



## NEWSLETTER

### Issue No. 22 May 2009

#### **Birds**

There is a good variety of wild birds to be seen on and near Hob Moor. The following birds have been seen on the Moor or in gardens adjoining it in the last few years. If you have seen other birds, then do please let us know via the website or phone 784616. We are always pleased to hear from members, so let us know what birds are missing from this list of 46. It would be particularly interesting to know if anyone has seen a kingfisher lately as none of the committee has.

Bullfinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Siskin, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Whitethroat, Longtailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Starling, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Fieldfare, Redwing, Mistle Thrush, Dunnock, Wren, Robin, House Sparrow, Goldcrest, Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Pied Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, Treecreeper, Kingfisher, Common Gull, Black Headed Gull, Mallard, Canada Goose, Skylark, Meadow Pippit, Carrion Crow, Magpie, Jackdaw, Pheasant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Tawny Owl, Swift, Swallow, House Martin.

#### **Soils at Hob Moor are fascinating too!**

(Malcolm Cresser, Professor of Environmental Science at York University, has very kindly written the following piece for the Newsletter, for which we are grateful).

Most people who enjoy walking or cycling across Hob Moor will not spare a thought for the soils that support the diversity of vegetation and associated insects, butterflies and birds, nor what it was that led to the ridge and furrow creation in the past. The muddy soil at the exit via North Lane Pasture is unlikely to stimulate enthusiasm! However, to a research team from the Environment Department at the University of York, the diversity of the soils there, and how each functions, is every bit as exciting as the above-ground biota; they are particularly interested in how the natural cycling and recycling of the nutrient element nitrogen works at the site, and how much of the nutrient can drain to the adjacent beck and to ground water.

The management strategy at Hob Moor aims to maintain a low nutrient status grassland, but this is difficult when atmospheric pollution brings in about 25 kg of nitrogen per hectare per year, perhaps a tenth of what a farmer might add elsewhere to fertilize a high yielding crop! Back in 2004 the group estimated there was 12.5 tonnes of nitrogen per hectare to 36 cm depth. That's about one and a quarter kilograms for each square metre, almost all stored in relatively stable soil organic matter. Of particular interest is how long this sink can be maintained and how soil micro-organisms that can convert organic nitrogen to ammonium and nitrate are behaving.

The work has led to several useful discoveries, including the fact that ammonium is much more mobile in water draining through or from such soils than previously thought, and that in the first rain after prolonged dry periods much of the nitrate flush that occurs is from stored nitrate rather than an instant burst of microbial activity as many believe. Soil carbon-to-nitrogen ratio is important to the mobility of mineral nitrogen species. The ratios at Hob Moor are very low because of the atmospheric pollution, so soil organic matter is being mineralized at depth below the rooting zone, contributing to nitrogen leaching losses to waters in the area. Most recent work is suggesting too that, in cold winters, the ammonium and nitrate leaching from soil is predominantly stored pollution, rather than from conversion of the soil's organic nitrogen.

So if you have ever wondered what that strange tall chap is doing on the moor with studenty-types (Muhammad Riaz, Ishaq Mian or Ambreen Bhatti), digging holes or collecting soil with a screw auger, now you know; but do feel free to come up and ask questions, or if you'd like more detail contact Malcolm Cresser by e-mail on [msc5@york.ac.uk](mailto:msc5@york.ac.uk).

### **In Search of the Water Mill**

In the medieval period, a water mill is known to have existed on Hob Moor. The first record of it is in 1563 when there was a reference to a "mylne called Hobmylne and a close.....conteyning by estymacon twoo acres of land" It was later called Folly Mylne. As well as being used for milling, it was also used to house plague victims in the 17th century. By 1723, the building is recorded as being "down". We felt pretty certain that the mill must have been on the Triangle as:

it is 2 acres in size

it belonged to the City of York

it was bounded by streams.

The question was, could we find it?

There are also references to eight people who died on the Moor of the plague and were buried there. Were there any bodies to be found?

We reported in last spring's Newsletter that we had carried out a geophysical survey on the Triangle to see if we could find any traces of structures, major disturbances etc. Unfortunately, due mainly to the large amount of work that had been done after the war to deepen and straighten the streams, the results were inconclusive. Also, we were not able to survey the whole area due to the number of trees, shrubs and in particular brambles.

Friends of Hob Moor (FoHM) had a site meeting with Jon Oxley, the City of York Archaeologist, and he felt that if a mill had existed in this area, then it was likely to be in the very north-eastern corner, at the confluence of Holgate Beck and the two streams that bound the Triangle.

So, in October, commissioned by FoHM, York based On-site Archaeology dug an exploratory 2m x 1m x 1m trench into the north tip of the Triangle. We chose the lowest part of the land as it seemed less disturbed by the recent culverting of the streams. It was also as close as we could get to the confluence of the two streams that bound the Triangle.

The results of the dig showed that 95% of the area excavated was modern in-fill. This included bricks, tarmac and even crisp packets! So it is likely to have been post-1960s. However, amongst the modern rubbish there were a number of roof tiles, which by their style and number, indicated a substantial pre-1800 structure. As no other pre-20th century building existed in the area, they are likely to have come from the water mill.

Even though they dug down 1.2m in places, the archaeologists didn't hit "natural" earth ie undisturbed by human activities. About 1m down they did find evidence of stream sediment and an old water course which ran through where part of the dig was.

In conclusion, we didn't find the water mill. We did find clear evidence of a significant building of the right date in the vicinity. There was also evidence of water management as the water course we found was in a different position to the existing streams. This would also point to the nearby presence of the mill.

