

The *Sobriety* Project



The Waterways Museum, Goole
Canalside Nature Trail

Forward Plan
2004-2006

The Sobriety Project

The Waterways Museum, Goole Towpath / Canalside Nature Trail

Forward Plan

Where is it ?

The Trail starts directly outside the Museum gates and runs eastwards through the picnic site, under the railway and along a strip of land between the Dutch River and the Aire & Calder Navigation towards Rawcliffe Bridge.

Why a nature trail here ?

The land itself was derelict for many years and had been used to dump dredgings from the canal. Abandonment has led over the years to it becoming populated by a big variety of fauna and flora. The main habitats are pond and reed bed, scrub and grassland with small areas of copse and woodland.

Where do we go ?

To see the Trail's mixed habitats at their best follow the canal towpath up to the stone drainage culvert (about 1700 metres or roughly a mile), and return along the informal pathway to be found on the right. Also take advantage of the new viewing platform on the pond and take a closer look at a freshwater aquatic environment. Perhaps take a break at the stoned picnic area on the other side of the railway with its meadowland plants and specially planted coppice hedge.



What can we see ?

As well as an extensive range of common and not so common grasses and wild flowers such as orchids, we also have some rare and beautiful birds notably barn owls, kingfishers and reed buntings. Look out also for herons that fish the ponds. If you are very lucky you may see a great crested newt, another protected species.

During the summer months 17 species of butterfly can be seen as well as six spotted burnet moths and the dramatic cannibal moth in the grassland areas. Dragon flies and damsel flies can be seen around the pond on hot days hunting for smaller insects. There is always something interesting and exciting to be seen on the Trail whatever the season.

Why is the Trail important ?

The Trail is an outdoor classroom, an oasis of wildlife in the midst of an area that is industrialised and intensively farmed. It is a refuge for plants, birds, insects and other animals which make up a complex food chain. We can investigate the way plants and animals live together and learn how man can either damage or enhance the environment. The study of this is called ecology.

And finally.....

The area is sensitive. Much time and effort goes into managing it for your enjoyment so please take your litter home and keep your dog under control and clean up after it. Don't make too much noise.

Be aware of danger, supervise your children and have a wonderful walk round. The two mile circular walk takes about two hours if you walk slowly.



Education

Environmental education is becoming increasingly important especially within a museum context as industry and other human activities have had a profound impact on the environment. Our past actions have shaped our current environment and future actions will determine what kind of world our children inherit.

The Waterways Museum at Goole is possible unique in that it has a nature reserve of significant size attached to it, providing resources and activities that would not be available in a classroom.

Topics for activity and discussion should include the following :

- How the environment is shaped
- Life processes
- Human influences on the environment
- Living things in the environment
- Evolution
- Humans / animals / plants
- Habitats
- Pollution / chemicals
- Food chains
- Adaptation
- Succession

Primary Schools

- Basic explanation of ecology, outlining how and why things grow and live in certain places
- Explain the importance of looking after and encouraging our wild life.
- Take short tours of the Trail and demonstrate plant and animal recognition, bug hunting and pond dipping.

Secondary Schools

- Basic explanation of ecology and why conservation is important.
- Discuss why biodiversity is important to the environment
- Discuss food chain and webs
- Outline man's influence on the Earth discussing what damage may have been done by pollution and exploitation of natural resources
- Tour of the Trail to show importance of biodiversity, pointing out habitats of plants and animals.



New Deal Students

- Explain the importance of ecology and conservation
- Training in the use of mowers and brush cutters
- Training in building and upkeep of paths
- Training in maintaining existing structures
- Practical work on the upkeep of ponds, reed beds and willow coppice

Adult Students

- Basic explanation of ecology and why it is important.
- Explain the importance of certain plants and animals in certain food chains and webs.
- Outline how basic resources of soil, air and water are being spoiled and how the balance of nature can be so easily upset.
- Explain what practical steps can be take to improve our environment

The Way Ahead

Over the past few months (August 2004) significant improvements have been made to the Nature Trail. These include:

- Setting up standing stones in the picnic area
- Construction of new improved viewing platform on the Railway Pond
- Widening and improvement of the informal path on the Trail and management of habitats to encourage greater diversity of insects.

All this has been achieved by a small but enthusiastic group of workers with minimal resources and funding.

To move things on in the coming year and to raise the Trail's profile within the Goole community substantial improvements will need to be made in funding for labour, equipment and materials.



The proposed improvements are:

- Improvement of paths for wheelchair access
- New railings
- Interpretation boards
- Extension of the informal path at the western end of the site
- Improving the area around the Railway Pond
- Construction of bridge, and bird watching hide on the high ground bisecting the top reed bed.
- Map and guide
- Design and build new benches
- Increase the educational use of the Trail
- Arts and sculpture project to carve the picnic stones.
- Further management to improve the biodiversity of the site
- Draw up improved health and safety measures and risk assessments
- Apply for local nature reserve status.
- Monitor and publish visitor numbers.