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The Friends of Troopers Hill



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Summer 2012



It's not often that we can claim a unique, historic event on Troopers Hill, but on Friday 1st June just such an event took place. For only the second time in history, we are celebrating a Diamond Anniversary for the Monarch and Air Balloon primary school marked it by

bringing the whole school –all 600 pupils - to Troopers Hill. It was quite a sight and we were extremely impressed by how well organised the children were. They marched from the school to the Hill, where they sang the National Anthem, and then released 60 balloons – one for every year of the Queen's reign. Afterwards, they all returned to school to enjoy a 1950's school dinner. One thing for sure, none of us will witness another diamond celebration like this again. Nor 600 children on Troopers Hill.



The [Stepping Forward Grant](#) improvements are nearing completion. The drainage has been installed in the field and the work on the steps has been completed. We feel sure you will agree that the steps are now considerably easier to use. Our designer is working on the waypoints for the woodland trail, which we hope to install during the summer, and we hope to be holding a celebration event in October, to which you will all be invited. Watch out for further news in the next edition.

We hope you'll agree that the Hill is looking good at the moment, but you know it takes work to keep it looking so good. The last two [work parties](#) have had only 4 volunteers turn up when we used to get 10 or 12. We really need more help and it only needs to be on an occasional basis. Children accompanied by adults are always welcome and it's a great way to learn about nature and wildlife. Do come and join us for a couple of hours.

It's that time of year again and we are looking forward to our annual "[Music on the Hill](#)" concert. We welcome the South Gloucester Youth Jazz Orchestra back again. Bring your family and a picnic to join us at 6pm on Saturday 16th June. Call our information line (07531615983) for latest updates if the weather is uncertain. See you there.

6th Green Flag for Troopers Hill?

Soon after you read this newsletter, judges will be visiting Troopers Hill to decide whether it deserves a [Green Flag](#) for 2012/13. To merit a Green Flag a site has to be well managed, have good community involvement and where possible be accessible to all.

So are we quietly confident? Well, all of you visiting the Hill will have noticed the work being carried out as part of the [Stepping Forward project](#) to improve access to Troopers Hill. We have now improved steps across the Hill, installed matting on Troopers Hill Field entrances to reduce mud in winter, and drainage by the slide in the Field so you will not have to cross a muddy bog to reach the Hill this coming winter. An [information board for people accessing Troopers Hill on wheelchairs](#) has been made and will be put up soon at the Malvern Rd entrance to Troopers Hill Field.

Vicki Abel of Bristol Parks, Rob and I spent many hours earlier this year reviewing the [management plan](#) that had been running for the last 5 years and creating a new plan for the next 5 years. Friends of Troopers Hill and Bristol Parks together with Julian, our Community Park Keeper (who recently celebrated 25 years working for Parks), have been working to deliver the objectives listed in the plan for the last 6 years.

In this year's [events leaflet](#) there are 32 opportunities for community involvement ranging from work parties and meetings to educational walks and a free concert just sitting on the Hill and enjoying the views. The odd extra event always seems to pop up just after publication and one of these was the truly enjoyable family "[Walkshops](#)" helping design way-markers for Troopers Hill woodland.

So, Friends of Troopers Hill and Bristol Parks have done as much as possible to help Troopers Hill win its next Green Flag. That, however, still does not stop me being very nervous as judging day approaches. Keep your fingers crossed.

Susan Acton-Campbell

Fire Safety This Summer

AVON Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) is urging people to stay safe when making the most of the warmer weather.

Plenty of people will be soaking up the sun at the region's many natural beauty spots, including the local nature reserve at Troopers Hill.

AF&RS wants people to have fun in the sun but to make sure everybody stays safe. Nationally some 79,000 fires are started on grass and heathland every year.



There are several simple steps that people can take in order to enjoy themselves and be safe. They include:

- Don't leave bottles or glass in woodland or grassy areas. Sunlight shining through glass can easily start a fire. Take these items home with you or put them into a waste or recycling bin.
- If you see a fire in the countryside, report it immediately.
- Don't try to tackle fires which are too big to be put out with one bucket of water – leave the area as safely and swiftly as possible and raise the alarm.
- During hot weather, a discarded cigarette is enough to catch dry grass and undergrowth on fire. If you smoke, make sure cigarettes are thoroughly stubbed out before you leave them – making sure you dispose of them properly.
- Be vigilant. If you notice people acting suspiciously or starting deliberate fires, call the police. Arson is a serious offence which can put people and property at risk.

Station Manager Stuart Matthews, from the Community Safety Team, said: "Fires involving grass, bushes and undergrowth can often take a long time to put out, potentially preventing crews from being available to respond to other emergencies. "By taking a few simple steps, we can reduce these incidents and make our open spaces safer for everyone."

Darren Bane
Avon Fire & Rescue Service

Music on the Hill

Saturday 16th June

MUSIC STARTS

6.00pm

Following a successful concert at the Chipping Sodbury Jazz Festival, the South Gloucestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra are looking forward to performing again on Troopers Hill!

