



The River Foss Society was able to provide valuable input into the review of the Environment Agency's flood warnings for the River Foss community. The names and descriptions of the new warning areas were put to our Committee for their feedback while Zoe Pattinson from the Environment Agency (EA) and external consultants designed the boundaries and trigger levels. Local community input is important as it helps the flood warnings to be more recognised and easier to identify.



risk of flooding in the same communities. This helps the warnings to be relevant to the communities they cover".

People who have already signed up for the flood warning service will automatically be transferred to the new relevant flood warning area that covers their property. If you want to register to receive free Environment Agency flood warnings then you can either visit <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings> or call on Floodline 0345 988 1188.

The areas covered by flood warnings are changing; the River Foss community currently has six flood warnings (covering the Foss, Tang Hall Beck and Osbaldwick Beck) and this is increasing to ten to include warnings for South Beck and Westfield Beck. Zoe has worked with consultants and the data that has come out of the recent modelling study helps make the flood warnings more risk-based. She explains, "looking specifically at the River Foss corridor, there is one long warning that is for the properties at most risk from river flooding, and a wider warning that covers the properties at lower

This autumn a new rain monitoring station will be installed in the village of Yearsley, north of York, as well as a river level monitoring station upstream of Strensall on the Foss. These two monitoring stations will automatically feed information into the EA's systems and forecasts for the River Foss, supporting a better understanding of the amount of water flowing down the river towards York. This will help the EA's flood duty officers to issue flood warnings with more confidence and with more accurate information included within the warning messages.

## Come Rain or Shine ...

With a terrible weather forecast in the period leading up to the litter picking event on 22 July, the number of volunteers turning up on the day was 11 – much fewer than normal. Unfortunately, the forecasters were correct, and within a few minutes of dispersing to the various points along the river, the heavens opened for some 30 minutes.

The rain did eventually stop, and we were able to proceed with the job in hand. As a team we collected 20 bin liners full of litter, as well as those on the boat filling a builder's bag full of larger items of waste. Wearing RFS tabards, we attracted favourable comments and publicity for the Society; one member of the public asked me personally if he



Top: Litter picking at the Castle Car Park



Left: The boat heads home in drier weather

could take a picture of me – not a full facial, but solely for the RFS logo.

*Barry Thomas*



## Autumn Activities

### OCTOBER

**Monday 9 October** Walk 7: Mill Green via the Durham Ox. Circular 5 miles. Meet in The Durham Ox car park for a 9.30 start. Contact: Bob Jowett.

**Wednesday 11 October** Annual Autumn Open meeting. A talk by David Barber and Martin Fuller of the Environment Agency on Invasive Plant Species (Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed etc). They will also update us on the river quality project. At the Strensall Village Hall at 7 pm. More below.

**Saturday 14 October** Litter pick. Meet on Foss Islands Road by the river bridge opposite Halfords. Car parking and other details from Barry Thomas.

### NOVEMBER

**Tuesday 7 November** Yorkshire Wildlife Trust North Cave reserve visit. Details from John Millett nearer the time.

### DECEMBER

**Sunday 3 December** Christmas Lunch preceded by a talk on the History of the Fishergate Postern Tower by Graham Smith. Meet 11.00 at the Novotel, York. Booking in advance is essential and will start in October. Contact Mike Gray. More on this page. For all events, please contact the nominated person in advance to say that you are coming.

### CONTACTS

John Millett 01904 491290

Barry Thomas 01904 490081

barry1thomas@googlemail.com

Bob Jowett 0904 764702

bob.jowett1@btopenworld.com

Mike Gray 01904 758510

sdmike.gray@btinternet.com

Peter Hopwood 01904 768071

peter147haxby@gmail.com

## Stop the Invasion!

With all the Himalayan Balsam we have along the river, and the 'pull' we did a couple of months ago, the talk at Strensall Village Hall at 7 pm on 11 October should be of particular interest. Where did Himalayan Balsam come from and why has it been so successful? Can we eradicate it and what damage do invasive plants such as Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed do?

We have David Barber and Martin Fuller from The Environment Agency in York coming along to tell us about invasive plants. They will also talk about our river water quality project and how it fits with the EA's work in that sphere and what we might be able to do in future to look after the Foss.

