



The River Foss Society has been successful in obtaining a grant from the City of York Council to purchase a picnic table to be installed next to the River Foss at Monkbridge Landing. The location for the picnic table, next to the southern end of Huntington Road in York is shown in the picture.

In our grant application to Guildhall Ward Committee, we stated: "Local residents and passing visitors will benefit from the wildflowers and the extra seating facilities in this small park area and will be able to have a picnic meal or social get together. This will help to make this area a more attractive place for family groups to gather, and for small events to be held. There is already an established community group (Monkbridge Landing) who litter-pick, maintain and garden this area and who have approved this request. Community gatherings and engagement will make for a healthier, more active, more diverse and connected community."

We were asked how we would involve the local community in the project, and we responded: "The Monkbridge Landing Group and/or the River Foss Society will organize periodic events at the site, taking advantage of the picnic bench." We proposed to purchase an octagonal picnic

Let's picnic!

bench made from recycled material. The local councillors on the Guildhall Ward Committee encouraged us to include funding for wildflower seeds and bulbs so that Monkbridge Landing will be a more attractive place for local people and visitors to gather.



The Landing without a picnic table ...



... and the new picnic table now in place

There is an established community group, Monkbridge Landing, who litter pick, maintain and garden this area and they are excited about this funding; they helped with the assembly of the picnic table when it arrived in late April. We have used anchor kits to hold the picnic table securely in place on a level patch of grass, close to the existing litter bins, away from the edge of the River Foss and illuminated by a local street lamp at night.

Roger Pierce, the coordinator of the Monkbridge Landing Group says: "My initial suggestion is that we invest the money [from the Council] in wild daffodil and bluebell bulbs in the autumn and, in the meantime, plugs of

wildflowers (as Prof Alastair Fitter recommended), and a long-handled scythe. The scythe will enable us to mow the Landing as and when we want - rather than rely on the council. St Nicks [will] provide training on scything."

Michael Reakes



Lots to do in Spring

APRIL

Fri 22 April 10.00 am Huntington All Saints Church. River Foss Fairies walk – 4 miles (or 2 if bus service used for return). Refreshments at the Hound Lounge.

Sat 30 Apr - Mon 1 May 10.00 am - 4.00 pm York Walls Festival. Contact: Mike Gray

MAY

Thur 5 May 6 pm Meet by the main gates of Beningbrough Hall. A stroll of 3 miles, followed by a meal at the Blacksmith's Arms in Newton on Ouse. Please let Anne know if you are coming. Contact: Anne Bednarski

Wed 11 May 7.00 pm Strensall Village Hall. AGM preceded by a talk from Nick Bielby, formerly Volunteer Project Manager of the York Civic Trust, on "City Enhancement Fund Projects". Tea and coffee will be available during the evening. Contact: John Millett

Wed 18 May 1.30 pm West Beck Chalk Stream, Wansford Bridge, nr. Driffild. Enjoy a stroll along one of East Yorkshire's best chalk stream habitats and learn field craft, looking for signs of water vole and otter. The session will also look at how to try to find and confirm evidence of one of our most elusive and under-recorded mammals, the water shrew. Numbers limited to 12, booking essential. Booking opens April 1. Contact: Mike Gray.

Wed 25th May 10.00 am Nunnington Village Hall. Circular walk 5 miles, stopping off at the Courtyard Cafe. Contact: Derek Chivers

JUNE

Tues 7 June St Andrew's Church, Huntington. Walk Huntington to Haxby – 2 miles one way or 4 miles there and back. Coffee in Haxby and walk or bus back. Contact Anne Bednarski

Wed 15 June 1.30 Skerne Wetlands YWT Nature Reserve nr. Driffild YO25 9HU = Cleaves Farm, adjacent to reserve entrance. Visit to the YWT

owned and managed habitat mosaic at Skerne Wetlands. Learn how a former commercial fish farm was turned into a nature reserve. The site consists of reed beds, wet woodland, fen, open water pools, pond and ditches and a 2 km section of the West Beck SSSI chalk stream. You will see examples of habitat creation, restoration and management across the reserve. NOTE: The drive to the site includes a 1.5 mile farm track, which has potholes, but is fine if you drive slowly. Numbers limited to 16. Booking essential. Contact: Mike Gray. Booking opens 1 May.

Sat 18 June 9.00 am Footbridge on Foss Islands Road across from Morrisons. Litter pick along the Foss. Contact Barry in advance if you are coming so he can plan the morning. Contact: Barry Thomas

Sat 21 June 10.00 am Meet Sandy Lane car park. Walk Skipwith Common Circular 4 miles. Possible lunch at the Drover's Arms in Skipwith. Contact: Derek Chivers

Wed 22nd June Meet at 6.30pm by the Bile Beans sign opposite the Monkbar Hotel. Toby Kendall will lead a relaxed wander around York looking at where some of the interesting below-ground archaeology has been found and how this relates to the above-ground City seen today. Specific themes and periods to look at will be based on what people suggest that evening. Limited numbers, booking essential. (Opens 1st May). Contact: Mike Gray.

