

## Potted history of the Ouse

Unlike most rivers, York's River Ouse has no mountain source. It is born of the union of the Ure with an insignificant stream called Ouse Gill Beck, and does not begin its journey (as is often erroneously stated) at the junction of the Ure and Swale, farther north.

The real source is about two miles east of Little Ouseburn, and from there it runs for 57 miles, wriggling its leisurely way through Yorkshire. It touches almost every point of the compass before, east of Goole, it becomes the Humber at the point where it meets the Trent. At Nun Monkton about eight miles north of York it is joined by the Nidd, and in the city itself by the Foss. The Wharfe, Derwent, and Aire also flow into the Ouse, which is tidal up to Naburn Locks, three miles below the city, but in ancient times the tides reached up to York.

During its journey, the Ouse waters a great area of the county and the other rivers and streams pour into its bed a vast volume of fresh water. Salt water contending with the fresh has from prehistoric times brought special problems. There is more silt in the Ouse than any other river in Britain apart from the Trent.

The river has been the scene of many historic happenings. Danish galleys sailed up as far as York in the 9th and 10th centuries spreading terror and confusion. The Romans bridged the river and built a fortress in the angle between the Ouse and Foss with a civil town on the opposite bank. Corn for this community would certainly come by water, via the Fossdyke and the Trent. Saxon York at the time of the Conquest was a thriving river port, trading in corn, fish, wool, and probably cloth.

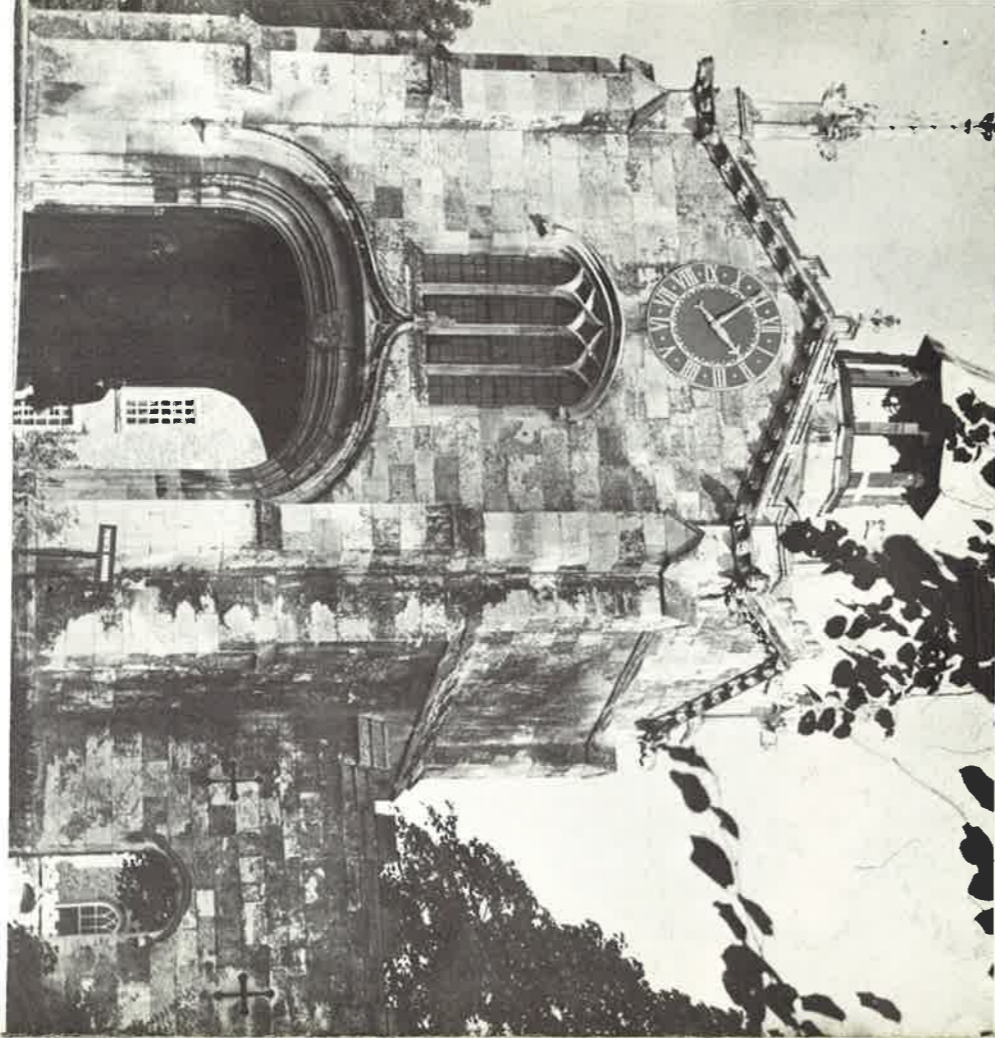
The Norman Conquest brought to the Ouse one trade that had been comparatively dormant since Roman times, the transport of stone. This was brought up the river from the Tadcaster area for the defensive walls, the Minster, St. Mary's Abbey, and many other important buildings.

