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Registered Charity No: 529709 An affiliated society of the British Science Association

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2010

After what feels like a very long winter, spring is with us at last. Flowers, tourists and ice creams have returned to the Museum Gardens and an equally colourful assortment of flyers for events and excursions is enclosed to put you into a holiday mood. This is also of course the time of year when we hold our AGM and we hope you will take the time to study the less colourful but equally important information sheets and will be able to join us on May 24th.

Your envelope should contain the following inserts. Please contact Frances at The Lodge if any are missing.

- Morning at Moorlands – Tuesday, 25 May 2010
- Visit to York Mosque, Thursday 3 June 2010
- Summer Social at La Piazza Restaurant – Thursday, 24 June 2010
- Visit to Hungate Dig - Wednesday 30 June 2010
- Visit to E Yorks Churches & Burnby Hall Gardens - Thursday 15 July 2010
- Visit to York Cemetery – Thursday 22 July 2010
- Visit to Saltaire & Leeds & Liverpool Canal – Wednesday, 11 August 2010
- Edge of Empire! Tour to Hadrian's Wall – 14 to 16 August 2010

Events News

We hope to arrange another Family Fossil Hunt to the Yorkshire coast, probably on a weekend in September. Details will follow in the next Newsletter.

We are sorry to announce that the visit to Sledmere on 23rd May has had to be cancelled, as insufficient bookings were received to make it viable. Cheques will be returned to all those who sent in applications.

AGM and final lecture

After our AGM and lecture on May 24th thanks to the kind cooperation of York Museums Trust we shall be rounding off the lecture season with drinks and nibbles downstairs in the Hospitium rather than in the Lodge. There is no charge for this but donations of wine or nibbles in advance or a contribution in the collecting tin on the evening will be very welcome. It would also be helpful if you could return the reply slip on the bottom of your invitation to the AGM, so that we have some idea of numbers. Thank you.

Making the most of the fiasco

Members who attended our lecture on March 29th will already be aware of the unusual events of the evening, and many others will have heard about them second-hand. Here is the story in the words of our Chairman, Jim Matthew, who somehow managed to look after a heavy projector borrowed from York University throughout.

I arrived at 6.45 pm to find that the Hospitium was not open – no immediate worry, but when nothing happened by 7 pm we contacted the security guard who, along with a garden guide, tried to telephone various numbers for clarification. By 7.15 pm I had around 100 people standing in heavy rain with no hope of access to the Hospitium.

Our members are not short of resourcefulness. One suggested we might use the upstairs room in the Bay Horse pub on Marygate and went there to negotiate. It sounded like it could take 50 to 60 people but we managed to get over 90 in – unfortunately we lost the disabled plus a few others. By chance the speaker was using an overhead projector rather than a digital projector and I had borrowed one from the University Physics Department: so we could project! We didn't have a screen but the landlady provided us with a white sheet. We were in business by 7.45 pm. Not ideal, but Professor Ewan Anderson was able to give his lecture involving many maps of borders in Iraq. The pub refused any payment but the landlady eventually got a good bunch of flowers!

And a letter from Janet Barnes of York Museums Trust:

1 April 2010

To all YPS members

Dear All

I would like to offer my sincere apologies to everyone who attended the lecture by Professor Ewan Anderson on 29 March which was due to take place at the Hospitium. We failed to open up the Hospitium for the talk due to a series of errors. We are very embarrassed and distressed about this and have consequently reviewed all our database procedures and the access to emergency contact numbers by security staff.

Fortunately the generosity of the Bay Horse pub on Marygate came to the rescue and the talk went ahead. However it is a lesson well learnt by us and we hope that our sincere apologies will be accepted by all concerned.

Yours sincerely

Janet Barnes
Chief Executive

We would like to add our own apologies to anyone who was unable to join us in the pub and also to express our thanks to those who managed to avoid disappointing a great many more people – Ewan Anderson, John Hampshire, Jim Matthew and Bill Smith for carrying on under such trying circumstances, and John Bibby for an idea that saved the evening. In view of the lecture title, we hope we made the best of our own particular fiasco!

YPS 2022

In the last newsletter we appealed for ideas for a substantial YPS-funded Project which might be undertaken on the run-up to our 200th anniversary in 2022.

We have received several really interesting ideas, including many to do with the currently underused part of the Gardens to the north and west of the abbey ruins themselves (all of which would require, of course, the approval, buy-in and encouragement of YMAG), including such projects as:

- a real Wild Flower meadow, reflecting the myriad wild flowers that used to be part of the everyday scene in York only a few generations ago
- a geological time-line based garden similar to the one at Burghley House
- a horticultural area focussing on the flowers and plants, the cultivation of which are associated with Yorkshire e.g. lupins, chrysanthemums, rhubarb
- a medieval or monastery garden linking the theme of St Mary's Abbey to the present day and perhaps incorporating references to past activities of YPS adventurers and botanists
- a fountain in the Gardens

Another large-scale project idea is YPS participation in a hands-on interactive science museum for York.

We would like to invite you to comment or add to any of the above that you might feel strongly about, and to make any further suggestions that might be worth considering.

The key criteria for any project are:

- that it contributes in some way to the Museum Gardens, the Museums Trust or the City of York
- that it leaves an on-going legacy of YPS behind in its wake
- that members can enjoy being involved – to a greater or a lesser degree - either in the funding of it or in the running of it

The ideas up to now have been inspired. Please add any further comments to the above or communicate your own new ideas to stephenlusty@btinternet.com or in writing to the YPS Office.

