

ABOUT FOLK



FOLKtalk

Issue 78
Summer
2025

**Friends of Leckhampton Hill
& Charlton Kings Common**

Conserving and improving the Hill for you

Why not have a look at what is new on the FOLK website <http://www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk/> and look us up on Facebook - *Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common*.

Contributions to the FOLK Website are always gratefully received.

Contact: webmaster.leckhamptonhill@gmail.com

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If you have any comments on the Newsletter or would like to contribute an article to the next edition please contact **Martin Wood** on **01242 231230** or send an email to: martinwood360@gmail.com. Articles of around 500 words, plus a photo if you have one, would be most welcome at any time.

Contact FOLK

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Find the ***Friends of Leckhampton Hill & Charlton Kings Common*** on www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk and on Facebook

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

The Galloway herd has three new calves and all are doing well.

Find out more about the cattle, and other developments on the Hill and Common, in The Word from Wayne on p 4.

FOLKtalk Summer 2025



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LOCAL RESIDENTS GROUP GUIDED WALK

On a perfect spring evening Cheltenham Borough Council and FOLK led a walk for St Phillips and St James's Area Residence Association (SPJARA) on Leckhampton Hill. It starting at Brownstones car park, with the group standing on land which was once used for the sidings for the Brownstones Quarry.



The topics for the walk were: the industrial history of the site, the site coming into public ownership and the present management of the site. Of particular interest was the history of the tramways which, of course, when operational passed through the SPJARA area.

We viewed the Belted Galloway cattle with the three new calves,

SPJARA at the Limekilns (Photograph by Simon Smith)

and Senior Ranger Wayne explained how we graze the common for the benefit of conservation.

The walk continued across the hill and ended at the Lime Kilns. Here the standard gauge incline was noted. This was built for a track which ran from the limekilns all the way to Charlton Kings railway station, with a level crossing on Sandy Lane. There is still evidence of the crossing gates and the railway track in the road.

It was explained that Cheltenham Borough Council are the land owners, but with guidance of the SSSI management from Natural England. Daily management of the Hill and Common is a partnership of CBC, FOLK, the Cotswold Wardens and other volunteers.

As you can see, there is always plenty to do. So please contact me if you would like join one of our work parties. Although numbers are pretty good, it would nice to have a few more volunteers to ensure the continuation of our conservation work. Do give it a go - we are a friendly group!

Work Parties are usually held on the second Thursday, third Tuesday and fourth Sunday of each month. Details of the dates and meeting points for upcoming work parties are shown on the "FOLK Work Parties" page of the FOLK website. If we need to cancel a work party (usually because of bad weather) or change the meeting point, details will be posted on the FOLK website and sent via a Work Party WhatsApp group to existing volunteers.

We meet at 9.30am, normally at Tramway Cottage Car Park, Daisy Bank Road, and are on the hill for approximately three hours. Tools are provided by FOLK. For your own safety we ask you to wear stout footwear and bring tough gardening gloves.

For further information you can contact me, Pete Niblett, on 07857 939072 and I would be happy to answer any questions. Alternatively please go to our website where you will find the 'FOLK Work Parties' page on the right hand side of the homepage, or click on this link: <https://www.leckhamptonhill.org.uk/work-parties/>

Otherwise, just send an email to folk.workparty@gmail.com and we will get back to you.

Welcome to the 78 edition of FOLKtalk. We have achieved, including the removal of three full bins of rubbish that had just been thrown into the undergrowth.

FOLK: our 25th year of volunteering, both to support nature conservation and to maintain and improve the facilities on Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (mainly Old Man's Beard) from a section of the

Old wall closer to the Memorial Wall (pictured right) letter. Before too long you will also receive

a special edition of FOLKtalk reflecting the clearing this area will enable the Wardens to continue with the construction of the new one.

Years. This was a hard task, but the volunteers made

light work of it and were then able to join the others in the quarry later. In

addition, a small amount of gorse and other scrub was cleared to allow the We were sorry to receive the resignation of Councillor Paul Baker from the FOLK

Executive Committee. He was one of two Cheltenham Borough Council

And finally, lives on our Executive Committee. Paul has recently joined the

Cheltenham Borough Council as a Member of the Waste Recycling & Parks,

Green Spaces & Wildlife Wardens team for his support in the past and wish him

well in his new post. It was also especially good to see Birdsfoot Trefoil (pictured below left) and

Much as we appreciate the dry sunny weather that we have seen over the

spring fire early. I would like to emphasise the possibility of fires of

the hill and the damage they can cause. Having over already had very

fire this year and therefore are often started by disposable barbecues, which are

still available from some outlets. Fires and barbecues are not allowed on the Hill

and Common. We have a good working relationship with the Fire Brigade; so

please tell them about any signs of fires burning on the site.

On a brighter note, we have recently seen three new Galloway calves born on

the Hill. These calves are a rare breed of Galloways called Riggat Galloway. Riggat

cattle come in multiple colours of black, blue-black, red, brown or dun, but they

are all easily identified by the white stripe running down the spine. We look

forward to seeing these calves on the main site when the whole herd re-starts its

conservation grazing on the Common in the autumn.

We are grateful for your continued membership and your support of our work.

Please enjoy this edition of FOLKtalk.



