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The Friends of Troopers Hill

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Winter 2015/16



This is, of course, the traditional Christmas edition of our newsletter. It is also, I regret to say, the final edition. It has been my privilege to be your editor for more years than I can remember, but as I will be moving on from Bristol next year, this seemed as good a time as any to sign off. Over the years, I have

found it particularly pleasing to report on the many, varied events and walks that the Friends of Troopers Hill have put on for your enjoyment and education. The Friends will, of course, continue to stage them, but in future you will need to turn to our website (www.troopers-hill.org.uk), Facebook (www.facebook.com/troopershill) or Twitter (www.twitter.com/troopershill) for information on upcoming events. Also, don't forget to check out the notices on the display boards at all the entrances to the Hill—these often seem to be overlooked by people who pass them every day, but everything that happens on the Hill is posted on these notices, so do read them.

I would like to express particular thanks to all the people who have contributed articles, poems and comments to the newsletter over the years. Steve Shepherd has been a recent stalwart, writing his articles with his very individual perspective and I highly recommend his Wednesday evening [radio show](#) on BCFM (93.2FM) between 6 and 8pm. It is a mine of information on a wide variety of natural subjects, from the weather to the stars.

And so it just remains for me to wish all of the many Friends, all my fellow FoTH volunteers, all the dog walkers who help care for the Hill, all of YOU, a very, Merry Christmas and all the best for a bright and happy future.

Kit Elliott

In other news:

We have just received confirmation that Troopers Hill has been classified as a [Dark Sky Discovery Site](#). Bristol Astronomical Society recommended that we applied for it —although there is light pollution from Bristol, the top of the Hill enables viewing above the lights, and has a southerly aspect enabling an excellent view of the night-time sky.

Two grant applications have been made for new play areas on Troopers Hill Field. There has been solid support for a fenced play area for under 5's and a separate activity trail for 5-11 year olds. If successful, the play areas will be in one corner of the field, near the existing log climbing frame and log seats.

Discover East Bristol Map

The Discover East Bristol map was officially launched on Tuesday 8th December. There is an online version available at www.discovereastbristol.co.uk and you can pick up a free copy at several venues across St George, including the library.

Throughout 2015, Susan and I have been involved with the St George Neighbourhood Partnership (NP) in the creation of this map. Indeed the idea goes back to a tour of the St George and Greater Fishponds areas that I helped organise for John Hirst of Destination Bristol in December 2013.

The idea of a map to highlight the green spaces in St George was discussed at the Partnership's subgroup meetings in 2014 and it was agreed that this would be a good use of some of the funding we were to receive from Bristol being European Green Capital. Adding funds from the Neighbourhood Arts Project (NAP) and Greater Fishponds NP allowed the map to cover a larger area and become a work of art rather than just a map.



Susan was involved in meetings early in 2015 to set the details of the creative brief which was for 'the creation of a beautifully designed, artistic or illustrated map'. The team of artists came to the Friends of Troopers Hill meeting in July and also joined us on our Heathland Walk that month. We also saw them at Redfest and they spoke to Susan about the back alleyways and paths she has found while planning St George Strollers Walks.

Meanwhile I have been working with the NP team on other parts of the project aimed at improving access to green spaces and off road routes. New lights on Strawberry Lane are part of this and we have worked with Bristol Parks to agree works at entrances to Rodney Road Playing Fields, Meadow Vale and Plummers Hill which will happen over the next few months.

Having been involved for so long I was a bit nervous about opening the printed copy of the map, but I hope you will agree that it looks fantastic and lives up to the brief.

Rob Acton-Campbell

www.troopers-hill.org.uk



Family Fun Dog Show, October 2015



"Really nice to get together with other owners and their pets"



"Thank you for a great show and great day out! Spread the word"



"Fantastic friendly community event— thank you to all those involved who gave their time to organise this...."



"A lovely afternoon out and such a warm + welcoming atmosphere! The events at troopers Hill are fab!"



www.troopers-hill.org.uk



Troopers Hill setting the mould - Worldwide

Karen Caudwell achieved a degree in archaeology and ancient history at Manchester University, where she joined the Civil War enactment society. That is how she met her husband, Mike – on a battlefield! Although she did do some work as an archaeology site supervisor at Nailsea, she eventually joined the Civil Service, where she stayed for 21 years. Having always been interested in handycrafts, she started making cakes for the children's birthdays and then for families and friends. Before long, she found herself making wedding cakes for people outside the family.

