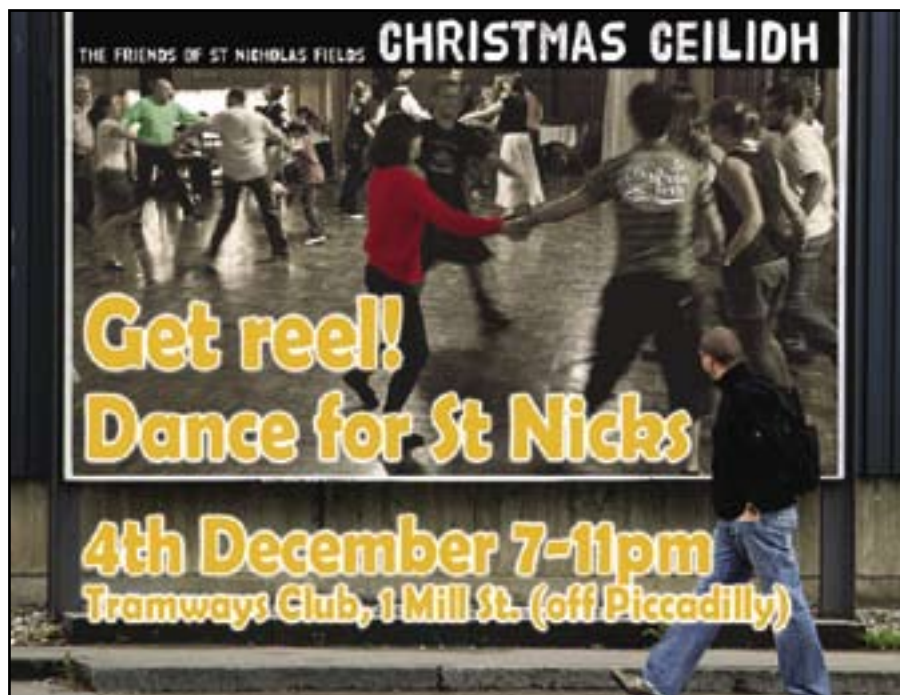




November 2008

News from St Nicks



Dancing shoes at the ready? Come and enjoy:

- ♻️ dancing with live music from Foxy Folk & caller Ros Batchelor
- ♻️ raffle with some fantastic prizes donated by shops and cafes
- ♻️ green Christmas shop with great pressies and stocking fillers like tetrapak wallets, recycled stationery, kitchen caddies...
- ♻️ bar

All proceeds will go towards mobile demonstration solar water heating unit to help us promote the benefits of solar energy.

Tickets: £5/£3 conc. in advance from Environment Centre or 411821; £6/£4 on the door



News from the Nature Reserve & beyond

It's been a busy old time in the nature reserve over the last few months with hundreds of volunteers and visitors. We are delighted to have a new volunteer park ranger, Ethan Earnshaw, who is working with us three days a week, supervising volunteers and placements in carrying out tasks around the site. This has included dead-hedging, path building, rescuing trees, litter-picking, bashing brambles, clearing paths and much more.

The TEE group continues to do a fantastic job in sprucing up and improving our butterfly walk. A new initiative from the City of York Council's Youth Service, the Outdoor Learning Zone, has seen groups of young students carrying out regular conservation tasks at St Nicks.

continued overleaf



Apple Day 10th October: The apple press was busy all afternoon producing many litres of yummy juice.

Friends of St Nicholas Fields

- ♻️ national 2007 Biffa Climate Conscious Award winner
- ♻️ registered charity (no. 1068909)
- ♻️ supported by the City of York Council

York Environment Centre, Rawdon Av, York YO10 3ST
tel./ fax: (01904) 411821 ♻️ www.stnicksfields.org.uk
general enquiries: info@stnicksfields.org.uk
composting advice: rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk

Recent bird sightings

Sparrowhawk, Dunnock, Robin, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Starling, Crow, Magpie, Blackbird, Black-headed Gull

If you are interested in birds or other wildlife, please get in touch if you would like to join our wildlife watch.

