

The Friends of Troopers Hill



Winter 2014/15



It has been an interesting year for Friends of Troopers Hill (FoTH). On the downside, there was no Green Flag award—not because the Hill didn't deserve it, but because as a result of cuts, there was no-one at the Council to apply for it! As a regular reader you will be aware what your

Editor thinks of that situation. However, we are assured that the flag will be applied for again next year.

On the plus side, Friends of Troopers Hill won "outstanding", for the third year running, in the Royal Horticultural Society "It's your Neighbourhood" scheme. In addition, we were the only location in Bristol to win a Parks and Open Spaces Gold award in the RHS Britain in Bloom scheme. We are particularly pleased with these two awards as they are applied for and won by FoTH as opposed to The Green Flag which is applied for and awarded to the Council.



Book now for our Stargazing event in February. Run in conjunction with the [Bristol Astronomical Society](#), we are planning it for a night in February. Places are limited and we confirm the actual date 24 hours in advance, once we can be confident in the weather.

The Local Government Boundary Commission is currently consulting on draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements. Under these proposals, St George may be split into three wards—St George West, St George Central and St George Troopers Hill. You can have your say at www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk.



At our recent "Review of the Year" evening, in addition to one of our own videos, Rob showed a number of surprising ones, shot on Troopers Hill. They are available on [Youtube](#), but an easier link for you to use is through our [Videos from the Web](#) page on our website: www.troopers-hill.org.uk/OtherVideo.htm

We are still working on our programme of events for next year, but you can see a list of those that we have already confirmed here: www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events.htm#prog. Amongst our plans, we are pleased to confirm the return of our Family Fun Dog Show on October 11th. Put the date in your diary—see you there.

Rob has written an article, in this edition, which talks about the importance of Troopers Hill. We have noticed a big drop in the number of people coming to our work parties to help maintain the Hill. Come on people, time to step up and help. If you value Troopers Hill, you owe it to Mother Nature to help her out!

Finally, as always this time of year, we would like to wish you and your loved ones a very

Happy Christmas.



National Recognition for Troopers Hill

In 2009 we were joined at our Bugs & Beesties event by David Goode who was writing a book for the *New Naturalist Series*. David's book *Nature in Towns & Cities* was published earlier this year and we were pleased to find that he had included a photograph of that event. Troopers Hill is mentioned as an example of a Local Nature Reserve that is there for the community as well as being important for nature conservation.

David quotes from the 1947 report that first recommended the formation of Local Nature Reserves and said *'We attach great importance to stimulating local efforts to establish nature reserves for the enjoyment and education of the public and to give opportunities for local scientific and natural history investigations'*.

It was with those aims in mind as well as the need to protect its unique ecology that Bristol City Council designated Troopers Hill as a Local Nature Reserve in 1995. David also mentions the Lottery funded Wildspace grant scheme which funded Sally Oldfield's post of Local Nature Reserves Officer and led to the formation of Friends of Troopers Hill in 2003.

The book covers the whole of the UK and also gives some international examples. It sets out the different types of habitat that can be found in towns & cities and notes that it is only relatively recently that naturalists have come to appreciate the range of species and habitats that exist in urban areas.

David gives several examples where remaining fragments of what had once been much larger areas heathland are being managed to keep open areas of heather and acid grassland and prevent the growth of birch and oak saplings. Sadly he also quotes examples of heathland that has been lost to become either *'rather ordinary expanses of amenity grassland'* or *'have turned into secondary woodland'*.

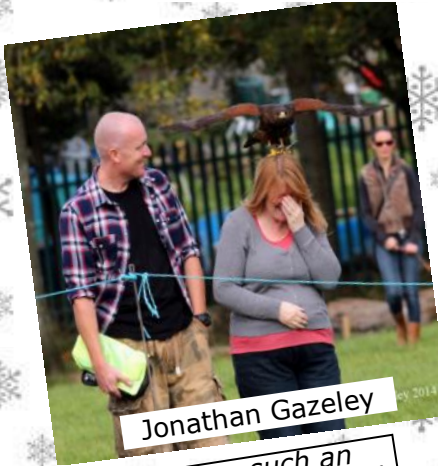
It is brilliant to see Troopers Hill being mentioned in a national context in David's book, but it also reinforces the need to protect our remnant of heathland and acid grassland and the invertebrates that live there. While Troopers Hill is now better maintained than it was when Friends of Troopers Hill was formed (some of the paths were then impassable) there is still a lot of work that needs doing to keep a balance between the different habitats if we are to ensure that in the future Troopers Hill remains as a positive example for nature conservation.

