



# On the Foss

The River Foss Society Newsletter

Spring  
2011



*A stunning visitor to the Foss (main)*

*Getting to know the locals (inset)*

## Winter Wonders

After one of the coldest winters we have experienced for some time, bird life along the river appears to be getting back to normal, although some folk have mentioned a shortage of small birds, wrens, tits etc. Sad to say, many of these birds might not have survived the extreme temperatures.

On 27th December, near Strensall, I saw an adult and juvenile swan feeding in the river. They seemed to be coping rather well as most of the water was completely frozen over. A week later it was a totally different story; the adult bird was struggling with a damaged wing and was duly reported to the RSPCA, whilst the juvenile bird was found dead lying near an overhead power line, its carcass a very sorry sight, probably having been ravaged by foxes.

Three Goosander were seen near New Earswick and an exotic bird was seen amongst Mallard at Huntington. This turned out to be a North American Wood Duck (above), probably an escapee from a private collection and not likely to be a wild bird. This extremely attractive, photogenic bird had several people searching their field guides to identify it.

*John Millett*

## Out and About

Autumn 2010 walks took society members on the final legs (5 and 6) of the Foss Walk.



Ten walkers started Walk 5 at Coxwold and walked to Easingwold on a glorious day.



*Setting off from Coxwold*



*Regular walkers at Strensall's 'Old Humpy'*

Twelve people joined Walk 6 from Towthorpe Bridge to Sheriff Hutton on another fine day. Some walkers finished with a meal at the Highwayman, Sheriff Hutton.

# What's happening this spring



## Saturday 12th March 10.00 am Foss Walk 1

Easingwold to Coxwold. For details see Programme sent out in January or phone Walks Leader Bob Jowett on 01904 764702

## Tuesday 5th April 7.00 pm, Strensall & Towthorpe Village Hall.

Adrian Lovett will speak on "Horse-Drawn Boats Past and Present", followed by refreshments and the AGM and the annual election..

**ELECTION TIME!** The present members of the Committee are willing to stand again but would welcome a transfusion of new blood. Speak to any one of them if you are interested - don't wait to be asked!

## Wednesday 13th April 10.00am Foss Walk 2

Coxwold to Yearsley via the Source of the River Foss. Distance 5.5 miles. Meet just east of Yearsley Village where the Brandsby-Ampleforth and Coulton-Yearsley roads cross (Grid Ref 587745) and let Bob know if you are coming on 01904 764702.

## Saturday 30th April

Please Note: Owing to major stabilisation works in the Foss Basin, the Inland Waterways Association Open Day (which the River Foss Society tries to support) cannot now take place at Castle Mills Lock. Arrangements are in hand for an alternative venue on the same date at Marygate Landing between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm, when you may still be able to enjoy river trips, though not necessarily into the Foss.

## Tuesday 10th May 6.30 to 8.00 pm

Visit to Professor Fitter's Garden. As numbers are limited, names of those wishing to go will be taken at the AGM and, if necessary, a ballot will be held.

## Wednesday 25th May 6.30 pm

Walk around Strensall lasting about an hour and a half, led by John Millett. Park in the car park at 'The Ship' in the village at 6.30 pm. If you plan to join us in the pub for a meal after the walk (optional), please come early to put your order in.

## Thursday 9th June 11.30 am

Visit with picnic lunch to two historic churches on the Foss Walk. Meet on Farlington Green (Grid Ref. 615675) for an 11.45 am talk on Farlington Church by Churchwarden Ramsey McCleary. We will leave at 12.15 pm and make our way by car to nearby Marton-in-the-Forest Church where we will eat our picnic either outside, or, if it is raining, inside the Church. Our hosts will be Sally Cromer (Churchwarden) and Hilary Clough-Smith. Please note that there are no toilets!

## Tuesday 14th June 11.00 am Foss Walk 3

Foss Walk 3 from Yearsley to Crayke (Mill Green) with picnic lunch at Pond Head Reservoir. Distance 4 miles. Meet in the car park at the Dutch House (Grid Ref. 567715) where tea or coffee will be available at the end of the walk. As usual, please let Bob know if you are coming.

## A New Existence

Readers may remember that an injured otter found alive opposite Lock Cottage in July 2009 died after vets tried to save it. The body was sent for post mortem to Cardiff University's Otter Project, CUOP which studies the potential link between declining otter populations and pesticides.

Dr Liz Chadwick, CUOP's manager, reported that as an externally undamaged specimen, he was selected for taxidermy and would be used in events starting with National Science Week in March 2010. Groups of school children visited the Cardiff School of Biosciences and took



*The New Earswick otter and the Welsh cub as they are now*

part in workshops based on the otter work and other projects.

The children were enchanted by the otters ('ours' and a Welsh cub), and were surprised and saddened to be told how many otters, like the New Earswick one, are killed on roads.

As a follow-up to Science Week, the scientists at CUOP asked the schools to send suggestions of names for the otters, so our local boy will even be named! It's great to know that something so positive can come out of a loss which saddened us and school children so far away.

# Someone was listening!



Why would anyone want to buy something they already own? - the question raised at a packed public meeting in York on 12<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the Government's proposals to sell parts of England's public forest estate. Happily the Government has listened to the tide of protest and has decided against a total sell-off. The sale of 15% of the estate will still go ahead, but not until an independent advisory panel has reported on the future of public forests. So it may yet be useful to record some of the points made at the meeting by the many speakers representing national, local and individual interests. They included our own David Nunns speaking for the Ramblers' Association.

Who would be in a position to buy the forests (including some of the woods around the source of the Foss)? Ideally they would be bought by publicly accountable bodies with strong local connections but neither charities nor local communities would be able to raise the purchase price and the running costs. That would leave, as potential buyers, bankers looking for something to do with their bonuses and the international logging companies.

