



NOTE OF MEETING

Thursday, 29th May, 2014 7.15pm

Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd

Present: Helen (Acting Chair), Rob (WPO), Kit (Memb Sec), Bryan (Committee), Jude (Committee), Elaine, Rod, Margaret (minutes)

Apologies: Susan (Chair), Clare (Walking for Health), Norman (Treasurer), Fabian (Cllr), Steve P (Cllr)

Minutes of previous meeting

Rod requested an amendment to the action regarding star gazing events early next year (page 3). This should be amended to say that Rod would pass on to the secretary of the Bristol Astronomical Society (BAS) our request for two more stargazing events in early 2015. Action: Susan to contact BAS to suggest dates, for consideration when the programme is planned in September.

Issues and thank yous for our Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager, and Grounds Maintenance team

- Preventing wear and tear on refurbished steps: Rob reported that some vegetation has been pulled from the front of steps, more needs to be done. He has asked that the stone be topped up where eroded.

Kit asked if work could be done on the steps by Little Elizabeth's bench as these were becoming difficult again and people were walking down the bank instead of the steps.

Kit also asked if the tree that had come down, partly blocking the path behind Malvern Road, could be removed. Action: Rob to talk to the Community Park Keeper to see if winter is the best timing, as we are now in the bird nesting season.

- Rob reported that work needs to be done on the rotting wooden fences, specifically the one opposite Phil and Vernon, and at the bottom of the hill. We could ask the Neighbourhood Partnership to spend Section 106 money but it would need to be as an upgrade. We could remodel the entrance by the bottom chimney and enlarge the kissing gate opposite Phil and Vernon's.

Kit asked about the spring that had been fitted on the gate opposite Fir Tree Lane as he was concerned the gate was now slack on the hinges and needed some maintenance. Rob explained the spring had been fitted by one of the local residents as previously the gate was not shutting properly. Rob said he would keep an eye on the hinges.

Maintenance of bed at Greendown: Steve B had been approached and has said that he would be willing to do this but would want some help, possibly from other Greendown residents. Rob explained that the Council park keeper does not have time to maintain the bed and there was not time for this at work parties. It just needed someone to regularly tidy it up, pull out weeds, etc. As yet no help for Steve has been identified.

Action: Kit to ask for volunteers in newsletter.

- BBQs – Bryan and Jude raised the issue of BBQs and whether more could be done to discourage them. They had recently spoken to a group who were using a BBQ on the grass near top of hill. Jude and Bryan suggested notices and leaflets to hand out on why they are a bad idea and asked if a sign could be put up saying ‘No BBQs’. Helen pointed out that existing signs on all entrances say not to use BBQs. Kit added that there are no byelaws at present about this so we can only ask people not to use them, not order them. Rob said that when the byelaw does go through it will say ‘no fires/BBQs’. It may also allow for BBQs in designated areas and we could then suggest that Troopers Hill Field could be a designated area where people can have BBQs. This was agreed.

- Update on dog fouling questionnaire: Susan had compiled an interim summary of the dog questionnaire results as at 26th May. Helen asked for comments. Rob commented that it was good that there were so many sensible suggestions, and Helen said that she was encouraged by the number of replies, the number of suggestions and the variety of ideas. Rob asked whether he should put this information on the website now and ask for more ideas. After discussion it was agreed he should put an edited version on the website, omitting Section 1, and adding comments.

Kit commented that he liked the suggestion about free dog training taster sessions on the Hill and it was agreed that this was worth looking into. There was also discussion of the pros and cons of providing free dog poo bags at all entrances.

- Green Flag. Rob had been informed that the Council has not entered any of their sites for a Green Flag this year. He understands that this is due to the restructuring that is taking place. The deadline for entering was in January and at that time the Council was unable to commit the resources needed for working on management plans, etc. Rob only became aware of this in March. He has chased Richard Fletcher about announcing this and also to ask what they will be doing for next year.

Post meeting note: Service Director with responsibility for Parks has confirmed by email that sites will be entered for the Green Flag next year.

Troopers Hill Field

Rob reported that the hornbeam tree that had snapped will be replaced this winter.

Upper chimney works

Rob reported that work had been done on approximately half of the chimney, knocking off the old render and repointing with traditional sand and lime mortar. This will lead to fewer problems with frost. There was another section still to do, but as there is a visible crack in the remaining section which may lead to costlier work, this has not been started on yet. It does not require urgent repair so will be done in due course when funds allow.

Work parties

- completed since the last meeting

- 5th April – Rob led this work party in Sally’s Glade with a group of about 10 people. They were joined unexpectedly at the end of the work party by ‘Good Gym’ (unexpected due to a break down in communications), who were welcomed and took

over the tools, carrying on the work of clearing the glade while the work party had their end of session coffee.

