

The Friends of Troopers Hill



Summer 2013



Well, the weather struck again and for the second year in a row, we had to cancel Music on the Hill. Not just rain, but high winds were forecast and really, no-one is going to turn up in weather like that. We hope to try and get the [Ambling Band](#) back next year, so fingers crossed for a better June then.

As many of you will have noticed, the upper chimney is currently closed off for safety reasons. The recent survey discovered a danger of falling masonry inside the chimney. Over the next year, the chimney is being monitored to see if the lean is increasing. Then a decision will be taken about the repairs needed. Rest assured though, it will not stay closed permanently if the Friends have anything to do with it. The original board fitted to keep people out, however, meant that for a very brief time we had our very own bit of "Banksy style" street art. One day to be precise, before someone stole it. Perhaps they thought it really was a Banksy? Maybe it was.



Much excitement on the Hill on a recent Saturday afternoon when the air ambulance landed on top of the Hill. A young person had fallen off one of the hillocks onto a ledge in the gully, hurting their ankle. Their sister had the presence of mind to call for help resulting in the arrival of the Fire Brigade and several ambulances as well as the helicopter. An all-terrain ambulance eventually managed to take him out to an ordinary ambulance and he was carted off to hospital. We hope he is recovering but the lesson to be learnt is not to take the dangers of the steep cliffs around the Hill for granted. It could have been much worse. This sort of accident is why we have to carry out extensive risk assessments every time we stage any event on the hill.



Tuesday 9th July—put the date in your diary as it will be your chance to meet our Mayor, George Ferguson. He will be visiting St George that day, so keep an eye out for him. Could be your chance to make your views known!

Have your say in the "[Parks and green spaces new byelaws consultation](#)". Ending on 13th September, the idea is to work with local communities and other agencies, such as the Police, to decide what new byelaws should be introduced to tackle anti-social and nuisance behaviour in the City's green areas. Should all fishing be banned? Cycling, football, barbeques etc? You can help by completing the survey here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/parksbyelaws>. Alternatively, you can get a paper version by contacting Rajdeep Kaur at Safer Bristol on 0117 914 2230. This is important as it will be setting the standards for the future.

Hot news: The St George Neighbourhood Partnership now has a new chair — our very own Rob Acton Campbell. Well done Rob.

ABC of Troopers Hill

P is for Paths

Friends of Troopers Hill (FOTH) have raised many thousands of pounds in grants to improve paths, giving easier and more available access to Troopers Hill and its surroundings. In 2007, with grant assistance from Yanley and North Somerset Environmental Company (YANSEC), a step-free route was created between Malvern Road and the top chimney, allowing the occupants of baby buggies and wheelchairs to appreciate the panoramic views over Bristol from the crest of the Hill.

In Autumn 2012, a £33,000 'Stepping Forward' project to re-grade steep steps on Troopers Hill and signpost existing ways through the woodland to create circular walks was completed. Many people did not know the paths were there. The money came from the Big Lottery Community Spaces programme. The wooden waymarkers were created by the artist and wood carver Michael Henderson, inspired by ideas provided by local families. The posts were installed by participants in the Community Payback Scheme who, together with the Conservation Volunteers Trust, have helped to improve the general condition of the woodland paths.

An additional grant from the Co-operative Membership Community Fund enabled a Schools Project in 2012/13 to mark three walking routes (the Brass, Copper and Zinc trails) with 23 small plates fixed to steps and other surfaces. Pupils from Summerhill Academy designed the artwork for the plates. FOTH are grateful to Ruth Coleman, environmental education specialist, for her work on the Stepping Forward and the Schools Projects.

Bryn Friallen

Thanks to Jude for sending us this poem by Rupert Brooke and titled, fortuitously, "The Hill" :

*'Breathless, we flung us on the windy hill
Laughed in the sun, and kissed the lovely grass
You said "Through glory and ecstasy we pass;
Wind, sun and earth remain, the birds sing still
When we are old, are old..." And when we die
All's over that is ours; and life burns on
Through other lovers, other lips", said I
"Heart of my heart, our heaven is now, is won!"*

*"We are earth's best, that learnt her lesson here
Life is our cry. We have kept the faith!" we said
"We shall go down with unreluctant tread
Rose-crowned into the darkness! ...Proud we were
And laughed, that had such brave true things to say
- And then you suddenly cried, and turned away.'*

St George Park

The Friends of St George Park has an active membership committed to improving the environment of the park, supporting projects within it and encouraging local people to enjoy and use it responsibly. The group re-activated about 18 months ago mainly due to concerns about the injuries to wildlife as a result of poor fishing practices at the lake.

