

## 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. The immediate impression when you first go to the park is one of surprise, as you probably hadn't realised it was there.

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 trim trail in Medway. Home-made jam and chutney enthusiasts visit in season to take advantage of the rich and varied fruits available, including damsons, blackberries, elderberries, rose hips to name but a few.

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

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

## Future Plans

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

The plans are at a very early stage but include measures to improve the children's play area, open up the views so that both rivers can be seen and to improve the wildlife habitats on the site. We will then for a viewpoint mark on Ordnance Survey maps. Any 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 participate in the consultation process please contact the Friends of Broomhill.



Farm Hill Avenue entrance

King Arthur's Drive entrance

Clarendon Drive pedestrian entrance



## Broomhill History

Broomhill is part of the North Downs ridge of chalk that finishes on the Hoo Peninsular and was formed in the cretaceous period. If you are lucky you may find prehistoric fossils, especially oyster shells, washed up by the sea that used to cover the area.

Chalk was quarried at Broomhill from Roman times until the last quarry was closed in the middle of the 20th century. There were also several lime kilns on the site from the Middle Ages which were still 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 which contained a spearhead, knife and bronze ring set with an amethyst which can be seen in Rochester Museum.

Through history, the summit has been used strategically in battle. Legend has it that Bodecia and the Iceni massed ready to swoop on the Romans as they sent their advance guard wading across the Medway.

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 rebellion in 1554 against Queen Mary marrying Philip of Spain failed, Norfolk and other 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, criss-crossing Sussex, Surrey and Kent to London.

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



## Broomhill History Continued...

Several skeletons have been discovered on Broomhill, it is believed they were victims of the spotted fever of 1657, infected sailors had been billeted on Strood residents.

Until recently, no one could travel between London and Dover without crossing the hill. Turner spent a lot of time on the hill painting views from it, Hogarth sketched it and John Cobbett refers to it in his writings.



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 6 windmills on all sides of the hill until the beginning of the 20th Century.



After the 1st World War, allotments were plotted out and sold, some are still there. By this time housing development had also begun to creep up the hill.

In more recent times, during the 2nd 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 with fixed bayonets, 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



After the war, prefabs were built on the top of the hill. It was when they were demolished in the 1960's that the summit was declared a park to prevent any further incursion on one of Medway's green spaces.



## The Friends of Broomhill

The Friends are actively involved in working to keep the area clear and tidy and to move forward our vision plan.

Since our inauguration two years ago, we have already managed to up grade footpaths, installed improved signage and fitted bollards and gates to combat vandalism. We work closely with the Neighbourhood police to combat vandalism and anti-social behaviour.



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