

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

The Friends of Troopers Hill

◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆



Summer 2015



It is that time of year again and we are getting ready for our annual "Music on the Hill" concert on Saturday 27th June. This year we are bringing the very different "Fantasy Orchestra" to the Hill. Music from 6.30pm and we hope to see you there with your families and picnics (but as ever, PLEASE, no BBQs).

We will also be telling you the latest news about the "Play on Troopers Hill Field" survey and project.

St George in Bloom are organising an open day on Saturday 18th July. Running from around midday to 4pm, you can visit various places to find out more about them. St George Park, Kensington Rd, and the St Aidan's Allotments are just some of the places you can visit. Friends of Troopers Hill will have a display on the top of the Hill. We shall also be running a sample work party, so you can come along and find out what is involved in case you have ever thought about helping out. So come along and find out what we do.

Bugs and Beasties are back! Saturday 8th August is, of course, the weekend of the Bristol Balloon Fiesta and many of you will come up to the Hill to watch the evening ascent. To coincide with this, our Bugs and Beasties hunt starts at 4pm and will keep the kids entranced until it is time for your picnic and the ascent to start—weather permitting. So bring the whole family, because grown-ups like investigating the smaller wildlife on the Hill as well.

We are approached one or twice every year by people wanting to put a bench on the Hill in memory of someone they loved. There is strong local feeling that the Hill is a wild place and there is now enough "furniture". That said, Little Elisabeth's Bench is very popular but only has about a year of life left so could be replaced. If the Troopers Hill Field play area happens (see inside) the budget may well not include any seats. Perhaps future commemorative benches could be situated there. Finally there will be a consultation later this year to check if local people are happy with 7 new trees appearing on the Field. Between the cherry trees and 1 hornbeam, they will fill in a gap in the allotment fence avenue. If this receives the thumbs up from local people some of those could be memorial trees. Contact us if you would like to discuss this further.

The St George Strollers will be celebrating their 100th walk on Monday 13th July, with a "Here be Dragons" tour of St George discovering dragons along the way. Their walks are open to all, young and old, though under 16s must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Why not come along and find out about your local dragons while improving your health?

Pete Harris - a great Friend

In April we heard the sad news that Pete Harris, one of the first Friends of Troopers Hill, had died. The large crowd of people at his funeral showed just how many are affected by his loss. The charity nominated by Pete's family at his funeral was Avon Mesothelioma Foundation <http://www.avonmesotheliomafoundation.org.uk/>.

Pete helped at many work parties and events on Troopers Hill and his affection for the site is recorded in an interview he gave Ben Prater on BBC Radio Bristol in 2009. It is also clear from that interview what a great family man he was, as he recounts his enjoyment of visits to Troopers Hill Field with one of his grandchildren, Max.



Perhaps one of the reasons Pete sounds so relaxed in his [radio interview](#) was his long experience of amateur dramatics with the Court Players. Some of his

friends from the Court Players are running in "Race for Life Pretty Muddy Bristol 5K" on 4th July in Pete's memory and raising money for Cancer Research UK. Their Just Giving page is <https://www.justgiving.com/TheCourtPlayers/>.

Our thoughts are with Pete's wife, Val, and his family. We enjoyed his dry sense of humour, his company and his help. Thanks, Pete, we miss you.

A New Ward for Troopers Hill area

"St George Troopers Hill" is the name of a new ward created for next year's Council elections, which will be the first time the complete Council is elected at the same time. The wards are being adjusted to better balance the number of residents each Councillor represents. You can find out more about it by going here:

<http://www.stgeorgenp.org.uk/new-council-wards-for-st-george-from-2016/>

Play for the future?

Over the years many people have said what a shame it is that there is so little play equipment in Troopers Hill Field. Since 2005 Friends of Troopers Hill have responded to this by saying they would be happy to work with local parents who would like to make this happen.

