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To: richard@hanage.com
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Friends of York Walls Newsletter

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Open Days: Sat 18 July; Sat/Sun 15/16 Aug (Festival)

Committee: On-line only

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Coronavirus Update - Open Now!

We are delighted to announce that the Fishergate Postern Tower (FPT) is now opening on the previously planned dates for the year (subject to any changes to Covid regulations). We had successful trial openings on July 4th and 18th, and the next opening is for the York Walls Festival 15/16 August. Please keep in touch on the [WEBSITE](#), and through our social media channels on [TWITTER](#) and [FACEBOOK](#)

Virtual Open Days (Martin Hetherington)

During the close-down we have been running 'virtual open days' and the most recent was on Saturday 20th June. You can still see them in the Open Days section of the [FoYW website](#).

York Walls Festival (Martin Hetherington)

It is just under a month until the third York Walls Festival takes place on Sat 15th and Sun 16th August. Preparations are going well, and a Zoom meeting was held in late June to review progress. Whilst smaller than the 2019 version, the show will go on. There will be online events (as below) and open days at both FPT and Red Tower.

New Flickr gallery at Explore York

As newsletter readers, you can have a sneak peek at the collection of walls photos from the City Archives. You may recognise some from past displays at FPT, and they have been brought together in one place by Laura Yeoman at Explore York. [Click here](#).

Speaking of Flickr, remember that there is a FOYW Flickr page too. It has 956 images on there - could we reach 1,000 by festival weekend? [Click here](#)

Filming (with Sharpstick Productions)

FOYW volunteer Baz Jones is helping with some collaborations that will feature in the festival. Clifford's Tower is a site of immense significance for Jews, as told in this [Times of Israel piece](#) from last year. There are moves to create a better memorial at the site, and Shannon from York Liberal Jewish Community will feature in a new video.



Clifford's Tower - Photo: Baz Jones

The River Foss Society are bringing alive their display boards from last year. A video will take place around the Foss between Layerthorpe and Fossgate, and will share something of the people and industry once found along the river. The map below shows the extent of the former King's Fishpond.



River Foss and the King's Fishpool - courtesy of YAT & HTT

Links

Details of how to see these online features will follow in August, and will be shared on the [Festival website](#) and on social media: @Yorkwallsfestival on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and @WallsYork on [Twitter](#).

Finally, here is a link to the latest [festival blog post](#). It was decided to dedicate this year's festival to Simon Perry.

Current Video Projects (Baz Jones)

Tower 39 - Fishergate Section of York Walls

With kind permission of City of York Council we were able to access Tower 39, located on the corner of the Fishergate stretch of the City Walls, more or less equidistant between Fishergate Bar and Fishergate Postern Tower.

Two of the three arrow slits are blocked up, but the remaining one on the western side allows enough light for a detailed exploration, and even the discovery of masons' marks.

Please go to the York Walls Friend Twitter account to [view the video](#).

Fishergate Postern Tower Repointing

In June the City of York stone masons undertook a repointing test at FPT, to explore replacing 1950s cement pointing inside the tower with the traditional 'hot lime' mortar.

A video covering this testing process will be coming soon.

Three Videos on the Fishergate Stretch of York Walls

Three short videos were produced to coincide with the Fishergate Postern Tower Virtual Open Day in May. They feature Fishergate Bar, the stretch of Walls from Fishergate Bar to Fishergate Postern Tower, and FPT itself.

These videos are being updated and will be available for the York Walls Festival.

Reopening the City Walls - a Personal Perspective ([Simon Mattam](#))

it was never going to be easy but, from my point of view, it began so well.

I have long had an interest in notices on the Walls and had suggested a one-way system shortly before they were closed instead. As a result, Louisa, the City Walls Manager, asked me for comments on her plans for the wording and placing of notices for the reopening as one-way Walls. She listened, reacted to my comments and, partly to deal with our differences, had the excellent idea of holding back some of her budget for notices until she could see how the reopening went.

Survey

The reopening was on Saturday the 4th July. So the middle of that day found me with my camp-stool on a bit of grass socially distanced from a designated exit from the wall-walk: the step-less one by Lendal Bridge.

About 100 people passed me going in the right direction, clockwise round the Walls; I managed to interview about half. One passed me going in the wrong direction, you might say I tried to interview him too, but this man with a can was not to be turned from his anti-social way.

Perhaps 20 people politely, even apologetically, paused then turned back when I pointed out that this was just an exit. Most of the 20 had not yet reached the 'no entry' notice here. It was on the gate about 10 metres past the 3 benches at the start of the wall-walk.

Questions

One of the 20 kindly went to look at the notice so she could answer my question about it: "oh no, that's no use, I wouldn't read a notice on an open gate!".