She was looking for new designs for cakes and, in particular, looking for icing moulds but was unable to find suitable ones. "Well, why don't you make them yourself" Mike asked?

So, she started sculpting them herself from white wax. As Mike is a chemist, he had the know-how to make the silicon moulds from her sculpted designs. She made her first one and it worked. Thinking "maybe other people might like to use them", she started selling them on eBay. Enquiries started coming in from all over, including some retailers. Early retirement from the Civil Service was offered to her so she decided to go full time on her mould making. Mike has now joined her in the business turning what had been a "table-top" enterprise into a business that exports all over the world.

In cake making you have to follow the trends and there was a trend developing for rustic, naturalistic cakes with flowers and birds etc, but there wasn't a bark mould available. Mike and Karen went up on Troopers Hill to see if they could find a suitable original. As they went around feeling trees, it was a case of "no, that one's too rough" or "that one's too smooth" until they eventually found the one that they thought would be ideal, which was a Goat Willow.

Karen reckons passing dog walkers must have thought they were crazy, because they had the bright green silicon putty wrapped on the tree, with their hands holding it to help it set as it was a rather cold day. Eventually they came away with a large piece of silicon with the lovely texture of the bark on it. After a bit of tidying up, they were able to create the mould, which has really taken off. "It really captured people's imagination" says Karen. It is their most expensive mould and they have now sold hundreds.

Both their sons now work in the business, which is taking on new premises. They export to, amongst other countries, Australia, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia and even to China, which is where

most of their competition comes from. In addition to the bark moulds, they now make many others with some of the popular ones at the moment being Baroque and Scroll designs. Overall they have about three hundred designs in their catalogue and they can also be seen on their website:

www.fpcsugarcraft.co.uk.

Last year Karen was approached by a very well known cake maker in the USA, who asked her to design some bird moulds for the Whitehouse. It was all very hush-hush as the design had to be approved by Michelle

Obama herself. The birds produced from her moulds were eventually used to decorate the Whitehouse Red Room last Christmas.

FPC Sugarcraft is about to move to new premises and may even be about to buy another business in a related field. "To suc-

ceed, you have to keep innovating" and Karen reckons that is their big strength. She has many new ideas, more than she can possibly bring to fruition. As long as she can sculpt it, they can make a mould from it.

For the future, Karen can see a big potential in 3D printing and computer aided design. Not so much for the artistic moulds, but for things like letters and numbers, which have to be exact. One thing for sure though, is that whatever the future brings, fpcsugarcraft will continue to be able to have their cake – and eat it!



ABC of Troopers Hill

Y is for Youngsters. Friends of Troopers Hill are keen to engage with local schools and youth groups (Scouts, Beavers and Rainbows), and invite them for formal and informal visits. With grant assistance, Friends have developed Fun Learning Trails which adults and children can use together to find out about map-reading skills. Friends regularly host family events, including Fun Dog Shows, Bugs & Beasties, a Falconry display, and Picnics with storytelling and crafts. Children's Forest Clubs have used Crews Hole Woodland for half-term activities. Our monthly conservation work parties always welcome accompanied children.

Z is for Zoology. Some unusual invertebrates are to be found on Troopers Hill. A scientific survey in 2007 identified 30 invertebrate species of conservation significance. Six were categorised at an international level as Endangered, Vulnerable or Rare. They were: *Philanthus triangulum*, a bee-wolf (large wasp that preys on bees); *Homoneura interstincta*, a fly living on sallow and poplar leaves; *Phytomyza sedi*, a tiny dull blackish leaf-borer that inhabits stonecrop plants; *Tricimba humeralis*, a grass-dwelling fly; *Catharosia pygmaea*, a small black fly with darkened wings; and *Cistogaster globosa*, a little fly that parasitises the Bishop's Mitre bug. These species rely on good management of Troopers Hill to prevent the open grassy areas being overgrown by brambles and scrub. Friends of Troopers Hill work in conjunction with the Council to maintain favourable conditions for these interesting insects.

Bryn Friallen

www.troopers-hill.org.uk



Shepherd's Way

Time seems to have flown by again this year. It does not seem five minutes since last Christmas, nor does it seem more than a couple of months since a much younger me was living in Warwickshire, waiting for snow to arrive so that I could get my hand made sledge out, and test its wooden runners.

Thinking back, it's strange how different the seasons seemed to be. We were always pretty much guaranteed frosts and snow - sometimes small amounts, sometimes more severe.