This year we were delighted to be contacted by local dad, Chris Deane. He, his wife Lisa, new parents Richard and Bethany Evans and local



childminder and mother, Millie Colwey have formed the core of a group of parents with a strong desire for improved play facilities on Troopers Hill Field.

The Friends and Chris met with John Knowlson, Bristol City Council's Parks Play and Youth Co-ordinator. John was able to arrange for a free design to be drawn up by play equipment supplier HAGS-SMP, with input from the parents to give an idea of what could be supplied in a small area, without impacting on the feeling of open space of Troopers Hill Field. The cost of supplying such a play area would be £65,000 plus any costs for an access path.

The Friends researched what kind of grants could provide this level of funding. The grants found required match funding so they approached the St George Neighbourhood Partnership. At the Partnership meeting in March it was agreed that £15,000 would be ring-fenced for 2 years to support this project.

For any grant, proof has to be supplied that there is local support for the project to be funded. Many of you will have seen our survey. Bristol City Council printed copies of the questionnaire and supplied freepost envelopers that the parents delivered to 500 households surrounding Troopers Hill. Chris Deane was delighted to have the support of Air Balloon Hill Primary School and Summerhill Infants School

who were willing to put questionnaires in children's backpacks. Over 900 questionnaires went out to these schools, also printed by Bristol City Council.

The Friends set up an online version of the questionnaires and emailed the link to everyone on their e-mailing list. They also promoted it via Facebook and Twitter.

At the time of writing, the day before the closing date of Monday 1st June, over 90 (18%) questionnaires have come back from the households, 126 (13%) from the schools and online responses have brought the total of completed forms to 434 which is a fantastic response.

Now comes the hard work of analysing those replies. There have been many comments, including detailed and very well-reasoned responses and design suggestions.

You are all invited to Music on the Hill on Saturday 27th June to hear the results of the survey and what will happen next. Bring a picnic and enjoy the great views and the amazing music of the Fantasy Orchestra. Music starts at 6.30pm and peace will return to the Hill at 8.30pm.

Susan

Music on the Hill

The Fantasy Orchestra

Sat 27th June 2015 6.30pm

Music on the Hill

Bring a picnic to Troopers Hill
(no BBQs - we've got special grassland)

Enjoy the views over Bristol while listening to a fun, summer evening of music **PLUS A SPECIAL UPDATE ABOUT PLAY ON TROOPERS HILL FIELD**

Troopers Hill Rd, St George has 4 entrances.
You can also cross Troopers Hill Field from Summerhill Terrace & Malvern Rd (Best for wheelchair access) to reach the Hill

www.fantasyorchestra.org
www.troopers-hill.org.uk www.facebook.com/troopershill

Friends of Troopers Hill

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

St George Neighbourhood Partnership Environment Sub-Group

As some of you may know, I represent Friends of Troopers Hill on the St George Neighbourhood Partnership and as part of that I am 'champion' for the Environment Sub-Group. www.stgeorgenp.org.uk/subgroups/environment/

While the sub-group is concerned with all aspects of the environment in St George (including street cleaning and waste collection), in practice it spends most of its time discussing issues related to green spaces. Anyone is welcome to come along to sub-group meetings but the aim is to have a group of residents that regularly attend to discuss issues in more detail than is possible at the full Neighbourhood Partnership meetings.

As well as myself there are usually members of Friends of St George Park and Friends of Dundridge Park at the meetings, along with residents interested in other green spaces in St George such as Rodney Road, Plummers Hill and Gladstone Street. Members of Meadow Vale Community Association also attend; they are putting together ambitious plans to redevelop both the community centre and the adjacent green space.

The sub-group does not directly make decisions on spending any money but there are three pots of money for which it makes recommendations to the Neighbourhood Partnership, for the four St George Councillors to have the final say. The sub-group can also influence the work that Bristol Parks do in the area, though in practice the effect of this has been limited by their restricted budget.

