

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

The Friends of Troopers Hill

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆



Winter 2012/13



Well, for a change (bearing in mind the weather this year) we had a beautiful day for the [dog show](#). A cold but sunny day saw many visitors and dogs turn out to compete and browse the stalls on display. Once again, the variety of inspiration for the fancy dress impressed the judges.

We'd like to send our congratulations to Steve England, of the [Stoke Park Action Group](#), who was awarded the prestigious "Volunteer of the Year" award at the recent Green Volunteers Awards in Bristol. For those of you who don't know him, this photo of Steve with a squirrel has appeared in newspapers around the world.



Amongst recent work carried out by the [Community Pay-back team](#), and paid for out of the lottery grant, was the development of a new woodland path from the car park, near the old Lamb Inn, up to the lower woodland path. This route will need further

work if it proves popular and is part of our efforts to encourage responsible parking to keep local roads clear for residents. Currently this parking area is often used by local businesses during the week, but it is clear at weekends.

December is upon us again, and we would like, as usual, to take this opportunity to wish all our many Friends and supporters

"A Very Merry Christmas"



Follow that butterfly!

Having spent over £30,000 of Big Lottery money, from the [Community Spaces](#) programme during 2012, we were delighted to hear, in July, that they had awarded us a further £3,500 for sustainability projects. Now steps are easier, the ground less boggy and the Woodland Trail is way-marked, we want to make Troopers Hill even more inviting.

We knew that £3,500 would provide 5 seasonal, guided walks, pay for a tree expert to identify and label trees on the [Woodland Trail](#) and give us an audio trail for people to download to their mobile phones but we did not have quite enough money to redesign and reprint leaflets and to provide orienteering trails for children with supporting educational materials on our website.

Nearly 4 months ago we submitted an application to the [Co-operative Community Fund](#) for £2,000. It has been a long wait but last week a letter arrived saying we had been successful.

Ruth Coleman worked with us on the Woodland Trail. In the New Year she will be working with pupils from [Summerhill Academy](#) to design 20 or so discreet, small metal plates etched and shaped as symbols. These will be inset into the existing steps or other suitable places. The metal plates will be copper, zinc and brass which are linked with the site's [industrial past](#) of smelting copper to make brass. The symbols will be simple but beautiful e.g. a leaf, chimney stack or butterfly. The routes following the markers will complement each other and designed to be walked as one trail or 3. The plates will be fixed to deter vandals, weather well and need no further maintenance.

Ruth will be working with artist [Steve Joyce](#) to create the metal plates. She will also collate the educational materials on our website.

We are pleased that we will be working with Clare Challice of [Dandi Design](#) again to redesign and reprint our leaflets and to produce maps for use on our website.

Thank you to the Co-operative Community Fund for a wonderful early Christmas present.

Susan Acton-Campbell

Stay safe this winter

Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) is reminding people of some top tips to help get their homes ready for winter – and to reduce the risk of fire.

Using portable heaters, log fires and electric blankets in one room may seem like a win-win situation, especially in these financially-challenging times. Keeping you and your loved ones warm in that one room while keeping your heating and energy costs low sounds like a good idea, but you could pay the ultimate price if a fire starts. So now that the darker nights and colder days are with us, AF&RS want to remind people of some simple steps they can take to help stay safe.

Electric blankets

You should always buy an electric blanket from a reliable source and make sure that it has a UK safety standard mark. Other tips in relation to electric blankets include:

Never buy second-hand electric blankets; they may not meet current safety requirements;

Always read and follow manufacturer's instructions;

Examine your blanket regularly for signs of wear or damage;

Don't use the blanket while it's still folded or creased;

Don't use a hot water bottle at the same time as using the electric blanket;

Don't touch the blanket if you have wet hands or feet, and never use the blanket if it's wet or damp.

Portable heaters

Plug-in heaters use a lot of electricity and generate a lot of heat. This means they can be dangerous if they are not bought from reputable shops and used correctly. Other tips in relation to portable heaters include:

Position them clear of curtains and furnishings;

Keep at least three feet – one metre – away from them;

Have fireguards to prevent and protect children and/or pets from coming into contact with them;

Never dry washing on or near them, or on the fireguards.

