

The Friends of Troopers Hill



Winter 2011/12

£30,000 Grant Successful

"Wild and beautiful Troopers Hill, a 20 acre Local Nature Reserve in St George, Bristol, owned by Bristol City Council, will benefit from £30,504.89 of Big Lottery money via the [Community Spaces programme](#).

Troopers Hill's steps and paths have become eroded over the 20 years since the Bristol Development Corporation installed them, making it difficult for the very young and the elderly to fully enjoy the site. For a long time the local community conservation group, Friends of Troopers Hill, have wanted to improve these steps and increase awareness of the paths in the adjacent woodland. The grant will allow this to be done without spoiling the wild feel of the site.

Rob Acton-Campbell, a dedicated member of the Friends' committee, put the Lottery bid together. He said, "It's been a year of fantastic effort for Friends of Troopers Hill volunteers supporting the application process. Thank you to everyone who helped, including volunteers who delivered 2,000 questionnaires locally and nearly 500 people who replied to our survey. This proved the high level of [support from local people](#) for this project."

Community Spaces funded the consultation that used the 2,000 questionnaires and an ecological survey. The survey showed that what was being proposed for the site was the best way to preserve the plants and wildlife that make this site so special. [Summerhill School](#) year 3 pupils were very helpful in giving the junior perspective on the proposals.

Work on the Troopers Hill Stepping Forward project will start in 2012, improving existing paths and steps and draining a boggy area of Troopers Hill Field. Local children and adults will work with a wood sculptor to create carvings to mark and reflect the natural feel of an existing woodland trail. This waymarking will encourage people to explore further when visiting this award-winning site. For all the details of how the grant will be used to improve access to Troopers Hill please visit www.troopers-hill.org.uk/steppingforward."

From the Press Release



Is your dog REALLY under your control?



Despite the rain and wind, our dog show was once again a great success, with several complimentary comments being posted on our [Facebook page](#). We had over 70 dogs entered and everyone had a

good time, even if some of the dogs looked a little wet and — well, miserable!

News that slipped by us in 2010 was that Troopers Hill is now not just a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), but has also been designated a [Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site](#) (RIGS). According to the report, "The best sections are in disused quarries just to the south and east of the Chimney, with cross-bedding and channelling visible". In other words, the exposed Sandstone faces in the "gully" are important examples of how the land was formed and the shift that has taken place over the millennia since then. Look carefully and you can see the layers that were once horizontal but now lie at a slope of around 30 degrees. There is much more to the story of how Troopers Hill evolved. You can read about it in our free Geology leaflets (available at all our events) or on our website here: <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/geology.htm>

Congratulations to Susan, our Chair, and Rob, our work party manager, on being awarded the Councillor's Special Award at the [Green Volunteer, Bristol Awards](#). Everyone, who knows Friends of Troopers Hill, knows that they are a real powerhouse for the group and work extremely hard at raising grants and support. Very well deserved to both of you.

Lastly, on behalf of all the Friends may I wish you,

A Very Happy Christmas

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

Fighting Back to Health, the Troopers Hill Way

Russell Porter has lived in Troopers Hill Road for 46 years and has walked on Troopers Hill with his grandchildren often. In the last few years, however, he started to notice he was getting out of breath easily and eventually couldn't even work in his garden, much less climb up the Hill. "He was always such a fit man" says Gwen, his wife, "but now he couldn't even get up to the butchers!"

It took a long time to diagnose the problem, but eventually it was discovered that a virus had damaged the Aortic valve in Russ's heart. He needed a replacement. May this year saw Russ in hospital for his operation. The day after his operation, Russ was on his feet and astonished Gwen by walking up the corridor to meet her as she came to see him. The next day, the physiotherapist had him climbing some stairs and a day later he was home, with the brief to get plenty of gentle exercise.

Russ says "I had to walk somewhere, but everywhere around here is hills". Although he began walking in St George's Park, he soon realised he needed more of a challenge. This is where Troopers Hill came in.

He first walked the easier paths – into and around the Gully where quarrying used to take place. Fortunately the Friends have been able to install several benches on the Hill over the years and these proved to be invaluable to Russ's rehabilitation by helping him to tackle the Hill itself. "I started off by walking a little bit, then I would sit on a bench and rest" says Russ. "Gradually I found I could go further and eventually I was able to miss out one bench and sit on the next". The Hill and the benches helped Russ gradually increase his fitness level.

