



# On the Foss

The River Foss Society Newsletter

Autumn  
2015

## Waterstart adventures



ing River Aire until turning onto the Selby Canal, the third different type of waterway during the day. An otter was spotted approaching

Selby and members held up traffic as they electrically operated Selby's canal swing bridge before walking a further 50 yards to the boat's mooring in Selby Basin. The YWM's organised bus soon got



This summer, we were lucky to enjoy three boat trips on the Yorkshire Waterways Museum's wide beam trip boat "Waterstart". These started from Whitley Lock on the Aire and Calder Navigation and all trips started in fine weather.

On 8 July we travelled east along the wide, once very busy commercial, A&C Navigation. After a delay at Pollington Lock we reached Goole, but with rain moving in, we decided to take lunch once we reached the YWM. After lunch, and a look round the Museum and an Art Exhibition on Barge "Room 58", the weather improved and our trip continued round Goole Docks with an informative commentary. We then travelled back with the rain returning as Whitley Lock was reached.

The good weather lasted all day on 15 August as "Waterstart" travelled west along the A&C Navigation until turning onto the River Aire travelling downstream (helped by extra water from the previous day's rain). We stopped at Beale Lock for a short walk to the Kings Arms for lunch. The trip then continued on the constantly twist-



Top left: Entering Beale Lock; top right: Cormorants keep watch; centre: Opening the swing bridge at Selby; above: this heron flew with us

us back to Whitley Lock. This trip overran the expected timing but the following one ran to time. On both trips, a variety of birds were seen. The majority of members had a go on the boat's tiller and some helped at the locks. Thanks are due to the boat's volunteer crews, who willingly answered questions, and staff at the YWM and The Kings Arms - too numerous to name.

*Peter Hopwood*

Owing to popular demand Peter was able to organise a repeat of the August trip on 5 September. Again the weather was fine if a little chilly, but after refuelling at the Kings Arms at Beale we

followed the meanderings of the River Aire before branching north along the beautiful Selby Canal, escorted by a heron and enchanted by the blue flash of kingfisher wings. Thanks to Peter and to all who made it such a peaceful day.

*June Card*





# Looking towards Autumn

## 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 –Tel: 01904 764702 or e-mail: bob.jowett@btopenworld.com

**Wednesday 14th** Open Meeting at 7.00 pm at the Strensall & Towthorpe Village Hall. Nadine Rolls, the City of York Countryside Officer, will talk on “A Wildlife Vision for the Foss” and refreshments will follow. This is a public meeting, free of charge, to which all are welcome. Contact Marjorie Burton - Tel: 01904 760871 or e-mail: marjorie.burton599@btintern

**Saturday 17th** Litter Pick along the Foss.

Meet at 9.30 am at the footbridge opposite Morrisons on Foss Islands Road, wearing protective clothing. Contact Barry Thomas – Tel: 01904 490081 or e-mail: barry1thomas@google-mail.com

## DECEMBER

**Sunday 6th** Christmas Lunch at 12.30 pm in the River Room at Novotel, Fishergate, preceded at 11.15 am by a talk by Mike Gray on “The Birds in your Garden”. Parking at the Hotel is free and the charge for the 3-course lunch and tea or coffee is £19.95 (the first increase for four years). Payment and menu choices are required by 31st October. Book at the Open Meeting or contact June Card – Tel: 01904 766196 or e-mail: junecard700@gmail.com

On August 11, 25 people - 13 non-members included - met near Monk Bridge for a walk looking at many of the city's bridges led by City Archaeologist John Oxley who has investigated bridges over the Foss amongst other City structures. From Monk Bridge, an eighteenth century replacement of a medieval bridge, we headed to the modern bridges at Layerthorpe, where John told us how excavations had revealed evidence of a Roman ford. This could have solved the mystery of where a Roman crossing was.