During that time, we have attended local meetings, familiarising ourselves with local priorities and participating in decision making relating to funding amenities and projects in the area.

Our plans to improve the lake have been extended to include the park as a whole. It became clear that the project we envisaged (with the lake as a centrepiece of a nature trail) would encourage more users who would, in turn have an impact on other aspects of the park.

Several objectives have been achieved in the past 12 months. Grants were successfully obtained allowing us to

- Reimburse the costs of rescuing injured birds to local wildlife charities that support us.
- Create an organic community garden
- Install a community notice board in the centre of the park.

We have raised £285 from the sale of duck food to offset the transportation costs of injured wildlife.

Section 106 money is being used to

- Test the silt in the lake, as phase 1 of the lake clean up.
- Install signage to create a no fishing zone.
- Purchase spring bulbs that were planted at the entrances of the park.
- Purchase a secure tool box for the garden project.
- Extend the children's playground
- Create a MUGA (multi-use games area - Ed) in the former basketball court.



The Friends also supported many improvements

- Refurbishment and repainting of the skate park,
- Repairs to fences, paths and benches.

We took part in Redfest, carrying out a survey of park users priorities for improvements and held a bat walk.

The Friends work very closely with Marie, our park keeper, to log the welfare of the wildlife, maintain some of the flowerbeds and other plantings in the park and support her maintenance plans.



During the coming months we intend to

- Measure the lake silt as the next phase of that project.
- Seek advice on how best to create cover for the island birds so they can breed successfully with less risk of predation.
- Host a bug hotel building event for local children.
- Hold a tree planting event in the park.
- Install additional benches near the skate park.
- Hold another bat walk.

The current Chair of the Friends is Maggie Waldon. She stepped into the post at our AGM in April, having served on the committee for a year and is supported by the rest of our enthusiastic committee members. We also welcomed a new set of members at this meeting.

We face a number of challenges, including

- The continued threat to wildlife.
- The glacial pace of progress in cleaning up the lake.
- The lack of public toilets in an increasingly popular park.
- Rejection of our proposal for a sustainable multi-purpose building in the park.

However, we have established good working relationships with members of the Neighbourhood Partnership and other local groups and will press onwards with our plans for the park, hopefully with their support and help.

Sally Shenton

(Ed's Note: If you would like to contact the Friends of St George Park, their email address is: fosgpg@yahoo.com. Facebook—<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfStGeorgePark>)

Report on Lower Chimney Works

As those of you who use Troopers Hill Road will know, the Lower Chimney was surrounded by scaffold for 4 weeks from the end of May. Part of the scaffolding was in the road and had to be protected by red & white water filled barriers. The work was deliberately started during half-term week to reduce the effect on traffic but we were pleased that it had less impact than we feared.

The main part of the work was to rebuild the top section where some of the stones were coming loose. The condition of the top of this Grade 2 listed chimney has been a concern for some time so we are very pleased that the Council arranged



to get this work done.

The chimney was originally part of an engine house for Troopers Hill Colliery, similar to another that stood further up Troopers Hill Rd and was drawn by Loxton in circa 1914 (the [drawing](#) can be seen on the history page of our website and on the board by the chimney). We believe it was built around 1805 and will have housed a Newcomen steam engine (or fire engine as they were known at the time) for pumping water out of the mine. The chimney used to be taller than it is now with a top section probably built in brick. The first of the photos shown here shows the state of the chimney in 2006 with lots of loose bricks, you can also see a brick section in the Loxton drawing (though that may have been built when it was converted to a house).

As part of the work, the remaining bricks and some of the stonework was taken down and then carefully re-built with the stones in the original position as far as possible. Lime mortar was used and it was mixed to match the old mortar as closely as possible. The arrangement of the brickwork found as the work was carried out seemed to confirm that it originally



had a brickwork section. As you can see from the photo of the completed work a few courses of this old brick section have now been rebuilt to reflect this. Lower down the chimney loose mortar was removed and the stonework was re-pointed.

Evidence of the original height of the chimney can be seen in the old photo of the area reproduced here with the engine house at its centre (circled), it dates from the early 1900s. You can see that there were two sections of chimney above the roof line. The arch facing us in the side of the engine house would have been for



the beam from the steam engine to pass through. This photo was very kindly donated to us last month by George Elliott of Bitton along with lots of other photographs (slides & prints) and information about Crews Hole. We are still sorting through the photographs and also intend to visit [Bristol Records office](#) to look at other documents that he has donated to them. We have not yet decided how to make best use of this collection but we will certainly be making it available to the public in some form. Bryan has already scanned all the slides for us. Susan has of course written to thank Mr Elliott for this very generous donation, but I'm also pleased to thank him publicly here.

