

# NEWSLETTER

## Red flags flying high

*Eye-catching new banners are attracting more visitors*



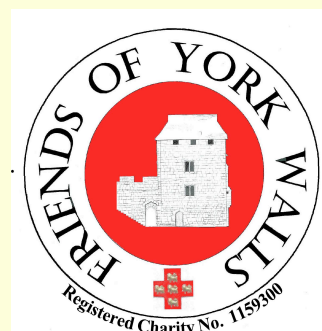
In spring 2015 the Friends of York Walls (FOYW) committee considered how best to improve our signage during open days. The two wooden A-boards were looking dated, and while the canvas banners that are tied to the railings were in good condition, it was felt that something more visible was needed. We purchased three flying banners, each over eight feet high. Alan Fleming,

Robert Reed and Martin Hetherington are pictured at our July opening with one of the banners above. One of the three banners sits in the grass next to the tower (below left). Two smaller banners for display at the top of the steps were also bought (below right). Early evidence shows the new displays having led to an increase in visitors - see page 3 for more details.



## More help needed on the committee

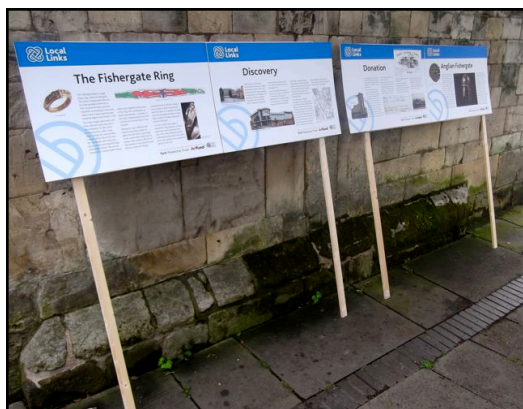
We are looking for people to get more involved with the FOYW. The management committee is down to just seven people at the moment, with Lindsay Clarke and Robert Reed having left it.



We meet on the first Tuesday of every month, and you may be able to help even if you cannot attend in person in York. Any help with the following areas would be welcome:

- Fundraising
- Event organisation
- Publicity, both for FOYW and for events
- Recruit and grow membership, and active volunteers
- Facebook and Twitter
- Legal knowledge - see the Chairman's update on the lease on page 4
- Attending York CVS meetings, linking up with other local groups

Please get in touch if you're interested.



## YORK FESTIVAL OF IDEAS

**The display about the Fishergate Ring, produced with input from Chris Rainger**

In June 2015 the group opened the tower on successive weekends during the annual Festival of Ideas.

Curators from York Museums Trust were on hand to show visitors items such as Anglian coins that were found in the area. It was hoped that the Fishergate Ring, a gold ring seldom on display at Yorkshire Museum, would be on show at FPT. Unfortunately the ring did not make it as the display case would not open.

But there was an informative display produced about the ring which Chris Rainger put together. The outside display shown above was complemented by more detailed info on the top floor.

## Calendar

### Sat 23rd January 2016

Get together for volunteers and committee members at FPT, 11am. A chance to get the tower looking good, and think about our next steps.

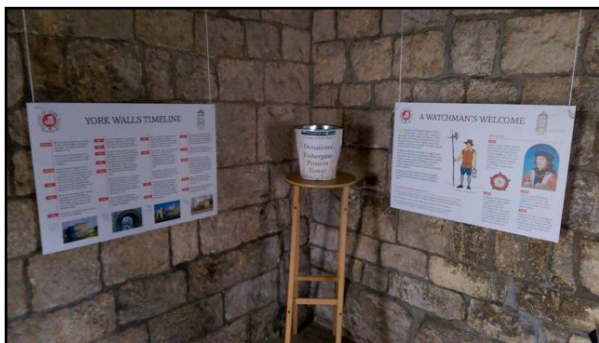
### Sat 30th Jan & Sun 31st Jan

Fishergate Postern Tower open during Resident's Weekend. Always one of our busiest openings.

### Other 2016 open days To Be Confirmed

Keep an eye on our website.

