



# NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 33    September 2014

The two main items of news over the summer have been the completion of the cable laying across the Moor and the development of Our Lady's School site (OLS) both of which have had or are having a deleterious effect on the Moor.

## **Our Lady's School Site**

It looks as though this development is going to be causing issues for the Friends for a long while to come. One of the members of the committee has been relentless in trying to defend the Moor from potential damage from it but unfortunately with little success. The old school has been demolished and many of the trees and shrubs on the site have been felled, although we are assured that only those on the original plan have been removed. The perimeter looks desolate. The remaining conifers will be felled late summer when the nesting birds have gone. There was a fire of unknown origin on the site in early summer and the fact that the building affected housed a bat roost (although not of an endangered species) has made some people think it was deliberate.

There have been on-going issues over drainage - the increased height of the water table at least temporarily, the potential for an increased risk of flooding and the impact on Askham Bog - but none of the organisations which might defend the interests of the Moor has been willing to take up cudgels on its behalf.

It is unfortunate that the hedging 'buffer zone' around the site is going to come from the Moor and not from within the development area. The plans say that the buffer zone is to be 2 metres, but Dan Calvert of York Council wants this to be 3 metres as this would give enough depth for a dense hedge to become established, which would be more effective in shielding the development from the Moor. The buffer zone would remain part of the Moor and the responsibility of the Council, who would probably cut it (once established) every 3 to 4 years. We are assured that the land is not being lost from the Moor and will remain part of the stray and in council ownership, although it would no longer be covered by the Stewardship Scheme because of the change in its management.

## **Cable Laying**

The cable laying has been completed after pits were dug three times in different (or the same, in some cases) places on the Moor. During the first lot of digging, which was the major part, the vehicles had caterpillar tracks which kept the damage to a minimum. During the second, however, when two more pits had to be dug to further the cabling work, there was regular movement of vehicles across the Moor carrying personnel and equipment. These vehicles did not have caterpillar racks, so the wheels churned up the ground quite a bit. They also drove straight across the middle of the Moor over potential bird nesting areas. Debris including long plastic cable ties, metal plates and large pieces of rigid plastic were left at the scene of the digging, creating a potential hazard for cattle as well as being an eyesore. The Friends complained about this to the contractors via the Council but despite this, vehicles drove across the Moor again during the third round of digging.

The third phase of work also meant that the tunnel had to be closed with little advance warning. It was interesting to observe how much quieter the Moor was during the 2 weeks or so of this closure, with not just cyclists but also dog walkers and pedestrians not as much in evidence. It made very clear how much busier the Moor has become over the last decade since the cycle path was built and how difficult it is to balance the needs of people and nature. When the housing development is completed we can expect even more traffic on the path and the Moor and consequently more disruption to the natural world.

The good news is that the floor of the tunnel has been resurfaced and this should mean an improvement to the drainage there.

The contractors have left a deep and rutted path where the cable was laid across the Moor and this and the areas where the pits were dug had still not been levelled and reseeded by the middle of August. The Friends have also brought this to the attention of the Council. The reseeded was scheduled to take place on 21<sup>st</sup> August but at the time of writing has still not been done. The work will be carried out by a local farm contractor, BHE, who stock the York Strays with cattle; they have a good local knowledge and a vested interest in the suitable management of the land. The re-seeding works had been planned to take place in August at a time when flowers are naturally dropping seed. The wildflower seed used is 'Scottish Meadow Mix' and the works involve shallow sub-soiling, seeding and cultivation plus rolling.

The contractors also damaged the plaque on the Hob Stone and this will be replaced at their expense.

## **Cows**

The cows made their entrance on 13<sup>th</sup> April when a dozen or so arrived and then numbers gradually increased until by the end of the month there were about 60, making a beautiful pattern with their white, brown and black coats.

They have been escapologist cows this year. They have got out of the Moor through various

gates, some apparently left open by contractors, some left open by we know not whom. In one instance they were off the Moor during three consecutive weekends and the chains to the gate were reported to have been cut but not stolen, so not the work of metal thieves.

Then on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August one young, black bullock walked off the moor through the Hob Moor Drive entrance, over the cattle grid and through the cycle restriction. He spent twenty minutes or so in frightened thundering along part of Hob Moor Drive, to the delight of children and the consternation of residents, even visiting our esteemed Chair's garden to have his photograph taken, before he returned the Moor, again over the cattle grid. The stockman came and checked him over and the disoriented animal moaned plaintively as he trotted off to find the rest of the herd, now nowhere in sight.

## **Repairs & Maintenance**

- ❖ By the end of April repairs were completed on the two areas of the banks of the beck on the north side of the Moor which collapsed in the heavy rains of the winter of 2012-13. The area was checked for nests etc. beforehand and found to be clear. Each section was completed in a day and the repair was very thorough, including not only the rebuilding of the banks but also the insertion of a dozen or so timbers at each site to support the bank. The surplus earth was spread over the Moor near to the beck (but not impeding the path along the edge) as the earth cannot be moved more than a limited distance from its original site. The banks were reseeded and have now regrown and grass and weeds have also grown through the earth that was dumped onto the Moor. Members of the committee removed at least some of the debris that found its way onto the Moor from the beck and the banks along with the mud during this process. One of the affected areas of the bank was thickly populated with snowdrops, so we might see a patch of those growing on the Moor if bulbs were in the mud that was put there.
- ❖ Also on the north side at the end of April, a large willow overhanging the beck from an adjoining garden had to be severely lopped as it had become unsafe through age.
- ❖ The banks of the beck were trimmed in July and the hedges overhanging them cut back. It was all done very thoroughly. This is A Good Thing, even if it was a bit too early in the year, as this was not done at all last year.
- ❖ Some of the thistles in the middle of the Moor were sprayed in early summer with a thistle-specific herbicide. This is in accordance with the Stewardship Scheme, as the thistles have to be kept in check, so also A Good Thing. It is encouraging that a member of the public contacted the Friends to inform us about the spraying and to check that this was ok.
- ❖ Fifteen volunteers spent a morning in June tackling the balsam on the Triangle and several more also worked on it in August.