The street Stonegate commemorates the traffic, for it was one of the routes taken by masonry unloaded at jetties on the river. Its name, however, arises because it was a paved road, not because stone was carried along it.

In medieval times the Ouse played a vital part in the economy of York. Lead from the Pennines was floated in lighters from Boroughbridge and transhipped at York for carriage further south.

The ships of the York merchants made the hazardous voyage between the city and towns of the Hanseatic League in the 15th century, gradually wresting the carrying trade from the German ships greatly to the prosperity of the York Merchant Adventurers and the city generally. With the increase in the size of ocean-going ships, the importance of the river diminished, and the trade today consists largely of tugs and barges plying between York and Hull with many pleasure cruises taking advantage of the scenic splendours.

*Every care has been taken in the compilation of this folder but no responsibility can be taken for any inaccuracies.*



Bishopthorpe Palace Gatehouse

### COVER PHOTOGRAPHS

Top: View up river from Skeldergate Bridge to Ouse Bridge

Bottom: Lendal Bridge and starting point for pleasure cruises



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## River history in handy date form

- A.D. 947 The Dane, Eric Bloodaxe, sailed up river and was installed as king but he was expelled five years later.
- A.D. 1066 Harold Hardrada of Norway and Tostig sailed up the river as far as Riccall and on 20 September fought the Battle of Fulford against Earl Morkere and his brother Edwin. The battle raged across the river at Middlethorpe Ings and the Norwegians won.
- A.D. 1090 Stone was brought from Tadcaster by river vessel for York Minster restoration.
- A.D. 1154 A wooden Ouse bridge collapsed under the weight of crowd welcoming Archbishop William.
- A.D. 1226 To pay for building of city walls a toll of 4d. per boat was levied on craft loaded with merchandise for sale.
- A.D. 1462 King Edward amplified and defined powers of Court of Conservators specified in a charter of Richard II granted in 1396.
- A.D. 1478 City Council decided to build an official barge to inspect the river.
- A.D. 1594 Lord Mayor and Alderman dined with Archbishop John Piers at Bishopthorpe and paid 3/4d. for haulage of barge down river
- A.D. 1607 River was frozen so solid on 11 November that horse-drawn vehicles could easily cross. Horse races and games were played on the ice.
- A.D. 1625 River was 18 feet 8 ins. above normal causing extensive flooding.
- A.D. 1717 Act of Parliament passed "for promoting the navigation of the River Ouse in the County of York".
- A.D. 1771 Linton Lock constructed.
- A.D. 1775 First Naburn Lock opened with a toll of 1/2d. for every vessel passing through.
- A.D. 1816 New Walk was crowded on 25 April to witness arrival of first passenger steam boat on river.
- A.D. 1840 Hills boatyard established at Lendal Bridge.
- A.D. 1857 After Fat Stock & Poultry Show at Christmas seven cygnets purchased by subscription and presented to corporation to place on river. Colony of swans ever since.
- A.D. 1871 Naburn railway bridge opened to rail traffic.
- A.D. 1888 New lock completed at Naburn.
- A.D. 1894 Tolls abolished for crossing Lendal Bridge.
- A.D. 1926 Terrys chocolate factory opened alongside river.
- A.D. 1952 Naburn railway swing bridge opened to river traffic for last time.
- A.D. 1963 Road bridge costing £270,000 opened at Clifton.



