

## Why Barbecues are banned on Troopers Hill

This summer Friends of Troopers Hill publicly thanked two visitors to Troopers Hill on Facebook and Twitter. The visitors had gently explained to people with barbecues why they should not be used on Troopers Hill. Two barbecues were put out by people who saw this made sense. Tact and diplomacy won the day.

Troopers Hill has a history of fires. The worst that local people remember was in 1995 when fire threatened to leap from the Hill across Troopers Hill Rd to local homes. The fire service did an excellent job but the Hill was still recovering in 1998. After the fire, the grayling butterfly was never seen again on Troopers Hill. It is not known whether its loss was as a direct result of the fire or a coincidence.

Thanks to a quick response by the fire service in 2013 (see photo), the damage was less severe but the fire service kept returning for 2 days to keep damping down the ground to prevent any smouldering embers lighting again. The remains of a disposable barbecue were found in the ashes.



In 2017 Bristol Parks Byelaws were passed. Those byelaws specifically list Troopers Local Nature Reserve as the only public green space where barbecues are entirely forbidden; the record of past fires is the reason for this. Now, at every entrance to Troopers Hill there is a plaque listing all the byelaws in picture-form. An image in a red circle means the activity is forbidden, orange means

council permission is needed and green means you can enjoy your activity. In a further effort to catch the eye, each entrance has an A4 laminated sign saying “No barbecues” with the Bristol City Council logo and a link to Bristol City Council’s webpage on Parks Byelaws.

Friends of Troopers Hill have made great efforts to publicise the risk of fire. The Met Office publishes a Fire Severity Index to indicate the level of fire risk so the Friends suggested to BBC Radio Bristol that weather forecasts should include the Fire Severity Index. The response was an invitation to come and talk about fire risks on the Emma Britton show and the Fire Severity Index was mentioned throughout the show. At the time of writing this article the Fire Severity Index is “4 - very high fire severity”; there is only one higher level “5 – exceptional fire severity”.

All sources of fire are a risk to Troopers Hill, whether a discarded cigarette end or a piece of glass catching and focusing the sunlight. Friends of Troopers Hill are asking visitors to be vigilant and do all they can, without putting themselves at risk, to protect the site.

Why not come to the next Friends of Troopers Hill conservation work party and learn more about ways to protect the site? **There is a conservation work party on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month, starting promptly at 10am and finishing at noon. The volunteers meet by the red slide on Troopers Hill Field.** You can also find out more fire risks on Troopers Hill by visiting [www.troopers-hill.org.uk/why](http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/why)

The Bristol Astronomical Society will help you look at the fires of our nearest star, the Sun, if you visit Troopers Hill from 4pm on Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> August. Natural Learners will be there hosting a bee craft event for families and the Friends of Troopers Hill will be lending bug pots and nets to those families who want to go hunting for Bugs & Beasties and have them identified by expert, Rupert Higgins. The events will finish at 6pm and then we hope people will stay on to see if balloons take off from Ashton Court for Bristol’s Balloon Fiesta.