THE WORD FROM WAYNE

Wayne Sedgwick, Senior Ranger, Cheltenham Borough Council

PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL GRID GRANT

The vast majority of the projects which have been supported by the National Grid grant have now been completed. An initial completion report has now been submitted to National Grid, and further periodic monitoring reports will be provided, in part to help ensure the lasting benefits of all that has been done to enhance the site.

The remaining tasks include some mowing to be done on Ravensgate, as the earlier planned works were postponed due to poor weather. Similarly, there is also a small amount of scrub clearance still to be completed. Finally, while the Cotswold Wardens continue to provide the skill and effort to rebuild the Cotswold stone wall up from Hartley Lane, the supply of stone has been funded by the grant, with the final load of 20 tonnes delivered on the 27th June. This will take the length of the re-built wall to around 400 metres, or a quarter of a mile.

It is more than five years ago that a small team, including the then FOLK chairman John Harvey, began the process of preparing a bid for this grant, which was made available due to works completed by National Grid within the Cotswold National Landscape.

Although the programme was initially time-limited to three years for completion, allowances have been made in the light of unavoidable delays, most significantly the disruption caused by the COVID19 pandemic. Over the course of the project, works have addressed a range of aspects of this site. These include widespread scrub and gorse clearance, help with Ash dieback, veteranisation of five oak trees, restoring drystone walling, improving woodland walks, opening up views, improving accessible access to the Hill and Common, conservation of the Limekilns, and replacing over 500 fence posts and many gates.

While the National Grid grant funding made possible a great deal of work which needed to be undertaken by specialist contractors, most of these have also been ably and energetically supported by FOLK's Work Party Volunteers. For example, when the Cotswold Wardens have been preparing to move onto each new phase

Common. This is the continuation of a project undertaken on previous visits by HSL pupils to the site.

The objectives for this work were to continue to enhance the grassland area; to open up the views; to improve access across the ridge and to remove gorse regrowth. This area had been checked for nesting birds two days before. As on previous occasions the youngsters were divided into two groups, one group having a walk round the Hill with CBC staff, whilst the other cut and cleared the gorse. It was another successful visit and I think the pupils enjoyed the break from classroom studies and working outdoors.

Lower Daisybank Slopes

We carried out three work parties on the lower slopes above Daisybank Road, a varied habitat and rich in flora and fauna. The objective as always is to enhance the grassland areas and encourage the spread of wild flowers. The tasks included:

- removing cotoneaster (a non-native plant, probably a garden escapee) from grassy slopes to the right of the lower path heading east. This was a tricky task and over two outings we managed to remove and treat about half of the cotoneaster, but we decided to let the bees enjoy the nectar on the other half!
- clearing regrowth, mainly gorse and bramble from an area further along from the cotoneaster – an area worked last year and a routine maintenance task.
- opening up a sunny glade opposite the above area. This is a good habitat area for butterflies and so our aim was to widen the glade by pushing back the scrub.
- keeping the path that runs parallel to Daisybank road clear of encroaching scrub, especially at the top end near and above the turning circle.

The Hill

On a glorious April morning a large group of seventeen volunteers braved the sunshine to attend the work party, enough for us to tackle two separate tasks.

The majority of the volunteers remained in Salterley Quarry to remove growth from around the edges in order to prevent further encroachment into the parking area. This hadn't been done for some time and there was a lot of

One change that will be seen by those walking the Hill will be the arrival of an unobtrusive temporary shelter for the cattle while they are off the conservation site. This will be situated in the Reversion fields only.

WORK PARTY REPORT SUMMER 2025

Pete Niblett, Work Party Coordinator

This shelter consists of a wooden frame 4m x 2.8m with a flat roof of a special tough fabric which will protect the animals when grazing in areas which have limited natural shade. As the area to be grazed moves from one zone to another, the shelter can also be moved to a new position as and when needed.

September – The Work Party Plan is available to read on the FOLK website.

Youth engagement

Typically, annual tasks such as High School Leckhampton's Eco Committee is a group of enthusiastic students mowing, Hemp Agrimony and Ragwort removal, and path access are in our work programme. Another important task is to monitor previous work and revisit these areas to remove and treat regrowth if necessary. This time, the students' time on the Hill and Common included a look at the newly created Adder habitat and, of course, some hands-on practical work to give them a feel for what is involved in managing such a

FOLK has continued to hold successful work parties and the consistent number of volunteers attending our sessions has enabled us to achieve most of the objectives laid out in the winter programme. We have also worked with other

New benches

Volunteers, including the Cotswold Wardens, Gloucester Vale, High School Leckhampton and of course those from Cheltenham Borough Council. To mark the Council's appreciation of the huge contribution made by volunteers there will soon be two new benches installed. One will be dedicated to the

Firebreaks

Cotswold Wardens and the other to all the Volunteer/Friends groups across the Town. The dry and sunny spring has been welcome, but it does raise concerns about the risk of fires on the Hill and Common. Indeed, so far this year, the Fire Brigade has

been called out on at least three occasions to tackle fires caused by portable barbecues.

This is why, since my last article, FOLK has carried out three work parties (and more are planned) to maintain the existing fire breaks and to create one other.

Doing this will cut through some very large hawthorn scrub (or more accurately small trees) as well as gorse and bramble on the eastern end of Charlton Kings Common. There are four or five fire breaks in this stretch of gorse to the side of

