

NOTE OF MEETING
Tuesday 2 October 2007
Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill



Present: Susan, Rob, Julian (BCS) Fabian (Cllr) Laura, Ivan, Roy, Pauline, Gill, Jude, Maureen, Phyll, Vernon, Liz, Alan, Helen (minutes)

Apologies: Sally (BCC) John (BCC) Val, Anne, Kit

Outstanding actions from the previous minutes (annual licence)

Chair reported there was no feedback, equally there was no urgency to resolve this before the Kite event as no music was being planned.

Action Chair to raise again after FOTH Planning meeting (tba).

The previous meeting's minutes were approved.

Plans for winter works

Rob would be meeting John Threadgold (BCC) on Friday 5 October to discuss forward work plans. He invited other interested FOTH members to attend.

FOTH could expect to see a difference between last year's and this year's work schedule given the presence of Julian on site, enabling better organisation.

Proposed works would include some selective clearance of trees, including improvements to the view from the top of the Hill towards the city centre. Further tree cutting and scrub clearance was proposed, to include work to expand "Sally's Glade" and encourage downhill movement of the grass and broom zones respectively.

It was recognised that where trees had been planted to stabilise the ground and prevent landslip after dumping of excavated material from Old Market, care would need to be taken to consider the risk of compromising that stability when removing trees was contemplated. Removing all the foliage would leave the Hill windswept; conversely too much tree cover tended to shade out vegetation of greater conservation value.

Rob hoped to plan an outline timetable for fence repairs, step replacements and works to paths. Julian had given John a list of fencing requirements.

As much bracken and bramble would be tackled as possible without affecting the heather, and taking account of recent reports of hedgehogs on the hill. Julian noted that apart from constraining the bramble to its existing dimensions it would be a longer term issue to control it in the gully. Composting arrangements would be discussed as part of the meeting.

Action: Rob to ask John for copies of the grid map of Troopers Hill with paths showing, to facilitate reporting of problems.

Any issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to John

Chair mentioned that the recent graffiti on the Chimney had been rapidly removed and thanks were due to Julian for swift action. On this occasion the graffiti had only affected the bricks in the arch and been relatively easy to remove. Julian suggested FOTH might fund a graffiti proof sealant to treat the stone work where chemicals are less effective and the surface more sensitive. Different grades of sealant were available offering a more or

less glossy surface. It was important to consider the listed status of the chimney and the need to allow the stone to “breathe”.

The kissing gate at entrance D (second down from Green Down), reported broken, had been quickly repaired. Rob and Susan were very impressed as the work was done before they even knew a repair was required. Works to the steps leading off Troopers Hill Road opposite the gate and connecting with Fir Tree Lane had been completed and the steps were open for use.

Green Flag

The Council had applied for a six-metre flagpole to be placed on Troopers Hill near Greendown and comments had been invited from all interested parties. The Council had decided a height of six metres would be less intrusive than the alternative eight metres. A new pole was proposed as being less expensive than converting an existing one.

Fabian advised the meeting that respondents should ensure that the issues referred to in the e-mail or letter are planning related issues and be specific and factual. He mentioned that conservation area consent might also be necessary. The meeting agreed that FOTH members living on Greendown might be encouraged to submit letters of support.

Rob explained the Green Flag application and judging cycle and reminded FOTH that the application would be renewed in January 2008.

Action Rob to check on requirement for and progress of conservation area consent.

Susan to write to Greendown residents explaining the Green Flag Award and enclosing a copy of the new leaflet (at Ivan’s suggestion).

Work parties

Since the last meeting, work party volunteers had cut gorse, removed bramble in Sally’s glade and other locations. Flickr contributors had posted work party photographs on the internet.

The next work parties would clear bramble from broom and bracken from among heather. There was a need to reduce bramble in the gully and cut down a particularly big sycamore tree.

Julian observed that an area to the side of the steps down to the lower stack where overgrowth should be pruned away to expose the sedum to sunlight and this could be an appropriate task for the Friends as it requires a more delicate approach than a strimmer. Sedum is also known as stonecrop and is the food-plant of the leaf-mining fly, *phthomyza sedi*, that has only been recorded at one site in the UK, Troopers Hill. Bramble in broom needed clearing on the opposite side of the path.

The meeting discussed propagation methods of broom and its long seed viability. There are no plans to do any propagation currently. Rob noted with pleasure the large amount of new growth of broom in the area where bramble had been cleared at the top of the steps from entrance E.

It was agreed that the first work party in 2008 should take place on 12 January being the second Saturday in the month.

Rob reported that FOTH events were currently being publicized on a range of web sites including the BBC Breathing Places site and by Forest of Avon.

Funding

Rob reported £4000 of Breathing Places funding had been spent on the new leaflets, now available for distribution. It was recognized that the history and geology leaflets might receive a more restricted distribution than the general leaflet. The meeting discussed distribution arrangements more generally.

Fabian suggested sending a set of three to Head of each local school. Other suggestions included sending them to Friends of other local nature reserves and the Bristol Magpies. Roy reported he had distributed leaflets in Hanham venues and Barton Hill.

