

Friends of Troopers Hill - It's Your Neighbourhood 2019

1. Aims of the Project

Troopers Hill is a Local Nature Reserve extending over 21 acres (8.4 hectares) of acid heath and grassland on a pennant sandstone hillside overlooking the River Avon. This wild and romantic site supports rare plants and wildlife and provides local people with a space for relaxation and recreation. Friends of Troopers Hill is a community conservation group of primarily local residents, formed in December 2003 to:

- provide a friendly community focus for people who care about Troopers Hill
- undertake practical conservation tasks
- organise public events, including walks and talks
- work with Bristol City Council Parks department to ensure Troopers Hill is properly managed.

Our constitution is at <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/constitutionF.pdf>

2. Achievements since the IYN judging of 2018

In addition to our usual activities (see section 3), we have

1) been using our grant of £44,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. To:

- replace the rotting wooden fences and gates on our Troopers Hill Rd boundary to prevent motorbikes accessing the site and destroying the habitat
- create a new conservation management plan
- carry out £10,000 of conservation work to carry out the recommendations of the new conservation management plan
- fund an invertebrate survey the last of which was carried out in 2007
- install a new interpretation board on fungi and lichens
- provide events through 2019
- supply 4 outdoor learning sessions for adults with learning difficulties.

2) completed the project funded by the Nineveh Charitable Trust for Natural Learners to provide 14 Wild Play pre-school outdoor education sessions, 8 school holiday family activity sessions, 3 outdoor education sessions for schools

3) used the funding from the Avon & Frome Partnership to make 13 wooden trail markers for the woodland paths and for 3 days of conservation work, opening up an overgrown track linking the woodland and the nature reserve and clearing invasive buddleia and some of the weaker hawthorn to provide a healthier ecological balance in the woodland.

4) welcomed another visit from geography students from Bridgwater College. Troopers Hill features in a Geography 'A' level textbook they use.

5) been allocated £62,500 in funding to resurface the deteriorating wheelchair access paths and create a new path from the play area to make it easy for young families to access the Hill. We expect this work to be done this summer.

More details about our Heritage Lottery Fund and paths projects are on www.troopers-hill.org.uk/waystonature

6) supported the "Future Proofing Parks" project involving young people in green spaces.

<https://www.groundwork.org.uk/hlf-future-proof-parks>

3. What we have achieved since we started

In December 2003 paths were obscured under vegetation, large quantities of litter had accumulated, and, most importantly, scrub was invading the acid grass and heathland that justifies the Local Nature Reserve classification. Maintenance visits took place only for brief periods every 6-8 weeks.

Now the site is well managed according to a management plan <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan.htm> agreed with Bristol City Council. This plan links to the relevant sections of the UK and Bristol Biodiversity Action Plans. The latter is supported by bodies including Bristol City Council, Avon Wildlife Trust and Natural England.

The site achieved Green Flag status each year from 2007/8 to 2013/14. Bristol City Council no longer had staff resource to support the process so in 2014 we entered the Britain in Bloom South West Parks and Open Spaces scheme and received a gold award. In 2015 Troopers Hill was given the top level, 5 stars, Pride in Parks award by Britain in Bloom South West. This was repeated in 2016 and in addition Troopers Hill was awarded the Suttons Seeds Cup for an outstanding area of nature conservation. We organise monthly Thursday and Saturday work parties, mainly addressing encroaching scrub and litter picking. Bristol City Council undertake machine-based maintenance, while Friends of Troopers Hill continue with manual tasks that would not otherwise be practicable, e.g. removing brambles growing in and around broom plants, and pulling out bracken amongst the heather, etc. Over 50 different local people have volunteered at our work parties and we now have ParkWork carrying out ½ a day of work on the date of the Thursday work party. ParkWork help people who have difficulty finding employment by providing training in parks tasks while volunteering.

In 2006, to preserve a boundary, 20 volunteers planted an 80-metre hedge of native species. Local residents were consulted about hedge management: the majority favoured cutting over hedge-laying. Volunteers hand-pruned the hedge annually until December 2012 when it was sufficiently mature for an annual flail cut by Bristol City Council.

We have 1,511 Facebook 'likes', 940 Twitter followers and a free email newsletter which is opened by over 60% of recipients. We maintain an informative and regularly updated website www.troopers-hill.org.uk. We publish a monthly article in the free paper St George & Redfield Voice which goes to 7,500 homes. The website is often a first point of contact for students seeking further information about Troopers Hill.

Notices and details of all the activities are posted on the site. Our meetings are open to all. We focus our publicity locally, encouraging people to walk, cycle or use the bus.

Our Walking for Health group, the St George Strollers, has celebrated its 8th anniversary. The Strollers have walked more than 500 miles and completed 190 walks attended by more than 130 people.

In addition to work parties and regular meetings, we have organised over 143 free public events since 2004, including guided nature, history and geology walks, concerts, dog shows, tai chi classes, star gazing and craft activities for children and families.

