



NOTE OF MEETING 11 MAY 2005 AT WESLEY MEMORIAL CHURCH HALL, BRYANTS HILL

Present: Susan, Rob, Sally, Vernon, Phil, Kit, Helen, Fran, Liz & Alan.
Apologies received from David, Val, Carole and Liz R

1 Outstanding actions: None not included in Agenda.

2 Previous minutes: Approved.

3 Malvern Road Open Space Update: The Chair presented a summary of responses to the survey. 1700 questionnaires were issued and 173 responses received – a creditable 10% response rate. The majority of respondents lived within five minutes of the space, visited more than once a week, and used the space to go for a stroll or to visit Trooper's Hill. Amongst a range of names the most commonly reported was "Troopers Hill Field". Improvements to the play area were most in demand. Dog mess was reported to be the most disliked feature. 18 respondents had expressed willingness to help in future. Thanks to Somerfield and Bristol City Council (BCC) for sponsoring the exercise.

Action: Chair to obtain addresses of possible helpers with a view to holding a meeting at which they would be encouraged to take leadership of and ownership for an improvement project.

4 Air Balloon School Project: Kit played the DVD that he had produced about the project in which Helen Adshead led local schoolchildren in creating decorated sides for a gazebo and tablecloth representing the wildlife and scenery to be found on the Hill. Rob showed the photographs on the website. It was suggested that if BCC provided the school with an aerial photograph of the area it might encourage the teachers to engage pupils in visits to the Hill as part of "local studies" lessons.

Action: Chair to find out whether FOTH gazebo could be displayed at Infants School fête given that pupils' older siblings might have participated in the project.

5 The Grayling Butterfly: Sally presented the arguments for and against the proposal to re-introduce this butterfly to Troopers Hill LNR, and options for a decision. Time was of the essence since there was an imminent opportunity to begin. In summary, the argument against re-introduction was based on advice from ecologists that highlighted the absence of sufficient knowledge to gauge whether such a project could succeed. The argument for centred on the existence of the ability to proceed with the project on a "try it and see what happens" basis. On reflection, the meeting decided that the scientific approach should prevail. The consensus was a decision to devote effort to monitoring the insects (including rare bees) that currently inhabit the LNR, with a view to researching a possible grayling re-introduction in the longer term. It was estimated that a

survey plus report could cost in the region of £500 and a fuller study proportionately more.

Action: Sally to communicate the outcome of the meeting to the person concerned, and advise on possibilities for obtaining a grant for insect research in some future year.

6 Mailing: Kit explained that in response to the growing mailing list and to save the cost of envelopes, he had attempted to share the printing and delivering of newsletters by e-mailing them to distributors as mail-merge files. That had been only partially successful and the problem could be resolved by removing the requirement for individually personalised copies. It was decided that those delivering batches of newsletters would in future be sent unlabelled, unaddressed copies with a list of recipients' names and addresses. Rounds would be rationalised in light of the additional addresses.

Action: Chair to let Kit have Maureen's details and to discuss distribution.

7 Research at Bristol Records Office: Rob and Susan brought a copy of the auction papers for Troopers Hill in 1920. In 1704 the land had been known as Harris's Hill. It had been in the possession of the Elton family who sold it to the Bristol Brass Company in 1758. In 1813 the name was recorded as Trubody's Hill. In 1854 Trubody's and Troopers Hill were used concurrently. The 1881 Ordnance Survey map showed the modern name which was authorised by several local residents. Records kept by Councillor F C James proved to be an excellent source of information and leads for further research. A book published in 1830 recorded an event known as the Strawberry Feast which involved a visit to the arched summerhouse/bath house (c.1760) still in existence on Strawberry Hill. Also mentioned was a report of a service held by a religious group who had to worship in secret. More research was required on Malvern Road Tip and to follow other leads.

Action: Anyone wishing to contribute to research to liaise with Rob and Susan on subjects.

