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The Friends of Troopers Hill

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Summer 2011



Regular readers will be aware that we have been carrying out an extensive consultation exercise as part of our application for a [Big Lottery grant](#). We delivered 2000 questionnaires and the results are now in. A response rate of 10% is considered good in a process like this, so the fact that we had a

rate of over 20% is astonishing. Over 95% of respondents supported improving the steps and paths with 94% in favour of improving the drainage in Troopers Hill Field. 86% were in favour of waymarking a woodland trail. It is highly likely that most of those who are against any work do not read this newsletter. So, if you get a chance to tell them, please say that their views are not being ignored, but the vast majority disagree with them. On page 3 Rob has written an article to address some of their concerns.

We have experimented with producing an audio version of the last newsletter available for download from our website at: <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/newsletter.htm> We hope to do the same with this edition as well. If you know anyone with impaired vision who might appreciate these, please let them know. We would welcome your feedback on this experiment as it takes considerable effort to record it and we need to know if it is worth continuing.

Friends of Troopers Hill are sponsoring a Forest Club for 7-9 year old children on two days this summer. The dates are Wednesday 3rd and Thursday 4th August, from 10–11.45 am each day. They will be using natural materials to make arts and crafts and play games in the woods on the Hill. The club is completely free and waterproof jackets and trousers will be provided—should they be needed. There will also be squash and biscuits. Places are limited, however, and should be booked by calling Susan on 0117 947 5037, or emailing friends@troopers-hill.org.uk. The Forest Club is being run by Isabel Hopwood-Stephens, who is a primary school teacher and is also trained as a Forest Schools Leader.

We look forward to welcoming you at our annual Music on the Hill concert from 6pm on Saturday 25th June. As previously mentioned, the [Gasworks Singers](#) will be performing for us and we look forward to an enticing variety of songs and acoustic performances. Don't forget to bring cushions and a picnic, but remember — **no BBQs**

ST GEORGE STROLLERS ENTHUSIASTICALLY LAUNCHED!

If you're a regular reader of this newsletter (or heard it on the download version) you'll know that St George Strollers, the local [Walking for Health](#) group, was planning two launch walks in May. Well, they happened, with just under 20 walkers at each event, which was beyond what I had dreamt, despite tales of over 50 at a launch on the other side of the City! Members of FoTH were walkers at each event, including our esteemed editor on the second and he has added a Magpie Bottom photo of his own to this account:



So, what's coming up? Our next two walks are:

Tues 21st June Solstice Saunter.

10 am meet at Chalks Road entrance to St George Park for a stroll through the Park and Royate Hill Nature Reserve, with an addition in Eastville Park for those who like something longer

Mon 4th July Willsbridge Wander.

9.45 am meet at St George Library or 10.20 at [Willsbridge Mill](#), Bath Road (A4) to walk in the Avon Wildlife Trust reserve and on part of the historic Dramway

and on July 20th, as part of the Avon River Festival, there will be a special afternoon walk plus river trip up the river to [Beeses](#) and back, funded by St George Neighbourhood Partnership. Booking is essential for this – contact Judith on 0117 955 9819

These and all our walks are on the updated [FoTH events leaflet](#) and for more information, please, as ever, ring Clare on 0117 941 4514.

Clare Willott

Managing Troopers Hill

In the responses to the Stepping Forward Consultation several questions were raised about the way Troopers Hill is managed. I hope the following will answer some of those questions. In particular I want to stress that the clearance of scrub, bramble etc is not to 'parkify' Troopers Hill but to protect its most important residents - the bees, flies and other invertebrates that live here.



Troopers Hill was declared as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) on 22nd June 1995 in recognition of the wide range of wildlife present on the hill and its importance as a unique habitat in the Bristol area due to the presence of acidic soils. The most important habitats are the areas of acidic grassland and heathland. As well as the many different grasses, the heather and the broom there are also many invertebrates - flies, bees, moths, butterflies, grasshoppers, crickets and many other bugs that live there. Many of these are rare in the Bristol area, some are rare nationally. One small fly [Phytomyza sedi](#) has not been found anywhere else in the UK. A mining bee found in a survey in 2000 [Nomada guttulata](#) is [Red Data Book](#) Category 1 which means it is in danger of extinction. The colony of the (Nationally Scarce) Dotted bee fly [Bombylius discoloris](#) one of the largest and most consistent in the region. Various surveys of invertebrates can be found via the 'Wildlife' page of our website.

