much better basis for the Action Plans we are required to have for the site to meet the requirements of the HLS and Farm Environment Plan.

John has also helped Wayne to develop a far more effective way of monitoring the condition of the site and recording the results. This effort is supported by another group of volunteers, some of whom are also Working Party volunteers. So they too are to be thanked for their assistance with the monitoring.

Roger Smith has been a vital link between the Council and FOLK and the many mountain bikers who use the site and has facilitated an ongoing dialogue with them. This has not only helped to improve mountain biking on the site and the behaviour of some of the riders, but has also helped to mitigate some of the negative impact they were having on the site and other users.

I am also extremely grateful to **Rick Plummer** who is **FOLK's Secretary**. We have had some periods when FOLK hasn't had a Secretary, but it makes everything so much easier and more effective when we do, especially when they do such a good job. Rick has also produced a new Membership Application Form and we hope you will all use this to recruit more of your friends and contacts to join FOLK.

Likewise, **Treasurer Geoff Holt**. He, possibly reluctantly, stepped in to the breach after Serena Meredith retired from the post, but has done an excellent job. Thank you.

Finally, I should like to thank **Peter Whalley** for taking over editorship of FOLK's newsletter. I don't know what you think, but I think the latest issue of the newsletter is a significant improvement and further improvements are in the pipeline. I should also like to thank everyone who has contributed any articles or material for the newsletter.

Please encourage anyone you know, who has an interest in the site to join FOLK, so that they can receive a copy of the newsletter. It really is the best way to keep informed of what FOLK is doing and what is happening on the site throughout the year.

Treasurer Geoff Holt presented the audited accounts to the end of September 2013 to the meeting with the following points:

FOLK generated a surplus of £264 in the financial year, although the cost of the most recent newsletter was not included in these accounts. The total balance in hand amounted to £3163. This sounds satisfactory, but it should be noted that subscription income was strongly down, suggesting that we really need to generate a larger membership. We are fortunate in receiving a number of regular donations, including two new ones from Cheltenham Borough Council and from Cheltenham & County Cycling Club for which we are very grateful.

A thank you to Jaina Mistry from CBC Audit Dept for auditing the accounts.

The audited accounts were accepted at the meeting

Elections of Officers and the Executive committee took place. There were no motions or other business to debate and the meeting concluded with an interesting talk on wildlife conservation in Gloucestershire given by Will Masefield of the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

The Word from Wayne, Wayne Sedgwick Senior Community Ranger, Cheltenham Borough Council.

We now have the benefit of a full year of cattle grazing on Charlton Kings Common. Natural England are to carry out a site visit and assessment of the state of the Common in terms of how effective the grazing has been and how well the ground has coped with the number of cattle grazing. This site visit will take place on the 28th of March and will involve representatives from Natural England, the Grazier and Cheltenham Borough Council. Members of FOLK are invited to attend to observe the spring grazing assessment.

Over the past year the weather has not been the best for grazing with some poaching of the ground. The maximum number of animals grazing has not always been at the level that Natural England advise is the optimum for the Common but all parties are keen to learn the lessons of the year's grazing.



Wayne wielding a chain saw

As part of the Higher Level Stewardship scheme and management of the SSSI, Natural England requires the Borough Council to produce a number

of **Management Plans**. Draft plans for grassland, scrub, woodland and grazing will be supplied to Natural England by the end of March. FOLK has been closely involved in the development of these plans. The Borough Council are very grateful to John Harvey for his unstinting commitment to this project and Graham King who is working on the Woodland plan.

Attention is now being focussed on the **Woodland on the Hill and Common**. An exercise has started to identify and map trees on the site. Information gained will be incorporated into the draft Woodland Management Plan.

The **Swindon Village Parish Council** has recently sought advice from the Borough Council on the setting up of a volunteer programme and it was felt that FOLK may be a good model on which to base their programme, so credit to FOLK.

Our continuing problem with luxuriant growth of **Hemp Agrimony on the Common** will be tackled this year with early and late cuts of the growth with the objective of keeping this plant under control.

An event is being organised by the Borough Council on the Hill and Common in June, on behalf of the **Countryside Management Association (CMA)** as part of their programme for professionals involved in open spaces.

Two new **information boards** for the Hill Fort are nearing completion. A final draft design was considered in early March and it is hoped that the boards will be installed soon.

