

Richard Hanage

From: Friends of York Walls <richard@hanage.com>
Sent: 22 March 2020 20:53
To: richard@hanage.com
Subject: Friends of York Walls Newsletter - March 2020

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Friends of York Walls Newsletter

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Open Days: **Cancelled until further notice**

Annual Friends Meeting: **Cancelled**

Committee: **On-line only**

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To All Our Supporters & Volunteers

We all need to focus on the health and welfare of ourselves, our visitors and our volunteers as the nation comes together to deal with the coronavirus.

Following Government instructions we will not hold any public events (for instance the 'Annual Friends Meeting') and Fishergate Postern Tower (FPT) will remain closed until further notice. While the FPT door remains closed to visitors you can still see a "Virtual Tour" inside the tower [HERE](#)

Given the uncertainty we are all facing, we don't yet know when we will reopen FPT. You can keep in touch on the [WEBSITE](#), and through our social media channels on [TWITTER](#) and [FACEBOOK](#)

We can't wait to welcome back old friends and volunteers, and ignite the curiosity of many more who haven't yet had the chance to visit us, when we re-open our doors.

For the time being, stay safe and take care.

The Friends of York Walls

The FoYW Newsletter (Richard Hanage)

We will be publishing a newsletter each month to keep you up-to-date with developments. In addition we will probably be raiding the archives for interesting articles from the past.

We would love contributions from readers, so please get out your virtual pens and see what you can produce for us..... including pictures, if possible.

We Have a New Chair!

We are delighted to announce that we now have a new Chair. Bill Hill is taking over from Glen McGowan who has been in the role for several years. We would like to thank Glen for his contribution to the FoYW and wish him well in the future.



Bill Hill, new Chair of the Friends of York Walls - Photos: Martin Hetherington

Bill joined the group in 2018, and immediately got involved on FoYW activities, including the YAT archaeological dig and the 2019 York Walls Festival. He is currently seeking funding to widen the range of activities we carry out - especially around the annual festival see below.

York Walls Festival (Martin Hetherington)

There are currently discussions about what to do about this year's York Walls Festival and there will be an update in the April issue.

Riding Lights Theatre Promenade (Bill Hill)

We have been successful in securing grants from the Guildhall and Fishergate Ward Funds totalling £1,500 to enable the [Riding Lights](#) Senior Youth Theatre Group to undertake a promenade performance piece along the walls.

The Senior Youth Theatre is made up of young people in their teens, working under the guidance of a professional theatre tutor. They will work this piece up over a series of workshops, culminating in a public performance along the walls from Fishergate Postern Tower to the Red Tower. This was initially scheduled for 4 July, but may have to revise that depending how long the coronavirus strictures last. It will take place once circumstances allow - we'll update in each newsletter.

This is taking our activities as the Friends into new areas of work, reaching out to audiences in ways that are perhaps more likely to engage with both young people and the local community living along the walls.

Visitor Numbers (Martin Hetherington)

We have had an excellent start to the season - totalling 1130 visitors already. It is possible that, once we re-open, we could quickly reach 40,000 tower visitors since 2014.

Archery at Baile Hill (Simon Mattam)

I know very little of archery and not a lot about Baile Hill so please, reader, e-mail in extras and corrections - I still thought you might like to read what I think I know.

Baile Hill

Baile Hill, where the City Walls now officially start with Victorian 'Tower 1', was the motte of a Norman 'motte and bailey' castle; almost half of what was its bailey is the patch of grass beside it now half enclosed by the walls. I've been told it was once where York's men had to practice their archery, and we hope Jorvik will be organising archery there again in this year's Walls Festival.

More attention than usual was focused on Baile Hill last year when some local people and Cllr Jonny Crawshaw became worried about its becoming unpleasant, even dangerous, to visit because of litter left there by drug users & rough sleepers. This attention led to considering the hill as historical heritage and to Bill Hill's reading the report of the 1960s archaeological work there.

He was particularly interested in finds of arrow heads that were reported and the linking of these to archery practice in the bailey. There is a brief mention of such practice at the bottom of the City Walls Trail information board in Tower 1. One line of enquiry took Bill to the Yorkshire Museum as custodians of the arrowheads while another line of thought, centring on a possible celebration of the hill's history, led to a meeting at the hill with me and Ronald Kane who manages the Richard III and Henry VII Experiences on the City Walls and has a special interest in archery.

Yorkshire Museum

At the museum, Adam Parker first kindly gave his time to finding the cardboard boxes full of little plastic bags containing the iron-work finds from the Baile Hill excavation. Then, after warning of possible disappointment, he offered to show what he had found in the archives to Bill and any FoYW companions. A young new volunteer and I joined Bill for the showing and that is where I

took the photographs I've included here.



Socketed military(?) arrow head - Photo: Simon Mattam



Bodkin (or practice?) arrow head - Photo: Simon Mattam

Disappointment - for Adam at least - came from the contrast between the hoard of neatly drawn and labelled arrow heads displayed on a page in the archaeological report and the piles of little plastic bags and their crumbling contents. It wasn't just the crumbling, enough was recognisable to show that the labelling on the page and the bags often didn't match. I found Adam's adult 'show and tell' fascinating but it was clear that our hope of public displaying, even handling,

of the finds was unrealistic.

