



# On the Foss

The River Foss Society Newsletter

Summer  
2015

## Quick Action!



The EA placed a boom in the river around the mouth of the drain; this boom encloses special oil soaking pads to stop any more oil from entering the Foss.

By 21 May there was no sign of a leak, but the boom was to stay in place until rains have flushed any remaining oil through.

We give our thanks to the sharp-eyed person who reported this and the Environmental Agency for taking action quickly.

This incident demonstrates the need for constant observation of

In late May we learned that an oil leak on the Foss at Strensall had been reported to the Environment Agency (EA). Some irresponsible person had poured the oil into a storm drain, coming from Darfield Close and Chaucer Lane and emptying into the river. There have not been any reports about how far the oil travelled downstream or if it affected any wildlife.

the river; river wardens are needed to keep a good eye out for the river. Any volunteers?

*John Millett*

*Above: The boom placed by the Environment Agency on the river near Strensall. The pads soak up any oil still in the drain.*

## Keeping it Clean

The weather on Saturday 18 April could not have been better, sunny and not too hot. Twelve volunteers met at the footbridge along Foss Islands Road, including one non-RFS member, who had read about the event in *Local Link*. We hope that his experience will lead to him joining.

The CYC boat failed to start at the beginning, despite use the previous day. CYC contact Brian Collins assured us that they would get the boat started, and so they did. After the delay, the boat was manned by CYC staff – Mark (skipper) and Paul, to whom we offer our grateful thanks. Volunteers not on the boat worked in pairs at different locations, covering the river banks from Blue Bridge upstream to Yearsley Bridge.



*Above: Working on the CYC boat; Below: Overlooked by a Tour de Yorkshire yellow bike*

June and Hilary, working on the final stretch of river ending at Yearsley Bridge, were delighted to bump into member, Adrian Lovett, who was dogwalking; he very willingly joined in, grabbing litter that was awkward to reach.

Sincere thanks to all 13 volunteers on the litter pick; together we filled 20 black bin liners – “well done” to all.

Thanks go also to Iain Dunn of CYC for delivering the litter pickers and bin bags, and to Morrisons for extending our parking time solely for the period of this litter pick.

The next litter pick, a joint effort with the Rotary Club of York Vikings is on Thursday 16 July, when we meet at 9.30 am at the footbridge opposite Morrisons, Foss Islands Road.

*Barry Thomas*





## More summer fun

### JULY

**Thursday 16th** Litter Pick by boat and on foot jointly with Rotary Club of York Vikings. Meet at 9.30 am at the footbridge opposite Morrisons on Foss Islands Road, wearing protective clothing. Names, please, to Barry Thomas, tel: 01904 490081, e-mail: barry1thomas@goolemail.com

**Monday 20th** Evening History Walk, "York's First Millennium and The Museum Gardens", led by Dr. Neil Moran. Meet at 6 pm outside York Explore (Central Library) for a walk of about 2 hours and optional meal afterwards. Numbers limited to 20 so advance booking essential. Contact June Card, tel: 01904 766196, e-mail: junecard700@gmail.com

**Wednesday 22nd** Evening Country Walk around Kirkham Abbey. Meet at 6 pm at The Stone Trough car park. Contact Anne Bednarski, tel: 01904 764086, e-mail: annebednarski@hotmail.com

### AUGUST

**Thursday 6th** Foss Walk 6 Yearsley to Ampleforth, about 5m. Meet at 9.30 am in the car park of the White Swan in Ampleforth. Contact Bob Jowett, tel: 01904 764702, e-mail: bob.jowett1@btopenworld.com

**Tuesday 11th** Evening History Walk "The Bridges over the Foss" led by John Oxley, the City of York Archaeologist. Meet at 6 pm in the little park near Monk Bridge, at the city end of the Huntington Road, for a walk of about 2 hours and optional meal afterwards at the Macons Arms. Contact June Card (as above).

