

**NOTE OF FOTH MEETING
Wednesday 18th April 2007
Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill**



Present: Susan (Chair) Rob, Kit, Pauline, Roy, Liz & Alan, Val & Pete, Judith, Maureen, Gill, Gregory, Fred, Helen (minutes)
Apologies: Phyll & Vernon, Anne, Nick

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Outstanding actions from the previous minutes

Nick to investigate possibility of re-seeding heather in places where the ground had been cleared of bramble

Green Flag application

Rob reported that when the first part of the wheelchair accessible path had been put in, Friends had raised concerns that it was not being implemented according to plan. Accordingly a meeting had been arranged and the Council stopped the contractors working until FOTH had agreed a compromise. Gravel had been delivered for surfacing on 19 April. The large rectangular area had been reduced in size. It is located in the best place from a nature conservation point of view, taking out soil and grass of lesser conservation importance.

The top layer of stone will bond together to form a suitable surface. Two new seats (with backs) will be installed, neither of which will impinge on the skyline.

Likely benefits from the Green Flag application would be likely to include:

- Repeat annual funding.
- Bramble will be continually cut down to allow regrowth of heather etc
- More frequent litter picking and minor repairs to steps
- A regular caretaker presence whose work programme may be susceptible to influence by FOTH.
- 3 new signs at the entrances Greendown, top and stack, being replaced by larger interpretation board signs
- Interpretation sign opposite one of the new benches (see above) with drawings from leaflet and map. Rob passed round a form of words for inclusion on the sign. Also a sign at the gate between Malvern Road and the Field will say "Welcome to Troopers Hill Field" being the local name for the area hitherto referred to by the Council as "Malvern Road Open Space".
- The entrance from THF to the Hill is going to remain gated but normally left open. New section of wooden fence alongside to look smarter
- The fencing by the lower stack is rotten and has broken rails. This will be removed, the kissing gate replaced and a short fence put up instead.
- Plan to put in more dog bins: the Council are designing combined litter/dog bins, and Troopers Hill could be one of the first sites for the installation of new bins.

Bristol Parks have agreed improvements to communications that will remove some of the impediments to discussing urgent issues.

The Green Flag judging would probably take place before half term at the end of May. Rob, Sally Oldfield and John Threadgold would accompany the judges on their tour of inspection.

Kit thanked Rob for sorting out the communication difficulties and agreeing to attend regular meetings with JT over the next few months.

Rob's suggestion of a letter of thanks to the Council for their constructive response to the path problems was agreed by the meeting.

Action: Susan to write to the Council.

Hill problems – mini mopeds had been seen on more than one occasion. The police had responded to a 999 call. The police welcome photographs if they can be taken without danger to individuals. Roy said they will only come through where there is easy access, for instance via the milestone path. Kit suggested logging the motor cycle problems to see whether any pattern could be discerned. Pete Crawford's number was circulated.

Action – ask Pete Crawford's permission to include his number in a forthcoming newsletter

Fires: On 17 March a fire had burned a considerable area of gorse, the impact was considered beneficial in management terms. The fire brigade had responded promptly and the flames had been extinguished. A second fire had been started on 14 April. The Council had been intending to make a controlled fire of dead bramble stacked by FOTH but others started the fire prematurely. The police and fire brigade had responded quickly and reprimanded the culprits.

Further reports included:

Groups of lads throwing stones in the gully;

Some of the wood edging from the path has been removed and broken up;

BB gun or equivalent had been fired at one of the benches.

Work parties

The work party on Saturday 14 April had been monitored by BCTV to assure competence in health and safety. Some of the activities (cutting holm oaks) had been filmed by BBC Nature in England to form part of a broadcast in September. There was some support for Rob's suggestion of evening work parties, especially on Thursdays.

Action: Rob to consider dates, gauge interest and organise evening work parties

Liz brought to the meeting some decorative objects made from a silver birch tree that had been felled to provide a sight line from the new bench and turned into ornamental designs by a wood turner.

Leaflet Design

Susan demonstrated the latest draft and passed it around.

Rob circulated a newly designed logo, almost identical to the former one which was approved by the meeting. Susan invited feedback on the text

Rob reminded participants that the History leaflet and Geology leaflet would require design meetings in due course

Rob showed a plan of the former fireclay mine on Troopers Hill 1908 also a section through the hill showing where the tunnels are. The plan showed an air shaft emerging at the side of the hill near the quarry. It might form a possible basis for the history leaflet.

