



**Note of FOTH meeting Wednesday 5 April 2006
7.15pm Wesley Memorial Church, Bryants Hill**

Present: Susan Acton-Campbell (Chair), Rob Acton-Campbell, Sally, Val, Gillian, Helen, Liz R, Roy, Nick.

Apologies: Liz and Alan, Kit, Maureen, Tanya Darch, Caroline, Claire.

Outstanding actions and approve previous minutes

All but one action had been completed. Kelston Precision Gears had been approached but no response had been received. Gill reported that though she had sent Events dates to the Observer they had not been published. Liz said that the action noted for her (Barton Hill History Society Exhibition) had in fact been for Liz W. Minutes were approved with amendment.

Action for Chair to contact the Dogs Trust carried forward.

Feedback on

- **Troopers Hill exhibition.** Susan and Rob thanked FOTH members who had helped on the day. Although attendance had been low, the visitors to the exhibition had been very interested and enthusiastic and some donations had been collected.

- **Barton Hill History Society exhibition:** FOTH had contributed a stand to the exhibition at Bethesda on Church Road. The exhibition had been very successful, attracting over 150 people, many of whom had spoken with Liz W and Alan. The event produced some valuable contacts.

- **Riversway Nursing Home slide show:** An audience of around a dozen (including residents and their visitors, many of whom were local) had been most appreciative of the slides and videos showing the natural and industrial history of the hill, the story of the bench, and events including the school project and Bath House visit.

- **MOD step repairs:** Despite a wet day the team-building exercise had been successful in re-aligning the step timbers. FOTH had paid for the timber and would reclaim the cost from Caroline.

Action: Chair to e-mail Val the address for invoice: Val to invoice Richard Fletcher for £105 in addition.

- **Women who Make a Difference:** Sally had nominated Susan for an award presented in this category on International Women's day. Liz R had attended the presentation on Susan's behalf. Rob read the citation and a photograph of the event was passed around for viewing.

- **Royate Hill Film show** - A film recording events surrounding the defence of Royate Hill against development had been made and shown recently by the Royate Hill LNR group. An interesting feature of the protest had been the extent of active and effective support by Bristol City Council that resulted in the site being preserved and subsequently designated as a local nature reserve. A copy of the DVD was available for FOTH members to borrow – see Rob.

Action: Sally to send copy of the DVD to Phyll. Rob and Kit to liaise on posting a link to the DVD on FOTH website. Sally to contact TV or radio programmes that might be interested.

Any issues on Troopers Hill to be passed to Caroline/Claire

The fence alongside Troopers Hill Road had broken beneath the weight of spoil from badger setts in the bank. The Greendown contractors' gate had been damaged when an attempt was made to get a motorbike through it. Rob suggested there might be an opportunity for mending it on one weekday evening. Roy circulated a number of photographs among which the

original (1994?) gate and fence were clearly shown. The kissing gate by the lower chimney stack had been lifted off its hinges; Rob and Susan had replaced it and noted that the gate post was becoming rotten.

Liz R observed that where Council contractors had trimmed trees adjacent to her house they may have broken the fence by pushing the clippings through it.

The FOTH litter pick had recovered a large amount of litter even though litter picking was supposed to be one of the contractors' functions.

Feedback and plans for work parties

The March work party had removed brambles from amongst a stand of broom near to the lower chimney stack. A common lizard had been sighted during the morning.

During the April work party, Kit had taken three loads of rubbish to the skip located at Eastwood Farm including concrete blocks, pallets and a number of carpet tiles (some were retained on the Hill as potential reptile habitat). Several sacks of lager cans had been collected and recycled. Pippa Miller from Radio Bristol had participated in the work and had recorded interviews for a broadcast on volunteers working with nature in Bristol.

The next work party would take place on 6 May. The regular morning activities would concentrate on removing holm oak and bramble from "Sally's glade" and the main event would be an all-day bench-making workshop. Most of the places were filled but there was a possibility that a limited number of half-day slots could still be accommodated. Rob would be testing the depth of soil for practicability at the suggested new bench locations (entrance from lower woodland into "Sally's glade"; by the buddleia part way up the steps leading from the lower chimney stack; top of the recently restored middle steps leading up from Troopers Hill Road, by the stand of bracken).

Action: Sally to organise a youth group work party to make a bench. Chair and WPO to check suitability of bench locations with Troopers Hill Road residents.

YANSEC – match funding: (see also minutes from 19 January 2006) Rob circulated photographs of the proposed route. The Council's Hard Works Officer, Adrian Oakley, had inspected the site. The surface would probably have to consist of crushed sandstone. An eroded patch in front of the bench overlooking Crews Hole Woodland, and the path alongside Troopers Hill Field could be improved at the same time. This could also be expected to remove the puddle under the gate between Malvern Road and The Field. The Council would provide 10% match funding.

Action: Chair or WPO to write to YANSEC concerning the proposed variation to the original terms of the grant.