This got me thinking about the recent climate change summit, just ended in Paris. 196 countries have pledged to do something to slow down the rise in climate temperatures. Without urgent action a rise of 5 degrees was estimated. Now they have agreed a plan that aims for a 1.5 degree rise.

However, an ever increasing world population means more of everything is needed to cope with the higher numbers. More roads, fuel, schools, infrastructure, hospitals, food, and homes will be needed and it seems little has been done to tackle the problem 'head-on'.

With more and more areas of forests being destroyed each year, more and more green areas being built on, or taken to make way for our ever increasing numbers and needs, surely it isn't rocket science to see that if we tackled population control, along with a strategy of planting more trees, hedgerows, reducing the use of fossil fuels, reducing our ever increasing selfish consumption of material things we don't really need, we might well be on the right road to making this planet more sustainable. Living and working with nature is absolutely vital to our survival.

Many species have seen a massive decline over the last few years. This worries me greatly. It doesn't take a genius to see that the problem is us, ourselves.

I want to see frosts and snow at Christmas. I want to see wildlife and nature in its natural habitat, not just in parks and zoos, or in cages, or extinct specimens in museums.

Let's hope that one day soon, people sit up and smell the roses.

But, all that aside, and ending on a brighter note, may I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Steve Shepherd

Dates for your Diary

Conservation Work Parties: Saturdays 9th Jan, 6th Feb and 5th March, 10am—midday. **Sunday 21st Feb, 3-5pm. New meeting point: Entrance from Troopers Hill Field to Troopers Hill, by red slide.** Help us look after Troopers Hill. Gentle exercise and a bit of a laugh over some coffee.

Meetings. Thursdays 11th Feb and 12th May. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.

Star Gazing: An evening in Feb or Mar, approx 7.30-9pm. Book your interest now to be kept informed of the exact date—see Contacts.

St George Strollers: Mon 18th Jan: **Park to Park.** Meet Croydon St bus stop, Lawrence Hill, 10.10am. Fri 19th Feb: **Warmley Wander.** Meet Aldi, Church Rd, 10.15am. Wed 16th March: **Clifton Woods to Harbourside.** Meet Bond St bus stop (behind Debenhams and just before the Bear Pit) 10.30am.

Thank you to a great couple

If you entered a dog in one of our [Family Fun Dog Shows](#), you will have met Kit and Helen Elliott. Kit was the man with microphone, co-ordinating the event and Helen was taking down details of your entry.

You will also have seen the results of some of the great work both of them have been doing, for over 10 years, where they have been less visible.

The newsletter you are reading, "The Hill", was Kit's creation and has been published every quarter since 2006.

For over 10 years Helen has presented clear, concise minutes of all our meetings, a challenging task, with the many topics we cover. We appreciate Helen's plant knowledge and were particularly grateful when she guided a plants walk.

A professional TV director, Kit has freely donated his time and expertise to creating a [series of videos](#) that have captured episodes in the story of Troopers Hill and the Friends. [Music on the Hill](#) has also benefited from Kit's "sound" skills and the downloadable Troopers Hill [audio trail](#) is his creation.

When the Friends of Troopers Hill started the Walking for Health group, the [St George Strollers](#), Kit was quick to volunteer and has led enjoyable and entertaining walks for just over 4 years.

Kit and Helen successfully applied for [grants](#) on our behalf to fund events and the purchase of materials. They have regularly supported [conservation work parties](#), with Kit becoming a trained work party leader. You will also have seen them as the welcoming face of Friends of Troopers Hill at events as well as being part of our super slick gazebo erecting team.

Sadly from our point of view, but with great pleasure from theirs, Kit and Helen will be taking to Britain's beautiful waterways in 2016, to live and travel on their narrowboat, Brandy Pad. We wish them "Bon voyage" and "Happy landings". Thank you so much, Kit and Helen.

(You will be able to follow their future travels on their website: www.brandypad.uk)

(Blush—Ed)

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

friends@troopers-hill.org.uk

www.facebook.com/TroopersHill

Or tweet us at

www.twitter.com/troopershill

To book a place on an event, Phone Judith 0117 955 9819 Or email

events2016@troopers-hill.org.uk

Walking for Health (St George Strollers)

Contact Liz Scott: 0117 952 2513

strollers@troopers-hill.org.uk

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

Report criminal activity to the police on 999 or Police local beat manager, Pete Crawford. He can be contacted via the Police non-urgent phone number 101

Shepherd's Way is on BCFM, 93.2FM, every Wednesday from 6-8pm, and available online at

<http://bcfmradio.com/shepherdsway>

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

