



# Friends of York Walls Newsletter

## Spring 2017

This newsletter is based on extracts from our January, February and March email newsletters.

To subscribe to these, please contact [friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com)

## We are now tenants of Fishergate Postern Tower! (Glen McGowan)

The City of York Council have at last returned the lease duly signed and dated. As of 16th Dec 2016 the Friends of York Walls were the official tenants of Fishergate Postern Tower. Now that the Christmas celebrations are over we will start working on the Heritage Lottery Fund bid in earnest.



*Fishergate Postern Tower door Photo: Alan*

## Postern tower door (Richard Hanage)

The first step is to deal with the rotten door. We have decided to replace the door completely rather than try to repair it and are seeking quotes from experienced heritage joiners. As it will cost around £2,000 we will also be looking for grants or donations towards the costs. A couple of friends offered help with the repairs, and I will be contacting them to see what they can do for us.

## NHK filming (Richard Hanage)

You may remember that the Japanese broadcaster NHK filmed some of us at the Tower as part of a programme about York. We now have the DVD of the one-hour programme. It is part of a popular, long-running series in Japan, where each episode looks at one day in the life of a city, exploring all the historic streets and locations, and meeting local people along the way. Martin, Chris and Richard were the 'locals'.



*Chris Rainger, Martin Hetherington and Richard Hanage on NHK TV*



*Inside Tower 39*

*Photo: Chris Rainger*

## Tower 39 opening (Chris Rainger)

We had hoped to open the Fishergate Corner Tower (Tower 39) for Residents' Weekend, but the City Council have decided that it is unsafe to go inside. The subsiding brick roof has been propped up, so the walls above are open, but it is not possible to enter the tower. We hope to open it later this year, and will let you know in the monthly e-News. Alternatively you can check with our website [www.yorkwalls.org.uk](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk) The photo shows the arched brick roof that is the source of the problem.

## Feature Article: Inside the Walls (Julian Crabb)

So often when we walk the Walls we look out and try and identify what we see down below or in the distance. Supposing we look the other way, inside the Walls. Supposing we start at Bootham Bar and think of heading to Monkgate Bar. What would we notice?

We know about Bootham Bar so let's move on to the first building inside the wall. It is No.4, High Petergate and the sign on the front says, 'The Lion and Lamb'. Where did that come from? A visit on a crisp winter morning to the landlord draws a blank. No, he didn't know any history about the hostelry. I decided to research this building which demonstrates, yet again, the immense variety of historical buildings in York.

Before a visit to York Explore Library perhaps a quick trip up the Bar stairs to have a look at the back of the hotel. Interesting that an old faded notice attached to the wall states 'Bootham Bar Hotel'. Need to remember that information. The back courtyard is covered in black umbrella like awnings protecting guests seated at the numerous trestle tables. Currently about twelve students are noisily celebrating the end of term. Also visible from the Walls are the substantial houses nos. 9 and 10 in Precentor's Court but we can leave these for another day.

After the research, a quick return to the house reveals that the appearance is almost identical to the black and white photograph alongside here. The height of the house overlooks the Bar by a few feet, a plan that would today surely be rejected. The house has an extension north right up to the wall and this part forms the bar and restaurant on the ground floor. The 1782 mark is still clearly visible on the rainhead by the eaves. The original colour scheme is unknown outside but the grey-green colour of today is entirely tasteful.



*No. 4 High Petergate. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1981 England, City of York, Vol 5, The Central Area*

Where 'The Lion and Lamb' name comes from is uncertain. It is likely to be a modern invention. What was wrong with Bootham Hotel!? Perhaps sometime our group could request a tour of the inside of the building with the bribe of supper to follow.

## FoYW walls maps (Simon Mattam)

The FoYW 'wheelchair friendly' map of the walls has been very well received.

- The "Disabledgo" website, [www.disabledgo.com](http://www.disabledgo.com), will soon include sections of the City Walls and there will be a link to the map. They have used their own assessors to describe the accessibility of the Walls but I've been promised a chance to comment on their text when they have finished their internal checks.
- 'VisitYork' have taken copies of the map to brief staff and to offer free to those physically unable to access the walls.

The 50p part-colour map of the City Walls Trail is now also for sale in Explore central library.

