



In 2024 the River Foss Society was invited to the Global Day of Action at York University by Professor Steve Levett. As a result of that meeting, the RFS was invited to collaborate with students through the Sustainability Clinic on projects relating to the River Foss. This is a multi-disciplinary option which gives it the advantage of inputs from various angles. As part of their degree programmes, students undertake practical projects with real-world organisations, and we were delighted to be involved.

In our first year, we worked with 16 students divided into four groups. After giving them an overview of the River Foss and its importance, we challenged them to develop ideas to raise awareness of the river and improve public understanding of it. At the end of the project, each group presented its proposals.

The results were encouraging. Three of the four groups produced thoughtful and engaging ideas. One group contacted the local MP and created a video highlighting river issues. Another developed a broader, more global concept, while a third produced an educational package aimed at schools. We were particularly interested in the education idea and explored it further, although we found it more complex to develop than initially anticipated. The fourth group focused on litter around supermarkets, which, while relevant, did not have the same level of impact.

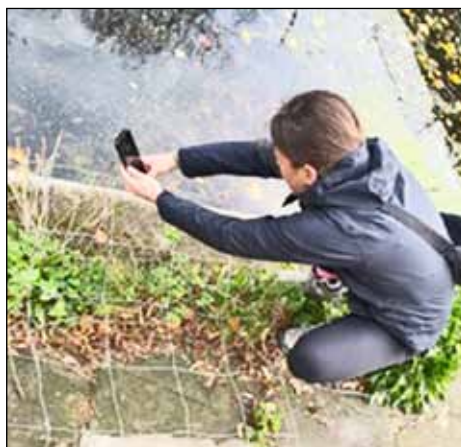
In the following year, we worked with two groups. One of these developed an excellent and practical idea: a "bin map" showing walkers along the River Foss where they could find the nearest general waste and dog waste bins. This stood out as something that could be very useful. We are currently working with a local Environmental Councillor to help bring this

Fresh Ideas on the Foss

*Working with the
Sustainability Clinic at
the University of York*



Investigating aspects of sustainability



Photographing the evidence

idea to life and make the maps accessible to the public.

Last year, we collaborated with a single group focusing on biodiversity on riverside land. Given the limited time available, the project was executed well, although given a bit more time it could have had more depth added to it. During this collaboration one student in particular demonstrated outstanding leadership, and she was recommended for an award. I am pleased to report that she has been shortlisted for the award event which takes place in May.

This year, the team proposed a new project centred again on biodiversity, but developing a questionnaire aimed at the general public. The Sustainability Clinic facilitator Angela Purdham has expanded this idea further and returned with a draft proposal, which is currently being reviewed and discussed within the team.

Overall, our work with the University of York has been both interesting and rewarding. The student groups are often female-led, which is a notable and positive aspect, and we have consistently found the students to be engaged, receptive and committed to producing the best work they can within the University's guidelines which include the health and safety requirements.

This partnership continues to provide fresh perspectives and practical ideas, and we look forward to seeing how it develops

in the years ahead.

And last but by no means lest, I would like to thank the team behind me, who have provided invaluable insights, guidance and support: Barbara Hilton, Mike Gray and Peter Mills.

Lynette Mills



Summer Sparkles

JUNE

June - July Balsam Control - dates, places and times to be announced nearer to the time. Paul Wilson

Sat 27th Jun 10.30 am Foss Walk in three stages – stage 1 Blue Bridge to Strensall 8½ miles. This is a linear walk. Drop off/pickups of cars to be arranged. No. 5 bus runs from York to Strensall. Derek Chivers

JULY

Fri 17th Jul 10.00 am Merchant Adventurers Hall Daytime social – booking essential by July 3rd, please. (Outdoor seating near the Foss if the weather's good!) Christine Gray

Sat 25th Jul 10.00 am Outside The Ship Inn, Strensall. Foss Walk in three stages - stage 2 Strensall to Crayke 12½ miles. This is a linear walk. Drop off/pickups of cars to be arranged. Derek Chivers

AUGUST

Sat 1st Aug 0900 - 1200 Footbridge opposite Morrisons. Riverside litterpick in conjunction with Foxy operating on the river. Please let Tim know if you are joining. Tim Rane

Saturday 8th Aug 10.00 am Outside the Durham Ox, Crayke Foss Walk in three stages – stage 2. Crayke to Easingwold 9 miles. This is a linear walk. Drop off/pickups of cars to be arranged. Derek Chivers

