

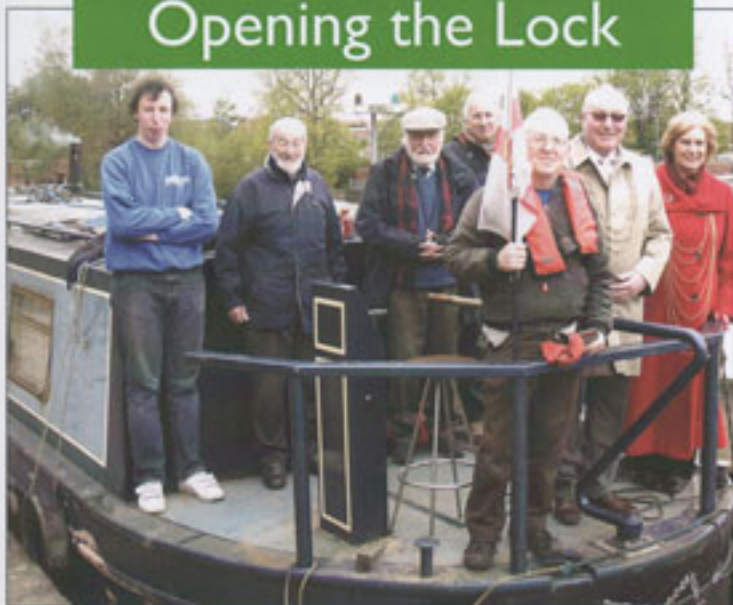


On the Foss

The River Foss Society Newsletter

Summer
2012

Opening the Lock



Skipper Michael Cadoux (front) and his crew take The Lord Mayor of York, David Horton, and Lady Mayoress Jane Horton cruising on the Foss. Our Chairman John Millett is at the right hand side of the back row.

The lock is now open! After nearly a year of closure due to the stabilisation work at Castle Mills, the one remaining working lock on the Foss is open to boats again. Lord Mayor David Horton and Lady Mayoress Jane Horton joined River Foss Society members and other guests to celebrate at the long awaited Open Day at Castle Mills Lock on 5 May.

Moon River, a broad beam boat belonging to Michael Cadoux, chairman of our local Inland Waterways Association, travelled up the Foss for about an hour with the Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress and some of the 30 or 40 people attending.

Boat owners can travel through Castle Mills Lock provided they give the lock-keeper Tony Martin and his team of ten volunteer lock openers two days' notice.

Pleasure trips for the public will be available during York's Festival of Rivers in July.

Grounds for Action



Working in the shadow of the Castle.

Members who attended last year's Christmas lunch will remember the very interesting talk given to us by Angela Green, the landscape architect chosen to design and activate refurbishment of the grounds and riverside around Castle Museum and Raindale Mill. Initiated by York Museums Trust with CYC support, the project will regenerate this part of the riverside, and includes removal of undergrowth and bushes from the river bank as well as installation of a path and seating along the Castle Walls.

On 10th and 24th March a number of members volunteered to take part in planting trees, shrubs and flowers in the rockery garden which forms part of

the improvements. Among the shrubs and trees planted were a rare Black Poplar tree and Tansy plants donated by Will and Christine Durrant. We also cleared rubbish and litter from the river bank beside Raindale Mill.

A visit is planned to the garden on Tuesday 18th September (see Events) and all members are welcome. It will be interesting to see the garden in full bloom, and as a result of placing Will's plants, we might also see the elusive and secretive Tansy beetle!

John Millett



Planting the new rockery by Raindale Mill



Summer's Here

For events in June,
see Spring Newsletter

park at 10 am. A light lunch
will be available afterwards
at the Coxwold Tea Rooms.

Further details from Bob Jowett: 01904 764702.

Thursday July 5th

Afternoon litter pick with the Rotary Club of York Vikings. Meet at 2 pm on the uppermost level of Sainsbury's car park, Foss Bank. Collect free parking permits from Customer Services from 1.30 pm onwards – say you are taking part in the litter pick. Gardening clothes and gloves advisable, equipment provided. Come and help smarten up the River Foss for the Festival of the Rivers. It would be helpful to have names in advance to June: 01904 766196.

Sunday July 8th

Dragon Boat Race Day. Visit the River Foss Society's stand at this all-day enjoyable charitable event on the banks of the Ouse between Lendal Bridge and Scarborough Bridge.

Wednesday July 11th

EXTERMINATE! Volunteers, please, to strike a blow at the dreaded Himalayan Balsam. It seems to be not quite so rampant this year so we might just get on top of it. Meet at the car park at Huntington Church at 9.30 am well covered up in old clothes and gloves and if possible bring a cutting tool such as a hoe. For further information phone June on 01904 766196.

Thursday July 12th & Wednesday 18th July

River Trips – see insert

Monday 6th August

Circular Walk of about 5 miles from Coxwold via Hushwaite. Meet at the Coxwold Village Hall car

Wednesday August 22nd

Visit to Pond Head Reservoir, (from where the flow of the River Foss is regulated) with Brian Hebditch, Senior Flood Risk Engineer, City of York Council. Please note that there is no parking at Pond Head Farm or the approach road to it, so we will meet at 10.15 am just east of Yearsley Village where the Brandsby-Ampleforth and the Coulton-Yearsley roads cross (grid Ref. 587745) to arrange transport. Bring a picnic lunch and please let June know in advance if you are coming: 01904 766196.

Friday 14th September

Walk from Marton Church to Mill Green, followed by the famous Dutch House Salad Lunch (£7) for which non-walkers will be most welcome to join us. Walkers meet at 10 am in the car park at the Dutch House, about a mile east of Crayke on the Brandsby road. Please tell Bob Jowett (01904 764702) by Wednesday 12th September if you are coming – lunch orders essential!

