

Friends of Troopers Hill - It's Your Neighbourhood 2023

1. Aims of the Project

Troopers Hill is a Local Nature Reserve extending over 21 acres (8.4 hectares) of acid heath and grassland on a pennant sandstone hillside overlooking the River Avon. This wild and romantic site supports rare plants and wildlife and provides local people with a space for relaxation and recreation. Friends of Troopers Hill is a community conservation group of primarily local residents, formed in December 2003 to:

- provide a friendly community focus for people who care about Troopers Hill
- undertake practical conservation tasks
- organise public events, including walks and talks
- work with Bristol City Council Parks department to ensure Troopers Hill is properly managed.

Our constitution is at <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/constitutionF.pdf>

2. Achievements since the IYN judging of 2022

In addition to our usual activities (see section 3), we have

- 1) succeeded in a grant application for £5,000 for winter conservation during the succeeding 2 winters.
- 2) identified the 84th species of bee to be recorded on Troopers Hill
- 3) carried out a community consultation repeating the questions, plus a few more, that were contained in a survey 20 years ago in 2002. The 2002 survey led to the formation of Friends of Troopers Hill and a "wish list" of projects, from a play area to improved access, seating and more. All items on that wish list that continued to have proven support had been completed. Quoting from the report of the results of the new survey "It would seem from this survey that by continuing to provide events and working with Bristol City Council on nature conservation, litter removal, maintenance and monitoring, we will be meeting the wishes of most of those people who have replied to our survey". The full detail of the 2002 and 2022 can be seen on www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan.htm#Survey2022.
- 4) created a new paper newsletter to reach more widely in that part of our community without internet access and for use at public events and in local business venues.
- 5) helped a local family to achieve their aim of having a memorial bench on Troopers Hill. We contacted the sponsors of another bench that was nearing the end of its life, for their permission to replace it. We agreed the bench design with Bristol City Council and their cost of installation. We ordered the bench manufacturers, checked delivery and installation, made payments and ensured everyone was kept informed, including the public to avoid concern about the removal of the old bench. The family was so pleased they made a donation towards our conservation work.
- 6) led corporate groups from DEFRA and the Environment Agency on nature conservation work parties.
- 7) welcomed school groups ranging for year 1 pupils from Summerhill Infants School taking a look at nature in their neighbourhood to year 12s from 4 Olympus Academy Trust secondary schools learning about nature conservation and its challenges carried out in this very urban environment.

3. What we have achieved since we started

In December 2003 paths were obscured under vegetation, large quantities of litter had accumulated, and, most importantly, scrub was invading the acid grass and heathland that justifies the Local Nature Reserve classification. Maintenance visits took place only for brief periods every 6-8 weeks.

Now the site is well managed according to a management plan <http://www.troopers-hill.org.uk/plan.htm> agreed with Bristol City Council. This plan links to the relevant sections of the UK and Bristol Biodiversity Action Plans. The latter is supported by bodies including Bristol City Council, Avon Wildlife Trust and Natural England.

The site achieved Green Flag status each year from 2007/8 to 2013/14. Bristol City Council no longer had staff resource to support the process so in 2014 we entered the Britain in Bloom South West Parks and Open Spaces scheme and received a gold award. In 2015 Troopers Hill was given the top level, 5 stars,

Pride in Parks award by Britain in Bloom South West. This was repeated in 2016 and in addition Troopers Hill was awarded the Suttons Seeds Cup for an outstanding area of nature conservation. We organise 2-3 work parties every month, mainly addressing encroaching scrub. Bristol City Council undertake machine-based maintenance, while Friends of Troopers Hill continue with manual tasks that would not otherwise be practicable, e.g. removing brambles growing in and around broom plants, and pulling out bracken amongst the heather, etc. Over 50 different local people have volunteered at our work parties and we now have ParkWork carrying out ½ a day of work per month. ParkWork help people who have difficulty finding employment by providing training in parks tasks while volunteering and are also working with students from Bristol City College.

In 2006, to preserve a boundary, 20 volunteers planted an 80-metre hedge of native species. Local residents were consulted about hedge management: the majority favoured cutting over hedge-laying. Volunteers hand-pruned the hedge annually until December 2012 when it was sufficiently mature for an annual flail cut by Bristol City Council.