Mon 17th Aug 7.00 pm Blacksmith's Arms, Huntington. Evening social – no need to book, just come along and get chatting. Christine Gray

SEPTEMBER

Sat 12th Sep 10.00 am onwards. The Bakehouse, Crayke Daytime social – no need to book, just come along and get chatting (outdoor seating not far from the Foss if the weather's good!) Christine Gray

OCTOBER

Wed 14th Oct 7.00 pm Strensall Village Hall Open meeting. Speaker Mike Potter: Flowing with the Flow – Beavers. The beaver release above Pickering. John Millett

Sat 17th Oct 9.00 am -12.00 noon Footbridge opposite Morrisons Riverside litterpick in conjunction with Foxy operating on the river. Please let Tim know if you are joining. Tim Rane

Thur 22nd Oct 7.00 pm Blue Barbakan, Walmgate Evening meal – booking essential by Oct 7th please. Christine Gray

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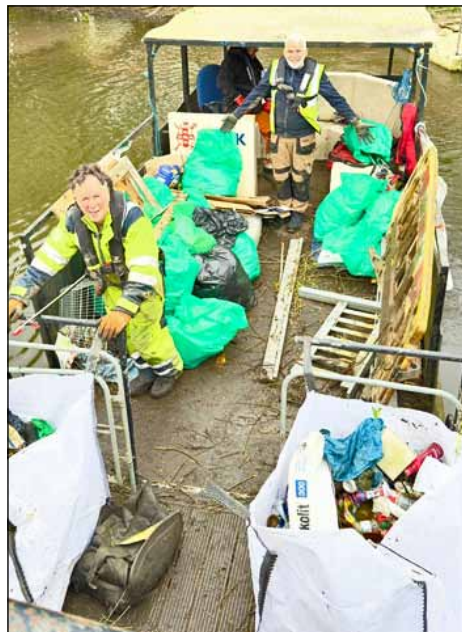
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Archives

Help is needed to maintain our archives, which are kept at the main York library. We hope that our new archivist will help with 'mining' the archive to find items of interest for inclusion in future newsletters.

Contact our Membership Secretary at: Membership@riverfossociety.co.uk

Selective Picking



Thirteen volunteers showed up for the litter pick on Saturday 4 April. Our ground crew recovered more than the Foxy crew, as you can see from the green bags in the photo.

The main reason for this was probably that the rain has washed a lot of litter from the Foss into the Ouse. The water was still cloudy, so we couldn't see anything large lurking beneath the surface other than a plastic road barrier.

However, this did give the Foxy crew the time to remove some fallen trees which were blocking the path of the Foss up the river. Overall it was a successful day, but nothing significant to report this time.

Tim Rane

Ouse it or Lose it!

Many River Foss Society members will already know that a small group of us have recently launched Ouse It or Lose It, a volunteer-run community initiative focused on making the Ouse nicer.

The idea began in September 2025, when I watched the film *Rave On For The Avon*. It challenged my assumption that the River Ouse was simply too polluted, dangerous or inaccessible to enjoy. Instead, I came away with a simple thought: if we want people to care about a river, they need to have a relationship with it.

Since then, a growing group of swimmers, paddlers, walkers, scientists and local residents have come together around three themes: better information, stronger community and responsible river use. We



Swimming from Blue Bridge in the Ouse

hold monthly gatherings at Blue Bridge, have helped establish citizen science water quality monitoring with Surfers Against Sewage, and - thanks to RFS and Alistair G in particular - are now working with RFS and the University of York's AQUA project to monitor sites on the Ouse.

We see Ouse It or Lose It as complementary to the work of the River Foss Society. The Society brings expertise, local knowledge and long-term stewardship of York's waterways.

Our focus is on helping more people connect with and care about the rivers through recreation, citizen science and community engagement. Together, we can help build both the evidence and the community needed to support healthier rivers in York.

If you'd like to find out more, join a future gathering or sign up for updates, please visit: <https://forms.gle/ztauwUYMWUqNGUB67>

Helen Poulson



Charlotte Sawyer (film-maker, Rave on for the Avon), Helen Poulson, Alistair Boxall (Professor of Environment Science, University of York)



Rolling out the Barrel

After a great deal of planning, and making a special ramp from an old pallet and two long scaffold boards, I used my trusty winch, staked into the ground, to haul this oil barrel just out of the river, enough for the water to drain. Through a small rusted hole in the side where my winch was gripping, I was able to hand move most of the mud out of the barrel to reduce its weight, as it had been half full.

With the help of a friendly passerby, he pulling the rope connected to the winch, and myself in the river, we managed to finally lift the barrel out of the water.

