

Minutes of Friends of Troopers Hill Meeting
Thursday 25 September 2025 7.15pm
Wesley Memorial Church Hall

Attendees: Susan, Rob, Margaret, Rod, Fran, Neil, Judith, Brian, Alvaro, Jill and Rosie
Apologies – Councillor Fabian Breckels, Elaine and Willy

All present introduced themselves. Susan welcomed Alvaro to his first meeting and Judith and Brian as returning long-standing “friends”.

1. **Approval of Minutes from June 2025**

These were approved. There was one small typo which Rosie might correct.

2. **Nature Conservation Work on Troopers Hill**

- Work Parties

Recent - Rob reported that since the last meeting in June; one work party had been cancelled as the weather had been too hot and one had been lost to rain. Work had been carried out on Himalayan Balsam, scrub and brambles but from now on, now the bird nesting season is over, work can be done in the denser areas. Rob had gone back over the data from the same period last year to compare figures – there had been 432 work party hours last year compared to 499 in the same period this year (including litter picking). There had been an increase in the number of work parties this year.

Forthcoming – the next one was on Saturday 27 September and others to follow on Sat 11th & 25th October, then November & December. Some work party leaders will be away in October so there would be no Thursday work party until November.

- Path edge strimming by BCC

Bristol City Council (BCC) had strimmed along path edges and the steps and had done a good job

- Bracken cutting by BCC

They had also done the bracken cutting as requested

- Meadow and hedge cuts

The meadow and hedge cutting work was still outstanding and Susan will remind them. **Action Susan**

- Plan for winter works inc Birch Collective joint bid

The autumn / winter cut to the Greendown hedge still had to be done but there was less urgency and probably better done later in the season. Rob said that the hedge at the Greendown entrance (noted in the last meeting’s Minutes) had extended through new suckers – these were to be removed by cutting, hopefully during the winter works. A note would be put through the doors of the local residents.

Susan added that FoTH had jointly applied with the Birch Collective for £10K so that the work would include the cost of rope work for the safety of the workers on steep slopes. Unfortunately, the application had been turned down as we were not the landowners. Margaret agreed to go through the accounts to see if there is any extra money that could be spent on the winter works. **Action Margaret.**

There could be £1400 from BCC for special works. Susan and Rob were meeting the Council rep on Sunday and would raise the matter.

- Barbecues – Susan gave the background to the survey she had put to members in regard to local retailers selling small barbecues and whether to ask them to stop. There had been a mixed response though most were in favour. Some thought it unfair to the local shops. After some discussion the consensus was to leave the issue. A lot of publicity might even highlight the idea of barbecues to some. There were official 'No Barbecue' signs on every entrance to the Hill and the season was changing.

3. **BCC Active Travel Grant**

- Strollers 300th walk celebration

The celebration had taken place on 27 June and had been very enjoyable.

- Interpretation Board, Troopers Hill Field (replacing notice board)

The design had now been paid for plus 50% of the stand; the other half for the installation would follow.

St George Active Travel Group Grant

- This had been mainly for cycling but Susan had arranged two walks for the Strollers. Unfortunately the turn-out had been disappointing but it had given Susan the opportunity to write a long article about St George – a useful local guide.

Events funding via the Lamplighters

- The Lamplighters (a CIC) made lanterns and were responsible for the Church Road parade. There was to be a lantern procession towards the end of the year. This year their theme was "Nature" and they had agreed to fund the Bugs & Beasties event (August) and the Fungi Foray which was to be held on 8 November. Fran and Neil agreed to put up the advertising posters for this on 8 October.

- **Charge on bank account**

A bank charge was to be introduced by Santander on our current account of £4.99 per month. After some discussion it was decided that £60 pa was not a huge amount and would be offset to some degree by the interest made on the deposit account. The question of whether FoTH should become a charity was raised and discussed but not taken up. Margaret agreed to look at the option of using bank transfers in the future as cheques were becoming a thing of the past and not always welcome. **Action Margaret**

After some discussion, it was agreed not to onward charge the Strollers for having use of our bank account. Susan would inform them. **Action Susan**

4. **Maintenance and Projects - Hill, Field and Woods**

- Replacement of red bench

A local couple had paid for the replacement of the red bench in memory of their daughter. They had also given a generous donation. Luckily the new bench had fitted exactly on the original base, saving some money, and it had better views. The old red bench would be delivered to Rob and Susan and in time would be refurbished.

