



Friends Of The Craggs

CRAGGS NEWSLETTER

Issue 1

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KEEPING THE INTEREST GOING...

WITH the nation in lockdown over Covid-19, there has been little chance to capitalise on the efforts made by the Friends of The Craggs in recent months, to improve this area of beauty. Our secretary, Alan Brocklehurst, has kindly put together our first newsletter, with contributions from Craggs lovers, to keep up the momentum at this very difficult time.



*A section of the Stone Railway.
Picture: Sue Redfern*

Antonia S writes:

I have been on the Craggs in the last two weeks.

I may not have seen the changes, but I can smell the new growths, and the cutting of the grass, the sound of the birds singing and diving between the trees.

It has also been nice to hear all the people that have been using the Craggs at this unfortunate time.

Let's hope they carry on using the Craggs when this is all over.

My son and I feel there should be a bin at the side of the seat, as you walk up from Hillside Academy.

If you walk straight up, to the right hand turn, there is a seat on the corner.

There should be a bin with an ash tray there.

Alan B writes:

I have not walked on the Craggs recently. Just outside my back door, I have Nearcliff Wood, close the water tower.

Walking through this wood, I have seen various spring wild flowers.

There are carpets of white wood anemone, patches of (now fading) yellow celandines, the emerging flowers of wild garlic, and some early bluebells.

Along the footpath beyond Drake Head Lane, I was pleased to see stitchwort, white deadnettle, and black-thorn blossom.

Seeing these spring wild flowers caused me to go home and look up a document relating to a survey of the Craggs plant life, carried out in the summer of 2012.

Well over 40 species of wildflowers were recorded on the Craggs during that survey.

Gary P writes:

When we first moved onto Windsor Road roughly 30 years ago, the Craggs near us was sparsely covered with hawthorn scrub, grass and bracken.

The paths worn by workers tramping between their homes in Conanby to the pit-related industries near the river were still clear to follow, as offroad motor bikes did, each weekend, to and from Steetleys.

Even a 4 x 4 did its best to go straight up the hill to the disused quarry. It didn't get there but not for the want of trying.

Nuisance

The nuisance caused by these activities prompted the authorities to

erect the green barrier fence that is still there.

A change started.

With motor vehicles no longer easily accessing the area, nature started to stir.

We would leave our house, look right at the Craggs, and walk up with Sooty our dog.

I came to know every square yard between the top of the Cinder Path and the swing park, the eastern end of the Craggs.

Northcliff field was still open, so many cars were dumped and burned out in the old quarry.

I counted 22 of these by the time the clearout happened.

Frequently drug users left their paraphernalia just off the pathed routes, just out of sight



Remains of the Stone Railway. Picture: Gary Pugh.

in the undergrowth.

Well placed viewing benches with their accompanying litter bins were vandalised.

Dry grass areas were set alight. Many Saturday nights had Lady's Valley hosting musical 'raves'.

I'll wager that these were loud enough to be heard in High Melton.

Then when De Warrenne School was built, things started to change more quickly.

No longer was access across the top (school) field available.

The road to the old reservoir was closed, preventing fly tipping in that area.

Now, nature thrived.

The trees grew undisturbed, the tangle of

brambles along the path sides thickened, diminishing further human footfall.

Wildlife could move more freely. Rabbit, squirrel, fox, innumerable varieties of birds, including woodpecker, buzzard and sparrow hawk, and even the occasional deer could be seen.

Less visible, but there none the less, were, and still are, mice, shrews, frogs, and a few hedgehogs.

Sooty my dog departed some years ago, and I grew less interested in my neighbouring green space.

A chance encounter, earlier this year, with a couple of chaps trying to locate the 'stone railway'



The Stone Railway incline. Picture: Sue Redfern.

rekindled my curiosity.

I ventured into the wilderness again to see how time had affected it.

Discarded beer cans, left by ravers, are still in Lady's Valley.

The local youth still fire any dry grass they can.

Drug users don't appear to be visiting these days.

The path around the top of the

old quarry, from the reservoir to the Oval, is still well trodden.

The old maze of paths criss-crossing the area are still there, but now only visible to those with a well trained eye.

Young trees, yew, birch, thorn, and most pleasingly a number of ash have established themselves.

The area is now becoming a woodland, again rather than the

scrubland that it formerly was.

Nature enjoys minimum human intervention, and hopefully that is what the area will receive; largely left alone, with paths through, for us to walk and to enjoy the flora and fauna doing their own thing.

***Still intact - the Stone Railway.
Picture: Gary Pugh***