I was totally filthy from the stinking mud baked on my arms by the day's heat, and my waders were also full of water, having got ripped on both sides. The picture shows me all cleaned up, but the barrel's finally out. It was collected and ready to be seen to by the recycling team.

Tim Rane

A Foss Essential



One of the announcements at the AGM in April was that John Millett is retiring after 22 years as a committee member. Since 2005, John has been a stalwart of the club and a steady presence for very many years. As our Chairman, he has overseen much of the Society's rejuvenation and to many of us, it has seemed that whatever activity we attended, John was always there helping!

John has promised to remain involved with the Society and we all look forward to seeing him. And with the company of his bright green Foss Frog, John will always be reminded of the River Foss Society!

The River Foss Society was recently awarded a £200 grant from the Guildhall Ward to improve a part of the towpath at the backs of 68-70 Huntington Road. The project actively contributed to the ward priority of "Safety" by making a short section of the River Foss Towpath near the backs of Huntington Road less slippery

Towpath Improvement

and safer during the wet winter months by filling in several large slippery and muddy patches and puddles.

The towpath on the western side of the River Foss is a popular pedestrian route and is used by many walking (north or south) along Huntington Road; use of this route avoids walking into the path of road traffic when passing The Holt (formerly the Aaron Motors garage at 92a Huntington Road), where there is no footpath. It also avoids crossing the busy Huntington Road to the west side, with limited visibility around the bend, and then walking back to the east side.

We purchased and applied gravel to several of the worst locations of the towpath on the western side of the River Foss. The project made this section of the path less slippery and less dangerous for pedestrians



Left: before repairs



Right: After repairs

and helped them avoid walking on, and crossing, Huntington Road on a blind bend. See the pictures before and after the project.

This project only improved a small section of the muddy towpath. It is possible that others in the River Foss Society may continue the work to cover more areas which are still slippery in the wet winter months.

Michael Reakes

On Tuesday, 19th May, at the Red Goat Climbing Gym, several members of the River Foss Society attended the annual Pint of Science series of talks showcasing ways science can help shape healthier, more inclusive, and more sustainable communities. Pint of Science started in 2013 when two people decided that an ideal venue to share their research was in a pub, where curious people could engage with researchers in open and transparent conversations. The idea rapidly took off and between 18th – 20th May 2026, almost 500 cities globally took part, with 43 locations across the United Kingdom.

One of those locations was in our very own York, where speakers shared presentations on mosquito control, urban wildlife, and no- and low-alcohol



Enjoying a Pint

since the very beginning. One of the interesting finds that Kian highlighted from the 2026 CNC was an uncommon species of spider called a Conical Trashline Orbweaver, which was photographed while crawling on the RFS gazebo set up during the City Nature Challenge!

The next annual Pint of Science Festival will take place on 10 – 12 May 2027, so mark your calendar and get ready to learn something new!

John Terenzini

Did you know that the River Foss Society is on Facebook too?

Hard Work Rewarded

I attended the awards ceremony at York University on Thursday 7 May and was delighted to see that the student nominee I put forward from the River Foss Society, Amy Leeming, receiving an award in recognition of her work with us for the Sustainability Clinic. (See page 1)

It was a fascinating evening, with a wide range of categories and an impressive number of inspiring projects represented. The Sustainability and Environment category in particular was highly competitive, with many outstanding groups involved, so I honestly wasn't sure whether we stood a chance. I was therefore especially pleased when Amy and the River Foss Society were announced among the winners.

What made the moment even more special was that, from all the award recipients in that category, only representatives from St Nicks and the River Foss Society were invited to speak about their work and projects. It was wonderful to see Amy recognised in this way, and she spoke brilliantly about the impact of how doing the project for the River Foss



Amy Leeming, left and our Lynette Mills, right

Society gave her a better understanding of the biodiversity around the river and how we should cherish it.

Amy was absolutely delighted with the award, and it will no doubt be a valuable addition to her CV as she begins looking for employment opportunities. More importantly, it is something she will always remember with pride.

I am immensely proud that, as a Society, we have been able to support and encourage a young person in a way that has given her both recognition and confidence for the future.

Lynette Mills

Started in 2016 as a competition between Los Angeles and San Francisco, the City Nature Challenge has grown into an international event, motivating people around the world to find and document wildlife in their own cities, with over 650 cities in 50 countries participating.

