

MINUTES OF MEETING OF FRIENDS' of TROOPERS' HILL, 26/5/04

Present: Helen Gillard, Sally, Rob, Susan (Chair), and David.

Apologies: Carol, Liz, Virginia, Norman, Gary, Val, Fran Stewart, Kit Elliott, and Andy Wilcox.

Review of Previously Minuted Actions:

No one posted any issues with regard to Rob's latest edition of the Action Plan (partly because the minutes were late – sorry!)

Susan has had mixed fortune in her various efforts to solicit volunteers for the First Aid course – Helen volunteered Kit.

Susan referred to the wrong temple when she wrote to the Evening Post about the racist attacks (inaccurate information from various sources were the causes of the mistake) but all is well because she has established personal contact with a representative from the Summerhill Temple at the St. George Partnership Meeting. This contact has resulted in an offer of the use of a room at the Temple for the August meeting.

Susan has approached professionals to see if the smelted stone slag on the Hill might be used for a monument of some kind and awaits their verdict.

Actions carried over:

Carol on the plaque and the lecture by Joan Davey.

Susan on Andy's attendance at the Parks forum.

Previous minutes: were agreed as read.

Feedback and Plans for Work Parties: Sally's glade was now cleared and the south east steps repaired. Thanks were due to Sue Fowden for the loan of a sledge hammer wielded unerringly on the day by Susan (aka Body Builder!?) Rob showed photos of the new tools which had arrived this week from BTCV costing nearly £500 of the available £1000 grant for tools. The next work party will be 5/6 at the usual place and time. cf : notes about work party scheduled for 3/7 under First Aid below as date has been changed.

Action Plan and Launch Event: Since the last committee meeting Rob, Sally and Susan have met to review the Plan. Rob has added photos and now thinks it is more or less complete. Sally said she was waiting for Gary to come back from sick leave so he could take a final look.

The revised idea for the Launch event (Weds. 9/6) is to keep it separate from the Butterfly and Bugs Walk (planned for Sat. 12/6). The format for the Launch will be a formal signing of the Plan by Susan as Chair of FOTH and Peter Wilkinson (hopefully, though currently enjoying a holiday!) who is Head of Bristol Parks.

There was some discussion about the timing of the two events and the need to maximise the possible favourable publicity.

Action: Sally to issue a Press Release and Rob to provide her with a photo of the chimney with a discernible city skyline framed in the background..

Issues For Gary: Rob showed a photo of the new Greendown dog bin which David said had been greeted favourably by those dog walkers he had so far spoken to. There followed a long discussion about dog poo and bins!! The consensus was that we are all desperate to find a solution to the recalcitrant dog walkers but are uncertain how to go about it.

Action: Sally to report back on the precise scope of the local bye-laws that relate to dog fouling on unmown areas.

Rob showed a photo of the terrible damage to the seat near the chimney which has been completely destroyed by fire. He was particularly concerned to know about possibilities of replacement. . Susan doubted that the council would provide a replacement as the seat seemed to be the result of a bequest. Susan enquired whether a crime report had been made to police. Susan also raised the issue of a long outstanding repair to the remaining bench.

Action: Sally to ask Gary about repairs to the remaining bench and about the crime report.

Rob reported on information received by E mail from Gary about the prices of gates and fences at the Summerhill Terrace entrance (£1620) and the Malvern Road kissing gate (£820). Rob would also like some prices for noticeboards.

Rob also asked if Gary could review the existing contacts held by the Council with outside agencies for the clearance of paths on the Hill. He felt that there was some danger of overlap with voluntary labour unless this was monitored carefully.

Sally reported that the BTCV contact had proved to be a dead end as the only work team as yet undirected were children who could not be expected to cope with the arduous task of the step replacement.

Note also the issue about knotweed raised by David under AOB

First Aid: At its current date the July work party (3/7) will not have a qualified first aider so Rob suggested putting it back to Thursday 8/7 at 7pm. This was likely to be a walking path clearance exercise. The meeting readily agreed to this suggestion.

Action: Helen agreed to be on site at the Greendown entrance on the morning of 3/7 between 10 and 10.30 am to explain to any who turn up.

