

## Friends of Troopers Hill - It's Your Neighbourhood 2021

### **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 2019**

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

1) completed spending a £44,800 grant 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 and spend £10,000 on its recommendations.
- 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) used £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. The newly created surfaced, circular route around Troopers Hill Field has had unexpected benefits. In addition to improved access the new "circuit" has turned into a training area for young children learning to ride bicycles and building their confidences on scooters and skateboards. The timing of this project was ideal allowing people more opportunities to access outdoor space during Covid restrictions, particularly during winter, when Troopers Hill Field turns into a quagmire.

More details about both the above projects on [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/waystonature](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/waystonature)

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

[www.groundwork.org.uk/hlf-future-proof-parks](http://www.groundwork.org.uk/hlf-future-proof-parks) Our Instagram account and the Troopers Hill Art competition were two of the fruitful results of this interaction [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/art25](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/art25) More about "Young Rangers" on [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/young.htm](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/young.htm)

4) welcomed Geography students from Bristol University, giving them the task of investigating why water collects on Troopers Hill Field, creating muddy conditions in winter. <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/field.htm#water>

### **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 2-3 work parties every month, currently following Covid restrictions, 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 per month. ParkWork help people who have difficulty finding employment by providing training in parks tasks while volunteering and are also working with students from Bristol City College.

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 2,106 Facebook 'likes', 1,263 Twitter and 776 Instagram 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](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk). 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 physically posted on the site. Sadly our meetings are now restricted to those who have Zoom access, we hope to return to physical, public meetings when Covid restrictions allow. 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 10th anniversary. The Strollers have walked more than 600 miles and completed over 200 walks attended by more than 130 people. We hope to start walks again soon, when Covid restrictions are lifted.

In addition to work parties and regular meetings, we have organised over 147 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. We have provided virtual self-guided walks and a poetry workshop during Covid.

Since 2003 Friends of Troopers Hill have raised over £300,000 for different projects. We work closely with Bristol Parks, are members of the Bristol Parks Forum, and are represented on the St George Community Network.

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**

In 2019 a much-loved slide on Troopers Hill Field reached the end of its life (over 40 years) and had to be removed for safety reasons. We started fundraising for a replacement in 2020 and followed this, in 2021, with a successful grant application for the remaining sum. We expect the new slide to be installed this summer. [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/field.htm#RedSlide](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/field.htm#RedSlide)

We will continue with conservation work and promoting Troopers Hill, particularly via events. Better dog control and reducing dog fouling will remain a priority. Both of these issues are visibly improving.

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.

**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. Our local wildlife still enjoys full access.



**“Unveiling” the new and improved paths – over £60,000 raised**



**A typical view of Troopers Hill Field in winter – the paths were much needed**



Still a few places left on a Troopers Hill  
Zoom POETRY WORKSHOP  
Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2021 11am



Find out more and book your place via  
[www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events.htm#060421](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events.htm#060421)

*You Can't Just Leave It*

Colours change all the time,  
but the hill has been here  
for thousands of years:  
a degree of permanence.

It can feel uncomfortable  
to walk on your own.  
On the path, take a breath -  
that feeling goes. On the edge

of fear, watching someone  
fix a wall, you make a friend:  
a bonding moment.  
It helps you slow down,

eases you into the day.  
Forget the big, get absorbed by  
the tiny. One of many species.  
You can't just leave the wildlife -

some butterflies rely on dappled shade.  
A mosaic of habitats. A need for friends,  
on hands and knees, with secateurs.  
Hedges full of insects and birdsong -

people to elicit joy. Some help is practical.  
Some is spiritual. Learn to ride a bike.  
Go sledging in snow or summer  
(all you need is a cardboard box).

Above Bristol, you can see the city  
with its lights on. The stars. The bats  
flitting by the chimney. And balloons -  
not just going with the wind

but determined  
to land on  
the hill  
of friendship.

Beth Calverley

Some of 2021's events

**WELCOME** to Troopers Hill

Enjoy your visit  
Please take your litter home

Keep 2m apart at  
all times



Enjoy the many walks featured in this year's  
Bristol Walk Fest. Full details on

[www.bristolwalkfest.com](http://www.bristolwalkfest.com)

For the Troopers Hill Wildflower Walk and  
walks from the St George Strollers visit

[www.tinyurl.com/THwalkfest21](http://www.tinyurl.com/THwalkfest21)



**Wildflower Walk**



[www.troopers-hill.org.uk](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk)



# June's Thursday Work Party

Thursday 24th June 2021

Another warm morning, today we moved to the end of the gully to remove the bracken from the heather at the edges of an area where most of the bracken had been strimmed by Bristol Parks.



Some of the group also then moved to remove saplings from further up the gully.

In the meantime Bristol Parks were grass cutting on the Field.

[Photographs here](#)

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

13.2	Remove saplings
15.6	Hand pull or cut bracken from heather and broom on edges of areas cut by BCC

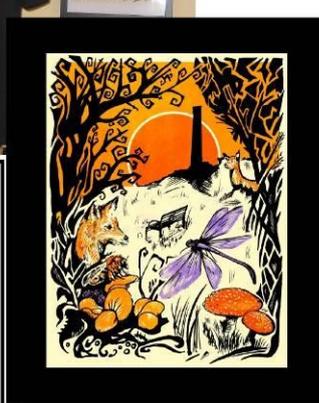


# Making use of our art competition to fund raise

Would you like to **WEAR THE WINNING ENTRY** to the Troopers Hill Art Competition?



Donate £5 or more to the Troopers Hill Slide appeal [www.tinyurl.com/thslide](http://www.tinyurl.com/thslide) and we will email you the image for you to use to create your own garment.

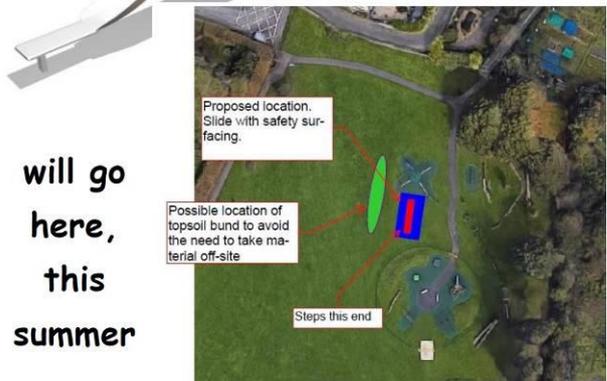


We used local business [www.coldprints.co.uk](http://www.coldprints.co.uk) based in the nearby Kingsway shopping precinct to print our T-shirt. [www.troopers-hill.org.uk](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk)

 **We've done it! We've raised the money for a new slide**  
Thanks to over £1,300 of donations and a grant of £9,847 from Ibstock Enovert Trust



**A new slide looking like this**



**will go here, this summer**

[www.tinyurl.com/THredslide](http://www.tinyurl.com/THredslide)