Run by the California Academy of Sciences and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, it is an annual four-day global bioblitz, where cities are in a friendly-competition to show

what can be accomplished when working toward a common goal. The event uses the iNaturalist app on phones to photograph any wildlife found, which is often easier said than done – have you ever tried to photograph a restless butterfly or a bee? – and share

it with a world-wide community of scientists and nature enthusiasts.

York has an excellent record having been in the top 5 in the UK for the last three years with 30+ cities taking part, and the RFS has made its contribution each time.

Again, this year York managed to come in at the top of the leaderboard for the number of species with 2134 recorded – Greater London came in second with 1620, but considering we had only 238 observers to London's 806, that's pretty impressive.

Thank you and well done to all our members who took part.

Mike Gray

York City Nature Challenge



Locating wildlife species



We kept an information gazebo in New Earswick during the Challenge

Alderflies – A Foss Resident

We generally find a few Alderflies (*Sialis lutaria*) at all but one of the sites we sample on the Foss. Described as being the 'most common' in Britain relates to them not being too fussy about where they live, from upland, acid pools in Scotland down to floodplain ponds in southeast England and most rivers in between. They are primitive insects, with their nearest relatives being Lacewings.

The larvae spend up to two years submerged, living in and crawling along the bottom of ponds, lakes and slow-flowing stretches of rivers in the silt, mud and detritus. As avid predators with large, broad heads and strong, sharp pincer-like jaws, which they hold open when they feel threatened and use for defence, they feed, mainly at night, on smaller invertebrates such as worms and other insect larvae. They have seven pairs of filamentous gills along the sides of the abdomen to help them breathe and a single tail. The final instar larvae, prior to pupation, can reach 30mm in size.

The larvae go through several instars (stages) and, when ready to pupate, they emerge from the water and burrow into wet soil. Adults emerge, often in large numbers, after a few weeks' metamorphosis, from late April to June, but only live for a week or two in order to mate, which takes place at night although they generally fly by day and are easy to see and quite tame. If they land on you, they tend to remain until moved! They are 10 – 15mm long, have long, thread-like antennae and are blackish brown in colour with large, dark wings folded over their bodies like a tent, with lace-like venation or markings – they belong to the insect Order Megaloptera, which means large wings. Despite this, they are poor, sluggish fliers and generally don't fly too far from the water's edge. They also don't feed but live off the reserves they built up as larvae.

Large numbers of eggs are laid on overhanging vegetation



Alderfly Larva. Photo André Karwath, CC BY-SA 2.5, via Wikimedia Commons



Alderfly Adult. Photo pjt56, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons



River Foss Alderfly larvae

and, when the larvae hatch, they drop or crawl into the water and the cycle begins again.

Barbara Hilton

A Getting to Know You social meeting for members, to meet each other and also committee members, was held in March at Earswick Village Hall. This involved two interesting talks, stands showing aspects of the history and geography of the River Foss, live invertebrates collected from headwater sites the previous day as part of the biological monitoring, plus a nice selection of savoury snacks, cakes and drinks to help the evening go well.

The first talk was by John Terenzini explaining his



John Terenzini talks about a rare freshwater jellyfish

quest to find, research and report on the UK's only and highly elusive freshwater jellyfish, *Craspedacusta sowerbii*. It lives in waters such as lakes, ponds and canals and feeds, using those stinging tentacles to catch its prey, on zooplankton of no more than 2mm in size.

If you do see these jellyfish as you swim in, fish or walk by any body of still water, do please contact John.

The second talk was by Roger Button looking at changes in and on the Foss from Earswick down to its confluence with the River Ouse, using old photos, up to and beyond 100 years ago (kindly donated to the Society by Paul Thorpe) and more recent photos to make direct comparisons, where possible, between then and now. This covered industrial development along the banks of the river, its subsequent decline, changes in the river's course due to road building and local artistic interpretations of the river's environment.

Getting to Know You

Dr Margaret Atherden led another gentle stroll along the Foss, from All Saints' Church, Huntington to the footbridge over the river at Earswick and back to Huntington. We looked at the flowers currently in bloom, those just past their best and those ready to flower over the coming months along that stretch of the

A floral walk



Few-flowered leek

river. These included four common and edible plants: Jack-by-the-Hedge (also known as Garlic Mustard of which the leaves, flowers and seeds can be eaten); Wild Garlic; Few-Flowered Leek (leaves, flowers and bulbils being edible, the latter tasting like a mix of onion, chives and garlic) and White Deadnettle, with a flavour of its own. If you do decide to pick any to try, remember to avoid the dog pee zone!

