

## Richard Hanage

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**From:** Friends of York Walls <richard@hanage.com>  
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**Subject:** Friends of York Walls Newsletter - April 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**

**Contents:** Coronavirus Update .... Virtual Open Day .... Glen's New Stone .... Baile Hill (continued) .... York Walls Festival .... Sharing Heritage .... Coronavirus Support .... FPT Improvements .... FPT Virtual Tour .... Ferns on the Walls

## Coronavirus Update

We are sorry to say that the Fishergate Postern Tower (FPT) will still remain closed until further notice.

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

For the time being, stay safe and take care.  
The Friends of York Walls

## Virtual Open Day (Martin Hetherington)

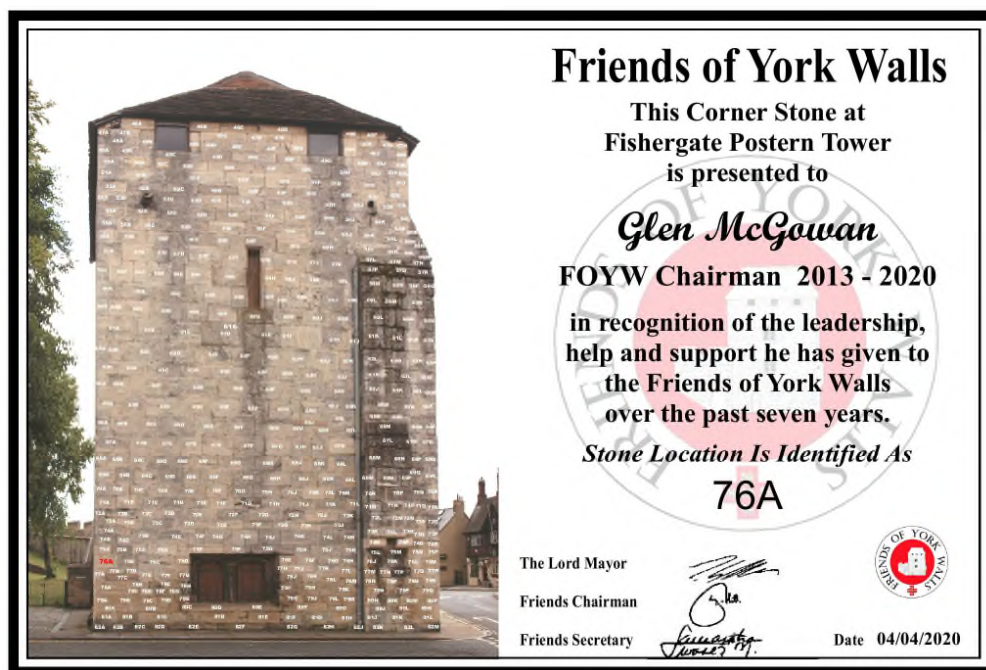
This Saturday, April 18, there will be a virtual open day with content [posted here](#).

We invite you to share your memories of Sheriff's Inspections of the Walls, as this would have taken place this Saturday. You can also see our 'walking the walls' video, so you can still enjoy our heritage whilst the walls remain closed. And you can see inside Fishergate Postern Tower by trying our virtual tour.

For volunteers only, there will be catch-up via Zoom at 2.30pm. Sam will send out joining details via email.

## Our Thanks to Glen McGowan (Alan Fleming)

As a special "Thank You" for his time as FOYW Chairman, the Committee have presented Glen McGowan with stone 76A, on the North Wall of Fishergate Postern Tower.