- 3rd May – Kit led this work party, again in Sally's Glade with a group of about 8, including two walkers from St George Strollers.

- 22nd May – Teams from Lloyds Bank working on Hill from 10am to 5pm. Kit, Rob, Susan, Chris and David all present. Work was done clearing bracken and saplings, clearing the markers on the steps and checking the tree labels (only one was missing). Lloyds Bank has sent an email saying they will make a donation.

- Work parties before the next meeting:

7th June – will be clearing bracken

5th July – possibly clearing some gorse

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

Kit reported that they had held their 3rd anniversary walk on Friday, ending up at Summerhill Church for the bi-annual meeting when they discussed the issue of voluntary donations. Kit explained that it costs about £500 to £600 per annum to run the Strollers and that, while they had been able to obtain funding for the first two years, it is hard to obtain grants to support running costs. Initially a charge of £2 per walk had been made but following the Walking for Health initiative being transferred to the Ramblers/Macmillan charging was no longer allowed, and they could only ask for voluntary donations.

St George Strollers had held approx. 70 walks over 3 years. At the meeting leaders asked walkers which walks they would like to do again and this will be taken into account when planning future programmes.

Events

Since the last meeting:

Dawn Chorus Walk, Sunday 6th April – There was a good turnout for this event. Rob mentioned that Ed Drewett, who led the walk, has a book coming out on urban peregrines.

Wild Plants Walk, Sunday 18th May – this walk, led by Tony Smith, was part of the Walking Festival and attracted several people who had not been to Troopers Hill before. A photograph of Troopers Hill won the competition on Facebook as the 'most liked' photograph from the Festival and will be included in the exhibition at the Create Centre.

Good Friday – Kit proposed that we change our venue for the FOTH display for the Good Friday service, moving it to Summerhill Church so that people would have more chance to look at it when they get together for coffee and hot cross buns before the procession. FOTH would still help with access to the hill for the service. This proposal was supported.

Action: Rob to suggest this when responding to the email he has received from the organisers of the procession.

Before the next meeting:

Music on the Hill, Saturday 21st June 6pm-8pm

The Ambling Band is booked for this. Volunteers are needed to start setting up from 4.30 pm and also to provide refreshments for the Band. Kit suggested that all FoTH regular volunteers be asked to bring something to share in their picnic and that we sit together as a group. There will be a toilet again, with the same arrangements and charge as last year.

Action: Susan to send an email asking for volunteers to help set up and provide refreshments.

Night-time moth hunt, Friday 18th July, 9.30pm-11pm. This will be a guided walk. Helpers will meet people on Troopers Hill Field and take them to the moth traps which will be set up by the Bristol Moth Group.

Fungi Foray, Sunday 2nd November - Kit asked about the fungi foray in November. Rob replied that Susan is contacting the British Mycological Society to ask if anyone else can lead a walk. Rob also reminded the meeting that it had been agreed to make a donation to the Avon Wildlife Trust in memory of Justin Smith. Kit suggested that a collection is held at the fungi foray in November and FOTH could then add to this from funds. This was agreed.

Donation from Beeses – Rob reported that Beeses will be making a donation to FOTH of approximately £700, from last year's Beer Festival. This will probably be handed over at the Eastwood Farm dog show in mid-July.

Networking

It's Your Neighbourhood – Denise James, who has now left Bristol City Council but is still secretary of St George in Bloom and Co-ordinator for It's Your Neighbourhood, has emailed Susan an application for an RHS Parks Award suggesting we should enter, Susan had submitted an application.

Green Capital Partnership – Rob reported that FOTH is officially a member of the Green Capital Partnership, and is also a member of the Nature Group. This will be chaired by a representative of the Avon Wildlife Trust and Fraser Bridgeford from Bristol Parks Forum, and will be co-ordinating events for Green Capital 2015. There will be a fund people can apply to for events or improvements to parks.

St George Neighbourhood Partnership – Rob is currently FOTH representative on St George Neighbourhood Partnership and is happy to continue to be the representative. The meeting confirmed that they would like him to continue. Rob is also the chair of the Partnership and Bryan is now a member as a business representative. Susan is also a member, representing the St George West Community Fund.

There is a new joint chair of the Friends of St George Park: Marie Burke, who used to work in Parks. There is also now a Friends of Dundry Park group.

Facebook/Twitter/website Update

Rob reported that 373 people have now liked our page on Facebook and there are 273 followers on Twitter.

An enquiry had been received on the website from a lady in Cornwall whose father used to live on Crews Hole Road when young, in a cottage next to the chapel (the one that is currently being restored), requesting any photos. Rob circulated one photograph that he had managed to find to send to her.

Newsletter

Kit said that the next issue will come out in the next couple of weeks.

Next meeting

Thursday 24th July at 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road