Birds of the Common and Hill

A number of members of FOLK have recently been visiting Charlton Kings Common to formally monitor the abundance of important plant species in the grassland and of butterflies. The presence of special plants and rare butterflies were amongst the reasons why the wider site was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1954. Two bird species, Meadow Pipit and Grasshopper Warbler,

were mentioned in the designation, but there is currently no systematic monitoring of the bird populations. This contrasts with the first decade of the century, when Tony and Frances Meredith, members of both FOLK and of the Cheltenham Bird Club, made detailed records of birds seen on their very regular visits to the site. The records made by Tony, Frances and others are the basis for this summary of the bird life of the Common and Leckhampton Hill, or perhaps more accurately, the more open sections of the site, as the woodland areas, where birds are generally more difficult to see, seem not to have been so regularly visited.



Greenfinch in full voic

Of the two species mentioned when the SSSI was designated, the Meadow Pipit is now rarely seen and the Grasshopper Warbler, a summer visitor to the UK, no longer breeds. Why the former should have been virtually lost is unclear, but the loss is part of a Europe-wide decline since about 1980. The Grasshopper Warbler has also declined elsewhere in the UK, but a contributing factor on the Common may be the destruction of large stands of Gorse, one of its favoured nesting sites, by the major fires of 2003. A species not

mentioned in the 1991 listing is the Tree Pipit. This summer visitor has also suffered a national decline in numbers in recent years and has been listed amongst the bird species of Greatest Conservation Concern in the UK. Fortunately, a few pairs still breed on the escarpments of the Common, with males using isolated trees from which to soar in their territory display.



Grasshopper Warbler

A convenient way to consider the site's avifauna is to review each of its main habitats (grassland, scattered shrubs, scrub and woodland) separately, whilst not forgetting the sky overhead. We also need to be aware that there may be differences, in both overall bird numbers and the species involved, between the exposed Cotswold Plateau and the more sheltered lower slopes.

The steep grassland slopes, generally north facing and with a tall sward, used to support Meadow Pipits, but generally have few birds of a limited number of species. Both exposure and the tangled nature of the vegetation, that will limit feeding opportunities, probably contribute to this paucity, but the relative lack of protection and sanctuary, in the form of scrub, must play a major role.

It is generally in late August and September that one can see the greatest number of birds from the grassland slopes. In certain weather conditions very large numbers of hirundines, mainly Swallows and House Martins, move along the slopes feeding on insects, probably concentrated here by the wind. Where there is a mix of grassland and scrub, as in Daisybank Meadow, then the habitat is much

better for birds. Here one can find species such as Bullfinch, Whitethroat and Lesser Whitethroat breeding, whilst at any time of year one might expect to encounter Blackbird, Robin, Wren, Dunnock and a variety of Tits. Flat grassland on the plateau, as in the Hill Fort, is generally kept short and can provide a feeding opportunity for thrushes, both residents such as Blackbird and winter visitors such as Redwing and Fieldfare. One might even see Green Woodpecker here on occasion, whilst small numbers of Skylark breed on such grassland or on adjacent farmland.



Redwing feasting on Cotoneaster

As indicated above, scrub can generally support many more birds than grassland, as it can provide the key needs of birds in the form of food, shelter, nest sites and protection from some predators. Unfortunately much of the scrub on the site is presently in a less than ideal condition for birds, with the shrubs being very leggy and there often being no understorey, so that shelter is limited and nest sites are few. It is hoped that a Scrub Management Plan that is being prepared will help remedy this situation. One issue being addressed in the Plan is the need to safeguard those areas of scrub of high value to birds, such as dense clumps of Bramble, and prevent them from being cut unnecessarily. Breeding birds found in scrub, in addition to those listed in the Grassland section above, include; Yellowhammer, which can frequently be seen from the Cotswold Way, Chaffinch and Greenfinch. Winter bird populations may include some of these species, but the number of birds is likely to be lower, save when

winter visitors such as Redwing and Fieldfare call in to feed on the often abundant Hawthorn berries.

“Woodland” on the site includes several different plant communities, ranging from rather scattered trees with a good ground vegetation alongside the Golf Course, through a variable set of stands of deciduous trees with some understorey on the western part of Leckhampton Hill, to dense Beech and planted conifers, with virtually bare ground below them, on the eastern part of the Hill. As with the grassland, some communities, particularly the Beech and the conifers, host very few birds at certain times of the year. Elsewhere one can encounter many of the species listed as users of scrub, plus more woodland specialist species such as the resident Treecreeper and Nuthatch, or winter visitors such as Brambling, Siskin or Redpoll. Summer visitors that breed include Blackcap, Garden Warbler and Willow Warbler, whilst Great Spotted Woodpecker breeds on the Hill or nearby. Tawny Owl is regularly heard calling in woodland alongside Daisybank Road.



