



## Friends of the Nickey Line Newsletter 29 – November 2022

### WHAT'S IN THIS NEWSLETTER?

- **What's Happening on the Nickey Line**
- **Surface Work in Harpenden and Maylands / Hunters Oak sections**
- **Draft User's Code and Graffiti Policy**
- **Busy Year for Work Parties**
- **Book Holidays with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays and Earn the Friends £s**

### WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE NICKEY LINE

#### New 5 Year Greenspace Action Plan (GAP) for St Albans Published

The much delayed St Albans D.C. (SADC) 5 Year Green Action Plan has been published. You can see it at <https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Nickey%20Line%20GAP%202022-27%20%28compressed%29.pdf> or go to [www.stalbans.gov.uk](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk) and search for 'nickey line'.

This will be the guiding document for our volunteer work parties for this section of the Nickey Line for the next five years although we agree a specific work programme every year.

#### Draft Friends of the Nickey Line User Code

The new SADC GAP discusses possible measures to help encourage considerate behaviour between users, in particular between different types of user (walkers/dog walkers/ runners/cyclists).

We believe most users are considerate but occasionally even the best of us slip. Here are a few suggestions from us to help **but we do welcome feedback from you on this:**

#### As a Walker

- Don't walk more than 2 abreast if you can
- If you stop to chat, move to one side
- Listen or look out for cyclists or runners – especially coming from behind
- Keep your dog under control, preferably with a short lead
- Pick up your dog's poo and put it in a bin

#### As a Cyclist

- Give a warning (bell or polite shout) before you pass people from behind
- Be aware that with some disabilities (or wearing earphones) people may not be aware of such warnings
- Whatever the direction, pass people at moderate speed and at a good distance

#### As a Runner

- Give a polite warning shout before you pass people from behind
- Be aware that with some disabilities (or wearing earphones) people may not be aware of such warnings
- Pass them at a good distance

#### Everyone

- Don't litter! Put it in a bin or take it home
- If you have a plastic /paper cup, take it home to recycle or crush it before you bin it
- When it's dark or dull, make sure you are visible to others. Use lights at night
- Be polite, do thank people who have been considerate and enjoy your time on the Nickey Line!

**\*\* If you have a view on this, please email us on [friends@nickeyline.org](mailto:friends@nickeyline.org) \*\***

## New Surfaces Choice Remains Contentious

The type of new surface to adopt in different sections of the Nickey Line (when we have the funding) remains a contentious issue. The new SADC GAP discusses this and acknowledges there are different views but comes down on black tarmac as the basic surface with the possibility of different specifications "at particularly visually sensitive points". There is likely to be strong opposition from many users including some councillors to black tarmac in our rural sections in particular so this is not a settled issue.

To help keep up to date with our users' opinions and on top of receiving very welcome individual feedback, Friends conducted another survey of visitors to our stall at the Redbourn Classic Cars event in September as we did last year. A further 20 visitors, including a good mix of walkers and cyclists, recorded their surface preferences after a discussion of pros and cons, with many adding comments explaining their choices and/or views. The main results were very similar to last year with strong support of keeping the Nickey Line looking 'natural' and as a consequence very little support amongst the visitors for the use of the more urban black tarmac.

**\*\* If you have a view on surface choice, please do email us on [friends@nickeyline.org](mailto:friends@nickeyline.org) \*\***

## Harpenden News

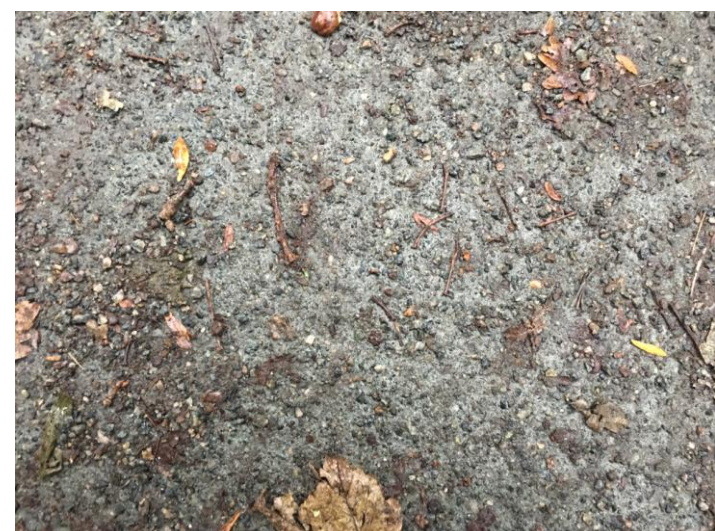
### Roundwood to Five Ways Surface

The Roundwood section was scraped last year to remove the muddy top layer but the area around the Halt itself remained soft and potentially muddy.

