



NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 35 September 2015

Once again our first item is a plea is on behalf of the Friends' Committee. We have been working very hard in the past year to promote and protect Hob Moor so it can be enjoyed by all. We are in urgent need of new committee members. Our Chair, Imelda, stepped in to save us last year but did say then it would probably only be for a year and indeed her work commitments prevent her from continuing. At the same time, Madeline, who produces the newsletter, has to step down having completed the eight years on the committee allowed by the constitution. The newsletter is highly valued by our members, especially those who do not use the internet, and it's one of the main ways the Friends communicates with its members and lets everyone know what has been, is or will be happening on the Moor. However it does not have to continue in its current form and could be changed to suit a new editor. Jenny, who has been membership Secretary for the last year, is also stepping down, so we are in need of at least 3 active new members on the committee.

As looks to be the situation for the foreseeable future, the Council is stretched and the Friends is very much needed to support the maintenance of the Moor with volunteering and drawing the Council's attention to what needs doing.

We are all busy, but the Moor is such a valuable environment so close to the centre of the city that it is vital it continues to get the support that it needs. It is easy to think that as a piece of land the Moor looks after itself, which is not the case. The most obvious example is the importance of the cows coming on every year, without which the Moor would be a very different place. We have just been reminded of the power cables running across the Moor and the land is crossed underground by a network of drainage pipes emptying into the becks. The becks have to be maintained to keep them flowing freely and the banks cut to promote the growth of wildflowers. And that only looks after the bare bones of the Moor, as it were, without the care for the flora and fauna it supports.

With increasing pressure from people and building, even though it's a designated Nature Reserve, the Moor needs protecting. For instance, we have been powerless to prevent the Hob Stone development, but we can, and have been, working to maintain a good boundary hedge to the site and to see that no more trees are removed and that the builders and Yorkshire Housing keep to their contract as far as the Moor is concerned.

The committee needs more help to maintain the Friends, and without it the risk is that the Friends will have to fold.

You can volunteer to help without joining the committee if you would prefer. For instance, it would be very helpful to have someone to do the layout for the newsletter – easy if you know how and very time-consuming if you don't. You don't need to wait until the AGM in October. Contact us now via Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfHobMoor> or our Website: www.fohm.org.uk or call the Secretary, Stephanie, on 01904 593788.

We'd love to hear from you!

The Stewardship Scheme

The gate between North Lane Field and the Moor has been open all summer despite its closure being one of the conditions of the Stewardship Scheme. The wooden bridge was built over the beck to the west of the gate to allow public access to North Lane Field from the Moor so the gate could be locked to keep the cattle out. The Stewardship Scheme stipulated that hay from the Field should have been cut and taken away twice over the summer. This is to keep the fertility of the area low to encourage and protect the growth of wild flowers. This part of the Moor has remained untouched for longest, with buttercups hundreds of years old and ridge and

furrow evidence of medieval ploughing with oxen. (One of the walks on the Moor some while ago was to look at the buttercups on North Lane Field and work out how old the plants were by looking at the number of petals on the flowers. Where the land remains undisturbed the flowers produce an increasing number of petals. This showed that the far end of North Lane Field had not been ploughed since the 17th century.) Emails have been sent by the committee to the council but the gate remains open at the time of writing and the cattle are even encouraged there by buckets of mineral licks.

Cattle

There have been about 100 cattle on the Moor this summer, a mix of Aberdeen Angus, Hereford and Belgian Blue, both heifers & bullocks. They were only 4 – 5 months old when they came on, so were quite small. Their arrival was later than it has been for the past few years and we have been told that they will be arriving in May rather than April in the future. They have been put on early for a few years to graze the grass low so that the thistles could be treated, but now these are less of a problem the grazing is not needed as early. However, the grass had already grown quite long before the cows appeared and so even though numbers were large, appetites were small and the grass had to be cut in July.

Being so young, the cattle have also been more vulnerable to dogs and there have been several incidents of a dog out of control chasing them and biting at their legs. This is a frightening experience if you happen to be near at the time, especially if you have children with you. We have been told that sadly one cow died as a result of a dog attack soon after they had gone on the Moor. There are numbers to contact in the event of dog attacks and these are listed at the back of this Newsletter and on the Contacts page of our website.

Again because they are so young, the same animals will be returned to the Moor next year.

Damage Repair

Members of the Committee met with Interserve (the company responsible for the cable laying) at the end of May to survey the damage to the Moor that had still not been put right following the work last year. It confirmed that it had paid the Council to do the work although in fact it hadn't been done. A month later the Friends had a meeting on the Moor with Dan Calvert, the Council Officer now responsible for the Moor, to discuss with him the repairs to the Moor that still hadn't been done. He agreed that the council would rectify the damage, namely the dip on left before railway tunnel on Little Hob Moor, the rutted track and crater on right after railway tunnel on main Hob Moor, the worn track off to left of the path after railway bridge which goes right across the Moor towards Hob Moor School, the worn and rutted wide tracked areas from Lidl gate onto main Hob Moor and dips near Hob Moor School. Dan has responded since this meeting to say preparation of the areas for reinstatement will commence this Sept ready for seed sowing April 2016.

We also raised with him questions about access to the cycle track at the Hob Stone site as we had received comments on Twitter that some cyclists could not get through the temporary barrier there. He said he would pass this on to the council officer responsible, Andy Vose. Again, the temporary barrier still makes it difficult for parents with a child-carrying cycle to get through.

Events on the Moor

The walks and talks that we have arranged on the Moor this year have been unusually poorly attended. A few hardy souls met author Elizabeth Smith at the Hob Stone on a chilly and windy afternoon for a fascinating walk around the Moor, learning much about its history. The talk wove aspects of local, social and natural history in tracing the Moor's evolution to what it is today. Thanks to Elizabeth for sharing her detailed knowledge with us.