It has been a real pleasure of late to receive praise from a number of regular users of the nature reserve commenting on how much is getting done around the site and how good it is looking. If you haven't been here for a while, why not pay a visit while the glorious autumn colours are still with us.

Group visits over the last couple of months have included 100 students from York University Environment Department, 40 students from Leeds University School of Earth & Environment and 80 schoolchildren from Oatlands Junior School in Harrogate.

Saturday 15th November saw our annual autumn bird walk, led by local ornithologist David Campbell. Back in July, Tony Fairburn took a dozen people on a guided butterfly walk on what was probably the hottest day of the summer and Geoff Oxford ran a spider workshop at the end of September.

A community environmental arts project entitled 'Seeing Green' is now in full swing with workshops taking place over the next month at various venues around York. In January an auction of artworks created at these workshops will take place, with St Nicks as the beneficiary.

Green Away Days

We have now held a number of very successful team-building days and team challenges for local organisations and companies. These included a team from the Bank of New York Mellon in Leeds (*pictured below*) and another from HBOS, both of whom carried out a path-building project in the nature reserve. Thirty people from the Centre for Research & Dissemination at York University carried out further path building and took part in a treasure hunt, while ten staff from the City of York Council's Children's Health and Disability Team had the challenge of building a shelter from natural materials foraged in the woodland as well as a scavenger hunt around the nature reserve.

We can now offer a varied menu of team-building activities as part of our Green Away Days package with the programme tailored to the requirements of a particular team. The day could consist entirely of outdoor activities or part of the day could be spent at York Environment Centre:

- ⌘ work as a team on a practical conservation activity to improve the nature reserve for its users
- ⌘ engage in a fun problem-solving task
- ⌘ join a nature trail or treasure hunt around the nature reserve
- ⌘ explore your carbon footprint
- ⌘ find out about greening your office



If you would like more information for your own staff team or work colleagues or you know a company or other organisation that would be interested, please contact John Brierley at the Environment Centre.

Volunteer Co-ordinator Calling

Since the last newsletter the number of volunteers and range of volunteer opportunities has gone from strength to strength. We now have an amazing volunteer park ranger – Ethan, who leads groups out in the nature reserve. Also, our tools and maintenance volunteer - Tony has been brave enough to tackle the lock up and keep all the tools in ship shape condition. Not to mention the exciting launch of our brand new Young Friends of St Nicks group which will see a dedicated group of 16 to 25 year olds getting involved in the future of St Nicholas Fields. We also have a group from Applefields School coming to the Centre every Thursday to help with anything which needs doing - from making recycled crafts for sale to painting our compost bays.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the fantastic people who have volunteered at St Nicks over 2008 – without you St Nicks could still be ‘Tang Hall Tip’! Have a great festive season!

Michelle Hawthorne (volunteer@stnicksfields.org.uk, 01904 411821/ 07531 009149)

Top 3 New Year Volunteering Opportunities

ECO ACTIVE DAYS

The first eco-active day of 2009 will be Wednesday 21st January, 11am – 4pm. This is a great way to gain new skills, have fun outdoors and meet lots of friendly people. In return we will keep you warm with free soup and bread for lunch! Please see overleaf for further dates and details.

YOUNG FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS FIELDS GROUP

Join our brand new Young Friends of St Nicholas Fields group for 16 to 25 year olds. This is your chance to gain skills in events organisation, publicity, practical conservation, environmental education and much much more. Contact Michelle to find out more.

SATURDAY VOLUNTEERS

Do you fancy chatting to visitors about St Nicks, pottering around in the garden, reading a book in the sunshine or doing some small admin tasks at the Environment Centre on a Saturday? We need volunteers over the winter to open up and staff the centre from 10am – 1pm. Please get in touch.



York Rotters Update

We are again holding our **Design a Poster Competition** to show what items can be composted at Christmas.

