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The Friends of Troopers Hill

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November/December 2007



An excellent article in the Evening Post about our photo competition and the kite event brought a lot of interest from many keen kite fliers. We had even less wind this year than we did last year however, and nothing was going to fly high above the Hill. All was not lost and our craft area did tremendous business with loads of kids having great fun making paper kites. At one point the floor couldn't be seen due to the numbers lying on it painting, sticking glue and glitter and attaching thread to their creations. Children were soon running up and down the path, towing their kites in the air behind them and some parents must have been very pleased to have worn out little ones who probably slept very well that night.

Entries for our photo competition are starting to arrive and the judges - Peter Wilkinson from Bristol Parks, Stuart Thorne of the flickr.com Troopers Hill group and Tim Hill of Tim Hill photographic Services - are soon going to be very busy trying to decide the winners. Don't forget, as well as entering you can come and see the winners at our AGM on 11th December in the Wesley Memorial Church Hall at 7.15 pm. We'd be very pleased to see you.

TROOPERS HILL AND FIJI

Before anyone says there's no connection, I'll say there is a slight oneme ! I spent many hours of my childhood in the 30's and 40's on the Hill and along the river. I now spend the remaining years of my second childhood in Fiji with its very different scenery. Temperatures of 25°C to 33°C all year round and the crash of the sea on the reef let you know that you are really in the South Pacific. Flying foxes and other large bats inhabit the night.

What larger mammals there may have been have long gone but there are great numbers of lizards and especially skinks. There are some colourful iguanas which are very tame and will sit on your shoulder but these are few in number now and not found in my location except in a nature park. There are a few scorpions but again not very prolific and rarely seen. Four types of snake (all harmless) and in the hills inland, a great variety of insects. The rhino beetle is found everywhere and does much damage to the coconut palms.

Bird life is quite varied and ranges from brightly coloured parrots and such curiosities as the barking pigeon to many types of sea bird with the petrels to give warning of storms.

Fish life is abundant on the reefs and in the deep sea beyond and there are some sharks at Pacific Harbour which are tame and can be fed you can "swim with the sharks"! Fish for eating is abundant and cheap.

330 Islands and a coup every few years. What more could one want?

Dick Best, Fiji

Awards for All Grant

Friends of Troopers Hill have been successful in securing another £5,000 of lottery money, this time through Awards for All.



Part of the grant is for an interpretive project with local school children to celebrate the story of Troopers Hill. The project will involve environmental arts and performance to bring the History of Troopers Hill to life. It will be run by Sally Oldfield and Helen Adshead of Avon Wildlife Trust who was also involved in our 2005 Air Balloon School project. The story telling will be led by Martin Maudsley who some of you might remember from our 2004 Family Fun Picnic.

The remainder of the grant is to design new entrances to the hill at Greendown and by the lower chimney. The gates and fences at both these entrances need replacing and we want to improve the appearance and safety at the entrances when they are eventually replaced. We have already produced a design brief and our designer will have some initial ideas to discuss at our meeting on 15th November. We will then arrange further meetings to finalise the design. Further grant applications will then be needed to get the funds for the work itself.

Rob Acton-Campbell

Troopers Hill is 300 million years old!

As many of you will know Troopers Hill is mostly Pennant sandstone. This stone was formed in the Carboniferous Period some 300 million years ago. The plants that grew at that time rotted down and were compressed to form coal seams while the clayey soil in which they grew formed the layers of clay which are often found under the coal. The sandstone comes from sands and fine gravels that were later washed down by rivers to cover the whole area. Pennant sandstone, coal and fireclay have all been mined and quarried from Troopers Hill in recent times to create the unique landscape that exists today. You can learn more about the Geology and History of Troopers Hill from our two Big Lottery funded leaflets that were launched at our discovery day in September. We also intend to host a walk to look at the geology of the hill on March 2nd 2008. If you would like copies of the leaflets please contact Susan.

