



On the Foss

Autumn
2012

The River Foss Society Newsletter



A tricky manoeuvre on Mermaid just past Monk Bridge

Mermaid heads into Castle Mills Lock

Cruising the Two Rivers

The RFS had again planned various trips on "Syntan" and "Mermaid" as part of this summer's Festival of Two Rivers, but due to the previous week's flooding (p. 2) these had to be rearranged as "Syntan" would not have been able to get under Blue Bridge.

Eventually five trips on "Mermaid" were organised and fully booked using both Kings Staith and the Landing behind BT's Telephone Exchange. Thanks are again due to the Inland Waterways Association's voluntary lock-keepers for operating Castle Mills Lock. As always, seeing the City and its wonderful sights from the River Foss and being able to get as far as Monk Bridge before turning were much appreciated, as well as the good weather on both days!

The receipts enabled the RFS to make a donation to the BBPS which was much appreciated and the BBPS asked that its thanks for the continuing support be passed on. Donations help it to carry on restoring and looking after working vessels and promoting them as educational and living history.

Peter Hopwood



Stuart Pinchbeck pilots Mermaid across the high waters of the Ouse.



Presenting our donation from the river trips to Beverly Barge Preservation Society. Left to right: Peter Hopwood (RFS), Tony Hardwidge (BBPS), Iain Campbell (BBPS), John Millett (RFS Chairman) and Stuart Pinchbeck (BBPS).



Looking Ahead

Saturday 6th October

The last walk of the season! The five-mile circular walk via High Stittenham will start at 10.00 am from Sheriff Hutton Village Hall where we have special permission to use the car park. Please let Bob Jowett know (tel. 01904 764702) if you are coming and if you would like to have lunch afterwards at The Highwayman.

Wednesday 17th October

Open Meeting (i.e. everyone most welcome) at 7.00 pm at Strensall & Towthorpe Village Hall, when John Oxley, City of York Archaeologist,

will give a talk on "The Effect of Glaciation on the lower Foss". This will also be an opportunity to book for the Christmas Lunch – see below.

Sunday 2nd December

12.30 pm: Christmas Lunch in the River Room at the Novotel, Fishergate, **preceded at 11.15 am** by a talk by Michael Turvey on the mills at Stillington. The cost for a 3-course lunch and tea or coffee is held for us at last year's price of £17.95 and parking at the hotel is free. Payment and menu choices are due by 31st October. Please sign up either at the Open Meeting or by contacting June Card, tel. 01904 766196 or e-mail june_card@o2.co.uk.



Syantn and Sun marooned at King's Staith!

High Water

This summer's exceptional rain caused flooding in both the Rivers Ouse and Foss. The two week York Festival of Rivers, which was to start with the York 800 Celebrations Flotilla on 7 July, was hit by the flooding as was the following day's Rotary Club of York's Dragon Boat Racing Day at which the River Foss Society was due to have a stand. Both days' events had to be postponed until later - the Flotilla on 25 August when the Paraplegic flame was in York and the Dragon Boat Day to 22 September.

The Beverley Barge Preservation Society's three vessels - restored barge "Syntan", recently relaunched and being restored barge "Sun" and the



Two visiting vessels explore the Foss

recently acquired adapted tender "Mermaid" - had arrived in time to take part in various Festival events just as the flooding started and the crews were soon stranded on board at Kings Staith. Other narrowboats arriving early for the Flotilla were trapped in the Foss Basin as the Foss Barrier was closed. This did enable some of them to make unanticipated but greatly enjoyed trips up the River Foss!

Peter Hopwood

Dirty Work



Thursday 5th July 2012 turned out to be one of the many rainy days this summer, but despite this 9 RFS volunteers took part in a combined Litter Pick with members of the Rotary Club of York Vikings.

One team walked the western side of the Foss river bank from Monk Bridge to Yearsley Bridge, whilst another team walked the eastern side.

Another team worked on the City of York Council litter barge. They cleared the river from Foss Islands Road to Castle Mills Lock, whilst another member walked the footpath route from Castle Mills Lock to Foss Islands Road via the GPO building.

