



# News from St Nicks April 2011



Wildlife & wildflower walks p.7



Centre update p.6



Woodwork p.5



## JOIN US & ENJOY FREE WALKS

Support York's leading organisation promoting sustainable living - join St Nicks and you will get free entry to our guided walks. Membership starts **from £10 per year** - please pick up a form or join on-line at:

[www.stnicksfields.org.uk/join.php](http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk/join.php)

## There is so much at St Nicks that we want to achieve.

Over the next few years, we want to raise funds for **upgrading and improving the Environment Centre**. Now 11 years old, the Centre is in need of urgent repairs.

With the expansion in our activities, the Centre is bursting at the seams and we need to upgrade and expand the facilities here.

We want to continue **improving the nature reserve** as a haven for wildlife and as an amenity for all its users.

We want to **expand our environmental education** programme for schools and the wider York community.

By becoming a **central hub for environmental action** in York, we hope to play a key role in making York a sustainable city.

These are exciting times for St Nicks, but they are also challenging times. Public funding is in short supply and we have had to develop new approaches to our fundraising. We are seeking to reduce our reliance on grant funding and public money and increase our earned income through various means.

We know that as a reader of this newsletter, you care about the environment and care about St Nicks. We all want to see this unique local treasure developed for the benefit of the city and for future generations.

If you are not already a member, now is a great time to join. By becoming a member you will be helping us to achieve our aims, can have a say in how things develop and will help to give St Nicks a strong voice in the city.

If you are already a member, we thank you for your support and generosity.

If you are not, **please join St Nicks today.**

Thank you.

### FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS FIELDS

♻️ Community Recycling Champion 2010

♻️ Green Flag Community Award winner 2010

♻️ national 2007 Biffa Climate Conscious Award winner

♻️ registered charity (no. 1068909)

♻️ supported by the City of York Council

### York Environment Centre

Rawdon Avenue, York YO10 3ST

tel./ fax: (01904) 41821 📧 [www.stnicksfields.org.uk](http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk)

**general enquiries:** [info@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:info@stnicksfields.org.uk)

**composting advice:** [rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk)

**volunteering:** [volunteer@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@stnicksfields.org.uk)

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

As a member of St Nicks, you will receive:

🌿 **Free entry to our guided walks** and discounts on training events. This year, we have some excellent walks planned including a butterfly walk, bat walk, two bird walks and a tree and wildflower walk. We also have a pond dipping session and two other special events (also free to members): the Big Bug Hunt and a Moth Day, including a multi-media show by local poet and photographer, Anneliese Emmans Dean. See page 7 for full details.

🌿 **Regular news** of the nature reserve, Environment Centre, St Nicks projects and events.

🌿 **Access to special events** for members and donors. We will be inviting all our members and donors to a special event later in the year.

If all of the above is not enticing enough, maybe you will join us because, as one of our recent visitors described St Nicks: **“It’s just generally groovy!”** You can join today through our website [www.stnicksfields.org.uk/join.php](http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk/join.php). Alternatively, you can collect a membership form from the Environment Centre at one of our forthcoming events.

We particularly welcome regular monthly donations, through a standing order. These give us security to plan ahead and help keep our administration costs down.

As a small charity, your donation will make a real difference to our success. Being local, you can call in and **see just how your money is being spent.**





## RECYCLING TEAM UPDATE

Having battled through snow and ice throughout December and January, we were pleased not to miss a single collection. We have completed the exchange of rounds with the council, and now collect from 2100 households, covering most of the area within the city walls. Now that we are settled into the new routines, we have started to survey customers to see how we can further improve our service. The responses so far have been very positive, with most respondents rating us 'very good' and appreciating our hard work over the winter. Many people would like it if we collected more materials, something we will be looking into. We are also exploring the possibility of recycling collections for small businesses to further reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

Although we try to encourage residents to put only recyclable material in their boxes, we do have some interesting other finds, some of which we can reuse, sell at St Nicks, or give to local charity shops. Recent treasures include plenty of books, some decorative bottles and a rather imposing 'antique' globe drinks cabinet! If you are passing St Nicks, do pop in and have a look in our 20p box to see if there is anything you would like.

