



York Rotters' Pumpkin Evening - the largest yet! p. 8



Apple Day 2011 - Pudding Contest Judges p.3



photo of Long-tailed tit by Jan Traynor

Wildwatching p.4



A happy apple face on Apple Day (photo by Anneliese Emmans Dean).

Thanks go to Hull Road Ward Committee for their financial support for this popular event.

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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

Welcome to another News from St Nicks!

I am delighted to welcome Jo Bussey as our new and first Chief Executive. Jo has extensive, relevant experience and expertise covering all areas of our work at St Nicks. She is also a successful fundraiser, so we are delighted to have her leading the organisation.

Jo was able to start work with us on 22nd November and was able to meet the Management Committee that evening.

We are all very pleased to have Jo working with us and look forward to St Nicks going from strength to strength under her guidance and leadership

Tina Funnell, Chair

What a first week it has been!

I am thrilled to have been appointed as St Nicks first Chief Executive and would like to thank all the staff and volunteers who have given me such a warm welcome

in my new role. I am new to the City of York having worked in the environmental sector in the North East of England, managing sustainability and waste partnership projects in the voluntary sector. My project experience combined with my business degree, masters degree in the environment and Institute of Fundraising Certification gives me quite a unique range of business and environmental skills, all of which will be vital in taking St Nicks forward in the current economic climate.

St Nicks has an excellent reputation and myself, the staff team and Trustees all have some fantastic ideas for new environmental partnerships and projects throughout the city. I look forward to working with all of our partners and volunteers over the coming months and hope you will all continue to join us in making the City of York a sustainable city to be proud of.

Jo Bussey, Chief Executive



FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS FIELDS

♻️ ♻️ Community Recycling Champion 2010

♻️ Green Flag Community Award winner 2011 & 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

general enquiries: info@stnicksfields.org.uk

composting advice: rotters@stnicksfields.org.uk

volunteering: volunteer@stnicksfields.org.uk



St Nicks seventh Apple Day on 15th October was a glorious and fun day which more than 160 people enjoyed. Litres of juice were pressed and drunk. Apples were juggled, played with in Apple Olympics and turned into crafts. Both last year's records in the Longest Peel Contest were beaten. Dave, in the over 16s category, managed to peel 71 inches/ 180cm and Peter achieved 19.5 inches/ 49.5 cm in the under 16s. More puddings were submitted into the contest than last year

so our judges had a difficult task on their hands. They rose to the sweet challenge and everyone happily tucked into the pud's at the end of the day. Our stall sold all the chutneys and jams our volunteers had made from fruit found in the reserve. Local poet Anneliese Emmans Dean was helping people write the longest apple poem, which ran into 58 lines - you can read it below. All in all, another successful celebration of the humble apple!

The Amazing Adventures of Pip the Apple Seed

Long ago there was a seed called Pip
Who set off on an awe-inspiring trip
She fell from the tree and onto the ground
Just lying there waiting to be found
The rain it rained and she started to shout
For from her tummy she was beginning to sprout
The rumbling in her tummy grew
And from her depths a fresh shoot flew
The root pushed down, through the soil
Down and down, as if drilling for oil
Then one day some juicy leaves appeared
And all the children loudly cheered
A rabbit came along and tried to eat it up
But it was chased away by a tiny little pup
It grew taller and taller towards the sky
Until it reached way up high
Branches sprouted left and right
Until it caught the accursed blight
It was ill, would it die?
'Don't you worry, don't you cry!
Out from the forest crept the Green Man
'Do not fear, I have a great plan.'
He howled and he hollered and he thrashed his twigs
And up from the ground twined cherries and figs
Out from the tree flew a pretty white bird
Singing a song to warn the herd
Of elephants and rhinos and a kangaroo
Who had all escaped from the local zoo
Nellie the elephant emptied her trunk
And soon enough the tree was drunk