In all, we collected 13 sacks of various rubbish and returned a lifebuoy to its rightful location (again!) having retrieved it from the undergrowth along the river bank near Huntington Road.

Our thanks go to Mr Iain Dunn of the CYC for supplying not only the barge but also the sacks, jackets and litter grabs used by the teams.

John Millett

Summer Walking

Thursday 14 June Circular Walk

Farlington via Whenby

A group of 13 walkers, including three who had not joined us before, met at the Blacksmiths Arms, Farlington at 10:00 am. We had an ideal day for



Above: Getting started at Farlington

walking - dry and warm. The distance walked was 5¼ miles with no steep hills and proved very enjoyable. At Whenby the church was locked but unfortunately there was insufficient time to obtain the key and get back for the meal at 1:00pm. At Whenby Lodge farm, which specialises in breeding bulls, we made a diversion off the right of way around the farm yard to avoid any close contact! A staff member came out of the office and gave us a brief but interesting talk about the work of the bull breeding centre.

Unfortunately one lady arrived after we had left at 10:10am, so missed out on the walk, although we saw her briefly afterwards. However, we still believe that 10 minutes is sufficient time to allow for late arrivals.

Eleven walkers joined us for a meal at the Highwayman in Sheriff Hutton after a lot of readjustment due to the Blacksmiths Arms being unable to serve. All in all we had a rewarding and pleasant day.

Monday August 6 Circular Walk Coxwold to Husthwaite

This walk started at Coxwold, with initially warm and sunny weather, but unfortunately dark clouds in the distance gave one heavy shower - a waterproofs on and off day. John Millett knows this route so led the walk. There were 14 in the group, with some new walkers introduced by Christine Hopwood. They had not joined the society, but our walks are open to non-members.

We had excellent views and good visibility. A few lonely horses insisted on walking up to us for company. At one stile, two large horses almost blocked the path; I calmed them until the group had got over the stile. John's easy pace gave us a finish at about 1.00pm. Most of the group enjoyed a very good meal in the Tea rooms at Coxwold.

Harold Tomlinson, a member, had hoped to join us on the walk but has very limited walking ability. He had assumed that the walk would include



Above: St Nicholas Church at Husthwaite

Left: An interesting village sign



towpaths hence it would be suitable for his mobility scooter. Although this walk was not suitable for his mobility scooter, Harold did join us for lunch, telling of his war time experience as non-combat aircrew.

Bob Jowett

HELP!

Always
appreciated!

Remember - there are lots of ways to help with the work of our organisation.

For instance, could you help just three times a year with the distribution of *On the Foss*? There are various jobs to do which help send our newsletter out as economically as possible.

And there are many more ways that members can help the River Foss Society. We always consider ideas and offers of help!

Why not have a word with one of the committee members at our Open Meeting on 17 October?

Don't Forget our website:

www.riverfossociety.co.uk



At the beginning ...



Far left: Brian Hebditch displays the valves
Left: Water gushes into the Foss
Above: the tunnel under the dam

Our visit to Pond Head Reservoir on 22nd August was blessed with warm and sunny weather. Although we have often visited Pond Head, this outing was organised to give us a lot more information about its operation and its background.

The City of York Council is responsible, under the Reservoirs Act, to inspect and maintain the dam, so Brian Hebditch of the council is the ideal person to tell us about it. The dam and reservoir were built around 1790 to supply water to the then new Foss Navigation. The reservoir holds approximately 150,000 cubic metres of water and is in places about 25 to 30 feet deep. Regular inspections are carried out by Brian and his team.

The reservoir is fed by the spring which is the 'official' source of the river. The water to the Foss eventually flows out of the reservoir over a weir. One feature of the reservoir is a tunnel which passes below the dam and contains valves for adjusting the flow of water to the Foss. The operation of these valves was demonstrated and the effect of this was seen by the increase of water level in the duct feeding the river below the dam.

We finished our visit with a picnic with pleasant views across the reservoir. Our thanks go again to Brian Hebditch for arranging the visit which was enjoyed by the eleven members and visitors, including one lady who cycled all the way to and from York to join us!