The band regularly perform concerts and gigs under their director Roger Sansom, and have performed across the region as well as touring Europe. One of the exciting projects run by the Council's Music Service, 'SOGYJO' took part, this spring, in a regional festival in Cheltenham, which is part of the National Festival of Music for Youth. They have also been invited to play at the National Festival in Birmingham in July with a high-profile performance at Birmingham's Adrian Boult Hall.

South Gloucestershire Council Music and Art Strategy Manager Richard Jones said "To perform in the National Festival of Music for Youth in some of the best concert halls in the world is an opportunity which will stay in the memory of our young musicians for a lifetime.

"I am very proud of the achievement of these young people, which is a testament not only to their

skill and dedication but also to the professionalism of the teaching staff who coach the ensembles and the support from parents."

The orchestra members also hope that success in Birmingham will lead to a high-profile performance at the School Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in London.

South Gloucestershire's Music and Arts Service recently received a major Arts Council award to co-ordinate a music 'hub' promoting music provision for young people throughout South Gloucestershire.

Richard Jones
Music and Arts Strategy Manager
South Gloucestershire Music Education Hub



www.troopers-hill.org.uk

A Personal Perspective

Hello there fellow Hill Friends!

Over the past few months, I've developed a bit of a penchant for going hunting on Troopers Hill. I usually go out early in the morning, when the light's at its best and there aren't so many people around (or even awake for that matter!). Whilst most of the world slumbers, and everything's still very peaceful, I can sometimes be found peering, across the grass, into the bushes and trees, just waiting to launch my attack.... And once I spot my target, it has no chance at all of escape. The bigger it is, the more of a sitting duck it is, and if the wind acts against me, well, that just adds to the challenge!

Don't worry, I'm not an ASBO waiting to be caught - it's litter that I'm after. I just can't admit to that straight out though. All too familiar is the look that crosses people's faces when they see me, or they find out it's something I volunteer to do in my spare time. It's a look that says "Why on earth would you want to do that? Yuck!" or, more simply "You weirdo!". However, my feeling is "Why on earth wouldn't you?". Troopers Hill is such a beautiful place, and this is one of the easiest things which anyone can do to help keep it that way.

Let's face it, litter is a problem that is likely to be with us for a long time. Regardless of initiatives to educate children and the wider public about the problems of littering, or of fines if caught doing so, various forms of rubbish continue to wind up "adorning" our beautiful places in a way that to be honest, I can't imagine anyone appreciates. Yet it's really easy and satisfying to do something about it. Anyone can take a sturdy pair of gloves and a bag up on the hill and pick up a few pieces they are comfortable with tackling, along their walk. Whilst obviously it'd be best to take the rubbish home and recycle whatever can be recycled, there are bins at so many places on the reserve where small bags of collected rubbish can be deposited. Actually, I always take two bags with me, and put the recyclable waste in one, and the non-recyclables in the other, so it isn't quite so unsavoury to separate it at home. Now that the council have introduced the green boxes I'm really relieved to be able to recycle plastic bottles so easily, as these make up a very significant proportion of the rubbish I find.

Well, on that note, here's a quick, totally unscientific breakdown, in no particular order, of the things I frequently take off the hill:

- Plastic bottle caps
- Drink cans
- Broken glass and glass bottles, and, more commonly, the metal tops left behind when people have actually taken the bottles away
- Hordes of confectionery wrappers
- Carpets of cigarette butts, and a fair few cigarette packets

- Numerous tissues
- Plastic bags
- Remnants of chewed up dog toys - the foam ones irritate me quite a bit as they are often left as piles of hundreds of pieces, which take an age to pick up, and must have taken a significant time for the dog to generate, whilst staying still in one place, where, surely, the responsible human could see them.

Empty dog poo bags that may have caught in the wind when people were doing the responsible thing... or were they? For now I come to the one item of litter that really, really winds me up, and I'm sorry, but I am going to have a bit of a whinge about it, though I know it's surely to the wrong audience if you're a recipient of this newsletter. However, please humour me and help spread the word: Just as there is no such thing as the "Dog Poo Fairy", there is also no award to aspire to, for the most artistically hung filled dog poo bag. You could be forgiven for thinking though, that Troopers Hill has its own Dog Doo Display team. I find bags deposited along paths, carefully placed on rocks, delicately hung from trees between knee and face height, or, lobbed into the shrubbery, where their full glory will only be revealed come autumn, when the leaves drop away to reveal them. This utterly defies me. I just don't get it. If someone is going to go through the less than pleasant task of picking up faeces that will break down naturally within about 4 weeks on the ground, why then leave them on the hill in a bag which will not break down for potentially 400 years, and provides a real danger to wildlife throughout that time? Plastic bags can choke wild animals, block their digestive tracts, ensnare their limbs or strangle them, and can leach chemicals into the soil as they break down. And besides which, anyone walking on the hill, who has cleaned up after their furry friend, is never far from a suitable receptacle. So why leave the waste on the hill in worse circumstances than the dog did? OK rant over, thank you. I'm just glad my passion for keeping Troopers Hill a safe and beautiful place for wildlife and people far outweighs the yuck factor involved in removing this type of waste.