## NEW INTERNAL DISPLAYS



**Ground Floor displays at FPT - Timeline (left) & A Watchman's Welcome (right)**

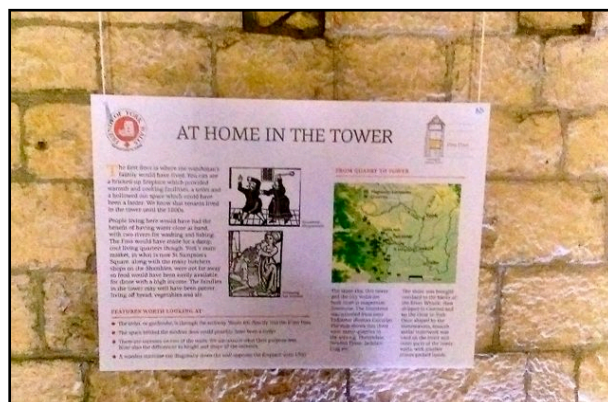
Seeing Chris's displays in June led the FOYW committee to think of producing something similar for the inside of FPT. It was commented that the ground floor looked a bit overcrowded with displays from both Simon Mattam and Chris Rainger there.

Following work by Martin Hetherington and local graphic designer Doug James (of Mode Design), three new displays were created in time for our final open weekend of the year. They are intended to be more accessible than the old displays, with more images too. It is hoped that after 12 months or so, if funding permits, a set of professional boards could be created with the help of a heritage interpreter.

The display Chris made has been removed from the tower, whilst Simon's display can now be seen on the first floor.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Simon Mattam, author of the Walking Guide to York's City Walls, is producing some additional info to sit alongside the displays on each floor. This will provide more information for those who want it, in conjunction with the folders already in the tower.



**First Floor display at FPT -  
At Home in the Tower**



## TOUR DE YORKSHIRE PASSES BY



**Above:** View from Fishergate Postern Tower as the peleton passes

**Below:** The cyclists head down Fishergate

The inaugural Tour de Yorkshire bike race passed by FPT three times on Saturday 2nd May. Our top floor vantage point afforded a great view to the few who came in. Unfortunately the Council were forced to close the walls for safety reasons, which reduced our visitor numbers. We also had low numbers when Ebor Saturday was on at the races in 2014, so perhaps sporting events and tower openings don't mix?

### OVER 5,000 VISITORS TO FISHERGATE POSTERN TOWER IN 2015

Our 2015 openings got off to a mixed start. Snow closed the walls on the Saturday of Resident's weekend but Easter was busy. Easter Saturday, with 343 visitors, was our busiest day in 15 months. Some poor spring weather meant that by late June our first 16 open days had averaged 188 visitors each.

Since July, with our new banners, Fishergate Postern Tower has had 2,448 visitors in 9 days. The average of 272 per day is up 45% on the first half of the year. Heritage Open Days saw a record 720 visitors, though I can't recall anyone mentioning the Daily Telegraph publicity (in the Top 10 weekend attractions), it cannot have hurt!

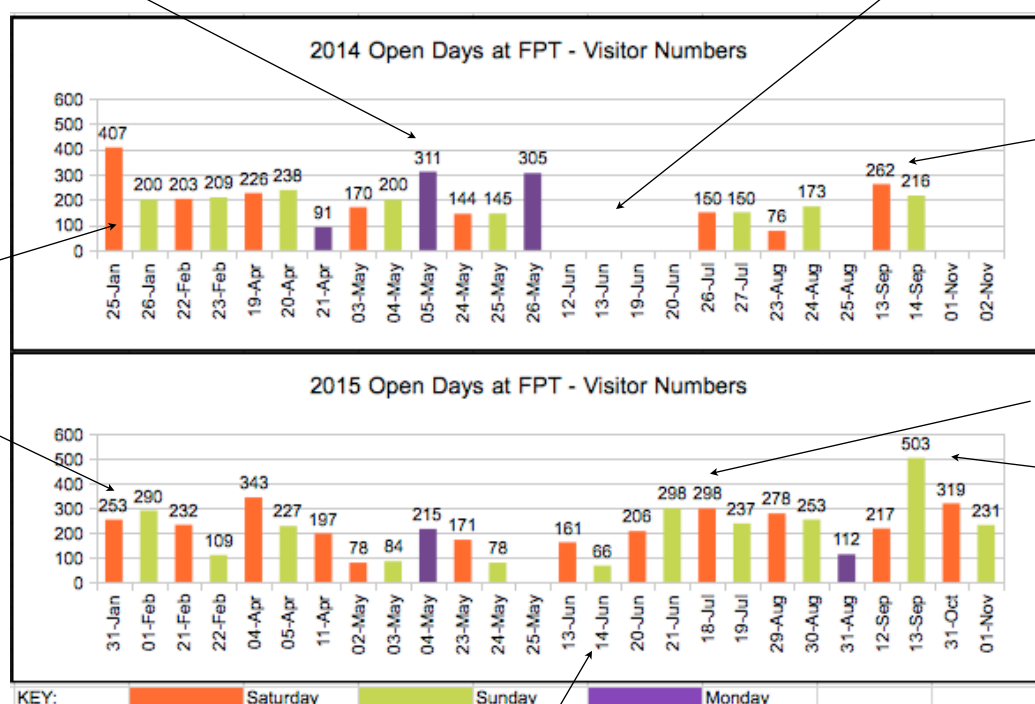
Martin Hetherington

### GRAPH OF VISITOR NUMBERS IN 2014 & 2015

In 2014 the three Monday openings had mixed results. The two in May were the 2nd and 3rd busiest openings in 2014, but Easter Monday was poor.