Is it worth doing any further investigation? As we found disturbance over 1m down, it appears likely that any structural evidence is very likely to have been destroyed during culverting, local housebuilding and the development of the golf course between the wars. Evidence may exist, but we would probably have to dig very large holes before we found it. And no, we didn't find any bodies either!

### **Litter**

There has been a general blitz on removing litter from Hob Moor and Probation Services did a two hour litter pick in March. If you would like to help to keep Hob Moor tidy by picking up litter when you are on the Moor, you can get a litter picker from Madeline Evans ([mae@madelineevans.com](mailto:mae@madelineevans.com) or 784274).

### **Re-Profiling**

Further re-profiling of damage caused by the cattle and farm vehicles during the winter of 2007/2008 will be done in late spring. Areas by the gate between Hob Moor and North Lane Pasture and by the Green Lane access gate will be levelled and reseeded.

### **Dogs**

Most of the people who walk on Hob Moor do so to exercise their dogs. There has been a welcome increase in the amount of dog waste that is bagged and binned and we are doing our best to get the bins emptied more regularly. Please ring York Pride on 551551 if you see a bin that needs emptying. Apart from the health hazards caused by dog waste left on the Moor, its fertilising effect is changing the chemical composition of the soil over time, which in turn determines the diversity of plants that grow on the Moor, so it's important to pick it all up.

### **In Brief**

- One of the two magnificent Beech trees by the entrance from Holly Bank Road had to be felled. It was suffering from Meripilus Giganteus, a fungal growth which rots the tree's roots, making it unstable. The Council acted very quickly and the 100ft tree was taken down in October.
- As part of the York Cares project, five solicitors from Rollins volunteered and took down the fencing no longer needed to protect the cluster of trees and three individual trees near the Triangle.
- The number of cows grazing on the Moor this year will be greatly reduced in order to maintain a better balance in the Moor's natural ecosystem.
- Japanese knotweed on Hob Moor – the Council intends to begin the lengthy process of dealing with this invasive weed.
- A photo album has been compiled for display at Hob Moor Day.

- Local M.P. Hugh Bayley visited Hob Moor to learn about the work and concerns of FoHM.
- FoHM are producing a new colour leaflet – “A Walk Round Hob Moor”.
- It is hoped to commission a new survey of the ecology and wildlife of the Moor from Martin Hammond, a local expert, in the near future. This would update the survey he carried out in 2000 and his findings would provide the basis for managing the Moor.

**Don't forget –**

**HOB MOOR DAY**

**Saturday, 23 May 2009**

(behind the Baths)

**2.00 – 4.30pm**

Falconry Display – Fun Dog Show – Music  
Crafts – Bouncy Castle – Climbing Frame

Refreshments

**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS ETC.**

To report damage etc. urgently on Hob Moor (24 hours)	625751
To report motor cyclists on Hob Moor, contact Police	0845 6060247
For removal of fly-tipped debris, litter, graffiti etc. – York Pride	551551
Emergencies regarding health and safety of cattle	01423 869502
<b>Don't forget to contact us with your comments and suggestions about Hob Moor, Little Hob Moor and our Group</b>	<b>784616</b>
-or you can contact us by email at <a href="mailto:friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com">friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com</a>	
Our website is <a href="http://www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk">www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk</a> or <a href="http://www.fohm.org.uk">www.fohm.org.uk</a>	

## EVENTS ON HOB MOOR IN 2009

### **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May**

10.00am – 11.30am

Meet at Edmund Wilson Baths  
car park

### **Wild Birds on Hob Moor**

Join this enjoyable and informative stroll to look out for the many birds that live on and around Hob Moor, and maybe even hear the rare and beautiful song of the skylark.

This is a joint walk with the Friends of West Bank Park.

### **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May**

2.00 – 4.30pm

Behind Edmund Wilson Baths

### **Hob Moor Local Nature Reserve Day**

A great afternoon out, with lots of activities for all the family: a falconry display; fun dog show; willow weaving; face painting; story telling; refreshments; stalls and more.

### **Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> May**

2.00pm – 4.00pm

Meet at North Lane access to  
Hob Moor (Chase Side Court)

### **Hob Moor in Spring**

Come and join this entertaining and informative walk, during which we shall be discovering the spring wildlife on the moor, including some folklore and local plant names, and perhaps carrying out an investigation! Bring a camera, if you have one.

### **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup>**

#### **September**

8.00pm – 9.00pm

Meet at Edmund Wilson Baths  
car park

### **Bat Walk**

Discover the secrets of the moor at dusk! Come and spot the bats that come out just when you thought there was nothing to see on the moor. You'll need a torch, suitable footwear and warm clothes.

Please book onto this event through AnneMarie Heslop:  
07767 318103 or [annemarie.heslop@york.gov.uk](mailto:annemarie.heslop@york.gov.uk)

### **Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October**

7.00pm – 8.00pm

Meet Edmund Wilson Baths  
car park

### **Haunted Hob Moor**

Leading this walk will be famous storyteller and poet, Adrian Spendlow. As we plunge into the dark, eerie silence of Hob Moor, Adrian will tell us stories of ghosts and times gone by. It will be a walk you will never forget.

Don't forget your torch. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Not recommended for under 8s.

Please book onto this event through AnneMarie Heslop:  
07767 318103 or [annemarie.heslop@york.gov.uk](mailto:annemarie.heslop@york.gov.uk)

Please note that walks will not take place if it is raining heavily.

Website: [www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk](http://www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk) Email: [friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com)

*For removal of fly-tipped debris, contact York Pride on 551551.*