



Friends of
Troopers Hill

**Note of Meeting Wednesday 14th September 2005 7.15pm
Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill**

Present: Susan, Rob, Liz W, Alan, Liz R, Gill, Kit, Helen.

Apologies: Sally, Phyll, Vernon, David.

Outstanding actions from the previous minutes: Chair reported that the outstanding actions had largely been completed.

Approve previous minutes: Approved.

Malvern Rd Open Space Update: Chair reported that at the recent meeting with John Knowlson, Bristol Council Play officer, the participants learned that a fairly small play area (say 400 metres square) would cost around £60,000 to £70,000. The Council was under no obligation to replace play equipment. A play area is normally expected to last ten years. The Council's small annual budget (£50,000 spread over 150 play areas) was devoted mostly to repair. In a future year there could be a possibility of limited match-funding. In light of the current Green Spaces Strategy Initiative, this would be a good time for MROS to raise awareness of its need for play provision (though not necessarily formal play equipment) as otherwise it might not be placed in a qualifying category (St George's Park and Dundridge Lane being close by). Apart from SWEET and Living Spaces there were no other apparent sources of grant funding. The suggestions for future provision included:

- Provide tubular steel five-a-side sized football goals @ around £700 (but no marked out pitch) for informal games
- Consider the provision of seating area with regard to positioning and shade
- FOTH to arrange a meeting of all survey respondents who had indicated a willingness to attend, with Council Officers to facilitate and Councillors invited to attend.
- Meeting, ideally, to identify a new MROS group leader preferably living in immediate vicinity and having children/grandchildren of relevant age
- Take up the Council's offer to provide design drawings once the equipment provision had been clarified, as basis for grant applications
- Explore the potential for commercial sponsorship
- Ensure provision for teenagers is in place, to encourage "ownership" before facilities are provided for younger age groups
- Recognise that the teenagers tend to move around the area in stages over the course of an evening and provide facilities accordingly, perhaps in the form of U-shaped seating
- Consider locating some seating in the "bomb crater" below the top chimney on Troopers Hill
- While awaiting new facilities, retain existing play area in support of MROS claim for play provision.

Actions: Susan: List names for invitations to meeting, send mailing list to Kit.
Make a written record of the meeting. Arrange date and venue for next MROS
meeting. To ask John Knowlson to issue letter of invitation.

Gill: Identify contact with Summerhill Over 50's club as possible venue.

Feedback on events (Balloon Race and Story Telling)

The Chair thanked all participants for responding to challenging circumstances and, in particular, Kit for organising the balloon race and successfully attracting publicity from local TV, radio and newspaper. The event had gone as well as it could have given the adverse weather and the rain had stopped in time for the story telling. The event had more than paid for itself. In addition:

- It would be worth repeating the balloon race next year, with greater advance publicity
- The storytelling had been a success and Cassandra had expressed willingness to be booked for another event
- It was suggested that FOTH participate in next year's Doors Open day
- Two balloon labels had been returned, the winner had travelled to Hampton Hill (115 miles away) and the other from Sunbury on Thames. The return of the winning label had been rewarded with a WH Smith voucher.

Action: Kit to send a newsletter to the runner-up; to investigate whether Evening Post article appeared in the online archive (www.thisisbristol.co.uk)

Susan to reattach tapes to gazebo sides.

Feedback on boat trip

The Avon Valley Partnership's Volunteers' Day had comprised a steam train from Bitton to the river, boat trip on the Avon and return on vintage bus from Keynsham. The event had been very popular and somewhat crowded, lengthy but worthwhile.

- Richard Bland's commentary on wildlife and other local features was much appreciated
- Representatives from Eastwood Farm and the recently designated Avon Valley Local Nature reserves gave talks at appropriate points
- Kit gave a talk on Troopers Hill when it came into view from the boat
- Participants were encouraged to contribute writings and take photographs of the event which would be compiled and exhibited at a meeting on 22 September.
- It was a valuable opportunity to meet members of other LNR groups,

Actions: Rob and Susan to attend the meeting and offered a lift to others who would be interested.

Feedback on Parks Forum

Kit provided a comprehensive report on the more interesting parts of the Parks Forum meeting that he had attended on behalf of FOTH. The participants had heard presentations from the head of Bristol Parks, a councillor, a representative from Continental Landscapes and Bristol Contract Services. All had accepted that things had not gone according to plan in the past, apologies were offered and progress (two years into the contract) was currently being made. Changes had been put in place and more people recruited. There had been much discussion of funding issues, and comparison between the Council and other maintenance providers.

The main thing of interest to FOTH had been an observation Troopers Hill and other LNR maps were not very reliable, and the contractors had complained that certain areas had been wrongly defined.

Other subjects discussed at the meeting included:

- The pros and cons of LNR and Parks groups being permitted to make their own maintenance arrangements
- Maintenance contracts were all very well but were not always responsive to variations in seasonal conditions (eg dry vs wet summer, mild vs severe winter)
- Leaving or removing dangerous trees, in connection with the Council's plans to introduce wood burning boilers
- Taking the LNR maintenance under a separate contract from Parks etc

- Pride in some of Bristol Parks' achievements such as success with bowling greens

The meeting had elected a new chair and the former chair had agreed to become the vice-chair and retain certain executive responsibilities.

The next Parks Forum meeting would be attended by police representatives and would focus on issues associated with the "youth" element, such as more resources for police beat managers and greater youth involvement in LNRs.