We have over 2,600 Facebook, 1,300 Twitter and 827 Instagram followers and a free email newsletter which is opened by over 60% of recipients. We maintain an informative and regularly updated website www.troopers-hill.org.uk. The website is often a first point of contact for students seeking further information about Troopers Hill.

Notices and details of all the activities are physically posted on the site. For 2023 we are holding Zoom meetings for cold months and face to face meetings when it's warmer or our Annual General Meeting. To increase direct contact with our local community we have 3 "drop in" gazebo sessions a year on site. Our Ramblers Wellbeing Walks group, the St George Strollers, celebrated its 250th walk in May. The Strollers have walked more than 700 miles attended by more than 130 people. Last year in addition to our 3-mile/90-minute walks we introduced a 30-minute monthly "St George Park Stroll" which is greatly enjoyed by those with less walking ability. Photos on

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/wfhsusan/albums/72177720296067404>

In addition to work parties and regular meetings, we have organised around 160 free public events since 2004, including guided nature, history and geology walks, concerts, dog shows, tai chi classes, star gazing and craft activities for children and families. We provided virtual self-guided walks and a Zoom poetry workshop during Covid.

Since 2003 Friends of Troopers Hill have raised over £300,000 for different projects, ranging from a play area to paths, fencing and conservation work. A list of our funders and projects can be seen on www.troopers-hill.org.uk/grants.

We work closely with Bristol Parks, are members of the Bristol Parks Forum, and support the St George Community Association.

Troopers Hill is a venue for educational visits by primary school and 'A' level pupils. The site provides study material for University undergraduates and Ph D students.

Professor Jane Memmott of Bristol University, who presented the findings of the Urban Pollinator Project to parliament, wrote in a letter supporting our application for a Heritage Fund grant

"Troopers Hill is a very special site in Bristol for both wildlife and people."

4. What we are aiming for in the future

We will continue with conservation work and promoting Troopers Hill, particularly via events. Better dog control and reducing dog fouling will remain a priority. Both of these issues are visibly improving.

We have now achieved our "shopping list" of Troopers Hill's major needs. Our community survey, carried out in October to November 2022, showed that what remains is a need for continuous conservation and maintenance, with Bristol City Council and the volunteers playing their part. We succeeded in a bid for a £5,000 grant to fund winter conservation work over the winters 2022/23 and 2023/24. With the news last week that Bristol City Council have Countryside Stewardship funding we look forward to working with them on how this can best be applied to benefit Troopers Hill.

**First winter of 2 winters of conservation work funded by a
£5,000 BCC Climate and Ecological Emergency Community Grant**



This Dartford Warbler appreciating the habitat of Troopers Hill stayed right through the conservation work and finally left, perhaps overly disturbed by birders visiting from far and wide, in March

Copyright Duncan S Evered



Rare Nomad Bee recorded in Bristol for the first time ever

WEST COUNTRY | BEES | BRISTOL | NATURE | Monday 15 May 2023 at 3:13pm



Nomad Bee recorded in Bristol for the first time ever
Credit: Susan Acton Campell

Old Bench



Replacement



Issues 1 & 2 of our new paper newsletter



VOL. 1 ISSUE 1 • MAR 2023
SUPER TROOPER
Newsletter of Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve

Bringing the community together
BY SUSAN ACTON-CAMPBELL

In December 2022, Nina (age 9) and Arley (age 6) created their own newsletter, 'The Super Trooper' to celebrate the Hill. This inspired me to ask Ruth to volunteer as Editor of a new printed newsletter.

Nina and Arley were more than happy to let us use 'Super Trooper' to christen our new newsletter. 'Abba was the inspiration, and it felt right as the Hill is such a brilliant place for everyone', Nina explains.

The previous quarterly newsletter finished at the end of 2015 when the volunteer editor of 'The Hill', Kit Elliott, moved away. We hope this new newsletter will help further strengthen connections, as well as inspire you to get involved with many of the activities on the Hill.

We'd love to know what you think so please get in touch with the Editor with your comments.



Editorial
BY RUTH SEMPLE


My friend Lauren recently said that the Hill should be called 'Troopers' Hill' due to its healing powers. It's been a major part of my healing journey having been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia.

In the early days of the diagnosis, it was challenging to get out onto the Hill, but I always did. It soothed and calmed me so it was a no-brainer to volunteer as Editor!