*Glen McGowan's Stone 76A Certificate*

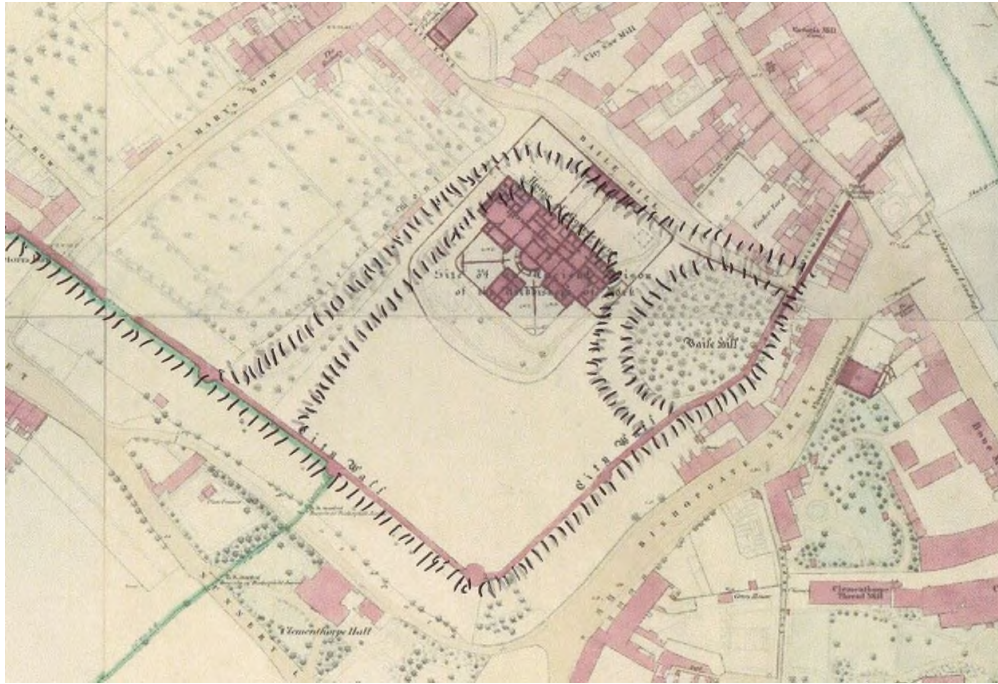
The certificate message reads "This Corner Stone at Fishergate Postern Tower is presented to Glen McGowan FOYW Chairman 2013 - 2020 in recognition of the leadership, help and support he has given to the Friends of York Walls over the past seven years."

John Dowell has contacted us with this tribute: "Can I just say a big thank you to Glen for all his hard work running the committee, especially in the early days when we lacked a reliable leader! I know it must have been tough for him, running his business and family, but he has done the association well over the last few years, again thank you, Glen. Best of luck to all and happy greeting to the new chairman". John Dowell.

## More on Baile Hill (Tony May)

Following Simon Mattam's article last month on Baile Hill one of our volunteers, Tony May, who lives nearby, sent us some information about the old moat.

The bailey (or at least the outer bailey) was a lot larger than twice the existing grass area. You can see the line of the moat marked in on the 1852 map (below). You can actually still trace the line of the moat where it joins the Walls between Bitchdaughter Tower and Victoria Bar. If you look closely as you walk along Newton Terrace you will see that Nos 4 to 8 have basements and behind them have sunken gardens. The houses behind them in Kyme St are the same. These were all making use of the moat when they were built in the mid 1870s.



*Baile Hill area around 1850 - moat superimposed on the "York in 1852" map by Alan Fleming*

For comparison the current street plan is shown below.



*Current streets in the bailey - Source: Google maps*

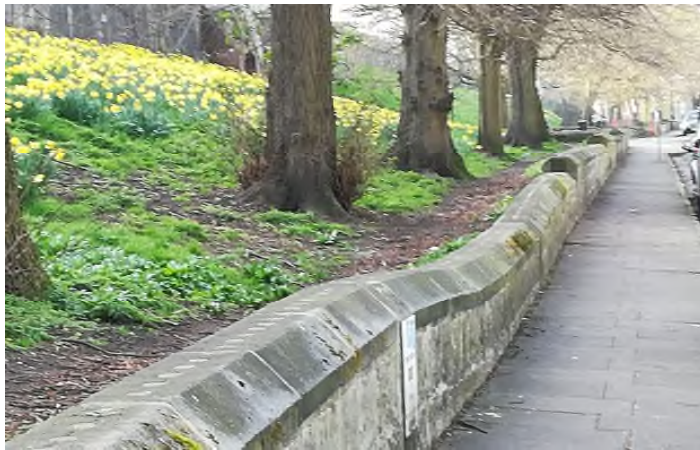
Our house (No 10) and our neighbour at No 9 were the first pair built on Newton Terrace inside the bailey in the mid 1880s. For some reason the builder decided to build the kitchen and bathroom offshoots to either side, rather than backing onto one another, and No 9's thus has a blank wall stretching over four storeys from the foot of the moat to its ridge. Partly as a result, we both slope gracefully towards the moat, though happily this is what estate agents call settlement rather than subsidence!





*Sunken garden in Kyme Street - Photo: Tony May*

As further evidence, there is a clear dip in the wall at the foot of the bank opposite Nos 6 to 8, where the road as originally built sank into the moat.



