

FOD

Friends of the Downs

Avon Gorge +

AG

Issue 28

Spring 2018



Chairman's Report April 2018

February saw over fifty FOD+AG members enjoy good company and refreshments, to celebrate our tenth anniversary.

Our activities continue to be recognised as a major contribution to the long-term wellbeing of the Downs and Avon Gorge. Three new committee members, are already making a positive difference, and we can be confident of strong support in the future.

The Council see the Downs as an opportunity to raise income. We fully understand the need for this, but, while accounting is not transparent, and non Downs users, such as the Zoo, are keeping income generated from Public Land, we will continue to ask questions,

The Downs Act has served users of the Downs well. What is needed is greater application of the principles and powers.

Richard Bland, Gerry Arnold, Roger Yates and I met well before FOD+AG was ever conceived. The City Council required a USER group to support their Green Flag applications, so we attended, and were even given a facilitator!

At the 10 year celebration, I referred to the highs and lows we had encountered. We establish a team ethic, 'Quality contribution with respect for others', it was our aim from the start.

The lowest point was the death of Brian Sprosen, one of our most effective contributors. His smile told me when I had got something wrong. We miss Roger Garret and John Hardy due to their ill health.

A lesson on self awareness came when Mandy Lievers, and some young helpers, took disabled/disadvantaged children out on the Downs. I had a compassionate smile, but little else. No relevant skill or experience to offer.

On the other extreme I walked with a group of Caribbean widows, we laughed loudly when comparing trees to parts of the human body. I suggested we talked about cricket and was nearly lynched.

There were many successful walks, talks, also maintenance and monitoring sessions. We have a high quality team. The next committee meeting we will

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be discussing amongst other issues: Parks Forum, Social media, Sustainable Energy and Advertising.

FOD+AG are an essential voice for the future of this superb green space at the heart of Bristol.

Thank you

Jack Penrose



Cutting the Cake at the FOD+AG 10th Anniversary Party

DOWN'S QUIZ

This quiz is a modified version of one done at the 10th anniversary party when the winner scored 15. It was suggested that a wider audience might enjoy the challenge. The answers and notes are at the end of the newsletter.

1. **How many goats came to the gully in 2011?**

2. **What was the Observatory before John West bought it in 1828?**

3. **When was the Water Tower added to the water reservoir?**
A) 1932 B) 1954 C) 1965.

4. **What object at the top of Blackboy Hill celebrated its centenary in 2017?**

5. **When was the ZigZag on Sion Hill opened?**
A) 18th century B) 19th century C) 20th century

6. **What type of tree is painted white at the White Tree roundabout?**
A) Horse Chestnut B) Beech C) Lime

7. **What species of tree did FODAG plant in March 17 on Clay Pit Road?**

8. **When was the wall at Sea Walls built?**
A) 18th century B) 19th century C) 20th century

9. **When was the last flight of the Concorde over the Downs?**
A) 2012 B) 2007 C) 2003

DOWNNS QUIZ

10. What was the popular name of the quarry the Spire Hospital was built in?
11. Which war is commemorated by the War Memorial sarcophagus on Clifton Green?
12. When was the Portway first opened?
A) 1910 B) 1926 C) 1963
13. What soccer teams play on Wednesdays?
14. From Clifton Camp you can see Sugar Loaf near Abergavenny. How far away is it?
A) 15 miles B) 25 miles C) 35 miles D) 45 Miles
15. Why did the Queen visit the Downs in 1973?
16. How many pedestrian routes are there from the surface of the Downs to the Portway?
17. When did the water main burst at the bottom of Bridge Valley Road?
A) 1983 B) 2001 C) 2013
18. Who built a fountain at the top of Bridge Valley Road in 1867?
19. Why was the Portway closed between 1974 and 1976?
20. What are the Severn Sisters?