Black Cap on the look out

Woodland and older stands of scrub are used for nesting by a set of larger birds, such as Carrion Crow, Magpie, Jay and Woodpigeon, whilst good numbers of Jackdaw breed in the cliffs of Dead Man’s and Salterley Quarries. All of these species can be seen flying over at times. Also sometimes seen in the air are Ravens, a species which, unlike the two Pipits and the Grasshopper Warbler mentioned above, has increased markedly in numbers in Gloucestershire over the past 20 years. The Buzzard is another species often seen

overhead, generally using the thermals created by the steep scarp slope to soar like the hang gliders that sometimes use the site, rather than flying purposefully over like the Raven. Kestrels can sometimes be seen hovering in search of prey, whilst Sparrowhawks can be encountered as they hunt for small birds. At different times of the year and of the day a wide range of species, such as several species of gull, waders such as Golden Plover and Lapwing, corvids such as Jackdaw, and Woodpigeon, pass over the site on migration or whilst moving between their daytime feeding areas and their overnight roosts.



Tawny Owl

Neither the Common nor the Hill are meccas for birdwatchers hoping to see rare or unusual birds, although these can turn up in the most unlikely situations. Amongst the less usual species seen in recent years are spring migrants such as Redstart and Wood Warbler, winter visitors such as Black Redstart, Crossbill and Snow Bunting, or the increasingly seen Red Kite. More regular monitoring might extend this list.

It is unfortunate that the ornithological interest of the two sections of the site has, in common with much of southern England, declined somewhat in recent years, due to pressures such as intensive

agriculture, climate change and lowered overwinter survival of migrants going south in winter. This impact has been most severe on the breeding birds. However, the site still has good populations of many common species, and also of several species, such as Linnet, Tree Pipit, Willow Warbler and Yellowhammer, that are listed as being of Conservation Concern in the UK because of their limited or declining numbers. Whatever changes have occurred over time, the Hill and the Common combined are almost certainly the site closest to urban Cheltenham, and easily accessible, where one can encounter a typical British bird community.

John Harvey, with thanks to Tony Meredith for helpful comments on a draft of this article.

Introducing Mary Paterson FOLK member

In the second of our interviews with FOLK members we are happy to introduce to you Mary Paterson, who has had a lifetime's association with the Hill and Common. Mary shares her passion for the Hill and gives us some interesting historical insights to the area.

Mary is a Cheltonian. Her family has had four generations with roots deep into the limestone of the Hill. Her Great Grandfather, Charles Marshall, acquired a property in the shadow of the Devil's Chimney in the 1870's. His son in law, her grandfather, John William Hattersley was involved in the legal aspects of the transfer of the Hill to the Borough Council in 1927. For thirty years from the end of the 1940's Mary lived with her mother and father first at Ashmeade Lodge and later at Craigside Cottage. In the 1960's and 70's Mary and her mother were active members of the Hill Residents Association, doing conservation work FOLK members would recognise today.

When did you join FOLK? I was teaching in India when FOLK was set up in 2000 but I joined when I retired and returned to Cheltenham in 2002

How do you (and your family) enjoy the Hill? I tend to enjoy the Hill more from a distance these days although I take a gentle walk up there now and again. When I lived there my favourite activities were to float down the scree, or collect fossils or pick a small nosegay of flowers for my Great Aunt who lived at Craigside Cottage. These activities are rather frowned upon these days.



Mary Paterson in her Leckhampton garden

What are your earliest memories of the Hill? When I was very small we lived in Tryes Road off the Shurdington Road and I can remember my mother holding me up to the window and pointing out the distinctive profile of the Hill in the distance. I also have very fond memories of Saturday teas with the family at Craigside Cottage and Sunday tea with my grandpa at Ashmeade Lodge. My Great Aunt Edith and Great Uncle Louis often invited neighbours from the Hill to these tea parties and there was a good feeling of community in those days.

What changes have you noticed over the years? I think the thing that strikes me most is the effect of the tree planting that was done in the late 1960's. A gentleman called St Barbe Baker persuaded the Borough to allow the planting. He provided the saplings and tools and encouraged Dean Close School to get their children involved. The Hill Residents Association fought unsuccessfully to

prevent the loss of grassland to the trees. I also remember the regular and controlled burning of the Hill in the Spring in time for the traditional invasion of the Hill by Cheltenham Residents on Good Friday.

What is your favourite view of or from the Hill? On a very very clear day, probably after rain I love to look to the west from Craigside Cottage to see Churchdown, May Hill, Hay Bluff, the Black Mountains and maybe even the Brecon Beacons, 60 miles away.

What is your favourite time of year on the Hill? The long mid-summer evenings of July when the orchids are out and as the light fades glow worms can be spotted on the Hill. This is a magical time for me.