*Wall sinking into Baile Hill old moat - Photo: Tony May*

## **York Walls Festival** (Martin Hetherington)

Like all groups organising events this summer, we are faced with the realism that ordinary life will be on hold for many months. Only a few days ago the Bar Walls themselves were closed to help reduce the spread of Covid-19. Given it is nearly five months until the festival on August 15 & 16, there is a hint of optimism that the worst may be over by then but, even as a small festival, the uncertainty over whether government restrictions will be in place makes planning difficult.

We will therefore keep the situation under review, but certain events due to take place outdoors like an archery event at Baile Hill and a theatre piece between Red Tower and Fishergate Postern Tower will be cancelled. Talks may be postponed or delivered as online videos. Indeed, the festival committee will see what activities we can take forwards online (at [www.yorkwallsfestival.org](http://www.yorkwallsfestival.org) and via social media), and look at developing resources to share our wonderful heritage more widely.

During the planning so far for this year's festival, the committee have agreed on our vision and noted the audiences we are looking to attract. [Read it here](#)

As we scale back our 2020 plans, at least we can confirm our dates for 2021: Aug 14 & 15 next year. Updates regarding festival plans will be shared online. Finally, the festival committee wish everyone well for the months ahead. Times will be hard, but everyday life will eventually resume, and we look forward to enjoying the City Walls with you when it does.

## **Sharing the Heritage of York Walls (Bill Hill)**

The Heritage Fund have extended the deadline for the conclusion of our "Sharing the Heritage of York Walls" project until at least December 2020. Over the last 12 months we have made good progress against most of the outputs we said we would achieve, for example:

- Increasing the number of people who have developed their knowledge and understanding of the heritage of the walls.
- Engaging with people who live next to the walls.
- Putting on three public lectures
- Enhancing the use of digital communications in our interpretation work
- Installing the display of archaeological findings in Fishergate Postern Tower
- Developing family activities

The outputs we have yet to address fully include:

- a) Developing a schools pack (good plans are in place but have been halted by the current lockdowns)
- b) Undertaking Field Trips to comparable heritage attractions and bringing back lessons for our work (Chester for example).
- c) Foreign language versions of our interpretation materials.
- d) Training sessions for volunteers on e.g. on the use of archives.

We have some of the grant left to address these as soon as current restrictions ease and allow.

## **Coronavirus Support (Jonny Crawshaw)**

Councillor Jonny Crawshaw has asked us to circulate a message to our readers, in case any need local York support. To see the message, [please click here](#).

## **Improvements to the FPT (Alan Fleming)**

We continue to make improvements to the FPT, and last month Alan Fleming installed extra lighting on the top floor to improve illumination of the maps on the walls. Unfortunately, further progress has been halted due to the coronavirus. We have ideas for modest improvements to the ground floor and will share them with readers when they have been discussed by the committee.

## **Virtual Tour of the FPT (Richard Hanage)**

Last month we briefly mentioned the virtual reality (VR) tour of the FPT which can be accessed from [our web-site](#). With thanks to Jonathan Malory at Sky Filming for providing the images and

files to FOYW.

It starts at the entrance door, and to enter you click on the 'star' shape:



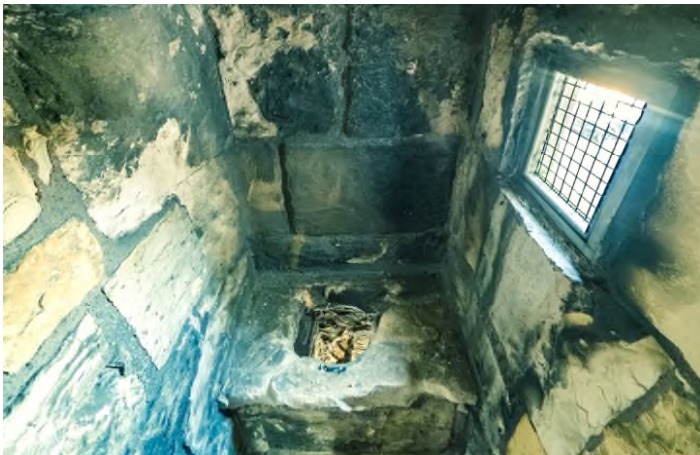
This takes you in to the ground floor and you can look around, and up and down:



Clicking on the stairs takes you into the stair well and up to the first floor:



You can even check out the toilet:



before going up to the second floor for tantalising glimpses of our display from the dig:





The top floor is all space and light .....



