



# On the Foss

The River Foss Society Newsletter  
Summer 2010

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

## A Walk for Pat



When Pat Rattenbury, our Footpaths Officer, died suddenly in December 2009, his friends in the Society wanted to do something to remember him. We decided to have one last 'Walk for Pat' and chose 16 March 2010 for the day, walking a circular route of about five miles partly on the Foss Walk.

We had a perfect walking day, with little wind and warm temperatures. BBC Radio York came to do a live broadcast before we set off from the Highwayman at Sheriff Hutton. Several committee members were interviewed, outlining the Society's work and Pat's particular services to the community and the River.

Setting off mid-morning, we headed almost west from the lane next to the Highwayman. The walk is shown in Mark Jones' book, *The Foss Walk*, but we did have to make a small diversion to avoid heading straight through the field marked 'Beware of the Bull'! After a coffee break at the bridge over the river, we followed the Foss, turned north to West Lilling and back to the Highwayman.

We drove to the Malt Shovel at Hovingham where several non-walking members joined us for an enjoyable lunch in a pleasant room with excellent service. Thanks go to the pub again for fitting us in at

only one day's notice after technical problems forced the Highwayman to cancel.

Peter Braithwaite also belongs to the Ryedale Family History Group and arranged to open their research room at Hovingham village hall for us. We saw their excellent computer facilities and the library they keep for tracing ancestors.

We had a wonderful day walking and socialising. And what better way could we say: 'Thank you, Pat, we'll never forget you'?

*Bob Jowett*

## From the Committee...

Welcome to *On the Foss*. Since our last issue, Amanda Watterson has resigned from the Editorship as she was finding it difficult to attend Committee Meetings. We want to thank Amanda and her husband Simon for their hard work and editorial leadership for the past three years.

Beth Shurter, a retired sub-editor and graphic designer, recently joined the committee and will try to fill the large gap left by the Wattersons.

There's so much happening this summer - we hope lots of you will take part in the events on the Foss.

Let's have a wonderful summer with lots of good weather - see you there!



# What's happening on the river this summer

## For your Diary...

**Wednesday 23 June: Foss Walk 2 with Picnic at Newburgh Priory**

**Thursday 8 July: Litter Pick - Mid Summer Clean Up**

**Sunday 11 July: Dragon boat Race Day**

**Tuesday 13 July: Foss Walk 3**

**Wednesday 14 July & Thursday 22 July: Barge Syntan trips and talks**

**Thursday 12 August: Foss Walk 4**

**Wednesday 18 August: Visit to the Foss Islands Nature Reserve**

**Friday 17 September: A Celebration of Rivers in Music**

*Wednesday 23 June, 9.00 am*

**Picnic and Visit to Newburgh Priory for walkers and non-walkers preceded by Foss Walk 2 - Oulston to Newburgh.** Special permission has been given for us to enter the grounds of Newburgh Priory at 1 pm (fee £3.00) for our picnic. There will be an optional tour (fee £2.50) of the house at 2.15 pm.

Walkers meet at 9 am in the lay-by next to the lake at Newburgh on the Crayke to Coxwold road (GR540767). If the lay-by is full, park on the verge of the farm track on the left just beyond the lake.

If you are coming please phone Bob Jowett in advance on 01904 764702 so that he can arrange transport to the starting point. Bring a snack for a short stop en route, a picnic lunch and a change of footwear if you are visiting the house.

Non walkers meet at 12.45pm as above and bring a picnic lunch.

*Thursday 8 July, 2.00 - 4.00 pm*

**Litter Pick - Mid Summer Clean Up.** As part of City of York's Council Mid Summer Clean Up Campaign the Society, in conjunction with York Vikings Rotary Club, is organising a litter pick in the Foss Basin. Why not come along and support us? Meet at Sainsbury's car park on Foss Bank at 1.45pm. Please ring John Millett on York 491290 so we can organise teams and participate in this worthwhile cause. Please bring your gardening gloves and wear old clothes.

*Sunday 11 July*

**Sunday 11th July Dragon Boat Race Day** - a great fund-raising event with all the fun of the fair. We are again sharing a stand with the Inland Waterways Association on the bank of the Ouse between Lendal Bridge and Marygate. Come and find us or, better still, lend a hand. For further details, contact John Millett on 491290.