It felt fitting that wellbeing should be the theme of this edition. I hope you enjoy it! Please get in touch with any comments or ideas for future editions.


0117 336 4015

SUPER TROOPER PAGE 01



VOL. 1 ISSUE 2 • JULY 2023
SUPER TROOPER
Newsletter of Troopers Hill Local Nature Reserve

From Hilltop to Heart: A Volunteer's Story
BY ROSIE TORRE



After retiring 11 years ago from my 20-year stint as a manager at Bristol Law Society, I had more time to spend on my own interests. Nature, and the Hill has always been very important to me.

I love joining the conservation parties. The fresh air, the sweeping views, the physicality, and the camaraderie - it's a real tonic. While I may not be the quickest or the strongest, as a team we help to preserve this special natural habitat.

Being on the Hill offers more than physical activity, it gives a sense of openness and health, and helps me stay grounded in the present. It's also a great opportunity to chat. We share laughs, stories, and knowledge, which creates real community.

One of my most memorable encounters was lifting a large piece of corrugated iron to reveal four beautiful grass snakes curled up asleep underneath. They vanished quickly, but the sight was unforgettable.

I highly recommend the events on the Hill, particularly the upcoming Bugs and Beasts event. It's not only great fun but a fantastic opportunity to appreciate our environment as a community.

Editorial
BY RUTH SEMPLE

Strolling over the Hill, butterflies dance around me, a testament to its thriving biodiversity. This heartwarming scene is thanks to dedicated volunteers like Rosie and our resident ecologist, Rupert. If their stories inspire you, join us in preserving this haven for wildlife. We can all make a difference!

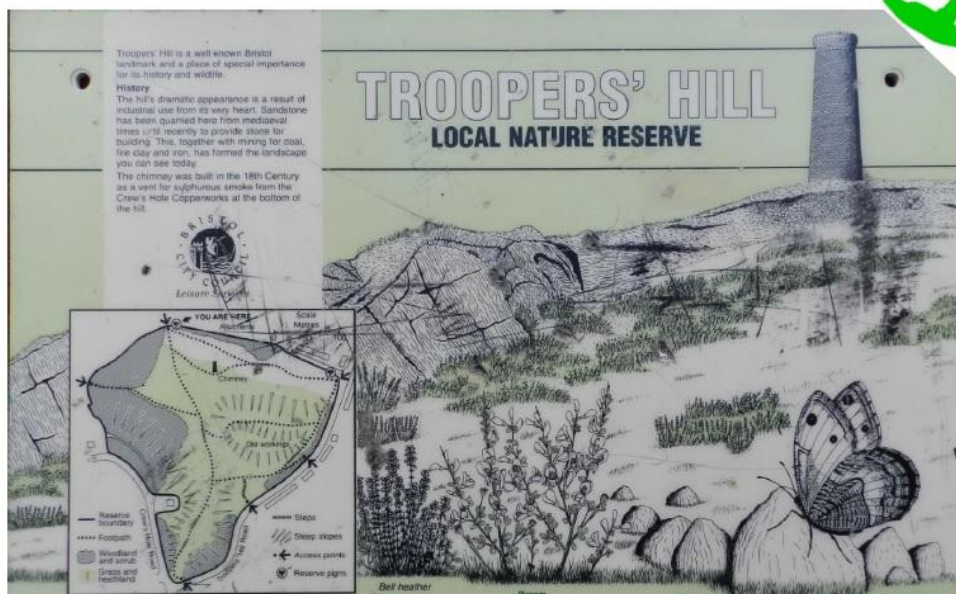
Don't miss our upcoming Bugs and Beasts event where you can discover the intriguing world of our Hill's smaller residents. It's an adventure you won't forget!

0117 336 4015

SUPER TROOPER Pride in Parks 2022 ★★★★★ PAGE 01

Survey Flyers Delivered to 2,000 households by volunteers

TROOPERS HILL – PLAN THE NEXT 20 YEARS



20 years ago 1,000 households around Troopers Hill were asked to complete a survey. This led to the start of Friends of Troopers Hill.

Please spend 5-10 minutes answering the questions on www.tinyurl.com/thtoday to guide Troopers Hill into the next 20 years.

Please contact Susan on 0117 947 5037 if you need a paper copy.

www.troopers-hill.org.uk

"DROP IN" GAZEBO

Sunday 2nd July 2.30pm-5pm

Questions about Troopers Hill?



