

Friends of York Walls Newsletter

Winter 2016

This newsletter is based on extracts from our October, November and December email newsletters.

To subscribe to these, please contact friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com

The Lease – Approved!

York City Council approved our lease in October, subject to a minor alteration which won't affect our use of the Tower. Hopefully they will sign it soon and we can start planning developments and seeking grants. **### Stop press ### 19th Dec 2016: We now have a signed lease!**

Wheelchair Walls Route (Simon Mattam)

"My partner uses a wheelchair. We plan to visit York soon and would like to go on the Walls – can you suggest how?" This query came to us by e-mail early this year.

Alan Fleming dealt with it by explaining why we could suggest nowhere on the Walls and then suggesting a route around them, and this led me to think that Friends of Yorks Walls (FoYW) ought to have materials that were welcoming – and useful – to those who couldn't get up onto the wall.



Simon and Henry exploring the wheelchair friendly route.

My mid-summer mystery lung damage brought with it wheelchair use, and so a reminder of this thinking which was reinforced by my daughter's report of the response she got in VisitYork when she asked if they had any information they could give her about wheelchair access in the city.

She was told "No, but don't try to get down the Shambles". To be fair she also got a leaflet about a small charity

called "ShopmobilityYork" – from this it seemed they rented out mobility scooters from the Coppergate car park but didn't want them to go outside the City Walls.

My visit to VisitYork, to Shopmobility and to the CYC website all referred me to the "disabledgo" website but this didn't include the Walls as an attraction in York so I



have made a version of an A3 map [with pictures and notes] of a fairly wheelchair-friendly route around the Walls [based on my A3 map of the City Walls Trail, on sale at Fishergate Postern Tower since the spring].

Free photocopy-quality copies are now available [to those using wheelchairs] from Shopmobility in Coppergate. Also, with friendly flexibility, Shopmobility have said that they have no objection to the route [mainly immediately outside the Walls] being taken by those hiring their equipment. The map is on our website, and I am hoping VisitYork will take copies to brief staff and to offer free to those physically unable to access the wall-walk, but problems would come from making it generally available due to the cost.

However, our readers are very welcome to a free paper copy: please contact Richard Hanage on 01642317309 or richard@hanage.com or else download the pdf file from our website:

<http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MAP-City-Walls-Trail-from-groundlevel-2.pdf>

Which Way did the Walls Run? (Chris Rainger)

In the recently published and wonderful York Historical Atlas, there is a puzzling map of the walls



The Alignment of the Walls at Fishergate Corner c.1300 From the York Historical Atlas.

in c.1300 showing a dotted line which is meant to indicate that they originally cut off the corner as the walls turned towards Fishergate Bar.

I am reluctant to challenge the map's illustrious author, Prof. David Palliser, but when I opened Fishergate Corner Tower for two days for the 2015 Residents' Weekend, I noticed the tops of a series of arches were just visible above the ground on the section of wall leading towards the Postern.

These arches looked the same as those near Walmgate Bar, and I believe they show that the walls were constructed on top of a pre-existing rampart. My civil engineering

background leads me to think that rather than dig a deep trench in the rampart for the foundations, the medieval engineers built the masonry wall on a viaduct of arches. These arches were founded on pillars of lime-bound rubble backfill into well-shafts which had been excavated into the rampart at roughly 3-4m intervals. The viaduct was hidden by the rampart, so invaders would not have known the walls around Fishergate were hollow underneath.

In my view, this shows that the alignment of the walls at Fishergate Corner Tower has always been as it is today and did not originally cut off the projecting corner.

Guardian 'Best Walks' (Alan Fleming)

The Guardian published a "20 best autumn walks in the UK" article recently:

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2016/oct/15/best-autumn-walks-uk>

York's City Walls are featured in walk No. 19 - with a link to the FOYW website at its end. We had 76 "click-through referrals" to the FOYW Walls Trail home page from The Guardian link on our website on the first day.

