



ROYAL FORESTRY SOCIETY

YORKSHIRE DIVISION

AGM / Field Visit Update

24th September: Hardcastle Craggs and Gibson Mill, Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire

Host: The National Trust

Location: Hardcastle Craggs Car Park
Midgehole Road, Hebden Bridge, HX7 7AA
NGR: SD 98805 29205
W3W: alright.jigging.users

Directions: From Halifax take the A646 Burnley Road. At Hebden Bridge at the Y-junction take the A6033 to Keighley and brown-signed to Hardcastle Craggs. After about 1 mile bear left on Midgehole Road, continue to car park.

Because the location is signed with brown tourism signs we will not be using RFS waymarking signs on the route in.

With mixed woodlands and watercourses reflecting West Yorkshire's industrial past Hardcastle Craggs includes woodland restructuring, debris dams and the built heritage of Calderdale.

We will be looking at a variety of projects implemented upon the estate, including Scots pine removal, beech monolithing and water management. We will lunch at Gibson Mill, an historic cotton mill with a café. Our AGM will also be hosted here over lunch.

It should be noted that the terrain is steep in places, but that paths are generally good. There is the possibility of individuals walking on a lower,

flatter path if preferred, but this would mean missing some stops. Please let us know if this would be your preferred option.

Proposed Programme for the Day:

- 10:00 am – Car park and toilets
- 10:30 am – Top path to the Mill (ancient meadow; view of Scots pine)
- 11:30 am – Gibson Mill: AGM and presentations (National Trust on Management Plan, Landscape for Water and Natural Flood Management)
- Lunch – Followed by a tour of the Mill (wood store, boiler)
- 1:30 pm (approx.) – Continue from the Mill north to see beech monoliths (time-dependent)
- 2:30 pm (approx.) – Main track back to the car park (including Natural Flood Management features and charcoal hearths)

Additional Site Notes for the visit at Hardcastle Craggs and Gibson Mill

The estate covers 160 hectares and is notable for supporting a population of the Northern Hairy Wood Ant. Scattered throughout the woodland are 84 charcoal-burning platforms, alongside clear evidence of historic smelting activity that stretches back more than seven centuries. At its heart stands one of West Yorkshire's earliest water-powered textile mills, restored in the early 2000s and now operating off-grid with a wood-fuelled boiler.

Across the site, over a thousand natural flood-management interventions have been installed, including debris dams, contour logs and attenuation features that help slow and store water. The woodland is predominantly oak and birch, with Scots pine and beech also present. Management challenges include Himalayan balsam and increasing deer pressure, and the National Trust is working to restructure the woodland under a new Management Plan.

The area behind the car park contains waxcap grassland and an ancient woodland enclosure used for pony grazing, adding further ecological interest. During the visit, there will also be a presentation on *Landscape for Water*, the National Trust and Yorkshire Water's regional programme focused on catchment-scale water management.

For more information please visit : [Hardcastle Craggs | West Yorkshire | National Trust](#)

Notes for Field Meetings

- Please let the Hon Sec Jim Smith know in advance if you plan to attend by emailing **jimrfsyorkshire@hotmail.com**. Some visits require booking; for others you can still come without booking, but it does make arrangements more difficult.
- Meetings start at **10.00am** unless otherwise stated.
- Please sign in on arrival. The cap is £3.00 per head.
- Non-members will be charged a **£5.00 levy** at field visits.
- If you are a new member or are a visitor from another Division, please introduce yourself to a committee member (those wearing RFS name badges!).
- Dogs are not allowed.
- Suitable footwear including and wet weather clothing are advisable. You should bring a clean change of footwear which can be worn on-site.
- Please follow any biosecurity measures that have been implemented by the host or the divisional committee
- Bring a packed lunch (unless lunch is being provided!).
- When practicable please arrange to share transport with other members.