**Saturday 15th** Boat Trip from Whitley Bridge on the Aire & Calder Navigation aboard the Yorkshire Waterways Museum's broad-beamed boat "Waterstart", travelling mainly west north west, then mainly east onto the twisting River Aire downstream to Beal with a stop for lunch. Thence onto the Selby Canal to Selby Canal before being bussed back to Whitley Lock. Approx. time taken 6 hours. Requires 12 people to be viable - some have booked already. "Waterstart" has a small bow seating area, large saloon, small kitchen area and toilet. (See also September 5th.) For full details

and booking form contact Peter Hopwood, tel: 01904 768071, e-mail chrisandpete@haxby147.fsnet.co.uk

**Thursday 27th** Evening Country Walk around Castle Howard, followed by a pub meal. Park in the road near the Crown and Cushion in Welburn for a 6 pm start. Contact Anne Bednarski (as above)

### SEPTEMBER

**Friday 4th** Foss Walk 7 Circular from Hovingham, about 7m. Meet at 9.30 am in the village car park in Hovingham. Contact Bob Jowett (as above).

**Saturday 5th** (Provisional) The Yorkshire Waterways Museum has volunteered to repeat the 15th August boat trip IF 15th August is fully booked AND there is a sufficient number. For full details and booking form contact Peter Hopwood (as above).

**Mon 14th** Evening Country Walk around Nunnington,, followed by a pub meal. Meet at 6 pm in the layby on Caulkley's Bank, at the top of the hill between Hovingham and Nunnington on the B1257. Contact Anne Bednarski (as above).

**Tues 22nd** Morning visit to The Retreat, York's pioneering psychiatric hospital opened by William Tuke in 1792. Meet at 10 am at the main reception desk. Bus No. 4 and the 44 Unibus pass the door, otherwise street parking. Numbers limited, so advance booking essential. Contact June Card (as above).

### OCTOBER

**Thursday 8th** Foss Walk 8 Circular from Mill Green via Pond Head, about 5m. Meet at 9.30 am in the car park of the Dutch House near Crayke. Contact Bob Jowett (as above).

**Wednesday 14th** Open Meeting at 7 pm at the Strensall & Towthorpe Village Hall. Talk by Nadine Rolls, the City of York Countryside Officer, followed by refreshments.

**Saturday 17th** Litter pick on foot and by boat. Meet at 9.30 am at the footbridge opposite Morrisons on Foss Islands Road, wearing protective clothing. Contact Barry Thomas (as above).

Details for the Christmas Lunch on Sunday December 6th will be in the next Newsletter.

## Unwelcome Wildlife



A few weeks ago Rowena and Adrian Lovett, whose garden backs on to the Foss, sadly discovered that all their hens had been killed.

The prime suspect at first was a mink as the attack coincided with a noticeable absence of young goslings and ducklings on their stretch of the Foss near Yearsley Bridge - mink are known to devastate local wildlife.

To date there has been no positive sighting of a mink, however. The other main suspect is a fox - several have been seen in this area.

If anyone sights a mink, please let our chairman, John Millett, know.

*A mink after trapping. Smaller than an otter, it has a pointed snout and fluffy tail. Photo by Lucie, courtesy of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.*



# Himalayan Balsam - the Facts



Dodsworth Avenue on 20 June. In spitting rain, they worked in heavy undergrowth and managed to pull up an impressive amount of Himalayan Balsam, some of which was 5 feet tall!

Himalayan Balsam was brought to the UK in 1893 as a garden plant. However, it has also become a naturalised wild plant, happiest on damp ground. It poses a big problem for rivers as it tolerates low light levels, shades native species and eventually kills off these plants. It is at this point that river banks can be left bare and liable to erosion.

The plants spread widely as the seed pods explode on touch, releasing up to 800 seeds into the air as far as 7m away. These seeds can be viable for two years, and can be transported further along the river. It is therefore essential that the plants are removed well before the flowers, and seeds, have formed.

Aimed at preventing flowering, control measures are most effective before or during June. Chemical control can be used but kills other plants, and cutting can work. But pulling is very easy and removes the entire plant. Ideally, the removed plants should be burned or composted unless seeds have formed.

Another control measure is grazing by cattle or sheep throughout the plant's growing season. Biological control methods have potential and may eventually be encouraged.

On the Foss, the only practicable control method is pulling, although we cannot remove the pulled plants, nor can we burn them. It is very important that we do as many removal sessions as possible, for by pulling one plant we can prevent up to another 800 new plants forming.

Nine River Foss Society volunteers cleared a portion of the river bank adjoining the playing fields behind



*Above: Part of the team of hard-working Himalayan Balsam pullers*

*Below: A small part of what was cleared.. Can you see more than one person in this photo?*



## A welcome from Alistair

The evening of May 12th, if not exactly warm, was at least dry as our President, Professor Alastair Fitter, welcomed us to his garden

Beyond the narrow front drive and the house lay a patio where a fountain played gently as our host served us a glass of wine. Then came a flower garden with an array of spring flowers, This gave way to an orchard of venerable old apple and pear trees, flanked by a vegetable garden.