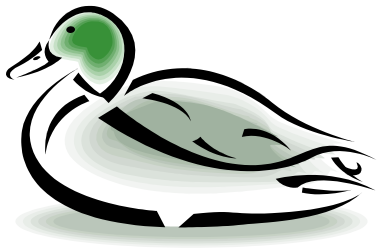
*Tuesday 13 July, 6.00 pm*

**Foss Walk 3 Blue Bridge to Huntington.** Leader John Millett. Meet at 6 pm for a 6.15 pm start at the Blue Bridge where the Foss joins the Ouse. Access to the meeting point is either along New Walk from St. George's Field car park, or from Blue Bridge Lane, a turning off Fishergate, or from the footpath that runs along the Foss Basin. This interesting walk takes you from the heart of York through a green river corridor and as there are several points where you can peel off and catch a bus back into town you can make it as long or as short as you like. Phone June Card on 766196 for further details, or to give a couple of days' notice if you would like to round off the evening with a meal.

*Wednesday 14 July & Thursday 22 July*

**Barge "Syntan" trips and talks.** After last year's interest, slightly longer trips as well as talks about the "Syntan" story are planned this year. Please find details with a booking form enclosed. You can also e-mail [chrisandpete@haxby147.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:chrisandpete@haxby147.fsnet.co.uk) or send a stamped s.a.e. to 147 York Road, Haxby, York YO32 3EU for these details.





Thursday 12 August, 9.45 am

### Foss Walk 4 Marton Abbey to Yearsley

We will stop for lunch at the Dutch House, Mill Green Farm, near Crayke, on the Crayke to Brandsby Road. Non-walkers are welcome to join the walkers for lunch at about 12 noon and those not wishing to walk the whole distance will be able to do either the morning or the afternoon section. All-day and morning-only walkers meet at 9.45 am where the road from Brandsby to Ampleforth crosses the road from Coulton to Yearsley just east of Yearsley Village (GR 586745). Park on the verge opposite the telephone box. Please phone Bob Jowett in advance on 01904 764702 if you are coming so that he can arrange transport to the Dutch House and the starting point.

Wednesday 18 August, 2.00 pm

### Visit to the Foss Islands Nature Reserve and the Hungate Riverside

Established by River Foss Society in conjunction with the City of York Council, the Reserve is not normally open to visitors, so this is a rare opportunity to see recent developments. Meet Environmental Consultant David Houldershaw and Site Manager Ian Shepherd at 2 pm at the Hungate Marketing Suite, Peasholme Green.

Friday 17 September, 7.30 pm

**A Celebration of Rivers in Music.** An open evening of recorded music presented by Muriel and Tony Pook at the Central Methodist Church, St. Saviourgate. £2 admission.

Looking further ahead ...

Wednesday 22nd September: Foss Walk 5 Coxwold to Easingwold

Saturday 9th October: Foss Walk, Huntington to Sheriff Hutton.

Wednesday 20th October: Open Meeting Strensall Village Hall

Sunday 5th December: Christmas Lunch

Details of these in next Newsletter

# A busy Spring

27 bags full! That was the tally of black plastic sacks of litter collected when 12 members were joined by Mary Watson and four "Surfers against Sewage" on 27 March to scavenge the Foss Walk between Yearsley Bridge and Lock Cottage, New Earswick. The blackest spots were near Yearsley Baths and where the Walk emerges onto the Haxby Road. No wonder the pupils of Yearsley Grove School had written to the Society expressing their disgust at the state of the River and its banks. We hope they noticed the difference. Thanks to Iain Dunn, York Street Environment Officer, for lending his litter-pickers, providing the black bags and collecting them afterwards.

Tucked between the Haxby and Huntington Roads is a very special place - the Sessions Nature Reserve.



It embraces three water channels - the River Foss, the old course of the river and the derelict New Earswick lock. Here, nature holds sway and only a privileged few are admitted to disturb the cycle of growth, decay and regeneration. On 26 April 26, a party of 16 was given a magical tour by the Warden, Will Durrant, who, together with his wife, Christine, invited us to a cool

drink afterwards in their garden. There we were able to admire the dog, the guinea pigs and Will's model railway.

