



Locked Out

Over the last four years boat passage through Castle Mills Lock and the centre of York has been a rare sight! During that time, thanks to the considerable help of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA), a formalised "Memorandum of Understanding" was agreed between the IWA and City of York Council (CYC), the Navigation Authority for the lower River Foss, so that CYC trained voluntary lockkeepers can operate the Lock. The River Foss Society (RFS) is an interested and supportive party.

Accessing the River Foss as far as Wormald's Cut has been added to the IWA's Silver Propeller Challenge – a challenge to interested waterway users to reach more remote parts of the system. Locally, Ripon and the Melbourne Arm on the Pocklington Canal are other challenges.

Voluntary lockkeepers, mainly from the IWA and RFS, have been trained by CYC (and some retrained due to a lack of practical opportunity). Lack of opportunity has been caused by Covid restrictions and stoppages last year by CYC work on Blue Bridge and Environment Agency (EA) work on the Foss Barrier. Another problem can be water level in the River Foss – too much rain and flooding or too little – both preventing use of the Lock.

However, better things were anticipated in 2022! On 6 July narrowboat *Water Routes* returned after being refused passage through the Lock almost exactly four years earlier. This had been a big disappointment as *Water Routes* films its travels and produces DVDs and Maps. Fortunately, lockkeepers Tim, Michael and Neil



Above: "Water Routes" in Castle Mills Lock 6 July 2022



Left: Lockkeepers Neil Ogley, Tim Rane and Michael Alexander with "Water Routes" in Castle Mills Lock

were available at short notice and were offered a trip for their efforts. "Water Routes" reached Huntington Road but required use of the bow thruster to

help reverse all the way back to Wormald Cut before being able to turn round. The trip was much appreciated and enjoyed. At the time of writing three more boats in July and two in August requested passage which had to be refused because of the low (negligible!) flow – probably only



"Water Routes" under Castle Mills Bridge returning to the lock



Approaching Wormald's Cut

being the discharge from Yorkshire Water's Wallbuts treatment plant.

All over the country there are stoppages due to low flow. The EA have had pumps pumping from River Ouse level in the Foss Basin/Browney Dyke from below the Lock round the EA's swivelling/rotating weir in the by-pass channel in order to maintain an acceptable level in the River Foss, which is not helped by licensed extraction above Strensall.

Peter Hopwood



Into Autumn

OCTOBER

Sat 15 Oct 9.00 am Litter pick along the Foss. Meet at footbridge on Foss Islands Road across from Morrisons. Contact Barry in advance if you are coming so he can plan the morning. Contact: Barry Thomas

Wed 19 Oct 7.00 pm Open Meeting at Strensall Village Hall. Talk by Andrew Morrison, CEO of York Civic Trust on "A small bridge to a powerful past on River Foss". Refreshments afterwards. Contact: Mike Gray

DECEMBER

Sun 4 Dec 11:00 am – 2:30 pm Novotel York. RFS Christmas lunch. Lunch preceded by a talk given by our President Alastair Fitter "The campaign to save Askham Bog – lessons learned".

Pre-booking is essential and will open at the meeting on 19 October, when a menu will be available. Thereafter booking will be via events@riverfossociety.co.uk Contact: Mike Gray

CONTACTS:

Mike Gray events@riverfossociety.co.uk
(preferred) 07596 366342

Barry Thomas barry1thomas@googlemail.com
01904 490081

York Walls Festival

Once again, the River Foss Society had a stall as part of this year's second York Walls Festival on 13 and 14 August. This was during the heat wave and we found the shade of the gazebo and a large umbrella very helpful.

As always, the trays of macroinvertebrates pulled out of the river by Andy Mulholland proved to be very popular, attracting adults and children alike. Although the large amount of duckweed covering the river made dipping more difficult, Andy managed to get some excellent samples.

Our member Barbara Hilton, a retired freshwater biologist, manned the table and introduced visitors to some of our smaller but essential friends.



Barbara introduces a young visitor to some of the residents of the River Foss.



Above: Andy Mulholland

Right: Mayfly (top) and freshwater hoglice



Below: greater waterboatman



On the morning of 8 July, two walkers set out from Blue Bridge to be joined by seven other human walkers and Branston the terrier at All Saints Church Huntington. It was a dry and warm day and the lower reaches of the Foss seemed sluggish with vegetation often encroaching. The Fairy Walk was intact.