Winding paths through a long wild section brought us eventually to the bank of the River Foss. A garden full of lovely surprises for adults: it must be a paradise for Alastair's grandchildren.

*June Card*



# Nature's Gems

Our sharp-eyed photographer Tony Ellis captured these shots of an Emperor Dragonfly (left) and a thrush (right) near the Foss



## Moorland Magic



*Left: Leader Tanya Eyre (second from left) took us to this glorious vantage point over Robin Hood's bay.*

*Right: striding happily over the moor*

On Wed 20 May a small group of RFS members gathered at Fylingdale Moor to be introduced by Tanya Eyre, Education Officer of the Hawk and Owl Trust, to the environment which the trust works to maintain for hen harriers and other birds.

On the day we had five walkers, though several more had booked. Our route was circular from Ravenscar Mast; it took us through heather moorland to the edge of a farm, back through a beck and onto part of the Stoupe Brow archaeology trail. Though we had hoped

to see hen harriers and other birds of prey, we did enjoy the sight of many skylarks. Tanya pointed out five types of heather and various juniper trees as well as mysterious large flat stones which had cups and shapes carved on their surface c. 5000 years ago.

Bronze age burial mounds dot the landscape, reminding us that the environment then would have been more amenable to a population of farmers.

After our walk, we had a lovely lunch at the nearby Falcon Inn.

On the evening of June 16 a group of 13 met in Easingwold, 13 miles north of York as part of this summer's evening walk series. Foss members walked around the town led by Valerie Taylor, a well respected local historian.

## Exploring Easingwold's History

Walking a circular route, we stopped at many of Valerie's 'hidden treasures' which reveal the

long history of this attractive market town, which was mentioned in Domesday Book.

Easingwold once had 28 pubs and four coaching inns servicing the first coach stop after York. Most were built in the 18th century, some earlier, but are now private homes, many named in memory of their previous life.

It was a wonderful walk on a beautiful evening.



Eight walkers met on Tuesday 7 April, a warm sunny day, in Terrington for Walk 2 of the season. Volunteer drivers took us to the start of the walk in Sheriff Hutton. There are two walking routes from Sheriff Hutton to Terrington: the Ebor Way and the Centenary Way. We went via High Stittenham with excellent views. This



walk has some steep climbs but the group dealt with these easily, and surfaces were mostly dry. We arrived in Terrington at 1.00 pm in good time for lunch at the Lavender farm.

A group of nine walkers met for Walk 3 on Saturday 9 May in the village hall car park in Hovingham. With pleasant but chilly weather, volunteer drivers took us to the start of the walk in Terrington just past the church. We walked round the school's playing fields, through

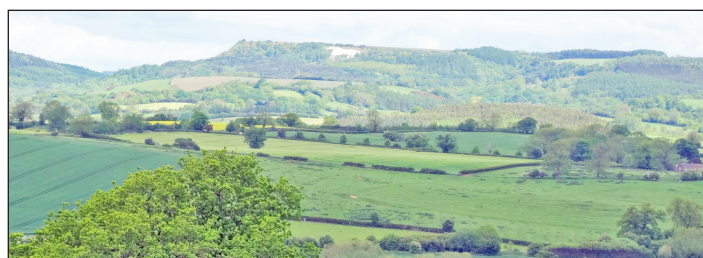


Top: Some of the walkers on Walk 2; Bottom: Walk 3's team

fields to Hollis Wood Plantation, followed by South wood. This walk follows part of the Ebor Way and the Centenary Way. Two non-members joined and enjoyed the walk. Although a bit overcast, we did enjoy good views on the walk. The group stayed for lunch at the Yorkshire Lavender Farm near Terrington.