**Nun Monkton**  
At the confluence of the Nidd with the Ouse is this old village with its green and duck-pond fringed by mellowed brick houses, the base of an old cross, and maypole 65 feet high made from a tree grown in Russia. There is a private museum of Roman antiquities in the priory.

#### Nether and Upper Poppleton

Fast developing as dormitory suburbs of York, these two tranquil old-fashioned villages once consisted of only a few cottages. Where the road runs alongside the river is an unusual war memorial, a rock garden planted with flowers.

#### Beningborough Hall

Standing in the midst of wooded parkland is this National Trust property. Built in 1716 for Sir John Boucher it contains outstanding woodwork.

#### Clifton Ings

Earliest records of racing in Yorkshire date from 1633 and give this as the battleground and racing continued here until 1730.

#### Scarborough Bridge

This cast iron railway bridge was built in 1844/45 to take the York/Scarborough line across the river.

#### St. Mary's Abbey

This abbey, now in ruins, was the first monastic house to be established in Yorkshire after the Norman Conquest. It became one of the largest and wealthiest of the Benedictine Abbeys, with a mitred abbot who sat in the House of Lords. Founded about the year 1080 by Stephen of Lastingham, it was later enlarged by King William Rufus, who refounded it as St. Mary's Abbey.

#### Viking Hotel

A 10-storey, 100-bedroom hotel called "The Viking" towers 109 feet above the river here. It cost £850,000 and contains a restaurant seating a hundred, a conference room for 300, and is decorated in Scandinavian style.

#### Lendal Bridge

Designed by Thomas Page, this single arched cast iron bridge was opened to traffic in January 1863. Here are boating facilities and river trips operated by W. W. Hill. The first waterworks was established here in 1682 and the tower still remains.

#### Guilddhall

Built in 1448 by the City and the Guild of St. Christopher and St. George the Guilddhall was largely destroyed by fire bombs in 1942 but was restored and re-opened in 1960. In the adjoining committee room the sum of £200,000 was paid to the Scots for Charles I. Behind it is the Mansion House built in 1725/6, with its valuable collection of antique silver plate and historic portraits. This is the home of the Lord Mayor.

#### Yorkshire Evening Press

Backing on to the river is the printing works of the weekly newspaper Yorkshire Gazette & Herald established in 1772 and the evening newspaper Yorkshire Evening Press established in 1882.

#### All Saints, Pavement

Overlooking the river and distinguishing it from all the other churches of York is the fifteenth century tower of All Saints in Pavement. Anciently, lamps burning in the lantern used to guide wayfarers to the city, particularly those coming from the North, through the Forest of Galtres.

#### Ouse Bridge

This is the oldest bridge in the city and the present structure is the third of its class. A bridge of five Gothic Arches was completed in 1820. It was the first place to have a continuous flagged footway and one of the first three to be lighted at night with an oil lamp.

#### Queen's Staith

Opposite to King's Staith, the Queen's Staith was founded and built by Mr. Christopher Topham during his mayoralty in 1660. After a large butter factory was built on adjacent land, it became known as Butter Staith and for about a century great quantities of butter were landed here, weighed and shipped by butter contractors to London and other places.

#### King's Staith

From the first building of the city when York was of triangular form sitting between the river and the Forest of Galtres there has existed a staith here. Roman galleys landed here, and the prefix King is thought to have been added as a compliment to the early kings who used the staith when visiting the city. Improvements to the staith were carried out in 1612, 1659, 1733, and 1820.

#### Friars Wall

Running from the King's Staith to the New Walk, this wall is a remnant of a Friary dedicated to St. Francis, which extended from Friargate to the New Walk and the Ouse to Castlegate. The order is said to have been founded by Henry II and the friars provided hospitality and residence for visiting kings but they opposed the marriage of Henry VIII with Anne Boleyn and so he confiscated the property on 27/28 November 1538. On the wall is a plaque showing flood levels. A river bus service by boat is operated from here, landing at the Bosun's Chair Cate, Bishopthorpe.

#### Skeldergate Bridge

Opened to pedestrians on 1 January 1881 and to carriages on 10th March, this bridge was not fully completed until 1882 and cost £67,000. Tolls were removed in 1914.

#### Fertiliser Works

A distillery once occupied this site which about 1850 became a chemical manure works and is now the headquarters of Hargreaves Fertilisers Ltd.