The competition is open to all children in the York area. The competition will be judged in two age groups: under 8 years and 8-16 years, one winner will be chosen from each group. Winners will win gift vouchers worth £20 and the winning designs will be made into large posters and displayed across the city as part of the York Rotters Christmas compost campaign. All entries should be on A4 paper and received by **Friday 28th November**.



Pumpkin Evening: Winners of the 8-16 category of the pumpkin carving competition.



We held our **Pumpkin Evening** on the 29th October which involved weighing pumpkins grown as part of the Giant Pumpkin Competition. The winning pumpkin weighed a massive 8.65 stone, nearly the weight of a size zero supermodel! Well done to pupils from Archbishop C of E School in Bishopthorpe. There was also a pumpkin carving competition which saw some very interesting, and scary, faces. We will be holding the competition again next year so look out for the seed giveaway in April.

If you are looking for a useful present, then look no more - **Compostmate** is a fantastic tool for all ‘rotters’. It makes turning the contents of a compost bin very easy and, unlike with some other aerators, you do not need to be strong or tall to use it. £12.50 from the Environment Centre



Environment Centre Update

Our 2.5kW Proven wind turbine has had its regular service and has been given brand new blades. The original appointment in October with Eagle Power, who maintain our turbine, had to be cancelled - due to high winds! So we were worried that our second attempt in November might not work out either. Luckily the weather obliged with a nice calm morning. The new blades should significantly improve the efficiency of the wind turbine due to a better shape and materials. Our first impression is that the turbine is turning more at lower winds and it sounds very different. We shall see soon whether our meter readings show any real improvement. We're now looking for some creative ideas for what to do with the old blades - put them up at the Centre like a trophy or turn them into garden beds? Please let us know if you think of something better and more imaginative.



St Nick's Events December 2008 - March 2009

Meet at the York Environment Centre unless stated otherwise. Check our website or call us on 01904 411821 for bookings, more information and more events. Please help us spread the word.

REGULAR EVENTS

Eco-Active Days

Fancy a bit of exercise whilst doing something useful outdoors, followed by a free lunch? Join us on:

- ♣ Sat. 6th December, 10-1pm - tree planting
- ♣ Wed. 17th December, 11am-4pm - path building
- NO Eco-Active Day on the first Saturday in January
- ♣ Wed. 21st January, 11-4pm - path maintenance
- ♣ Sat. 7th February, 10-1pm - bird boxes
- ♣ Wed. 18th February, 11-4pm
- ♣ Sat. 7th March, 10-1pm
- ♣ Wed. 18th March, 11-4pm
- ♣ Sat. 4th April, 10-1pm

Camera Club

Meets every first Saturday of the month 2-4pm (except in December when we're not meeting, and January when we're meeting on the second Saturday - 10th January). New members welcome. **Free admission.** Please contact Ivana at the Centre for more info.

OTHER EVENTS

Christmas Ceilidh Thur. 4th December, 7-11pm
at Tramways Club, 1 Mill St. (off Piccadilly)

See the front page for more details.

Fungi Walk Sat. 6th December, 1:30-2:30pm

Come join Findlay Cook on a hunt for autumn fungi. Please book ahead.

5th Birthday of St Nicholas Fields

Local Nature Reserve Saturday 28th February

It will be five years since St Nicholas Fields was officially declared a Local Nature Reserve. We are currently busy planning an event to celebrate it. More details will be available in the new year.



Composting Training Sessions

Sat. 28th February

10am-12.30 a Free 'How to Compost' training
12.45-2pm 'Train to be a York Rotter volunteer'
Be amazed at the wide variety of waste which you can turn into fantastic compost - and you don't even need a garden to do it. Come to the morning or both sessions and become a master composter.

EVENTS IN THE PIPELINE

Auction of artworks created during the Seeing Green workshops (to raise funds for St Nicks) in January 2009, coppicing and woodland crafts days and other courses...