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Friends of York Walls Newsletter

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Friends of York Walls Newsletter

Upcoming Events

Open Days:

Sat 26 Jan; Sun 27 Jan (Residents Weekend)

Sat 23 Feb

Committee: Tues 5 Feb; Tues 5 Mar

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FoYW Newsletter - January 2019

Happy New Year! Welcome to the first e-News of 2019.

2019 Openings (Martin Hetherington)

In 2019 our openings start with Residents Weekend on Saturday 26th and Sunday 27th January. There is a tidy-up meeting on the Saturday 19th Jan, at 10.30, as in previous years. The openings in 2019 are as follows:

- **Jan:** Sat/Sun 26, 27
- **Feb:** Sat 23
- **Mar:** Sats 9, 23
- **Apr:** Sats 6, 20
- **May:** Mon 6, Sat 25, Mon 27
- **Jun:** Sats 8, 29
- **Jul:** Sat 13
- **Aug:** Sat 10, Sun 11 (York Walls Festival), **Sun 25**
- **Sep:** Sats 14, 21
- **Oct:** Sats 5, 26

- Nov: Sat 2

Archaeological Dig (Bill Hill)

Just before Christmas, Friends had the opportunity of taking part in an archaeological dig of Fishergate Postern Tower, triggered by the need for a trench to be dug so an electricity cable can be brought into the ground floor. The dig was led by a professional archaeologist, Arran Johnson, from Yorkshire Archaeological Trust, over a two-week period and up to five volunteers a day were enabled to take part under his supervision. The following is a community volunteer's, non-specialist, perspective of this experience.

The excavation consisted of digging a metre-wide trench, half a metre deep, along the inside wall of the tower towards the door, and then a continuation trench outside. That sounds simple when baldly stated, but actually, given modern archaeological practice, two weeks was only just enough time to get it done.



Graham in the trench - Photo: @YATFieldwork

For someone whose only previous experience of an archaeological dig was a bronze age burial mound in the somewhat buccaneering times of the 1960's, 'modern archaeological practice' is an eye-opener, particularly the amount of time and care taken nowadays to record each level of an excavation. It must have been a good fifty-percent of the time, but one of the rewards of working with YAT is their philosophy of involving volunteers fully in all the activities. Thus I learned to use a theodolite to measure levels, the etiquette of 'Context' record cards with their *de rigueur* use of professional conventions, drawing plans to the standards needed nowadays, and hour by hour detective work on finds and changes in soil conditions.

The dig itself consisted essentially of daily trowel-scraping layers of earth, an outwardly mundane task, but greatly enlivened by coming across finds and by hearing the gradual interpretation of evidence as the daily judgements of the professionals unfolded (the speed

of change a refreshing characteristic of urban archaeology).



Digging! - Photo: @YATfieldwork

The main features found, going backwards in time, were as follows:

- The brick foundation to a set of internal stairs (see photo). There is a record of one being removed in 1960 and the line of where it went up can still be seen on the inside of the south wall.
- Outside, a Victorian kerb with sets.
- Internally, the original 1504 stone foundations for the tower walls, uncovered for the first time since they were laid five centuries ago, together with the construction filling in the trench created at the time.
- The 1504 clay surface created as a construction platform.



Old tower foundations - Photo: @YATFieldwork

The highlight of the finds was a comb made out of horn (see Twitter photo, below), which Arran said could be 16th or 17th century. It was a find which delighted the professionals since it is rare to find such a personal item. Other finds included glazed pieces of a late 18th/early 19th century plancheon (large bowl for making bread); a fragment of late-medieval pot, glazed and with the maker's thumb-print on it for decoration; pieces of Roman Samian ware (an import from Gaul), black-burnished ware and grey ware; the base disk of a Cistercian drinking mug, and a piece of Norman pottery from the 11th/12th centuries.

Overall, an interesting experience bad on the knees but great for the mind!



What a lot of pot! - Photo: @YATFieldwork



It's a wrap! - Photo: @YATFieldwork

FoYW Tweets (Martin Hetherington)

Around 280 new Twitter followers were added during 2018, bringing our total to 1,265. There were peaks in activity in the summer, linked to the festival, and in December, linked to the dig. We had the highest ever monthly interaction rate last month, with the media in particular lapping up the daily updates, sharing tweets and liking our content.

Tony Robinson eat your heart out!
[#York](#) [#archaeology](#) [#find](#) [#dig](#) [#news](#)

YAT Fieldwork @YATFieldwork

🚩 Find alert 🚩 Bill has just discovered our most exciting find - a near complete bone/antler comb! We believe it to be post-medieval in date and has been beautifully crafted [#archaeology](#) [#york](#) @YorkWallsFriend



10:17 pm · 17 Dec 2018 · Twitter Web Client

Bill Hill and the comb - Tweet by Martin Hetherington

[Click here for more tweets.](#)

From the Committee (Sam McDermott)

Other items from the committee:

- The committee has received proposals for the future of Fishergate Postern Tower from our heritage consultants, and we will discuss this at the next meeting
- A bid is to be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in the coming week to hopefully boost our activities and profile over the coming year.

FPT Electricity Connection (Alan Fleming)



There is light at the end of the tunnel - but the tunnel may still go on to the end of January !

