

# Friends of York Walls Newsletter

## Autumn 2016

### The Floods

This picture of the tower during the floods was taken on Sunday of 27<sup>th</sup> Dec 2015. Below, is also a picture of Martin Hetherington, Glen McGowan, Rob & Sam McDermott cleaning up after the floods. We had to disinfect all the banners and throw out everything that couldn't be saved. After a few runs to the tip, and the purchase of 6 metres of chequered red and white table cloth, the place was ship-shape again.



*Cleaning up*  
*Photo: Martin Hetherington*



*Fishergate Postern Tower ... once more by the Foss!*  
*Photo: Rob McDermott*

### Forthcoming Open Days

The remaining dates for openings are Fri 9th, Sat 10th & Sun 11th September (Heritage Open Days) plus three standalone Saturdays: Sept 24, Oct 8, Oct 29.

We will also be opening up the walls after dark during 'Illuminating York': 6pm - 9pm on Wed 26 & Thu 27 October from Bootham Bar to Monk Bar. Entry will be £2 for adults and free for children. Please spread the word amongst your friends and family.

### Contact us:







This newsletter is based on extracts from our regular e-News. To receive our e-News or the quarterly print-News, please contact: [richard@hanage.com](mailto:richard@hanage.com) or 0780 143 0784

To sponsor a stone: [http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/?page\\_id=272](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/?page_id=272)

Free membership, or other queries: [friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com) or [www.yorkwalls.org.uk](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk)

## Annual Friends Meeting 2016

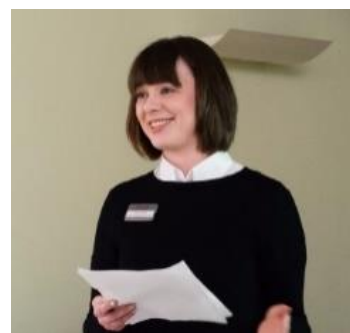
Twenty-two friends attended the annual meeting of the 'Friends' in March at Clements Hall. Below are pictures of the presenters - all by Rob McDermott. We will tell you more about what was said in later newsletters.

		
<b>Glen McGowan</b> (Chair) opening the meeting with an overview of the group's aims.	<b>Sam McDermott</b> (Secretary) outlined the Management Committee's activities in the past year.	<b>Martin Hetherington</b> (Committee) explained how our group of volunteers is developing.
		
<b>Simon Mattam</b> (Trustee) reporting on behalf of the Trustees	<b>Alan Fleming</b> (Committee) described the Walls Trail QR codes project.	<b>John Dowell</b> (Trustee) appealed for volunteers - and a new book is taking shape!

**Chantelle Gaskell** (YAT) also gave a comprehensive presentation about the Jorvik Group

## Volunteering for the FoYW .... and for YAT

We are always looking for new volunteers to help show people around the Tower, or to help in other ways. If you would like to know more about taking part, please contact [richard@hanage.com](mailto:richard@hanage.com).



*Chantelle Gaskell (YAT)  
Photo: Rob McDermott*

Also, the Yorkshire Archaeological Trust (YAT) are on the lookout for volunteers – especially those of more mature years! David Barrett and Richard Hanage volunteer for both YAT and FoYW and find it very interesting to do both. Helen Harris of YAT will be more than happy to talk to anyone who just wants a bit more information. <http://jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk/get-involved/volunteers/>

## 'No Name' book

FoYW volunteer Chris Robinson has mentioned a fiction book that maybe of interest to readers. The book is by Wilkie Collins and goes by the title 'No Name'. There is a free version online (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1438/1438-h/1438-h.htm>) and if you scroll down to the 'Second Scene' you'll see it is set around Victorian Skeldergate.

## City Walls Trail Map (Simon Mattam)

In early April a new, low cost, hand-drawn map of the walls sold out fast at the Tower. An improved version is now available.



*Drawing The Multi-angular Tower  
Drawing by David Patrick*

About 5 years ago I first noticed York's little brass pavement studs marked with a tower, I was told different stories about what they were for. It seemed strange that there was so little easily available information about them and the walking trail they marked out. This new map is my latest try at helping people use the studs. It is a bit like a collage; it puts together the maps I drew for FoYW's guide book to the Walls - but I have added some extras.