Website Hits Well Up! (Alan Fleming)

The "Walking Article" in The Guardian (see above) pointed hundreds of people at the FOYW website. Some interesting web site statistics are :-

- TOTAL of all FOYW website page hits in September = 4680 & in October = 6505
- TOTAL "Walk The Walls - in the dark" web posting = 998
- TOTAL Walls Trail Home Page hits in September = 993 & in October = 1400 (increase probably due to Guardian article ?)

The Walls: Four Known Unknowns (Simon Mattam)

Readers' contributions of other unknowns, or of information about the following, will be very welcome. A selection of replies will be in the next e-News.



Incendiary bomb damage? Photo: Simon Mattam

1. **Red stone.** Much of the stone inside one of St Mary's walls' towers is reddened. The tower is on Bootham next to the corner tower - it is one the towers that the opening of the area behind the Art Gallery has improved access to. What is the evidence that this reddening was caused by incendiary bombs dropped during the big air raid on York during World War II? Incendiaries were dropped in this area and Russell Marwood of YAT/Jorvik thinks he has read this about the tower somewhere but I've not found it in the accounts of the raid I've read.

2. **Giraffe.** Is it true that a lorry carrying a giraffe got stuck under Walmgate Bar once and, if so, what other details are known of this and where are they recorded? Chris Dowell, I think, had a memory of being told this happened but had no further details.

3. **Stuck portcullis.** How did Monk Bar's portcullis get stuck during the last coronation? This is assuming the story is true - does anyone have the evidence or memory? Did it fall and the spikes

get stuck in the ground [in the way suggested by Yorkwalk notes made available recently via the Civic Trust website] or did it jam in its grooves - perhaps because a rope or chain holding one side of it broke?

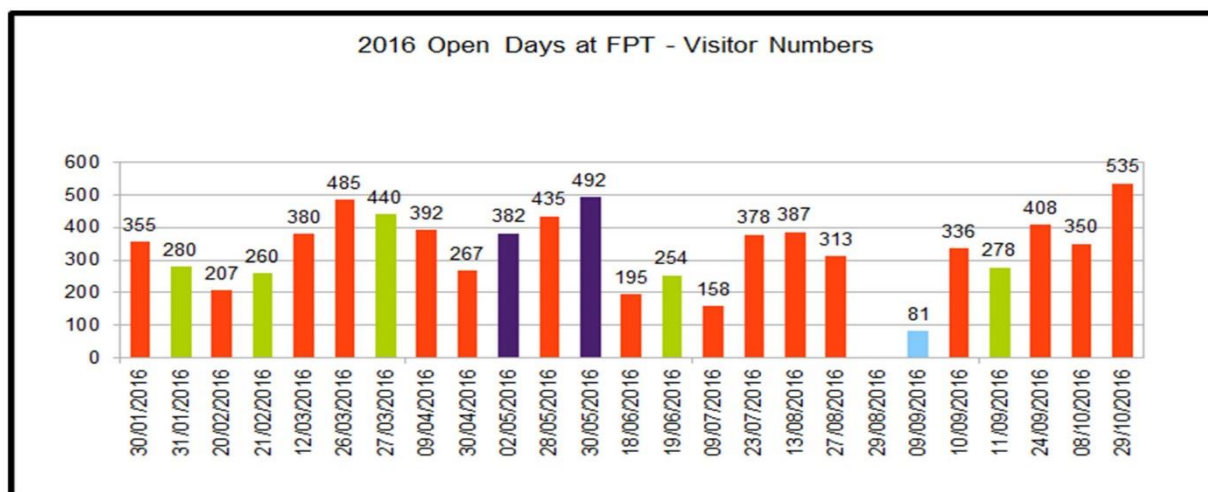
4. **Ghosts?** Are there any Ghost stories told about the Walls?

Exceptional Visitor Numbers! (Martin Hetherington)

The last week in October was a week like no other, an exceptional end to a record-breaking year for Friends of York Walls.