## UPDATE: Incident Light Group donation (Alan Fleming)

The York 'Incident Light Group' - <https://www.flickr.com/groups/yorkincidentlight/> - have raised £111 for FoYW by publishing a 2017 calendar. They presented the donation to us at their monthly meeting in December.

## Illuminated Bars (Sam McDermott)

Our readers gave the illuminated Bars a cautious welcome: Yes (6), Unsure (1), No (1).

The comments were interesting, and were more negative than the overall vote suggests:



Micklegate Bar - illuminated

Photo: York Press

1. **Yes:** I do like the idea but I don't think the design is right. It is too garish and inappropriate for the setting. Hopefully, if it is done again, it will be different and more subtle.

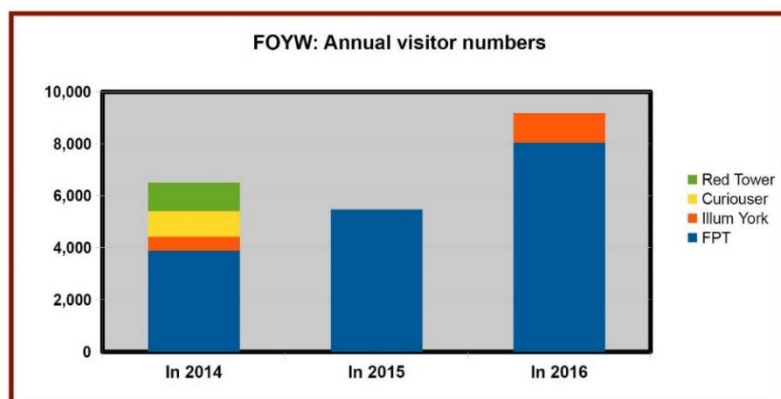
2. **Unsure:** Liking the look of the lights is obviously a matter of taste - I disliked them but some of my family really liked them. How much the look of them unlit is disliked will vary too, but I suspect nearly all will dislike that they litter and obscure the detail of the face of interesting and attractive buildings. Perhaps there will be near unanimity on its being a waste of money and an unnecessary increase in carbon emission to have them lit from

midnight to 8.00 a.m. as they appear to be at the moment. There might also be a clear majority for taking them down on twelfth night [as is traditional for Christmas decorations] rather than leaving them up for another 4-8 weeks. If BID have money to burn I think they should spend it on something that will not worsen climate change and which none will think actually reduces the attractiveness of the city - for example, employing extra by-hand litter pickers/recyclers.

3. **Yes:** Fine up to a point. It doesn't really enhance the architecture. Some decent coloured floodlighting would be better. Please take it down after Christmas.
4. **Yes:** I thought the lights looked like chain-mail, which is very appropriate for York.

## Visitor Numbers (Martin Hetherington)

First, a reminder of the very satisfactory visitor figures for the last 3 years.



It has already been a busy start for 2017, with 669 visitors, despite the walls closure on Sunday. This is the first time we have exceeded 300 on both days of Residents Weekend, and is our busiest start to a year. We had eight different volunteers out on both Saturday and Sunday. We sold also 12 books, had 9 people sign-up for our newsletter and over 20 new followers on Twitter. Our Tweets have been seen

by more people in the past week than in the whole of 2016!



## BBC Radio York “Finders Keepers” visit FPT (Alan Fleming)

On 27th January, the BBC Radio York Saturday morning “Treasure Hunt” program “Finders Keepers” visited Fishergate Postern Tower as the location for the answer to clue five. In the studio Clare Frisby directed roving reporters Jeremy and Sean as clue five was read out at All Saints Church Micklegate. It read - “Find Robert the wine merchant, and Mayors Tower. Travel to the only small gateway into the city”.

Listeners ringing in then directed Jeremy and Sean to Fishergate Postern Tower (previously Talken Tower, named after Robert de Talken, a wine merchant, who was York mayor in 1399) and the adjacent Postern, the only remaining one in York. The roving reporters picked up the next and final clue, followed by short interviews with Martin Hetherington and Graham Smith who talked about FPT, FOYW and the new Photo Competition.