As with the guide book, [David Patrick](http://www.davidpatrick-art.com) (<http://www.davidpatrick-art.com>) has kindly let me use his pictures for free; I have only used two but they are crucial, partly because the comments I've put with the pictures tell people a lot about the Walls. This first proper edition of the map was a black and white A3 print so as to have hand-crafted charm and low production costs. John Oxley, City Archaeologist, has told me he likes it. I am collecting comments on how it can be improved and yours would be welcome .... but remember, a map can be too 'busy'.

## Toilet Improvements? (Simon Mattam)



*Tudor toilet tissues in Fishergate Postern Tower Photo: Simon Mattam*

Since April, the Tower's garderobe has been equipped with a display of alternative Tudor bottom-wipes: moist moss, dry moss, large ivy leaves, very wilted dock leaves and, for use by the rich apparently, lambswool. Laminated sheets of about these are available from a new holder kept by the side of the garderobe's seat. On an even lighter note, a 'guzzunder' [or chamber-pot] from a later period may also be seen somewhere close with an invitation to leave money if for FoYW.

Comments on the chamber-pot to [Paul Sanderson](#) and on the other extras to [Simon Mattam](#) who would also like information on how he can find leaves of the hoary mullein or similar - he has read that these were special toilet-leaves, as they feel a bit like a soft, thick, hairy blanket!

## Timeline Up-dates

Many small changes have just been made to the wording on the early half of the big 'History of the Walls' timeline (now kept on the 2nd floor of the Tower). They are designed to make this history of the defensive walls of the Roman fortress fit better with Patrick Ottaway's latest account in the newly published historic atlas of York. Changes to words at the end of the Roman period, and in

the following section are in response to visitors and others who thought that Alcuin of York's words about the Walls - and his time, 'the golden age of Anglian York' – were wrongly ignored in the display. Also new this winter are three holders for extra information about the times on the time-line above them. Simon Mattam would welcome comments on the big time-line.

## Repairing the Walls

As many of you may be aware the Friends of York Walls carry out a number of activities to promote the use and conservation of the walls. We regularly attend meetings with the City of York Council to discuss issues relating to the walls, and to offer our input including pressing for greater capital funding for the Walls.

It is pleasing to see that Council will be spending £350,000 to carry out repairs to Micklegate Bar and Tower 32 in Jewbury. However, other locations are also in need of vital repair and we would urge the Council to recognise not just the historic importance of the walls but the significant role they play in the economy of York.

## The Lease

We had hoped to be able to report to you by now on a successful conclusion to signing the lease for Fishergate Postern Tower. As explained at our recent AFM at Clements Hall, after a period of negotiations the Friends signed a 30-year lease for the Tower in January this year. After chasing York Council for their signed copy of the documentation, we discovered that the Council Officers with whom we had negotiated, were not empowered to offer the 30-year lease.

We now require the approval of the Council's Executive Committee and it would be a great help to us, if you as a Friend, were to contact your local councillor and express your support for our cause. With your support I'm sure we can reach a successful outcome.

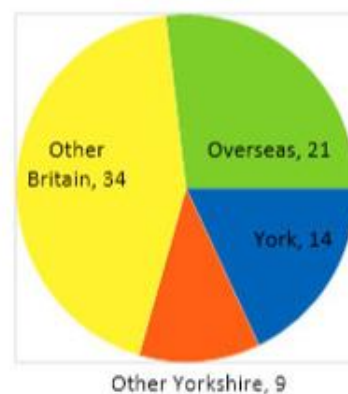
## August Walk

On Tues 2nd August around 20 people came on a 'walls walk' from Lendal Bridge to Micklegate Bar and on to Skeldergate Bridge. It was a damp evening, but spirits were raised by some Terry's Chocolate Orange and a visit to the newly reopened Masons Arms, across from the Postern Tower.

