

# The Friends of Troopers Hill



Spring 2008

## BRISTOL PARKS AND GREEN SPACES STRATEGY

This strategy was adopted by Bristol City Council's Cabinet on 21 Feb and sets out a programme to spend £87m on improvements to Bristol's parks over the next 20 years. You may have seen some of the press coverage in January, when there was talk of up to 200 acres of green space



being sold off. Following the strong reaction in the press and from the Bristol Parks Forum, changes were made to the financial part of the strategy. The council will now ring-fence 70% of the money raised from any sale of parks for use in improving other parks. There is also a commitment to spend more on day to day parks maintenance such as grass cutting and litter picking. A fund will be set up to finance replacement of things like benches when they reach the end of their useful life.

Most importantly the strategy also confirms that it will be local people who decide which areas of green space, if any, can be sold off through the production of "Area Green Space Plans". This process will be run through the Neighbourhood Partnerships (such as the St George Neighbourhood Partnership) and there is a commitment that if less land becomes available than the council currently expects, then the finances will be reviewed rather than more land being found.

When there is talk about the sale of parks it must be remembered that all areas of public green space in Bristol are considered to be 'parks', not just parks such as St George. Many of these are patches of grass or scrub that are of no real benefit to the community or wildlife, but may be areas which attract drug users or where gangs cause trouble. It will be up to communities to decide whether these can be improved or whether they are better put to other uses.

*Rob Acton-Campbell*

If you'd like to talk to us about any issues raised in this newsletter, please contact:

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

Email:

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[Sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:Sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk)

Or go to the online forum at:

<http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/forum.html>



Apologies to all for the long gap since our last newsletter. Your editor has been rather busy elsewhere of late and has only now had time to get around to this edition. We've also decided to reduce the number of issues to 4 per year — one for each season. This is our first "Spring" edition and I hope you find it enjoyable.

We had our first Sunday afternoon work party during February and very successful it was. We decided to try this out in order to give people who find it difficult to join our regular Saturday morning sessions. So if you'd like to help maintain Troopers Hill (TH) but can't make Saturdays, you will have another chance on Sunday 20th April at 2 pm and another one on Tuesday 20th May at 7 pm. Put them in your diary.

We are delighted that Bristol now has three new Local Nature Reserves (LNR). Badock's Wood, Eastwood Farm and Manor Woods have all been officially designated as LNRs bringing the total in Bristol to seven. The others are Troopers Hill (of course), Lawrence Weston Moor, Stockwood Open Space and Royate Hill which was designated an LNR by Avon County Council. Well done to all concerned. We recommend that you visit all of them and enjoy the havens of wildlife that they are.

Don't forget that even if you do not have the Internet at home, you can still use it for free at your local library. They also run courses in computer and Internet use which some of our members have found very useful. The Internet is becoming an increasingly important part of our communications and a lot of discussion about ongoing events on TH take place on our Website's Forum (<http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/forum.html>). More and more people are sharing their opinions with us this way, which is a great way for us to hear about the things that concern you. Make no mistake, we do listen to what you say.

We had another extremely successful work party at the beginning of March, with a total of 23 people including several under 16's. It's great to see more and more people turning out to help out and get involved in their Local Nature Reserve. We've also been lucky enough to have a couple of lads, Drew and Chris, working with us for their Duke of Edinburgh Award. They are creating a new path from Troopers Hill Field down to the lower path that connects the LNR to Lamb Hill.

On 2nd March we had an extremely popular "Geology Walk", looking at the formation of Troopers Hill and surrounding areas. Led by local Geomorphologist Eileen Stonebridge, 50 people (plus a baby and a dog) walked all over the Hill discovering how the landscape was formed. A fascinating, if cold and windy, experience.

## PHOTO COMPETITION

**W**e had a terrific response to our photo competition, with forty-nine entries overall. It's a shame that we couldn't award a prize to all our entries as they were so good and the judges had a really hard time deciding on the prizewinners. In the end though, they agreed on three winners – one for each age category.

**A**ll the entries can be seen on our [website](#) and Amy's is being used in the next issue of the Avon Gardens Trust Journal,



Winner under 12 category, Harry M



12 to 16 winner, Amy D

and Mike's photo is one of the three submitted to the judges for this year's Green Flag Award.



Harry M, Amy D and Mike A receiving their prizes from Susan Acton – Campbell (chair) and Kit Elliott from Bristol Video Solutions —sponsors of the trophies.

**W**e managed to get all the winners together just before our January work party for a brief prize giving ceremony. Even better, many of them decided to stay and help out on the WP itself, so Troopers Hill benefited even more than we could have hoped!

**O**ne of the interesting things about the entries was the range of images and subjects chosen. We had entries from all over, including from Sweden.

