

News roundup from Troopers Hill

St George's only Local Nature Reserve

The bench is back

Little Elizabeth's bench is back! A much loved wooden bench on Troopers Hill finally bio-degraded after 10 years of service. Local people responded to the appeal for funds to replace the bench and there is now a smart metal bench waiting at the top of steps leading from Troopers Hill Woodland to the Local Nature Reserve. This will be much appreciated by many weary people and the mystery dog groomer who used to leave large amounts of dog hair round the old bench.



So who was Little Elizabeth? She was a best-selling author of the 19th century. Elizabeth Emra was the daughter of the local vicar of St George. In 1830 her book, "Scenes in our parish" described as "by a country parson's daughter" was published. The book sold so well that it was also published in America. She describes life in St George at that time and how Troopers Hill looked. "the barren and quarried hill, with its yellow spots of gorse and broom, and its purple shade of heath, raising itself above the dark heaps of dross on our own side; and then the river, the beautiful, soft flowing river". The view from the bench is across to the river Avon.

Just a few feet away from the bench is a carved pitch pine post, one of 4 markers on the Troopers Hill woodland trail. The carving on this post is full of references to Elizabeth Emra; an open book, a quill pen, a strawberry to refer to the strawberry feast she writes about in her book. It is worth a visit to see if you can spot the other references. You can find out more about Elizabeth by visiting www.troopers-hill.org.uk/emra

Ways to Nature project given the go-ahead by local people

Replacing the bench cost a few hundred pounds, the next project planned for Troopers Hill could cost up to £100,000. Friends of Troopers Hill ran a consultation to find out if local people would support this new project. Volunteers delivered over 1,800 questionnaires to local households and an online version of the survey was publicised in this paper and on Facebook, Twitter and other social media. 225 responses were received. A large majority were in favour of the proposal to replace the rotting wooden fencing on the Troopers Hill Rd boundary of the Local Nature Reserve. This fence is the only barrier to motorbikes accessing the site and destroying valuable habitats. Proposals to resurface the existing wheelchair access routes and create a new path to link the new play area on Troopers Hill Field to the Local Nature Reserve also met with general approval. The Field becomes muddy and waterlogged in winter and many people, ranging from families with small children and buggies to wheelchair users, find it too difficult to pass through to reach Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve. A more detailed report of people's feedback can be found on www.troopers-hill.org.uk/waystonature



The Friends hope that the funds they apply for will also cover a new invertebrates survey of Troopers Hill. The last detailed survey was in 2007 and a new survey should reveal whether the range of species is as good as it was, better or deteriorating. An enjoyable "mini survey" was carried out on Saturday, 12th August with excited children borrowing nets and bug posts to go hunting "bugs and beasties" to bring back to ecologist Rupert Higgins for identification. A generous donation from Children of Summerhill Out of School Club meant there were plenty of pots and nets to hand out this year and many more identification charts to help name each child's find.

Foraging can be fatal...for the wildlife

As autumn approaches blackberries, apples, plums and pears can be found on Troopers Hill and in the woodland. While picking some of these will not deprive local wildlife of all their food resources it is a good time to repeat the message that foraging is very much discouraged on Troopers Hill. This 20 acre site is totally surrounded by housing and some plants found there do not grow anywhere else nearby. Picking a plant that might be a tasty addition to your salad could mean stripping the only plants that are food for a particular species of wildlife. Enjoy the blackberries and other fruit but please leave some on each tree or bush for wildlife. Please leave other plants to grow and seed. Bristol Parks



Byelaws are useful to reference when thinking about whether an activity in a council owned green space is permitted or not. New signs will be appearing soon on Troopers Hill that will give a helpful, pictorial summary of the Byelaws.

Why not come to our next conservation work party and found out more about what makes Troopers Hill so very special?

There is a conservation work party on the 1st Saturday and 3rd Thursday of every month, starting promptly at 10am and finishing at noon. The volunteers meet by the red slide on Troopers Hill Field.

www.troopers-hill.org.uk



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