The drunk apple tree swayed in the breeze
But come the night, the blossom would freeze
The plan came to fruition, the Green Man arrived
With a hop and a whistle, the blossom thrived
The blossom was brilliant, a beautiful sight
You just knew that the apples would be alright
Feelings of delight consumed the apple seed
Watching changing colours in the sunlight ... 'oh we will succeed'
The days grew longer and the summer breeze blew
The sunlight warmed and the pollen flew
All around, far and wide,
And into another tree it did collide
Up above high in the sky there was a bee
It flew down down down into the tree
Then the lovely juicy apples come
While the busy buzzy bees hum
Said one bee to another 'You are the apple of my eye'
He then went on to say 'I sometimes wonder why!
The air became cold, and the sky went black
Suddenly our tree was under ATTACK!
The wild wind howled and the thunder clashed
As a fork of lightning from the heavens flashed!
God said 'People you must pray
There will be peace for Pip this day'
It wasn't really God, but a bad angel with wings
Then the police caught the angel who stole God's things
Pip's first crop was safely gathered in
And this is where next year's poem will begin ...

COMMUNITY ORCHARD PROJECT

Exciting times on the Bearing Fruit project as after 9 months of research, planning, mapping and expert consultancy we have finally decided on the trees for the orchard! Trees ordered are a mix of top fruits including apples, plums and pears, hedging trees such as blackthorn, crab apple, hazel and hawthorn, wild gooseberries and some extra special and quite rare Yorkshire heritage varieties of apple trees.

As well as the planning and preparation work for the orchard the core group have been doing a mixture of activities including wildlife surveys, foraging and practical conservation work. Throughout summer we spent some very enjoyable afternoons making jams, jellies and chutneys, which went down a treat at Apple Day, where we sold them to members of the public to raise money for St Nicks. The Bearing Fruit group also treated some visitors at Apple Day to a tour of their forthcoming community orchard.

On Monday 24th October we hosted a Family Wildflower Planting Day, which proved to be very popular with a fantastic attendance. Together the group planted wildflower bulbs with the hope of bringing the orchard sites to life with Bluebells, Snakes Head Fritillary, Snow Drops,



Celandines and Wood Anemones. While the little ones were kept busy with storytelling and crafts, St Nicks provided refreshments in the form of crackers with some of Bearing Fruit's homemade chutneys, which went down a treat! As a thank you for their hard work on the day the families were given their own St Nicks apple pips to plant, which will hopefully grow into a fruitful tree of their own.

There are plenty of opportunities to get involved in planting St Nicks own community orchard! Join us on Saturday 3rd December for our Family Planting Day, which coincides with our regular Eco-Active Day, or on Monday 5th December for an orchard-planting day. For more details about upcoming events, please see the events page on our website or email jonathan@stnicksfields.org.uk.

FROM THE VOLUNTEERS' DIARY

As usual, it has been a busy few months for our conservation volunteers. Throughout the summer months we were pleased to host a student all the way from Spain, who was a big help to us throughout August and September. When Miguel wasn't busy reviewing our Health and Safety policy as part of his Masters course, he could be found grafting with the other volunteers by widening our paths and scything our meadows.

We have done a great deal of scything these past few months as our scything team were once again contracted to cut Danesmeade Meadow. Our traditional methods are clearly in demand!

We have finished all of our scything for the year now and are concentrating on tree planting. We have planted several young trees donated by the Woodland Trust over the past few weeks, including an oak that our volunteers decided to dedicate to former Project Co-ordinator John

Brierley who has left St Nicks for pastures new.

Last month our volunteers had a fantastic day learning how to make benches using green wood with expert Geoff Norton. Together we managed to build a whole bench in one day. As a result we now have a beautiful new oak bench in our nature reserve that our volunteers are proud of (as you can see on the right)!

Youth Group

Our new youth group has been very busy in the past few months learning a wealth of outdoor skills. So far they have made bug hotels, bird feeders and conducted wildlife surveys on the reserve. When they are not busy with these tasks, they are working hard on a project re-vamping one of the oldest paths on the nature reserve. Our 14-16 year olds have been cutting back brambles and rescuing hollies on the



'Ceremonial Path' leading up to the Dragon Stones. They hope to work on this path more when the days lengthen again, but the dark nights have brought them indoors for willow weaving and Christmas crafts.

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

(Some of many) memories of John Horsley who has been involved with St Nicks in one way or another since early childhood. His energy and drive is envied by many of younger age. If you have any stories to tell about St Nicks, please get in touch.

