



Report of the Friends of the Downs & Avon Gorge

January 2018

The Friends of the Downs and Avon Gorge welcome this opportunity to update the Downs Committee on our recent activities.

FODAG remains committed to its core values to support the City Council and the Downs Committee and to represent without favour all legitimate users of the Downs.

Traditionally a quieter time for FODAG on the Downs but we have not been entirely inactive.

Following our AGM FOD+AG Committee members met in December to elect its officers. Jack Penrose was once again nominated as chairman and accepted the role for the coming year. All other officers of the committee remain unchanged.

Early in December Redwing and Fieldfare returned to the Downs. Both are regular winter visitors.

On a cold December evening, working with the Avon Gorge Wildlife project and the Astrological Society FOD+AG members gathered to organise the Downs Star Party. Thankfully the clouds cleared and those who had booked onto the event had an opportunity to discover some of our more prominent constellations. This was followed by star shaped biscuits, hot coffee and a sing along.

Some of the more recent appointees to the Downs Committee may not be aware that the Downs are a designated Dark Skies Discovery location. The absence of any significant light pollution and easy access near the Sea Walls allows these events to take place every winter.

On December 10th snow fell on the Downs for the first time since March 2014. There were further more significant falls again towards the end of the month. This prompted many visitors out on to the Downs to enjoy the wintery landscape and to create many imaginative snow persons.

At the end of December dozens of laminated A4 sheets were observed around the Downs. They had been fixed to dead hedges, bollards and railings. On closer inspection they were discovered to be the work of an anonymous poet and generated great interest and spontaneous joy. The identity of the Downs bard remains a mystery. {I have included an example of his or her work at the end of the report}

FOD+AG members continue with regular weekend goat monitoring and following the death of a second goat FOD+AG has increased its vigilance, reminding dog owners about their responsibilities when in the goat compound.

During the course of the winter FOD+AG members will undertake the annual maintenance of the Victorian steps. This includes the removal of debris and leaves. At the same time minor repairs will be carried out.

Regular cleaning of the Haven is also scheduled for the winter months.

Last Sunday volunteers undertook further planned clearance work to the Lichen Trail. This is one of several clearance projects undertaken this winter. Working closely with the Education Officer the aim is to reduce competing plant species.

Next Saturday another volunteer team will be out and about working to remove deep seated litter from some of the less accessible areas the Downs.

For the next meeting of the Downs Committee FOD+AG plan to report on our ten year anniversary activities and FOD+AG's position with regard to the criteria for future acceptable uses of the Downs.

Who am I? I hear you ask. Why am I here? What is my task?

Sssh I say and listen to me. I'll tell you now all you can be.

You are the thoughts in your mind, the leaves on a tree.

You are the wind in the mountains and all the fish in the sea.

You are a new baby's breath and the blind's will to see.

You are everything and nothing, you are black you are white.

And, with as much as a wish you could be daytime or night.

You see, my child, as much as you ask,

The answers the same as the time you asked last.

You're a perfect creation of all that was true

To come down here and just, be you.

Anon