Troopers Hill LNR is only 21 acres and the heathland / grassland is probably less than 2/3rds of this so we have less than 14 acres left of a habitat that once would have been found in clearings throughout [Kingswood Forest](#). In contrast we are lucky to have many acres of woodland and scrub along the Avon Valley stretching all the way from Netham to the open countryside beyond Hanham. When we started discussing the management of Troopers Hill with Bristol Parks to put together the 2007 Management Plan it was clear from old photographs that the scrub and woodland was steadily encroaching and the area of



heathland and grassland was shrinking. Protection of this habitat therefore became the main aim of the plan.

Trees and scrub are of course important for birds and other wildlife but the ecological advice was that we needed to clear some of them to prevent the [heathland](#) getting smaller still and to extend it if possible. There are limits to how far this could go, in particular heathland is unlikely to regenerate on the land in the woods that was used as a tip in the 1960s & 70s. Bramble is also home to birds, particularly [wrens](#), but again the advice was that it should be prevented from spreading and cleared from some areas if possible. As with bracken, if it is cut back regularly it is gradually weakened and grass or heathland can eventually re-establish. This of course requires a long time commitment and we are pleased that Bristol Parks have shown this commitment through appointing Julian as 'Community Park Keeper'.



Nesting birds are protected through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Destroying a nest is illegal and in any case is not something any of us would want

to do. Both Bristol Parks and Friends of Troopers Hill are therefore very careful not to damage nests when carrying out management work. At work parties we will only clear dense areas of bramble during the winter (October to February) for the rest of the year we clear straggly bits of bramble spreading into grassland or areas of broom or cut small saplings. Bracken is not used as a nesting site and ideally should be cut twice during the summer so that it uses the energy in the roots to regrow but does not get a chance to get the energy back from [photosynthesis](#). Julian therefore strims the bracken in the summer and sometimes areas of bramble that were cleared the previous winter before they get thick enough to shelter nesting birds. All Bristol Parks' work is carried out in accordance with their agreed procedures and protocols which protect nesting birds.

Rob Acton Campbell

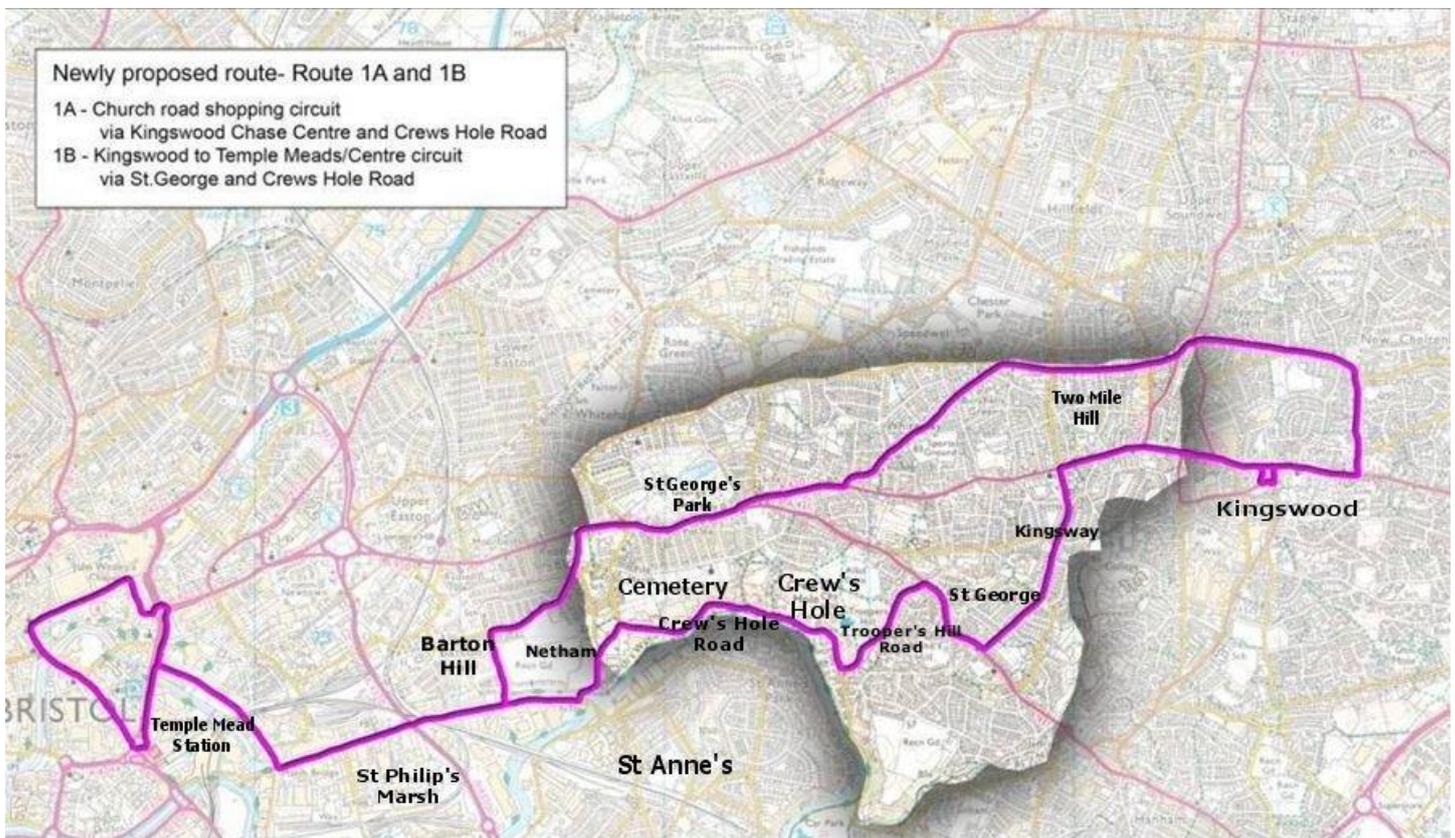
Troopers Hill by Bus?

