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The Friends of Troopers Hill

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January/February 2007



Exciting news for naturalists reaches us this month. Not one, but two new species have been found on the Hill. A new variety of moss and a new fly have both been identified. You can read about them elsewhere in this issue, but they are both very important finds and increase the importance of Troopers Hill as a Local Nature Reserve.

Also elsewhere this issue, you can read more about the Green Flag application. We cannot stress the importance of this enough. Bristol Parks will be investing up to £20,000 in Troopers Hill over the next few months to get the Hill to an appropriate standard for the application. Over the last few years Friends have themselves invested over 923 working hours on the Hill to improve it for us all. Almost 397 working hours have been carried out in 2006 alone. We've also been very pleased that more and more people turn out to help, with the average work party attendance over the winter now being 11.7 people. As Rob tells you elsewhere, this work has now paid off for all of us since it is because of the improvements Friends have brought about that the council is now putting Troopers Hill forward for this award. Make no mistake about it—you will see many more visible improvements over the next few months. Forgive us if we give ourselves a rather large pat on the back!

We were delighted by the turnout to our AGM in December. A record 21 people attended and enjoyed the roundup of the year in slides and video that was presented. There was also a very lively and useful discussion about the Green Flag implications and the much heralded wheelchair path. Full minutes can be read on the website.

You may have noticed that we have been squeezing in as many extra work parties as we can recently, but ever wondered why? Well, although it may not seem obvious, the winter months are the best time for doing a lot of the work that needs doing. From February on we have to be aware of bird nesting season, so we generally can't cut bramble or work in areas where birds may be nesting. Summer months tend to be limited to repairing fences, steps and planting hedges. Hence we need to get as much as we can done now, especially with the Green Flag award in the offing.

News has just arrived of an application to demolish the Lamb Inn on Crews Hole Road. This inn was a focal point of social life in the area for a reputed 300 years and while the building itself is not impressive, it is one of the few remaining structures from that time. Not much of its history is known but we have heard rumours of the pub being used as a mortuary after a tragic accident on the river. If you know anything of its history, please let us know. Meanwhile, Susan is working on a response to send to Bristol Council's planning office and will post information on the website. Let us know what you think so that we can truly represent our members feelings. The planning application reference is: 06/03518/LC should you wish to view it—but time is very short as the cut off date is 14th February.

THE FLY

We have just received David Gibb's report on the invertebrate survey that he carried out last year. Approximately 4½ days of survey yielded 276 species of which 23 are considered to be of conservation interest. David says that this places Troopers Hill amongst the most important reserves in the region.

Amongst the insects David found living on the hill this year was a small fly called 'Phytomyza sedi'. This is a dull blackish leaf-mining fly with a wing span of only 1.8mm. This was the first time that this fly had been recorded anywhere in Great Britain! Our rare bee 'Nomada guttulata' was not seen this year, but that does not necessarily mean that it has disappeared. David will be carrying out further sur-

GREEN FLAG UPDATE

The application for a Green Flag Award for Troopers Hill that we mentioned in our Nov/Dec Newsletter has now been submitted. Bristol Parks applied for only three Green Flags for this year; for Troopers Hill, Queens Square and the Downs.

As those of you who came to our January meeting will know, Phil Williamson at Bristol Parks has been working hard to produce an updated Management Plan and to agree a programme of works to be carried out over the next few months. Susan, I and other committee members have been involved in the discussions and have reviewed the Management Plan. Much of the content comes from the Plan we produced in 2004 but it has been reformatted to match the latest recommendations. Once complete the plan will be available for download from our web site.

The really good news from our point of view is that Bristol Parks are going to make some improvements to the hill this year and are committing to more works in future years to maintain the Green Flag standard. Much of the work will involve cutting bramble and trees. This is to protect the heathland and acidic grassland; Troopers Hill is the only significant area of this type of habitat in the Bristol area. The works will also include the completion of the wheelchair access path (at long last!) and some new signs.

There is no doubt that the work that the Friends of Troopers Hill have put in over the last three years was the major factor in Troopers Hill being selected. Whether or not we are successful this year, the very fact that we have been put forward is going to bring about improvements in the next few months that I thought would take us years to achieve.

Rob Acton-Campbell

CONTACT US

If you'd like to talk to us about any issues raised here, please contact:
Susan Acton-Campbell (Chair), Tel. **0117 947 5037**.
Sally Oldfield (Bristol Council Local Nature Reserves Officer),
Tel. **0117 922 4429**

You can also write to us at: **3, Corkers Hill, St. George, Bristol, BS5 8DT**

Or email:
chair@troopers-hill.org.uk
or
Sally.oldfield@bristol.gov.uk

veys for us next year as part of our Big Lottery Fund Breathing Places project.