At our suggestion, the section by the Halt was repaired earlier this year with crushed concrete and drainage strips to each side to reduce future problems. The project was managed by Herts Countryside & Rights of Way and funded by Herts County Council. Many thanks to them and to the actual work team who mounted the old rail section uncovered by the scraping by the railway signal as another reminder of the Line's railway past.



New Crushed Concrete Surface by Roundwood



Crushed Concrete Surface after 5 Months

This Summer's long, hot dry weather helped to cause some local concrete dust problems from the surface initially but a resumption of our normal wet climate appears to have solved the issue. The crushed concrete has consolidated and the surface now seems quite solid as well as more naturally coloured.



## Five Ways Seat Replaced

In July three of our volunteers replaced the broken bench at Five Ways (Townsend Lane junction), then two of our stalwarts scientifically tested the new one out - as in the action photo taken by our third volunteer, secretary Geoff Bunce.



Volunteers Alan Gahagan and Ian Roderick

## Hemel Hempstead News

### No Progress Yet on Level Access Improvements for Thumpers Residents



Thumpers Possible Level Access Point

The new level access possibility identified from Thumpers remains waiting on funding. This would provide a much improved access to the Line for local residents, disabled users, parents with young children etc.

### Finishing Off of the New Surface East from Maylands + Misuse by Motor & Quad Bikes

Snagging work on the tarmac surface laid from Maylands industrial estate to Cherry Tree Lane bridge continued to early this year and was eventually finished with more uniform connection to access points and the older surface by Cherry Tree Lane.

Dacorum police have recently reported local complaints about noisy bike and quad use of the new tarmac stretch and have proposed possible new restrictive barriers to reduce misuse. Discussions are ongoing.

### Juno Road and Cherry Tree Lane Steps Repaired

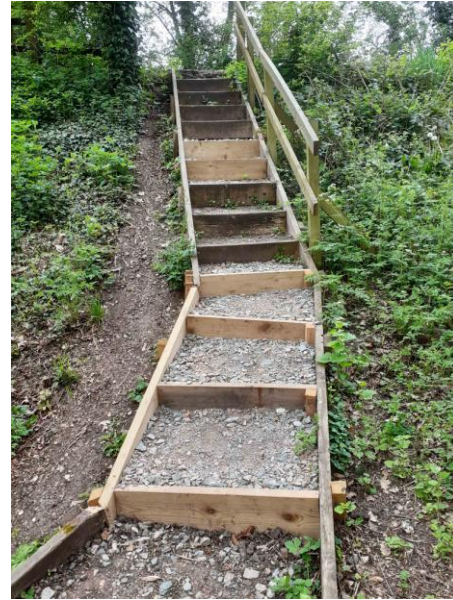
Juno Road steps were repaired early in the year by Dacorum Council after Friends' requests.

Cherry Tree Lane steps were in a poor state and getting worse. This has now been repaired by a St Albans DC / Herts Rights of Way team. See our photos below!

Thanks to both teams!



Cherry Tree Lane Steps Before...

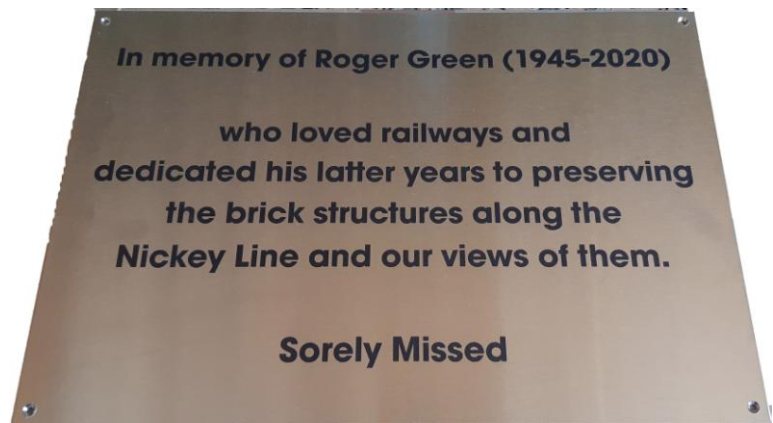


And After Repair

### Cherry Tree Lane Bridge Plaque for Roger Green

In October, Friends mounted a plaque in memory of Roger Green on the Cherry Tree Lane Bridge. This was unveiled by his widow Sylvia with many volunteers and friends present.