It used to be a tip for household rubbish. I can remember it from about 1932/33. We used to rake among the bricks and get sticks to light the fire. I used to come here with my grandmother and put the sticks in an old pram. Everyone used to go sticking. I would have been 4 years old.

Our main play area was at the back of Harington Avenue. We were called 'Tip Gang'. Every gang had its name because we used to play football against each other. Where the eco house is now [Fieldside Lane], that's where our football and cricket pitch was. We used to fight, throw stones at James Street Gang and we used to set fire to grass to mark our territory.

I left the Royal Navy in 1959 and I took up fishing. We used to come [to St Nicks] to get worms for fishing from the pressings from Rowntree's – the jam, the fruit pastilles and that – they were tipped in big heaps. Well we used to get a fork and dig among them. It was like compost and we found these little red worms.

We also used to try and find wasps' nests. They have a big comb in the nest with a big fat grub in there. Fish love them. Now the idea was to get a wasp, put it in a jar with a flower, shake it up and let it fly, and it would take you to its nest. One day we got a wasp, put it in the jar, shook it up, it flew out and stung my brother!





Wood Mouse - aka "Long-tailed Mouse" (*Apodemus sylvaticus*, photo by Ian Traynor). The animal was inside a trap for no more than 12 hours, with ample supply of food. It was inside this plastic bag for no more than about 60 seconds and was then released unharmed.

By now, the soft fruit and autumn flowers are just about over, and the first frosts have cut back much of the annual vegetation. There is still a plentiful supply of longer lasting hips, haws and apples for the birds, together with abundant teasel heads for goldfinches. Leaves are falling fast, but the colours are still beautiful even on dull days.

The summer visitors have gone: whitethroats left the reserve during September; chiffchaff and blackcap were still about well into October, as were speckled wood and red admiral butterflies. Our first redwing of winter was sighted on 26th October. A lot more blackbird activity than usual suggests that resident birds have been joined by winter visitors from northern Europe. We are also looking out for siskins: they should soon be feeding in the alder trees where the little cone-like seed heads are abundant. If you see them, check for the possible presence of lesser redpolls among them. It remains to be seen whether we get another waxwing winter. Among resident birds, listen for robins – we've already tentatively identified eight winter territories – and look out for family parties of bullfinches. Winter flocks of tits and finches are starting to build up: a flock of around 40 goldfinches was seen recently. The most exciting recent find

was a yellowhammer – a first for the reserve, bringing our bird year-list up to 46.

One of the highlights of late summer was our first attempt at a small mammal survey using live trapping. It was an interesting and useful experience even though we only found one slightly bemused wood mouse. Plans are in hand to take part in the national mammal conservation group's spring survey. A very successful bat evening was held in August. More recently we had a very enlightening talk on fungi, followed by fieldwork.

Winter sessions are expected to concentrate on bird monitoring, winter tree identification and learning more about detecting the presence of small mammals through signs such as gnawed fruit kernels.

Join Wildwatch

- 🌿 Meet Wednesdays 10am at the Centre
- 🌿 Join our mailing list - email St Nicks
- 🌿 See www.stnicksfields.org.uk/blog
- 🌿 Please report your sightings



Photo of Lesser Redpoll taken at Fairburn Ings in February this year by Mark Coates.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE RECYCLING TEAM

Most people see us when we are out and about collecting, but what do we get up to the rest of the time? Our day starts at eight, when we generally all arrive by bike. The centre is opened and the first job is to get the electric vehicle and the tricycles out of their lock-ups. Someone also does the vital job of putting the kettle on. Work sheets for the vehicle and the trikes are printed off and put on clipboards – these help us to keep track of how many households participate each week. We also check if there are any new boxes, baskets or lids to be delivered – we make a note when people ask for them and aim to get them delivered on the following week's round.

There is time for a quick cuppa then, which is also a chance to pass on any news from meetings, or to raise any special jobs that need doing. Then it is time to hit the road. Collections usually take a couple of hours and then it's back to base to unload. Sorting at the kerbside means that unloading is relatively simple, although it's one of the more physical parts of the job – everything is winched or lifted by hand. Paper, card, glass, cans and plastic all go into separate skips to be picked up by our various waste merchants.