On June 3rd with ideal warm weather, we met in Coxwold for Walk 4. We chose a circular walk to ensure we returned by 1:00 pm, the agreed time to enter Newburgh Priory grounds. Seven people walked from Coxwold to Hushwaite where we had morning coffee. On the return leg of the walk, many bought free range eggs at the roadside. We then joined non-walking members for a picnic lunch in the Priory grounds. After lunch, we toured the Priory

Bob Jowett

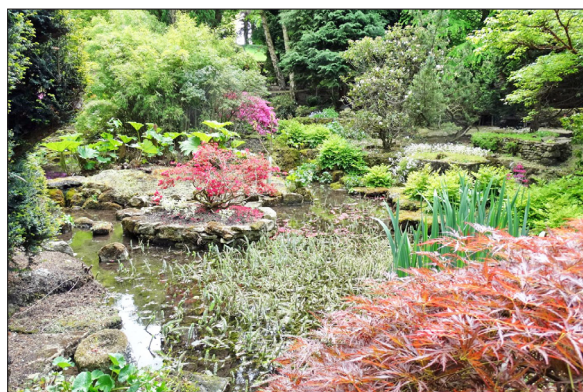


Top: The Walk 4 group; Bottom: The White Horse shines in the distance

We will be reporting this year's programme of evening walks in our Autumn issue.

## Visiting Newburgh Priory

One hour ahead of the normal opening time on 3rd June, a convoy of cars driven by River Foss Society Members wound its way through the gates of Newburgh Priory and up the long drive. Having been given special permission to picnic in the grounds, a few hardy souls braved the cool wind and sat by the lake whilst the rest took refuge in a sheltered part of the ruins of the original Priory.



We were fortunate enough to be led on a most entertaining tour of the House by the owner himself, Sir George Wombwell, who told us the stories behind the family portraits, warned us of the hazards of the steps that marked the transitions from Jacobean to Georgian interiors and enlarged on the mystery of whether or not the bones of Oliver Cromwell rested in the Priory, once the home of his daughter.

We then freely explored the grounds, the highlight of which was the water garden and to do justice to the Tea Room's delicious cakes.

June Card

**WE WANT  
YOUR  
MONEY!**

Thanks to all those who have already paid their 2015 subscriptions. Those who have not paid will have received or shortly be receiving a reminder !

Queries and any other membership enquiries to e-mail: [membership@riverfossociety.co.uk](mailto:membership@riverfossociety.co.uk) or phone: 01904 769168.

If there is a copy of the Membership Application Form enclosed then please try and pass it to anyone who may be interested in joining the RFS.



On 23 May, 12 members boarded "SUN", Beverley Barge Preservation Society's trip boat (converted from a mud hopper), as it set off along the half mile Beverley Beck before passing through the Lock into the tidal River Hull - hence the early start to catch the rising incoming tide against the natural river flow. Travelling north on the River Hull we saw so much - the Beverley Shipyard with some work still being carried out there, sunken wrecks, life aboard other boats, becks draining into the canal, the abandoned Leven Canal, kayaks and a boat travelling south from the Driffeld Navigation.

## ANOTHER NEW BOATING EXPERIENCE

We eventually reached Struncheon Hill (Hempholme) Lock and Weir where we disembarked. Dave Ware, volunteer Warden at Tophill Low Nature Reserve, gave us an Introductory talk and leaflet about the Reserve explaining that the site was a Water Treatment Works providing Kingston on Hull's water and was the only Nature Reserve owned by Yorkshire Water. A short walk took us to the nearest Hide where members learnt more both on the way and at the Hide including the finding of remnants on the site of a plane from nearby RAF Catfoss which crashed during a WWII training flight. Unfortunately, time was limited by having to return to "SUN" to catch the best of the, by now, ebbing tide. Nearing Beverley on the return trip, we were delayed for a short while waiting for the Grovehill lift bridge to be operated. In the lock there was much excitement as a mink was spotted in the top lock gate - it then climbed the lock gate, ran along the beam and scuttled around on the adjacent land.

Our thanks are due to BBPS's Chairman, Iain Campbell, and the Reserve Warden, Richard Hampshire, for arranging the visit and to Sun's crew: Iain again (skipper), Alistair and Connor. Not forgetting Dave, our leader at the Reserve. We all had a truly excellent day thanks to these gentlemen.

*Peter Hopwood*

**Don't Forget our website:**  
**[www.riverfossociety.co.uk](http://www.riverfossociety.co.uk)**



*Top: Nature has taken over the skeletal remains of a boat  
Middle: Some of the day's travellers with the crew  
Bottom right: Grovehill lift bridge in action  
Bottom left: A mink peeks out of a drainage pipe*



### On the Foss

Editor: Beth Shurter

Tel. 01904 631125

e-mail: [york.beth2@gmail.com](mailto:york.beth2@gmail.com)

Secretary: Marjorie Burton

Tel. 01904 760871

e-mail: [m.burton599@btinternet.com](mailto:m.burton599@btinternet.com)