We stopped for refreshments at the Ship Inn, Strensall and had a picnic lunch on the grass by the Village Hall. Progressing on, we noted the flood control engineering works north of Walbutts. We then chose the Blue Route from Lilling Green Farm.

Following afternoon refreshments at Sheriff Hutton, we resumed our walk, noting a general deterioration of path management around Cornborough Manor. Several stiles were broken and at one point, in the absence of a footbridge, we had to scale a gate. We did note some new Foss Walk discs. Farlington was reached in time for an evening meal at the Blacksmith's Arms.

The next day was also blessed with good weather but we had only four walkers. Leaving Farlington, we made good progress to Crayke where we then took the permissive path to Mill Green so as to avoid a section of road walking. We enjoyed lunch at Pond Head. Thus far there were no footpath problems even though the route is little walked.

After a drinks stop and some welcome shade at Oulston we encountered the worst walking conditions of the two days. The path was overgrown along the Kyle and the signage was poor or non-existent. We reached Easingwold by late afternoon and celebrated with a drink at the Angel amidst the music carnival. Looking back over the two days, we had enjoyed this walk but were disappointed to see that some of the upper stretches of the path have not yet received the attention that is planned.

Philip Mander



Part of the team accompanied by Branston

Two days on the footpath



Sheriff Hutton Castle glows in the sunlight



Oh dear – the path seems to have disappeared!



One of the new waymarker discs installed by the River Foss Society

A select group of walkers met outside the Crown and Cushion in Welburn on 11 July for a Monday morning walk in lovely conditions. Heading uphill, towards the church, the walk passed through a crop field nearing readiness for harvest before rewarding our efforts with lovely views across towards Castle Howard. We walked, shaded now by trees, towards Bulmer, turning north again to cross the road to Welburn and heading into a shallow valley between Welburn and Castle Howard.



Enthusiastic walkers

the canine member of the party cooled off with aplomb.

Returning to the main route, we passed through some delightful woodland, across a stream and back via paths to the village, where we enjoyed excellent refreshments at the 'Dogh' café.

Derek Chivers

A Summer of



Very dry fields

A brief encounter with some cows brought us to the edge of Castle Howard's 'false' fortifications, with good views not only of the main house, but also of the Pyramid nearby and the Mausoleum in the distance. A short stretch of road walking led us to a track, which in turn led to another great viewpoint – the bridge over one of the estate's lakes, where



The team

The wonderful hot and sunny weather on 4 August encouraged 18 walkers to turn up at Kirkham Priory to start our 4.5 mile evening stroll.

We walked up the hill, across fields, by a garden where a friendly dog came to say hello, and through the hamlet of Firby. After passing through Westow we headed up the road and back through fields and woods, finishing at the Stone Trough pub where 10 of us enjoyed a drink.

We thoroughly enjoyed beautiful views and weather as well as convivial company.

Anne Bednarski



Mooo-ving right along



Wonderful views



Beautiful country

Wonderful Walking

On 12 August, eight walkers braved the 29^o heat for a stroll starting in Moor Monkton. We walked across fields and down a minor road to the River Ouse, stopping at Red House on the way. Now privately owned by the Gordon family, the house has a chapel, and its cool offered a welcome contrast to the heat outside.



Brave hot weather walkers

Then along the Ouse, passing the flood barrier and pumping station, across more fields and back to the village.

There was little shade on the walk but

we were not too overheated to enjoy a hearty meal of fish and chips at the Wetherby Whaler to finish off the day's exertions!

Anne Bednarski



Looking around the Red House chapel



A narrow Ouse

Christmas is coming!



It's possibly a little early to start thinking about it, but our Christmas lunch is back on the 4th December after a gap of two years! It will, as usual, be at the Novotel on Fishergate and will cost £28 per head.

The talk before the meal will be by our President Alastair Fitter, and is entitled "The Campaign To Save Askham Bog – Lessons Learned" at 11am, with tea and coffee being served from 10.45 am.

For those who have not attended before, it's a convivial occasion and an ideal chance to meet and chat with other members. After the talk we gather in the bar area with canapés and mulled wine on offer before sitting down to a tasty three course lunch.

Pre booking is essential, and will open at the October talk by Andrew Morrison CEO, York Civic Trust, in Strensall village hall. Afterwards booking via events@riverfossociety.co.uk.