## YORK ROTTERS LATEST

In the first week of May, York Rotters will be celebrating **Compost Awareness Week** by holding a series of events throughout York. You can pick up free lettuce seeds and free composting advice at any of the events.

St Nicks volunteers have been busy making a glamorous scarecrow to be displayed as part of the Haxby and Wigginton Scarecrow Festival. There will be an information stall at Haxby and Wigginton Methodist Church. Other events in the week include a free training course on how to compost and annual Wormcharming Competition where the best team wins a prize. You can also have a 'compost workout' at May's Eco-Active Day—we will be creating a compost area for turning the garden waste collected from the St Nicks Recycling round and nature reserve into valuable compost. **See page 8** for more or contact Catherine on 412861/ [rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk)



## FROM THE VOLUNTEERS' DIARY

### Woodland skills and craft workshop

On a chilly spring morning we welcomed back woodland expert (and 2006 British Scything Champion) Raymond Lister for a workshop on woodland management and craft for our volunteers. The day started with a long walk round the reserve getting Ray's opinion on how we manage the site and what craft each type of trees could be used for. This does not mean we are going to start chopping all the trees down and replacing them with rustic furniture! However, it is sometimes necessary to take trees down. Occasionally they come down naturally, such as in the high winds we experienced some week ago.

Ray showed us lots of examples of products we could make (or bodge as he called it) from our woodland. Things like chairs and stools made from hazel, baskets woven from willow and even brambles, cutlery from sycamore, walking sticks from blackthorn, bird feeders and lady bird hotels from birch logs, woodland pencils and funny sounding things, such as faggots and pimps, which we now know are bundles of different sized firewood and kindling.

With kinder weather in the afternoon we all got very practical out in the garden and are now the proud owners of six besom brooms made almost entirely from birch wood. The workshop really inspired some of our keener woodworking staff and volunteers, so next time you visit St Nicks do look out for what we've made next, which will be on sale for a very reasonable price!

### Bearing Fruit Launch

The Bearing Fruit Core Group is now into its third month of our project to create St Nicks very own community orchard. The project is progressing well and on **Saturday 18th June 1-3pm**, the Core Group will hold a launch day to show off what work has taken place already and its future plans. Part of the event will be a consultation process so you can have a say in how the orchard will be designed. The event will include a presentation about the project, a chance to see what the orchard may look like, details of open work days for you to get involved, key speakers, plus a chance to see all four of the orchard sites. You will also be able to



### Part-Time Volunteer Park Ranger Wanted

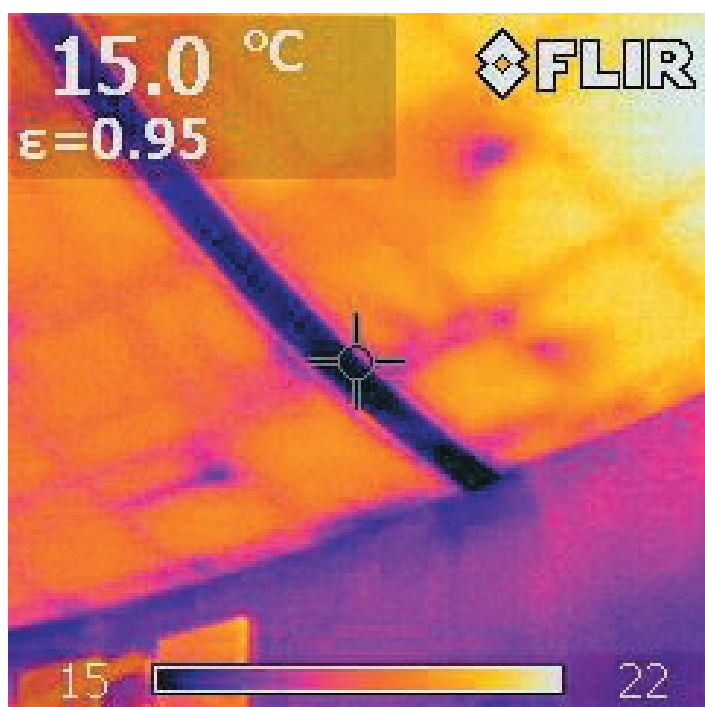
Duties include regular checks around the nature reserve, working with other volunteers and staff to manage the site, and engaging with users of the nature reserve. In return you will get full induction, training programme and ongoing support. No formal qualifications are needed, although an interest and enthusiasm for the environment and wildlife is essential. **For more details** please contact Jonathan on 01904 411821 or see [www.stnicksfields.org.uk/jobs.php](http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk/jobs.php)

**Application deadline:**  
12 noon, Wed 27th April

find out about our exciting plans for a foraging trail.