Winter Works Taking Place at Troopers Hill

Troopers Hill, as everyone knows, is a special place for both people and wildlife. It is the only place in Bristol where heathland and acid grassland is found. Plants and insects (like rare butterflies and bees) found nowhere else in the Avon area are living on Troopers Hill and some are found nowhere else in the UK.

This rare wildlife is threatened by the growth of bramble, trees and scrub on the hill. Old photographs (many of which can be viewed on www.troopers-hill.org.uk) show just how much this scrub has crept up the hill over the years. We now need to take action to remove some of the trees and scrub before they cause more damage.

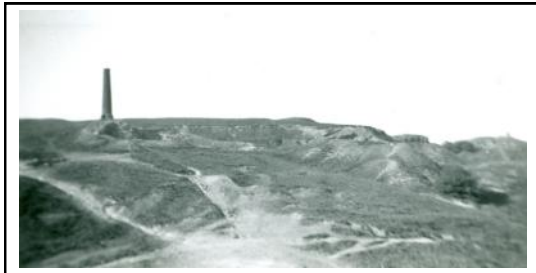


Photo from 1950, taken by Mr B Alvis.

That is why this winter (between November and February) we will be working to remove some bramble, scrub and trees from carefully chosen areas.



Same view taken in Sept 2007. Notice the increase in bushes on the right and the bushes in front of the chimney.

We are working in accordance with the Troopers Hill Management Plan which everyone is welcome to view on the websites - www.bristol.gov.uk/parks or www.troopers-hill.org.uk. Or you can call Bristol Parks on 0117 922 3719 to ask for a copy.

This winter we plan to make a great start in restoring some of the heathland that has been lost and in preventing more from disappearing. In addition to the work that Bristol Parks will be carrying out, The Friends of Troopers Hill will continue with their excellent volunteer work parties, taking out tree saplings and some bramble. Working together, we can help keep Troopers Hill unique for generations to come.

Sally Oldfield, Local Nature Reserves Officer, Bristol Parks

Nature in the City Events.

Contact Sally Oldfield for further details.

Friday 7th December: 10.30 am. Through the Seasons Walk. *The final in the series of four short and relaxed guided walks introducing the history and wildlife of the Hill.*

A Flagpole on the Hill?

There has been considerable discussion on our website forum recently about putting up a flag pole to fly the Green Flag which Troopers Hill was awarded earlier this year. The Council is currently applying for planning permission to erect it near Greendown, but a little way back into the Reserve. The intention is to place it so that it can be seen from Troopers Hill Road, but so that it will not be high enough to interfere with the skyline as seen by local residents.

The Friends of Troopers Hill exists (amongst other things) to represent local residents and their interests in the Nature Reserve. We act upon majority opinions and concerns that are expressed to us. At recent meetings, the majority opinion has been that we should support this application. However, we realize that others have different views. We can only represent opinions that are given to us, so we need to hear from you. Come along to our meetings (the next one is on Thursday 15th November) and tell us what you think. Or you can tell us on the Forum – the thread to look for is titled “[Where to put it](#)”. Alternatively, you can write to Susan – her address is in the “Contact Us” panel.

We all know how special Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve is, but do we need a flag flying to tell us? Other people do not know about the Hill, so perhaps we should have the Flag to tell them. Why shouldn't we boast about our success? Should we have it where the Council proposes, or would it be better in a different location? We cannot fly it from the Chimney because it is a listed structure, but should it be alongside? If YOU don't tell us your opinion, there is no way we can represent you, so get in touch and make sure we know what you think.

The Ed.

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**

Email:

chair@troopers-hill.org.uk or

Sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk

Or go to the online forum at:

<http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/forum.html>

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday 15th November: Meeting. (Meet as AGM below)

Saturday 1st December: Work Party. 10 am until mid-day. *Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown.*

Tuesday 11th December: 7.15pm. AGM & Social Evening. Wesley Memorial Church Hall, Bryant's Hill. *Come and see the winners of our Photo Competition. Find out what we have been doing during the year and have your say about our future plans.*

Saturday 12th January (Note: 2nd Saturday for this month only): Work Party. As 1st December.