A new benefit for members

While the Yorkshire Museum is closed, staff at the ice cream stall at the entrance to the Museum Gardens are being given the use of kitchen and toilet facilities in The Lodge.

In return for this help YPS members have been granted special privileges at York Museums Trust retail outlets. On production of your YPS membership card you will receive a 10% discount in the shops at the Castle Museum, Art Gallery and Yorkshire Museum (when it re-opens) and can also purchase ice creams from the stall opposite The Lodge at the reduced price of £1.20.

Increasing subscriptions

It is almost seven years since our subscription rates were increased, even though during that period many more activities have been offered to members. In addition to some twenty lectures each season we have a President's Dinner, a summer and a winter social, "Behind the Scenes" visits to places not usually accessible to the general public, excursions to various destinations of interest, and at least one study tour of four or five days' duration. Of course our costs have risen over the years and our income from investments is not as healthy as it was: so we are having to curtail some of the things which we would wish to achieve. At the same time we look forward to 2022 when we want to do something special to mark the passage of two centuries during which YPS has made an impact on the city. Hence the decision to increase subscriptions.

The increases will not come into operation for existing members until January of 2011: this is simply advance notification. For those who pay by Standing Order it takes us a while to sort out the paperwork to alter the amount from next January and you will find a separate form with this Newsletter so that we can get to work in good time to persuade the banks to amend their records.

The new rates will be:

Single	£22	Single Concessionary	£15
Joint	£35	Joint Concessionary	£25
Institution	£35	Student	£5

As a reminder, Concessionary normally means over 60, or anyone retired or unemployed.

In response to suggestions from some members it has been decided to create a new category, that of Life Membership – something that will surely appeal to all those members who are planning to reach their century. Although many societies offer only one Life Membership fee, we have decided in view of the age profile of our membership to introduce a triple option, namely:

Under 60 years of age:	Single £400	Joint	£600
Ages 60 to 69 inclusive:	Single £300	Joint	£450
Age 70 years and over:	Single £250	Joint	£375

Any Life Membership fees received will be put immediately into our long-term investments, as this will help to ensure the future of the Society for many years to come.

Do you need...?

Over the last couple of years The Lodge has gained two umbrellas, left behind and never claimed. If one of them could be yours, please do call in and see Frances.

We also have a quantity of scrap paper which is more than sufficient for our own needs, as well as old paper of an obsolete size. If anyone could have a use for some of it, please let us know.

Fred Jefferson - Information sought

Does anyone remember hearing of a keen ornithologist called Fred Jefferson? We have at The Lodge a large collection of glass lantern slides and negatives taken by members of the York & District Field Naturalists section of the YPS. Approximately 300 are labelled 'Fred Jefferson 1919-1927', but a few show tame birds being held or fed by a middle-aged Fred, 'Master Richard' who looks about seven or eight, and 'Miss Jean' Jefferson, who is about five. These are undated, but look as if they come from the 1940s or 1950s. Another image shows a tame jackdaw feeding from the hand of an unidentified young woman of about twenty.

Can anyone supply any biographical information about this family - where they lived, perhaps Fred's occupation, and whether Richard and Jean were his children or grandchildren?

Please reply via Frances at the Lodge.

Bob Hale, Hon Archivist



Other events

York Archaeological Trust Bookfair

The annual YAT Bookfair will be held in the Guildhall on Saturday 9th October and once again the YPS will have a stall. We hope you will come along to support this event which always offers the opportunity to buy interesting books and gather information about other like-minded groups. Frances will be manning our stand and, if you have an hour or two to spare and would like to help, please contact her at The Lodge.

Trees of York

There will be an exhibition of drawings of Trees of York by Ewan Anderson at the Blake Head Bookshop on Micklegate from 19 August to 16 September 2010. When he is not sorting out Iraq's borders or giving lectures in unusual circumstances (see above), Professor Anderson can sometimes be found sitting in the Museum Gardens with his sketch pad. Go along to this exhibition to enjoy the result.

Aliens: a history from Selenites to ET

The York Astronomical Society and the Harrogate Astronomical Society will be hosting a lecture by the famous historian Dr Allan Chapman of Oxford University. The title is *Aliens: a history from Selenites to ET*.

The event will be on Friday, 21st May in the main hall of the Priory Street Centre in York. Doors open at 7.15 pm. £2 at the door for visitors – no pre booking. Visit the YAS website for details of the venue: www.yorkastro.org.uk.

Dr Chapman will discuss the ideas held about the possibility of life on other worlds as imagined since the 1600s, when it was realised that stars were spheres and not dots of light in the night sky. Dr Chapman will also comment on recent ideas about extra terrestrial life and his suggestion that the SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Life) projects have more in common with religion than science.

This will be a fascinating event, with the opportunity to meet and hear the UK's leading expert in the history of astronomy. Dr Chapman appears in many science and astronomy related TV programmes.

Older Citizens Advocacy York (OCA Y) is currently looking for people to join their board of trustees. OCA Y provides volunteers to advocate on behalf of any older person in the City of York, speaking up for people who are not able to speak for themselves. Anyone interested in the welfare of older people is welcome to contact Linda Tester, Advocacy Service Manager on 01904 676200 or ocay@btconnect.com.

Stop Press - Autumn 5 day tour in Scotland

Arrangements were well in hand for this tour and details should have been circulated with this newsletter. Unfortunately, the hotel with whom we had been dealing has very recently told us that they cannot now accommodate us as we had wanted so that we are left searching for alternative accommodation, which may also entail revising the itinerary. Enquiries are continuing and, if successful, details will appear in the next newsletter. If efforts fail, we hope the tour can be rearranged for 2011.

Alan Owen, Organiser