Richard Bland

Scandinavian Invasion

This winter the Downs experienced a Scandinavian invasion, with the arrival of flocks of Redwings and Fieldfares during cold weather in the north and east. These birds are thrushes but unlike our Song and Mistle Thrushes they gather together in large groups. In the huge old orchards near my wife's parents in Herefordshire you can sometimes see hundreds of them at a time, (although perhaps it would be better to say hear hundreds of them at a time as they have a remarkable ability to disappear into the trees around you leaving only they're chattering 'chuck-chuck' calls.)

The groups on the Downs are not as large as this but I have seen flocks of 30 or 40 both there and in Redland Park where they fly down from trees to forage for food on the ground. They particularly seem to like the avenue of trees running up from Cafe Retreat. It is amazing to just sit and watch and see people wandering around you oblivious to these visitors.



Fieldfare

The flocks are generally mixed and the slightly smaller Redwings are the easier to identify as they have a distinct black eyestripe, (think 80s New Romantic.), and when they fly up you can see the red underarm patches. By comparison the Fieldfares are much more like a typical thrush with a heavily speckled breast and rather upright stance but both birds are very dapper.

Scandinavian Invasion



Redwing (Above) and Waxwing (Below)



Every 5 or 6 years in a very hard winter we can be very blessed to see another visitor from the same family the Waxwing. This bird is a fabulous concoction of elements - the proud punk style headwear, a yellow wing stripe and multicolour plumage - altogether it would do a Bird of Paradise proud. Generally they tend only to make the eastern coast of England but when they do reach the South West they gather to devour crab apples, ivy and berberis etc. They are voracious eaters and I have seen them strip a crab apple tree from top to bottom in a matter of days like the tide flowing out.

Luke Hudson

The White Tree

FOD+AG intends to repaint the Small-leaved Lime tree at the White Tree roundabout this summer as it needs re-doing.

The origins of a tree painted white at this junction is both fascinating and obscure. Originally the route to Westbury was one of three major roads across the Downs that were part of the 18th century turnpike system set up in 1727 by Act of Parliament. This established a Bristol Turnpike Trust that was eventually to be responsible for 180 miles of roads around Bristol. In the early 19th century the Trust was run by the great John Loudon Macadam who revolutionised road building methods, and enabled average speeds by mail-coach to reach the dizzying speed of twelve miles an hour, cutting the journey to London from four days to ten hours.

As part of the road improvements carried out by the Trust, avenues were planted along the roads across the Downs as a guide, and these avenues have been continuously maintained ever since. There were other tracks and driveways that led off the main Westbury Road, and one led to Cote House which dates back to the seventeenth century and is now part of St Monica's.



White Tree Roundabout: mfirmage <http://bristolimage.co.uk>

The White Tree

At some point the owners painted the trunk of the tree which was close to their driveway white to show visitors which track to take and as late as 1948 the owners of Cote House maintained the painting.

By this date the junction had become very complex, and the City road engineers decided to build a roundabout, and realign Saville Road and Parry's Lane. This meant removing the original tree, and planting a new one as part of the realignment of the roads. The present tree is a replacement for the Elm that was planted in 1950, but was killed by Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s.

Richard Bland

Anniversaries

The Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge celebrate their tenth anniversary this year. But it is also the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society (CHIS) and the 200th of the creation of the Clifton Club. The latest edition of the CHIS newsletter contains an article first published in our newsletter, and a note about how to join us.

CHIS members for many years provided funds to improve the Downs especially the area within Clifton, funding the replacement of trees that died, the establishment of a children's play area, and the marvellous historical bench at its centre. They also support the planting of spring bulbs, and the various schemes to make the history of the Downs more widely understood. They have put up more than 150 plaques in memory of prominent citizens, and fight planning battles to ensure the improvement of the village. They hold regular talks and events, and organise the annual Green Squares and Secret Gardens scheme on June 9th and 10th, which is also now part of an international program.

If you are interested in their activities and live in or around Clifton please go to their website www.cliftonhotwells.org.uk.

