



# On the Foss

Summer  
2011

The River Foss Society Newsletter

## A Busy Spring

Bob Jowett reports:

This year's walk programme started from Easingwold and will eventually finish at Blue Bridge in approximately 5-mile stages. We



*A much needed break on Walk 1*

are using Mark Jones' suggested route including the villages of Coxwold, Husthwaite and Crayke that the official Foss Walk does not cover.



*Lots of walkers for Walk 1*

Walk No 1, Saturday 12 March: Easingwold to Coxwold. We met in the car park at Coxwold on a warm and dry morning. Drivers ferried the walkers to the start in Easingwold and all met in the square. with lunch organised at Husthwaite's Balmoral pub for all walkers. Some walkers did the 4 mile morning section, finishing at Husthwaite. The remainder of the walkers completed the full 6.2 miles. This was our best attended walk with 17 taking part despite the absence of some of our regular walkers.

Walk No 2, Wednesday 13th April: Coxwold to Yearsley. Starting in Coxwold and finished in Yearsley,

we visited the start of the River Foss at its source. This is the hardest physical walk on the programme: the section from Low Lions Lodge to High Lions Lodge is a tough climb. We had a few cows for company in one field. Though they seemed friendly, we were relieved to leave that field!



*A Dry, cool day for Walk 2*

This was our least well attended walk with only five walkers taking part due to holidays. Nevertheless, we all enjoyed the walk, including Michael's dog.



## A Well-Earned Tribute

John Hampshire, Vice-Chairman, writes: 'At the AGM I asked for members' support for an expression of appreciation of the excellent leadership of John Millett during the year, and this was given with acclaim. What I wish to say now is that we must also recognise the work June Card has done as our Secretary over the last five years; she has been tireless in the meticulous execution of her duties. June has now handed correspondence and minute-keeping to Marjorie Burton, our new Secretary, but will continue to keep an eye on planning issues and the organisation of events. June, along with John, have made a superb team which has greatly re-invigorated and strengthened the Society.'



*Our President, Alistair Fitter (standing above, fourth from left) welcomed Society visitors to his lovely garden on 10 June. We explored the large garden which includes an orchard, vegetable beds, beautiful borders and a path down to the Foss.*

*Many thanks to Alistair for a lovely evening.*



# Here Comes Summer!

**Tuesday 14th June 11 am Foss Walk 3** Yearsley to Crayke (Mill Green), distance 4 miles, with picnic lunch at Pond Head Reservoir. Meet in the car park at the Dutch House east of Crayke on the Brandsby Road (Grid REf. 566715) where tea or coffee will be available at the end of the walk, but not before. Please let Bob Jowett know (Tel. 01904 764702) if you are coming.

**Saturday 18th June 10 am Himalayan Balsam Pick** An onslaught on this non-native invasive plant that smothers other vegetation and causes river bank erosion. Meet at the footbridge over the Foss at Haxby Lock House (GR617578) which is accessible from Landing Lane, Haxby, Earswick Chase and the no. 5 bus route on the Strensall Road. Wear stout footwear, gloves and clothing that covers arms and legs. Sharp hoes and scythes would be useful but not essential. The roughly two-hour stint will be followed by a barbeque - wet or fine - at The Flag and Whistle on the Huntington Road near the Link Road. Prices will range from £2.50 to £6.50 including salad and bread. Names, please, to June (Tel. 01904 766196) before Thursday June 16th.

**Thursday 7th July 2 pm to 4 pm Litter Pick**

We are again combining with the Rotary Club of York Vikings for a litter pick along the banks of the Foss. Volunteers are required so please round up your friends and neighbours and meet at the upper level of the Sainsbury's car park, Foss Bank. For a free parking permit, call at Customer Services from 1.30 pm onwards, stating that you are taking part in the RFS/Rotary litter pick. Equipment will be provided: gardening clothes and gloves are advisable. Please let John Millett know (Tel. 01904 491290) in advance if you are coming.

**Sunday July 10th Dragon Boat Race Day** The River Foss Society will have a stand on the bank of the Ouse near the Museum Gardens. If you could help to man the stand for an hour or so while enjoying all the fun of the fair, phone John Millett on 01904 491290.