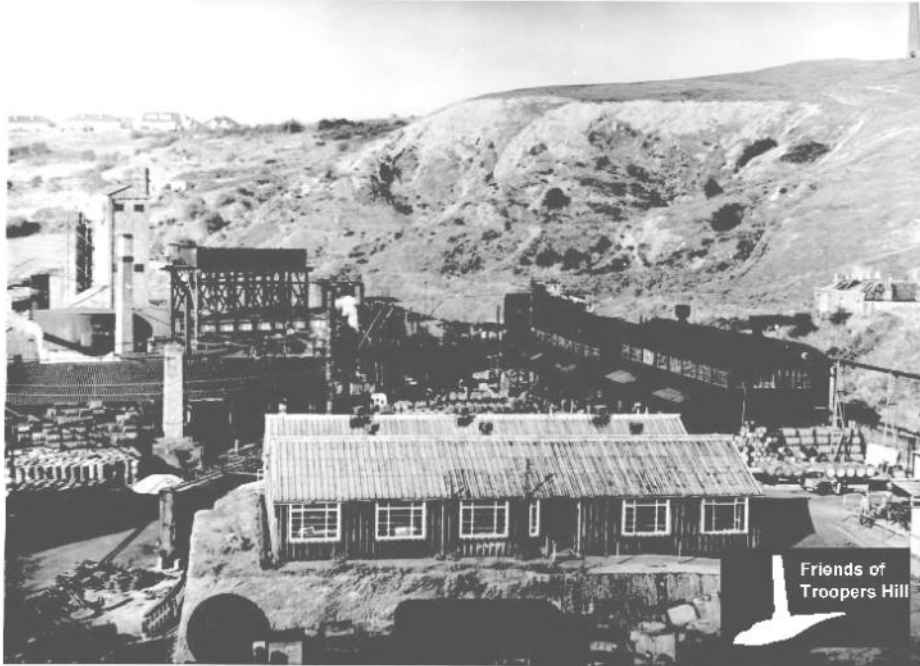
Apologies to those of you reading the print version of this newsletter as you're only seeing these pictures in black and white!



Over 16 winner, Mike A

## WORKS ON THE HILL

**I**f you walk on the Hill regularly, you won't have failed to notice the huge amount of work that has been going on over the winter months, and the changes that have resulted. This has not been done without a considerable degree of "pain" over lost trees, as those who are able to follow our [Forum](#) on the website will be aware. It is important to understand why this work has been carried out and the aims to be achieved.



This photograph was taken of the tar works around 1953. You can clearly see the Troopers Hill chimney in the top right corner. Notice how there are virtually no bushes. Of course, the quarry was filled in and trees encouraged to grow to stabilise the dumped soil and debris. However, the trees are now in danger of taking over the whole hill, destroying the unique nature of Troopers Hill in the process.

**D**espite people's memories, photographs prove that the Hill has not remained the same over the decades. On our website you will see photographs from fifty years ago (reproduced above), together with more recent ones that show the huge changes that have taken place. Scrub (bushes and trees) has been gradually increasing over the years. But why does this matter? After all, we all love trees and the more trees the better, right, especially in this time of concerns about Global Warming?

**W**ell, to understand the answer, we need to think about why Troopers Hill was made a Local Nature Reserve in the first place. The only area of acid grass and heath-land in Bristol, it is home to many important and rare varieties of plants and invertebrates. Apart from the [butterflies and moths we have several different types of mining bees](#), one of which is very rare and a fly that has never been found anywhere else in the United Kingdom. We also have several rare grasses, heather and a [variety of moss](#) that may date back to the days of [Kingswood forest](#). These are all important indica-

tors of the state of the ecosystem and they all need a certain size of community to survive and reproduce, otherwise they will die out.

**A**s trees encroach, the area of grass and heath-land decreases until it reaches a point where those communities, which depend on the grass and heather, are threatened. That is exactly what has happened. Independent, expert opinion has been telling the Council Parks Department for some years that this is going on and now they are acting to reverse the process.

Trees that were shading important grasses, causing the grass beneath to die out, are being removed. Bramble and scrub that is diminishing the heather and broom is being cut back. Not *all* trees or *all* bramble bushes are being removed – the birds and other wildlife need them and the hedge that Friends have planted along Greendown will provide an excellent new habitat. It is hoped a sensible balance will be achieved, although we are not there yet. More has to be done.

**I**t is the Council that is carrying out this work. They are keeping the Friends of Troopers Hill informed of what is going on and we are doing our best to keep you up to date with events through the [Forum](#). Keep posting *your* thoughts and feelings on the Forum though, as we know the Parks department monitors it carefully to find out exactly how people feel. We always try, at meetings, to reflect the views you express on our [Forum](#). In the end though, we can only represent you if we know what you think.

