

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FRIENDS' of TROOPERS' HILL, 22/3/05

1. Present: Carol, David, Liz, Kit, Susan (Chair), Val, Maureen, Liz, Alan, Sally.
Apologies received from Helen and Rob.

2. Previous Minutes : approved with one correction to section 11: strike Summerhill School replace with Air Balloon Hill Junior School.

3. Outstanding actions from earlier meetings: Susan has written to the councillor listing our reservations about the proposed housing development near the allotments. The letter was passed round for viewing. David has not yet spoken to John at Animal Crackers (see section 9)

4. Malvern Road Open Space Update: 1500 copies of the questionnaire have been printed and delivered another 200 copies are being produced for back up distribution and for use at the Good Friday Service. In addition there was an online copy which people could send down the line. Susan encouraged all committee members to complete the thing as soon as possible. So far 79 copies have been received with the majority happy that the open space should remain as such. The results were being compiled by Rob and Susan onto a spreadsheet.

5. Air Balloon Hill School Project: Kit spoke about the visits to the Hill and the various highs and lows of the event. Sally showed the group the results of the children's work in class following the visits: the colour fixed tablecloth and the three waterproofed sides for the gazebo – they were all decorated with the plants, animals, insects and the chimney the children had seen or heard about. Everyone agreed that the result was charming and most worthwhile.

6. Parks Forum Celebration Event: Susan spoke about hers and Rob's efforts at the event, which despite Rob's bad cold had gone off very well. A £50 cheque from BPD would follow in due course.

7. Meeting with BEAA: Carol and Susan spoke about the agenda of this meeting stressing the opportunities it presented for sharing long term aims; practical positive spin-offs such as pooling resources on things like the upkeep of fencing; as well as exchanging views on the development proposals for the land opposite Troopers Hill Farm (see earlier mention section 3). Local councillor Margaret Shovelton is in agreement with both groups' opposition to the proposal.

8. Good Friday Service: 11.00-11.30 am start so the gazebo will have to be erected before then. Sally has sent out a letter to all Air Balloon Hill School children explaining that their work will be on view then so she hopes this will boost numbers on the Hill at this time and is looking to make the best use of this publicity. Susan asked for help at the event, various excuses were tendered along with a few positive responses.

9. Events for 2005: Notices about the various proposed events are going up after the Service, Susan passed around copies. They mention the Dawn Chorus Walk, The Flowering Plants Walk, the Dog Show, and the Nighttime Moth Hunt.

Liz and Alan spoke very positively about the Wildways Walk at Golden Valley (19/3) and noted their use of a conservation survey to be compiled by visitors using OS Grid referencing. Although permission is not easy to obtain from the OS Commission they felt we might stand a chance of this given our LNR status. They passed round copies of the Golden Valley survey sheet and the meeting agreed that this was an area worth pursuing.

Sally mentioned the Avon Valley Partnership who are now planning twice yearly evening meetings. To launch this development they are having a free train and boat trip along the river Avon for LNR activists (like us!) in May/June. There was some disquiet amongst a few at the meeting about yet another group holding meetings but Sally spoke well assuring us that the aim was laudable: to facilitate networking on issues of environmental concern for example the Japanese Knotweed problem. Sally to tell us more precise details at a later meeting.

The Dog Show was discussed. David explained that he had not started the process because he was waiting for Emma Martin to respond to a much earlier E mail about the Community Farm Group's plans for the 18/6. There was considerable confusion here as he remembered her as a Council employee, in fact she is a member of the Community Farm Group. Liz mentioned the possibility of using the services of Martin Reiss who lives near David and has an engraving shop in Staple Hill as a possible way of providing cheap trophies.

Since the meeting Emma has replied to the original E mail saying that her Group have now decided against the Fete on 18/6 and David has begun the process of organising the Dog Show as a one-off event.

10. Gary's Issues: Gary is to sort out some form of rubbish collection for the work parties to preclude the need for the lugging home of various full sacks on the first Saturdays of every month

Liz explained how motorcyclists had crashed through her garden fence that very evening after having negotiating the Malvern Road entrance with their machines. Liz is contacting Gary directly about this. This incident highlights the urgency of installing the wheelchair access gate from Malvern Road.

Carol and David spoke of the problems associated with the dog bin by the play area at the Malvern Road Open Space. David said he had conversations with Rob and Gary about this bin in the past and they were agreed that, despite appearances, it was rarely full but was mounted too high so that dog owners cannot get their bags in far enough to let them fall into the container. Kit wondered if it might be possible to remount the container after having cut off a few inches from the concreted stalk on which it sits. Gary to be asked to respond to this suggestion.

11. Work Parties: at the last work party much was achieved: fence railings were replaced and two more new notice boards were erected at Crews Hole Road and the first entrance on Troopers Hill Road. The work party on 2/4 will be a Spring Clean.

12. The Last of the Awards for All grant: Susan will spend the money by mid-April as per the decision taken at the last meeting.

13. SWEET Application: Sally explained that the completed application had gone to ENTrust for approval before (hopefully) being sent onto SWEET itself.

14. Next Newsletter: David suggested that this be slightly delayed because he was busy until mid April and because the results of the MROS survey could then be included. Everyone agreed so David will aim to have the newsletter finished during the week beginning 17/4.

15. AOB: Sally explained that there had been developments in the “great Grayling Butterfly” debate and although we now had an enthusiast who was keen to reintroduce the specie other naturalists had spoken against this intervention in the natural ecological cycle of the Hill. Sally was to seek the advice of English Nature and report back at a later meeting.

Sally spoke briefly about the issue of Brown Road Signing from Air Balloon Road, Crews Hole Road and Nags Head Hill. There was a brief debate about the utility and purpose of signing or not. There was no clear consensus between those who thought it would inevitably bring the problem of more cars and those who thought that we could scarcely object given the overall aim of the group to publicise and improve the public usage of the Hill.

15. Dates and Venues for future meetings:

11/5 7.00 pm Wednesday at the Wesleyan Church, Bryants Hill – David, Val and Carol gave their apologies in advance.

30/6 Thursday, at Wesleyan Church.

Meeting closed at 9.05 pm.