By the time unloading is finished it's usually lunchtime. If not, there are always little jobs to be done – maintenance, tidying and so on. After lunch, we simply repeat the process once or twice.

We recently had a new helper for a morning. Leader of the Council, Cllr. James Alexander and Cllr. Janet Looker came to St Nicks on 1st November to find out more about our recycling scheme and other St Nicks projects and how we could further extend our partnership work between the two organisations. James then lent a hand sorting recycling onto one of our tricycles. It's the best way to find out what the challenges of the job are, and how people can be encouraged to recycle more. He picked it all up quickly and is obviously keen to see even more of the city's waste recycled.



Councillor Alexander and Councillor Looker (in high visibility vests) posing with some of St Nicks team and chair of the charity Tina Funnell (second right) for The Press photo. James did get his hands dirty later, helping on the recycling round.

St Nicks kerbside recycling scheme is run in partnership with City of York Council.



CHOOSE 2 REUSE FAIR

**Sat 3rd December 10am-4pm
at York Racecourse YO23 1EX**

Visit our stall featuring jewellery, gift boxes, belts, heat mats and more items made out of recycled materials.

Entry is **free**.

More info: www.letstalklessrubbish.com

Or come into the Environment Centre to see and buy what our Recycling Team has re-made.



The Biggest Pumpkin and Evening Yet!

Wednesday 26th October saw York Rotters' biggest Pumpkin Evening and winning pumpkin yet. We had around 80 people enjoying the pumpkin-filled night so some people were carving their pumpkin masterpieces outside as they wouldn't fit in the hall. We very quickly ran out of the delicious pumpkin soup but there was plenty of three kinds of pumpkin cake for everyone. The carving efforts resulted in 36 entries into the contest but there were only four entries into the Giant Pumpkin Contest. The winning Giant arrived at the last minute but it was certainly worth waiting for. The pumpkin weighed over 24 stones and would not fit through the door! Its grower said the trick was feeding with seaweed, and beer (both for him and the pumpkin).

Compost Bin Sale in Haxby

Thanks to a subsidy from York & North Yorkshire Waste Partnership, St Nicks purchased some 330-litre compost bins for a one-day discount sale in Haxby on 1st October. The sale was heavily promoted within Haxby and Wigginton,

which included placing bin-tags on over 5400 householders' refuse bins (resulting in very tired legs and a few blisters). With lots of hard work from volunteers and staff the day went very well and we managed to sell over 250 bins. Amongst the volunteers were five Little Rotters helping out who all did a fantastic job. Two of them even carried a compost bin $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to hand deliver a bin to a lady who couldn't manage to get it home on her own. One of the amusing sights of the day was a customer trying to fit a 330-litre bin into a two-seater smart car. The sale was followed up a few weeks later by a short crash course for composting novices. Now there should be around 200 households sending less waste to landfill due to composting.

Need a Composter (or Dalek)?

We have some composters left from the sale at the Environment Centre – you can buy a 220-litre one for £10 and 330-litre for £15. If you cannot collect, we can advise you how to get one delivered at similar prices – just get in touch.

We also have some composters with manufacturing defects for which we are asking a £3 donation. The bins do not have hatches or lids but could still be used as composters or turned into dalek models (as we are planning to do with one of them).



Where there is a bin (and determination), there is a way – to fit it into a smart car.

Tours and Talks

The Environment Centre has been very busy with events, volunteering activities and also special visits. We had around 100 students from York University Environment Department come for a tour of the Centre and nature reserve on 14th October. A few of them have been back since either as volunteers or to join in with events. A few days later, members of the York Guild of Building paid us a visit and our Education Officer Rachel Bell gave a talk to the Hartrigge Oaks Gardening Club on the same night. The organiser of the guild's tour told us: "It was a great evening and I know that my fellow Guild members enjoyed it." If you know of a group that may be interested in finding out more about our work and projects, please get in touch.