We moved to the iron 'Half Moon' bridge on Foss Islands Road, built at the height of the City's industrial activity. Only this bridge and the large chimney across the road remain to remind us of that time.

On the footpath, we reached the newest bridge on the Foss. This striking and busy pedestrian and cycle bridge, called Leatham's Bridge by some, was installed as part of the Hungate development. It is a popular route.

We stopped further along the footpath to view the Foss Bridge. This charming nineteenth century struc-

## Bridging the Foss

ture, probably by Atkinson, replaced a medieval structure of multiple arches.

After a brisk walk along noisy city streets, we stopped briefly at the modern bridge spanning the Foss on Piccadilly, then head-

ed on to Castle Mills Bridge south of Clifford's Tower. This modern bridge, whose name refers to the mill below the Castle, is the successor to several earlier structures and carries traffic over Castle Mills Lock, the Foss Basin and the recent tilting sluice structure.

We finished at the Foss Barrier, looking towards the Blue Bridge. Traditionally painted blue, this bridge has existed in several forms and now takes pedestrians across the very last few metres of the Foss before it joins the Ouse.

This was a wonderful walk with lots of information about the structures we see and use every day in York. Our grateful thanks go to John Oxley for his friendly and knowledgeable leadership of a very large group through the streets of York.



*Top: Quite a crowd! Twenty five people gathered at Monk Bridge for an information-packed evening walk*

*Below: This modern footbridge from Hungate is the newest of the Foss crossings*



## Looking at York History

Our member Neil Moran, an experienced York tour guide who has led us through other history walks around York, took us on another voyage of

tower, now thought to be late Roman. With the Empire declining, building was being done in a much rougher way and this tower was once mistakenly thought to have been built by the Anglian people after the Romans left.

discovery on 20 July.

Meeting at York Explore (aka Main Library) Neil, with the help of useful maps, reminded us of the Romans' arrival in York in 71 AD. The Multangular Tower, corner of the stone fortress built in 107 AD, remains to demonstrate the sheer power of the Roman empire. But, like all the Roman walls, it has been adapted to uses through the ages.

Tucked behind the library, is the so-called Anglian



Neil led a large group through many stages of York's long history starting inside the city walls at the library

Neil showed us a prehistoric stone slab in the Museum Gardens. Not originally from the York area, it was probably donated to the Museum but, for some reason, placed in the gardens at some point in the distant past.

We moved on to King's Manor to hear about its history as an Archbishop's palace, later occupied by Kings. After many other uses, it now houses part of the University of York.

As always, Neil's encyclopaedic knowledge of York's history and buildings is breathtaking and we learned so much. After our two hours surrounded by history, most of the group enjoyed a meal at Ask.

**Don't Forget the Open Meeting on Wednesday 14 October! Details on Page 2**

## An eye for Foss wildlife ...

Member Tony Ellis keeps his camera ready to capture all sorts of wildlife around the Foss.



Above: Coots are not often seen on the Foss; Below: A comma butterfly seeks nectar



The RFS records are being organised by members for storage in the City of York Archive at Explore, York. Does any member have any back papers, photographs or any-

## KEEPING IT SAFE

thing relevant to the activities and history of the Society? We also need copies of any newsletters PRE-2010 only.

Archive material is needed by the end of October. If you have something, contact June Card on 766196 or on e-mail [junecard700@gmail.com](mailto:junecard700@gmail.com)

## Partial Success

Our summer litter pick took place on Thursday 16 July, a warm July day. Ten volunteers met at the iron bridge on Foss islands road and collected litter from the riverside footpaths from Yearsley Bridge to Blue Bridge.

It was the intention to collect litter from the river using the CYC litter barge but this was cancelled due to an accident to one of our members.