## NEW YANSEC GRANT

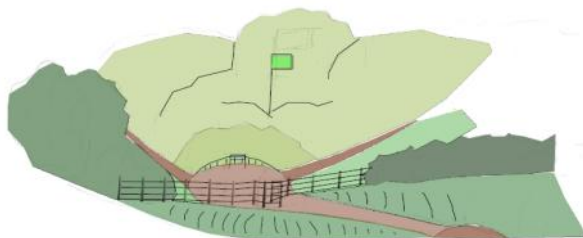
We have just received news that we have been successful in our application to YANSEC for money to improve the entrance at Greendown. The grant of over £18,000 will also allow us to replace the two benches that we installed on the hill in 2006 and were vandalised - benches that were also funded by YANSEC. YANSEC (Yanley and North Somerset Environment Company) are a non-profit making organisation that receives contributions from landfill operators to finance projects to improve the environment of parts of North Somerset and Bristol.

We will keep you up to date with the project via future editions of 'The Hill' and our website.



## GREENDOWN ENTRANCE

In September 2007 we were awarded a grant as part of the Lottery Funded Awards for All scheme. Some of that money was for a redesign of the Greendown entrance to Troopers Hill. The wooden gate and fence at this location is rapidly deteriorating and needs replacing.



PROPOSED VIEW OF GREENDOWN ENTRANCE TO THE SOUTH WEST

The new design is now complete, and this is a rough sketch of how it will look. The idea is to create a more welcoming entrance with an area for new notice boards and a repositioning of the new rubbish bin. It will also allow for a new entrance and exit path that will take visitors slightly further up Greendown and away from the corner. This has

been a safety concern of the Friends for some time. The wood will be replaced with thin metal strips, which will last much longer and be less noticeable. You can see an example of this type of fence at Callington Road Nature Reserve if you would like to see what it looks like.



## Waiting for Spring

Now Winter's gone with its icy chill  
The cat suns herself on the window-sill,  
And every morning the sweet birds sing  
A welcome to the coming Spring.

A brisk walk with the dog will cause  
A hasty wipe of its muddy paws,  
The morning's soft with gentle rain,  
So Spring is nearly here again.

Silken crocus glow amid striped leaves  
And birds are nesting in the eaves,  
With sudden showers and fleeting sun  
Our fickle spring has surely come.

Molly Setter

## Dates for Your Diary

**Saturday 5th April:** Work Party. 10 am until midday. Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown.

**Tuesday 15th April:** 7.15pm. Meeting. Wesley Memorial Church Hall, Bryant's Hill. All are welcome. We need your thoughts.

**Sunday 20th April:** Afternoon work party. 2 pm until 4 pm. Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown.

**Saturday 3rd May:** Work Party. As 5th April.

**Tuesday 20th May:** Evening Work Party. 7 pm. Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown.

**Wednesday 28th May:** 7.15pm. Meeting. Wesley Memorial Church Hall, Bryant's Hill. All are welcome. We need your thoughts.

**Saturday 7th June:** Work Party. 10 am until midday. Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown.

**Sundays 8th and 29th June:** 10 am—11.30. Tai Chi on the Hill. Join the Bristol School of Tai Chi for some gentle exercise for all ages. No experience necessary. Contact Susan Acton — Campbell to book your place.

**Wednesday 25th June:** Evening Work Party. As 20th May.

**Saturday 28th June:** Trouping on the Hill (3 pm) and **Music on the Hill** (6 pm). In the afternoon a troupe of local children will lead us on a journey around Troopers Hill and through time. Then from 6pm a summer evening of music on Troopers Hill, provided by the South Gloucestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra (SoGYJO). Don't forget: bring a picnic!

## Nature in the City Events.

Contact Sally Oldfield for further details.

**Sunday 30th March:** 7 am. Early Bird Walk at Eastwood Farm LNR. Expert Ed Drewitt will show us how to recognise our local birds by song and sight. Contact Sally for meeting points. The Beeses Tea Garden ferry will be running for this event, though you may have to tip the ferryman!

**Friday 25th April:** 10.30 am. Troopers Hill. Through the seasons walk. The second of four short and relaxed guided walks introducing the history and wildlife of the hill.

## Other Events.

**Saturday 15th March:** Barton Hill History Group Exhibition. 10 am—4 pm. Bethesda Church, Church Rd, Redfield. Admission £1.50. Friends will stand at this excellent annual event. Come and find out all about your local history — or just relive and share old memories with us.

**Friday 21st March:** 12 Noon. Good Friday Service on the Hill (Procession starts from Summerhill Methodist Church at 11.30 am.)