On Wednesday 26 Oct and Thurs 27 Oct, during our participation in 'Illuminating York', well over 1,000 people enjoyed the City Walls at night. This is double the 2014 figure. Then, on Sat 29th, the group had its busiest ever open day at Fishergate Postern Tower, with 535 visitors.

As the graph below shows some incredible visitor totals of which we can all be proud. It is safe to say that the flags and banners have made a difference to how busy we are, as has the extra publicity we generate online, and increased awareness through the books and maps we sell.



*Our record-breaking year at Fishergate Postern Tower.
(Red=Saturndays; Green= Sundays; Purple = Bank Hols; Blue= Fridays)*

Above all else though, it has been the efforts of the volunteers, year round, welcoming people to our events that makes the difference. Roll on 2017!

Bewitching Poetry (Julian Crabb)

*Deadly Nightshade flowers in a ditch
My great grandam she was a Witch'*

My family were very much into poetry especially my mother. So much so that my brother and I catch fragments every so often from the past. As soon as I saw the words 'deadly nightshade' (in **'Death by the Anglian Tower'** - Simon Mattam, Sept e-News), the lines came back. It is from 'The

Little Creature' by Walter de la Mare.

*Twinkum, twankum, twirlum and twitch
My great grandam – She was a Witch.
Mouse in wainscot, Saint in niche –
My great grandam – She was a Witch;
Deadly nightshade flowers in a ditch –
My great grandam – She was a Witch;*

Illuminating York (Alan Fleming)



Some of the Volunteers for Illuminating York Photo: Richard Hanage

Illuminating York went exceptionally well. Personal thanks to all who made it such a successful event. Nearly all the public I came into contact with seemed very enthusiastic. On the Thursday evening Hazel Colquhoun (York Curiouser and IY2016) called by Bootham Bar and asked how things were going. Keith Myers also called by for a short chat and wished us well!

The publicity for the event seemed to work very well - with coverage not only on our own FOYW website, Facebook and Twitter (many likes and re-tweets) but also via the official IY2016 channels, Radio York, the BBC, etc.



The Minster from the Walls

Photo: Martin Hetherington

Incident Light Group donation (Alan Fleming)

We are delighted that the York 'Incident Light Group' have raised £111 for FoYW by publishing a 2017 calendar. Check out the photos on their website - they are stunning! They are presenting the donation to us at their monthly meeting in December.

<https://www.flickr.com/groups/yorkincidentlight/>

Red Tower 'RED I' (Alan Fleming)

The Red Tower team have just completed an installation, comprising nine site-specific works installed in the Red Tower. It is a collaboration between York St. John University and Schoolhouse Gallery. The commissioned artists are all studying for a Masters in Fine Art at York St John University. Find out more about the Red Tower project at



Flying angels at Red Tower

Photo: Richard Hanage

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/redtoweryork/about/>

Tower 39 [may be] opening (Chris Rainger)

The Friends of York Walls hope to celebrate York's Residents' Festival on 28th & 29th January by opening Fishergate Corner Tower (Tower 39), along with the Postern Tower (*but see article below*).

The Corner Tower stands above the pedestrian crossing opposite Festival Flats, on the junction of Paragon Street and Fishergate and is accessed via a gate next to the Postern Tower.

Visitors will see the small room from where soldiers could fire bows and muskets from the arrow slits to try and stop attackers from reaching the Postern Gate and the Castle. There is a fire place

to keep the soldiers warm under the barrel shaped roof, and masons' marks can be seen on some of the masonry blocks. As well as housing the defending soldiers, the flat platform above the tower was intended to mount a cannon.



Tower 39

Photo: Chris Rainger

Tower 39 [may be] falling down! (Chris Rainger)

After an emergency inspection of Tower 39 (the tower in the corner adjacent to Fishergate Postern Tower the council has had to close the wall walk between

Fishergate Postern Tower and Fishergate Bar. The inspection revealed that the shallow brick arch inside the tower is in danger of collapse and the walkway across the top of the tower has started to subside.