Fairy Fingers

Members from the Foss Fairy Trail team joined up with Andy and Tim of the River Foss Society on 3 July for balsam picking. We provided waders, as much of the balsam was at the waterside and inaccessible from the footpath.

We were also joined by Eleanor Sorfleet, Senior Countryside and Ecology Officer of the City of York Council, who kindly gave up a day to help out. She also donned her waders to get stuck in and pull up as much as we could.

Don't forget our website:

www.riverfossociety.co.uk

Lifting loads of litter

On Sunday 14 August, in conjunction with our stall as part of the York Walls Festival, we did a litter pick solely on the river, using the YCC boat/pontoon Foxy, along with its skipper, Mark. On the boat were Louise Woodhall, Tim Rane and myself. The litter pick took place in the afternoon and lasted three hours.

Initially, we were apprehensive about identifying larger items on the river bed due to the excessive amount of duckweed on the surface of the water. This was not the case and we went on to recover three bicycles, one shopping trolley (see photograph), two large traffic cones, a very large wooden notice board and a wireless receiver. Additionally, we also collected litter on the water surface such as tin cans, bottles,



Up it comes! Grabbing a shopping trolley just near our York Walls Festival stall

Tim 'fishes' for bits of metal on the river bottom

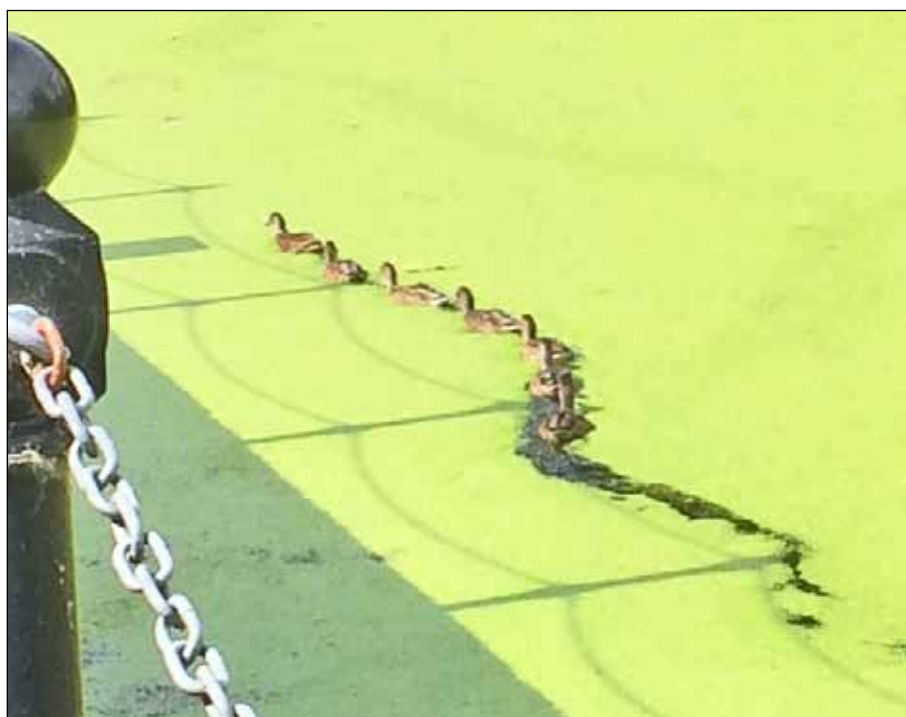


cardboard food trays and other lightweight items.

When we reached the Huntington Road section of the river, we recovered a number of fallen trees which had entered the water, along with overhanging branches that were getting close to the water level. Overall, it was another successful day's work.

Our final litter pick of this year will be held on Saturday 15 October, meeting as usual at 9.00 a.m. on Foss Islands Road. This litter pick will take us downstream to Castle Mills lock, collecting litter from the river banks and the river.

Barry Thomas



Ducks in - what else? - duckweed

These brave waterfowl don't seem to be bothered about the carpet of duckweed currently covering the Foss.



**You can find us on
Twitter @riverfossyork.**

**And, of course,
we are still on
Facebook**



On the Foss

Editor: Beth Shurter
Tel. 01904 631125
email: york.beth2@gmail.com
Secretary: Helen Button
Tel. 01904 658228
email: info@riverfossociety.co.uk
Membership: Christine Gray
Tel. 01904 621808 email: membership@riverfossociety.co.uk