David's report emphasises the importance, to the invertebrates on the hill, of continuing to expand the open areas by clearing bramble, scrub and trees. His recommendations have been included in the new Management Plan and Bristol Parks' contractors have already started part of the Green Flag works. We also continue to cut bramble and saplings at our work parties. Acting on David's advice we have arranged with Bristol Parks for the cut bramble to be removed so that it doesn't rot and improve the soil which would encourage more growth.

MEMORIES OF MALVERN ROAD

My family and myself have been living in Malvern Road for the last 35 years. Considering the length of time, Troopers Hill and the field have not changed very much. The view overlooking Bristol from the field is virtually non-existent. When we first moved into Malvern Road, we could see the stacks of paper at St. Annes Board Mills: hundreds of them all along the rivers edge. Very often they would catch fire and we would watch the smoke billowing up over the Hill.

For many years the trees and brambles would be kept low growing due to vandals starting fires. In the school holidays there was a fire nearly every week! For some reason we haven't had fires for at least 15 years and, in my opinion, this is a shame as we have lost the view over Bristol from the field.

Over the years, the field was often churned up by motorcyclists and sometimes cars. This was stopped when the new fences and gates were put in. When my daughters were growing up there were swings, slides and a roundabout for them to play on. Now all that is left is the slide.

Also over the years we have heard rumours that a road would be built connecting Hilltop Gardens across the allotments and the field to join up with Malvern Road. Then the rumour travellers would move on to the field. We were warned not to give them water or they would stay, but all this came to nothing.

Unfortunately, in the winter months the field is only used by dog walkers due to the poor drainage. Then the field and paths turn into quagmires.

About 8 years ago, there was a dog show on the field and there was a very good turnout. We were promised another show in the future but nothing has yet come of it. This did bring home to people how messy the field could get if no-one cleaned up the dog poo. Some residents of Malvern Road had an all day sit in a few years ago, handing out leaflets, plastic bags and information. It was all supplied by Bristol City Council dog wardens to explain the advantages of keeping the field dog poo free - you win some and lose some! It's a lot better now, especially as we have 3 dog poo bins. Now my grandchildren can play on the field as it's safer and a bit cleaner that it used to be.

Gillian Dyte

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 8th February: Leaflet design meeting. 7.00 pm. Contact Susan for details.

Thursday 15th February: Quiz Night and Raffle! 7.00 pm onwards. Beeses Tearooms. Ferry will be available to take you over the river. Lots of prizes and a buffet will be available. Get your team together now and contact Susan.

Friday 2nd March: 10.30 am. Through the Seasons Walk. The first of four short and relaxed guided walks introducing the history and wildlife of the hill. Book your place with Sally Oldfield.

Saturday 3rd March: Work Party. 10am– midday. Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown. Please come and help us.

Thursday 8th March: Meeting. 7.15 pm. Wesley Memorial Church Hall, Bryant's Hill.

Friday 6th April: Good Friday Service. 11 am on the Hill. Organised by local churches.

Saturday 7th April: Work Party. 10am– midday. Meet at corner of Troopers Hill Road and Greendown. Please come and help us.



“NEW” MOSS FOUND ON HILL -

Common Haircap (*Polytrichum commune* var. *commune*).

During a visit to Troopers Hill at the end of 2006 I found a Haircap moss not recorded from the hill. The moss is called Common Haircap *Polytrichum commune* var. *commune*. Common Haircap is a moss of damp moors and heathland and although there is heathland on Troopers Hill finding this moss here is unexpected as it is rather outside of its main range and it is not recorded anywhere else nearby.

It possible that it could have colonised the hill from somewhere else, but the lack of nearby populations would suggest the likelihood of this happening is probably quite low.

Could it be a relic? Is it possible that this moss has been here a long time and the population found here today is just the remnants of a perhaps larger historic one? Troopers Hill lies within what was the old Forest of Kingswood and this less intensely farmed area might have supported some of the less common species of our area today, such as Common Haircap. You can find more information on our website.

Nick Hudson

The Elusive Badger

*The badger-sett lies in the hollow,
Deeply shaded by spreading oak trees,
Which provide their favourite acorns,
Striped heads shining in the moonlight,
They venture out, with small eyes gleaming,
In the coolness of late evening.*

*Sometimes on evenings in summer,
Badger-cubs will cautiously appear,
To tussle, grunting, with each other
On rough banks and trodden pathways,
Rolling, fighting, chasing, biting,
As their mother watches for danger.*

*They like to snuffle along hedgerows
Seeking worms, in dark and rainy weather.
If they live near nature-lovers' gardens
They will pay a visit, in friendly darkness,
Will stand and raid the full bird-table,
They love titbits and scattered peanuts,
But at any noise will run for cover.*

Molly Setter