



## NEWSLETTER

### Issue No. 25 September 2010

The Moor has been through several different guises this summer with the late arrival of the cows in June allowing the grass to grow long through the early months. Then at the end of July the central part of the Moor was cut to limit the spread of thistles, making it seem suddenly bald and more expansive. With 60 cows still cropping the Moor, the grass remains very short.

The disappearance of the Edmund Wilson baths has made a big difference to the skyline at the western edge of the Moor and we wait to see what the new Lidl building will look like. The trees at that edge of the Moor have not been affected by the demolition works (thankfully now silent) and Lidl has guaranteed their continued existence.

The football pitches are no longer being mown and will be allowed to become part of the Moor again and both sets of goal posts have now been removed. Other pitches have been made available on the Knavesmire for the teams who used them. Since the closing of the entrance at the Edmund Wilson car park, far fewer people have been walking along the path from that entrance across the Moor and it has quickly become much narrower with the edges already grassed over. A new access gate will be built as part of the supermarket development. With regular rainfall over the summer, none of the paths has become bare or wide.

### **Cows**

There have been 60 Aberdeen Angus crosses on the Moor this year, rather more than would usually be the case, to compensate for their late arrival and to crop the grass quickly. They have been gentle beasts unphased by dogs and people, although they did get excited when some boys chased them soon after their arrival and they galloped around for fifteen minutes or so before calming down. Now that the contract with the grazier has been settled, the cattle should be on the Moor earlier next year at the beginning of May, or even earlier, depending on the weather.

### **Flora and Fauna**

For the first time in many years there have been no skylarks nesting on the Moor over the summer. Two males were on the Moor in the spring, the first appearing in early March, but they had disappeared by early May. One did reappear in the summer but this was too late to breed and he went away, probably finding no female. This is very sad as the bird is so emblematic of the Moor and we can only hope they return and manage to breed next year. One of the problems is that without the cows coming on early enough, the grass gets too long for the birds to nest, but this should not be the case next spring.

The kestrel has continued to be a regular visitor and can often be seen hovering over the Moor and a there has been a first sighting of a snipe. We would love to hear of any animals or birds that you see on the Moor or of any plants you have found. In particular information about fungi or photographs which could be put on the website would be welcome. Last autumn there were a lot of different types of fungus on the Moor, but as far as we know, none of them has been recorded. Please contact Gwen or David on 788018 or use the contact details at the end of the newsletter.

Putting sheep on the Moor has been mooted as there are Shetland and Hebridean sheep on Strensall Common but although we would all love to see (and hear) them, the absence of secure fencing and the presence of so many dogs makes this impossible on Hob Moor.

## **Thistles**

With the grazing now set up with a new farmer and new contracts, there should be no problem (fingers crossed) with the cattle coming onto the Moor next year in time to graze the grass short by the time the thistles are growing. This will mean that the thistles will stand proud and the thistle management programme can be implemented, using selectively applied weedkiller. The reduction of the ever-encroaching thistles is an important aspect of making the Moor more attractive to skylarks by increasing the area of possible nesting sites.

## **News in Brief**

- ❖ Along with the Council, the Friends have paid for two new benches which have now been installed, one by the hawthorn next to the path across the middle of the Moor and the other near the southern edge. They are already well used. The worn-away area underneath the bench near the Hob Moor School entrance has been filled.
- ❖ The application for the Stewardship scheme (outlined in the last newsletter) has been submitted but as yet there is no news of its progress.
- ❖ The Friends' new four-page colour leaflet about Hob Moor has now been printed and distributed to houses surrounding the Moor. It has a map of the Moor and takes you on a guided walk highlighting some of the key features to look out for. The leaflets are also available at Acomb and Dringhouses Libraries and will be available at the AGM in October should you not already have one. The leaflet can also be downloaded from the Friends website.
- ❖ It has been confirmed that the Catholic Church is going to close Our Lady's Primary School and sell the land on which it stands on the north-west edge of the Moor. As this intrudes far more into the Moor than the Edmund Wilson site, we shall monitor carefully any proposals for its development.