Richard Bland

Photo Montage



In 1913 the Royal Agricultural Show was held on the Bristol Downs for the third and final time. The first picture shows the main pavilion built for the occasion. This is followed by the horse and bull categories, and



Royal Agricultural Show



finally commercial machinery exhibitors. The photos are all from post-cards produced by Harvey Barton, the president of the Bristol Camera Society, whose eponymous firm survived until 1960.



Plants of the Gully: Libby Houston

In the latest of our series of articles introducing you to the increasingly accessible Gully, which the 2015 restoration of the Victorian Steps has made possible, I am delighted to be able to welcome another local expert. This time a botanist-extraordinaire, Libby Houston describes herself as “an independent botanist and poet”. Her responses to a number of questions I put to her as an outline for this article attest to how comprehensively she fulfills these typically modest descriptors.

Since she embarked on her botanical career in earnest in 1985, Libby has carved herself a niche in the history of the Gorge by combining her fascination with its rare plant species and a love of, and expertise in, rock climbing. Her insistence on truly close encounters with the plants she studies and conserves has contributed significantly to our knowledge and identification of often dauntingly inaccessible flowering plants, as well as of the Avon Gorge community of Whitebeam - endemic only to this site.

One Whitebeam hybrid, of which there is just a single specimen, bears the Latin name *Sorbus x houstoniae*, (i.e. Houston's Whitebeam). So who better to tell us about some of the more remarkable plants of the Avon Gorge.

What led to the Avon Gorge gaining the status of Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and what is the difference between them?

The Avon Gorge was notified as an SSSI in 1952 and 1988 for its Carboniferous limestone exposures, grassland and woodland and the “exceptional number of nationally rare and scarce plant species” they support. SAC is a European designation conferred in 2005 primarily for the *Tilio-Acerion* ravine forest habitat on the west side, with its “high concentration of small-leaved lime” and its rare whitebeams; the calcareous grasslands come second – as I understand it, this habitat is commoner in Europe generally, though rare and vulnerable in Britain.

Approximately how many species of flowering plant found in the Gully are rare or endangered?

Rarity has been defined by distribution, Nationally Rare plants occurring in fewer than 16 of the (3859) 10km grid-squares in the British Isles (including

Plants of the Gully

Eire), Nationally Scarce plants in 16-100 squares, and Nationally Uncommon in 101-250 squares. The newer Red List of 2005 uses the international threat categories, e.g. Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable and Near Threatened; and Of Least Concern. This last can sound misleading, as a plant with very small but apparently stable distribution, such as Nationally Rare Honewort *Trinia glauca*, is now classed alongside the very Common Daisy *Bellis perennis*. I use both systems. Currently 3 of the Gorge's 4 Nationally Rare herbs – Bristol Rock-cress *Arabis scabra*, Bristol Onion *Allium sphaerocephalon* and Honewort – grow in the Gully; Bristol Rock-cress and Bristol Onion are both classed as Vulnerable. Honewort is the only rarity restricted to the Gully, since the recent losses of its 4 other Gorge sites. Four of the 9 rare Whitebeam *Sorbus* species are also found in the Gully, and 6 of the 17 Nationally Scarce plants. None of our herbs are globally rare, but our endemic Whitebeams are on the international list.

Please select one example.... and tell us something about it

I can ramble happily on about all the rarities, but the small umbellifer Honewort stands out as the most improbably disadvantaged.



Honewort: Libby Houston

Plants of the Gully

Though it flourishes in the cropped grass of Crook Peak and Sand Point, our hard-pressed plant is a larger ecotype (Lovatt, 1982), and for that, particularly, should not be lost. It's monocarpic – it flowers once, then dies. Biennial in a greenhouse, in the parsimonious Gully a plant might take up to 16 years to flower; then, it's dioecious – its *plants* separately male or female; oh, and pollinated by ants.

So for successful seed-production it needs a male and female plant to flower *the same year*, within ant range. Then, if it sets seed, there is a seed-eating weevil standing by. And any seedlings are vulnerable to trampling... It is amazing it exists at all! To me the Gully population is definitely Of Most Concern. (At least, the University Botanic Garden is working on a viable back-up population from Avon Gorge seed).