Another feature of the lower chimney is the two cast iron road name plates, saying "Trooper's Hill Road". You may have noticed that these were removed as part of the works. The plates are going to be refurbished and will be returned and fixed back in place later in the year.

Our thanks to Christina Raddon of the Structures team at Bristol City Council for her work on this project - next repairs to the upper chimney!

Rob Acton-Campbell

Troopers Hill Fun Trails

We are really proud of our new [fun learning trails](#) and hope you enjoy using them. This is the poster we have put up on the Hill to publicise them. Friends of Troopers Hill, year 3 pupils and staff at Summerhill Academy, sculptor Steve Joyce and environmental education specialist Ruth Coleman, worked together to create the trails.

Unfortunately a few trail markers have been damaged or removed by vandals. Where we still have the markers we have repaired them and put them back looking a little bit the worse for wear. Where two others have been removed we are temporarily replacing them with laminated photos like these until the vandals become bored when we will replace them with new markers. The actual value of the markers is pennies although it cost us considerably more than that to carry out the project to develop the trails.

Dates for your Diary

Regular events:

Work Parties: Saturdays July 6th, Aug 3rd, Sept 7th, Oct 5th 10am—midday. Meet at Troopers Hill Road and Greendown. *Help us look after Troopers Hill. Gentle exercise and a bit of a laugh over some coffee.*

Evening Work Parties: Wednesdays July 17th and Aug 14th 7-8pm. *Bring something refreshing to relax and enjoy the view afterwards.*

Meetings. Thursdays July 25th, Sept 26th, Nov 14th 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. *Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.*

St George Strollers: Wed 10th July: **Warmley and Mangotsfield** Meet 10.00am, Aldi car park, Church Rd for bus 43. Thu 25th July: **Keynsham to Avon Valley Railway.** Meet 10.15am Lidl car park, Lawrence Hill. Bring £3.50 train fare, plus bus fare home. Fri 9th Aug: **River walk to Dundry via Beese's.** Meet Aldi Car Park, Church Rd. 10.30am for bus 44. Tue 27th Aug: **Kingswood to Hanham.** Meet Aldi car park, Church Rd., 10.10am for bus 42. Mon 9th Sept: **Willsbridge Walk.** Meet Aldi car park, Church Rd at 10.10am for bus 42. Wed 25th Sept: **Walk for Health Anniversary Walk.** Meet opp Aldi, Church Rd at 12.20pm or The Silver Ball, Millennium Square at 1.10pm. For further details, contact Clare—see Contacts panel.

Walks: (booking essential—see contacts panel)

Sunday Nov 3rd. Fungi Foray. 10.30am. *Join expert Justin Smith in a hunt for mushrooms and toadstools on Troopers Hill.*

Sunday Dec 8th. Avon Valley History. 10.30am. *Join Rob Acton-Campbell for a tour of Troopers Hill & Avon Valley Woodlands, talking about the fascinating history of the Hill and the surrounding area.*

Other events:

Saturday 10th August. Family Fun Picnic including a Bugs and Beasties Hunt. 4pm on. Join expert Rupert Higgins identifying your finds, plus a fun Crafts Tent. *Bring a picnic (please, no BBQs) and stay on after the event to watch the mass ascent of hot air balloons*

Troopers Hill



Fun Learning Trails

Created and tested with the help of Year 3 pupils from Summerhill Academy there is now a

Copper Trail,

Brass Trail

&

Zinc Trail



There are 9 challenges and 3 word searches to be found on www.troopers-hill.org.uk/funlearning

Enjoy!

These trails were created with funding from

The **co-operative** membership
community fund



We owe a huge thank you to the Big Lottery Community Spaces programme and the Co-operative Membership Community Fund for their funding.

Susan Acton-Campbell

Contacts:

For the latest news and updates, phone our
Information line: 0753 161 5983

If you'd like to talk to us, please contact:
Susan Acton-Campbell (Chair), Tel. **0117 947 5037**

You can also write to us at:
3, Corkers Hill, St. George, Bristol, BS5 8DT
Email:

friends@troopers-hill.org.uk
www.facebook.com/TroopersHill
www.twitter.com/troopershill

Or go to the online forum at:
<http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/news&views>

To book a place on an event,
Phone Judith: 0117 955 9819 (Tue-Sat, 9am-5pm) Or email:
events2013@troopers-hill.org.uk

Walking for Health (St George Strollers)
Contact: Clare Willott
0117 941 4514
strollers@troopers-hill.org.uk

To report incidents on Troopers Hill, phone Bristol Parks:
0117 922 3719