Treasure Found in Strensall



Did you know that Strensall hid a treasure trove? On the evening of 29 June, The Huntington Hunters, aka Doreen Agar and Christine Price, were the winning team in the Treasure Hunt around Strensall. They were followed by the Red Hot Nannas from Haxby, and then the First Timers, formed by the Joblings and granddaughter Charlotte. The route and the 27 clues along it were devised by Society Member Stephen Whetstone who himself lives in Strensall.

The competitors completed the course in about an hour, and as well as having their powers of observation tested, learned some interesting things along the way, such as the identity of the little

old man with a walking stick seen near the school and the abundance of lions on the front of the library.

The Hunt was followed by a pleasant meal at The Ship Inn and requests for another Treasure Hunt soon. Would any of our readers like to suggest, or, even better, plan one for 2013?

June Card

Where is this?



This picture was taken on the Foss - but do you know where it is?

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A glowing bullfinch

Like so many of us, our photographer, Tony Ellis of News Earswick, has found this summer's weather a challenge. But, as always, he has caught vignettes of the wildlife near his local Foss



One of the many bees seen this summer

A summer of photography

A cheeky robin carrying an insect in his beak



This two-headed monster is actually two insects mating!



A multiplicity of bees feeding from - oh dear - Japanese knotweed



Coming in to land on lovely summer flowers

Without Reservation

We were lucky to have a warm Spring evening on 22 May, when we visited two local nature reserves. We first walked round the New Earswick Nature Reserve and Triangular Flower Meadow led by Mr Brian Jardine. This reserve was created from a former brick works which in the 1930's used local clay to make the bricks to build many of the houses in the area. Its main feature is the Brick Pond, now well stocked with fish; the foundations of the brick kiln can still be seen in the undergrowth. This very interesting reserve is criss-crossed with footpaths.

Although we could have spent more time there, we next visited Sessions Nature Reserve, another hidden gem. It is very interesting as it surrounds a bend in the river Foss and is full of unusual species of trees and shrubs

Photograph unavailable

Fishing at the New Earswick Nature Reserve

providing an ideal habitat for birds and wildlife. Greenfinches were calling and a tree creeper was seen, whilst a great spotted woodpecker posed on a building nearby.

Our thanks go to our Founder Member Bill Sessions for allowing us to spend the remainder of the evening in his very delightful reserve.

John Millett

A lovely day was had by all

After almost 40 years of the RFS organising nearly every event in some way related to the River Foss, a suggestion was made for a visit to the Yorkshire Waterways Museum, part of the Sobriety Project, in Old Goole.

So on 30 May a well supported visit was made. Most visitors started with a walk on the Trail alongside the Dutch River, returning to the Museum along the Aire & Calder Navigation (canal). Following an introductory talk about the Museum, we enjoyed a cold buffet.

The party then split into two groups, one group looking round the Museum whilst the other group went on a boat, "Telephon Louise", round Goole Docks. This trip was subject to shipping movements in the Docks, and permission for the first trip was granted only ten minutes beforehand. The alternative would have been a trip along the Navigation. The roles of the two groups were then reversed.

The weather was excellent and the only vessel missing was "Wheldale", a compartment boat tug, which was on its way to take part in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Pageant on the River Thames.

Returning from the visit to Goole, eleven members made an impromptu visit to the Derwent Tidal Barrage and Lock at Barmby on the Marsh. The River Derwent is the next main river to join the River Ouse downstream of the River Foss doing so at York.

The Environment Agency built this Barrage and Lock in 1975 so that the waters of the River Derwent are separated from the tidal River Ouse, preventing the tidal water polluting the water extraction plant on the Derwent at Loftsome Bridge.

Just as the high tide turned, Martin, one of the two Barrier/Lock controllers, gave up his own time to explain and show the Control Room and operation of the sluice gates and lock to the appreciative group, one of whose members had previously taken a boat through without having "seen things from above". It is hoped to incorporate a future organised visit with a walk in the area.

Peter Hopwood



Top two photos: Enjoying the cruise



Above: A Thames Pilot boat ended up here



Below: A good chat in the cafe

Left: A sight along the dock