Our work parties will continue throughout 2015 starting on 10th January and then on the first Saturday of each month starting at 10am. Our new meeting point for work parties is at the entrance to the Hill from Troopers Hill Field (by the slide) and we would be pleased to see some new faces. Find out more at www.troopers-hill.org.uk/WorkParties

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

Falcons on the Field

Photos and comments, from our visitors book, about a unique experience on Troopers Hill Field, thanks to funding from St George West Community First.



Jonathan Gazeley

"Very good to have such an interesting, educational event in walking distance of our home....."



Bethany Evans

"Wow! Free, informative display & coffee ☺ & the weather's perfect. Friendly, helpful people—could not be better."



"Today has been a lovely day and (we) look forward to many more on Troopers Hill."

"Lovely place to visit and spend some time with family and friends."

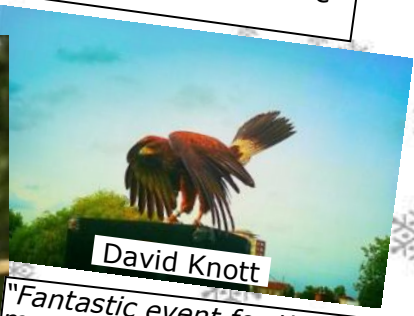


Jonathan Gazeley

"A really good afternoon. Yet another good event from Friends of Troopers Hill."



Winning Entry from Skye Anthony



David Knott

"Fantastic event for the community. The children have loved seeing the birds and exploring Troopers Hill."



Samantha Chaffey

"Wonderful event. So lovely for the children to have the opportunity to see the birds and increase local knowledge of Troopers Hill. ☺"



"Such a well organised event—lovely community feel—well done! ☺"



Mrs Knott



See all the photos entered on our website: www.troopers-hill.org.uk/Falcons/

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

Bristol: European Green Capital 2015

The European Green Capital Award is the result of an initiative by 15 European cities (Tallinn, Helsinki, Riga, Vilnius, Berlin, Warsaw, Madrid, Ljubljana, Prague, Vienna, Kiel, Kotka, Dartford, Tartu & Glasgow) and the Association of Estonian cities on 15 May 2006 in Tallinn, Estonia.

Their green vision was translated into a joint [Memorandum of Understanding](#) establishing an award to recognise cities that are leading the way with environmentally friendly urban living.

It is important to reward cities which are making efforts to improve the urban environment and move towards healthier and sustainable living areas. Progress is its own reward, but the satisfaction involved in winning a prestigious European award spurs cities to invest in further efforts and boosts awareness within the city as

- Is committed to ongoing and ambitious goals for further environmental improvement and sustainable development;
- Can act as a role model to inspire other cities and promote best practices to all other European cities.

The winning cities to date include: [Stockholm in 2010](#), [Hamburg in 2011](#), [Vitoria-Gastiez in 2012](#), [Nantes in 2013](#) and [Copenhagen in 2014](#). [Bristol will hold the title in 2015 and Ljubljana in 2016](#). All are recognised for their consistent record of achieving high environmental standards and commitment to ambitious goals.

The award aims to provide an incentive for cities to inspire each other and share best practices, while at the same time engaging in friendly competition. In other words, the cities become role models for each other.

"The finalists and winners of the European Green Capital Award provide us with valuable real-life ex-

amples of how respect for the environment, excellent quality of life and economic growth can all be successfully combined,"

EU Commissioner for the Environment, Mr. Janez Potočnik.

Bristol impressed the Jury with its investment plans

for transport and energy. The city has committed a budget of €500m (£395m) for transport improvements by 2015 and up to €300m (£237m) for energy efficiency and renewable energy by 2020 (this includes a confirmed €100m (£79m) [ELENA](#) (European Investment Bank) investment in renewable energy). Carbon emissions have consistently reduced in Bristol since 2005, despite a growing economy. Bristol has the ambition of becoming a European hub for low-carbon industry with a target of 17,000 new jobs in creative, digital and low carbon sectors by 2030. Bristol demonstrated 4.7% growth in the green economy in 2012.



well as in other cities. The award enables cities to inspire each other and share examples of good practices in situ.

The overarching message that the award scheme aims to communicate to local level is that Europeans have a right to live in healthy urban areas. Cities should therefore strive to improve the quality of life of their citizens and reduce their impact on the global environment.

This message is brought together in the Award's slogan "Green cities – fit for life".

Starting in 2010, one European city is selected each year as the European Green Capital of the year. The award is given to a city that:

- Has a consistent record of achieving high environmental standards;



Shepherd's Way

I can't believe that Christmas is almost here, many gallons of water have passed under the bridge since last year's festivities - literally in some cases.