The barge 'Syntan' will be moored at King's Staith

during the York Festival of the Rivers (July 9th to 24th) and visitors will be most welcome aboard to see the exhibition and the improvements that have been carried out over the winter. However, please note that owing to stabilisation work in the Foss Basin, there will be no river trips this year on 'Syntan'. Once work has started, we are hoping to arrange a visit to the site. Details will be posted on the website: [www.riverfossociety.co.uk](http://www.riverfossociety.co.uk)

**Thursday 21st July Walk around the Crayke Estate Permissive Walk** Meet in the restaurant at the Dutch House on the Crayke to Brandsby Road, where Peter Cliff of the Crayke Estate has kindly offered to give an introductory talk over coffee starting at 10.30 am before leading us off on the walk of about 3.5 miles. Please let June know (Tel. 01904 766196) by Monday July 18th if you are coming and if you would like to book for lunch afterwards at the Dutch House.

**Friday 12th August Morning Walk around Stillington** Meet at the Village Hall at 10 am for a walk led by John Sparrow and Michael Turvey that will include the sites of three former mills. Those wishing to have lunch afterwards will find the Bay Tree and the Fish and Chip Shop open

**Saturday 10th September Foss Walk 4 Farlington to West Lilling** about 4.75 miles. Meet at 10 am at the junction of Lilling Low Lane and New Lane (GR645639). Coming from Strensall towards Sheriff Hutton, pass the left hand turning to Stillington, cross Sheriff Hutton Bridge and take the first, un-signposted turning to the right to the crossroads. Please let Bob Jowett (Tel. 01904764702) if you are coming and if you would be interested in a meal afterwards at The Highwayman.

**Wednesday 21st September Foss Walk 5 Strensall to Huntington** about 5 miles. Meet at 10 am in the car park of Huntington Parish Church, just down Church Lane from the Old Village (GR616562), Names, please, to Bob before the walk and let June know (Tel. 01904 766196) before Saturday 17th if you would like to book the Seniors' Lunch at the Blacksmith's Arms, Huntington. Non-walkers are welcome to join us for lunch.

**Don't Forget  
our website:**

**[www.riverfossociety.co.uk](http://www.riverfossociety.co.uk)**

Was this photograph taken in the Scottish Highlands, or perhaps the Yorkshire Dales? No, it's New Earswick on a sunny May afternoon.

The picture was taken by John Cowls (email: johncowls@supanet.com.) from his flat overlooking a section of the Foss and Willow Bank, between Sleeper Path (Bridge) and the Ivy Place car park in New Earswick. The deer was photographed on the roadway at 2 pm on Thursday May 5th and it appeared to be travelling towards the Ring Road.



## Welcome Improvements



A great improvement has been made to the footpath at Towthorpe (above). The City of York Council Rights of Way office has installed new steps on the footpath on both sides of the road bridge as it crosses the river. Previously the slopes were extremely slippery in the winter months. Our thanks go to Mr Richard Hoyland and his staff for this work.

The Yorkshire Water Authority (YWA) has now installed improved level controls and automatic valves to the containment tanks at the Cobb's Cottage, Strensall, sewage pumping station. We hope that these modifications will prevent the overflowing of the tanks which allowed raw sewage to flow into the Foss. Members can rest assured that we will continue to monitor the plant to see that these improvements prevent the contamination witnessed in the past.

Repairs to the Foss riverbank path between Heworth Green and Fossway were reported briefly in *The York Press* on 30 April. Heworth Councillor Ruth Potter said: "Residents raised the issue of the state of a section of the path ... because it had become boggy and unsafe for those wanting to use it."

The funding was contributed by the City of York Council's Heworth ward committee. This has made the riverbank path safe for all users.

## Sad News

As we go to press, we have been told about the death of Michael Fife, founder member and former chairman. He was joint author with Peter Walls of *The River Foss: Its History and Natural History*. We offer our sympathies to his family and will write more about him in our next issue.

## Going Overboard!

There were two main excitements at Castle Mills Lock on 30th April, the now annual Open Day organised by the North Riding Branch of the Inland Waterways Association and supported by the Society.

