



NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 30 April 2013

As we are all too aware, this has been a very wet winter and a long, cold one. At the time of writing at the end of March it is snowing again and parts of the Moor have still not drained from the recent of heavy rain. Small ponds are now a feature of the Moor, most of which have not dried out all winter and the one by the hawthorn on the causeway is getting bigger by the week.

How the water drains from the Moor is not something most of us ever think about until there is a problem with it. We probably assume that it simply trickles downwards through the soil but in fact water is channelled towards the becks around the edges and there are pipes draining the water into them. The heavy rain has put a strain on the drains and the work done by the Marston Moor Drainage Board last year on the beck and its banks to the north of the Moor has destabilised the banks. This combination was probably the cause of the banks collapsing in several places in late November, happily not causing any blockages to water flow. One spot is particularly unfortunate as it was thick with snowdrops and daffodils and looked lovely in the Spring.

Work on these areas, and other work needing to be done on the Moor, has to wait until the Moor is dry enough for vehicles to be able to get onto it without causing too much damage. At the moment it looks like this will be a long wait.

Cows

The Moor is very muddy, a situation which has not been helped by the cows arriving on the 3rd March. There are 50 of them, all about 12 months old and not as frisky as previous animals. As before, they are mostly Aberdeen Angus with two Belgian Blues and a few Limousins. We were only expecting 30 beasts and don't know yet why so many went on, especially with the ground being so wet.

It is part of the Stewardship Scheme (see below) for the cows to go on early to keep the grass short so that the dreaded thistles can be dealt with in the summer but this is all dependent on the weather and ground conditions. With the cows going on, the gate between the main Moor and North Lane Pasture has been locked so that the grass will grow there and can later be cut and taken away. There is still public access by a gate to the side of the main gate and the footbridge.

The cows have had to be given hay to see them through the bad weather and this extra vehicular activity hasn't helped the general muddiness. The entrance near Lidl has been especially badly affected as this is used by the stockman with his landrover and trailer.

Cable Laying

Northern Power has to replace underground electricity cables which run across the Moor and this is planned to take place in July. Two cables are to be replaced requiring two trenches just over a metre wide and seven metres apart. Fortunately ecologically sensitive land is not affected. There will be plenty of notice given to the public before the work starts and it is expected to take about eight weeks.

Litter

There seems to have generally been less litter than usual on the Moor over the winter and committee members regularly go on litter picks as do some members of the public. The area by the Kingsway West entrance is a particular black spot with litter accumulating as fast as it is cleared and anyone willing to help clear litter from this area on a regular basis would be very welcome. The Friends have litter pickers should anyone want one.

At the request of the Friends, Jenny Cairns, our Ranger, has once again asked the Environment Agency to clear from the banks the litter which is still there since the dredging work last year. Unfortunately this is already a more difficult job than it was as much of the rubbish has become embedded in the soil and overgrown with grass.

The Stewardship Scheme

As a result of the general financial cuts, the Stewardship Scheme won't be extended to any new sites but the Moor is safe for the remainder of its term. As part of the scheme all the hedges have now been planted; the edge of the Moor along Thanet Road between Kingsway West and Lidl has been deliberately left clear so that there is an open view of the Moor from the road. Learning from experience, this time the new hedges have been protected from the cattle by strong fences. Let's hope that they don't have to survive human assault too.

Springs will be attached to the gates on the wooden footbridge onto North Lane Field.

It was planned that the new footbridge onto the Triangle was to be erected in April but this may well be delayed yet again because of the weather.

The wild flowers planted in the autumn have been eaten by wild life and will be replanted.

Solstice Celebrations

For the first time, a Winter Solstice Celebration was held on the Moor on December 21st. Miraculously it didn't rain in the evening but during that day and the previous day there had been continuous, heavy rain. Consequently it was too wet to meet at the hawthorn tree on the causeway as planned, so the event was moved to a bench by the cycle track. Although it had been a mild, cloudy day the moon was visible at night and gave some light. Nine people turned out and the table was filled with lanterns and a variety of food and drink. Stephen Sayers gave an excellent talk about the Winter Solstice. This was a good social event which we hope to build on for the Summer Solstice - more information in the forthcoming Events Newsletter.