#### Skeldergate Wharves

From here ran the daily steam packet boats to Hull up to about 1870. They made the journey in about eight hours and returned according to the tide at Hull. The first of these packets was the 'Waterloo' which ran a trial trip on 25 April 1816.

#### St. George's Field

Located in front of the law courts and castle, St. George's Field derives its name from being associated with the guild and hospital of St. George. A chapel once stood on one corner and a festival and pageant used to be held here on St. George's Day. The public baths were opened on 7 July 1880. The ducking stool was also operated here.

#### Terrys

The clocktower of the chocolate factory dominates the skyline. Behind it is the Knavesmire racecourse and the site of the former York Tyburn where public hangings took place.

#### New Walk

The riverside promenade known as New Walk has existed since 1547 when Edward VI was king. It has been improved with the addition of trees and seats on a number of occasions and includes a landing place once probably used by the Prior of St. Andrew. An old well stands in the middle and is enclosed by a well-house.

#### York Motor Boat Club

Clustered together is a £100,000 sewage pumping station capable of processing 66m. gallons every 24 hours, the old church of St. Oswald, and York Motor Boat Club.

#### Middlethorpe

A white headless lady is reputed to haunt the river banks here. Many years ago she is said to have been cruelly murdered and decapitated when out for an evening stroll. Ever since she haunts the bank looking for her murderers and is said to be less offensive to residents than strangers.

#### Fulford

Derived from an old English word meaning 'foul ford', the village of Fulford has long military associations. In 1795/96 the cavalry barracks were erected here and the first show of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society was held here in 1838. Between 4/5,000 people paid a shilling for admission. It was also the terminus of the famous ride attributed to Dick Turpin, but in fact performed by another highwayman, William Newison, who was hanged at York Tyburn on 4 May 1684.

#### Bishopthorpe

Archbishop Gray purchased Bishopthorpe early in the 13th century, called it St. Andrew-thorpe, and attached it to the See of York. The present building and fanciful gatchouse are due principally to Archbishop Drummond who died in 1766. The chief historical event connected with the palace is that the Great Hall was the scene of the sentencing to death of Archbishop Scrope for joining the rebellion against King Henry IV headed by the Mowbrays and Percys. Lord Chief Justice Gascoigne refused to sentence His Grace and a lawyer named Fulthorpe pronounced judgement at the instigation of the King.

#### Acaster Malbis

The Malbyse family who came over with the Normans were rewarded with a gift of land and its use by the Romans as a camp results in the two names Acaster Malbis. The river here is a favourite spot for sailing enthusiasts and the banks for caravanners.

#### Naburn

A Saxon named Torchil owned much of the land at Naburn before the Norman conquest and the Parish is mentioned in Domesday Book. The church, whose spire rises 100 feet above the neighbouring trees, was dedicated to St. Matthew on 21 September 1853. The railway bridge from London to Scotland. Consisting of two spans, one moveable and one fixed, it is 280 feet long and 26 feet above summer river level.

#### Naburn Locks

The first lock here cost £10,000 and was opened in 1775 with a toll of 1/2d. for every vessel passing through. This lock was 90 feet long, 21 feet wide and 10 feet 6 ins. deep but was insufficient for many craft and a new lock 152 feet long, 26 feet wide and 13 feet 6 ins. deep was formally opened by Prince Albert Victor on 27 July 1888. The first vessel to pass



To Nun Monkton  
Nether & Upper  
Poppleton, and  
Beningborough Hall

Clifton Bridge

RIVER OUSE  
Clifton Ings  
Nun Monkton

Scarborough Railway Bridge  
The Guildhall

Abbey of St. Mary  
Museum Gardens  
Yorkshire Museum

Lendal Bridge  
Railway Headquarters  
B.R. Railways

British Railways

Yorkshire Evening Press  
Herald

Queen's Staith  
Ouse Bridge  
Viking Hotel

Plaque showing flood marks  
St. George's Field  
RIVER OUSE  
All Saints  
Pavement  
1625  
1636  
163  
392

Plaque showing flood marks

St. George's Field

RIVER OUSE

Skeldergate Wharves

Fertiliser Works

Skeldergate Bridge

Queen's Staith

Ouse Bridge

Viking Hotel

Yorkshire Museum

Museum Gardens

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