

The Friends of Troopers Hill

The Hill

Spring 2010

Yansec Work Completed



Winter is normally a fairly quiet time on the Hill. Apart from our work-parties, nothing much seems to happen. Not so this year though. The snow that meant we had to cancel our January work party also brought many people out to enjoy tobogganing, building

snowmen or just having a snowball fight. One unfortunate participant had to be carted off to hospital in an ambulance, which underlines the need to always be careful on our Hill and not take the dangers for granted. Pity Keith, our parkie, who had to clear up all the debris once the snow had finally departed. This was the second year in a row that we have had a lot of snow activity on the Hill. Will we get a third?

To finish off the building of the new play area on Troopers Hill Field, you may recall that we planted 125 trees around the climbing area. This was part of a BBC Breathing Places plan to plant as many trees as possible in one hour across the country. Overall it is estimated that 500,000 trees were planted in the one hour alone. Amazing! Hopefully most of them will survive rather better than ours did. Most of the tree whips were either torn up or flattened by feet and bicycles within a few weeks. Friends have decided not to bother trying to re-plant them as we feel they wouldn't last if we did.

Long time readers of our newsletters may recall an article some while back about a hobby called "Geocaching" where typically a box containing 'treasure' is hidden and the GPS co-ordinates are published on the website www.geocaching.com. There is a cache hidden in the vicinity of Troopers Hill and it is very popular, bringing many people to visit the area for the first time. Many of them log how much they enjoy the view and the wonderful location. However, recent logs of their visits contain examples such as this quote: "Fantastic views over the city.... Kids loved it here... it's just a shame the dog owners don't pick up after their 4 legged friends...."

A problem that seems to have been getting very much worse recently. Isn't it a shame that the last bit is the memory that people are left with of our beautiful hill?

With the installation of the last two benches, the recent work covered by the Yansec grant to Friends of Troopers Hill has finally been completed. Friends raised the grant from Yansec in 2008.

The aim was to replace the elderly and rotting fence and gates along Greendown and on the corner of Troopers Hill Road and also replace the benches built and installed by Friends in 2006. Those benches lasted only a couple of months before being destroyed by vandals. The new benches have been positioned to give a view



Attaching the wooden tops

looking towards the Hill from the lower bench and from the hill at what Friends call "Virginia's View" (named after our original, and much missed, Membership Secretary who loved this view).



The view of the Hill

Another bench has also been installed by Bristol Parks at the top of the Greendown steps. This was paid for by a local family in memory of a former resident of Troopers Hill Road. With these installations Friends and Bristol City Council now consider that there is no room for any further benches on Troopers Hill. Over the last two years, the Field had to have several trees removed as they became unsafe due to internal rot. It is our feeling that paying to replace these trees would be an excellent and lasting way to create a memorial for loved ones in the future.

Friends would like to express their gratitude to Yansec for their help and support on this, the last of our projects financed by them.



Campaign for Drinking Fountains Launched

The REFiLL movement is an organisation whose concept is simple: Why should we keep buying loads of plastic drinks bottles when we can reuse them? In other words, rather than buying endless bottles of water, why not just use one refillable one?

The problem is that if you are out and about, how do you refill your bottle once it is empty?

So, Katie Alcott of Frank Water has launched an ePetition on the council website, calling on Bristol City Council to "erect and maintain public drinking fountains in proper working order in the busiest public spaces across the city". (http://epetitions.bristol.gov.uk/epetition_core/community/petition/681)

"The great Victorian philanthropists introduced free drinking fountains (and cattle troughs) in the mid and late 19th century to provide clean water for the public." (Our own St George Fountain is a great example of this — Ed). "Many fountains are now in a neglected state of disrepair and we want to bring back an important part of our heritage. There are many good reasons to do so. We want to give people access to cheap, clean water on the go. We want people to have the choice to use fountains to refill their bottles and cut down on the amount of waste plastic and CO2 emissions we produce. And because they look really impressive.

The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association has produced a historical guide of the DFA and the drinking fountain in Britain.

What you can do

The Public Health Act of 1925, S14 allows for "the local authority and any person with their consent and subject to such conditions as they may impose may, in proper and convenient situations in any street or public place, erect and maintain seats and drinking fountains for the use of the public and troughs for watering horses or cattle".

You can, therefore, support the campaign to bring back public water fountains by:

1. Joining our 'Bring back public fountains' campaign group
2. Using your local water fountains and encourage others to use them too
3. Registering a fountain and adding it to the website!