I recently visited Morocco and witnessed the most violent rain storms they've had in over forty years. The rain caused havoc in the Mountains and many other places, bringing down rocks, causing landslides and destroying many of the old Berber mud huts that have stood for years. The rains carved out new river beds, uprooted trees, carried huge boulders for miles, destroyed bridges and roads. This was not the Morocco I expected to witness.

I travelled there with one of my co-presenters. We had hoped to see the wildlife that this part of North Africa has to offer. How wrong we were!

Staying in Marrakesh for two weeks, we travelled to the coast, the Sahara, the beautiful Atlas Mountains—the tops were covered in snow - but only where the roads were still in one piece.

We saw few birds, insects or mammals. The place was almost barren of creatures, apart from donkeys, horses, a few working dogs, abandoned cats and kittens. Then there were the creatures they keep in cages, ready to sell in the markets. Tortoises, lizards, monkeys and snakes (that visitors were quick to have their photos taken with), even a poor hedgehog and of course camels. None of them were being treated well, which I found upsetting.

I got cajoled, by a very persuasive gentleman eager to help me part with a substantial amount of money, into having my picture taken with a snake. A picture that now reminds me of the suffering these animals endure, so that 'man' can make a quick buck.

Near the coast we saw gulls, egrets and the odd small bird here and there. Perhaps not the best time of year to visit Morocco. It is, apparently, their cold season.

Almost a week on from returning from North Africa, I look out into my very small garden. Well stocked bird tables, loaded with seed, I see many sparrows on which, sadly, the sparrow hawk may feed later today. There are collared doves, magpies, mice, gulls, crows, robins, the list goes on. Many insects still flying around, trying to find that last bit of nectar from late flowering plants.

On my last show, I interviewed Dr Bevis Watts, Chief Executive of the Avon Wildlife Trust. We chatted about wildlife meadows and the importance of such, to encourage wild plants on which insects will feed, breed and lay their eggs. It is not only important in the animal food chain, but for us too, as it is these insects that pollinate the vegetables and fruits that we need to survive.

All this now seems a far cry from Morocco. But it makes me realise that we and the wildlife, here in the UK, are so very lucky to live in a country that even in the cold season, can still see a wide diversity of animals and birds. Where most of us care and appreciate the importance of being a part of the rich and wonderful habitat around us. We still have a long way to go to get it right, but what a pity the rest of the world doesn't follow suit!



Have a very Merry Christmas and
A Happy New Year.

Steve Shepherd

Dates for your Diary

Regular events:

Work Parties: Saturdays Jan 10th, Feb 7th, Mar 7th, 10am—midday. **New meeting point: Entrance from Troopers Hill Field to Troopers Hill.** Help us look after Troopers Hill. Gentle exercise and a bit of a laugh over some coffee.

Meetings. Thursdays Jan 22nd, Mar 12th. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.

St George Strollers: Thu 8th Jan: **Opening Doors Walk.** Meet 10.30am, Cascade Steps, The Centre. Wed 21st Jan: **Tyntesfield.** Meet 9.15am, Outside Aldi, Church Rd. Mon 2nd Feb: **The Primrose Path.** Meet Kingsway Shopping Centre 10am. Tue 17th Feb: **Across St George from Avonview.** Meet corner of Blackswarth Rd and junction with Fireclay Rd, 10.30am. Tue 10th Mar: **Street Monsters.** Meet Summerhill Methodist Church, 10am. Fri 27th Mar: **Montpelier to Muller Rd and back.** Meet Lidl car park, Lawrence Hill, 10.25am for train. Bring £2 for fare. Further details, contact Kit—see Contacts panel.

Events:

February Star Gazing with the Bristol Astronomical Society. 7-8.30pm. Numbers will be limited to 25. Email events2015@troopers-hill.org.uk or contact Susan to learn more (booking essential—see Contacts panel).

Other local events:

Saturday March 7th: St Aidan's Community Fair. 11am –2pm. St Aidan's and St George church and hall, Fir Tree Lane. Come and visit our stand.

Friday April 3rd: Good Friday Service on Troopers Hill. Procession starts from Summerhill Methodist Church at 11.30am

Regrettably, we have no room for *ABC of Troopers Hill* in this edition. It will be back in the Spring.

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

friends@troopers-hill.org.uk

www.facebook.com/TroopersHill

Or tweet us at:

twitter.com/troopershill

To book a place on an event,

Phone Judith: 0117 955 9819 Or email:

events2015@troopers-hill.org.uk

Walking for Health (St George Strollers):

Contact: Kit Elliott: 0203 640 5867

strollers@troopers-hill.org.uk

BCFM 93.2FM and Online at <http://bcfmradio.com/>

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. He can be contacted via the Police non-urgent phone number 101

www.troopers-hill.org.uk