Only one person turned up for Tony Fairburn's Butterfly Walk despite the fact that the weather was dry and fairly warm and there were plenty of butterflies around. In fact this has been a particularly good year for butterflies on and around the Moor. Usually this walk is very popular with adults and children with 15-20 people attending,

Turnout for the Solstice celebration was also disappointing.

On the other hand, the Friends had a very successful day at West Bank Park Summer Park Fair, with 11 new members signing up and a lot of people interested in the Moor, including two local councillors. It was a sunny day but a bit windy so we had to watch the gazebo and the leaflets.

The Moor also hosted an interesting Foraging Walk with York Timebank, finding edible wild food on the Moor. There was fantastic weather and a good turnout.

We would like to get your views on why you think there was such limited attendance at some of our events and hear your ideas about what you would like to see happen in our events programme. Is it that you didn't hear about the events, or would you like other things at other times? Are weekdays better than weekends; mornings or evenings better than afternoons? Please let us know; we need your feedback. Contact details at the end of the newsletter.

Weeds

According to the Council, thanks to a couple of years of treatment thistles are much reduced on the Moor (some people disagree!) but weeds are always with us and now it is foreign plants that are a problem: Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed around the southeastern edges of the Moor. Japanese Knotweed has been dealt with by Network Rail over the last few years. However it can take several years to kill and it has spread onto the edges of the Moor where it will be dealt with by the Council. It seems they have a person dedicated to dealing with it wherever it appears in the city. Giant Hogweed has also been dealt with by the Council where it could get to it. The best time for treatment is early autumn after it has flowered. It is not helpful if well-intentioned members of the public 'have a go' at it as this only encourages it.

Hob Stone Development

As you will have noticed building on the site was halted in the spring after the building company ceased trading. Yorkshire Housing now has new building contractors and work recommenced on the 17th August. At least most of the summer has been quiet for local residents.

Just before the company collapsed, members of the committee met with one of its representatives to express our concern about the boundary hedge and in particular the mature trees there. Now that construction is well ahead, it is obvious that some of the houses particularly on the south side of the site, have been built very close to the trees and we can envisage a resident in the future requesting that a tree be removed as it obstructs light to the house. This meeting is now redundant and we will have to repeat it with the new construction company. None of the trees has a preservation order so we need to be very vigilant about the trees and the hedging around the site.

We have been told that the future of the trees on and adjacent to the site is only guaranteed for 5 years. This is very worrying as the removal of any of these trees would expose the development, alter the whole appearance of the Moor and remove a natural habitat. It is because of situations like this that we MUST have a strong committee to help to protect the Moor. PLEASE JOIN US!

In Brief

- ❖ The grass on the Moor was cut at the end July and the banks of the becks were trimmed at the same time.
- ❖ On 31st July at about 8pm 10 police/community support personnel were seen on the on the Moor. We have no idea what the cause of this enormous police presence was and nothing has appeared in the press. Can anyone enlighten us?
- ❖ A fox has been a regular visitor around the north edge of the Moor in the spring. It appeared regularly every evening at about 8.30 trotting eastwards, hopefully not towards the chickens kept in a garden backing onto The Triangle but probably towards the rabbits there.
- ❖ There have been reports (unconfirmed) of a 'flasher' on the Moor.
- ❖ The Council managed to omit the Friends from the list of environmental groups in our local edition of 'Ourcity', the new Council newsletter. As we represent the largest area in the west of the city, we were very disappointed and have emailed the editor.
- ❖ The Friends now has a presence on Twitter and Facebook and the website has had an overhaul. If you have not given us your email address, please do. If we can email you, you will get more information and a reminder about up and coming events. It also saves the Friends time and money if we can email you the Newsletter rather than posting it.
- ❖ 5 members of the Committee turned out in July to remove Himalayan balsam from the Triangle near the railway track.
- ❖ The plaque on the Hob Stone in Hob Laine has been restored.
- ❖ If you need disabled access through the cycle gates, you can obtain a key from the Council that will open all the gates.
- ❖ St. Nick's Autumn Fayre Sat 10th October 1-5pm. The event is a celebration of nature's harvest and York's green spaces.

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 Monday December 21st

This is a great opportunity to meet and talk to other people interested in the Moor.
Meet at 6pm by the bench on the Moor near the tunnel.
Bring food to share, instruments and anything else to celebrate the midwinter turning of the year.
Children welcome.

FRIENDS OF HOB MOOR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 7th October 2015 at 7.30pm
West Thorpe Methodist Church, West Thorpe.
(Parking available)

There will be talk by Anna Jakubova from St Nick's

THIS IS A VITAL MEETING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE FRIENDS

PLEASE COME

Contact Details

Website: www.fohm.org.uk

To report damage etc. urgently on Hob Moor (24 hrs): contact York Council: 01904 625751

To report motor cyclists on Hob Moor: contact North Yorkshire Police: 101

To report dog problems:

If a dog bites a person, call the police to report the incident. (101 for a non-emergency, 999 for an emergency.)

If a dog bites another dog, or if there is any issue with people being harassed or intimidated by dogs, call City of York Council at 01904 551551

For removal of fly-tipped debris, litter, graffiti etc., contact Pride in York: 01904 551551
(email: ycc@york.gov.uk)

For emergencies regarding the health and safety of the cattle:

Weekdays: 01904 553392 (York Council) Evenings and Weekends: 01904 634512

To contact Friends of Hob Moor by phone: Secretary, Stephanie Luxton, 01904 593788