Due to uncertainties over the start of stabilisation work in the Foss Basin, the centre of activity was initially shifted to Marygate but Michael Cadoux kindly offered trips up the River Foss in his narrow boat 'Moon River'. Low water levels and high winds caused problems for him. To conserve water in the River, the lock gates were opened only twice, at the beginning and end of the day. Going upstream, the boat had to be backed out of the lock - never an easy manoeuvre with a bow 50 feet from the tiller - and then tightly turned just beyond Castle Mills Bridge where it caught the full force of the wind.

On the first trip, the boat went as far as King's Pool. Attempting to turn for the return journey, 'Moon River' went aground both fore and aft. It was "everybody out" to lighten the load while the crew manhandled the boat along Rowntree Wharf to the broader reach at Wormald's Cut. Later, a couple just completing a two day walk from the source of the river to Blue Bridge had an uneventful river trip and pronounced it "the icing on the cake".

On the final trip a child chose to disobey orders to come ashore at the moored side and edged her way along the offside narrow gunwale. She slipped and fell into the lock, but was hauled out immediately by two of the crew while others grabbed lifebelt and boathook in case they were needed. The child was wet and frightened but otherwise unharmed and hopefully learned that water and boats are definitely not adventure playgrounds.

## Speaking to June

"I have learned so much from being the Society's Secretary – I believe that if I were to go back to work now, I would be better at my job," June Card says, looking back over her time as RFS Secretary. June joined RFS in 2006 after attending a meeting at Huntington Community Centre to attract new interest in the Society. She felt that all the good work done to that point shouldn't be wasted, so she not only became a member, but took on the role of the Society's Secretary in one fell swoop.

Far from simply writing and distributing minutes, June has been the Society's link with other organisations and has sometimes faced situations where diplomacy was required, combined with an amount of determination to follow issues through. June admits that balancing the Society's work with special interest groups can be difficult at times. But she has managed it all superbly.

June is originally from Bristol, but settled in York, where she had family connections, after retirement from a career in the senior administration of the John Lewis Partnership. She loves walking, has a lifelong interest in art and is also an active member of the Anglo-German Society.

She has seen many positive changes during her time with RFS. One of the group's original aims was to walk the entire Foss Way yearly, but numbers had dwindled. Lately, with the routes kept to about 5 or 6 miles and walks on different days, they are attracting more people.

June has worked with the Committee to arrange a wider range of activities, while keeping them firmly focused on the River Foss. These have included pub meals after walks, events for non-walkers and the revival of the Christmas Lunch. One thing that pleases her is that our involvement in the environment is developing, with talks on the conservation of the River and activities like the Litter Pick and our forthcoming Himalayan Balsam Pick.

In her five years as Secretary, new housing developments, especially in the city centre, have greatly increased the number of people living along the Foss, people June would like to see involved in the Society's activities.

June's role as Planning Officer continues with regular monitoring of all planning applications that have any association with the river in York. The importance of this has been demonstrated when RFS objections have been made and heeded in several instances.

"It's so important for each person to do a little bit on their own doorstep, in their community, towards saving our environment", says June. She is passionate about the environment and believes that people working together really can make a voice.

Asked what she most enjoys about the Society, she answers: "the people, and the feeling of working together and enjoying the river. We must continue to promote not just the enhancement of the river, but the enjoyment of it as well." With our hard-working friend's support, we can feel confident that we will continue to do just that.

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## Don't Forget 'Syntan'



*Skipper Tony Hardwidge of the barge 'Syntan' moors her last year at King's Staith. Even though there will not be any Foss rides this year, due to works in the Foss Basin, Tony and crew will warmly welcome visitors to 'Syntan' at King's Staith in July. He hopes we will come and see all the improvements made over the winter as well as the exhibition. Photo: John Skelton*

## Meet Marjorie

Marjorie Burton has answered the call and stepped in as our new Secretary. Raised in Darlington, she studied Maths and Education at Keele University, then taught maths in Hampshire, near trout streams and watercress beds. She returned north in 1979 to teach maths and worked as a Head of Department at a school in North Yorkshire. After early retirement in 2010 Marjorie now spends time with friends and family, enjoying the open air, walking and seeing wildlife all over Yorkshire. She joined the RFS to enjoy the walks along the River Foss and to be part of the community.

We know that the job of secretary will suit her well – she enjoys working on the computer and likes being part of a team. We warmly welcome this newest member of the committee and look forward to working with her.