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Work begins ...

It looks as if a start is being made on the Flood Prevention Scheme. I'm sure that those of you who live close to the river will be pleased about that.

This view is of a temporary road running parallel to the Foss footpath as it leaves the so-called Iron Bridge just outside Strensall and heads on to Low Lilling.

John Millett

There are pieces of masonry and metal all along the Foss from Castle Mills upwards, many left over from its late eighteenth century canalisation. Reading the books by Tessa Mitchell and Michael Walls, if you can still find them, tells much of the river's story, and allows

you to identify most of the artefacts you come across, but for the casual walker or anyone with maybe a passing interest, a geographical storyline with appropriate pictures will allow appreciation of the many finds.

Remains of the eight locks constructed between the city and Strensall are quite easy to find, although working out which bit did what is less obvious, but what about other less apparent items such as this brickwork to be seen on the footpath downstream from Huntington Church?

There used to be a bridge crossing the river somewhere opposite Mill Hill – could this be the remains of it? The IDB reprofiled the banks hereabouts in the early 1970's

so is this a surviving bit of bridge, or could it be a culvert of some sort constructed to allow drainage of fields lower than the canal as is to be seen around Haxby weir?

Lower downstream, not far from the site of Yearsley baths, there was a section of the river paved and used as a swimming area until the 1950s. Can traces of this still be seen?

Into the past



Is this brick and stonework a reminder of the work done around the Foss in the distant past?

These are just some of the preliminary questions which a small group of interested volunteers hope to expand upon, with the possibility of putting together a sort of "walk-over" guide showing what is to be seen and what the remains used to be.

We are looking for help of all sorts, photographs, anecdotes, written material, and above all involvement from interested volunteers. If you'd like to be involved, or can provide some interesting material, please contact Mike Gray.



Barry Thomas and Tim Rane lift one of the bicycles

Quite a catch!

Three members decided to do a special litter pick along the river, concentrating on larger heavy items that people dump over the railings. This took place on 9 April, finishing with four bicycles, one shopping trolley, a heavy metal advertising board, a large plastic child's toy, a deckchair, and various other items. We produced a video of this for future publicity, and are likely to repeat this exercise more often.



Some of the evidence attached to the Foss Islands Road fence displaying our work for the York Festival of Walls



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

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



An increasing visitor to the fields and the upper reaches of the Foss corridor is the common buzzard. Up to three birds can be seen at a time, soaring over open fields. They are easily recognised by their large wingspan - 110-132 cm - and fan shaped tails.

They are highly vocal for a bird of prey, especially in spring, with a call like a cat mewing.

Buzzards nest in woods with access to open farmland. Their food is mainly rabbits, reptiles, insects and earth worms. The photographs are by John Spring.

A welcome visitor



John Millett



The Green Corridor Project

St Nicks and the RFS cooperate on many projects. Perhaps the most exciting of these is the Green Corridor Project which aims to enhance and join up suitable potentially biodiverse sites along rivers and streams to form corridors through which wildlife can move freely. Isolated patches of land, however species rich they are, are vulnerable to events both natural and man-made, but if they are inter-connected, they are much more able to resist or recover.

Beki Haggar (St Nicks Green Corridors Officer) tells us: *"We have been working on the creation and restoration of bigger, better, joined up habitats along three corridors and on twenty-two sites across York, including floodplain meadow, hedgerows, woodlands and the riparian habitats of the critically endangered tansy beetle and water vole."*

The twenty month project aims to

- Improve or restore 78ha of land in small patches to form corridors
- form and support corridor nature conservation groups along the corridors
- train citizen scientists to map and record key species
- create corridor restoration plans for longer term solutions across a further 266ha
- Provide training to deliver sustainable habitat management and help purchase essential machinery and equipment

The project is already a third complete, and work has been done along the Tang Hall and Osbaldwick Becks, and Fulford Ings. We will launch the project in Clifton Ings this spring.



Typical area suitable for improvement in Huntington

Citizen science surveys will gather data of habitats and species along the corridors, allowing effective monitoring to take place during long-term restoration.

St Nicks has also been working with the Environment Agency to naturalise a section of Osbaldwick Beck through Hull Road Park. Progress includes practical restoration creating eight new bends in the upper reach, with a wetland seed mix

sown onto dryer banks. Rubbish has been removed, approximately 11 tons of litter and fly tipping having been cleared out of the beck. Monitoring has included freshwater invertebrate surveys, water vole and mink monitoring. 2022 plans include new bends in the lower reaches,

planting schemes around restored areas and installation of coir rolls to establish marginal plants."

On the Foss some 20+ small sites have been identified between Strensall and New Earswick that could potentially be enhanced, and possibly extended, to improve their inter-connectivity. Beki is working with the RFS and other groups along the river encouraging them to get involved in creating this corridor to help increase biodiversity, and bolster resistance to climate change.

On the Foss

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