Room hire

The Centre is also available for hire and has been hosting a regular pilates class on Tuesdays. York Organic Gardeners' Association used the hall for one of their public meetings in which experienced gardener Tony Chalcraft gave tips on growing apples. Both Garden Organic and the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens used the hall in November for their training events. If you are looking for a quirky friendly venue for your meeting or event, let us know.

Improvement projects

We are looking to improve the facilities at the Centre and an important part of the process is finding out how well the building performs as an eco building. We know that the green building technologies have moved on greatly since 2000 when the Centre was opened and want to update it accordingly. A student from Sheffield University has started monitoring the Centre as part of his PhD and we hope it will give us ideas of what we could do.

Two things we hope to change within the next



**St Nicks wishes you
a peaceful festive season
and a Happy New Year 2012!**

Our Christmas Recycling Tips

⌘ Wine corks, burst balloons, party hats and cracker jokes can all be composted unless covered in metallic or plastic layers. Ask York Rotters what else you could compost.

⌘ There is no special collection for Christmas cards this year so if you cannot reuse them as gift tags, include them in your kerbside recycling.

⌘ Chopped up Christmas trees will get collected on the kerbside if you get garden waste collection in your area. Otherwise they can be taken to Household Recycling Sites such as Hazel Court on James Street.

For more tips and ideas see

www.stnicksfields.org.uk/york-rotters.php

few months are our heating and water systems. Thanks to a grant from the Feoffees we can upgrade our wood burning stove which has struggled to heat the whole building. We shall invite you to an evening by the fire once a new stove has been installed.

With a heavy heart but clear conscience we have decided to downgrade one of the green features of the building – its rainwater harvesting system. Until a few years ago the system would reliably deliver sufficient supplies of good drinking water but, as our numbers and activities have increased, we have been running dry. We have therefore decided to get connected to the water mains and are hoping to do this next spring. This should actually help improve our carbon footprint as mains water generally requires less energy than harvesting and cleaning rainwater to drinking water standard. We will retain the rainwater system, with fewer filters, for use outdoors.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Please note that there may be changes and more events. For all events meet at York Environment Centre. Please check our website www.stnicksfields.org.uk or call us on 01904 411821 for bookings and more information. Please help us spread the word.



ORCHARD PLANTING FAMILY DAY

Sat 3rd Dec 10am-1pm

Wrap up warm and bring the family along to help us plant St Nicks Community Orchard. This planting day, aimed at families, will run alongside our regular **Eco-Active Day** session to make sure all our shiny new fruit trees get planted. As with the recent wild flower planting day there will also be lots of other fun activities to keep the kids busy such as crafts and storytelling. The event is free and open to all. Tasty lunch and refreshments will be provided.

NIGHT TIME EXPLORERS - for under 5s

Wed 14th Dec 5-6pm

Run by the Avenues Children's Centre. Contact Vicky or Claire for more info on 01904 551250

BEARING FRUIT DAYS

Mon 5th December 1-4pm - planting

Mon 19th Dec 1-4pm - Christmas crafts

Help turn St Nicks Community Orchard plans into reality. Volunteering on Bearing Fruit is a great opportunity to get healthy, meet people, learn new skills, have fun and create something

St Nicks members get free entry to all our guided walks and discounts on training courses. JOIN US and enjoy the benefits of supporting York's leading organisation promoting sustainable living.

really exciting and fruitful at St Nicks.

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.

Please contact Jonathan on 01904 411821 or volunteer@stnicksfields.org.uk for more details.



CALLING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

Wed 7th & 14th Dec 4.30-5.30pm

We are running free sessions in environmental studies and conservation for 14-16 year olds. Sessions can include environmental projects such as wildlife photography, recycled art and wildlife identification, as well as practical conservation tasks. **Please call to book.**

ST NICKS WILDWATCH

Meet Wednesdays 10am at the Centre. Watch and learn about St Nicks wildlife.

EVENTS 2012

We are currently working on a calendar of events for next year. Please contact us or check our website for details. In the pipeline we have Willow Weaving and Fruit Tree Pruning courses, a series of wildlife walks, Grow Your Own and Composting training, plus our regular favourites Give or Take Day and Apple Day.

CAMERA CLUB moves online

Help record life on St Nicks by adding your pics to www.flickr.com/groups/stnickscameraclub