What aspect of the natural history, archaeology or geology of the Hill do you find most interesting? I was a fossil hunter from my girlhood days on the Hill. My great aunt Ida was a keen naturalist and taught me about fossils. My favourites are the tiny star shaped Crinoids that can still be found on the Hill

What does membership of FOLK mean to you? I am very glad that care is being taken of our precious heritage. I enjoyed the work parties in the early days of FOLK

What would you hope that FOLK would have achieved on the Hill by its 25th anniversary in 2025? I would like to see that the grazing has been a success and that there is a widespread acceptance on the part of users of the Hill that the conservation regime adopted by the Borough and FOLK is the best one for the long term health of the Hill and Common. As a small extra point, I think it is rather a pity that we don't mark national events such as the Diamond Jubilee with the lighting of a beacon on the Hill as was done in the recent past, perhaps we could start a new tradition.

Thanks to Mary for her insights and we hope we can draw on her memories in future newsletters as we explore the history of the Hill. Ed.

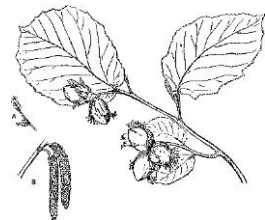
Spot those trees

At least a third of Leckhampton Hill is wooded. Trees of various kinds have gradually colonised the Hill and some have been planted.

Test your knowledge of tree identification by naming some common and not so common trees found on the Hill from the following pictures of leaves. Answers later in this issue of **FOLKtalk**



Tree A



Tree B



Tree C



Tree D

Work Party Report, spring 2014

FOLK Work Party Report Spring 2014

At the time of writing this report (February) we are in a period of severe flooding across the country and unlike last year we have had very little cold weather. The heavy rainfall has made the footpaths and some other areas on the hill very muddy and slippery. At a recent FOLK subcommittee meeting it was agreed that this spring and summer we will do more work on the footpaths surfaces and gateways using stone to fill in some of the larger puddle and muddy areas. We will also cut back some of the scrub along the side of some paths to allow them to dry out quicker when it does rain.

With the increase numbers of volunteers, we have been reviewing the tools we have available and the condition of the existing stock. We recently applied for a small Community-Build Grant from

Cheltenham Borough Council and were successful with our application. With this money we have replaced and also increased the number of tools we have available for work parties. The main tools replaced were loppers some of which are over 10 years old and were showing their age. Our thanks go to Cheltenham Borough for their support for this project and our work we do on the hill.

As reported in my autumn review we were planning to coppice a small area of one of the Hazel Plantations. This work has now been completed and we have also put up a temporary post and wire fence around it. This fence is to keep out the Dexter cattle and hopefully some of the wild animals to stop them eating the new growth. The idea is a trial to monitor the Hazel regrowth and also the ground cover, now that the Hazel has been cut allowing much more light to get through.

We have also completed clearing some large areas of gorse, particularly one that allows access from the lower slope to the top of the hill adjacent to the Cotswold Way. The plan for gorse on the hill is to leave some large islands of gorse, some gorse just cut to encourage young growth, cut gorse back from the sides of paths and to clear and treat some gorse in the grassland. It should be remembered that in years gone by there was very little gorse on the hill as each year the grass and gorse were burnt off. We now have much greater areas of gorse that for many years have not been fully managed.



Gathering gorse on Charlton Kings Common

As reported in the Gloucestershire Echo at the end of January (with picture) the FOLK volunteers completed over 1000 volunteer hours in 2013 working on various projects on the hill. This

number of hours was achieved with our basic three work parties a month with an average of 9 volunteers on each work party. Our thanks again go to Cheltenham Borough Council, particularly Wayne Sedgwick Senior Community Ranger and Councillor Roger Whyborn Cabinet Member for Sustainability for their support of our efforts

You are always welcome to join us on one of our work parties, we are a friendly mixed group of male and female members, you can work at your own pace and take a break if you wish. We meet at 9.30 at Tramway Cottage Car Park Daisy Bank Road and are on the hill for approximately 3 hours. Tools are provided by FOLK. For your own safety please wear stout footwear and tough gardening gloves. We have three FOLK work parties a month. Dates for the next 6 months are printed below

For further information Contact Mike 01242 238790 or Geoff 01242 244165

Mike Donnelly, FOLK Work Party Coordinator

Work parties for 2014

April 2014	Thursday 10 th	Tuesday 15 th	Sunday 27 th
May 2014	Thursday 8 th	Tuesday 20 th	Sunday 25 th
June 2014	Thursday 12 th	Tuesday 17 th	Sunday 22 nd
July 2014	Thursday 10 th	Tuesday 15 th	Sunday 27 th
August 2014	Thursday 14 th	Tuesday 19 th	Sunday 24 th
September 2014	Thursday 11 th	Tuesday 16 th	Sunday 28 th
October 2014	Thursday 9 th	Tuesday 21 st	Sunday 26 th

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

Cheltenham Bird Club

Following on from our main article on the bird life of the Hill and Common, the following are details on the Cheltenham Bird Club

To begin by clarifying the Club's name, the "Bird" refers to wild birds and not to caged ones!