Action: All: to discuss involvement in re-drawing or otherwise improving the map of Troopers Hill LNR at a future meeting

To discuss how to improve youth involvement with Troopers Hill LNR at a future meeting.

Future events for 2005

History Exhibition on Saturday 17 September at Allotment pavilion, Nicholas Lane:

The material to be exhibited would include archives from the records office, maps, books, DVDs of the schoolchildren's and other FOTH activities, work party photographs, but not photographs of the tar works belonging to John Cornwell. A scanner would be available in case anyone brought an interesting document and Kit would set up a camera to record interviews of anyone with relevant memories to share.

Actions: Susan to investigate possibility of sale of refreshments: To take A3 copy of poster to Kit for laminating. Liz R to bring copy of Elizabeth Emra's book; Liz W to put poster in Gingells.

A "Farmer-style Market" would be held at the Allotment pavilion, Nicholas Lane on Saturdays 24 September, 29 October and 26 November.

The Fungal Foray was set for the morning of Saturday 22 October.

It was decided that the AGM should take place in December on either Tuesday 6th or Wednesday 7th. Members were asked to consider changes to the constitution and/or officers of the Friends.

Action: Content and conduct of AGM to be an agenda item for next meeting

Thoughts for events for 2006

Carried forward to agenda for next meeting

Any issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to Gary

Gary's post with the Council was to end on the forthcoming Friday for a year at least. A successor was being sought but no appointment had been made. The wrecked moped was still awaiting removal.

Action: ensure an early invitation to a FOTH meeting for Gary's successor

Feedback and plans for work parties

Rob reported that at the last working party a small number of volunteers (five) had managed to eliminate a stand of bracken at the foot of the steps near the middle Troopers Hill Road entrance. A variety of wildlife, including small invertebrates, had been found during the morning.

It was suggested that instead of filling in behind the steps where the infill had become compacted, the timbers could be lowered to correspond with the existing soil level.

Rob had spoken to Sally regarding the vista from Malvern Road Open Space. The Council would not normally remove trees for the benefit of an individual view, but where a public open space was concerned, the practice was to identify and take out one or more trees to give a view through the woodland.

The next working party would be asked to cut bramble from amongst the broom – this should be done only outside birds' nesting season.

Action: Rob to meet Richard Eynon to identify suitable trees at MROS and near the Troopers Hill bench – possibly one morning soon; and to inform Gill of meeting date
To remind contractors of post-Bonfire Night Litter Pick responsibility

SWEET Application Update

There had been a message from Sally to the effect that SWEET would be prepared in this quarter to consider a reduced re-application totalling no more than £15,000 split between Troopers Hill and Eastwood Farm LNRs. Rob circulated suggestions for reducing the Troopers Hill bid to £7,500 which were agreed by the meeting as follows:

- £2000 + £450 for history/wildlife leaflet + laminated A4 posters respectively - substitute for £3000 interpretation boards.
- Reduce scope and cost of wheelchair accessible path to £3000.
- New Benches (possibly using wood from Eastwood Farm) @ £1650
- £300 for three educational events
- £100 for cost of meetings and publicity
- Delete/postpone £4500 cost of wheelchair accessible entrance gate (completed), postpone new fencing and pushchair gate at Greendown
- Delete/postpone £1600 for disabled parking bays - not in management plan.
- Postpone cost of tourist signs (£1000) to a later year

Action: Susan to provide Council with FOTH letter of support for grant application before end September.

Rob and Susan to visit Gill to assess her offer of wooden lintels, possibly for seating on the Hill

Money/Fundraising/Test the testers/New path for Dundry

Val had prepared a balance sheet which was circulated at the meeting and showed that the accounts still maintained a small credit balance after deducting the outgoing. Sally had undertaken to cancel and replace the Council cheque that had failed to reach FOTH. There were some donations outstanding and sales of leaflets had raised cash. The last newsletter had resulted in donations of at least ten bags of books.

Dundry Park had created a waymarked circular walking path and had asked FOTH to publicise it. It should be mentioned newsletter (see next item) and FOTH would offer A4 copies of a description of the walk for sale at FOTH events (£1 laminated, otherwise 50p). It was suggested that this could be the first in a series of similar fund-raising publications (local walks on and including the LNR).

Richard Fletcher invited FOTH members to participate in a group session to assist in testing the process for developing the Green Spaces strategy in return for a £60 donation, the offer was accepted. The session is expected to take 2 to 2.5 hours on a date in late October (tba).

It was noted that certain employers encouraged their staff to become involved in community development projects and this could be a potential avenue for future grant applications. Interest from companies such as KPMG and HSBC in this area of funding was also recorded.

Representatives from BRERC would be present at the Avon Valley Partnership meeting on 22 September and it could be useful to explore potential sources of funding.

Date and Content of next Newsletter

Outline version to be created by the end of the following week and the final version distributed in the second week in October before the Fungal Foray. Articles to include the need for more volunteers and the Dundry Park path (see above).

Action: Kit to prepare outline version and arrange distribution.

Dates and Venues for future meetings

- Next meeting Tuesday 18 October, same venue
- AGM 6 or 7 December, same venue
- Social event at Scouts Bonfire 5 November, afterwards at FOTH member's house for mulled wine and desserts.

Action: Chair to confirm AGM date having checked absent members' availability.