Since 2003 Friends of Troopers Hill have raised over £250,000 for different projects. We work closely with Bristol Parks, are members of the Bristol Parks Forum, and are represented on the St George Neighbourhood Partnership.

Troopers Hill is a venue for educational visits by primary school and 'A' level pupils. The site provides study material for University undergraduates and Ph D students.

Professor Jane Memmott of Bristol University, who presented the findings of the Urban Pollinator Project to parliament, wrote in a letter supporting our application for a Heritage Fund grant

“Troopers Hill is a very special site in Bristol for both wildlife and people.”

4. What we are aiming for in the future

We will continue with conservation work and promoting Troopers Hill, particularly via events. Better dog control and reducing dog fouling will remain a priority.

We have now achieved our “shopping list” of Troopers Hill’s major needs. What remains is continuous conservation and maintenance with Bristol City Council and the volunteers playing their part. To promote Troopers Hill and attract more volunteers from the local community we are now planning, for 2020, a 25th anniversary celebration of Troopers Hill’s designation as a Local Nature Reserve.

Friends of Troopers Hill raised over £44,000 for their Access to Nature project



This new fencing, replacing rotting old wooden fencing, is seen as new play equipment by local children but also serves a serious need of keeping motorbikes off the site and of discouraging pets and children running off-site into the road.

**Next Troopers Hill Event – poster designed by our
newest 16 year old recruit**



*** Open to all – just turn up ***

{ Kids very welcome }

□ Activities for families put on by Natural Learners □

○ **Join in our annual bug hunt to find as many different
mini beasts as we can** ○

▪ **Young Rangers will be putting on a scavenger hunt using
the iNaturalist app** ▪

◇ **Did you know Troopers Hill is home to over
75 different species of bee?** ◇



■ **Dawn and Rupert Higgins from Wessex Ecological Consultancy will be there
to help identify all your little creatures and to explain why Troopers Hill is an
amazing place for bugs to live** ■

• **Bristol Astronomical Society will be there with their solar
telescopes to help us see our nearest star** ●

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

Our poster designer came across the marbled white butterfly and 6-spot burnet moth caterpillar on her first conservation work party with us.

Wildlife newly recorded on Troopers Hill 2019



The day-flying moth shown above has not been recorded anywhere else in England for over 10 years. Found in one of a series of survey visits funded by our Heritage Lottery grant



Find above reported 4/7/2019

Poster for work parties and event - poster designed by our newest 16 year old recruit



Troopers Hill Conservation Work Parties

July dates: Saturday 6th July and Thursday 18th July

10am-noon followed by tea/coffee and biscuits

♻ On Thursdays, volunteers are joined by Parkwork ♻

- Meet at the red slide in Troopers Hill Field ▪

Conservation work parties are held on the 1st Saturday of each month and the 3rd Thursday of each month.

The work done is to protect the area and to keep it a thriving habitat for local wildlife.



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BUGS AND BEASTIES EVENT 10TH AUGUST STARTS 4PM

Supported by people from Natural Learners, Bristol Astronomical Society,

Young Rangers and Wessex Ecological Consultancy.

Activities for all the family and in the evening the opportunity to see the hot air

balloons from the Balloon Fiesta fly over Bristol.



www.troopers-hill.org.uk



June's Thursday Work Party

2019 Management Plan Work Plan activities for this work party (ref no. indicates compartment)

9.1	Remove encroaching trees from scrub
9.2	Clear a strip 2m-3m wide of scrub and trees to both sides of path.
12.1	Remove all gorse, broom, scrub, tree saplings and seedlings by pulling and cutting.



Troopers Hill Dark Sky Discovery Site

Troopers Hill has now been declared as a
"Orion Class" [Dark Sky Discovery Site](#).

Despite its location in the midst of brightly lit St George it is a good place to visit for star and planet watching, relatively protected from light pollution and with a good horizon.

Dark Sky Discovery Sites are places that:

- provide good sightlines of the sky
- are away from the worst of any local light pollution
- have good public access, including firm ground for wheelchairs and are generally freely accessible at all times.

"Orion" sites are those where the seven main stars in the winter constellation Orion are visible to the naked eye. Typically, this means away from, or shielded from, bright lights such as street lights, security lights or approaching car lights.

Visiting Troopers Hill for Star Gazing

Maps & directions to Troopers Hill

Star gazers should visit Troopers Hill via the wheelchair access route from Malvern Road, use torches and either keep to the wheelchair access path or keep north and west of the chimney on the fairly flat area of turf nearby. As Troopers Hill is an exposed hillside, layers of warm, windproof clothing including head covering are advised.

The best observing site is near the chimney on top of the hill where you are above the City's lights.

The Hill is in a residential area, please consider our neighbours and keep noise to a minimum, especially if visiting late at night or early morning.



A free stargazing event was provided in February in partnership with the Bristol Astronomical Society.