John Millett



# Two Days on the Foss Way

*This annual walk is arranged to allow the entire Foss Walk to be done in two consecutive days. Some walk all, whilst others do sections of it. Bob Jowett tells the story ...*

On Day One - 26 June - walkers were Anne, Carol, Jackie and Bob. To save time, we decided not to bus into town and walk back, so we set out from Huntington at 10:30am in hot and sunny weather. After stopping at the Ship Inn, Strensall for drinks, we walked along Duncombe Lane and down past Lock House. We managed to pass Lock House on a newly cut path before its resident dogs were let out.



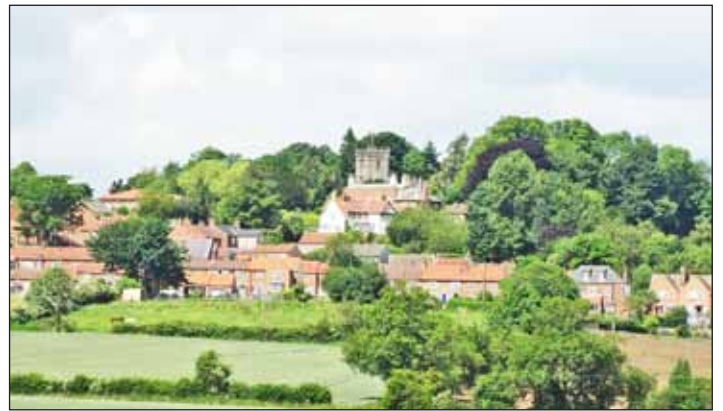
*Enjoying a good path on Day One.*

We stopped just beyond to eat lunch by the river opposite Walbutts. Reaching Foss House, we turned north away from the river towards Cornborough Manor. Two fields along we came across crops with no path through and so had to detour around to reach the stile. Entering the crop field, we had difficulty with the electric wire, as it would not unhook. Not knowing if the fence was on, we avoided it, but this obstacle did cause a bit of a delay. Though some parts of the path were overgrown, the croft field had good paths cut through and we were soon at the Blacksmiths Arms, Farlington. We had drinks but no meals were available.

Our walking group for Day Two included Anne, Carol, Jackie, Bob, Gillian, Mike and Mary. Starting at Farlington, we followed the Foss Walk route towards Marton Priory but had to leave the path and walk up to the road as the path is totally overgrown and narrowed by an electric fence. After walking along the road to Marton Abbey we crossed the Stillington to Brandsby road, walked to Crayke and then down to the Dutch House for morning coffee and refreshments. After their customary welcome, we set off to Oulston reservoir and had our lunch on the dam. After lunch we walked past Pond Head farm onto the Oulston road, then east along the road before turning down to footpath leading into Oulston. Picking up the path at Oulston and dodging



*A welcome break at the Dutch House*



*Sweeping views of Crayke*



*A happy finish at the Market Place, Easingwold*

cows, we followed the Kyle beck. We were able to walk on the footpaths until they became too overgrown. Finally, we walked into Easingwold on the road to complete a good two days' walking, overgrown paths and electric fences notwithstanding!

*Bob Jowett*

**Don't Forget our website:**

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



This year, additional evening walks were offered, bearing in mind that some cannot do a daytime walk. These included one walk led by John Millett around Strensall and four walks led by Anne Bednarski further afield.



*The walk at Strensall was very well attended*

On the evening of 18 May the weather did not look promising - dark and wet, but by the time nine walkers had met by the main gates of Beningbrough Hall in Newton-on-Ouse, the rain had stopped and the sun was shining.

We walked along the Ouse, past the water tower, stopping by the confluence of the Nidd and Ouse to read about the rare tansy beetle. In the woodland walk on

On 27 August, a beautiful evening, 17 set off from Welburn. Walking around Castle Howard towards Bog Hall we enjoyed the views of the House, the Temple of the Four Winds and the Mausoleum in the evening sunlight. Afterwards, thirteen of us sat down to a delicious

## Evening Rambles



*Left: Heading across a field; Right: the Castle Howard Mausoleum glows in the evening sun.*

the grounds of the Hall, the trees were beautiful, and there was information about the different species. The sweet chestnut was particularly interesting with its spirally grooved bark.