Other flowers seen included Goldilocks and Meadow Buttercups, Green Alkanet (despite the

beautiful blue flowers, it's called Green because the leaves remain green during the winter), Cowslips and Danish Scurvy Grass. The latter is a coastal plant, used to salty conditions, and due to this it has become one of the fastest spreading plants in Britain due to salting of major roads in winter. It now commonly carpets the verges of these roads, as here on the Ring Road bridge.

As the name suggests, this plant was used to help prevent scurvy aboard ships due to its high levels of vitamin C.

Margaret uprooted a young Himalayan Balsam plant, which the Society spends many hours pulling up and cutting during the spring and summer months, due to its highly invasive nature. Please do uproot any you see as you walk along the Foss. Uprooting as much as you can all helps.

One tree stood out on the walk, the native Bird Cherry, due to its prolific flowers.

Thanks to Dr Atherden for an enjoyable and informative walk



Dr Margaret Atherden

Barbara Hilton

Over the last few weeks we have been making good use of the early summer sun and adding to the list of kick sampling sites visited this year.

Barbara Hilton does a fantastic job organising, training and supervising the collecting and identifying of invertebrate samples

which give us snapshots of the health of the river, the populations it supports and comparisons with the now years of data collected.

The pictures show our plucky volunteers braving dragonfly larvae and other wee beasties, sorting ready to count and enter on our riverfly sheets.

Different finds help indicate varying conditions with the highest scores given to species tolerant of only the cleanest water. Near the head of the river you might

come across stonefly larvae or even crayfish; as pollution increases downstream we still find life, but only those able to cope such as hoglouse. We were lucky at Willow Bank, New Earswick to find a well developed dragonfly larvae and at the Sessions Nature Reserve, Huntington some caddisfly larvae too. When combined with results from our chemical testing volunteers this can help track effects of pollution events both in the short and long term. For example we have years of data from Willow Bank and will be able to track whether the building of houses nearby affects that stretch of the river over the next couple of years. If you would like to help collect samples from the river or help count on the banks contact Barbara at: barbara_hilton@msn.com

Kicking up a storm



Checking what has been found in sampling at Willow Bank, New Earswick



A full tray of samples at Sessions Nature Reserve

Andy Mulholland

The River Foss Society has been involved in a project led by Professor Alistair Boxall at the University of York with the aim of highlighting the presence of chemicals, particularly pharmaceuticals, in our rivers. This will add to the national pressure to find ways of avoiding these chemicals getting into water courses, as well as ways of removing them when they are there.

As publication of the consequent academic paper approaches, Alistair decided to give RFS members a chance to see what the project was all about together with an indication of its findings. He co-ordinated an exhibition in the Sliding Water Gallery on Marygate as part of the York Festival of Ideas and was kind enough to arrange a

Reclaiming our Rivers

private viewing for our members. It was a fascinating and impressive exhibition, with a wide variety of photographs and several relevant exhibits, including a dis-assembled autosampler, all giving an insight into what was involved in the work. The final section was a map showing the sites sampled all over



A good number of members attended a private viewing of an exhibition at the Sliding Water Gallery, York

Yorkshire including a summary of the results for each. The focus of the Festival was "Reclaiming our Rivers", and the aim of the exhibition was to allow the public to "gain a deeper understanding of the science behind river health and leave empowered to help protect our rivers".

A video of the display together with the Soundscape produced to complement the visuals will hopefully appear on our website.

Barbara Hilton

Unfortunately we were not able to use Foxy for our early summer litter pick on 13 June, because the driver went on holiday and the spare driver was not available. Three volunteers covered footpaths, and I

we were able to paddle around the corner where the wind was less problematic and we paddled back to leave the bags of litter on Foxy for the next litter pick.

Litter pick challenges

used my paddle board, while Howard worked in his canoe. Howard filled up the rear seat in his canoe with litter; we then decanted that into green bags onto the paddle board.

As you can see, the paddle board became heavily laden, which is normally not a problem, but then the wind picked up and the extra full bags, six in total, acted like a sail and we were blown into the trees where we took shelter. To paddle against it was ineffective, but I nearly fell in the water along with some bags.

After around 10 minutes, the wind calmed a little and



Tim paddles along litter picking

Even with not having Foxy, we had a very successful morning, under the circumstances.

Tim Rane

The ground crew had a good session but had no choice but to leave the green bags by the public litter bins because we were unable to use the Castle Mills lock landing due to the ongoing works to fit the new lock gates.

Don't forget our website:
www.riverfossociety.co.uk

On the Foss

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