Chimneys

Chimneys with fires using smokeless fuel, bituminous coal, oil and gas should be swept at least once a year. Those using wood should be swept every three months when in use.

Smoke alarms

And last, but by absolutely no means least, think about smoke alarms, which have proven to provide an early warning that a fire has started, and gives people those vital extra minutes to safely escape. Top tips concerning smoke alarms include:

Ensure you have a working smoke alarm on every level of your home;

Check that the batteries are working at least once a week; and

Keep your smoke alarm clean and free from dust.

For even more fire safety advice, visit

www.avonfire.gov.uk



Stepping Forward Celebration Event, 20th October 2012

Dates for your Diary

Regular events:

Work Parties: Saturdays Jan 5th, Feb 2nd, Mar 2nd, Apr 6th. 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.*

Meetings. Thursdays Jan 24th, Mar 30th. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. *Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.*

St George Strollers: Mon 7th Jan: **Nightingale Valley.** Meet 10.00am, at Pile Marsh bus stop. Wed 23rd Jan: **Redland and Clifton.** Meet 10.20am Lidl car Park, Lawrence Hill. Bring £2 for train. Fri 8th Feb: **Stoke Park.** Meet The Maypole, Hanham for bus, 9.30am. NB—one way walk. Thurs 21st Feb: **Bristol Plaques.** Meet Cascade Steps, the Centre, 10.30am. Mon 4th Mar: **Avon Ramble.** Meet Pile Marsh bus stop, 10.00am. Wed 20th Mar: **Magpie Bottom.** Meet The Maypole, Hanham, 10.00am. Further details, contact Clare—see Contacts panel.

Walks: (booking essential—see contacts panel)

Sunday Feb 3rd. **Geology Walk.** 10.30am – noon. Expert Andrew Mathieson will lead us through Troopers Hill's 350 million year geological story.

Sunday Mar 17th: **Dawn Chorus Walk.** 6.30—8am. A guided walk to listen to bird song and spot birds led by expert Ed Drewitt.

Other events:

Saturday March 9th: **St Aidan's Community Fair.** 11am –2pm. St Aidan's and St George church and hall, Fir Tree Lane. *Come and visit our stand.*

Friday March 29th: **Good Friday Service on Troopers Hill.** *Procession starts from Summerhill Methodist Church.*

www.troopers-hill.org.uk



A Christmas Tale

It was the busiest night of the year – we'd been on the go for 12 hours already, and another 12 to go. I was tired of the wind, the soot and the climbing. We were just about to leave the UK coast heading west, when Rudolf brings us screeching to a halt. "Rudolf, what the 'elf are you doing?"

"Sorry Boss. But I suddenly spotted that chimney down there – isn't it the one you got stuck in a few years ago?"

I looked over the edge. Rudy was right. There was this enormous stack, with a lean on it and a kink on the top. I suddenly felt dizzy. Terrible memories of getting well behind on our deliveries a few years back came rushing back to me. That very cold winter – it took us three hours to get me out of that fix. I was frozen, stiff and black and blue all over. Just as well it wasn't being used for a fire anymore and it loosened all the stones in the process. Maybe that's why it has that new bit on the top?

"Also Boss, didn't you get a letter from there last year?" says Rudolf.

I get out my little helper – it's all digital now you know. The only problem is it keeps crashing. I think it's all the time zones we cross that confuses it. Anyway, when I get it rebooted and the GPS locked in (why is it always looking for satellites? Surely it knows where they are? They're all up there above us.) I work out that we did indeed get a letter last year. Now, let's see. How did we do on those requests:

Extra helpers – found a few, but I think more might be needed;

Extra walk leaders – yep, done that;

Antiseptic wipes and plastic cups – blimey, they've got through a lot this year!

Loppers – yep they got those;

2nd class stamps – yep, got those in before the price rise. Phew!