Baile Hill Site Meeting

The site meeting with Ronald Kane proved much more promising from the point of view of possible public involvement. Ronald is not only informed about archery and archaeology but has access, through his employers, the Jorvik group, to a team that can create an archery experience.

He roughed out with us plans for people to have a go at shooting arrows at targets in a space safely enclosed in tents pitched on the grass below Baile Hill, a wonderful event for this year's walls festival. In an extra tented space he could probably arrange for someone to display and explain a replica medieval long bow and arrows. He also alerted us to the interesting diversity in arrowheads, saying it was thought that different styles performed differently against different types of armour so that as armour evolved so did arrowheads.

Archery Practice Research

Finally, a little research using Google [for some serious detail try:

<https://oxoniensia.org/volumes/2008/wadge.pdf>] suggests that:

- archery practice was compulsory for able-bodied men from 1363,
- details of laws for this were being altered rather than ended in Tudor times,
- there were public archery butts at the edge of towns,
- targets were set up on mounds of earth [to prop up the target and catch arrows that miss the target? This would make sense, and Baile Hill would be a ready-made mound, but some accounts suggest a flat topped mound as a base for targets],
- research is still being reported into the effectiveness of different arrow heads against chain mail, plate armour and brigandine armour,
- a variety of replica medieval arrow heads are fairly easily available for sale.

York's Sheriff's Army Marches Again (Tom Gibson)

This event has now been cancelled. Please check the Gild of Freeman [website](#) for updates.



The Sheriff's Army at Red Tower - Photo (anon)

The Sheriff Mrs Jo Trythall and the Gild of Freemen were expecting to lead the Army on its annual patrol of the City Walls, but this has now been cancelled.

If you require any further information please contact, Brian Watson on 01904 792579, or Tom Gibson, clerk to the Gild of Freemen on 07956 028339.

Reminder: 2020 Open Days and Brochure

The list of originally planned Open Days for 2020 is available [here](#).

NB. Open Days are currently cancelled until further notice.

Volunteers (and friends) please sign up to help [here](#), when we announce future openings.

The **2020 brochure** is available to download [here](#). If you would like one or more hard copies of the final version, please email your postal address, and how many you would like, to me at

richard@hanage.com

Red Tower to Walmgate Bar (Simon Mattam)

I live in hope but no-one has yet responded to last month's invitation for an item about lichens on the walls so I went out with my camera last week.

The council are being particularly considerate to walls walkers between Red Tower and Walmgate. They are refurbishing railings and paving on this section but only closing the walls during times when they are setting up and such-like. As a result I was able to walk this bit of the walls and enjoy the miniature banks of flowers along the crack between the parapet and the wall-walk.

Whitlow Grass

The grassy ramparts at the moment are dominated by daffodils [the Rampart Flower of the month in this newsletter last March]; roughly a twelfth of the size of a daffodil is 'common whitlow grass', but it dominates the flowery crack by the parapet and for me these plants are not a whit less beautiful than daffodils.



'Banks of March flowers in miniature - Photo: Simon Mattam

As with daffodils, their beauty comes partly from their green context. Sometimes they seem to be bedded in the moss that was featured in last month's newsletter but their delicate flower stems also spring from their own rosette of leaves. The leaves are described as spear-shaped but they are hairy and much less obviously spear-like than a daffodil leaves.



Common Whitlow Grass - Photo: Simon Mattam

It would be nice to think that the plant's common name refers to the white flower [as in 'Whitsun'] and its diminutive stature [there are few smaller plants] or humble demands but 'Culpeper's Complete Herbal' gives an alternative name of 'nailwort' and tells us that 'it is held to be exceedingly good for those imposthumes in the joints and under the nails, which they call Whitlows...'.

It belongs to the enormous cabbage family so it really has only four petals to each flower but each petal is very nearly split in two so it appears to have eight. Its botanical name is usually given as 'Erophila Verna' which seems to me to translate roughly [and probably unreliably] as Springtime Love-lover. So it seems a little inappropriate that it should also be described as 'self-fertile', needing no other plant [not even more than one flower?] to seed successfully.

The Trees

Just before I got to Walmgate Bar I passed what I think is a cherry tree in flower on the inner ramparts. It was very pretty against the sun but just past the bar on the outer ramparts is the tree flower in the photograph; I liked the fact that I could get a blurred image of the Bar and its barbican in the background. It was the City Ecologist who identified it for me when it was in flower this time last year - it is a silver maple, possibly the commonest tree in North America. Its botanical name is 'saccharinum' - I assume because its sap is much like that of the sugar maple [named 'saccharum'] which gives us maple syrup.



Silver Maple in flower by Walmgate Bar - Photo: Simon Mattam

As Shakespeare almost said 'Life is but a flower...Sweet lovers love the Spring'.

Richard Hanage (richard@hanage.com)

Editor, on behalf of the FoYW committee.

Bill Hill	Chair
Penny Heptonstall	Treasurer
Sam McDermott	Secretary
Alan Fleming	Website
Glen McGowan	
Simon Mattam	
Martin Hetherington	

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 walls & defences. Registered Charity: No. 1159300 www.yorkwalls.org.uk

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