Bearing Fruit has been funded by Ecominds, a £7.5million funding scheme run by Mind on behalf of the BIG Lottery Fund. Ecominds involves people with direct experience of mental distress in environmental projects that improve their mental and physical health, and local communities.

Some of the Core Group getting their hands dirty preparing the soil.



## CENTRE UPDATE

The **Centre gardens** are looking better than ever thanks to our tireless volunteers. A particular mention goes to Becky, who is doing wonders with our wildlife garden beds, and to Jean who has re-started her Square Foot Garden with her usual verve. Potatoes are in, broad beans are one foot tall and onions are poking proudly out of the soil. We are all looking forward to sampling her produce in one of our Eco-Active Day lunches.

Artist Jamie Vaughan came back recently to unveil the **beautiful mosaic** he designed for us (pictured on the cover).

The Centre itself is being spruced up too and we are exploring various ways in which we can further improve the energy performance of the building. To that end we borrowed a **thermal imaging camera** from Sustainability 4 Yorkshire and spent a couple of hours snapping. Mostly we were happy with what we saw but the ceiling in the hall is showing a few cold spots. In the picture you can see the lattice structure of the ceiling on either side of a steel beam running through the middle, and there are purple/cold spots on either side of it. We presume these mark places where the sedum roof cover has been damaged and needs fixing. Another reason to go up on the roof will be to repair damage to the rubber seal around the chimney caused by a confused rook which kept pecking away at it over winter - apparently they like the red colour.

We are improving both the look and performance of the building so that we can be even more proud to offer it for hire. The centre has hosted meetings, workshops, children's parties and even moderate hen parties. **If you are looking for an interesting venue**, which comes with access to 24 acres of fantastic green space and a playarea, **get in touch**.

We also like to show off to casual visitors what we've achieved so far. We try to keep the Centre open on Saturdays with the help of volunteers - please contact us if you could help even just once every other month.

## ST NICKS EVENTS MAY - JULY 2011

Please note that there may be changes and more events. For all events meet at York Environment Centre. Check our [website](#) or call us on 01904 411821 for bookings and more information. Please help us spread the word.

### GET WILD ABOUT ST NICKS

**Discover the variety of wildlife on St Nicks** on our series of guided walks, supported by the Big Lottery Fund. Join St Nicks Wildlife Group and local experts in their wild explorations. **YOU don't need to be an expert, just a bit wild...** **All ages and abilities welcome!** Entry is free to members—join on the day, or £2.50 adults, £1.50 children. Price includes a drink and biscuits afterwards.

**BIRD WALK** Sat 7th May 10am-12 noon  
Led by local ornithologist David Campbell

**POND DIPPING** Sat 14th May 10am-12 noon  
Led by freshwater specialist Vicky Kindemba of Buglife

**TREE & WILDFLOWER WALK** Sat 18th June 10am-12. Led by botanist Thea Jacob

**BIG BUG HUNT** Sat 16th July 10am-1pm  
Explore the world of minibeasts, with the Open Air Laboratories project officers

**BUTTERFLY WALK**  
Sat 30th July 10am-12  
Led by local butterfly expert Tony Fairburn

### Further wild dates for your diary

**BAT WALK** Thur 18th August 8-9:30pm

**MOTH DAY** Sat 27th August 10am-4pm  
With Dave Chesmore and the Open Air Laboratories project officers plus a multimedia moth show by Anneliese Emmans Dean

**BIRD WALK** Sat 12th Nov 10am-12

### Enjoy the wildlife on St Nicks!

This programme of wildlife walks is supported by the Big Lottery Fund.