Birds

Unsurprisingly given the weather and their decline over the last few years, the only sightings of skylarks were two in February flying over the Moor but we still hope that they will at least continue to visit and eventually nest again. Other birds have been sighted for the first time on or near the Moor including a jay and a tree sparrow in November and a moorhen on the Triangle in January. We would love to hear from more keen bird watchers especially from someone who could also put information about birds on the Moor on our website.

What the Friends of Hob Moor Does for Us

You may not be aware of all the activities of the Friends but we ARE important and DO make a difference. Here are some of the things we do/have done:

Information

- a. We keep the information boards up to date with details of what is happening on the Moor and forthcoming walks and talks.
- b. We have produced a leaflet about the Moor, now in its second printing, with a map and things to look out for.
- c. We maintain an excellent website which an increasing number of people are visiting. We are currently working on a Facebook presence.
- d. Members receive emails informing them of coming events.
- e. The Newsletter is posted and emailed twice a year with news of what is happening, is about to happen or has happened on the Moor.
- f. We attend the two local fairs - Hob Moor Day and the West Bank Park Fair - where we have our own gazebo and display boards purchased by FoHM. Visitors are always interested in the photographs and maps of the Moor as it was and is now.

Managing the Moor

- g. The FoHM has organized and helped to pay for two ecological surveys.
- h. We have organised and paid for archaeological surveys.
- i. Surveys of birds on the Moor are regularly made by Friends, including skylark observations.
- j. We have been involved in the Management Plan and the Stewardship Scheme with the Council and have made recommendations for changes which have been adopted.
- k. We deal with problems on the Moor on an ad hoc basis. Members of the public have contacted us directly about issues on the Moor such as litter and cows.
- l. Members regularly pick up litter on the Moor.
- m. We have been involved in physically digging out thistles in ecologically sensitive areas of the Moor and in thistle management generally.
- n. We liaise with the council, usually through our excellent Ranger, Jenny Cairns, over other issues as they arise. It is through our pressure that the cycle track gets gritted, for instance.
- o. We have worked with the planting of wildflowers and look forward to the planting of an orchard.

The Friends have paid for

- p. Surveys (mentioned above)
- q. Extra dog bins
- r. Additional benches on the Moor
- s. Equipment such as the gazebo and display boards

The Friends Organise

- t. Walks and other events on the Moor and are involved in Hob Moor Day.
- u. Events to make children more aware of the Moor, such as this year's photography competition. We have approached local schools in the past but not received much feedback.

Summer Events

A separate list of walks and talks on the Moor will be sent out in a few weeks and put on the website as we won't know until the Council has finalised its budget what will be happening.

Council Cutbacks

The Parks service is having to sustain its share of the financial belt-tightening taking place throughout Council services at the moment. This will mean changes to the Rangers and to the support given to Hob Moor along with all the other parks and open spaces. At the moment we don't know what this will mean for us, but it seems safe to assume that with less input from the Council there will be more that the Friends will need to contribute.

We are in need of new people to join the committee and to help in looking after the Moor. In particular we need help at the Friends' gazebo on Hob Moor Day and West Bank Park Fair, so please get in touch if you can spare just 20 minutes to talk to passers-by about the Moor and encourage them to join us.

!!!!!! Photography Competition !!!!!

The Friends are sponsoring a photography competition this year. The theme is 'Spring on Hob Moor'. Entry is free and there are two categories: adult and under 16. Entries will be judged by a professional photographer AND by popular vote at the annual Hob Moor Summer Fair on Saturday 25 May. Entries (6x4 prints) must reach us by noon on 14 May 2013 – include your name, address and phone number plus date of birth and signature of parent/guardian if you are under 16. There will be two prizes for each of the professional and popular choices of both categories; details of the prizes are to come soon.

For full details and conditions of entry see our website: <http://friendsofhobmoor.org.uk>

Send entries to: Hob Moor Photography Competition, 36 Collingwood Avenue,
YORK YO24 4JY

In conjunction with this, the Council are holding a photo workshop for children on Friday 5th April between 10.30 and 11.30. There will be hints and tips on how to use a camera on its own or on a mobile phone. Contact Michael on 07951 497205

HOB MOOR NATURE RESERVE DAY

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

Saturday 25th May

1.00-3.30pm

Held behind Lidl Supermarket



WEST BANK PARK SUMMER FAIR

Sunday 30th June

1.00-3.30pm



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: 634512

email: friendsofhobmoor@yahoo.com

website: www.friendsofhobmoor.org.uk or www.fohm.org.uk