Paper, cartridges and pouches – sorry, have to be Staples for those. They blow all over the place the speed we travel;

Craft materials – yep. Just as well as they used a lot of those at their events;

Litter bin at bottom gate – oops, have to see what I can do next year on that one;

Cash for events – well, I don't think they need me for that, they're raising enough themselves through grants. Still, I guess they could always use more.

Well, I think I've done the Hill proud on the whole. Still, I guess I could try and help out again next year. More help is always welcome.

Suddenly, another shiver runs down my back as a feeling of déjà vu comes over me. I look at the top of the chimney again and realise that in spite of my feelings about that awful night years ago, all around me the Hill is looking remarkably well. Those look like new steps down there and I think those are new signposts by the woods. The field behind is looking dryer than it was as well. It looks like things have been growing particularly vigorously. Something good has been happening here this year.

On the subject of something good, we need to be getting on our way if we're going to keep all those kids happy.

"OK boys, I think we've done everything we can here. Time to move on Drive on Dasher and Prancer, proceed Dancer and Vixen, come on Cupid and Comet, allen zie Donner und Blitzen, Hi-oh Rudolf, AWAY."



Jules's Diary

Hello troopers.

Well, an interesting summer. (I refuse to use a capital S for this one!) A good acronym for this one being WOW! Wet or What? Especially the last few weeks. Makes life fairly difficult on the winter preparation work when a lot of my parks are suffering from a water table that's only a few inches below the surface, or, as is currently the case, a few feet above it! Fortunately Troopers Hill doesn't suffer much in this regard, apart from the odd length of well-used path. Unless, of course, you are walking on the top when it's persisting down, or up if it's particularly windy.



Good to see that the hedge along Greendown is now mature enough to take a machine cut, lot of work saved for the intrepid volunteers. As a side note, it was also good to see the temporary closure of Crews Hole Road which allowed us to reduce the overhanging vegetation and, at least visually, widen the road a bit.

Old friends coming and going. On the conversation and conservation front it was great to see Sally Oldfield at the way-marking thingy and catch up with her news somewhat. The perfect person to draw a line under it so to speak. But sad to



see the departure of Jan Walters, 'our' Conservation Officer and a long time friend and confidante. We wish her well in her new ventures.

So another winter, we seem to have missed Autumn again, trundles in... Thermals will soon be dug out of the wardrobe (the waterproofs have been hanging beside the door) and ice-scrapers retrieved from the back of the garage. And Christmas is only a few weeks away!

Hope you all 'Ave a Good 'Un! I'll be off to the warmer climes of the Gulf Stream again... If it's still there!

Cheers

jules

PS. We've got a Mayor! Discuss...

ABC of Troopers Hill

N is for 'NO'

Troopers Hill was declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) in 1995. The land belongs to Bristol City Council. In Spring 2010 I wrote an article, E is for Everyone; all parts of the LNR are available for the general public to enjoy. The site was designated because the local environmental conditions are unique within Bristol. It is the only area of acid heathland within the city boundary. The LNR supports locally scarce plants, which in turn provide food and homes for rare insects, reptiles, birds and small mammals (including bats). As Rob Acton-Campbell explained so clearly in the last issue, Troopers Hill is not a formal park but a natural green space in which the wildlife is enhanced and maintained for people locally to take pleasure in visiting.

To protect the sensitive habitat from the risks of 'excessive' enjoyment, however, there have to be just a few rules. So here are a small number of simple NO's which we hope everyone will gladly observe: NO motor vehicles and NO horse riding. NO dog fouling and NO litter. NO overnight camping and NO fires (not even barbecues) NO digging, planting or sowing seeds.

We are fond of the saying, 'take only photographs; leave only footprints'. We would remind everyone - 'What you carry in, please carry away!' Friends of Troopers Hill thank you for respecting this special site, and for helping to keep it a pleasant and welcoming place for everyone to enjoy.

Bryn Frialen

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 go to the online forum at:

www.troopers-hill.org.uk/news&views

To book a place on an event,

Phone Judith: 0117 955 9819 Or email:

events2013@troopers-hill.org.uk

Walking for Health (St George Strollers):

Contact: Clare Willott: 0117 941 4514

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