## A Tasty Celebration



Christmas is still (relatively) far away, but I will be taking bookings and money for our lunch at the Novotel during October. I'll be at the open meeting on 11 October for anyone wanting to book then. The menu will be available for you to see.

This year we are going to try having a seating plan, so please tell me when you book who you would like to be seated with. This should stop the rush to bag seats on the day and allow us to have a chat over the *amuse bouche* and spiced wine before we go and sit down. It should also speed up service and mean that your choice can be delivered straight to you at your seat rather than having waiters running around asking "who's for the beefburger"!

The cost this year will be £24.45 per person and will include a choice of tea or coffee in the presentation room (room 5) Graham Smith's talk on the history of the Fishergate Postern Tower starts

Mike Gray



## Up the hill to Crayke



Top: Crayke Castle tops the hill

Above: This beautiful tapestry in the church tells the story of Crayke

Fourteen members converged on Crayke Church on a very wet 26 July for a walk around the village guided by long term residents Dr Michael and Mrs Shirley Haslam. The persistent rain meant that proceedings did not go entirely as planned, but we began with the history of the church as well as some fascinating stories not only about the church itself but also about the village and its prominent residents.

Following this we braved the elements and went for a walk via the Grange atop the hill and down to the village centre. We finished with lunch and further informed discussion in the Durham Ox. We did not let the weather totally spoil an interesting day!

Mike Gray

After the Boxing Day floods of 2015, the Environment Agency's first task was to rebuild and improve the Foss Barrier. That work is well under way, and should be complete later this year. Next came the EA's Five Year Action Plan for wider flood alleviation in York, mainly through 'hard' engineering such as flood walls. These projects are now at the detailed planning stage, and we expect to see them start to appear over the next few months. But what comes next? The Five Year Plan gave some tantalising hints of a sustainable, climate-change-proof flood alleviation strategy based on Natural Flood



*A 'leaky dam', part of NFM at Pickering*

# Slowing the Flow

## A long term strategy for flood control

Ouse (SUNO) catchment, as well as the much smaller catchment of the Foss and its tributary becks. There's far too much in the report to summarise it all in *On the Foss*, but here are some points of interest.

- On 26th December 2015, peak flow on the Foss at Huntington was 40 cubic metres per second and river depth was 3.57 metres – the highest numbers on record, and supposedly a once in every 200 years event.
- To alleviate flooding from a similar flood on the Foss by holding water back in upstream reservoirs would require 1.5 million cubic metres of storage space.
- The study concludes that increasing the capacity of Oulston Reservoir (Pond Head) to provide more flood water storage would be both ineffective and impracticable.

Management - NFM. Now, in a study published this summer and reported in the local Press, the Environment Agency has started to add some substance to its long-term strategy.

*Slowing the flow in the Rivers Ouse and Foss* was commissioned by the EA from civil engineering giants Capita AECOM. An extremely detailed and thorough piece of work, it examines a range of options for long-term flood alleviation strategies on the huge Swale-Ure-Nidd-

- Westfield Beck near Haxby is under consideration by the EA as a site for a new flood storage reservoir. The study suggests that other pinch points on the Foss created by embankments - the York/ Scarborough railway line at Strensall, Towthorpe Bridge, and the Outer Ring Road – could be “re-purposed” as flood storage reservoirs, but it cautions that “further work is required to determine whether creating storage in this way is viable”.
- The report's longest section is devoted to Natural Flood Management (NFM) - a range of nature-friendly measures aimed at flood alleviation without large scale engineering. It concludes that there is good scope for introducing NFM peak flows on the river by up to 10%.
- The report advocates a balance between 'hard' flood defences and NFM, since no one approach is sufficient on its own. It cautions, however, that implementing NFM successfully will be challenging, requiring collaboration between stakeholders with different priorities. The support of the Internal Drainage Board as well as local landowners will be critical.
- As a first step to NFM, the report suggests the Environment Agency should appoint a liaison officer and instigate some farm-scale pilot projects in the Foss catchment.

It's not possible in this short article to do justice to *Slowing the Flow on the Rivers Ouse and Foss*, and the report doesn't seem to be available online. If you would like to see a copy, please contact me at: [markgladwin@ntlworld.com](mailto:markgladwin@ntlworld.com)

*Mark Gladwin*



Mike Gray, at the left side of this photograph, and John Millett, on the right, manned our stall at this year's Huntington Gala. They enjoyed talking to local residents, explaining how the River Foss Society works not only to conserve and improve the Foss but also to encourage people to enjoy the river.