You are particularly celebrated in botanic circles for your pioneering work on the Avon Gorge Whitebeams: how did you come to be involved?

My interest in the Avon Gorge flora stemmed from counting the population of Spiked Speedwell *Veronica spicata* for an evening class project. It's restricted to the southern end, mainly St Vincent's Rocks, round the Bridge. Surveyed previously from level ground with binoculars, it was stated to be declining and dangerously threatened by scrub. I counted it by hand, to see if I could reach every ledge (while noting what else was there) and live to tell the tale. My records told a much healthier story, and I just became very interested in degrees of truth and accuracy in botanic claims and understandings. But it's hard to look at small plants and trees at the same time. I scarcely noticed the Whitebeams until asked to assist Tim Rich in the first systematic *Sorbus* survey here, in the Gully. Because it's such a cliff-growing genus, I then took part in roped surveys in the Wye Valley and later solitary surveys in Cheddar Gorge, discovering that if you're only looking at one group of species you start noticing differences. Some people are quite dismissive to me about the new Whitebeam species as being only distinguishable by comparing their DNA. Absolutely not: my 8 various discoveries stood out for me as different in the field. DNA analysis (available then by chance) has just given my observations – as a woman without a science degree – unarguable credi-

bility. Some of the species even show different behaviours!

What is remarkable about the Sorbus community?

The rare *Sorbus* species have evolved directly or indirectly from an original hybridisation event in which Grey-leaved Whitebeam *Sorbus porrigentifomis* has usually played a crucial role, most often with Common Whitebeam *S. aria*. We can't tell when a species started, but the more localised distribution the more recent its origin. The oldest Bristol Whitebeam *S. bristoliensis* (alas, now dead) was reckoned to be at least 270 years old; but one of the new Cheddar species might well be no older than me. The proliferation of Whitebeams has happened since quarrying and grazing stopped, allowing unhampered colonisation of bare rock ledges in a dynamic and still-changing process.

What factors have led to the endangerment of so many herb layer plant species?

What threatens small herbs most is shading out: ancient limestone grassland including rare plants may have survived since the last Ice Age where woodland never became established, e.g. on cliffs or screes, shallow or shifting soils. I don't usually think of the Gully separately; for me every part of the Gorge has special features. What is unique about the Gully is its topography: an easy-angled dry valley with low rocky outcrops on sheltered slopes. The south side supported the largest area of calcareous grassland still intact, with its key species the spring-flowering tousle-tufted Dwarf Sedge *Carex humilis* (and an unexpected patch of limestone heath), before the northern slope was cleared. The secondary woodland that developed here was deepened by infiltration of (Mediterranean) Holm Oak *Quercus ilex*, which revels in the Gorge's microclimate, grows well on rocky soils and grows lethally fast, its impenetrable evergreen shade underlined by the cover of its almost non-rotting fallen leaves: it can and did wipe out grassland species here forever. Clearing the woodland brought back the open vista of the old pictures, but obviously not the grassland, and human conservation workers couldn't keep up with the returning scrub. The goats have been doing a great job in keeping the brambles and hordes of ash – and holm oak – saplings down: the slopes are still open. The rare plant sites remain where they were, and still

Plants of the Gully

do need human attention. I can't pretend to be a systematic person and have never managed to monitor anything regularly off my own bat. But I have observed that Dwarf Sedge seems to be making a comeback, if very slowly (its seeds are dispersed by ants), on the cleared slopes. This year at least I should – I will – manage to carry out a proper survey.



Bristol Rock Cress: Libby Houston

To what extent has the introduction of [the] goats been an aid or a hindrance to the conservation of the endangered plants? Whilst accepting the importance of maintaining some form of public access, what would be your advice on strategies to ensure their future conservation?