So, I hope this has given you a bit of an insight into why I feel that removing litter from the hill is something I am very keen to devote some of my time to, and that I've infected you with some of my passion and enthusiasm for doing it too. I'd be most grateful if you can spread the word about the importance of not littering on our beautiful hill, and, if necessary and applicable, consider a little more carefully your own and your dog's actions up there. Better yet, if you'd like to join the war against litter, Friends of Troopers Hill would be more than happy to furnish you with litter pickers and bin bags. Hopefully next time our paths cross, that look on your face will be less one of a lack of understanding, and more a smile of recognition.

Thanks a lot,

Chris Steel

ABC of Troopers Hill

L is also for Lepidoptera. The term, derived from the Latin for 'scaly winged' is the order of insects comprising butterflies and moths. The colours of their wings arise from iridescent scales and therefore come from light, not pigmentation. Apart from Antarctica, butterflies and moths inhabit every continent. One way to tell a butterfly from a moth is to look at the antennae. Moths have feathery antennae whereas butterflies' antennae are narrow with a club-shaped tip.

The life cycle of Lepidoptera takes four distinct stages. Firstly eggs are laid on or near a food source. Each species requires a particular host plant in order to survive. The eggs hatch into larvae - caterpillars - which eat voraciously of plant material (or, in some cases, lichens), grow larger and need to moult several times as they outgrow their skins.

Eventually the caterpillar becomes a dormant pupa within a case known as a "chrysalis". The pupa stage may last for weeks or months, for example, over winter. During this time the larval tissues are broken down and the cells reorganised into the imago form, which we recognise as adult butterflies and moths after they emerge. Unlike the larvae, the adults do not feed on leaves but - if they feed at all - rely on flowers for nectar.

Certain butterflies, for example the Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell, hibernate as adults and can survive the winter, which explains why they are among the earliest ones to be seen in the spring.

Surveys on Troopers Hill have recorded 22 different species of butterfly. Bryn's personal favourite is the elegant Marbled White, which appears in the illustration on the Troopers Hill LNR general information leaflet (p4) <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/leaflets/index.htm>. Possibly the most locally rare butterfly seen on the Hill is the Essex Skipper <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/butterfly.htm> spotted there for the first time a year ago. Moth surveys have counted 92 species [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/moths \[2005\].pdf](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/moths[2005].pdf), some having wonderful descriptive names such as the "Barred Fruit Tree Tortrix", the "Figure of Eighty", the "Red-Necked Footman", the "Small Yellow Wave", the "Flame Shoulder" and the "Bright Line Brown-Eye".

Susan took this rather splendid photograph of a Scarlet Tiger moth on the Hill. Scarlet Tiger moth larvae eat Comfrey, Nettles, Sallow and Willow leaves, all to be found on or near Troopers Hill. Bedstraw and willow herb are the preferred food plants for the Small Elephant Hawk moth. Marbled White butterfly caterpillars need grasses (including fescues) to survive.

Friends of Troopers Hill encourage butterflies and moths to flourish by managing the vegetation (in conjunction with Bristol City Council) so that their food plants are allowed to thrive.



Bryn Friallen

Dates for your Diary

Regular events:

Work Parties: Saturdays July 7th, August 4th, September 1st and October 6th. 10am—midday. Meet at corner of Greendown and Troopers Hill Road. **Evening workparties** on Wednesday 25th July and Wednesday 22nd August, 7-8 pm. Join us for a drink afterwards.

Meetings. Thursdays July 12th and October 4th, 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. *Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.*

Walking for Health walks: Wed 13th June—St Philips Greenway walk. Friday 29th June—Walled Garden walk. For further details, contact Clare—see Contacts panel.

Other events:

Saturday June 16th: Music on the Hill. From 6 pm. *A summer evening of music on Troopers Hill. Enjoy the views over Bristol while listening to some wonderful music from SOGYJO (South Gloucestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra). Bring the family and a picnic, but please—no barbecues as they damage the rare grassland.*

Wednesday July 11th. Sunset Stroll. 7—8.30 pm. *Join Rob Acton-Campbell for a tour of Troopers Hill talking about the fascinating history of the hill and the surrounding area. Booking Essential.*

Sunday 29th July. Tai Chi on the Hill. On Troopers Hill Field from 10.30 am. *Join the Bristol School of Tai Chi for a spectacular demonstration and a 1 hour introductory class with gentle exercise for all ages. Afterwards join us for a picnic on the hill. Just turn up and join in.*

Sunday 23rd September. Avon Valley Walk. 10am—4pm. *A guided walk through local green spaces with the opportunity for lunch at Beeses Riverside Bar & Tea Gardens or bring a picnic. Booking Essential.*

Sunday 14th October. Family Fun Dog Show. from 2pm. *A fun event on Troopers Hill Field for dogs and*

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
Email:

friends@troopers-hill.org.uk
www.facebook.com/TroopersHill

Or go to the online forum at:
<http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/news&views>

To book a place on an event,
Phone Judith: 0117 955 9819 (Tue-Sat, 9am-5pm) Or email:
events2012@troopers-hill.org.uk

Walking for Health (St George Strollers)
Contact: Clare Willott
0117 941 4514

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, can be contacted on
07919 628 304