The funding had also been used for the following:

- Invertebrate survey which had found insects of great conservation interest and was currently being written up,
- Bird nesting survey
- Badger survey
- New gazebos

There remained about £400 to be spent by the end of October which Rob proposed ought to be spent on tools. He invited suggestions which included the following:

- Pruning saws
- Spades and border forks
- Gauntlets
- Draw Hoes (for moving bracken)
- Lighter model of rakes
- Brushes (for applying fence preservative)

Additional invertebrate collecting pots and nets were ruled out of scope for the funding in question.

Rob confirmed that the Council had dropped its idea of training Nature Reserve volunteers in the use of power tools as the implications were too onerous and disproportionate to the benefits.

Rob had been notified of an award of a £5000 grant from Awards for All which includes the funds for creating design proposals for entrances (£1800) and an event involving schoolchildren and story-telling/arts project. Rob was planning to meet the designer on Friday; the designer would attend a future FOTH meeting to present and discuss ideas with members. The meeting expressed thanks to Rob and Sally for submitting the successful grant application. The actual work on the entrances, plus replacement benches, was hoped to become available via a grant from YANSEC. This will be applied for when an acceptable design proposal has been received.

Ticket sales at Beese's recent Beer Festival had resulted in a very much welcomed donation of £500 to be shared between Troopers Hill and Eastwood Farm Local Nature Reserves. It was announced that a "Drink Beeses dry" weekend was planned for the end of the month before they close for the season. The meeting expressed grateful thanks to the proprietors of Beese's.

Feedback on events

- AeroBatics

The evening Bat walk had attracted very many people but resulted in only three sightings of bats, even though according to experts pipistrelles are not normally bothered by people.

- Avon Valley Walk

The all-day walk, led by Rob, had visited Troopers Hill and Eastwood Farm LNRs, as well as St Anne's Park and a picnic by the holy St Anne's Well. Rob had read out an extract from a book on holy wells in Bristol, written, coincidentally, by the leader of the AeroBatics walk. The day had been most enjoyable.

Action Any FOTH member wishing to purchase a copy of the book at an advantageous price, to contact the author via Rob or Susan

- Discovery Day

Chair thanked all those who had volunteered their assistance. Thanks were also due to Forest of Avon for loan of their tent. It was acknowledged that not as many people attended as hoped for. As a result it was proposed that such events would not be held in future unless in conjunction with another activity, as FOTH had made a great deal of effort for a low attendance. It was recognized that sporting fixtures could have affected the numbers. However, the people attracted to the displays had generally represented a new

interest. A number of people had suggested that the Tree Walk become a permanent feature.

Action Chair to explore with Forest of Avon and others a way of permanently marking trees without damaging them.

- BRERC Heathland and Birds Workshops

It was generally agreed that the workshops (funded by Breathing Places) had been very good and most informative, of particular mention was the experts' ability to identify the birds from their calls and songs.

Action Chair to write a letter of thanks to BRERC.

Next Events

- Fungi Foray Sunday 7th October: This event was proving very popular, over 40 people had booked a place.

- Kite event – Sunday 14th October – Volunteers were asked to meet from 12.30 onwards to put up three gazebos and help with putting together craft kits on the day. Kite kits would be for sale (price to be confirmed) and free kites (made from carrier bags) would also be available. Fabian suggested inviting donations to a breast cancer charity in association with the free kites.

Action Chair to check with Carole whether this suggestion would be appropriate in view of the publicity content on the bags

- Children's event in November: had to be postponed until the spring because funding has now been received giving the opportunity for a bigger event next year.

- Photo competition: the latest Newsletter contained details of the competition – closing date 1 December 2007. The meeting chose blue glass items as prizes, to be accompanied by vouchers. Kit's offer of sponsorship was accepted. The photographs would be judged by a panel of three independent judges. Fabian suggested approaching local cinemas about donating vouchers. The competition entries would be shown at the AGM and Julian suggested displaying the results at local museums and libraries. Rob passed around a superimposition of two comparable photographs from now and the 1950s. It showed the chimney has appeared to have moved slightly in the intervening 50 years. The Council are monitoring the movement and are considering whether any works are needed.

Action : Kit to produce a news release next week publicising the competition and the Kite event.

- Christmas Social: It was agreed that Kit and Helen would host a social event at their house on Saturday 1 December from 3.00 pm onwards. All Friends are welcome to bring along food and drinks to share.

Next Year

- There will be an Events planning meeting at 7.00pm on Thursday 1 November 2007 at Rob & Susan's house. All Friends were invited.

It was reported that assistance had been found to organise a Fun Dog Show, in return for a donation to a dog charity.

Parks Forum Feedback

Rob gave an update on the future progress of the Council's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy. He reported Dave Stephenson's suggestion that FOTH might register with Avon Local History Association for a small fee.

Membership

Alan and Liz announced that due to other commitments they would in future be playing a less significant part in the group. Chair expressed thanks for their valuable contributions to FOTH's activities over the last four years.