As well as being a volunteer for Friends of Troopers Hill (FOTH), I am also a member of the St George Neighbourhood Partnership (SGNP).

Last year the SGNP were offered 3 final year students studying planning and architecture at the University of the West of England, for 6 weeks free work. We asked them to identify the aspirations of the people of St George. One clear aspiration was improved public transport. There is no direct bus service from St George to Bristol Temple Meads railway station, nor is there a service along Feeder Rd, the location of places of employment and access to Avon Meads Retail Park. There are no buses to Kingswood via the Kingsway and people in Crews Hole, at the foot of a steep hill have no easily accessible buses.

will be supported will be made by Bristol City Council cabinet at their meeting of Thursday 9th June. If people in St George want a new bus route then alternative ways of funding will have to be found. This is not impossible as has been shown the group running the weekend Free Bus service <http://www.freebus.org.uk/>.

I hope to present the students' proposed bus route, pictured in this newsletter, at the St George Neighbourhood Forum on Tuesday 6th September 7pm at Air Balloon Primary School. The idea is midi-style buses carrying up to 30 passengers each following two routes in clockwise and anti-clockwise directions. The first route (1A) is a shopping circuit linking Kingwood and Church Rd using the Kingsway, Troopers Hill Rd, Crews Hole, Feeder Rd and Marsh Lane. The second route (1B) spurs from route 1A going along Feeder to Avon St where peo-



This year we were offered two students, who are studying architecture, planning and transport, for 4 weeks. We briefed them to look at this transport problem, asking them to identify existing bus routes, propose a route or routes, identify any redundant routes and prepare a questionnaire that could be used to prove whether or not people wanted such a route.

Bristol City Council has to make savings on public transport so investing in a new bus route is very unlikely. Bus companies have already tendered for subsidised routes and the decision on which routes

ple can use pedestrian bridges to reach Bristol Temple Meads railway station. 1B then makes a circuit down Temple Way, up Victoria St and past Castle Park back via Avon St to Feeder Rd and back to the shopping circuit.

This may not be the best route but is a starting point for discussion. Do let me know what you think by posting your views on the Friends of Troopers Hill website <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/news&views/> or writing to me directly. If you would like to help with this project do contact me. My contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Susan Acton Campbell

Friends of Troopers Hill Dates for your Diary

Saturday June 25th: Music on the Hill. From 6pm. *This year the live music is provided by the wonderful Gasworks Singers. Bring a picnic and enjoy the views over Bristol whilst being serenaded. Please remember, NO BBQs, they damage the rare grasses which are one of Troopers Hill's precious assets.*

Saturday July 2nd: Work Party. 10 am—midday. Meet at Troopers Hill Road and Greendown. *Help us look after Troopers Hill. Gentle exercise and a bit of a laugh over some coffee.*

