



Future plans

Medway Council is working with the Friends of Broomhill on a variety of schemes to bring additional funding into Broomhill Park.

The plans are at early stage, but include measures to improve the children's play area, open up the views so that, as previously, both rivers can be seen and to improve the wildlife habitats on the site. We will then apply for a viewpoint mark on Ordnance Survey maps. Plans drawn up for the site will be sent to local residents for full consultation before any work is done.

If you are a regular visitor to Broomhill Park and would like to become involved in improving the site or take part in the consultation process, please contact the Friends of Broomhill.



The Friends of Broomhill

The Friends were inaugurated in 2006 and are actively involved in promoting knowledge of Broomhill, working to keep the park a welcoming area for everyone and raise as much money as possible to fulfil these aims. We work with the police to combat vandalism and anti-social behaviour and



Medway Council to ensure it is safe and tidy. We have achieved much by talking to the council, such as upgrading footpaths, installation of improved signage, bollards and gates.

We have regular task days throughout the year, occasional events and an annual Funday Sunday in June. See the Greenspaces *Your guide to our events* www.medway.gov.uk/greenspace for dates and times, or visit www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk. Contact the secretary for membership details or any information you have about the hill.

Contact:

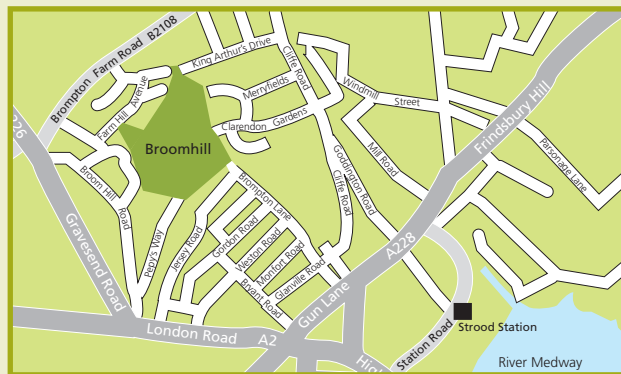
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Location map



Text © Odette Buchanan 2008

Broomhill

Strood's hidden gem



www.friendsofbroomhill.org.uk



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Broomhill Park



Broomhill is Strood's hidden gem; although it is one of the highest points in Medway, even local residents are often unaware of its existence.

Broomhill is a quiet local park full of interesting flora and fauna, easily accessible to all, with ample parking. The park is a popular area for dog walkers and has the only fitness trail in Medway. Home-made jam and chutney enthusiasts visit to take advantage of the rich and varied fruits available, including damsons, blackberries, elderberries and rose hips to name but a few.

There is a toddlers' fenced soft play area and seats at vantage points around the park. Societies and groups interested in nature, painting and photography find plenty of inspiration. The park is an excellent kite-flying area and good for tobogganing when it snows.

At the summit you can see the River Medway downstream to Sheerness and upstream to Blue Bell Hill. Turn around and glimpsed through the trees is the River Thames up as far as the Cliffe and Higham marshes.



Broomhill history

Broomhill is part of the North Downs ridge of chalk that finished on the Hoo Peninsular and was formed in the cretaceous period. If you are lucky you may find pre-historic fossils, especially oyster shells, deposited in the ancient sea.

Chalk was quarried at Broomhill from Roman times until the middle of the 20th century. There were also several lime kilns on the site from the Middle Ages, which were in use until the 19th century.

Evidence has been found at Piper's House Farm that the chalk pits were used as refuges by ancient Britons when under attack. An Anglo-Saxon grave was found on the site.

Throughout history, the summit has been used strategically in battle. British tribes massed on the hill ready to swoop on the Romans in AD43 but Roman strategy outfoxed them.

In 1264 Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester and leader of the 2nd Barons' uprising, used Broomhill to plan his strategy for capturing Rochester Castle. When the Thomas Wyatt rebellion of 1554 against Queen Mary marrying Philip of Spain failed, Norfolk and royalists escaped over the hill to Gravesend.

During the time of the Spanish Armada, Broomhill was part of the chain of early warning beacons set up from strategic points along the south coast.

In 1606 James I and his family showed off Chatham Dockyard to King Christian IV of Denmark from the hill and 40 years later, during the Civil War, Cromwell's troops were ambushed on it before they eventually captured Rochester.



German plane crash

During the Second World War, a German Messerschmitt plane crashed on the hill.



The wounded pilot was helped by a young woman before being taken to Chatham police station by the Home Guard, followed by an angry crowd of housewives wielding brooms and spades. In 1955, the pilot returned to thank the doctor who treated him and the girl who had helped him.

Several skeletons believed to be 1657 spotted fever victims, both sailors and Strood residents on whom they were billeted, have been found.

Until recently, travellers on the London to Dover Road would pass over the hill, permitting them a panoramic view north and south. Artist Turner spent a lot of time on the hill painting views from it, Hogarth sketched it and John Cobbett refers to it in his writing.

In the early 19th century, navvies tunnelled under Broomhill to construct the Gravesend to Strood canal, which was subsequently filled in and is now used for the railway line. The site was also home to six windmills until the 20th century.

After the First World War, allotments were plotted out and sold, some are still there. Housing development had also begun to creep up the hill.

After the Second World War, prefabs were built on the top of the hill. When they were demolished in the 1960s the summit was declared a park, preventing further incursion on one of Medway's green spaces.