The outstanding question is whether the roof problems can be relatively easily repaired or will they need major works. The opening planned for Residents Weekend is therefore on hold. It is possible it can be easily repaired, or that a partial opening could happen where visitors are allowed to come partly inside but not under the defective roof.

Please check our web-site before coming specially to see inside the tower. <http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/>



Chris Rainger was on BBC Look North

Sat Dec 10th: The walls are now open, but the tower is still being investigated.

Chris Rainger was on 'Look North'.

"It was an accidental encounter! I was taking my grandchildren to walk the walls and bumped into a Look North crew who were doing a piece on tower 39, except that they thought it was the Postern Tower which had unfathomable problems.

So I showed them around and gave them the story and they went up to tower 39 and re-shot their piece.

ER Tate postcards (Alan Fleming)



Fishergate Postern Tower

E Ridsdale Tate

Recently there was an article in The Press regarding old ER Tate postcards of York.

There is a nice reproduction of Fishergate Postern Tower with The Minster beyond about half way through the article. Unfortunately the view is now blocked by the new Travel Lodge.

If you look carefully at the image of FPT you will see that he shows what appears to be "triangular ventilation" at the top of the tiles roof ridge. Also the

support buttress at the South West corner of the tower is much larger than it is today. Is this just Tate displaying "artistic licence" or perhaps him drawing from memory - rather than actually being at the tower 39 viewpoint? Or maybe the roof and support buttress have been modified since his drawing? We will never know! See the article at:

http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/14882971.Colour_postcards_from_a_forgotten_York/?ref=eb

Reader's Contributions Please! (Richard Hanage)

Now that the e-News is monthly, I will always be looking for contributions. If any of our readers would like to offer items, I would be delighted. Please send ideas to richard@hanage.com.

Open Days – 2017 (Martin Hetherington)

There will be 29 open days in 2017 (4 more than in 2016). This list excludes August Bank Holiday, as it is difficult to find enough volunteers for that weekend. There are 22 Saturdays, 4 Sundays, 2 Bank Holiday Mondays and the Friday of Heritage Open Days.

You will receive reminders in the monthly e-News.

- Sat 28 & Sun 29 Jan: Resident's Weekend
- Sat 18 & Sat 25 Feb: School half-term. Viking festival too.
- Sat 11 Mar: stand-alone Saturday
- Sat 25 Mar: York Literature Festival
- Sat 8 Apr: First Sat of Easter School Holidays
- Sat 15 & Sun 16 Apr (Easter Weekend)
- Sat 22 Apr (York Open Studios, Sheriff's 'army' inspection)
- Sat 29 Apr & Mon 1 May: May Bank holiday
- Sat 13 May: stand-alone Saturday
- Sat 27 May & Mon 29 May: Spring Bank holiday
- Sat 10 June & Sat 17 June: York Festival of Ideas
- Sat 8 July: stand-alone Saturday
- Sat 22 July, Sun 23 July: Great Yorkshire Fringe (21 July to 13 August)
- Sat 5 & Sat 19 Aug: stand-alone Saturdays (school summer hols are 27 July to 3 Sept)
- Fri 8, Sat 9, Sun 10 Sept: Heritage Open Days, 11:30am to 4:30pm on the Friday.
- Sat 23 Sept: stand-alone Saturday
- Sat 7 & Sat 28 Oct: stand-alone Saturdays
- Sat 4 Nov: Final opening, last Sat of School Half-Term.

The Annual Friends Meeting is on Saturday 18 March.

Illuminating York is likely to be Wed 1st to Sat 4th November. If we are taking part, it would be on Wed 1st & Thu 2nd Nov. Check our website closer to the time for details.

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 or 01642 317309

To sponsor a stone: http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk/?page_id=272

Join us

Free membership, or other queries: friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com or www.yorkwalls.org.uk

Why not volunteer for a few hours a month to help us show people round the Tower?

If you would like to hear more (and we would love to hear from you!) contact us on friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com