



Note of FoTH meeting Thursday, 27th March 2014 Summerhill Methodist Church

Present: Susan (Chair), Rob (WPO) ,Kit (Memb Sec), Clare (Cttee - WFH), Jude (Cttee), Rod (Bristol Astron. Soc.) Mavis, Margaret (G), Helen (minutes),
Apologies: Bryan (Cttee), Margaret (Cttee), Fabian (Cllr), Steve P (Cllr),

This note has been amended in line with the comments made at the meeting of Thursday 29th May, 2014. This affects the section on star gazing.

The notes of the previous (January 2014) meeting were agreed without amendment.

Chair welcomed Rod, also Margaret & Mavis who were attending for the first time. Rod kindly summarised his role in weather forecasting for 'Star parties'

Issues and thank you's for our Community Park Keeper, Area Parks Manager and Grounds Maintenance team

- **RIP Justin Smith.** Chair expressed appreciation of the services he had provided to FOTH. He had been generous with his time and a great character, now sadly missed. His family would be setting up a Trust in his name for wildlife conservation in Bristol. The meeting agreed that FOTH would make a donation to the Trust.

- The meeting thanked Denise James and acknowledged the debt of gratitude for all the times she had made resources and practical assistance available. Chair enumerated some of the occasions on which Denise's help had made progress possible. A copy of the thank-you letter was circulated.

- Rob outlined the potential effects of council re-organisation due to budget cuts, that would mean inevitable changes to Parks management.

- Maintenance – no further update on steps maintenance.
Action: Rob – continue to pursue confirmation of the situation.

- The normal winter works had been deferred due to weather. In some compartments, scagging had been possible to remove bramble.

- The hedge at Greendown was due for a winter cut but the work had not been done before the start of the bird nesting season because of the muddy ground conditions. The Parks Manager had written to the residents to explain that the hedge would be cut next year.

- Given that Jules could not single-handedly maintain the planting outside the gate at Greendown, a request had been made to Steve Britton to establish whether the residents could maintain it. No reply had been received so far.

- The new sign at the starting point of the audio trail was ready to be bolted to the allotment fence

Action: Committee members to consider how the audio content might be made available via alternative media.

Dangerous dogs and dog fouling

The initiative had been launched at Community fair on Saturday and it was set to continue until after the balloon fiesta. Volunteers would distribute questionnaire on the Hill. The questionnaire had been distributed with the newsletters and volunteers would give them out from time to time on the Hill. A copy was circulated at the meeting. Posters were replaced at every monthly work party. A recent report of a full dog bin had proved to be inaccurate. Currently the worst affected area was the Field. Susan reported the recent visit from the enforcement team ([see newsletter article](#)).

Troopers Hill Field

Responses were awaited from the Council in relation to:

- worn grass under the football posts
- the unsupported hornbeam sapling (that had since broken)
- a puddle near the slide and
- poppy seed scattering.

An individual interested in improving the play facilities on the Field had recently approached FOTH. Susan recounted the history of FOTH involvement in supporting play provision, and mentioned the Play Pathfinder funding which had paid for the log structure, earthworks and stepping posts. She had invited the individual to a future FOTH meeting and to participate in painting the slide.

Works to the upper chimney

The meeting noted the re-pointing towards the top of the chimney. A photograph of the men ascending and carrying out the work was circulated.

Work parties

- The morning of the February work party had been wet but a small number of people had cut water escape channels to improve path drainage at a few locations.
- The March work party had removed bramble from amongst broom and heather,
- The April and May parties were expected to resume bramble and sapling removal in the vicinity of Sally's Glade.

St George Strollers Walking for Health update

Clare, assisted by Mavis and Margaret (G), outlined the history of how the Strollers had been formed. The walks were continuing successfully. The Ashton Court walk had attracted 30 participants and the most recent walk had been attended by 14 walkers. Very few walk routes had been repeated. Thanks were expressed to Kit for producing the programmes. A new prospective walk leader (Liz Scott) would be trained during the summer. Susan explained the current funding mechanism. The newly formed St George Women's Institute had approached the Strollers to design an inaugural WI walk. LinkAge were trialling establishing a walking group in St Werburghs and Barton Hill. Susan had assisted with a taster walk in Barton Hill. Susan was contributing to the Every Step Counts project by mapping 6 circular walks starting from Hillside Court. One of the Strollers was involved in leading a walk for a group from Knowle.