The largest sum of money available is 'Section 106' funding. This is money that was paid by developers to the Council to offset the impact of new house building. Part of this is allocated to improving green spaces and the Neighbourhood Partnership has been given a say over some of this. There is currently around £100,000 in the pot, but changes in planning law mean that this will not be added to in the future. So it is important that we get good value for money and try to share it out fairly across St George. It is £15,000 of this money that has been allocated to be used as match funding for the new play area on Troopers Hill Field.



There is also an 'Environment Fund' which is funding urban meadows being planted again this year in several green spaces through St George, including Dundridge Park and Furber Road. These bring a splash of colour to the parks as well as helping pollinating insects. Teija

Ahjokoski at Bristol Parks who organises the planting is very careful in selecting the sites. We could not have one at Troopers Hill Field because of the risk of seeds being spread to the Nature Reserve and upsetting the ecology there.

The Environment Fund also pays for planters such as those in the Kingsway Precinct and this year there will hopefully be two new ones at the entrance to St George Park. The plants for these and other small scale planting schemes, as well as some street trees, are paid for through the third funding pot called 'Clean & Green'. Much of this planting is done by working with St George in Bloom (www.stgeorgeinbloom.org.uk), who will be re-planting both the Kingsway planters and the St George fountain with summer plants this month.



St George in Bloom have been doing some great work over the last 12 months to raise the profile of St George including having Kensington Road, St George featured at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show in 2015. Friends of Troopers Hill are joining in with the St George in Bloom Open Day on 18th July when we will have a display on the Hill to highlight our work. Visitors will also be able to see other In Bloom highlights as they travel around St George.

There will be a chance to explore some of the other green spaces in St George on our guided walk on Sunday 6th September – book your place now! www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events.htm#060915

Rob

ABC of Troopers Hill

W is for walking

Troopers Hill is best explored on foot. FOTH has created a number of waymarked trails over the nature reserve and in the adjoining woodlands. The audio trail information and directions for the Woodland and other trails can be found here: <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/trails/index.htm>

FOTH has also fostered the creation of a Walking for Health group in St George. The national Walking for Health initiative was started by the Department of Health in the late 1990s. The scheme trains volunteers to lead health walks in the community. More than 3,500 volunteers have been trained and there are more than 5,000 Walking for Health groups across the UK. In 2011, Clare Willott approached the Friends of Troopers Hill with a view to setting up a Walking for Health group in St George. FOTH obtained grant funding for the project and the inaugural St George Strollers walk took place in May 2011.

There are currently six trained voluntary walk leaders, including Susan and Kit who are, respectively, FOTH's Chair and Membership Secretary. Over the last four years the walk leaders have created nearly 100 different walking routes, both within St George and further afield – for instance, in Bath, Keynsham, Chew Valley, Tyntesfield and Severn Beach. Walks are generally up to three miles long with occasional exceptions for longer, more demanding routes. The walks have been warmly welcomed by the community, are invariably well attended, and are sociable occasions, often ending with refreshments at a cafe or pub. The most recent Walking for Health programme is here: <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/strollers/index.htm>

Bryn Friallen

Shepherds Way

Well, June is with us already. In just under two weeks the longest day will be here again, and thereafter the days slowly get shorter. For me, June takes me back to my childhood in the Warwickshire countryside. Lazy days with dappled light, catching dust and pollens, throwing bright shafts to the ground under the many huge elm trees that I remember so well, and fell from whilst 'trying' to climb. Without a care in the world, of course.

Looking back, I remember the wildlife, the hedges, the leafy lanes, the relative peace and quiet. Today, in my opinion, that has nearly all gone, although some parts of Warwickshire may still reflect those lazy and very hazy days.

I've been hearing, with sadness, about the decline of the poor old hedgehog; a beautiful mammal that I used to see in abundance as a child and teenager.

Wildlife is precious to us all. Unfortunately, many of us take what we have for granted. We spare no thought for our valuable and amazing native creatures.