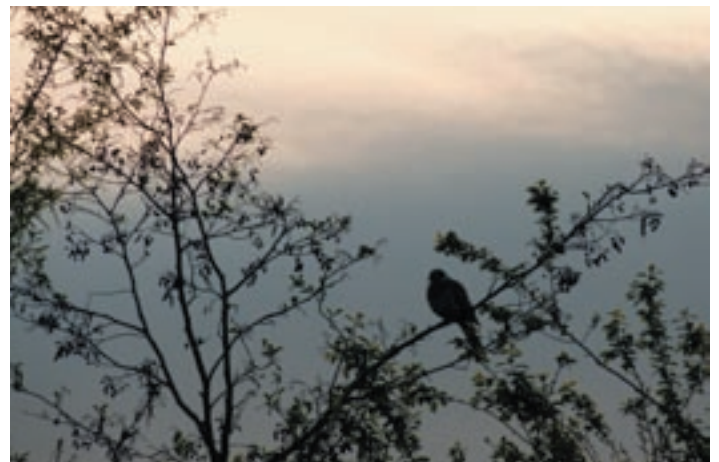
## Music for St Nicks

\* Piano shown not actual size

**Thursday 9th June 7:30pm**  
**The Unitarian Chapel on St Saviourgate**

David Hammond, one of our fantastic recycling officers, is also a talented pianist with similarly gifted friends. They have kindly offered to stage a **concert to raise funds for St Nicks**. Contrary to what the picture suggests, David will be playing a proper piano and it won't be folk. Ellen Jordan will accompany him on cello and Rob Carruthers will add the guitar to the eclectic mix of 20th century music. They will be playing works by **Schostakovich, Raffaele Bellafronte, Leo Brouwer, Maurice Ravel and Isaac Albeniz**.

**Tickets:** £8/ £6 concessions, includes light refreshments. If possible, please book ahead on 01904 411821.



The first of our wildlife walks was a Dawn Chorus walk on 9th April. Participants were rewarded for the early rise by seeing 18 species of birds including Blackcap and Song Thrush, followed by a delicious mushroom and egg butty breakfast.

## MORE EVENTS

### GIVE OR TAKE DAY

**Sat 11 June 1-4pm**

Join our regular recycling/ reuse extravaganza. Use the opportunity to get rid of unwanted items which other people may find useful. There will also be crafts activities, refreshments and plenty more.

### BEARING FRUIT LAUNCH

**Saturday 18th June 1-3pm**

please see page 5 for more details

### St Nicks AGM

**Thur 28 July 7-9:30pm**

Come and have a say in the future of St Nicks - elect our management committee and hear about the year in the life of the charity. We will have an interesting speaker (and possibly a charcoal making demonstration) to start the evening and there will be light refreshments.

### ECO-ACTIVE DAYS

**Sat 7th May 10am-1pm - compost workout**

**Sat 5th June 10am-1pm - scything & raking**

**Sat 2nd July 10am-1pm - balsam bashing**

(last year's balsam bashing fun is pictured on the right)

Come help us with the task in the nature reserve. You will get a warm feeling and free lunch in return. Eco-Active Days are a great opportunity to be doing something useful outdoors, get lots of fresh air, maybe learn a new skill, get fit, meet like-minded people and drink cups of tea!

### CAMERA CLUB

**Sat 7th May 10:15am-12:15**

**Sat 5th June 10:15am-12:15**

**Sat 2nd July 10:15am-12:15**

Join our friendly informal group recording life on St Nicks while improving photographic skills. Free admission. See what we do or join on-line at [www.flickr.com/groups/stnickscameraclub](http://www.flickr.com/groups/stnickscameraclub)

# GIVE IT A GROW



### Celebrate Compost Awareness Week with York Rotters

**Composting Advice Stall** Sun 1st May, 12-4.30pm  
at Haxby and Wigginton Methodist Church

**How To Compost course** Tue 3rd May, 7-9pm  
at York Environment Centre, please book ahead

**Annual Wormcharming Competition - best team prize**  
Fri 6th May, 3pm at Scarcroft Green

**Compost Workout** Sat 7th May, 10am-1pm  
as part of an Eco-Active Day in St Nicholas Fields

You can also pick up **free compost** from Harewood Whin, Rufforth on Sun 1st May, 9.30am-2.30pm. Bring shovel & bags.



**More info/ booking: 01904 412861**

[rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk](mailto:rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk)

[www.stnicksfields.org.uk/events.php](http://www.stnicksfields.org.uk/events.php)