4. Contacting your local representative asking them to back the campaign
5. Writing to a water company if you think they should provide a fountain
6. Adopting a fountain - help raise funds for the restoration of your local fountain

Bristol's Fountains

The website www.history4u.info and the Temple History Group of Bristol have produced a free download guide of Bristol's Fascinating Fountains, including a short outline of the fountains to be found in the city.

About Bristol has two interesting webpages on its site providing details of large drinking fountains in Bristol, as well as small drinking fountains in the city.

The regional page for Bristol and the South West of the Public Monument and Sculpture Association National Recording Project lists the locations of public drinking fountains in the city. Click the links for a detailed profile of each fountain."

Fountain Photo Competition Announced

Frank Water is a charity that was founded by Katie Alcott in 2005. After suffering dysentery from drinking dirty water in India. She came up with the idea of "water for water" - selling their own bottled water here in the UK and using the profits to help provide clean water with projects overseas.

They have launched its Turn Me On competition to find the best photo of a public drinking fountain that needs to be restored. "We invite you to download the campaign logo and come up with

the most imaginative and creative idea you can to highlight the need to bring back public drinking fountains. Just get a fountain and the Turn Me On logo in your photo and the rest is up to you.

Naturally, please don't do anything illegal like damaging or defacing a fountain and use materials that can be easily removed or wash away. Add your photos to the website and email them to

refill@frankwater.com. The winning photos will be used to promote the campaign and included in our petitioning of Councils and water companies. The winner(s) will be announced at a later date on the website.



Subsidence on the Hill

At the end of January when we were on the hill to install the new benches we noticed a hole at the bottom of the 'bomb crater' near the top of the hill above Sally's Glade. At first we thought something had been digging but then we realised that there was no spoil. It looked as though the ground had sunk. We contacted Bristol Parks and they put red & white tape around the area to keep warn people. Since then the hole has become slightly deeper.

Whilst we don't know for sure what has caused the subsidence, it seems most likely that it is as a



result of old mine workings. If the crater had been formed by a bomb it seems unlikely that further collapse would be happening now. On the '[Memo-ries](#)' page of our website there is a link to the memories of [Tom Fry](#), who played on Troopers Hill as a child before the First World War and later worked for the Geology Department at Bristol University. He says 'At this time - around 1910—Father used to warn me of the dangers of the hill, telling me that it was all undermined.' Tom goes on to say 'It may truthfully be said that the hill is the best remaining remnant of the [Kingswood coal-field](#). For one may still trace the sites of at least six shallow mines there'.

On our [forum](#) we have heard from Dick Best in Fiji who tells us 'I roamed around TH before, during and after WW2 but don't recall ever seeing or hearing of any bombs falling at the top areas. I do remember one or two "hollows" and I think they would have been at the sites of old workings. Probably the new subsidence confirms this.

Bristol Parks have contacted the Coal Board and will carry out an investigation to see if there is a danger of further collapse and what, if anything, needs to be done to stabilise it. They will be putting in a more substantial fence soon. In the meantime please do not be tempted to enter the area.

Rob Acton-Campbell

Mining Bees

Editor's note. *Bryn Frialen told us about mining bees in our autumn edition. The recent pleasantly warm spring weather means the bees will soon be appearing on the Hill and your Ed thought it worth giving you some further information that may be of interest to our younger members in particular. Look out for their tunnels at the Good Friday Service on the Hill, 2nd April.*

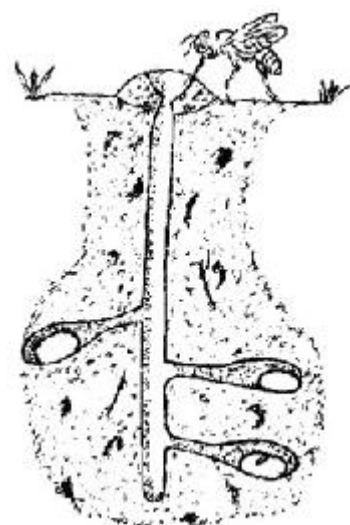
Mining (or digger) bees nest in burrows in the ground. Unlike the honey bee, mining bees are "solitary" i.e. they don't have long-lived colonies. Each mining bee female digs her own individual burrow to rear young. Although large numbers of mining bees may nest close together when conditions are suitable, they aren't social.

Mining bees are not aggressive and seldom, if ever, sting. The presence of many bees flying close to the ground may be considered a nuisance by some. Nesting females attract large numbers of males that fly around the same spot for several days in a mating display.

The large species of mining bees are furry and about the size of honey bees, but usually darker in colour. Other mining bees are noticeably smaller than honey bees. Some are brightly striped; others are a metallic green. Mining bee burrows may be located wherever there is exposed soil and good drainage. They are typically found in banks, along road cuts or in an area of excavation. They nest in level ground or areas of lawn and turf.