## News in Brief

- ❖ The useful green wheelie bin at the Hob Moor Drive entrance to the Moor has disappeared as mysteriously as it appeared a couple of years ago. It has been well used by people walking on the Moor for rubbish disposal and will be missed.
- ❖ A bird seen on the Moor for the first time is a Harris Harrier, a young hawk in training with her handler. Her appearance has caused a lot of interest especially amongst children and her handler is very generous in showing her off. She is native to the US and is apparently not often seen in this country.
- ❖ A skylark was heard and seen over the Moor over a period of several days at the end of April but disappeared. There is no connection with the Harris Harrier just mentioned! There have been reports of two skylarks having been seen together on the Moor in August, but again briefly. However, any appearance is good news and we can only hope that they do nest again.

## Reports from Summer Walks and Events

**Evening Bird Walk 28<sup>th</sup> April:** Fifteen Friends of Hob Moor were led by Bob Missin on a walk to listen to the evening birdsong from the bushes and trees around the Moor. It is only when you have somebody with you who can recognise the birds that you really hear them. We heard more birds than we can remember including chiff-chaffs, blackbirds, wrens, robins and long-tailed tits. Of course there were other things we all learnt about the Moor that evening besides being able to thoroughly enjoy it and be aware again of how lucky we are to have such an interesting area so close to us all.

**Foxwood Country Fair 7<sup>th</sup> June:** Unfortunately the weather was very poor so the event was held indoors in the Community Centre. There were twelve stalls and a scarecrow competition which was judged by Anna Wallace of Radio York. The event was well supported by the local community. The Friends of Hob Moor stall was run by some of the committee members and there was quite a bit of interest.

**Mark Tyszka Walk 21<sup>st</sup> June:** We met at North Lane Pasture to join Mark Tyszka on his walk. As usual Mark had done a great deal of preparation to provide what was a really fascinating afternoon. Amongst other things, we learnt how to measure the height of trees and the age of trees and about local grasses as well as other flora. Mark had brought with him so many magical boxes that we actually saw Tortoise Shell butterflies emerging from their chrysalis and flying away, flies with parasites and then there was so much to learn about all the different snails. We finished up at The Triangle bridge after a wonderful educational and enjoyable afternoon before going on to join the Solstice Celebrations.

**Summer Solstice:** Twenty-five people, including three children, came to the Summer Solstice this year, an increase on last year. Again the table was laden with food and drink with plenty of wine, cider and soft drinks and a good variety of food. People do give some thought and make an effort with the food they bring as there were sausages, hot and cold, breads, cheeses, quiche, pickles, spreads and dips plus a large variety of crisps, biscuits and other savoury foods. The evening was fine and warm with the sun breaking through the fluffy clouds. The cattle visited us on a couple of occasions with their usual interest but they weren't the problem of last year when we had to chase them away. It really was good to meet up with friends and colleagues we haven't seen for a while and also meet new people with new ideas. Eating & drinking with idle chat on a summer evening on Hob Moor can't be beaten. The Winter Solstice celebration is on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December.

**West Bank Park Fair 29<sup>th</sup> June:** As usual, Friends of Hob Moor had a stall and display at the Fair. It was good to see how much support the community was giving for the first year of the Fair not supported by the Council and luckily the weather was kind. We had a lot of interest in our displays and recruited new members, met current members and sold a lot of photo cards and some aerial photos. The Chair even had his Friends of Hob Moor t-shirt sold off his back for the princely sum of £10.

**Butterfly Walk 2nd August:** Tony Fairburn led the walk of eleven adults with help from his son Nathan. It was disappointing there were no children on the walk, especially when they enjoyed it so much two years ago. Weather-wise it was a mixed day with a breeze blowing across the Moor. At first it was nice and warm with hot sunshine and then a short but very wet downpour that caught us before we found shelter under a hawthorn tree near North Lane Pasture. Five minutes later the sun was drying us out. We saw 10 different species of butterfly: Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Small White, Gatekeeper, Small Skipper, Speckled Wood, Holly Blue, Common Blue, Green Veined White and Large White. All in all, a very interesting and pleasant walk on our excellent Moor.

### **Membership Renewals**

Membership renewals are due on November 1st. You can renew your membership at the AGM if you have an annual one. If you have a six year or life membership or pay by standing order, you do not have to do anything. Reminders and renewal forms will be sent out after the AGM to those who do need to renew. If you don't get a reminder, you can assume your membership is still current.

## **Winter Solstice Celebration**

**6pm Sunday December 21<sup>st</sup>**

Meet at 7pm, weather permitting, at the bench closest to the tunnel on the south side. Bring food and drink to share, instruments if you have them. Children welcome.

**FRIENDS OF HOB MOOR  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday 8th October 2014 at 7.30pm  
West Thorpe Methodist Church, West Thorpe.  
(Parking available)**

There will be talk by Derek Utley entitled Treemendous and Woodland Trust

**THIS IS A VITAL MEETING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE  
FRIENDS**

**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

(If you do need to phone the Council, please get a contact name so that the issue can be followed up if necessary)

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

phone: 634512

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)