Thursday July 7th: Meeting. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. *Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.*

Sunday July 17th: Tai Chi on the Hill. 10.30am. *Join the Bristol School of Tai Chi for a spectacular demonstration and a 1 hour introductory class with gentle exercise for all ages. Afterwards join us for a picnic on the Hill.*

Friday July 22nd: Purple Prowl. 7.00-8.30pm. *Join wildlife expert Rupert Higgins to learn about the unique flora and fauna of Troopers Hill.*

Saturday Aug 6th: Work Party. *As July 2nd.*

Saturday 13th Aug: Family Fun Picnic with Storytelling & Juggling. 3.00pm on. *Fun for all the family. Cassandra will lead some exuberant storytelling. There will be a juggling workshop and lots to do in our craft tent.*

Thursday Sept 1st: Meeting. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. *Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.*

Friday Sept 2nd: Troopers Twilight Tour. 7-8.30pm. *Join Rob Acton Campbell for a tour of Troopers Hill talking about the fascinating history of the Hill and the surrounding area. Advance booking essential.*

Saturday Sept 3rd: Work Party. *As July 2nd.*

Saturday Oct 1st: Work Party. *As July 2nd*

Sunday Oct 9th: Family Fun Dog Show. 2pm on. *A fun event on Troopers Hill Field for dogs of all shapes and sizes. Free entry to all classes.*

ABC of Troopers Hill

I is for Invertebrates. Invertebrates are animals without a backbone. Around 97% of animals are invertebrates. They may live in water or on land. Troopers Hill provides suitable habitats for a variety of invertebrate species of conservation significance due to their scarcity or vulnerability to extinction. Friends of Troopers Hill arrange summertime 'Bugs and Beasties' events to encourage children to learn about these small creatures. Invertebrates to be seen on the Hill include spiders and other arthropods like harvestmen, millipedes and centipedes, butterflies, moths, grasshoppers and crickets, earwigs, lacewings, bugs, bees, wasps, ants, beetles (including ladybirds and weevils), molluscs such as slugs and snails, and crustaceans such as woodlice. Also in this group are planarian worms (flatworms), and segmented worms, such as earthworms. The Troopers Hill invertebrates, particularly insects, spiders, small earthworms and snails, provide food for the Common Lizards which Friends see from time to time during work parties. The lizard seizes its prey with its jaws and shakes the creature to stun it, before swallowing it whole. More information on Troopers Hill invertebrates, including the results of scientific surveys in 2000, 2005, 2006 and 2007, is at <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/wildlife.htm>

Bryn Frialen

Jules's Diary

Hello Troopers!

I recently trudged off to Bath to see a play entitled "Jeffrey Bernard is Unwell". Those familiar with the piece, or the character portrayed therein, will have some sympathy with our editor.

I'm tempted to wander 'off-park' and rabbit on about nearby parks for a change but will only move just down the road temporarily.

It's that time of year again... GF judging (*Green Flag—Ed*). The Netham was formally judged a few weeks ago and we're all convinced that they will be successful again. The Hill, rumour has it, is not to be formally judged this year (a crocodile of people with clip-boards and nervous Parks officials trudging round the place) but 'mystery shopped' (this happened to me once but I was found innocent). Sadly it also means no formal reception and consequent free sandwiches. I personally prefer this system as it means that the joint has to look good &c. 365 days per year, as no date is given or, indeed, who is shopping. It could be the person stood next to you admiring the view. One is always tempted to flit round with the duster a bit more thoroughly when an 'important guest' (the Queen; ex-spouse; prospective spouse; her nextdoor) is expected whereas the dropper in-er sees you as you really are. It also means that the Hill is managed for The Hill rather than to pass the test. And they check everything, not just the park: the web-site, community awareness, management plan and maybe even this newsletter. So when we retain it again this year, he writes with hopefully not misplaced confidence, it's down to everyone involved including the visitors.

As many of you know I'm part of a team that looks after a fair section of east Bristol. This means I'm sometimes involved on other sites occasionally and next time I'll get round to chatting about some of the nearer ones that you may be tempted to visit.

Cheers

jules

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/news&views>

To book a place on an event,
Phone Judith: 0117 955 9819 Or email:
events2011@troopers-hill.org.uk

Walking for Health (St George Strollers)

Contact: Clare Willott
0117 941 4514

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 contacted on
07919 628 304