Roger worked tirelessly to help maintain the Nickey Line also with a strong focus on preserving our railway heritage by ensuring ivy on bridges did not get a hold and that good views of the bridges were not lost.



### General Waste Bins and Dog Waste

We have continued to lobby for additional waste bins in the Hunters Oak section. With Council budgets being limited, bins remain a tightly managed resource so we need to use them well.

***\*\*Your feedback on bin improvements would be very welcome\*\****

N.B. A reminder that both Dacorum and St Albans general waste bins take dog waste:

***\*\* Please use any available waste bins for your dog's poo bags \*\****

### Hemel Garden Communities Initiative

Hemel Garden Communities have launched an initiative for a sustainable vision of the Nickey Line up to 2050 including improvements to the Nickey Line. The Friends are inputting to this alongside other interested parties. We hope that it will produce long term benefits to our users.



## Redbourn News

A little bit of our history saw daylight for the first time for many years when, over the summer, our volunteers exposed what we believe was the floor of a Platelayers Hut at Owens Sidings between Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead.

(Platelayers inspected and maintained the track, rails, sleepers etc. We wonder how many pots of tea were brewed here...)



We undertook several work parties in and around Redbourn this year, collecting litter and controlling the vegetation.

We also planted new apple trees in the Orchard and plan to add 3 more fruit trees this winter: cherry, pear and plum. Any one for jam making?

## Redbourn Classic Cars

We again ran a stall at the September Redbourn Classic Cars event, using it to attract new members and volunteers as well as asking more users about their views on new surface types.

As usual we would like to thank the Cars event organisers for a free pitch and also Luton and Dunstable Cycling for use of their gazebo. We needed to have help from some of our volunteers for us to run the stall so many thanks to them too.



## FRIENDS NEWS

### Our Graffiti Policy

Graffiti is a recurring issue on the Line often affecting our signposts and brick infrastructure. It can be very difficult and costly to remove. Our policy is as below:



"The Friends of the Nickey Line view graffiti on any aspect of the Nickey Line as unpleasant and detrimental to the appearance and ambience of the Line. We are immensely grateful when users of the Line report it to us. Where possible we shall seek to remove graffiti ourselves and where this is not possible or impractical (for example on brickwork) our response is to contact the relevant council and ask that it be removed.

Unfortunately, Councils are not always in a position to be able to remove graffiti as quickly as we would like. It can therefore be helpful if Nickey Line users also report the issue to their local Ward Councillor and, if deemed appropriate, their MP. This can have the added benefit of raising awareness of the matter with a number of different local authority personnel who can then apply pressure to ensure the situation is rectified."

## Walks Programme

Since the last newsletter we held a Springwatch Walk in Dacorum, our annual Butterfly Walk near Knott Wood, and a historical walk kindly led by Mike Atkins, a Friend, along part of the Alban Way. During the next few months we plan to run a walk identifying trees during winter, while next summer there will be a repeat of our butterfly walk. There will also be a Springwatch Walk in May. Other walks are also likely. The location and dates of these events will appear on our website in due course.