Once back in the village, seven of us enjoyed a warm welcome and meal at the Blacksmith's Arms.

On 5 June, a warm sunny evening, 27 members, guests and visitors walked a route taking us along the Foss, turning off at Lock Cottage and returning via Duncombe Farm and the Sheriff Hutton road back to the start at the Ship Inn. In the meadows either side of Duncombe Farm we saw four brown hares whilst overhead several skylarks were calling and a single whitethroat was seen amongst the wild flowers.



*At the Stone Trough, Kirkham*

Eighteen members finished a perfect evening with a tasty supper at the Ship Inn.

On 22 July fourteen walkers turned up to walk around Kirkham Abbey, going via the hamlet of Firby to Westow, through fields and woodland, with a little minor road walking.

The views were stunning in the evening sunlight, and we had a bit of excitement first from a puppy trying to join us and then from some rather frisky bullocks! After the walk twelve of us enjoyed a meal at the Stone Trough, Kirkham.

meal at the Crown and Cushion where Eric, one of our party, delivered a monologue in Yorkshire dialect.

The evening of 14 September felt autumnal when six of us set off on our final evening walk from Caukley's Bank above Nunnington. It was a pleasant walk with lovely views towards the Howardian Hills, through fields and along the River Rye. Some very friendly bullocks stopped us in our tracks at one point, but Alison and Bob bravely moved them away so we could pass. We cut the walk short when it started to rain, and drove to the Malt Shovel in Hovingham for a tasty meal.



*Anne Bednarski*

*Above: cottages at Nunnington; Below: and to all a Good Night! Hardy walkers finished the walk on September 14 in the dark!*





More from Tony Ellis. Left: This carrion crow seems to be posing for the camera; Right: Foss Mallards are well camouflaged



## Foss Walking

under an electric fence which seemed to have appeared overnight. It all added to the fun! The views of Ampleforth Abbey and surrounding countryside were magnificent.

*Anne Bednarski*

On 2 July we met at 9.30 at the Blacksmith's Arms, Farlington, to do Walk 5. The weather was very hot and sunny – almost too hot to walk. Just three of us - Anne, Tom and myself - walked.

We had a fairly easy way in the first part; however, after crossing the Sheriff Hutton to Stillington road, the walk became very hard. The path was completely overgrown with grass, some almost head height, and we made very slow progress.

We walked to Whenby and its church. After passing through the village, we then walked on much more quickly and found easy paths back to Farlington. Unfortunately, as the Blacksmith's Arms was closed, we could not have refreshments.

*Bob Jowett*

On 6 August ten walkers gathered for Walk 6, including an American couple who were staying in Yearsley and had seen our advert in the local magazine. Originally planned as a linear walk, the walk was changed to a circular route, avoiding complicated car arrangements.

We negotiated some rather wonky stiles and crawled



On September 4th four walkers, including a non-member, met to do Walk 7 in the Hovingham village car park at 9:30. In cool, overcast weather we started this circular route in an anti-clockwise direction. We walked west to Cawton village, south to Coulton, on to Horse Coppice, Temple Bank Wood and back into Hovingham.

This route is fairly easy with good paths and no very steep



climbs. The non-member Ian, who had seen the walk advertised, had not walked in this area before and enjoyed it. Although I was the designated walk leader, Anne and Carol know the route well, so Anne led the walk. We had a nice meal and warm welcome at the Malt Shovel.

*Bob Jowett*

*Above left: Walkers on Walk 5; Centre: Battling an overgrown path on Walk 6; Bottom: Heading into Hovingham at the end of Walk 7*

On the Foss

Editor: Beth Shurter  
Tel. 01904 631125  
e-mail: york.beth2@gmail.com

Secretary: Marjorie Burton  
Tel. 01904 760871  
e-mail: m.burton599@btinternet.com