



Friends of
Troopers Hill

2nd anniversary newsletter



December 2005

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A newcomer at our AGM told the Editor that when Friends of Troopers Hill was first formed she wondered why? What was wrong with the way things were and what did we need another “organisation” for? She then went on to explain that until she’d come to the AGM, she hadn’t realised

how much FOTH had been doing. Not surprising really as it’s never been our policy to make a song and dance about it.

A lot of our work is either taken for granted or just plain isn’t noticed. Make no mistake about it though, we carry out crucial work that just wouldn’t get done if we weren’t around.

For a start, we work directly with Bristol Parks to ensure that regular maintenance and repairs are carried out. This is not about keeping their costs down – indeed we cost them more money - but because we tell them about what needs to be done. They can’t patrol Troopers Hill “just in case” something needs doing. We think the results of this have been visible this year with the paths been kept noticeably clearer and the virulent Japanese Knotweed being treated regularly. Hats off to the maintenance team for that.

Then there is the regular maintenance we carry out ourselves: repairing fence or steps, keeping bracken and bramble under control. If we aren’t there to do it, the whole hill and its precious acid grassland will eventually become overgrown with trees and bushes. If you doubt that, visit our website and look at the photographs from 50 years ago. No trees on the hill at all!

We can’t, however, continue indefinitely without your support. We shall enclose a short survey with our next Newsletter seeking your opinions. When you receive it, please DO fill it in and return it to us. We need to know what you think about our work and that you really support us.

More than that though, we really need your physical support. We seriously need to see some new faces at our work parties, particularly during the winter months when birds aren’t nesting. Join us for a couple of hours of light work and enjoy a cup of coffee with us afterwards. Without your help, we may eventually have to call a halt to our efforts on your behalf.

Meanwhile, as we approach the end of the year, all of us here at Friends of Troopers Hill would like to wish you, our readers, a Very Merry Christmas and an extremely Happy New Year. We look forward to seeing you and hearing from you in 2006.

Friends of Troopers Hill have now existed for two years. Our second year has been as full of enthusiasm and ideas as the first. Funding for day to day running costs can be difficult to find, so thank you to everyone who has given so freely of their time, energy and money.



The events we arrange, from storytelling to dawn choruses, fungal forays to a speaker for a history talk, tend to cost anything up to £100. Other costs from meeting rooms, laminating pouches for notices, to first aid supplies and unexpected repair bills all mean our true running costs are close to £1,000 a year.

These costs are kept down considerably thanks to volunteers who deliver the majority of paper newsletters by hand. This year Bristol Parks have been printing our newsletters for us and have also funded our meeting rooms. We cannot, however, depend on the same funding for 2006.

A very big “Thank You” is due to Local Nature Reserves Officer, Sally Oldfield. She is our link to experts for everything from carrying out fungi surveys to setting up light traps and identifying moths and has given us tireless support again this year. She also helps us to identify important sources of funding and gives us invaluable guidance when we have to consider any ecological issues in relation to the hill.



www.troopers-hill.org.uk



Particularly good news for 2006 is that we will be benefiting from the Casual Dress day collection at Somerfield's Whitchurch Support Centre. It takes place on Friday, 30th June, 2006 and the proceeds, shared with Folly Farm, should mean around £350 for our LNR.

Susan Acton-Campbell

INTERNET FOR ALL

Friends of Troopers Hill are always going on about our website. However, many of you do not have Internet access and may not be able to view all the interesting photos, articles and videos that are available there. Your local library, in addition to lending books and hiring out DVDs or videos, has free access to the Internet so that you can visit our site and make use of the vast amount of information available worldwide.



One of the reasons that the Internet became popular so quickly is that it is extremely easy to use. The library staff don't claim to be experts but are always willing to help you if they can. You can e-mail us or your friends, visit our new message board or have instant message chats with people all around the world. You can also scan in your photos to e-mail to your loved ones on the other side of the world and you can print out their replies although there is a small charge for that.

Jan Hartwell of Bristol Libraries tells us that St. George has 7 computers available for anybody to use. All you have to do is register for a library card (it's free), then get a pin code from the desk and you too can log on and "surf the net" to your heart's content.