Many years on from my childhood, and living in this fantastic green city of ours, I still see hedgehogs in the gardens where I live, and in the centre of this city. I am fortunate to live where our communal gardens are just occasionally maintained, almost untouched by man. The tenants do not notice the fantastic gardens on their doorstep. I'm glad about this, though, as nature and wildlife live without disruption from us humans.

Wildlife is all around us in this city, and there are many green areas where nature has to contend with humans and struggles to exist. Thank goodness for the 'Friends of' and 'Action' groups throughout the city who help to protect these valuable areas.

Walking through the streets of Bristol, I notice other nature too. The many beautiful wild plants that have self-seeded in walls and verges, and some fascinating things I was never interested in until about three years ago; I am talking here about the many different species of lichens on walls, paths and trees. Almost anywhere, this symbiotic organism grows and has an amazing story to tell.

I was walking by a small patch of ground on the very busy roundabout by Old Market recently. Someone had put in a few plants and a blackbird was scratching away at the old bark chippings that covered the surface, looking for a meal. Then I noticed under the bark chippings there was a plastic membrane, obviously to stop 'weeds' coming through. I thought this was really very sad, as the blackbird couldn't get his meal. Neither would bees and other insects benefit from the self-seeding wild flowers that could, potentially, look even better and far more colourful than the plants that man had planted.

How far will we go to interfere with nature? We're not above it, yet we try to control it!

When you are walking around the city or, in fact, anywhere, look around. See for yourself, the fantastic array of wildlife we pass by every day and take for granted. Spare a thought for nature. Let's work with it, not against it. The world would be a far more interesting and beautiful place.

Steve Shepherd

Dates for your Diary

Work Parties: Saturdays 6th Jun, 4th Jul, 1st Aug, 5th Sept, 3rd Oct 10am—midday. **New meeting point: Entrance from Troopers Hill Field to Troopers Hill, by red slide.** Help us look after Troopers Hill. Gentle exercise and a bit of a laugh over some coffee.

Afternoon Work Parties: Sundays 19th July and 16th August 3-5pm. Meet: as Saturday work parties. We are experimenting with these Sunday afternoon work parties to see if they may be more convenient to some people.

Meetings. Thursdays 9th July, 10th Sept. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.

Music on the Hill Saturday 27th June. From 6.30pm. The Fantasy Orchestra. Bring the family and a picnic, but *no BBQs*

Bugs and Beasties Hunt Saturday 8th Aug, 4pm. Expert Rupert Higgins will be on hand to identify your finds. Great fun for children. Bring a picnic and stay after the event to enjoy the view of Balloon Fiesta hot air balloons, but *no BBQs please*.

St George Strollers: Tue 23rd Jun: **Bath River and Canalside.** Meet Outside Aldi, Church Rd, 10.25am for 37 bus. Mon 13th Jul: **100th Walk. Here be Dragons.** Meet Bench opposite Tesco, Church Rd, 10am. Wed 29th Jul: **Harbourside Walk.** Meet the Cascade Steps, The Centre, 10.30am. Fri 14th Aug: **Weavers Mill to Troopers Hill.** Meet corner of Blackswarth Rd, by Weavers Mill, 10.30am. Tue 25th Aug: **Horfield and Golden Hill.** Meet 506 bus stop, Croydon St, Lawrence Hill, 10.10am. Wed, 9th Sept: **Bradford on Avon.** Meet Lidl car park, Lawrence Hill, 10.25am. Bring £6.60 return train fare (group fare). Lunch at "The Boat Café". Wed 23rd Sept: **Kelston to Bitton train station.** Meet outside Aldi, Church Rd, 10.25 for 37 bus. Further details, contact Kit—see Contacts panel.

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

www.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 02036405867

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

Shepherds Way is on BCFM, 93.2FM, every Wednesday from 6-8pm, and available online at

<http://bcfmradio.com/shepherdsway>

www.troopers-hill.org.uk