**Don't forget - River Foss Society is on Facebook too!**

# Two days on the Foss

The entire Foss Walk is arranged annually to enable the full walk to be completed in two consecutive days. This year's walk was done on 23 and 24 June. Walkers found generally dry paths, but with overgrown grass in too many places. This overgrowth not only makes footpaths hard to find, slowing progress, but also makes stiles difficult to use. Occasionally we had to climb over gates on Right of Way paths because these were fastened. Though there are some new signposts on the route, none show "Foss Walk". The Foss Walk is generally very short of signing and waymarking.

On Friday June 23, four walkers set off in wet conditions from the Market Place in Easingwold heading north. We attempted to follow the correct path through but this was impossible because this path is very overgrown. Our only alternative was to go into a field and walk alongside the official path.

Heading north past Thornton Lodge Farm and the fisheries, we walked along The Kyle beck to Oulston. After morning coffee on the green, we set off, finding another overgrown path, in places difficult to find. There is no signing. Going west to Whincover Farm, we continued along a road to Pond Head farm. The two signposts both show "Foss Way" not "Foss Walk" here. Passing Pond Head Farm and Oulston reservoir we went to Mill Green where we enjoyed refreshments at the Dutch House.

After walking through Crayke we crossed the fields to Marton Abbey farm, where private "keep out" signs once stood on the entrance to the lane, a public Right of Way. When these signs were placed, the 'fingers' on the signposts showing "Foss Walk" were removed from the signposts. NYCC took action six months later, but the posts are still bare.

At the end of this lane, we headed east to Marton Priory farm then south into a field where we could not walk the correct Right of Way on the south side of the hedge due to overgrowth and electric fencing. After a short walk into Farlington we finished the day, by now in heavy rain.



*Hard going on overgrown paths*



*The case of the disappearing path!*



*Up and over*

Saturday's walk started at Farlington in warm dry weather with five walkers. We headed along Farlington Beck crossing, re-crossing to Black Collar Farm. The walk continued easily, crossing fields to Upper Towthorpe farm. After the farm the Right of Way diagonally crosses a field sown with rapeseed. This path is almost invisible and very hard to walk through.

Walking through crops we headed towards Cornborough Manor, where we turned south towards the river Foss. Walking around Cornborough farm along a farm track, we turned right at a junction, down to Foss House and then left along the river Foss. This overgrown path leads to the Strensall - Sheriff Hutton road. We walked up to Lilling Low Lane to the crossroad, where we turned again to a track crossing the Foss. At Lilling Green we turned down to the Foss and walked west along the north bank. This was hard work as the path was very overgrown.

At Strensall, we bought refreshments in the Ship Inn. We then followed the Foss down to Towthorpe past the oldest bridge Old Humpy. We crossed Towthorpe Road and walked diagonally across the field to a small footbridge over a beck. After dodging traffic along Towthorpe Road we entered Landing Lane and followed the Foss down to Willow bank where two walkers finished their walk. Three walked on towards York following the Foss. One having finished at Fossway, two walkers headed to the very end at Blue Bridge.

*Bob Jowett*

# Kept in the dark for over 2 hours!

## Visiting Standedge Tunnel

Yet again this year a waterway visit started with a damp day that then improved. On 15 July 16 participants made their way to the Standedge Tunnel and Visitor Centre at Marsden by road or rail to meet at the Watersedge Café.



*Left: Briefing before the journey*

*Right: Into the dark*

*Below: The moors tower above the canal*



We had an exhilarating (frightening to some!) taxi ride along narrow lanes passing into the mist over Marsden Moor onto the main road (into Lancashire/Greater Manchester) and then down to the west end of the Tunnel at Diggle. After a towpath briefing we boarded the electric battery driven, specially built, through-tunnel boat and set off. The present Diggle entrance is a later tunnel extension to accommodate one of the railways above.



Standedge Tunnel on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal is one of the Seven Wonders of the Waterways. It was

built later; now a vehicle passes through the original railway tunnel to check the trip boats' progress, via the adits.

The boat banged on the sides and amounts of water gushed down in places. The excellent commentary and question answering kept everyone interested for just over 2 hours, even in a temperature of 5 degrees C!