Nest entry holes are about 1/4 inch or smaller in diameter. They sometimes are surrounded by a small mound of earth that the bee has brought to the surface. Burrow structure varies according to species, but generally is a vertical main tunnel with side tunnels branching off from it, each terminating in a single cell.

Female mining bees stock each cell with pollen and nectar collected from flowers. When each cell is provisioned, she deposits an egg on the food mass. The larva which hatches from the egg consumes the pollen and nectar, changes into a pupa and finally becomes an adult bee. The adult passes the winter below ground in the burrow site. The next spring adults emerge, mate, and females dig their burrows. Numbers can increase dramatically from one season to the next.



ABC of Troopers Hill

E is for Everyone welcome

Troopers Hill was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 1995. The land belongs to Bristol Council. There are public rights of way over the land – though at present they do not necessarily coincide with the existing paths. All parts of the nature reserve are available to the general public to enjoy. However, the nature of the terrain is such that there will always be areas which are not easily reached by less agile folk. Friends of Troopers Hill (with grant assistance from YAN-SEC), and the Council have made a path allowing children in pushchairs and others with mobility difficulties to reach the top chimney via a step-free route across the Field between Malvern Road and the Hill. From there everyone can appreciate the panoramic views of the city of Bristol as far as the Downs and the Mendips. Where there are steep steps, a few judiciously placed benches afford a spot to rest and contemplate the scenery.

Bryn Friallen

A Friend has recently suggested that one of the large, black bins like the one currently at the Summerhill Terrace entrance, would be a good idea at the entrance from TH Field onto the Hill. Many dog walkers who use the Hill regularly collect rubbish and place it by the bin that is currently at that location (for which we are very grateful). Certainly Keith the Parkie would be keen on the idea since he has the unpleasant job of having to pick up the bags which, by the time he gets there, have often been attacked by various scavengers. The Friend who suggested it has offered £50 towards the cost and thinks others might also like to donate as a way to remember a loved pet. What do you think? Let us know.

Hot off the Press – Great News



Just as we were going to print with this edition our Chair, Susan, received terrific news. She had applied for a grant from Bristol City Council (BCC) and has just received a letter that confirms we have been awarded a grant of £1,375. This covers the cost of a whole range of this year's planned events including the Family Fun Dog Show in October, Dawn Chorus Walk in April, Music on the Hill and the Family Fun Picnic in August. We can conserve our funds for next year's activities and any other items we think worthy. Many thanks to BCC for this extremely helpful grant.

Speaking of Music on the Hill, put Saturday 19th June in your diaries now and come along early to get a good spot. Bring your picnic and the music which starts at 6 pm. This year it is being provided by the City of Bristol Brass Band.

Friends of Troopers Hill: Dates for your Diary

Friday 2nd April: Good Friday Service on the Hill. Organised by local churches.

Saturday 3rd April: Work Party. 10 am—midday. Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown. *Come along and help us look after Troopers Hill.*

Saturday 10th April: Dawn Chorus. 6.30am. *A guided walk to listen to bird song and spot birds led by expert Ed Drewitt.* Booking Essential.

Sunday 25th April: Avon Valley Walk. 10am—4pm. *A 5 mile walk starting and ending at Troopers Hill visiting neighbouring wildlife sites and nature reserves. Bring 25p for your ferry crossing from Beeses Riverside Bar and Tea Gardens. Bring a picnic to eat by the river at Eastwood Farm or let us know if you want to buy lunch at Beeses so we can book a table. There is a special opportunity to visit the Bath House, a historic building close to Troopers Hill. Bookings can be made to only visit this venue and not join in the walk but numbers are strictly limited - first come, first served. The walk is free but places must be booked.*

Saturday 1st May: Work Party. As 3rd April.

Tuesday 25th May: Meeting. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. *Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.*

Saturday June 5th: Work Party. As 3rd April.

Contacts

For the latest news and updates, phone our
Information line: 0753 161 5983

If you'd like to talk to us, please contact:
Susan Acton-Campbell (Chair),
Tel. **0117 947 5037**

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

friends@troopers-hill.org.uk

Or go to the online forum at:
<http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/forum.html>

To book a place on an event,
Phone Judith: 0117 955 9819 Or email:
events2010@troopers-hill.org.uk
To report incidents on Troopers Hill, phone Bristol
Parks: 0117 922 3719
Report criminal activity to the police on 999
or
Police local beat manager, Pete Crawford, can be con-
tacted on 07919628304