

Clifton Camp

protecting the archaeology

Throughout most of the 19th century, Clifton Down was close-cropped by grazing sheep. Mowers gradually took over the work of the sheep, except on the slopes of the iron age hillfort, where it is difficult to mow. The woodland quickly became established. The slopes are now overgrown and tree roots are damaging the hillfort – a Scheduled Ancient Monument. As landowner, Bristol City Council is obliged by law to take action to preserve the archaeology.

Working in partnership with English Heritage, Bristol City Council is therefore undertaking an ongoing cycle of woodland management to prevent further damage. Fortunately, this work will also improve the site as a habitat for wildlife.



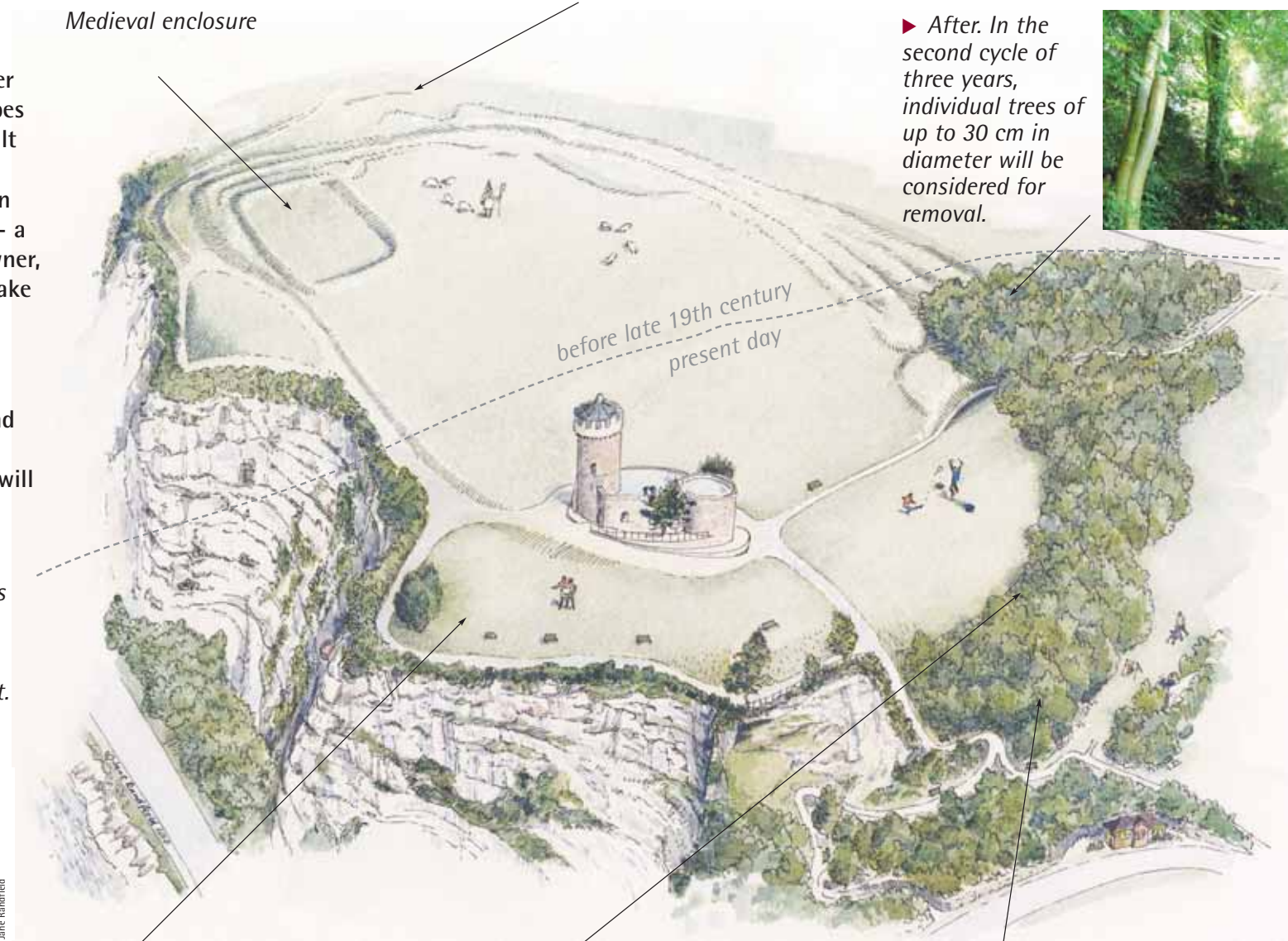
◀ As tree root systems grow and spread, they loosen and break down the ramparts of the ancient monument.

Managing for wildlife

At present, this recently established woodland supports few wildlife species. Managing it is helping to improve woodland structure and increases the diversity of wildlife that can thrive here.

The existing tree canopy provided by the mature trees is being retained, though some pruning of branches may be needed to prevent storm damage.

The main work is to remove young trees and scrub to increase the amount of light reaching the understorey.



Pruth Coleman

◀ The view from seats at this edge should look north-west along the Avon Gorge. At present the only view is of ash and sycamore.



Pruth Coleman

◀ Before. How the understorey looks before intervention. In the first three years, trees of up to 15 cm in diameter are being removed.



▶ After. In the second cycle of three years, individual trees of up to 30 cm in diameter will be considered for removal.

The management cycle



Jane Randfield

▲ Indicative management sections

Clearance is taking place in two non-adjacent sections each year in a six year cycle. Such practice minimises damage to existing valuable habitat and helps retain the woodland's visual character. The impact of the works is being reviewed throughout.

The coppicing cycle



Jane Randfield

Following clearance, an ongoing six year cycle of coppicing is being carried out. This traditional practice involves cutting trees and shrubs to ground level to allow new growth to flourish.

Coppicing prevents scrub from becoming 'leggy' and promotes dense growth. More light reaching the understorey allows scrub species to flower, providing nectar for insects and berries for birds.



Pruth Coleman

◀ Common calamint – locally uncommon, found in the Species-poor grassland that dominates the site. Currently under too much shade from overgrown trees and shrubs.



Paul Hulbert

◀ Hawthorn forms part of this dense, tangled belt of scrub. Other species include Elder, Old man's beard, Dogwood, Bramble, Blackthorn and Pedunculate oak.



Peter Wakeley, Natural England

◀ Ivy broomrape – very uncommon locally. Thrives in open woodland, scrub and woodland edge. Look out for Wild clary, Pale St John's Wort and Harebell too.



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