## **Past Events**

- ❖ Mark Tyzka lead another of his interesting and well-attended walks on the Moor, this year concentrating on bugs and beasties.
- ❖ Hob Moor Day was unfortunately cancelled after consultation with the Friends because of a forecast of torrential rain which would have made activities such as the bird display, climbing wall and bouncy castle unsafe and therefore unavailable. But West Bank Park Summer Fair went ahead in hot sunshine with a great attendance despite competition from football. The Friends' gazebo displaying pictures of the Moor and information about it was well visited.

- ❖ Margaret Weeden's bird walk in May was also jinxed by the weather, which was very windy. This meant that there were very few birds to be seen or heard although we did hear a blackcap. We were not disappointed at the absence of skylarks, since it had unfortunately already been a good two weeks since anyone had seen or heard one on the Moor. Margaret will no longer be conducting the bird walks and we'd like to thank her for the many walks she's lead. If there's a Member who's a twitcher who would like to lead a walk, we'd love to hear from you.
- ❖ Martin Hammond, who has recently produced a report on the Moor with recommendations for its management, lead 11 people round the Moor early one evening at the end of May while he discussed the ecology of the Moor and issues and recommendations to preserve its Local Nature reserve status. With the cold winter and late spring, everything was two to three weeks later than usual, so we were not able to see as many plants in flower as Martin had hoped. One of the issues he feels strongly about is the increasing fertility of the soil of the Moor, and the contribution played by one of the perennial topics of the newsletter:

## Dogs

Hob Moor continues to be well used by dog walkers more of whom are picking up their pooches' poop. Sometimes we wish the council was as good at emptying the bins. There is still a lot of dog waste being left, however, and we would welcome any suggestions as to how to make more people aware of the consequences of leaving it. Some people don't realise how important it is for the ecology of the Moor to pick up after their dog. Dog faeces (and urine - but there's nothing that can be done about that) contribute to the increased fertility of the Moor and this in turn determines the kind of plants that grown on it. Wild plants and flowers need a soil of low fertility to thrive; if the soil is too fertile they are outnumbered by stronger plants which benefit from higher nutrient levels, especially nitrogen. Dog faeces are far more nutrient-rich than cow pats. Having cows process the grass is much better than leaving the grass to rot down itself; in fact without the cows the grass would have to be mown and taken away to prevent its decay increasing the fertility of the soil.

Of course dog faeces also can carry harmful organisms, principally Toxocariasis, caused by contact with faeces carrying eggs of the parasite which can last for up to 24 months. Frequently the infection is contracted through the hands, but can also be caught through contact with objects such as the wheels of toys and soles of shoes. It mainly affects children aged between 18 months and 5 years, producing eye disorders in particular with other symptoms including vague aches, dizziness, nausea, asthma and even epileptic fits.

## Memberships

As we described in the last newsletter, changes to the way you can pay your membership subscriptions will be proposed at the AGM, so new memberships will run from November 1st. To remind you the options proposed are:

Annual membership	£2 (unchanged)
Six year membership	£10
Life membership	£20

We will be sending out renewal notices after the AGM.

We always welcome any members to the work of the Committee.  
Please come to any of our meetings if you are at all interested:  
contact David or Gwen on 788018

COMING SOON

**Tuesday 26th October: A Hallowe'en Walk on Hob Moor**

Leading this walk will be famous storyteller and poet, **Adrian Spendlow**.

Remember your torch.

All children must be accompanied by an adult. Not recommended for the under 8s

Booking essential: contact Jennifer Cairns: 07833 436832 or [jennifer.cairns@york.gov.uk](mailto:jennifer.cairns@york.gov.uk)

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at 7.30pm**

**West Thorpe Methodist Church, West Thorpe.**

(Parking available)

Before the business part of the meeting there will be talk about bats by Nancy Irwin, a bat researcher at York University

**USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS**

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

Contact us with comments and suggestions about Hob Moor and the Friends:

phone: 784616

email: [friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com)

website: [www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk](http://www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk) or [www.fohm.org.uk](http://www.fohm.org.uk)