Not shown for 2014 are the 17 open days during York Curiouser. These only attracted an average of 58 visitors per day.

Resident's weekend is ever popular. Note that in 2015 the Walls were closed due to snow on the Saturday.



In 2014 the group also opened Red Tower on Resident's Weekend and on Heritage Open Days in September.

For the school summer holiday openings our new banners were in place. Note the increased visitor numbers since. Sept 13th saw a new record tally of 503 visitors.

Sun 14th June was wet and cold, but even so, 66 visitors was a very low number. It was the 4th time in 7 openings with under 85 visitors.

## CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS - GLEN MCGOWAN

I would like to thank all our volunteers who generously gave their time to support the activities of the Friends of York Walls CIO in 2015. Can I also offer my congratulations to two former committee members, Keith Myers and Ashley Mason who were elected to the City of York Council in May.

I am sure that many of you are aware the Council has identified a need to update the Conservation and Interpretation Plans for the walls, which is positive news and we look forward to offering our views on these subjects.

We hope that in 2016 we will continue to build upon the work we have carried out so far, particularly in terms of our displays within the Tower. We also hope to finally put pen to paper

and sign the lease for Fishergate Postern Tower. This process has taken longer than we hoped, but we are now receiving legal help from Locality, a government funded organisation that work with community groups. With their assistance I am sure we can resolve the outstanding issues.

We are also investigating the potential to train some of our members as Wall Wardens, with the aim that they will be able to tackle some of the simple maintenance tasks needed to protect our walls. Do email us if interested in this.

Finally, I would like to send the best wishes of everyone at the Friends of York Walls to one of our founding members, Chris Dowell. We are all pleased to hear that Chris is feeling well again.

## WEBSITE UPDATE - ALAN FLEMING

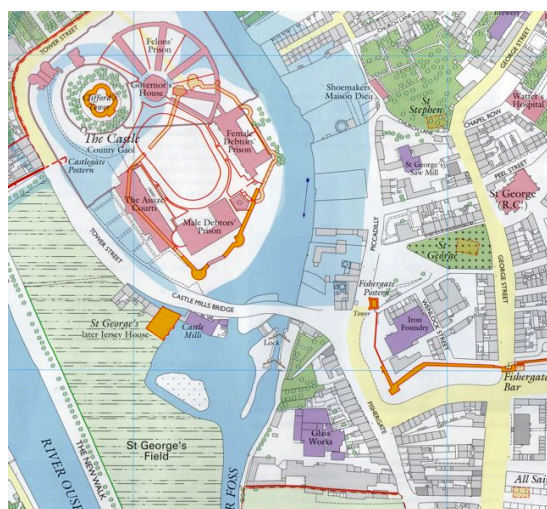


Simon Mattam's book "A Walking Guide to York's City Walls" and the similar "Walls Trail" pages on our website at [http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/?page\\_id=3690](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/?page_id=3690) continue to be a popular source of information.

The website wall trail sections contain detailed text, maps, and many colour photographs. There are also many website links to walls related documents, maps and images. If you have a SmartPhone or a Tablet then look out for the small A6 size QR cards which can be found at strategic Wall-Walk access places around the York's City Walls Trail. These QR cards are located on the existing large A1 Information Panels. The QR codes then take you direct to the

web pages of the City Walls Trail for the location you are at. This has boosted visitor numbers to our website which is now seen as a major source of information on York's City Walls.

The website gets regular hits as a result of links in TripAdvisor, VisitYork, etc.. Fishergate Postern Tower now has an entry on TripAdvisor, and is currently at #95 in the Things to do in York list. The general listing York City Walls is at #5.



## FOOTNOTES

- We have had a good first year of selling the York 1850 map at the tower. It covers the whole history of York on a colour-coded map, with a gazetteer on the reverse side. It comes folded and in a slip case. On sale for £8.
- The book mentioned by Alan above continues to sell well. Copies at the tower cost £6.
- City of York Council are considering a review of the care of York's Walls. John Oxley addressed a meeting on 20 October: <http://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s100325/York%20City%20Walls%20Feasibility%20Report.pdf>