I don't think Bristol Rock-cress suffers from either goats or people. The Gully is great for allowing people to see the plant close to, but it has better sites elsewhere in the Gorge – the Great Quarry for one. Bristol Onion is often damaged unintentionally by people at the top of the Gully Outcrop – but it always has been. There are patches where it carries on undisturbed; also it has a greater population on St Vincents Rocks. Large and small rare White-beams, and some of the common ones, have been protected against the goats by fencing, chickenwire or exclusion. Only Honewort may have a slight problem with trampling; I have been keeping an eye on that. Perhaps its pop-

Plants of the Gully

ulation might be reinforced some time from the Botanic Garden resource.

And thinking of the public, in spite of their propensity to leave litter and burn the earth with fires or cheap barbecues, I think it is wonderful that there are bits of the Gorge which non-botanical members of the public come and enjoy, off the beaten track, without being frightened off by the authority of fences and railings. They will always leave some traces at the top of the Gully outcrop, but less so the rest. And if I'm around I can bore them silly with uninvited botanical blather.

Libby Houston 16th April 2018



Dwarf Sedge with Thyme: Libby Houston

The Future of Parks

BCC Parks Consultation

Bristol Parks Forum has had an interim update on the BCC Parks Consultation that took place recently. In total around 2,700 people responded to the consultation along with organisations such as Avon Wildlife Trust and Bristol Nature Society. The results show a general agreement that income generation was preferable to cuts in services.

The Future of Bristol Parks

Regarding generating income, the least popular proposal was for advertising in parks, whilst the most popular (over 50% agreement) was for improving cafes and concessions. Increased business opportunities and fee paying activities scored around 50%, the latter more popular with young people.

In terms of reducing services, about 50% agreed in the reduction of facilities such as sports, unless there was a cost benefit to BCC. Grounds maintenance including floral bedding and hanging basket reductions, scored about 50%, although some people suggested volunteers could do a portion of this work. People were not keen on reducing park opening times, but did agree with the removal of play equipment where it was not fit for purpose. The final report will be published after going to Full Council and Downs Committee, followed by a briefing to Bristol Parks Forum.

A Foundation for Bristol Parks

Bristol along with many other UK city councils have been looking at various models to run parks with decreasing funds, and BCC / Bristol Parks Forum have proposed a Parks Foundation for their preferred option (as currently operating in Bournemouth).

Its main role would be to raise funds and awareness for Bristol's parks as an independent charity with a board of trustees. Funds would be raised through public donations, seeking corporate support and from 'social responsibility' budgets. In addition the Parks Foundation would set up a trading arm to manage and run activities in parks, such as cafes, with the profits going back to the Foundation.

Public engagement would be a key priority and the Foundation would work with parks groups and business to encourage and facilitate volunteering. Funds would be used for specific projects or to improve maintenance above standards possible by relying solely on BCC budgets.

Ownership and management of parks, and byelaw enforcement therein, would remain with BCC, and the foundation would focus on activities outside BCC's role, employing a small number of paid staff supported by volunteers. A funding agreement would need to be in place to ensure that any funds raised and passed to BCC solely benefitted Bristol parks. The Foundation

The Future of Bristol Parks

has submitted a bid for voluntary funding jointly with Bath City Council, to cover set up and the first two years' running costs. If this is successful there will be a Stage 2 submission in April 2018, followed by a final decision.

In conclusion the proposed Parks Foundation is intended to bring in new investment, with profits going back into improving Bristol's parks and green spaces above what BCC can provide from its own budget.

Terry Hannan

Book Review: Clifton Rocks Railway

Author Maggie Shapland has been involved with the conservation of the Clifton Rocks Railway since 2005 and has written a magnificent 300 page hard-backed book full of detailed photographs, and copious memories from people who can still recall the system when it was in use as a shelter and broadcasting studio during the last war. The book is published by the Clifton Rocks Railway Trust, and can be bought direct from them at a cost of £15 via their website at www.cliftonrocksrailway.org.uk.