We finally exited the east end at Marsden.

Thanks to all the Canal & River Trust staff involved for making this a new experience for almost all of us.

*Peter Hopwood*

On the 8th April 2017, Jorvik Viking Centre reopened its doors after 15 months closed.

Like many homes and businesses in York, the Centre was badly hit by the floods of December 2015, some of the worst in living memory.

Waterproof Memories is an oral history project of the Jorvik Community Engagement team that grew out of that experience. They want to record their own memories of flooding, and they also want the stories of our community, the people of York. By doing this, they want to reflect on the shared experience of the floods and the rebuilding process. They also want to celebrate the resilience of our community and plans for the future!

## Share your memories

They are interviewing local residents, business owners and employees, emergency responders, cleanup volunteers and everybody else who

has a story to tell about how the floods affected them and how we responded as a community. They also would like your pictures of the city during the floods, so that they can have a visual as well as an audio record of the landscape of York at the time.

If you would like to be involved in the project, have a photo for their archive or would like to be interviewed by their staff and volunteers to tell your story, email [waterproof@yorkat.co.uk](mailto:waterproof@yorkat.co.uk).

# Evening Rambling

Ten walkers set off from the Village Green at Low Hutton on 20 July, a beautiful summer evening. We walked along an ancient woodland bridleway towards the A64, and then back across the fields taking in the wonderful view of the River Derwent and far beyond.

We braved a field of cattle and returned to the village through a wood and past a delightful cottage. After the walk, seven of us enjoyed an excellent meal at the Crown and Cushion pub in Welburn.

The weather on 14 August was cloudy and warm when 12 RFS walkers set off for an evening walk from Nunnington Village. We passed by the Hall, a National Trust property, and walked parallel to the River Rye into West Ness. We turned onto an enclosed green track emerging onto a ridge with magnificent views to the Vale of Pickering, the Wolds and the Howardian Hills. After crossing Caukleys Bank, we eventually headed back into the delightful village of Nunnington.

We kept a brisk pace in order to be at the Malt Shovel, Hovingham in time for a meal. The chef kindly stayed a bit late, so seven diners could enjoy a delicious meal.

*Anne Bednarski*

With previously heavy rainfall and the possibility of muddy footpaths the route of the evening walk planned for 8 September around Strensall Common was changed. Eleven walkers headed along the Foss to the bridge known as 'Old Humpy'. Leaving the Foss Walk here, we made our way to Forest Lane, passing Ellis Wood and Woodhouse farm. We then turned onto Pottery Lane and returned to the Strensall via Sheriff Hutton Road.

In spite of the earlier rainfall the evening stayed warm



*Popular evening walks at Huttons Ambo (top), Nunnington (middle) and Strensall (bottom)*

and dry and nine members and two guests enjoyed a pleasant walk, finishing the evening with an enjoyable supper at Strensall's Ship Inn.

*John Millett*



*Toward the Howardian Hills*

On September 14 five walkers met at the Dutch House, Crayke, to do Walk 6. The weather was warm, sunny, with the occasional shower. Our route took us towards Mill Farm, Woodfield Farm and Beckfield House. After Beckfield House we walked through a field being ploughed, avoiding the freshly ploughed section.

The farmer ploughing has connections with the River Foss Society as his late father was a friend of Michael Fife and his mother receives our newsletter.

Progress was easy on the Foss Walk path after Beckfield House to the Dam at Oulston Reservoir where we had a

break. We then walked up to Pond Head farm, where the Foss Walk signposts show "Foss Way" rather than "Foss Walk".

Going up to the road and walking west we eventually turned off through Black Fir Plantation. After heading south to Yearsley Road and a short distance into the fields we passed Close House. We then had an easy walk back to the Dutch House, where we all enjoyed an excellent meal.

*Bob Jowett*

## Foss Walk 6

### On the Foss

Editor: Beth Shurter Tel. 01904 631125  
email: [york.beth2@gmail.com](mailto:york.beth2@gmail.com)

Secretary: Alison Scott Tel. 01904 766206  
email: [alisonscott3029@hotmail.com](mailto:alisonscott3029@hotmail.com)

Membership: Elaine Mephram Tel. 01904 769168  
email: [membership@riverfossociety.co.uk](mailto:membership@riverfossociety.co.uk)