Events planning

- **Good Friday Service 14 April** FOTH to maintain a presence, gazebo and display boards.

Actions: Obtain business card from mobile PA operator, with a view to arranging PA for 1 July. Ensure Kit & Helen have gazebo etc and know how to operate gates.

- **Hencliffe Wood (Avon valley) 25 April** Nick invited FOTH members to a guided walk of ecological interest. The walk would begin at 6.00 pm starting from the Conham Road car park.

- **Dawn Chorus Walk 7 May – International Dawn Chorus Day.** The walk, to be led by John Tully, would start at 0630 am. It would be preceded by "An Introduction to Bird Song" in Bishopsworth on Tuesday 18 April. Rob demonstrated examples of posters on the Birds in Bristol theme.

- **Moth Magic 26 May:** Bristol and District Moth Group had asked to return to the Hill, earlier in the year for this visit, hoping to find different species of moths from last time. The event would begin at 9.30 pm and would be publicised by labels added to the events leaflets for distribution between now and the event.

- **Friday 14 September 2006** would mark the 50th anniversary of Trooper's Hill being in the ownership of Bristol Council. It was thought that a fitting way to mark the occasion would be to make a photographic record of how the Hill looks now, taken from many different aspects, possibly with a competition for a prize.

Action: Eventual newsletter article.

Networking

- **Avon Valley Partnership meeting 24/4** - Sally said the meeting had been cancelled.

- **Breathing Spaces:** This initiative had arisen via BBC "Springwatch" – a series which records the phenology of the changing seasons – and was aimed at encouraging wider participation in local community action to improve green spaces, with a link to the Festival of Nature in June. Breathing Spaces were keen to develop links with sites where volunteers were already active, and to gather personal accounts of volunteering.

Action: Chair to ring Breathing Spaces, Sally to provide e-mail address.

Badocks Wood Sally circulated information on Badock's Wood LNR, which was offering FOTH and other LNR groups a reciprocal visit, guided walk and a chance to exchange ideas on 11 May – a good time to view the bluebells.

Manor Woods Valley in Bishopsworth would be hosting a visit on Thursday 1 June – a good time to see the wild flower meadow that is a feature of the Valley.

Action: those wishing to attend either event to liaise with Rob and Susan over car sharing arrangements.

Nature in the City Update

Sally thanked the Chair for the letter of support for her post which, if the application was successful, would be funded for a further two years.

- **BRERC Survey** – Sally reported that a condition survey of Troopers Hill undertaken in July 2005 by Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre had assigned an overall grade of A+ in recognition of the range of interesting grassland and heathland plants and the positive management of the site. A copy of the report was circulated.

Nick gave a short introduction to BRERC, which collects, stores and distributes environmental information in the former Avon area. He emphasised BRERC's interest in sightings and demonstrated a form that FOTH members could use to record wildlife observations either on paper or online at www.brerc.org.uk. The form required a grid reference and it was suggested that a standard reference be established for use by FOTH.

Action: Nick to consider producing a plan of Troopers Hill showing the reference grid lines.

In addition, he circulated an interesting photograph of a colourful moss (*Polytrichum juniperum*) growing on the hill that he had taken during the previous Saturday's working party. He mentioned the existence of Bristol Naturalists' Society who would welcome new members.

Nick also referred to Troopers Hill being under consideration for designation as a Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Site (RIGGS).

- **Photo survey** – A photographic survey of Troopers Hill had been taken from 36 locations every other year over the last ten years. It was proposed that Friends could continue the survey for this year with volunteer resource and so release funding for other purposes. The photographs could be taken during a work party – depending on weather. It was considered possible to identify the fixed locations from previous photographs, and this would be made easier by the advent of digital cameras.

Action Rob and Nick to liaise over photography arrangements. Anyone interested in participating to contact Rob.

- **Insect survey:** Sally reported the availability of £500 arising from the saving on the photographic survey to commission a further survey by David Gibbs (author of the report on the rare bee and other insects on Troopers Hill). A reply was awaited.

- **Status on leaflets:** Sally confirmed that funding for leaflets had been re-included in the grant application. She drew attention to the Royate Hill leaflet which might be a suitable example to follow in terms of style and content.

- **Purple Prowl:** Sally confirmed that Libby Houston, an expert on grasses, would attend the walk and provide commentary not only on grasses but on interesting plants in general.

Living Rivers and September Walk: Item adjourned to future meeting.

Budget: Discussion deferred to a separate meeting.

Action: all interested to attend a budgeting meeting (see below)

Newsletter Thanks and admiration were expressed to Kit on the new format of the newsletter. Kit was seeking contributions from different authors.

Action: all to consider providing articles for the newsletter.

Date of Next meeting:

Budget meeting Wednesday 10 May 2006, Rob and Susan's house, 7.00 pm

Regular meeting Thursday 18 May 2006, Wesley Memorial Church.