The railway is one of a number that were built in various places in Britain to solve the problem of enabling people to travel easily, usually from a river to a development on top of a cliff. Down the centuries there have been a variety of routes up the face of the Gorge, of which the ZigZag, built in 1729 alongside the Rocks Railway, remains one of the best. At this time wheeled traffic had to use Park Street or Constitution Hill to reach Clifton from Bristol. It was not until Bridge Valley Road with its constant gradient was opened in 1822 to a design by John Loudon Macadam, that there was an easy route from the city centre.

The railway had a brief working life from 1893 as it coincided with the development of the electric tram system which vastly improved the network of cheap transport. Its maintenance costs frequently exceeded its income and it finally closed in 1934. It is now a fascinating piece of industrial archaeology, and an important part of the tourist industry. I can't recommend this book too highly.

Richard Bland

On Litter

Some of you might have heard an interview/discussion on the radio recently. The interviewees were a woman supporting the introduction of swingeing fines for drivers caught throwing litter from moving vehicles and a man arguing against it, despite being a volunteer Womble, on the grounds that fining would be impractical and an inappropriate use of legislation against the individual.

I was left with a sense of confusion as to the purpose of the item and a feeling of frustration that the importance of the issue itself had been subverted by a spurious argument about personal liberty. Having reached the end of our 9th season of Deep Litter Clearances in which a record number of volunteers took part – for which I and the Downs Ranger thank them, this article is a timely attempt to explore these matters and to explain why this was a missed opportunity to inform and educate.

As so often happens in such journalist-led items the initial premise was anthropocentric. The questions it posed focused on the impact of litter on people or their pets – effectively extensions of themselves. Questions related to what our environment looks like, to how dangerous it is, to whether it represents a risk to health and safety of children and pets and to how much it costs, important as they are, miss the central point. That point, for me, is highlighted by the following quote:

“We don’t own the Earth. We are the Earth’s caretakers. We take care of it and all things on it. And when we have done with it, it should be better than we found it” - **Katherine Hannigan**

In other words, what should be at the heart of all aspects of our philosophy and practical management of the natural environment is “stewardship”.

If we recognize that our treatment of wildlife - animal, plant or microbial, and of the ecological balances that they maintain, is what matters then we as well as they will benefit. To thoughtlessly or, even worse, deliberately destroy green spaces like the Downs and Gorge which infiltrate our built environment, should be seen as an affront to that special gift of intelligence which evolution has bestowed on us.



Innocent Victim— similar to Grey Squirrel found on Litter Clearance

So what is the impact of litter on the natural environment and its communities?

What is litter? There is no legal definition, but it includes anything from crisps to cigarette butts; from take-away cartons and containers to dog waste; and manufactured materials which do not biodegrade from metals and glass, to plastics and expanded polystyrene; Littering should also be understood to include fly-tipping of products such as household and garden waste – and make no mistake, those of you who have never been on a FOD+AG DLC, we are increasingly confronted with such fly-tipping even on the Downs and in the Gorge.

Table 1: What Constitutes Litter

Litter Type	% of Sites Affected
Smokers' Materials	83%
Confectionary Packaging	69%
Soft Drink Cans and Bottles	54%
Fast Food Packaging	24%
Snack Packaging	21%
Alcohol bottles and Cans	20%
Broken Glass	8%

On Litter

Is littering getting worse? According to the Local Environment Quality Survey, the amount of litter is currently consistent. However fly-tipping is increasing as is littering associated with food and soft drinks “on the go”, whilst that due to plastic bags and dog fouling has decreased. Interestingly, at a time when smoking is on the decline, the proportion of sites surveyed littered with smoking-related materials was 83% (see table overleaf).

How can litter harm wildlife? A comprehensive list could be almost endless, so I will restrict myself to habitats like the Downs and Gorge (excluding the River Avon) and to the most common hazards.