Action those interested to contact Rob

Feedback on events

Barton Hill History Group History exhibition had attracted a certain amount of interest in Troopers Hill. It was described by those attending as a busy and interesting event.

Good Friday Service. The weather had been beautiful and the event well attended. FOTH's new gazebo had worked well. Friends made contact with many people and gave out a number of leaflets. Some concern was expressed about the numbers of motor vehicles. The organisers "Churches Together" had served hot cross buns tea and coffee after the service, and organised an easter egg hunt for the children. .

Action: 1) Chair to organise an extra gate key for Kit.

2) In advance of next year's meeting, contact organisers to attempt to limit the use of so many motor vehicles.

Next Events

- Barton Hill Skittles night 21 April - Thanks to Liz for sorting out the bookings, nine Friends would be attending.

Rob would provide a talk for Barton Hill History Group on 16 May at the Settlement. There would be a small charge for entrants.

There would be a Dawn Chorus Walk at Badocks Wood on Saturday 21 April.

Tree Gazing Walk on Troopers Hill on 24 May at 7.00pm

Through the Seasons Walk on Friday June 1

The Chair mentioned that Music on the Hill would take place on Saturday 30 June and it was time to begin organising. No sponsorship had become available so far.

The event had been advertised in Park Life and would be publicised at Bristol Festival of Nature

Action: Raffle to be organised by Kit. Volunteers to help on the day.

Kite Event 14 October: Gregory showed a photograph of a 9metre long kite that he proposed to bring. Also a bear, a gecko and a ray. It was established that Bristol Council were willing to provide a licence for music on the day

Action: Rob - Details to be passed to Roger

BRERC workshops

It had been arranged conjunction with BRERC that a number of workshops (5x 2-hour sessions) would be held through the summer with the aim of educating those interested in flora and fauna identification skills. Rob read out a letter describing the scope. Those present were invited to indicate their interest on a sheet for passing on to Nick Hudson.

Action – interested participants please indicate as and when requested.

Newsletter

- Feedback on the last Newsletter Chair thanked Kit for the newsletter. She read out a letter of appreciation from Reg Gill. The meeting noted that following a request for expressions of interest, the reduction in paper copies of the newsletter had considerably lightened the burden for delivery rounds. It was emphasised that anyone who realised they were missing the newsletter could reapply for inclusion on the distribution list.

- Date for the next Newsletter was agreed to be the middle of May- in time for the Green Flag judging

- Suggestions for the next Newsletter included articles on Lizards, history, the new path, and the Green Flag judging.

Forum – Summary of discussions

Kit explained the nature and use of the Friends forum on the Troopers Hill website. He encouraged members to use it. Rob pleaded for positive as well as negative comment.

Chair listed the current most lively topics, including Memories of Troopers Hill contributed by Dick Best in Fiji; discussion on the wheelchair accessible path; the location of the lower Stack; leaflet design; loss of habitat from the bramble cutting; and the former ducting to the Chimney.

Networking

- Visit to Narrowways Rob and Susan had attended a visit to Narrowways about the geology etc.

- Next Parks Forum on Saturday 21 April The agenda included Playing for Real (Youth and Play Services) Walking the Way to Health, and Parks Budget Increase, Ground maintenance procurement review.

Update on St Mary le Port development

A former Friend of Dundridge Lane had provided some photos of demolition of a chimney across the river from Troopers Hill, which were circulated at the meeting.

Update on

- the Bath House: Talks to BIAS about getting a lottery grant were still under way. The proposed Grade II* listing, if obtained, could help to secure funding for restoration of the bath house and gardens.
- Chair reported that proposals to develop the Lamb Inn site had proceeded as far as the conservation advisory committee, which had recommended it not be demolished.

Financial situation

- So far the Breathing Places money had paid designers £1000 towards leaflet design and costs. The leaflet would be submitted to the printers shortly. Bristol Parks would fund some of the illustrations. £2289 had been spent in all

Swings

It had been decided that safety surface needed repair before any swings could be restored. The attempt to achieve Green Flag status would highlight the poor state of the play area.