## Visitor Survey (Martin Hetherington)

Over three open days in the spring, and also from looking at the visitors' book, I can give some insights into the geographical split of our visitors, and the adult / child split too. Of 78 groups of visitors:

- 14 were from York (18%)
- 9 from elsewhere in Yorkshire (12%)
- 34 from Britain outside of Yorkshire (44%)
- 21 from overseas (27%) [11 Europe, 7 USA, 3 other]



*Split of visitors coming to FPT -  
spring 2016 survey*

From a smaller sample of those completing a survey sheet, or being directly asked, namely 56 groups comprising 155 visitors:

- 38 groups were adults only (68%), including 25 groups of 2 adults
- 18 family groups (32%), with 2 adults + 2 children the most common (9 times)
- The 155 people split as 118 adults (76%) and 37 children (24%)

Finally, a small number of people (27 groups) offered a view on three ideas for the future of the tower:

- 74% were positive about a walls museum,
- 52% were positive about an exhibition space
- 44% were positive about using the tower as an educational base for schoolchildren.

## **Fishergate Postern Tower on TV... Japanese TV!**

Japanese TV public broadcaster NHK have been in York for the past few weeks filming for a travel program called "Somewhere Street". The programme is part of a popular, long-running series in Japan, where each one-hour episode looks at a different city around the world. The York edition was being filmed in July. Past programs have featured world-wide cities including Istanbul, Graz, Canterbury, Zurich, Lisbon, St Petersburg, Milan, Buenos Aires, Honolulu, etc.

The programme captures one day in the life of the city, exploring all the historic streets and locations and meeting local people along the way. In York they wanted to feature the city walls as they are such a significant part of the city's identity. The Friends of York Walls were contacted to find out more about the walls in the past and in the present, with a particularly interest in any

events or activities that take place around the walls and which are suitable to film. After spending time at various city walls locations including Red Tower, The Bars and areas of the walls walk, they called in to see Fishergate Postern Tower during the recent Open Day on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July.



*Japanese TV crew in Fishergate Postern Tower      Photo: Alan Fleming*

Despite a dull and showery morning, the production team and the film crew spent some time in and around the tower and chatted with various Friends of York Walls volunteers asking them what they were doing and about the aims and objectives of The Friends.



*Photos: Alan Fleming*

They talked about what the walls mean to the people of York, why the city feels so proud to have them, and why it's important that organisations like the Friends of York Walls exist to ensure residents and visitors can continue to enjoy the walls for years to come.



*Photos: Alan Fleming*

All the material filmed in York will be edited into an hour long programme, which we understand will be broadcast in Japan later in the year. NHK do however have a website where past programmes have been posted, so we hope that "Somewhere Street – in York" will eventually be available (in English) for us all to see. Watch this space for any further information. The NHK website link to past programmes is at: <http://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/tv/somewhere/>

NHK World TV is available to watch if you have access to any of: Sky HD (channel 507), FreeSat (channel 209), Virgin Media (XL Package Ch 625), TV Player (Ch 241 Free View). "Somewhere Street" is currently being broadcast weekly, often on Sunday afternoons (on Sky). The commentary is in English although the voice over style can be rather irritating!

## Archives Visit - May 2016

On May 15th a group of seven volunteers went to the Archives at the main library. The hour we had with Access Archivist Laura Yeoman was really helpful, showing us the range of printed sources, maps and handwritten documents available.



Photo: Alan Fleming

Left, Wendy is looking over the range of maps held covering the last 400 years, with Julian in the background.

Perhaps best of all though, we now know that in 1652 the watchman at Fishergate Postern Tower was called John Wilson. Below is the entry in the Quarter Sessions (court records) and below the list of

names is a section referring to the Tower. Laura has provided some notes on this: *'John Wilson presents Rich(ard) Wilson for an assault the 3rd of June last, the said John being then upon his watch at Fishergate Posterne.'*

So from this we can be clear that John Wilson was on duty when the assault took place, and he presented Richard to the quarter sessions for sentencing in his role as watchmen at the postern

If any Friends study any aspect of the history of the walls, or York in general, then we will be interested in things you find out.

The reading room at the library is open Mon-Weds and Saturday (for looking at older sources) but the local history section is open daily.