Events

Since our last meeting

- Star Gazing, early February and March

Two successful events had been facilitated by Bristol Astronomical Society and Tyntesfield (National Trust). The evenings had been very popular, and had attracted many written expressions of thanks. Rod explained the use of several telescopes at a time. The Society had expected that light pollution would present a serious problem on Troopers Hill but were surprised because most of the light from the city was at a lower level.

Rod also commented on the air quality. On the first occasion a cloudy sky had cleared later. The second evening was hazy which enabled the use of the laser pointer. The Hill provided very firm ground. Less sky can be seen from the Field because of the trees and the Field is less satisfactory as a surface for setting up telescopes. The Astronomical Society had been pleased by the interest and the practical arrangements on the nights had proved satisfactory, although participants should be encouraged to wear more suitable (warmer) clothing. Pictures of star trails had been posted on Facebook.

The meeting discussed prospects for future stargazing events. Once the clocks go forward, events have to start an hour later because of later sunsets. The moon and planets are higher in the sky during spring than in the autumn. The meeting agreed it would be worthwhile holding two similar events during winter 2014- 2015. Rod said the Society could be interested in supporting prospective Star Parties in 2015.

Action: Susan to investigate the nomination of Troopers Hill as a Sirius dark sky star discovery site. Rod to consult the Secretary of the Astronomical Society about future participation. Susan to contact BAS to suggest dates, for consideration when the programme is planned in September.

- Community Fair

The meeting thanked to the volunteers who had set up and attended two stalls at the Community Fair. FOTH representatives had handed out numerous news letters and survey questionnaires and passed an information pack to the Scouts. In addition the stall holders had met and spoken to the Lord Mayor, and Kerry McCarthy MP. Attendance had dropped noticeably from the previous year. Some discussion ensued about the timing of the event (11.00 to 2.00 over a Saturday lunch time).

Before our next meeting

- Dawn Chorus Walk, Sunday 6th April

Bookings this year so far were low, it was speculated that the early start might put off some participants and others were waiting for the weather forecast.

Action: Susan to send a poster to Jude.

- Good Friday Service

Rob and Susan would be away, other FOTH members would put up a gazebo and display boards, look after access arrangements and maintain a friendly presence/

- Wild Plants Walk, Sunday 18th May

The event had been accepted as one of the elements in the Bristol Walking Programme

Future Events

- Moth Hunt Night, Friday 18th July

Susan explained the light trap mechanism for the moth hunt night.

- Fungi Foray Sunday 2nd November

Susan suggested a walk in memory of Justin Smith, drawing on participants' memories of previous occasions. Kit suggested asking the mycological society if they could nominate someone to lead a fungi foray (budget £120).

Action: Susan to contact the British Mycological Society

Networking

- St George in Bloom and It's Your Neighbourhood

The meeting noted that Denise had become the Secretary of St George in Bloom, which was running a competition for domestic premises as well as St George entering South West in Bloom in the 'small town' category. The judging for SGIB and IYN would take place simultaneously.

- **RIP George Elliott**, the local historian who had kindly contributed much of his store of relevant historical material to Friends of Troopers Hill.

- **Redfest** had invited FOTH to participate as a media contact, providing a blogging or Twitter presence for a day of the festival

Action: Chair to take a view on the publicity value of accepting the proposal.

- **Green Capital Partnership** [\[link\]](#) .The meeting recognised this might provide a potential source of grant in the near future.

- Tourist Information

Rob mentioned that Bristol tourist information centre had a display about East Bristol including Troopers Hill.

- Facebook/Twitter/website update

Rob updated the meeting with the latest 'friends' and 'followers' numbers.

Newsletter

The latest edition had been very impressive, generating instant responses particularly to the Gingells article and the dog survey. Kit confirmed that currently the distribution list amounted to over 380 copies.

Other Business

Given that FOTH had four easily erected gazebos, the meeting approved Rob and Susan's purchase of a surplus gazebo in return for a donation.

Next Meeting

Thursday 29th May, 7.15pm at Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Rd.