At present, the Forestry Commission controls 15% of England's forests but 50% of the publicly accessible forest. Nobody believed that the safeguards on access to be written into the 150-year leases of the new owners would be enforceable. The sell-off would exacerbate the fragmentation of natural habitats threatening wildlife. No provision had been made for the management of tree disease such as that damaging our oaks and chestnuts.

In fact, who better than the Forestry Commission to manage our forests? It ran a commercial business in a way that was increasingly beneficial to the environment. It supported small woods such as Hagg Wood at Dunnington as well as large forests. It had a fund

of expertise that it gladly made available to, for example, bird watchers and archaeologists. It was contributing to flood management around Pickering. And all this at a cost of only 30p a year per head of population.

The Government's own assessments had shown that the costs of privatisation would outweigh the benefits. The Forestry Commission had been set up to ensure an adequate supply of the country's timber needs. Wood for ammunition boxes might no longer be high on the list, but who could foresee what the requirements might be in 50 years' time? It was vital that the ability to respond should remain in public ownership.

For the moment the crisis is over but DEFRA's budget is to be cut by 30%. We must be alive to the effects of the cuts on our forests, waterways, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

We have been invited to join a ramble in Dalby Forest on Sunday 20 March from 11.00 am. This is to mark World Forest Day, 21 March 2011. Foresters will lead groups on the walk and demonstrate examples of good forestry practice. This starts at Dalby Forest Visitor Centre, (plenty of car parking, toilets and refreshment facilities). It can be reached via Pickering on the A169 Pickering to Whitby road. Brown tourist signs lead the way from Pickering and further information is available at [www.forestry.gov.uk/dalbyforest](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/dalbyforest). Please let me know if you want to attend as soon as possible.

*June Card*

## All hands to the pumps?

The Cobb's Cottage pumping station continues to be a contamination problem - it again overflowed raw sewage into the Foss on the 12th and 24th of January. However, we have been informed by Yorkshire Water Authority (YWA) that plans are at an advanced stage to convert this plant to automatic control and that this work will be complete by the end of February.

It is hoped that this modification will reduce the chance of contamination.

In the meantime, the Society has objected to a Planning Application to build an additional sewage pumping unit at Strensall Camp until such time that we can be sure the Cobb's Cottage Works can cope with this extra load. We await this outcome with interest.

*John Millett*

**Don't Forget  
our website:**

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

## Rewarding in every way - except the merely financial

That's the job of Secretary of the River Foss Society. With a second retirement age looming, I shall not be standing for re-election as Secretary at the AGM in April and am looking for my successor. Some organisational and basic computer skills would be an advantage. If you are not already interested in the environment, wildlife, walking, history, industrial archaeology, water quality and planning issues, I promise you that you soon will be! And all this in the company of the nicest group of people you could possibly hope to work with, the Committee and Members of the River Foss Society.

We don't always know what talents our Members are hiding under their bushels so please don't wait to be asked if you are interested in this job, or part of it, or can offer your help in some other way. To find out more, give me a ring on 01904 766196 or e-mail me at [junecard@waitrose.com](mailto:junecard@waitrose.com)

*June Card*

## Foss Wildlife

The topic of our October Open Meeting was 'Enhancing Wildlife along the Foss Corridor'. This informative and enjoyable talk was given by Jon Trail, Conservation Project Manager with Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Jon's talk covered in detail how river corridors can be improved for the benefit of wildlife and spoke of similar work that had been carried out on the River Wiske. He also spoke of the dreaded Himalayan Balsam, that invasive wild plant which is taking over our hedgerows and river banks. To quote Jon, "Bees love it, cattle eat it, nothing grows under it". He also explained how to deal with this plant. We hope to put his advice into practice on June 18th.

## 2011 Yearly Subscription

Thanks to the members who have already paid this year's subscription. The Committee will be recommending to the AGM that the rates for 2011 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 the 'RIVER FOSS SOCIETY' and send to the Membership Secretary, 147 York Road, Haxby, York YO32 3EU. Alternatively, please make payment direct to the Society's bank account: HSBC account no. 51349538, sort code 40-47-31. If you use the BACs system, please put your name in the reference box. Any queries to 01904 768071 or e-mail: [chrisandpete@haxby147.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:chrisandpete@haxby147.fsnet.co.uk). Your Membership Card will be sent as a receipt.

*Peter Hopwood*

## Strensall Conservation Area

Comments were invited from the River Foss Society on the Draft Conservation Area Appraisals for Strensall, Strensall Railway Buildings and Towthorpe, which deal mainly with places of architectural or historic significance.

We supported the suggestion that the listing of Strensall New Bridge ("Old Humpy") should be extended to include the associated lock walls visible along the River. These date from the time of the Foss Navigation Company when two other locks, the one just north of the John

Carr Bridge and the double lock further upstream, were also constructed. We suggested that the remains of the latter two should also be included in the Conservation Area, and possibly the former towpath, now part of the Foss Walk, that linked them.

RFS Members Tony Berry and Chris Dunn are surveying the Foss Navigation. They have already given us one fascinating talk on their work and have promised us an update as soon as the weather permits them to continue their research.

## Well done, Huntington!

Huntington Parish Council has opened up another small area of riverbank just south of the ring road. This connects by footpath with the existing environmental park and the open space, abundant with snowdrops at this time of year, nearly opposite the Church.

Congratulations to the Parish Council on the way that it has steadily improved both banks of the River Foss, creating a green and peaceful circular walk between the Church and the ring road.

June Card, Secretary      Tel 01904 766196  
Stable Mews, The Old Village  
Huntington, York YO32 9RA  
e-mail: [junecard@waitrose.com](mailto:junecard@waitrose.com)