Action: Rob to provide notices to the effect that the date has been changed.

Other Group Contacts: Susan is now helping a focus group within the St George Partnership to try to sort out more stable funding for the St George Partnership Times. While they have received a recent grant from the Greater Bristol Foundation this will only keep them going for a further 3 months and there will then be a gap before other applications, if accepted, result in further funds. FoTH has had a great deal of good publicity from the Partnership Times and Susan therefore proposed that we give them some money from our publicity budget. Rob suggested £100. This was approved by the meeting with the caveat that the money was to be given in 4 quarterly payments of £25 and was subject thereafter to an annual review budgets permitting.

Rob passed around a newsletter from the Avon Trail which contained a report he had written on his River Trail Walk (6/6) for which he is to be paid £50. He will then very nobly donate the cash to FOTH!

Bank Account: we now have a healthy balance as the grant money is in the account.

History Project: Kit continues to compile the video but has a problem for the next 3 events as he will be away.

Action: could any member going to the next three events with a video/digital stills camera please take it along so we can capture some of the action for posterity.

Sally is writing to English Nature (the History grant providers) to explain why there are delays over spending the money allocated..

Susan suggested that spoil stones from the Hill could be resited to provide vandal proof seating.

David mentioned the possibility of using the large grey rock with the smooth sides at the side of the southern stepped path as a canvas for a stonemason to carve appropriate wording about the industrial legacy of the Hill. Although not in the perfect position it is sited above the old Tar Works and would be largely vandal proof.

A discussion took place about the possibility of turning the north-west entrance (the Malvern open space one) into a rustic and therefore more inviting gateway.

Future Events: Sally said that Ray Barnet sadly could not make the Butterfly date but that she had booked Rupert Higgins despite his protests about not knowing much about butterflies! Sally assures us that he is in fact very knowledgeable. It is due to start at 2pm Sally will bring nets to facilitate the bug hunt for the children who attend and people should be encouraged to bring a picnic to eat at the end of the afternoon. There was a varied discussion about the catering arrangements. Helen offered the use of their gazebo.

Action: Rob to ask Bernard if we can borrow the Dundry Park gazebo as well, Susan to try and borrow the coffee vacuum flasks from work.

Action: David to do the minutes and the newsletter by 3/6 to expedite its distribution well in advance of the event.

There followed a debate on the utility of borrowing a butterfly and beetle outfit for the event. Also the possibility of booking Martin the Grasshopper man (!) who tells environmentally based tales to children at events such as this. Eventually those

suggesting this conceded that the timetable was just too tight to be sure of pulling off these refinements.

Sally spoke about the Bristol Festival of Natural History in October. Susan suggested a walk would be a good idea for October. Others mentioned the Balloon Fiesta as a date we should focus on. A consensus developed that Friday 13/8 (the first day of the Fiesta) would be an excellent opportunity to organise an event using both the costumes mentioned above and Martin the Grasshopper.

Action: Sally to investigate booking the various constituents of this event.

Website: Rob has upgraded the server so it now works a bit quicker but the site appeared to be unchanged and there has been no news from Liz.

Dates and venues for Future Meetings: the meeting scheduled for 6/7 will be held at Rob and Susan's (Sally sent her apologies in advance). The August meeting is scheduled for 5/8 at 7pm and will hopefully be held at the Summerhill Sikh Temple.

Action: Susan to firm up the booking with the Sikh authorities at the Temple.

AOB: David mentioned the rampant problem of the Japanese knotweed on the eastern slope of Crews Hole wood which is now threatening to take over the whole forest. It is now nearly a year since its existence was pointed out to the authorities on the evening walk last summer with Rupert Higgins and still nothing has been done. Rob said that he was intending showing the knotweed to Peter Wilkinson when he came in two weeks time as part of his walkabout.

Alex the student is now doing her butterfly transects. She has thus far seen common blues, holly blues, coppers, whites, commas and brimstone whites. No sign as yet of the elusive grayling. Helen expressed an interest in helping with the transects whilst Alex is away.

Sally continues to follow up the Helen Adshead visits to local schools issue.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.20pm.