- Animals, especially small mammals can become trapped inside cans and bottles where they can starve, drown or die of exposure. Larger mammals can get heads or other parts of their bodies stuck in containers where they can starve or suffocate.
- Mammals and birds can cut themselves on sharp metal edges of cans or broken glass which can lead to death or infection.
- Millions of invertebrates drown in any container which becomes filled with rainwater or melted snow.
- Plastic 6-pack rings can trap animals restricting their ability to move and escape from predators.
- Chewing gum in wings of birds can also restrict movement to find food and avoid predation.
- Chewing gum in fur or feathers can reduce the effectiveness of insulation to prevent exposure.
- Plastics and latex, mistaken for food can enter digestive tracts or respiratory tracts blocking them and causing starvation or suffocation respectively.
- Mammals and birds can become entangled in string or netting from which they cannot free themselves.
- According to “Keep Britain Tidy” 226 million cigarette butts are discarded annually forming a concentrated toxic risk factor for scavenging wildlife.

....and specifically due to fly-tipping:

- Domestic waste can attract scavenging behaviour by both mammals and birds and this has been linked to a significant proportion of wildlife injuries and fatalities resulting from being hit by traffic.
- A proportion of domestic waste including cleaning materials and containers is directly toxic.

Many of these hazards affect individuals, but what must be remembered is that the knock-on effects on wildlife populations and communities are significantly greater due to the disproportionate risk to young animals, whether due to their natural inquisitiveness or to their becoming orphaned and so lacking parental guidance and protection.

Contaminated garden waste can allow invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed or Himalayan Balsam to spread through native floral communities. An area degraded by rubbish-dumping becomes less biodiverse and, according to the Campaign for Rural England, this often leads to the land being bought for development with resulting habitat loss.

So, to return to where you came in, whilst I acknowledge that ‘policing’ littering might be very difficult, is that a valid reason for doing nothing? Why should swingeing fines be seen as an attack on the freedom of the individual? Is personal freedom a sacred cow which cannot be challenged – even when the resulting behaviour restricts the freedom of a majority of others? Whose freedom is most at risk in such situations? Is it the selfish “litter-louts” or is it the great majority of the human population and the wildlife with whom we share the Earth?

The only long-term solution to this problem is, of course, education, but personally I cannot see why a few high-profile prosecutions would not help to start the ball rolling in the right direction. After all there are already laws against littering and fly-tipping but clearly some hold them in contempt! I hope I can be forgiven for riding this particular hobby horse through this edition, but I suspect I am not alone in voicing this concern. Correspondence on it would be welcome.

Meanwhile for those of you for whom the subject of litter raises your blood

On Litter

pressure unhealthily and increases your stress levels, a suggested strategy for stress management by diversion therapy. The next time litter raises its ugly head think.....

Martin Collins



Answers to Quiz

1. Six - but two were chased by dogs off leads and killed in 2017.
2. It was a tower mill, built in 1766, destroyed by a storm in 1777.
3. 1954. A fine example of 1950s concrete brutalism!
4. The Haven, a shelter for soldiers recuperating at the Royal Victoria Hospital opened by the Queen in 1901 and now being converted to retirement accommodation. It is a listed building, and in our sad times is used by rough sleepers.
5. It was opened in 1729 to give access to Hotwell House.

