

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FRIENDS' of TROOPERS' HILL, 12/2/04

Present: Rob Acton-Campbell, Susan Acton-Campbell, Val Harris, Sally Oldfield, Norman Spalding, Virginia Spalding, David Gladden, Liz Read, Pete Harris, Andy Wilcox.

Matters Arising: Susan pointed out that Sally had been present at the last meeting but her name was not listed, the minutes were corrected accordingly.

Newsletter: Various people had made positive comments: Councillors Ron Stone and Margaret Shovelton had both sent complimentary E mails, 9 response slips had been returned so far from the big mailing list by people who wanted to continue to receive copies. The meeting felt that the exercise had made a good beginning. A brief discussion about proposed frequency of the newsletters resulted in the decision that we would aim for 6 per year.

Last Work Party: Rob showed the meeting "before" and "after" photos of the work done on the southern path. 12 people had attended. After a brief discussion on the utility of various kinds of tools it was decided that loppers were by far the most useful of those employed so far in this kind of scrub clearance exercise.

Plans for next Work Party: The March Work Party (Sat 6th) will concentrate on clearing the steps from Troopers Hill Road that are currently overgrown with brambles and bracken, this has been mentioned by several people as a task that the group should carry out.

Rob suggested that we should advertise the April event as a Spring Clean Day but that in essence it would be litter picking! Everyone agreed. By the time this event takes place Gary should be in receipt of the budget decision affecting the viability of the work to repair the south slope steps allowing plans to be further refined.

Rob handed out a Health and Safety Plan which was briefly discussed. There was some concern about the lack of suitably qualified First Aiders within the group and in consequence Susan offered to research the cost of a First Aid course and report back.

FOTH Action Plan: Rob handed out copies of the substantial document he had written to an amazed and very appreciative audience. Copies of the Plan can be accessed via a link on the web site. Sally said that Rob's work was so substantial that it was effectively the basis of a new Management Plan and with that in mind Sally and Gary will cost the Plan over the course of the next month. Rob appealed for group members to form a focus group to discuss this plan but everyone felt that No-one present volunteered, however, if anyone would like to join with Rob, Sally and Gary in reviewing the document and giving their input, they would be very welcome. Please contact Rob.

In the coffee break Sally showed those members of the group not in the kitchen Rupert Higgins' photographs taken at the same points around the hill biannually. Sally said that the aim was to record any positive or negative environmental change over time and that thus far (10 years in total) change seemed to be positive. Liz suggested using the photos of one point on the Hill on the web site to illustrate this very point. Everyone agreed. Sally lent the photos to Rob who undertook to scan a selection of them so we can use the electronically. Andy volunteered to take similar photos at more frequent intervals. Everyone thought this was an excellent idea.

Issues for Gary: Liz asked about the change to the kissing gate at the north-west entrance and Susan explained that Gary had adapted it to keep motorbikes off the Hill following the vandalism to the gate over Christmas.

Health and Safety training: the consensus was that it had been good, useful training. 8 people had attended with a full complement of 6 from the group. Sally agreed to produce 3 more sets of the 'Tool Talk' notes for those who had not yet got copies.

Contacts with other groups: there had been further contact with the St. George Partnership Group. Thus far Susan, Sally and Rob had been to meetings but Susan asked for representation from other members at the next meeting which will be Thursday 26/2/04 at 7pm. Having not been bowled over by eager volunteers Susan suggested we rotate the responsibility. Virginia tentatively agreed to go but asked what we actually got out of it. Susan listed possible pluses: publicity in their newsletter for the group, networking contacts and coordinating planning concerns on the margins of the Hill. Various people spoke about planning issues – one in particular that related to the allotments on the north border of the Hill Susan said she would investigate by paying a visit to the Planning Office soon.

David said he had talked to Robbie Riddell (the minister of three local, syndicated chapels) about the Easter service. He was quite prepared to use his influence to popularise our aims and wanted some “official” approach from the group.

Bank Account: Val said she had received the bank details and gave the relevant numbers to Susan to allow her to complete the first grant application.

Fundraising: Susan said she was ready to complete the grant application in the manner outlined at the last meeting as no group member, except Sally, had responded to her draft. Sally said she had sounded a warning note about checking before the application went in with the Fund Provider to see if they were concentrating on specific types of local activity. If this was the case and their focus did not match our specific interest it may be a better use of Susan’s time and efforts to redirect the application elsewhere.

Susan said that to date the application totalled £3550 with monies requested for benches, noticeboards, tools, fencing timber, and “publicity” money.

Research Coordinator Feedback: as Carole was not at the meeting Susan said that Carole had prepared a form for people attending the meeting on Weds 25/2/04 (St Aidans Hall side room, 7pm). There was some doubt in the meeting over likely attendance. Rob volunteered to design a poster which Val, David and Liz would put into the doctors Surgery (Air Balloon), the school (Air Balloon) and the Library respectively. A brief discussion occurred over the whereabouts of David Stephenson who would be invaluable at the meeting. Sally agreed to have another go at contacting him.

Publicity for the Group: Liz spoke about the web site which she was now working on. There were sections on working parties, the newsletter, history, flora and fauna, coming events, contacts, home and photos. There were also going to be links to the Plan and the newsletter. She said she was actively looking for photos of the Hill to illustrate the work she was doing and would welcome offers from anyone with appropriate material.

There was a discussion about whether the web site should include an appeal for tools for the group. A variety of opinions were registered. It was decided that David should include this request for tools on the next newsletter.

Liz and Rob also spoke about their efforts to engage local schoolchildren in providing the art work for the proposed noticeboards on the Hill. Initial approaches to Air Balloon Hill Junior School had been rather negatively received which everyone felt was a great shame given the school's particular connections with the locality and its centennial year in 2005. David, Liz and Sally discussed how this could be reversed by having a second try using a different approach. Sally will contact Helen Adshead, an Education Officer with Avon Wildlife Trust who could work within the tight curriculum constraints at Air Balloon School at no cost to their budget.

Date and venue of next meeting: St Aidans Hall Side Room, Thursday 18/3/04, 7 pm.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9 pm precisely!