Russ and Gwen saw a poster about the [St George Strollers](#) and decided to give them a go. The first outing they went on was the boat trip to Beeses with a walk around Netham Park. "We were a bit concerned about the slopes" says Gwen, "but the walks are designed to let you take your time".

Since then Russell and Gwen have been regulars on Strollers outings and enjoy the company and the places they visit. They continue to walk on the Hill with their grandchildren and Russ even helps out with work parties because "you work at your own pace and can stop and rest when you need to".

Ed's Note: The next walk program will be out soon, but if you would like to know more about the St George Strollers, you can contact Clare (details in Contacts panel) or go to: <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/strollers>

ABC of Troopers Hill

K is for Kites.

Troopers Hill is an exposed site and - usually - breezy, especially by the chimney. On occasions, Friends have struggled to prevent gazebos flying away in strong gusts. It was natural, therefore, for Friends to be inspired to arrange Kite Flying events, at which experts and novices could gather to display kites, and enjoy making and flying kites from kits supplied by the Friends. Two such events were held, on [Saturday 14 October 2006](#) and [Sunday 14 October 2007](#). Those dates proved to be two of the calmest days that Friends had experienced, days of fine weather and very light breezes. Despite the perverse weather, participants somehow managed to launch a number of kites, ranging from paper ones they had made themselves to stunt kites and exhibition kites flown by experts.



The shapes included a giant 'Morticia' kite which loomed menacingly over the proceedings. At the second event, Friends collected donations to Breast Cancer Care from people who made - and valiantly attempted to fly - kites constructed from plastic bags. Given the absence of favourable winds on those occasions, Friends have not tried to hold another Kite event in recent years. We still often enjoy seeing people, on light evenings and weekends, taking advantage of windy conditions and having fun flying their kites on Troopers Hill and on the Field.

Bryn Friallen

Dates for your Diary

Regular events:

Work Parties: Saturdays Jan 7th, Feb 4th, Mar 3rd, Apr 7th. 10am—midday. Meet at Troopers Hill Road and Greendown. *Help us look after Troopers Hill. Gentle exercise and a bit of a laugh over some coffee.*

Meetings. Thursdays Jan 12th, Mar 29th. 7.15pm, Summerhill Methodist Church, 5 Air Balloon Road. *Come along and share your views on our Local Nature Reserve.*

St George Strollers:

Wed 11th Jan: Brandon Hill Tour. Meet 10.15, at the Cascade Steps, The Centre. Further details, contact Clare—see Contacts panel.

Other events:

Saturday March 24th: St Aidan's Community Fair. 11am -2pm. *Come and see our plans for the Troopers Hill Stepping Forward project.*

Friday April 6th: Good Friday Service on Troopers Hill. *Procession starts from Summerhill Methodist Church.*

It's Your Neighbourhood Award Troopers Hill wins Level 4—Thriving

Until recently I thought the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and Friends of Troopers Hill (FoTH) did not have a lot in common. My impression was that the RHS concentrated on planting and wonderful, somewhat artificial floral displays. On Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve we focus on preserving native species and habitats and maintaining the wild feel of this special area of acid heath and grassland.

I discovered that the RHS runs an "It's Your Neighbourhood" award scheme. This scheme encourages local people to improve their neighbourhood. Points are awarded for community participation, environmental responsibility and gardening achievement. Thanks to you we had no problem meeting the community participation criteria. Our disposal of cuttings from work parties, litter collecting, and materials used on site all helped meet the environmental responsibility requirements. For gardening achievement our planting of the [Greendown hedge](#) counted plus of course, our maintaining a balance of the plant species on the site by our monthly work parties cutting back scrub.



For this award I had to write a two page summary of what Friends of Troopers Hill have achieved since starting out in December

2003 and what we aim to do. Our achievements range from running 86 public events to raising over £50,000 for improvements to the site, now over £80,000 thanks to your support for the Stepping Forward project. <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/achievements.pdf>. Reading all these achievements out to our members at a meeting led to a stunned silence. We had not realised how much we had done.

I was really proud to receive the award with Rob on behalf of FoTH. The judges only marked us down on one thing - dog fouling - but hopefully, we will be helping Bristol City Council to do something quite imaginative about this in the next couple of months. More news soon.