During the months of December & January The Friends of York Walls, together with the City of York Council, York Archaeological Trust and Northern PowerGrid, have continued to work towards the installation of electricity services within the tower.

Work started in the first week of December when CYC prepared the site and lifted the internal and external flags. A temporary closure of the walkway was put in place to restrict public access for H&S reasons. The YAT "archaeological dig", with a number of FOYW and other volunteers, took place from 10th-21st Dec. 9:00 to 15:00 daily. The volunteers experience included training, full participation, measuring, recording and documenting, plus generating FOYW publicity, etc.. There was a lot of media and general interest during the dig - which is reported elsewhere.

The site was closed and left safe and secure from 22nd Dec to re-starting work on 2nd Jan. Since then various CYC staff have worked hard to ensure that the project is completed to the agreed timescales. On Thursday 10th January the wall backing board, Meter Box and Consumer Unit Assembly were installed and FOYW's electrical contractor connected the consumer unit to a 100A switch inside the new meter box location.

By Friday 11th January the installation of the 38mm plastic duct + draw string + warning tile tape over + hockey stick + meter back board + meter cabinet - all to the approved Northern PowerGrid specifications have been achieved. All excavations have been reinstated together with relaying internal and external flags, etc.. to a high standard. The internal flags under the door have been lowered slightly to allow the door to open better, and the badly cracked and damaged door sill has now been replaced with a complete new stone.



The re-laid Door Sill - Photo: Alan Fleming



Excavations re-instated - Photo: Richard Hanage

Northern PowerGrid were booked to arrive on site on Tuesday 15th January - to excavate their part of the trench, located in the "flats garden area", and to find the existing passing three phase cable. By noon on Wednesday 16th however no NPG staff had arrived on site, but they then turned up and did the digging that afternoon. On Thursday 17th January NPG connected the single phase cable, which had been pulled through the pre-installed cable duct, and connected up the two ends. This provides a live supply to the internal service fuse ONLY.



Ready for Installation - Photo: Alan Fleming

In the week 18th - 25th January it is hoped that FOYW's chosen electricity service provider, British Gas, will arrange to install a Smart Meter and connect it to the pre-installed 100A switch in the meter cabinet. Then, after the electrical contractors second visit, we would get a working and usable electricity supply inside the tower - with just enough time to connect the existing LED 12V lighting strips to the new sockets via 240/12V 6A transformers, ready for Residents Weekend openings. Further internal electrical work to follow at a later date.

HOWEVER - at the current time of writing (17th January) BG who were initially unable to provide a date for their meter fitting sub-contractors before Monday 28th January have, after a lot of negotiation, given a new provisional date of Tuesday 22nd January. BUT by the way other contractors have been unreliable we will have to keep our fingers crossed that they turn up ! Dozens of people have worked hard to stick to their timescales, so it would be a pity for the project finish date to be thwarted at almost the last hurdle by the lack of reliable meter fitters appointments.

SO - Fishergate Postern Tower will open for "Residents Weekend 2019" on 26th/27th January BUT it may be with 12V battery powered LED strips, OR we might just be lucky enough to get a fully working and live 240V mains connection. The FOYW volunteers "spring clean and setting things up session" on 19th January will be with battery lighting only.

During 2019 we will be looking at what more permanent electrical installation is required throughout the four floors of the tower, including multiple sockets and fixed lighting per floor. This will all require professional design and implementation - which requires significant funding. Our Just Giving appeal is still open, but is getting no visibility or attention.

Please help us to raise funds for the next phase of the FPT full electrical installation by visiting :-

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/fishergateposterntowerelectrics>

Walls Liaison Group (Simon Mattam)

Alan Bridgman was introduced as the new Walls Manager, 'temporarily' in this post for 4-5 weeks so far, with John Oxley hoping his position would be 'formalised' in the new year.

Enhancement projects progress:

- work above Victoria Bar is finished,
- work in the Ice House needs English Heritage approval,
- painting and resetting gates-to-ramparts is in progress [eg. Prices Lane]
- YCT think they have a satisfactory method for the portcullis re-actification
- painting for the emblem on the gates to the wall-walk is also planned for next year's better weather.

The Walls had only been closed 3-4 times for weather [frosts] so far this winter. No health and safety issues had been noted.

Help With a Flower Diary? (Bill Hill)

Would you like to help keep a record of wildflowers you see on the Walls and Ramparts through the year? Beginning this way, we think we can get to help people enjoy walking them more, perhaps by providing information over the season, perhaps by increasing natural diversity through a focus on bee and butterfly friendly wildflowers. You can join Bill Hill and Simon Mattam to shape this project, and in the process perhaps improve your acquaintance with York's native wild flowers.



January flowers on the rampart - Photo: Ann Mattam

If you are interested, please contact Bill (billhill.torfaen@gmail.com) or Simon (ps.mattam@outlook.com)

Richard Hanage (richard@hanage.com)
Editor, on behalf of the FoYW Committee.

Glen McGowan	Chair
Penny Heptonstall	Treasurer
Sam McDermott	Secretary
Alan Fleming	Website
Emily Greenaway	Fund-raising
Bill Hill	
Martin Hetherington	Volunteers
Simon Mattam	

The committee may be contacted at friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com

If you would like to attend a committee meeting, please contact Sam McDermott.

The meetings are normally on the first Tuesday of the month.

The 'Friends of York Walls' is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation representing York's

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