Answers to Quiz

6. A Small-leaved Lime, planted in 1975, apparently following the death of an Elm.
7. We planted three Tulip trees, a new species for the Downs.
8. John Wallis built the wall in 1746. The coping stones are copper slag.
9. 2003- how time flies.
10. The Glen. It is the only quarry on the Downs surface not to be filled in, though it ceased operation in 1876.
11. The Seven Years War 1756-1763 in which Sir William Draper captured the Philippine Islands from Spain. He became the first conservator of the Downs and wrote the rules of cricket.
12. 1926. It was, at the time, the most expensive road in England. Until then Avonmouth relied on rail.
13. University teams play on Wednesdays, the Downs League on Saturdays.
14. 35 miles. It is only visible on very clear days.
15. The Queen visited the Bristol 600 exhibition on the Downs celebrating the 600th anniversary of the grant of a charter by Edward III.
16. Five - the ZigZag, the Mousehole, Bridge Valley Road pavement, the new ZigZag and the Gully footpath.
17. 2001. This was the original water main coming from Barrow Tanks, under the Avon to the Oakfield pumping station in Clifton.
18. Alderman Proctor, who also gave his house to the Lord Mayor of Bristol, and created Circular Road and Saville Road on the Downs.
19. A mass of rock on the face below Sea Walls was found to be unstable. 30,000 tons of rock was removed and the gallery below the Suspension Bridge built.
20. The Seven Sisters are a circle of Black Pines planted in 1872 north-east of the Water Tower. Only three remain, but a new set of seven has been planted nearby.

Key Events 2018

Butterfly Monitoring and Goat Monitoring: This commenced again for 2018 in April. If you would like to get involved please email: martinandglen@hotmail.com.

Deep Litter Collection: Last Saturday in the month September to March: Martin Collins 01179249435 or martinandglen@hotmail.com.

AGM The 2018 AGM will be held as usual at Redland Green Bowls club on Wednesday 21st November at 7pm.

Sea Walls and the Gully: Sunday April 29th: Walk with Richard Bland. Meet Sea Walls 10.00am. Register with Richard Bland. rlbland673@gmail.com OR phone 01179681061.

Geology of the Downs: Wednesday May 9th: The Geology of the Downs and Gorge with Geologist member Jeff Hurren. 7.00 p.m. Clifton Suspension Bridge Visitor Centre.

Wildflowers and Meadows: Sunday June 17th: Walk with Richard Bland – Meet 2.00pm Peregrine Watch on Circular Road. Register with Richard Bland as above.

FODAG Tenth Birthday Event: Sunday July 1st. Drawing the Downs...members drawing/painting on the Downs helped by FODAG members who are artists. Meet at the Downs Cafe 2.00pm. Bring your own art materials / equipment and the whole family.

Trees of the Downs: Bank Holiday Monday August 27th walk with Richard Bland. Meet 6.00 pm junction of Saville Road with Stoke Road. Register with Richard Bland as above.

FODAG Social: Wednesday September 26th Licensed bar and lovely food from Gayle at the Downs Café. Starts 5.30 p.m. with a short walk led by Francis Greenacre. Please let Robin Haward know if you are coming and how many! robinhaward@blueyonder.co.uk

Goats in the Gully: Wednesday September 12th 7.00 p.m. A History of the Goat Project and its future. Ben Skuse and Martin Collins present. Redland Club (junction of Burlington Road with Exeter Buildings).

Committee:

Jack Penrose (Chair), Martin Collins, Karen Findlay, Derek Catterall, Richard Bland, Robert Westlake, Terry Hannan, Joan Gubbin, Robin Haward, Jacques Solomons, Bob Bell, Caroline Baker & Luke Hudson

Contacts:

Deep Litter Clearance / Butterflies / Goats - Martin Collins.

History / Birds / Trees - Richard Bland.

Projects - Robert Westlake.

Working Parties (e.g. dead hedging) - Robin Haward.

Website - Stephanie Wooster.

Kay Snowdon - Facebook.

Articles for the Newsletter - Robin Haward: robinhaward@blueyonder.co.uk
- Luke Hudson: Fodagcontent@gmail.com

Please Note: Deadline for submissions for the Summer edition is 20th July 2018.

Subscriptions: £10.00 per individual or £19.00 per household per calendar year. Please ask for a standing order.

robinhaward@blueyonder.co.uk OR by post 7 Exeter Buildings BS6 6TH

Website:

<http://FODAG-bristol.weebly.com>

The website has further information on events and a weekly blog on the Downs.

@FODAGbristol

Send Downs & Gorge photos to fodagbs@gmail.com

Do please join the group on Facebook, and like/share the page to spread the word.



Igloo on the Downs - March 2018