Susan Acton-Campbell

Hello everyone

Just a few words to confirm my new role as your Area Environment Officer (AEO), within the recently formed Neighbourhood Engagement Team. My two dedicated work areas are St George Neighbourhood Partnership (NP) & Greater Fishponds NP. Some of you may have met me through my work in my previous role as Clean & Green Project Officer.



I will be your first point of contact for neighbourhood & community groups for Parks, waste and street scene issues in Environment & Leisure. I intend to work proactively with Neighbourhood Partnerships, councillors, resident groups and park user groups to change and improve the management and delivery of services and respond effectively to local concerns. I will be assisting and supporting you in delivering the Council's Parks & Green Space Strategy, at a local level, through Neighbourhood Partnership green space investment plans and waste and street scene neighbourhood plans. Supporting park user groups and others to implement improvement projects by raising funds, carrying out consultations and managing projects will be another important aspect of my role.

I will also continue to work with you on achieving "Outstanding" level for next year's "Its Your Neighbourhood Awards" as well as supporting you on delivering your Stepping Forward project (well done on your successful funding bid). After attending the Forest School back in October, I have volunteered to take part again in February. What an enjoyable experience that was. It is fortunate that local children have access to a wonderful natural asset for them to play in, as well as learning about their local environment.

Having been to two of your FOTH meetings, I have to say I'm really impressed with your dedication and enthusiasm, which has played a major role in transforming Troopers Hill and achieving five Green Flags. Your events and activities have certainly raised the profile of Troopers Hill over the years - "Well done to you all"

As with my previous role, I will be continuing to support local groups who wish to organise a community clean up, as well tackling environmental crime. If you wish to contact me at any time please email me on denise.james@bristol.gov.uk or alternatively call me on 0117 922 4726

Jules's Diary

Hello Troopers,

So here we are again at the Crimble edition. Is it just me or do they come round with increasing speed lately?



This last year seems to have been the year of the Step. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers have been working hard in a couple of nearby parks*, refurbishing and in some cases rediscovering, various flights of

steps as part of their NVQ courses and of course the Stepping Forward news (more of this elsewhere no doubt) means that The Hill will be 'easier on the foot' by this time next year, though those of us hoping for some type of 'electric stairway' (I won't say chair) may be somewhat disappointed.

*Dundridge: those ones that lead down through the woods to the stream and on to Conham car park.

*St Anne's Woods. Including a nice, possibly Victorian, possibly older, cobbled footpath.

As an aside... following a recent award by Bristol City Council, various requests have been received in the parks office for details of our "Acting Captains" from a few Euro countries (complete with offers of villas overlooking the Adriatic, Gibraltar Straits &c.)

Apart from that it seems to have been fairly quiet, Hill-wise. No huge traumatic changes, the usual events have taken place, the Flag still flies, the usual stalwarts have been doing their thing vis-a-vis litter collection after busy weekends (for which, and this is from the heart, I am very grateful!) A period of calm reflection, the Hill is good at these, (parks are generally aren't they?) in what seems to be turbulent times. The Hill really is a special place, not just for its nature and plants, or a gathering place for a chat with fellow users, but somewhere where one can sit quietly and let the elements blow away one's cares, and probably hat and brolly. Long may it continue. 'Ave a good 'un' cheers

jules

Dear Father Christmas,
I have been a very good Hill all year, providing food and shelter for many creatures, putting on wonderful displays of different shades of yellow, white and purple through the seasons, providing shelter and peace for people in the gully and great walks on my slopes. Please could you bring my Friends:
Extra helpers for work parties, events and planning,
Extra walk leaders for the St George Strollers
antiseptic wipes,
polystyrene cups,
loppers, litter pickers and bin bags for their work parties,
2nd class stamps,
A4 paper,
printer cartridges,
A4 laminating pouches
for their newsletters and posters,
Craft materials for children's events,
A litter bin outside the gate by the square chimney so the dog bin can be moved to the next entrance up on Troopers Hill Rd,
Vouchers, cheques or cash to buy any of these or hire experts, musicians or artists for events.
I promise to be a very good Hill all next year and to look after the improved steps and paths that my Friends are arranging for me.
Love and kisses, TH

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 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

www.troopers-hill.org.uk