Also based in the library is Learn Direct who run learning courses in how to use computers, maths and English. Speak to Jane or Leanne to get further information. They can start you off learning how to use computers from a complete beginner level up to level 2 which will enable you to qualify for a "European Computer Driving Licence". The cost is £15 but you must be over 19 and have been resident in the EU for 3 years. A free trial is available if you are eligible. Call them on:

0117 955 8330.



Why not help out our feathered friends during National Nest Box week by making a bird box or bird feeder? On Saturday 18th February from 2pm to 4pm we will be running a Bird Bonanza Event on Troopers Hill (or in the Allotments Pavilion if it is raining).

You can make a bird box for free to go up in Crews Hole Woodland or make one to take home (for a small charge). We'll also be making bird masks and there'll be lots of other fun children's activities. Booking is essential. To book your place contact Susan on 0117 947 5037.

The event is being funded by Bristol Parks.

Work Parties finished 2005 in the same way as we started: our December date became the first since January to be cancelled due to rain. Despite this we have had a very successful year. Perhaps the most visible achievement was the fitting of the new signs at the entrances. These were purchased with last year's lottery grant and have received some very favourable comments.

Two areas where bramble is encroaching on broom have received our attention this year, one above Troopers Hill Road and the other in Sally's Glade. Since the vegetation in Sally's Glade is not so dense we can work there during the bird nesting season and so that is where we spent a very enjoyable sunny Saturday morning in May.

The bracken on the hill was attacked on three different occasions, this is definitely a task where many hands make light work and it is surprising how quickly areas can be cleared.

In February we cleared several Holm Oak and other saplings, this is necessary to maintain the acid grass and heathland which is the Hill's most precious environment.

There is always room for more people at work parties, so please join us. If you can't make Saturdays but would like to help at other times, please let us know. If enough people are interested we are keen to start weekday work parties.

Rob Acton-Campbell

FIRST EVER HILLSIDE CONCERT



Friends of Troopers Hill are getting together with St. Aidan's church to organise our first ever concert. It will be a unique event with Bristol East Brass Band playing open air in the old quarry on 1st July and will be part of the "Arts at St. Aidan's" extensive 2006 music series. Come and have an early evening picnic and enjoy the concert afterwards. Don't worry about the weather as St. Aidan's have kindly offered their church as an alternative should the weather be too inclement. Of course, it won't be! We'll be giving you further details about the event a little nearer to the time but meanwhile, if you'd like to know a bit more about the St. Aidan's concerts, you can contact Bernard Merrick on **0117 940 7142** or you can email him at: **merrickqs@aol.com**

So, put this date in your diary now – it's going to be a historic event!

*Arts
at St Aidan's*

2006 BIRD SURVEY

On the subject of birds again, the weekend of 28th and 29th January sees the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds garden bird survey. You could spend an hour on Troopers Hill (it does count as part of the survey) logging the birds you see. Then send your report to the RSPB. For further information you can call them on **08701 222 793** or check out this page at their website. www.rspb.org.uk/birdwatch/index.as



A group of Friends rest after their exertions.

HEDGING OUR BETS



At our November work party we carried out more repairs to the fence on Greendown. These patch repairs will keep the fence together for a few more years but it will need replacing in the long term. An option mentioned in the Action Plan for Troopers Hill suggests a hedge to replace the fence. We'd already discussed the state of the fence with Bristol Parks and they offered to purchase the plants needed for a hedge if we could plant them. We wrote to the Greendown residents to get their views. A majority were in favour so we have decided to go ahead. So please join for this very special work party to plant a new hedge. To allow for more people to join in – as well as bad weather – we're having several sessions. They'll be on Saturday 21st January at 10.00am and at 2.00pm. If the weather is bad we will try Sunday 22nd instead but at the same times. If the whole weekend is lost due to bad weather, we shall move the event to the 4th/5th February. Remember, please bring a spade!