Fieldfare on a wintery day

The 35 year old Cheltenham Bird Club is a supporting member of FOLK. The Club recognises FOLK's important role in ensuring the active positive management that helps maintain the bird life of a location close to Cheltenham. This not only ensures that Club members have somewhere easily accessible from where they can watch birds, but also reflects the Club's charitable objectives, which include; advancing the knowledge of birds amongst residents of Cheltenham, contributing to the conservation of birdlife and working in partnership with other like-minded organisations.

From October to March each year the Club organises 20 indoor lectures, held at Bournside School on Monday evenings and covering a wide range of ornithological topics. Every month there are organised visits, on a Saturday or Sunday, to local or distant sites known for their bird communities, with travel by coach or car. In May and June, evening visits are made to spots near Cheltenham. All events are designed to be of interest to both knowledgeable birdwatchers and to beginners.

Membership is open to anyone interested in birds. There is a reasonable membership fee, with concessions for certain groups. Non-members can attend indoor meetings for a small charge.

To learn more of the Club, then please contact Sue Smith, at smith_home@btopenworld.com, or telephone, 01451 850385, or visit the Club website at www.cheltenhambirdclub.org.uk.

The Club collates records of birds that have been seen in and near Cheltenham and submits them to the County Bird Recorder. Any FOLK member is welcome to send sightings to the Club Secretary, Peter Ridout, at pandicridout@btinternet.com, for passing on to the Recorder.

We would be delighted to hear from anyone who is interested in the Club's activities.

Letter from Member. "Getting Plastered."

No, I'm not referring to the beer cans, bottles and other detritus left by those who have scant regard for the sanctity and beauty of our lovely Hill, but rather to our cycling friends.

It is wonderful that our Hill is put to so much excellent recreational use:- hang gliding; picnicking; bird watching; climbing; fossil collecting; running; naturalists' activities; archaeologists' pursuits; dog-walking; mountain-biking; tobogganing etc., oh, and of course, just plain walking.

Walking undoubtedly gives pleasure (and exercise) to the greatest number of Hill users yet does not often feature in the excellent Newsletter.

While it is lovely to see the sensuously clad mountain bikers on their fully suspended and damped, multi-gear, disc braked, sat-nav and heart-rate monitor equipped machines; in their mud-plastered fancy Lycra suits, full-faced helmets, complete with sun-glasses (even in the wet - no wonder some need search lights); they do churn up far more mud than the humble walker.

Consider the difference between the foot-print of perhaps 265 sq. cms falling every 80 cms against

the bicycle wheel delivering a continuous pressure over a much smaller area of about 20 sq. cms. The result is deeper penetration and distribution of mud which, when frozen, produces dangerous ruts.

Wouldn't it be lovely if bikers could stick to the tracks they have made over the last two years or so, leaving the two-hundred-year-old footpaths free for the rest of us to use without getting quite so plastered with mud in wet weather?

Philip Eden. February 2014.

Thanks for your letter Philip. It underlines the need to have a regular contact with bikers. Ed.

Fungi site visit

On a wet and windy day last October, Wayne Sedgwick other Borough Council colleagues and Peter Whalley, attended a training session in Sapperton Woods on fungi and lower plants run by the Conservation Management Association. Despite the inclement weather all delegates enjoyed a fascinating and informative day.



In need of identification before going into the pot

Spot the trees. The mystery trees: A Ash; B Hazel; C Oak; D Larch

Wildflower and Butterfly Monitoring.

Monitoring of the Hill and Common linked to our conservation work will continue in 2014 and more volunteers would be most welcome. Contact any committee member for details



Looking forward to spring

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: whalley-p@o2.co.uk Articles of around 500 words plus a photo at any time would be most welcome

Contact FOLK

Anne North, Membership and Grazier: 01242 522767 Mike Donnelly, Working Parties: 01242 238790
Julius Marstrand, Chairman: 07717 326610 folk@marstrand.co.uk Geoff Holt, Treasurer: 01242 244165
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The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of FOLK or its Executive Committee