



Autumn Cleaning

On 17 October, 11 volunteers for litter picking turned up at the meeting point on Foss Islands Road; the weather was dry with the temperature well above the norm for the time of year.

Two of the team were allocated to the boat and pontoon which readily set off upstream to Layerthorpe Bridge. The rest of the group was split up and directed to litter pick along the banks and surrounding areas downstream to Blue Bridge. As usual, the heaviest polluted areas were at Castle Mills Lock and the Castle Car Park.

We ultimately met up with the boat at Castle Mills Lock, and collectively we had filled some 14 bin bags. The members on the boat, assisted by Skipper Mark, had filled two large builders' bags. Their prize catch was an old half sunken canoe which was retrieved and landed at the Lock side.

The Society achieved good publicity as a result of wearing our RFS tabards as we walked from point to point. We also enjoyed some friendly banter with visitors to our City. My thanks to those who helped on the day.

Barry Thomas



Above: A good morning's work. On the far left is CYC Councillor Denise Craghill, who joined the litter pick.

Below: Anyone lost a canoe?



At our October meeting, held at Strensall Village Hall, we were very fortunate to have two excellent speakers from the Environment Agency, David Barber and Martin Fuller. They spoke about invasive plant species on the Foss, speaking at length on the problems of eradicating the dreaded Himalayan Balsam. They confirmed that there are no easy remedies. Several methods have been tried including spraying, but no conclusive remedies



Beating the Invaders

have been found to rid us of this troublesome weed. Removing Japanese Knotweed was also discussed; this presents a much more difficult problem as it has to be removed and disposed of by specialist teams.

The problem of coming into contact with Giant Hogweed was graphically illustrated by photos of the severe rash and abrasions to the skin which can occur.

A familiar foe — Himalayan Balsam

Fortunately there is a limited amount of this plant along the Foss corridor.

The subject of dead fish found in the Foss was brought up, and Martin promised to notify their expert to carry out an investigation. A report is eagerly awaited.

The result of our water sampling at six locations along the Foss over the last four months was presented as a table top display showing nitrate and phosphate levels. Members found this very interesting.

The meeting was well attended and the speakers were warmly thanked for their presentation.

John Millett



Into 2018

MARCH

Saturday 10th March Walk 1: Farlington via Whenby. Meet in the car park of the Blacksmiths Arms, Farlington for a 9.30 start. Contact: Bob Jowett.

APRIL

Wednesday 11th April City Walk and talk led by Neil Moran. Meet at Exhibition Square at 2.30. Contact: Mike Gray.

Saturday 14th April Walk 2: Evening walk, Beningbrough Hall. Meet at Hall Gates, Newton on Ouse for a 6.00 pm start. Contact: Carol Carr.

Tuesday 17 April Walk 3: Sheriff Hutton via Stittenham. Meet in lay-by by Sheriff Hutton roundabout for a 9.30 start. Contact: Bob Jowett.

Wednesday 18 April AGM and talk by Ross Lilley of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. Meet at 7.00 pm at Strensall Village Hall.

Saturday 28 April Litter pick along the Foss. Meet at 9.15 at the footbridge across from Morrisons. Contact: Barry Thomas.

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You'll find a full list of events on the sheet enclosed with this issue, and of course, in the Events calendar on our website

Footpath News

Land slippages have caused two areas of the Foss Walk to be closed with alternatives.

Lock House, Strensall

The Centenary Way footpath from the Sheriff Hutton Road Bridge leading to Lock House has been closed because of land slippage as it passes Lock House. For the alternative routes to Lilling Green and beyond you can use the footpath via Duncombe Farm, off the Sheriff Hutton Road. Alternatively, you can use the Foss Walk/Ebor Way footpath running parallel to the railway, Walbutt's Farm and crossing the Foss by the iron foot bridge.

Foss Walk south of the former Tannery site

This footpath, approximately 100 metres downstream of the former Tannery site, has become difficult to use because of a landslip. An alteration to this part of the path is planned, by-passing this section and connecting it to New Lane. Work is currently in progress.

John Millett

An eye on the waters



This past autumn a new rain monitoring station

was installed by the Environment Agency in the village of Yearsley, 30 miles north of York as well as a river level monitoring station at Lower Lilling farm, north of Strensall.

These two monitoring stations will automatically feed information into the EA's systems and forecast for the River Foss, supporting a better understanding of the amount of water flowing down the river towards York.

Flood duty officers will be able to issue flood warnings with more confidence and with more accurate information included within the warning messages.

Communing with nature



A green woodpecker. Photo by Charles J Sharp, from Sharp Photography

Eight members visited the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust North Cave Wetlands reserve on 7 November and were rewarded by seeing 24 species of birds including winter visitors such as wigeon, teal, pochard and gadwall.

Other birds seen were snipe, great crested grebe and little egret. It was also rewarding to see a large flock of approximately 1000 lapwing; this bird has suffered significant decline and is on the "Red List of Conservation Concern". We also had a very good view of an adult green woodpecker, ground feeding just 20 feet in front of the hide.

Rain was forecast on this grey morning and it duly arrived at 11.30am. We made our way to the on-site mobile café and enjoyed hot drinks and delicious bacon and sausage filled rolls before we headed home after an interesting morning of bird watching.

