

The Daffodil Society



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Farndale Daffodils

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For several years we have been travelling to Spain and France to look at daffodils in the wild when one of the finest displays in England is less than two hours from home. We finally got round to visiting them on 27 March 2007. Everyone remembers the warm early spring and we happened upon a perfect day.

Farndale is situated off the A170 Helmsley to Pickering road. We turned north at Keldholme and followed the road up through Hutton-le-Hole which must rank as one of the prettiest villages in England. The route is well signposted and at Low Mill there is a large car park. Parking is free as is entrance to the daffodil walk.

From the top of the car park through a wooden gate a path descends to a wooden bridge which crosses the River Dove and then travels north on the eastern bank of the river. Both banks rise steeply for up to six feet above the water level but whereas the western bank is fenced to the edge with sheep proof netting and the land rises gently beyond, the eastern bank flattens out and becomes a flood plain before rising steeply and unevenly to another fence to keep the sheep at bay.

The path is fairly easy and the bank is swathed in daffodils or *N. pseudonarcissus* if you wish. Superficially they look very similar to *N. nobilis* growing in Galicia or the *N. pseudonarcissus* at the top of the pass out of Andorra. The path stretches for one and a half miles before the Daffy Cafe at High Mill comes into view. An excellent salad/sandwich type lunch is available. A little further north there is a pub at Church



Houses. The round trip back down the valley is three miles with daffodils all the way. In dry conditions good strong shoes sufficed but if it was wet you would need more protection.

Photo Editor

For a long time it was supposed that the daffodils had been planted by monks from the numerous monasteries in the region but looking at the relative position of Farndale and its topography this is difficult to accept. Why are we obsessed with the idea that somebody must have planted the wild daffodils we find all over this country? I believe they are true natives that have survived in pockets due to local circumstance.

In Farndale it is immediately apparent that daffodils and sheep don't mix. The unbroken turf extends to the wire fence on their side and daffodils thrive on rough ground inches away. So why is the fence there?

First of all we must acknowledge and be grateful for the attitude of the landowner to conservation and whose magnanimity allows and encourages free access, but the ground may have its uses also. Firstly the flood plain, if that's what it is, will offer



*The steep bank to the east rising up to the sheep fence (just visible).
Photo Editor*



The flood plain and main path

Photo Editor

some protection to people living downstream. These moorland streams in both the Pennines and the North York Moors are notorious for flash flooding. There would also be a practical problem in allowing the sheep full access. The continuous

steep banks could result in sheep and lambs that fell into the river becoming cut-off and isolated. Furthermore the sheep are managed in fields that run west to east from the top of the secondary eastern bank which is tens of feet high in places. The problems of fencing such ground down as far as the river outweigh any potential benefits. All this is very fortunate for the daffodils and for us. It is grazing animals that are the daffodil's biggest enemy just as we've seen in Spain.

By mid-afternoon we were back on the road taking in the moorland scenery before going into Whitby for the best fish and chips in England at the Magpie Restaurant. There's a lot to be said for home comforts.