Laura recommended the following histories, alongside Pevsner and the Victoria County History:

- History of York (Charles (Brunton Knight, 1944)
- The Noble City of York (Alberic Stacpoole, 1972)
- Mediaeval York – a topographical survey (Angelo Raine, 1955)

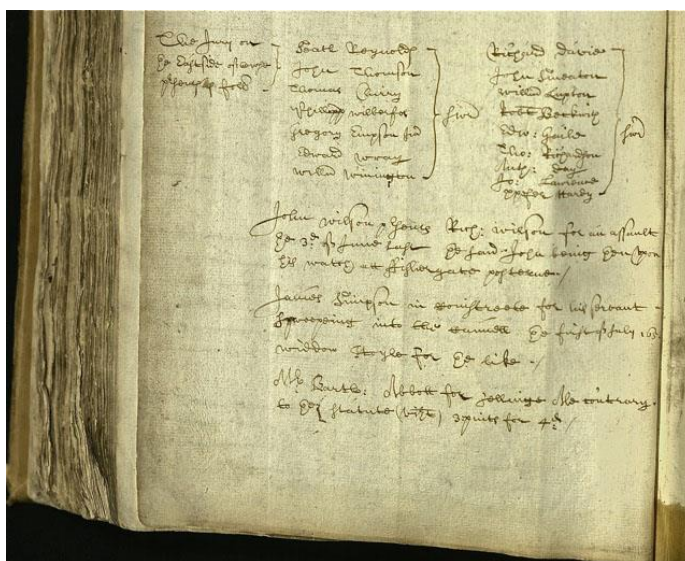
York Explore also has an online photo archive:

<https://www.explore.york.org.uk/digital/imagine-york-photo-archive/>

## Timeline York Group

Chris Robinson also mentioned the 'Timeline York' group: an association of 30 or so local history and archaeology groups, and their web address is:

<http://yorkcommunityarchaeology.pbworks.com/w/page/8847585/FrontPage>



Quarter Sessions (court records) referring to an assault at the FPT.

## Visitor Numbers

Numbers in 2016 are much higher than last year. We are averaging well over 300 per day, compared with averages of 204 during 2014, and 218 during 2015. The year-to-date total is now over 6,000 which means we have exceeded the 2015 figure with six open days to come.

Whether it is the flags, the new displays, or better publicity that is leading to the surge in visitors we don't know – but will try to find out.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel the opening on Mon 29th Aug (Bank Holiday) due to lack of volunteers.

## Get to Know Your York: Sat-Sun 10-11 Sept

The Lord Mayor of York, Councillor Dave Taylor invites you to “Get to Know Your York”. FREE WALKING TOURS: Sat 10<sup>th</sup> Sept and Sun 11<sup>th</sup> Sept. The 45-60 minute walks will start every half hour from 10am until 3pm, plus specialist walks, all commencing from St Helen's Square, York. There are also specialist walks 1 hour and 1 ½ hours long.

Entry is free but a donation to the Lord Mayor's charities – [St Nicks](#), [York Racial Equality Network](#), [York LGBT Forum](#) and [York Civic Trust](#) – will be much appreciated.

## Death by the Anglian Tower (Simon Mattam)

All Friends probably know of my/our printed guide to the Walls but some won't know the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/walkyorkwalls> which updates it. The last entry on this page may be controversial because not everyone shares my love of the weeds/wild plants that grow beside and on the Walls. It has this photo of me, drooping with sadness and holding the remains of a plant that was attacked about a month ago.



*Simon Mattam with Deadly Nightshade*

The plant was very special, growing in the shadow of the Walls close to the Anglian Tower behind the library, and possibly the direct descendant of one the canons of St Leonard's grew for their hospital there more than 500 years ago. A few days before my sad-to-me discovery I had written the following about this plant:

Deadly Nightshade has yellow-purple bell flowers, large single berries, green at the moment, turning black. This very poisonous plant is now quite rare - I have heard that it was weeded from places it used to grow around the Walls - it is interesting that it is growing now in what were the grounds of St Leonard's hospital. The Oxford Book of Wild Flowers says "monks ...extracted from its roots and leaves a drug which acts on the heart, muscles and nervous system".