John Millett

On 18 September 2017 eleven members arrived at the Yorkshire Waterways Museum (YWM) at Goole in good time (thank you again!) to look around the Museum and see the various moored boats. We then had a brief but interesting talk by Clare explaining how The Sobriety Project had been set up in 1973 (like the RFS!) as a charity to use the Yorkshire Waterways Museum, vessels, nature trail, community gardens, healthy eating cafe and allotments as resources for personal development and training for disadvantaged people in a deprived community. The free entry YWM, depicting the History and Industry of the Port Town of Goole, is part of the project. Previous RFS trips have involved going on trips round Goole Docks on "Telethon Louise", "Wheldale" and "Waterstart".

Other trips away from Goole have been on the broadbeam boat "Waterstart" but this trip starting from Goole on "Waterstart" enabled a buffet lunch to be provided on board by the YWM cafe.

Travelling west on the Aire and Calder Navigation (Knottingley and Goole Canal) after 8 miles, "Waterstart" turned south west onto the New Junction Canal, another straight section but this time with a few more road bridges, lift bridges and Sykehouse Lock to add interest. After a further 5¼ miles "Waterstart" turned about 150 degrees anticlockwise and easterly onto the Sheffield and South Yorkshire Canal (River Don Navigation) heading towards Keadby and the River Trent. After passing through Bramwith Lock, under the M18 again and through Thorne Lock and Swingbridge, "Waterstart" moored up by Thorne Bridge after a further 2¾ miles. The YWM minibus then soon had us back on the M62 to Goole.

Among the many other boats we saw moving was a narrowboat named "Aire today, Don tomorrow" – a reminder of this and other RFS waterway trips! Though birdlife was somewhat limited, the wide waterways were generally clear of litter and views varied from vast flat countryside to tree lined banks. Various members had a go on the tiller and some went ashore at the lift and swing bridges and locks. The weather was kind for mid-September, and the buffet lunch and updating monitor displayed map were appreciated.

Thanks again to all those at the YWM for another successful trip and an increased appreciation of the wonderful work being done under The Sobriety Project.

Peter Hopwood



Along the Aire on Waterstart



Top: Waterstart below Bramwith Lock

Centre: "Reklaw", once Walker's sand barge on the Foss and now a houseboat

Bottom: Through a lift bridge

“Not many people know this, but...” The River Foss Society keeps a watching brief over planning applications and policies going before City of York Council, to make sure that the interests of the river and its wildlife are at least properly represented. That’s not to say that the eventual decisions always go as we would like! For a long time, this job in the Society fell to June Card, who discharged it with great ability; but since our last AGM, the role has been taken over by Mark Gladwin.

The year 2017 was a very busy one on the planning front. The Minerals and Waste Joint Plan from CYC, NYCC and the NY Moors National Park Authority raised the thorny issue of fracking and its implications for the Foss corridor. We decided that on the narrow issue of protection for the river, the proposed safeguards were sufficient. The massive Hungate development in central York rolled on, including plans for treatment of the river bank, which turned out to be satisfactory. York Council started work on plans for a major transformation of the Castle area, and the Society has been deeply involved in the ensuing “My Castle Gateway” consultation. (The findings are very positive for the Foss - but will they become reality?)

Less welcome were two applications from commercial



Wonderful sunny weather for walking

perfect for walking with good visibility and little wind. We headed to Launds Farm, avoiding the road. The path - marked by traffic cones mounted on poles - crossed a ploughed field which proved to be difficult walking.

After Seavers Farm we crossed the Stillington Road towards Brandsby where we stopped for morning coffee. We then followed the path through a plantation of mis-

Don't forget - River Foss Society is on Facebook too!

developers for properties along the Foss in Piccadilly: one for a hotel and apartments on the NCP car park site, and one for a residential conversion of Ryedale House. The Society objected strongly to both applications because they fail to allow, and in one case actively prevent, the building of an east bank riverside walkway. At the time of writing, one of these applications has been approved and our objection overruled. We await the second decision without much hope.

But let’s end on an optimistic note! Along with Strensall Parish Council, the Society’s objections helped to secure the withdrawal of an application for a new build house on a greenfield site next to the river, which would not only have destroyed a significant wildlife habitat, but ran the risk of allowing partially treated sewage effluent to leak into the Foss. That’s a result we can feel pleased about as we face the prospect of another year of planning challenges!

The River Foss Society encourages all members to take an interest in planning proposals affecting the wellbeing of the river, and to comment and object if they are concerned. The City of York Council planning web pages are not too hard to navigate and can be found at

https://www.york.gov.uk/homepage/34/planning_and_building

If you have any queries, I will do my best to answer them at markgladwin@ntlworld.com

Mark Gladwin

An autumn walk

An avenue of energy crop miscanthus



canthus, an energy crop used to generate electricity in power stations. After the Crayke Road we headed up a hill, following the track to Beckfield Farm, where we joined the Foss Walk.

After walking past Woodfield Farm and Mill Green we joined the road back to Crayke, where some walkers enjoyed excellent refreshments at the Durham Ox.

Bob Jowett

On the Foss

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