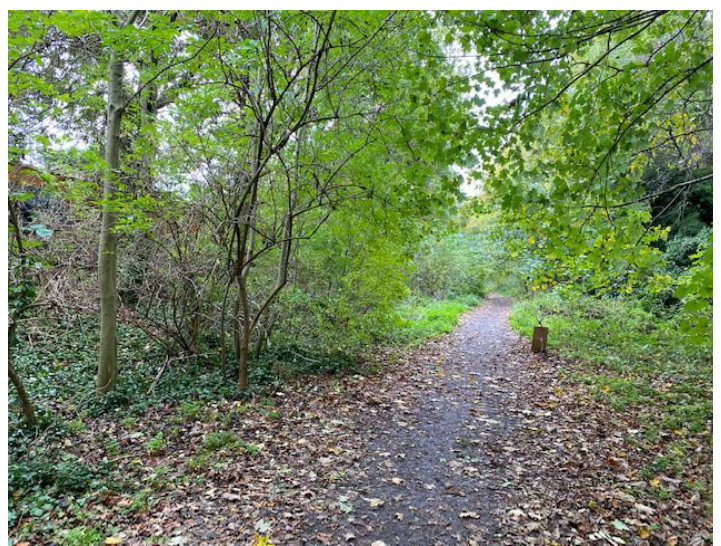
## Work Parties

Our annual work activities support the St Albans and Dacorum Green Space Action Plans (GAPs), and are agreed with the two councils on an annual basis.

We run full work parties twice a month from October to mid-March, along the length of the line, usually on Thursdays between the hours of 10am to 3pm, but many of our volunteers work for the morning only. Nonetheless, all the hours contributed add up to an impressive commitment to maintaining the environment of the Nickey Line. We provide safety equipment and tooling and the instruction necessary.



Scallop Re-Cut Near Five Ways



Hemel Path Cleared of Litter & Self Set Trees

These last two summers the Friends have set a programme of tasks involving just a few volunteers, such as additional litter picking, cutting and raking the grassy areas we have created, and removing fallen branches and trees. These have been well supported and have enabled us to maintain volunteer engagement and get done some useful work without disturbing the wildlife of the Nickey Line.

With the renewed support of Dacorum Borough Council, we have increased our activity at the Hemel Hempstead end of the Line and are seeing an encouraging growth in volunteer activity there.

In the St Albans section, the grassy areas we manage now include an area just to the east of the M1 tunnel, in which several wild flowers not seen elsewhere on the Nickey Line have appeared, including chicory, weld and wild carrot. We have recently extended this area, and sown some kidney vetch seed here in the hope it will germinate and encourage the Small Blue butterfly, a Hertfordshire rarity, to colonise. (Kidney Vetch is the larval food plant.)

This winter will see us coppicing hazels, maintaining views, hedge laying and supporting the various councils involved in other ways to enhance the Nickey Line as an enjoyable experience for users.

### **Many Thanks to Our Volunteers**

We again held a social 'Thank You' event for our volunteers in September in Redbourn. Redbourn Parish Council kindly gave us free use of their committee room in recognition of our efforts.

In the aftermath of COVID we have been pleased to welcome some new volunteers and we have seen a general increase in the numbers signing up for work parties. With most of our volunteers being retirees, infirmity or moving away from the area regularly depletes our group and so the renewal of volunteers continues to refresh our work.

A big 'thank you' to those of you who can no longer come out with us for your past work, and welcome to those now joining us.

Ladies, we would like to see more of you join us – even a couple of hours or so would be welcomed.

### **2022 AGM**

This year's AGM was again held 'virtually' on Zoom. Thank you to all of you who participated. All motions were supported. The AGM documents and Minutes are available on our website at [Friends of the Nickey Line AGMs](#).

### **Facebook Group "The Nickey Line"**

Our Facebook Group has grown substantially and now has over 1400 users who publish pictures, comments and stories about the Line. The Facebook Group also allows problems to be reported to us, such as fallen trees and motor bikes on the Line.

Why not join the Group today and add your favourite photos and stories or tell us about problems?

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/363326034099616>

### **Ramblers Worldwide Holidays Walking Partnership**

Book a holiday with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays ([www.ramblersholidays.co.uk](http://www.ramblersholidays.co.uk)) and you can nominate Friends of the Nickey Line to receive £10 per head for UK holidays, £20 for short haul holidays, and £30 per head for long haul holidays. **You must nominate Friends when you book!**

### **Nickey Line Zoom Talk To Your Local Group?**

We can give illustrated talks on the History of the Nickey Line online via Zoom to local organisations who want a guest speaker, in return for a small donation to the Friends. If you know of any organisation who may want one, please suggest they email us on [friends@nickeyline.org](mailto:friends@nickeyline.org).

**A Happy Christmas and Covid Free 2023 to all our Friends!**

**Friends of the Nickey Line 01582 622771 [www.nickeyline.org](http://www.nickeyline.org) [friends@nickeyline.org](mailto:friends@nickeyline.org)**