Graham Smith, Martin Hetherington, Jeremy Buxton Photo Alan Fleming

They then shot off in a taxi to find the clue six location which read “Close to gallows, near Diana’s Diadem, the pop-up lifestyle of a brew”. They apparently finished up near The Knavemire and claimed “The Treasure”.



## Walls closed?!? (Simon Mattam)

A surprising email came to us recently from someone at City of York Council asking us if we could tell them who was responsible for closing the Walls. Alan Fleming replied that CYC itself was responsible! The query was from a new member of staff who had had enquiries about the Walls being closed on the Sunday of Residents’ Weekend. I was able to explain how CYC staff communicate on closures – and how, in some cases, they don’t. In December, when the wall near the FPT was closed for a week or so, CYC put no explanatory notice onto the locked gates. Surely it is only polite to explain unexpectedly locked gates?

The week after Christmas the Walls were closed for 3 days because of frost [earlier in the year the CYC had to pay damages to a woman who had slipped on ice on the wall-walk]. There were no notices put out that week – except for some FoYW ones I was experimenting with.

John Oxley, City Archaeologist, invited us to develop a notice to be displayed on gates when they are unexpectedly closed. He preferred a temporary one but a recent meeting of the Walls Liaison Group didn’t back his preference, so I am now working on the wording of permanent notices for the gates.

The notice will say when the gates are usually open and where you can go for more information about closures. The “where to go?” question has led to more problems but I am told a team in CYC are meeting to work on this. Any comments will be welcome.

## Better Lighting (Alan Fleming)

Now that we have two batteries in the FPT, we have installed better lighting on the first and second floors. In the long run we hope to have electricity in the building, but this improves illumination greatly in the meantime.

## The Walls Liaison Group (Alan Fleming)

The "Walls Liaison Group" met on 18th January and the discussion included repairs and maintenance issues, 'walls closed' notices, and FPT electricity. Other potential CYC projects include a drone survey, floodlight replacements, and photography

## Ground Investigations at Tower 39 (Chris Rainger)

The roof of Tower 39 (Fishergate Corner Tower) was known to have a deep crack running across it, but when it was checked in preparation for the 2017 Residents Festival, a brick had fallen onto the floor, so CYC installed a forest of steel props to hold up the roof and prevent the wall-walk from falling in – and our planned opening was cancelled.



Tower 39 Foundations Photo: Chris Rainger

To find why the condition of the roof had worsened, John Oxley called in the council's consulting engineers, and York Archaeology Trust were contracted to excavate small holes next to the walls to determine the depth of the foundations.

Remarkably, the masonry blocks were seen to go down only some 200mm below the topsoil, where they were founded on very hard clay (see picture). Whether this was the main foundation for the tower, or just the outer stones, with the inner blocks going deeper is not known. However, the other puzzle is that the tower does not appear to have any obvious wall cracks, so whatever the cause of the roof cracking, there may not be a

major problem with the stability of the tower, despite its apparently shallow foundations. We await the findings of the engineers.

During the excavations, YAT discovered a piece of antler and a shard of Roman Samian Ware pottery. We



YAT Fieldwork  
@YATFieldwork

Follow

One of our field teams digging in York had a surprise trench inspection by a local enthusiast this morning... 🦊



know that Fishergate was a craft manufacturing centre during the Anglian period, when antlers were carved into combs and knife handles. During the Roman occupation, a road from the city passed under Fishergate Bar and down Fawcett Street towards Selby and there have been many Roman finds in the area.

The first defence around Fishergate was a deep water-filled ditch, with the excavated soil thrown up to form the ramparts we see today. So, the antler and Roman pottery were probably dug up in the late 12th century, and hurled up onto the rampart when the ditch was dug. The hard clay supporting the

masonry tower was probably installed around 1345, when Thomas de Staunton built the walls. We are waiting to hear what recommendations the structural engineers make to the Council, but these things usually take a long time, so I doubt we'll be seeing the inside of Tower 39 for quite a while.

The picture on the previous page is especially unusual as it is very rare to see foxes in York, they don't like jumping over back-yard walls to find food scraps. This one is at Tower 39, Fishergate Corner


### Replacement/Repaired Door (Martin Hetherington)

Glen has arranged for University volunteers to work at FPT during March to help complete a measurement survey, heritage statement and condition survey. These documents should help us with future works at the tower. Hopefully the first such improvement, the replacement of the front door, is not far off now.