Tuesday 18th September

Visit to York Castle (admission free) for a talk on the strategic importance of the River Foss and an opportunity to see the progress of the improvements to the river bank. A room has been reserved at the Masons Arms for those wishing to have lunch afterwards – small portions available! Names, please, to June: 01904 766196.

Details of the October Events and the Christmas Lunch will be in the Autumn Newsletter.

Our 'Photographer in Residence', Tony Ellis, has been busy as always during the last few months

Right: lovely catkins herald spring

Below: A male waterhen feeds his partner and chicks in the nest later swept away by the flooded foss. The young were later seen on the river, but their fate is unknown.

Spring
with
Tony



Right: A Greater Spotted Woodpecker, a Foss nester, visits Tony's garden frequently.



The Walking Season Begins ...



Checking the way: some of the 23 walkers who met to kick off the 2012 walking season on 21 March. This walk from Lilling to Farlington, following the Foss, passed Foss House near West Lilling, whose owner told us it had been a Quaker Meeting House in the eighteenth century. Afterwards, we enjoyed lunch at the Blacksmiths' Arms, Farlington. A great start to a season of interesting walks covering the river and areas nearby.



May 16 dawned warm and dry, ideal for this year's Walk 3. This followed a circular route starting at the Dutch House Farm restaurant near Mill Green. Nine walkers covered an easy 5 miles including Pond Head and Oulston Reservoir. John Millett led this section, talking about the reservoir, dam and tunnel, all essential to the Foss. Moving through a forest track, we turned south to retrace our steps to Dutch House Farm for a much-enjoyed meal.



Following their presentation of 18 April updating Society members on their survey of the River Foss Navigation, Chris Dunn and Tony Berry led 16 members on a two mile walk from Yearsley Bridge to Huntington on 28 April.

Walking a recently flooded towpath, still covered in silt in some places, Chris and Tony showed us the remains of the canal mechanism along the way and explained how locks, bypasses and weirs worked. Much of this was a revelation to many of us.



Walkers also saw the Foss in full spate – nature to be respected! Having dealt with tricky footing and intermittent showers on a very cool day we were all delighted to sit down to lunch in the cosy Flag and Whistle pub, Huntington.

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In February, a complaint from a Rowntrees' Wharf resident appeared in the *York Press* about the state of the Foss in the City. After discussion, the City of York Council agreed to lend us the manned litter boat often seen moored near the River Foss Nature Reserve. Our first cooperative litter clearing session was held on 24 March, with 14 members working alongside Julian Dawson of the CYC.

Julian Dawson worked with us again. Unfortunately neither a lightweight long-handled rake nor a smaller net had been supplied, as we suggested after our previous session. Julian did bring his own rake and a long handled net which unfortunately broke quickly!

Julian brought good news too: he and colleagues had

Low Down and Dirty

Julian was extremely helpful, both with the boat and showing us how to grab the rubbish. Two teams worked – one clearing the river from the Foss Islands Nature Reserve down to Castle Mills Lock, and another clearing the Nature Reserve itself. We cleared most of the accessible bank down to Blue Bridge including the Castle Mills Lock area, collecting over 30 bags of rubbish, four lifebuoys, a car wheel and much more! The only area that we could not reach was the waterway entrance into the Nature Reserve. We were also encouraged and cheered by the bank-side interest shown.

This first session taught us a lot. We became more familiar with the CYC boat and also made a request for equipment which would be useful on the boat.

Although not so many volunteers helped on 26 May, we did clear the river and banks from the foot/cycle bridge over Huntington Road downstream to Blue Bridge. Not as much litter was taken, but we did manage to clear 17 sacks, 3 life buoys, 1 wheel (again!), 1 holdall/case, a 6 ft. car section, and many other delights.



Flying the flag for River Foss Society on 24 March

cleared the entrance to the Foss Islands Nature Reserve, and a lifebuoy previously trapped at the Castle Mills Lock screen had been removed. His efforts and the cooperation of the CYC have really helped to get this project going. We're proud that our objective – to keep the Foss cleaner – is on the way to being achieved.

However, we cannot hang up our work clothes just yet, for Thursday 5 July will see the Society again cooperating with the Rotary Club of York Vikings on the now annual litter pick. (More details in Events.)

The exhibition, 'Views of York' at Fairfax House until 31st August, celebrates the last 400 years of the City's history. It includes several paintings of the River Foss. Among them, a watercolour of 1790 by William Payne shows the old hump-backed Monk Bridge with its three pointed arches which 'collapsed during demolition in 1794 by the Foss Navigation Company, which planned to open up the River for commercial use.' In the foreground, a sack-laden farmer's cart heads out of the City. In the background are several identifiable Monkgate buildings including the Grey Coat School for Girls, established in 1705.

One of three watercolours by John

Picture Perfect

Varley, 'A View on the River Foss', dated about 1803, depicts a sailing barge making its way downstream. It is about to pass under the walls of the Female Prison and will soon enter the lock at Castle Mills, recently installed by the Foss Navigation Company.

'The Minster from Layerthorpe Bridge', painted by Frank Harris in 1900, shows the single-spanned bridge that in 1829 had replaced the

earlier five-arched bridge in order to allow access to Peasholme Green and the Haymarket for boats that could lower their masts.

A star of the show is the J M W Turner watercolour, 'Early Morning on the Foss', painted in 1800, probably from a viewpoint near the present Yearsley Bridge. In the distance the Minster shimmers in a pearly mist while in the foreground, in the golden-pink light of dawn, a couple of boats are reflected in the calm waters of the Foss.

These are only four of well over one hundred exhibits. You have until 31st August to see them all for yourselves!