8 Feedback on Events: Twenty-four people including three children had attended the Dawn Chorus walk despite the early 05.30 start. It had been a fine morning. Among the birds observed had been six herons. Rob demonstrated a CD of the photographs, which were also posted on the website. FOTH members had visited a Keynsham LNR, the Manor Road community woodland and found common problems. It was speculated that B&NES council had provided money for the new trees. An application for grant from Conservation Counts (a new initiative to encourage visitors to local nature reserves to report any wildlife they see) might provide an avenue of possible funding for a FOTH project.

Rob reported on a visit to Camerton Batch, a LNR on an old mine tip with woodland of similar age to that on Malvern Road tip. The site was managed by the Parish Council and a very helpful contractor.

9 Future Events 2005: The next event will be the Flowering Plants walk on 30 May. There will be a moth hunt on 18 June with the possible addition of bat detecting. 22 June will be the 10th anniversary of Troopers Hill's designation as LNR. A family

event on the Saturday of the Balloon Fiesta 13 August and a walk and barbecue on 20 August are also planned. A Fungal Foray is booked for 22 October. David's efforts to arrange a dog show had resulted in good contacts for a possible show in 2006.

Other proposed events included a display of historic objects, documents and photographs associated with the Hill (perhaps in September, depending on a suitable venue) and a re-creation/commemoration of the "Strawberry Feast" (possibly 2006).

10 To be passed to Gary: Rob said that Gary would be taking a year's sabbatical leave beginning in September, no replacement had so far been identified. Meanwhile, he should be notified of requests for strimming alongside the paths, and the need to top-up the timber steps with gravel, turf or other appropriate material.

11 Feedback and plans for work parties: Rob showed the meeting photographs of the 7 May working party clearing bramble from amongst the broom in Sally's Glade, and commented that there was more to be done there. The next work party will clear bracken away from the steps (first of the annual visits).

12 Update to Management Plan: Rob drew attention to the end-of-year report on progress and update to the management plan which he had posted on the website. He reported that FOTH and Bristol Parks had achieved most of their planned tasks (put up new signs, established a stock of tools, cleared footpaths, made an extra step in a steep path, new dog bin at Green Down entrance, cleared round the Stack and kept it clear, repaired broken fence rails – additional details in the report). Two further dog bins remained to be installed, at the top of the hill and by the Stack. Three benches awaited funding. The access gate at Malvern Road would be done in year 2 (this year). Other tasks for year 2 include the creation of a wheelchair access path from Malvern Road Open Space to the Chimney, and repairs to the top of the Stack.

13 SWEET application update: Nothing to report.

14 Money: The Chair reported that all the grant had been spent. Presentations, walks and refreshments had earned around £100. £130 was earmarked for expenditure on benches. New applications for funding would be sought and it was mentioned that a new Lottery fund was accepting bids for community grant. However, the award of such grants normally excluded funding for running costs. Sally confirmed that BCC would continue to contribute to FOTH's running costs (principally meeting rooms, newsletter and postage) for the time being and within budgetary constraints. The necessity for fund-raising was recognised. The meeting briefly explored options including: charging for membership; for newsletters; for participation in events; encouraging donations; seeking sponsorship; and registering as a charity (onerous and not favoured).

Action: All – to consider and propose ideas for future fund-raising events at next meeting.

Chair – to check details of financial position with Treasurer and report at next meeting.

15 Date and content of next Newsletter: Rob told the meeting that the website www.troopers-hill.org.uk had been re-launched and the e-mail was working again. The newsletter should give that information and state that it is FOTH's aim to answer all e-mails and advise anyone who had not received a reply to re-send their message, as the system should in future be more reliable. Recipients should be encouraged to provide their e-mail addresses, to save postage. Other articles should refer to the first-year report, progress on Malvern Road Open Space and mention the date of the LNR designation tenth anniversary. It was requested that the newsletter be produced towards the beginning of June, preferably by the end of the second week of the month.

16 Dates and Venues for future meetings: 7pm Thursday 30 June 2005 and Tuesday 9 August 2005, Wesley Memorial Church Hall.