Was it the fact that 15 May was a Saturday, or that the walk was a mere 5 miles long, or that it was a beautiful spring morning that enticed 16 Members to walk the Foss from Sheriff Hutton Bridge to Stillington? We welcomed a new Member, Valerie Walker, who has joined for the express purpose of completing the Foss Walk, begun several years ago. The official leader was our Walks Officer, Bob Jowett, but he faced severe competition from Dill, Michael Turvey's delightful terrier, who hustled us all along. Along our way we visited two historic churches at Farlington and Marton and noted three missing signposts and an obliterated footpath, all of which have been reported.

### Apology

In the last Newsletter, the lock keeper's cottage at New Earswick was described as a listed building. This is incorrect, and we apologise for the misinformation.

## 2010 Yearly Subscription

Thanks to the many members who have already paid this year's subscription before, at or since the AGM. For those who have not yet paid their subscription, or who wish to join, the subscription rates for 2010 are unchanged at:

Family	£12.00
Individual	£ 8.00
Concessions	£ 6.00
Parish/Town Councils	£18.00
Schools and Societies	£18.00
Commercial Organisations	£25.00

Please make payment by cheque made out to "RIVER FOSS SOCIETY". Alternately please make payment direct to the Society's bank account: HSBC account no. 51349538, sort code 40-47-31. If using the latter please advise the Treasurer or myself separately. Thank you in anticipation. Your Membership Card will be sent as a receipt.

The Committee hope that you can continue to support the Society.

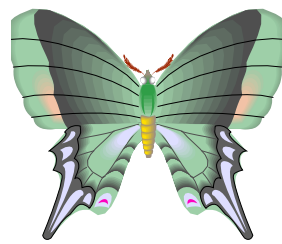
*Peter Hopwood*

## Buzzing with excitement

Our AGM and Open Meeting in April was a tremendous success.

The high point of the evening was a truly unique and entertaining 'education' called the Big Buzz by York-based Anneliese Emmans Dean, who has created a celebration of insects

by combining original witty poetry, beautiful photographs and music. Taking the role of her insect subjects, this prize-winning poet, performer, lyricist, composer and wildlife photographer gives her audiences an appreciation of insects and their environment.



What more can we say? The room was positively abuzz with it!



## From the River Wardens

As I write the recent spell of very hot weather has dried out the riverbank footpaths, allowing the paths to be used and reported on. The uneven surface of the path adjacent to the Tannery at Strensall has been levelled by the Foss Drainage Board, improving the path enormously. However a section of the path near the Strensall New Bridge (Old Humpy) has partly collapsed into the river and still requires attention. The CYC Footpath Officer is aware of this - hopefully it will be attended to shortly. Peter Braithwaite has reported that he had to do an unplanned "litter pick" upstream of Carr Bridge, Strensall, as someone had emptied a sack full of fast food wrappers, pizza boxes, drink cans, etc. on the river bank. Well done Peter - thanks for that effort.

A broken footpath sign leading to the river in Landing Lane, Haxby, has been reported to the CYC footpath Officer for attention and will shortly be replaced.

Wildlife sightings along the river include a roe deer seen near Landing Lane, Haxby. Numerous water voles have been reported: at least six between New Earswick and Huntington Church and three from the footbridge at Haxby Lock. Foxes are evident - one was seen during the day at Haxby and Strensall and another in a Strensall garden at night.

Birdlife sightings include a surprising pair of swallows seen along the river at Huntington as early as 31 March - not much sign of Spring at the time! A kingfisher was reported nesting near Earswick, and mallards have been reported with ducklings, some having nested in gardens backing onto the river. Recently, both tawny and barn owls have been seen flying along the river near Towthorpe Bridge.

*John Millett*

## Sewage Leak

A serious sewage leak at Church Farm, Huntington was reported to Yorkshire Water on 2 December 2009. Action was not taken until 7 December, by which time raw sewage was leaking into the Foss. The authorities dug three channels to drain the remainder of the contaminated water into the river. Fortunately, river water levels were high enough to dilute the contamination levels and thus prevent death of fish.

Yorkshire Water made no attempt to warn walkers of this health hazard on a much-used river footpath, and it was left to a member of the Society to post warnings. The footpath was temporarily closed whilst work was going on.

Six months on, undrained water is still seen at the site. The footpath is now open, but plastic temporary fences have not been removed by the contractors. These concerns were expressed to a representative of Yorkshire Water at a recent site meeting