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Harris Hill

The area that is now known as Troopers Hill is on the edge of Kingswood Forest or Chase overlooking the River Avon. A map of Kingswood dated 1610 shows the hill as 'Harris Hill'. As far as we know the first use of 'Troopers Hill' was on an Ordnance Survey map in 1830. The name could have come from the use of the hill by troopers in the Civil War but it could also be a corruption of the name 'Truebody's Hill' which was used on documents in the 1800s.

Copper Smelting

Crews Hole became a completely different place in the eighteenth century when the copper smelting industry was established in the area. Copper ore was brought by boat, mainly from Cornwall and north Devon and coal was sourced locally. The copper produced was mostly used with calamine (zinc ore) from the Mendips in the manufacture of brass at Baptist Mills and other sites in Bristol.

There was a copper smelting works near where the Bull Inn now stands from about 1710, but a new works was built below the hill at the end of the century; we think that the chimney at the top of Troopers Hill was built for this works. It is certain that the chimney was built before 1826, since it is shown in a drawing of this date commissioned by GW Braikenridge as part of a view from Arnos Court. By the end of the 1800s the chimney was being used by Stone & Tinson who had a chemical works on the site of the copper smelter. It seems that they continued to use the chimney until about the time of the First World War.



Coal Mining

The chimney or stack that still stands at the junction of Troopers Hill Road and Crews Hole Road is all that remains of Troopers Hill colliery. Originally the chimney was at the corner of the engine house and parts of the walls of that building can still be seen. The colliery, which was also known as Crews Hole Pit, was mining coal from the early 1800s and although the exact closure date is not known it was before 1845. A second engine house of the same design was further up Troopers Hill Road and is shown in Loxton's drawing.

Fireclay Mine and Works

Fireclay mining started in the mid 1800s and the mines extended right under the hill; they continued in use until 1908. Two seams of clay were mined, the five feet thick Dibb Clay and the deeper six feet thick Buff Clay.

Pennant Sandstone Quarrying

The industry that had the most effect on the shape of Troopers Hill as we see it today was the quarrying of pennant sandstone for use in building. Quarrying probably started in the Middle Ages and continued until the early 1900s. The main quarry on the hill was what is now known as 'The Gully' but there were also lots of smaller quarries around the edge of the hill, some now hidden by woodland.

Tar Works

The Tar Works was established between the hill and the river in 1843 and dominated the area until 1981. It is believed that it was set up by I K Brunel to provide creosote to treat the timber on the Great Western Railway. William Butler was appointed as manager of the works and bought the site in 1863 after a fire broke out that nearly destroyed the plant. The Tar Works distilled tar from gas works and then later from steel works, it closed in 1981.



Recent History

Troopers Hill was purchased by Bristol City Council in 1956 for use as a public open space. In 1991 the Bristol Development Corporation installed fences around the site and constructed new paths. This was aimed at keeping motorcycles off the site and 'stopping Troopers Hill from wearing out'. Troopers Hill was declared as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) by Bristol City Council on 22nd June 1995. The start of the Wildspace! project in 2002 run by Sally Oldfield led directly to the formation of Friends of Troopers Hill in December 2003. Since then Friends of Troopers Hill have worked in partnership with Bristol Parks to improve the natural environment of the hill, organise events and research and publish information such as this leaflet. **The success of this partnership was recognised in 2007 with the presentation of a Green Flag Award for the site.**



Loxton's drawing of the Engine House in Troopers Hill Road, about 1914.
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