GOODBYE GARY, HI TO CAROLINE

We mentioned in the October Newsletter that Gary Ratcliffe, our Community Parks Manager, was taking a break. Gary is away until September, but we are pleased to welcome Caroline Hollies who is taking over Gary's role. Caroline will be covering a larger area than Gary used to and so will be assisted by Claire Adams. We look forward to working with them both over the coming months

FRIENDS FOIL THIEVES

On Saturday 10th December just after 1.30pm Rob and Susan were telephoned by a local resident to say that turf was being dug up from the hill. The caller was advised to call the police and Rob and Susan made their way to the Greendown entrance. There they found a man and a teenager carrying a rope-handled bin of full of turf down the steps.

The two miscreants were advised they were committing an offence, that the land belonged to Bristol Council and was a local Nature Reserve and were requested to replace the turves. This they did,

WILDSpace! EXPLAINED

The Bristol Wildspace project, is funded by a grant called "Wildspace!" As part of this, Troopers Hill currently receives some extra support from Bristol Parks in the form of a Local Nature Reserves Officer. There are three other Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in Bristol, and three proposed LNRs. The LNR Officer works with all these sites to promote community involvement and run events so that as many people as possible can enjoy discovering these exciting and special places.

"The Friends of Troopers Hill" was set up as part of the LNR project. Thanks to a fantastic response from the local community and some very hard-working and enthusiastic volunteers, this group has gone from strength to strength.

The Friends of Troopers Hill has achieved an enormous amount during the last two years. Bristol Parks recognises the very important role that community groups like this have in supporting our green spaces. By working in partnership, we can better ensure that Troopers Hill reflects the needs of the local community.

Funding for the Local Nature Reserve Project runs out in Summer 2006. However Bristol Parks is currently seeking new funding in the hope of expanding the network of LNRs in Bristol for the benefit of both people and wildlife

Sally Oldfield.

under Susan's watchful eye, and an audience on Greendown and Troopers Hill Rd. Susan walked with them back to their trailer to recover another bin of turves. This was also carried up the hill and replaced at such speed that the teenager complained of being completely exhausted.

Thank you to the caller and to local residents for their moral support. If you do see anyone causing damage to YOUR hill please do call the police.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

BIRD BOX BUILDING - Saturday February 18th at 2.00 pm. We need to know how many kits to supply, so do please remember to book a place first by contacting Susan.

21st/22nd January – Hedge planting at Greendown. If the weather is too bad, we'll try for **4th/5th February** instead.

28th/29th January – RSPB bird survey. To helpout, call them on: **08701 222 793**

WINTER IN DUNDRIDGE PARK

The sun pokes weakly across the Park, faintly catching the morning frost. It is still not strong enough for the trees to cast shadows.

The deer nervously sniff the air; they catch the scent of an early morning dog walker, and they bound away to vanish into Conham Vale woods.

Two horses arrive for their exercise; the sun is higher and shadows are now stretching across the West field. More people come into view, their dogs enjoying the unrestricted space.

It is Friday; the Council staff erect goal nets ready for football – for this Park changes its appearance on a Winter weekend.

As the day warms up, Mums and pushchairs arrive. The playground is enlivened by happy sounds.

The sun soon starts to set over Bristol and the nocturnal creatures emerge.

Night falls; the deer make their way up the side of the valley. The Park is theirs again

Bernard Merrick

CONTACT US

If you want to talk to us about issues raised in this newsletter, or anything else, please contact:

Susan Acton-Campbell (Chair)

Tel. **0117 947 5037** or write to

3, Corkers Hill, St. George, Bristol, BS5 8DT.

email: chair@troopers-hill.org.uk

Sally Oldfield (Bristol Council Local Nature Reserves Officer)

Tel. **0117 922 4429**

email:

sally_oldfield@bristol-city.gov.uk

or

Post a message on the new Forum at:

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

MEETINGS - The next Friends of Troopers Hill meeting is on **Thursday 19th January** at the **Wesley Memorial Church Hall, on Bryants Hill** at **7.15 pm**. Please do come along and contribute your thoughts and views.

WORK PARTIES - take place on the **first Saturday of every month at 10am**. The next date is **Saturday, 7th January**. Meet at **10am at the entrance on the corner of Greendown and Troopers Hill Rd.**