Lovely tone, lousy location? (Station Road's notice, on the gate above the arch) - Photo: Simon Mattam

Of the 50 who answered my questions, no-one criticised the actual wording of the notices and everyone approved of the system they were describing, but a big minority volunteered the thought that they should be a lot more **PROMINENT**. Many of them had missed seeing the notices altogether. But the 'turn right' notice that faced people as they went up the steps at Micklegate was often praised.

Direct Action

It was obvious to me that when I left this exit many walkers would cease to know it was 'exit-only' so my wife brought me materials and I set to work. I chalked the paving in careful capitals and tied up the notice in the photograph



Guess whose? - Photo: Simon Mattam

Success?

My 50 wall-walkers had, between them, only noticed 5 people going in the wrong direction - I think this is close to a success but small, pale, polite and unobtrusive notices weren't CYC's only problem. On their [on-line map](#) of the Walls, nothing told users how to find the correct ways up to the wall-walk [first click on 'view larger map' then zoom in 3 times] nor how to interpret the symbols on this map-layer [imagine you are in a car, checking if you can drive down a street]. If you had managed to use the map to find the correct way up at Micklegate Bar then you would have found it mysteriously locked with the map-designated exit-only steps labelled for entry [see photo]



Mixed messages at Micklegate Bar - Photo: Simon Mattam

Sadly the intended instructions for social distancing [overtake only at towers and with warning] were missing from all these entry notices.

Like to help?

If you would like to informally help Louisa get feedback [just from you, or from other walls-walkers via you asking them about 5 questions] then please email me.

I can send you a copy of the spreadsheet she plans to use to keep track of the feedback - that way you'll be sending answers to questions she herself also asks.

By the way, on the 14th July she had the rough impression that compliance with the one-way system was increasing, possibly as a result of her second wave of notices, that were themselves the result of early feedback. Contact Simon Mattam [ps.mattam@outlook.com]

Follow us on Twitter

For the most up-to-date news please follow us on Twitter. Examples of recent posts:



Pollinators: Keep your nose out! (Simon Mattam)

No, 'keep your nose out' isn't CYC's policy for pollinators, but at times it has seemed to be its message for those interested in their activities on York's ramparts (see later).



Bumble bee enjoying scabious flowers west of Micklegate Bar - Photo: Simon Mattam

Here's a picture taken in early July of a pollinator busy on one of the few bits of the ramparts spared by the mowers at the end of May. This is the outer ramparts west of Micklegate Bar. The inner ramparts here and right round to the dignified, bone-white war memorial also seem to have escaped. In fact, about 50 metres south of the memorial there is a wonderful patch of some relative of the onion – it is difficult to get close so I am not sure if it is 'crow garlic' or 'sand leek'. Both have been recorded on the ramparts years ago. Crow garlic, with its nearly cylindrical leaves, seems most likely; this, I think, scarcely needs pollinators because it asexually grows 'bulbils' [=little bulbs] in its flower head and when these fall to the ground more plants grow – this explains how the giant patch on the ramparts developed.

Later mowing?

However most flowering plants do need pollinators and many people are concerned with declining numbers of individuals and varieties and so would like more native wild flowers around for more of the year to feed them. The issues involved are probably complicated but it seems likely that less and later mowing of the ramparts would help.

Please Wait

Baz, a new member of the committee [see his item in this issue about videos] has just discovered that CYC documents about its developing policy on pollinators will not be available for FoYW to look at and comment on before the autumn – and possibly not then. I've found the staff who first try to deal with enquiries are really pleasant and helpful but when you get 'higher up' in the system responsiveness can plummet - at least when it comes to questions about mowing.

And Wait

It took a freedom of information enquiry [generated by a kindly member of the enquiries staff] to get me, eventually, basic information on the mowing regime last Autumn. Answers seemed to imply the regime was based on unthinking repetition over 30 years [except west of Micklegate Bar] but when I tried to confirm that there was no thinking in CYC of the results or aims of the regime I got no answer. I'm

repeating the question from time to time. Of course, covid-19 responsibilities may explain CYC inaction since the spring.

Back to Pollinators

Oh well, let's go back to nature to cheer us up!



White tailed bumble bee[?] on knapweed, west of Micklegate Bar - Photo: Simon Mattam

I'm told tough tussock-forming plants like knapweed here [and the scabious in the first picture] can compete with fast growing grasses; they seem to be thriving here under the special late-mowing and rake-removed mowings regime they have, slightly mysteriously, been granted.

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 - Committee member

Simon Mattam - Committee member

Martin Hetherington - Committee member

Baz Jones - Committee member

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



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