DROP IN AND HAVE A CHAT
FREE CHALK FOR BUDDING ARTISTS

There are reports and photos of all our

Troopers Hill Bird Walks
Saturday 4th & Sunday 12th February 2023

A big thank you to Duncan Evered for leading two very informative walks on Troopers Hill and in the woodland learning more about birds and how to observe them.

Duncan grew up nearby and first learnt about birds visiting Troopers Hill and the area of thin scrub and rubble that is now Troopers Hill woodland. He has worked for over 20 years as a professional ornithologist (much of that time in the USA). Duncan has been recording his bird sightings at Troopers Hill on eBird over the past few months and offered to lead this walk after a chance meeting with Susan of Friends of Troopers Hill earlier in the year.

Saturday 4th February:

On a cloudy, but mild, February morning, with very little wind, we were surprised at the number of species that we saw or heard, the final total was 26. Duncan demonstrated the use of the Merin Bird ID app to help identify birds through their song, which confirmed a Coal Tit in the allotments.

There were many gulls flying south-west overhead and several magpies were building nests - we watched them bringing in building material. There were several great-tits and blue-tits, together with wrens and robins. A sparrow hawk was seen briefly, pursued by a crow. Later on Lamb Hill we saw two goldcrests and at the end of the walk a fieldfare was seen, and photographed by Duncan, on an apple tree at the edge of the Field.

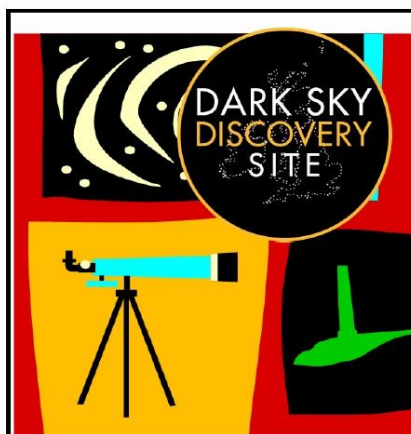
The highlight of the day though, was in the gully where a recent arrival at Troopers Hill - a Dartford Warbler - flew out of some heather and over the group. Later we both saw it and heard it in the gorse, while difficult to be sure there seemed to be at least two of them present. While these birds shelter in gorse, they also seem to need areas of heather, so it seems that the conservation management work carried out over the last 20 years - with the primary aim of protecting the heather and the heathland from encroaching scrub for invertebrates - has also benefited this species.

While numbers are increasing in the UK, the Dartford Warbler is still regarded as an Amber List species, as such its presence is suppressed so it is not listed on eBird, hence the list below shows 25 not 26 species. However, the presence of this bird at Troopers Hill is now well known via social media, so we have no concerns about mentioning it here.



events on our website

www.troopers-hill.org.uk/events



MARCH - one night only

STAR GAZING

with the
**BRISTOL
ASTRONOMICAL
SOCIETY**

Register your interest at

www.tinyurl.com/stargazing2023



Looking at Lichens

Guided Walk on
Sunday, 19th March
10.30am-noon

with expert Dr. David Hill
of the British Lichen Society

**FREE BUT PLACES MUST BE
BOOKED**

www.tinyurl.com/lichens2023

To be the first to know when bookings open for our events join the Friends of Troopers Hill emailing list. Just go to www.tinyurl.com/fothmail Mailings will include details of how to help the Hill at nature conservation work parties



www.troopers-hill.org.uk





Enjoy the many walks featured in this year's Bristol Walk Fest. Full details on

www.bristolwalkfest.com

To book your place(s) on the Troopers Hill History Walk for Sunday 7th May 10.30am-1pm visit www.tinyurl.com/thwalk2023



Supported by East Bristol Liveable Neighbourhood

FIND OUT MORE - MEETING
on Thursday 27th April 7.15pm-9pm
St Aidan's Church Hall meeting room, Fir Tree Lane
www.troopers-hill.org.uk/meetings

Book a place on a nature conservation work party
Visit www.tinyurl.com/thworkparty for more information



www.troopers-hill.org.uk



eventbrite

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Multiple dates

Troopers Hill Nature Conservation Work Parties

Many dates for 2 hours "green exercise" while helping maintain the mosaic of habitats needed by the wildlife of Troopers Hill's heathland.

Free

Select a date