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The Friends of Troopers Hill

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March/April 2007



Friends have been very pleased to see more and more people turning out to help with work parties over the last few months. 15 people turned out at the beginning of March to help us apply mulch to the new hedge and remove bramble. We are always delighted to see new faces and do our best to welcome them. As John,

our local CPM (Community Parks Manager) told us at our recent meeting, we will have a lot more work to do in the future to keep on top of the work now being carried out on the Hill. Rob explains elsewhere why this is being done, but it is up to us to ensure there is no reversion.

Speaking of work parties, please be aware that we are making one of our very rare changes to our routine and putting the April WP back to 14th April. This is because of our other commitments and the shortage of qualified supervisors. We will, as usual, have our gazebo and representatives at the annual Good Friday service on the Hill, and we look forward to seeing many of you there.

Barton Hill History Group have challenged the Friends to a skittles match on 21st April. There is still time for you to sign up. If you fancy joining us, contact Susan. Meanwhile, wish your team luck.

The observant amongst you may have noticed small piles of wood on the ground, particularly where we have been removing bramble. They have been placed there deliberately as "Insect Hotels". They encourage invertebrates and other wildlife that is such an important legacy of Troopers Hill. So if you notice them look closely by all means, but please do not disturb them.

Thank you to the many of you that took the trouble to confirm your details and your interest as a "Friend" after our request with our last newsletter. It has been a very worthwhile exercise. There were around 350 names on our list before and we have had just over 100 confirmations from you, together with some very nice and encouraging notes. That is a very good result. It means we will not be wasting effort and resources on people who are only marginally interested. More importantly, we now have a core of members that we know are truly "Friends". As well as your active interest, we have a manageable number of people we can contact if we need to canvas opinions in the future.

Lastly, we have to say a fond farewell to two of our youngest and most enthusiastic Friends. Ben and Jenny came to us a bit over a year ago, whilst Ben was studying at the University of the West of England. They have been very active within our group, being both committee members and regular attendees at work parties. We are very sorry to lose them as they are moving to Cambridge, but all of us wish them success and happiness for the future.

CONTACT US

If you'd like to talk to us about any issues raised here, please contact:

Susan Acton-Campbell (Chair), Tel. **0117 947 5037**.

Sally Oldfield (Bristol Council Nature in the City),

Tel. **0117 922 4429**

You can also write to us at: **3, Corkers Hill, St. George, Bristol, BS5 8DT**

Or email:

chair@troopers-hill.org.uk

or

Sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk

Treeson?

An anyone who has visited the hill recently will have noticed that a lot of bramble has been cleared and some trees have been felled. This work has been carried out by Bristol Contract Services who have been working for Bristol Parks. The work is part of the investment that Bristol Parks are making in Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve to bring the site up to the standard required for the Green Flag Award. Friends of Troopers Hill have been fully consulted about this work and have been involved in deciding which areas should be cleared and which trees should be felled. All of this is being done with our support.

So why are we cutting down trees on a Nature Reserve? The answer is that what makes Troopers Hill such a special place is the lack of trees. Take a boat trip from Netham to Hanham and you will see that there is almost unbroken woodland on our side of the valley. Troopers Hill is the exception; its grassy slopes, broom and heather are the only significant area of Lowland Heathland and Lowland Acidic Grassland in the Bristol area. Both of these habitats are identified under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (www.ukbap.org.uk) as UK Priority Habitats. In other words they are habitats that have declined in the UK and need to be both protected and restored where possible.

Over recent years the areas of bramble and numbers of small trees on Troopers Hill have increased; there have been corresponding decreases in the areas of grassland and heathland. If this process was allowed to continue the whole of the hill would eventually become woodland. This would mean the loss in Bristol not only of heather and broom, but also of the many invertebrates that live on the hill and depend on its acid grassland. At the current rate it has been estimated that the habitat would effectively be lost in 50 years time.

With Bristol Parks support we aim not only to protect the grassland and heathland that currently exists but also to restore some of the areas lost to bramble, silver birch and hawthorn. It is this that forms the basis of the revised management plan that was completed in February. To succeed we need an ongoing commitment from Bristol Parks and success in winning and then keeping a Green Flag Award will be a very public measure of whether this commitment has been forthcoming.

If you would like to know more about the grassland and heathland why not join the plant identification workshops that we will be running on summer evenings with Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre (BRERC)? If you are interested please contact Susan and let her know which evenings you would prefer, we will try and arrange the sessions to suit as many people as possible.