..... and you can look up to admire the roof timbers:



and even click on a window to see the view:



These pictures do not do it justice, so please try it for yourself by accessing it through [our web-site](#), where there is more information and tips on the best way to display the tour..

## Ferns on the Walls (Simon Mattam)



***Hart's tongue at tower 5[?] - Photo: Simon Mattam***

I have learned a new word, 'sori'. It seems to be pronounced much the same as the apology but it's the name for what makes ferns ferns, not flowers - that is the collections of spore-making bodies on the back of the fern.

Ferns make spores without flowering or fertilization, but when a fern spore lands on a damp place it can romantically grow to be a heart-shaped disk about half a centimetre across with male and female parts which get together by floating on the water. This reproduces the fern.

### **Damaging?**

Ferns have long lives but they don't build up wood, so English Heritage advised in 2015 that when they grow in walls they "... are unlikely to cause damage except in exceptional circumstances and, as a general rule, should be left untouched".

### **Nice Names**

There are many varieties of fern, often you have to look at its sori to discover the sort you are looking at, but the commonest ones on the City Walls seem more easily identified. They have a particularly fine set of names: Hart's Tongue, Wall Rue and Maidenhair Spleenwort! I'll leave the last of these - and the slightly salacious source of its name - till next month, by which time I hope to have a photo linking it to the city walls or just a good photo of it [anyone out there happen to have one?].

All three are from an 'order' of ferns called 'polypody' - which translates as 'many feet', apparently because at least some of the order have lots of little roots coming from a sort of creeping stem.

### **Hart's Tongue (pictured above)**



The Hart's Tongue is the only English fern with an undivided leaf – I suspect the 'hart' the name-giver had in mind was a hunted deer with its tongue hanging out, desperate for water. The old hymnist, echoing a psalm, says he thirsts for God "as pants the hart for cooling streams when heated in the chase".



*Hart's tongue leaves [with sori on the back] - Photo: Simon Mattam*

The first photo (above) shows Hart's Tongue on the outside of the City Walls a little west of Bitchdaughter Tower, it faces south but I think it may be shaded from the drying sun by some tall trees in the half-moat that still survives there – I wish I could go out and check on this and its development. I think it is the same plant that I noticed in February when, perhaps because of all the rain we'd had, there were young, light green leaves in the corner of the embrasure in the battlements a metre or so above where I later photographed it. The embrasure leaves were gone by mid-March – perhaps the dryness of the month or casual 'weeding' by someone not heeding English Heritage's advice.

### **Two Rues**

This Wall Rue (below) was a little above the Harts Tongue in the wall at the time of the photograph – the shape and colour of its leaf is like that of the Herb Rue.



*Wall Rue between towers 4&5[?] - Photo: Simon Mattam*

This Rue was probably an infamous plant when Wall Rue was named. Shakespeare mentions it several times, Ophelia mysteriously [or madly?] says "...There's Rue for you and here's some for me. We may call it 'Herb o'grace' on Sundays. You may wear your Rue with a difference".

Perhaps I should call this Rue infamous rather than famous. It is a strong smelling, dangerous [even to pick] medicinal herb; as if its common name was not enough ["I'll make you rue the day you...."] its botanical name seems to warn you to take care: *Ruta Graveolens*.



**Wall Rue leaves [with sori on the back] - Photo: Simon Mattam**

On the other hand I know nothing against Wall Rue, I have done no survey but I think Wall Rue may be the commonest plant rooted in the City Walls. It is a small fern and in Ireland was called 'plant of the seven gifts' or, in my word-by-word translation from the Gaelic, 'plant no seven captives' [plant of seven liberations?] as it was said to cure seven ailments. I'm not sure what the seven were but in Charles I's day Culpeper wrote: "The decoction being drunk helps those that are troubled with the cough, shortness of breath... It cleanses the lungs..." so perhaps I should tell somebody...

**Richard Hanage ([richard@hanage.com](mailto:richard@hanage.com))**

Editor, on behalf of the FoYW committee.

Bill Hill - Chair

Penny Heptonstall - Treasurer

Sam McDermott - Secretary

Alan Fleming - Website

Glen McGowan - Committee member

Simon Mattam - Committee member

Martin Hetherington - Committee member

The committee may be contacted at [friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk)

Postern Tower location: YO1 9AF (please do not send mail here - no letterbox!)







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