- Repairs to steps in woods

This had been covered in a previous item

- Repairs to steps on Local Nature Reserve

This would be discussed with BCC on Sunday when Rob and Susan met with them. Susan remarked that £36K had been raised in 2013 to repair the steps, posts and dig two drains. She hoped BCC would pay on this occasion.

- Repair to Interpretation Board at Summerhill Terrace

The old board had been taken away by BCC and had been repaired at their depot with recycled material at little cost and no charge to FoTH. It had been replaced a little to the side of the original.

- Greendown entrance timbers and hedge

This had been covered in a previous item. The edges of the neighbouring path were rotting and would need replacing. Susan would send photos to BCC. **Action Susan**

- New Interpretation Board at Layby

Susan had applied for money under S106 for this. The local councillors should have a decision in November.

- Birch Collective, Woodland Management

They were now taking out buddleia which was overhanging the new entrance. New saplings would be planted instead.

- Proposal for more trees on Troopers Hill Field

The BCC initiative "One Tree per Child" had been planting trees over some years. They were proposing to plant some close to the play area if they obtained the funding from DEFRA. This would give shade and a nice place to rest. It was suggested that they should be outside the fence and probably better not to have fruit or berries. **Susan would write to BCC** but there would be a future consultation exercise in any event.

- Tree issues reports for Field and Woods

There was a tall poplar tree leaning in the woods so Susan had contacted BCC. The Tree Officer had visited and judged that, although there was some movement, the tree posed no current risk but it would be monitored.

- Summerhill Terrace entrance and Westleigh – **additional item not on the agenda**

It had been confirmed that the Westleigh building was being sold and the proposal was to build social housing /accommodation. Rob had no doubt that planning permission would be granted. He tabled an aerial picture of the existing building and pictures of the existing entrance and surrounding road. On it he had listed the current issues with the entrance and road, such as accessibility, flooding, lack of footway etc. It would be at least 12 months in the planning.

5. Events

- Since last meeting

Bugs & Beasties 9 August – lots of attendance - it had been very successful. It had been organised as usual to coincide with the Balloon Fiesta. Rod had emailed to raise the question of the decision that there would be an evening flight being announced so early in the day on the Sunday which had therefore caused unnecessary crowding and bad parking which could have been dangerous. Elaine had been in contact over the same issue and had asked whether BCC could use cones on the streets. A long discussion followed after which it was decided that it

was not the responsibility of FoTH to monitor this type of situation but that Susan would pass on the comments to BCC Events Team and the police. **Action Susan**

- Future

Fungi Foray – covered in a preceding item

6. **Networking**

- History Talks

Rob had given a talk to the Friends of Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives at the M Shed. It had been received very well and they had donated £100.

- Sales of donated books

All the books by David Stephenson had been sold, bar one which had been a gift. Just over £500 had been raised.

- Bull Inn ACV Application putting up for sale

The ACV had been successful which made the process of selling the pub more complicated. An opportunity to buy it must be offered to interested parties if it was put up for sale. Fabian was monitoring the situation.

- Messaging re Balloon Fiesta – Rod's email of 12 August

This had already been covered in a previous item

- Emra plaque

Rob had contacted the Civic Society about putting up a blue plaque for Elizabeth Emra. He had suggested a building in Harveys Lane which at that time had been connected to Homefield House where Elizabeth had lived after her marriage. Before that she had lived at the Vicarage nearby. The Civic Society had agreed in principle and the current owner was very keen too. Rob and Susan were working on various versions of the wording which had to be factual. Any suggestions please pass to Rob. A direct descendant of the St George John Emra, Richard Emra, had recently met with Rob and was also in contact with the American side of the family.

- BBC Make a Difference Awards

The award dinner was to be on Friday night. Susan had been included in the "Good Neighbour" award category. There were 29 local finalists.

- Funds from Southmead Hospital fundraiser

On Saturday (27 September) Susan would be undertaking a 16-mile sponsored walk in aid of Southmead Hospital. FoTH would also receive £500 because she had reached the £500 target for Southmead.

7. **Meeting closed at 9.00pm.**

Next meeting is the AGM to be held on 4 December 7.15pm - in person Wesley Memorial Church Hall