Rob Acton-Campbell



AN APPRECIATION OF BADOCK'S WOOD

For those of you who know little, or nothing, of Badock's Wood, I would like to give you a brief summary of its history and what it has to offer – in the hope that you may visit The Woods to discover for yourselves what a little gem it is, hidden away in north-west Bristol.

Badock's Wood covers an area of about 8 hectares. It is a small, semi-natural, broad-leaved woodland situated in a limestone valley (with adjacent areas of grassland) between Henleaze, Westbury-on-Trym and Southmead. It therefore provides a wildlife haven in an urban setting. To the north of the



site, in an area of open grassland, is a Bronze Age burial mound (tumulus) which has been classified as "Middle Bronze Age, constructed about 1300BC". The tumulus is also known as "Milltut" and is marked by a modern sculpture.

The site has been in the care of Bristol City Council since 1937, when it was given to the citizens of Bristol by a local industrialist, as an area of open space for the enjoyment of local people. The local industrialist was Sir Stanley Badock, hence the adoption of the name "Badock's Wood" for the site. He died in 1945.

The woodland is probably at least 400 years old in parts, as indicated by the presence of ancient woodland flora. It has a surprisingly good bird life for an urban site. The River Trym flows through the floor of the valley and meets one of its (unnamed) tributaries in the centre of the wood.

To the north of the wood, there is an area of semi-improved grassland (which includes the tumulus) that was created in the mid-1980s when temporary post-war prefabs were removed and the area landscaped. In the autumn of 2005, a wild flower meadow was created in this area of open grassland with the help of children from Badock's Wood Primary School. FOBW are looking forward to seeing how the new meadow develops over the coming years. The UK has lost over 95% of its wildflower meadows since the Second World War, so FOBW's small contribution in north-west Bristol is well worthwhile.

For further information please visit: www.fobw.org.uk

Alan Aburrow
Chairman, Friends of Badock's Wood

A night to remember

On a dark but mercifully dry Wednesday night in February, large numbers of us tramped through muddy woods from Conham car park to the ferry, while others went by road on the St. Anne's side of the river. The occasion was a quiz evening at Beeses tea gardens, organized by Friends of Troopers Hill. Teams were entered from other groups including Badocks Wood, Malago Valley, Cock Road Ridge, Narroways, Northern Slopes, Three Brooks, Bristol Parks Department and South Gloucester Open Spaces. Although some people reported wet feet while in the ferry boat, the rain which had been forecast to soak the rest of our persons held off until after the last of us had crossed safely back and returned to our cars and houses.

An amazing sixty-seven people turned out altogether, 17 of whom were from FoTH; A flamboyantly dressed Kit was question master and master of ceremonies, and the evening consisted of a quiz with 80 questions and a picture round; a break in the middle with a splendid buffet provided as part of the booking by Beeses tea gardens; and the distribution of numerous raffle prizes afterwards.

Real ale and assorted other refreshments were available at the bar, which was open especially for us; all was conducted in good humour; and a fun evening was had by all.

There were some high scores in the quiz; the winning team had 87 out of 100, and the team I was in came fifth with 81.5.

I'm looking forward to the next one!

Norman Spalding

Footnote:, Friends would like to thank the following sponsors for their generosity and help in making the quiz night such a success:

Bristol Car Mart -Nags Head Hill, Lifestyles Fitness Centre - Clouds Hill Road, The Trooper Pub -Bryants Hill, Karparts - Kingsway, Bristol Video Solutions, Smile Local -Kingsway, Booze & Food -Nags Head Hill, The Pied Horse Pub - Summerhill Road, and, of course, Beeses Tea Room.

Dates for your Diary

Friday 6th April: Good Friday Service. 11.00 am. *All are welcome at the annual multi-denominational service on top of the Hill.*

Saturday 14th April: Work Party. 10am– midday. *Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown. Please come and help us.*

Wednesday 18th April: Meeting. 7.15 pm. Wesley Memorial Church Hall, Bryant's Hill.

Saturday 21st April : Skittles with Barton Hill History Group. Contact Susan by 14th April.

Saturday 5th May: Work Party. 10am– midday. *Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown.*

Tuesday 29th May: Meeting. 7.15 pm. Wesley Memorial Church Hall, Bryant's Hill.

Nature in the City Events.

Contact Sally Oldfield for further details.

Thursday 24th May: Tree Gazing Walk. 7.00 pm. Join with us and local tree expert Tony Titchen, looking at trees around the Hill.

Friday 1st June: Through the Seasons Walk. One of four short and relaxed guided walks introducing the history and wildlife of the Hill.