### DisabledGo on the Walls? (Simon Mattam)




York's City Walls are now a "venue" with an access guide on the 'DisabledGo' website, which is partnered and partially financed by CYC. VisitYork staff are told to refer anyone who asks about access for the disabled to the DisabledGo website. Last Autumn I asked if they could include the City Walls and found that I was pushing at an open door.

Unfortunately, I found the door tight shut when I offered to help them in their assessment and in devising ways of explaining access to a "venue" very different from a museum, café or shop. However, I am trying to sort out problems with what is written there - problems and errors with describing current access accurately using their standardised descriptions of access to the venues. I also hope that we can work with DisabledGo to make it clear that the Walls can be enjoyed from the ground. So far they have included my map of a wheelchair-friendly route around the Walls, but it needs to be better linked in to their guide where there are very few references to ground level "access"




York City Walls - Bootham Bar to Layerthorpe Bridge

★★★★★

[Add To My Trip](#) [View the Access Guide](#)

[Explain These Icons](#)



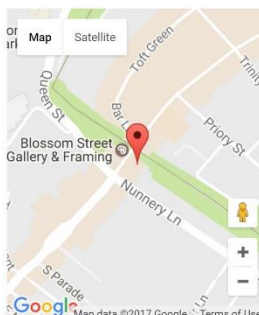
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<https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20114/york-city-centre/1340/the-city-walls>

[Something Changed? Click Here](#)



### Walls Photo Competition (Martin Hetherington)

You are invited to enter the 2017 Friends of York Walls Photographic Competition.

- All photos must be taken either of, or from, the Walls, Clifford's Tower or Museum Gardens.
- Three categories will be judged: Under 16, Amateur, and Enthusiast / Professional.
- A short-list in each category will be selected by members of the Friends of York Walls
- First place in each category will be chosen by the Lord Mayor of York
- Competition entry is free.
- The deadline for entries is: Noon on 1st May 2017

See our website for more details. [www.yorkwalls.org.uk](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk)



## Fund-raising (Alan Fleming)

The Friends of York Walls became a CIO (charity) in November 2014 and now has a 30-year lease for the Tower. It has big plans, but we need your help.

Please help us reach our first funding target of **£20,000** to match the £20,000 provided by the Council. This will enable us to do essential repairs and install electricity.

## The FPT Roof (Simon Mattam)

The photo below is of the roof of Monk Bar. The roof on Fishergate Postern Tower probably used to be similar in several ways: almost flat, lead-covered and draining onto an unroofed 'fighting platform' around the tops of the walls.



Monk Bar roof

Photo: Richard Hanage

You can still see the two places the water drained off the fighting platform on the north side of the tower where the River Foss was closest.

We believe that the current roof was added in around 1600, about 100 years after the tower was built. Some of its timbers are even older. For instance, the long groove on one strut shows it had a previous life holding the edge of a panel in a timber-framed house.

The current rough stonework where the fighting platform once was raises questions - was this laid to hold roof supports in place when the present roof was added? Or was the original surface of the platform removed so the roof supports could be bedded into the remaining rough stones and mortar?

## FoYW on Twitter (Martin Hetherington)

In February, @yorkwallsfriend had another 10,000 Twitter impressions, and we gained 30 new followers. Why not follow us - for up-to-date news? [Click here.](#)

Lewis Outing @LewisOuting

Daffodils York citywalls @YorkWallsFriend @yorkwalls @YorkUK1  
@York\_Today @YorkPictures @VisitEngland @Britanniacomms  
#PintoFotografia #OMGB



YorkWallsFriend  
@YorkWallsFriend

Friends of York Walls (CIO) is a voluntary non-profit group. We aim to help promote York's historic defences for the benefit of local residents and visitors.



## 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> to Sat 4<sup>th</sup> November. If we are taking part, it would be on Wed 1<sup>st</sup> & Thu 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 monthly e-News or the quarterly print-News, please contact: [richard@hanage.com](mailto:richard@hanage.com) or 01642 317309

## Sponsor a stone

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

## Join us

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