

Richard Hanage

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Friends of York Walls Newsletter

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Next Open Days:

Sat 23 January (Residents Weekend?)

Sun 24 January (Residents Weekend?)

Contents: Coronavirus Update From the Walls Manager Volunteers Needed Fire Risk Assessment Virtual FPT Tour Early Xmas Present? Twitter Frogs on the Ramparts? Tree Gifts

Coronavirus Update - Open Days

The Fishergate Postern Tower (FPT) has opened on the previously planned dates during the autumn and we now look forward to our first open days in 2021: Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th January. We do not know if the traditional Residents Festival will take place city-wide, as in previous years, but if it does we will certainly mark it at FPT!

The full list of 2021 openings will be available in our January e-News

Please keep in touch on the [WEBSITE](#), and through our social media channels on [TWITTER](#) and [FACEBOOK](#)

From the Walls Manager (Louisa Hood)

Tower Two Stabilisation

Work at tower two is progressing well. Following the completion of the phase one excavation, early monitoring shows that, without its infill, the tower is under less pressure and is more stable. Phase two excavations are drawing to a close and findings are tentative. We expect YAT's report shortly and this will be available via York's Historic Environment Record system.

We are now working closely with Mason Clark Associates and Historic England to finalise the design of the structural interventions the tower requires. The newly exposed inner face of the tower is in poor condition, so this will be addressed at the same time as the cracks.



Tower 2 work in progress - Photo: Richard Hanage

We hope it will be possible to leave the tower open, giving people an opportunity to see and understand the different phases of the history and development of the city walls, and we will reinstate a partial walkway to achieve this.

Regular Volunteers [Always] Needed

As always, we would like to welcome more volunteers to help run the Friends of York Walls and especially to greet visitors at the Fishergate Postern Tower. If you think you might like to join us, please email friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com or just turn up for a chat when we are open.

Festival Volunteers Also Needed

We are already looking for volunteers to help support the Fourth Annual York Walls Festival in 2021 on the weekend of August 14th/15th.

Volunteers can either provide a minimum of three hours at Fishergate Postern Tower on the Saturday and/or Sunday, welcoming visiting members of the public, or else help support one of the (outdoor) events to be confirmed as part of the Festival programme (central York locations).

Any help very gratefully received. Please contact yorkwallsfestival@gmail.com

Fire Risk Assessment

The FPT has recently undergone a Fire Risk Assessment by the Senior Health and Safety Adviser, City of York Council, and readers will be glad to hear that the FPT is a very low fire risk environment. As always, there are a few improvements we can make and these will be addressed by the Committee shortly.

A Step Forward on the Virtual Tour (Simon Mattam)

Readers may remember that Jonathan Mallory of Sky Filming, who gave us our website's virtual tour of Fishergate Tower as a result of his experimenting with his new equipment, has agreed to improve on this, working cut-price because of his interest in the project.

Happily [for him] finding time to spare from his bread-and-butter work has been a problem in the autumn but he has taken an important step forward with a draft you can see here: [FPT Virtual Tour](#)

There are now readable introductory commentaries for each of the 14 all-round photos and a button to remove all icons from the photos so they can be examined without blind spots. How these commentaries are accessed and presented may change - your comments on this are welcome.

Additional 'Feature pages' about the roof beams, Tudor toilet tissues, the Castle, the archaeology cabinet etc. are written but need to be added.



When the postern tower was built a road ran just outside the city walls and past the tower to the south gate of the castle, it crossed the Foss on top of the dam that had been built to flood the moats round the castle. Perhaps the postern tower was thought useful to defend this road and the dam.

Extract from the 2-page 'Castle' feature page (view from window) - Simon Mattam

As a Christmas Quiz: try to find the error in a commentary caused by a camera position being changed a couple of feet when Jonathan re-did some photos to get more sunlight in them.

Answers to ps.mattam@outlook.com, please. [Answer will be in January issue]

Very Early Christmas Present?

This present is for anyone on trying to follow the City Walls Trail where it leaves the banks of the Foss. It is a new and handsome finger post.

People who are not equipped with our free leaflet-map and are coming from the walls at Monk Bar and then Jewbury were frequently puzzled at this point on Foss Island's Road. There has long been a finger post there but at the exact point of puzzlement its base was behind other 'street furniture' and its single finger was almost invisible because it was pointing straight on.



Splitting of the ways - with old, almost invisible, fingerpost - Photo: Simon Mattam

The new finger post has fingers pointing correctly and clearly - and a shiny golden top.



The new clearer fingerpost - Photo: Simon Mattam

Another Christmas quiz question: Does anyone know what inspired the golden top?

Answers to ps.mattam@outlook.com, please. [Answer will be in January issue]

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Be There Frogs?

Introduction to Amphibians

Wednesday 16th December
6.00pm - 8.00pm

Join Froglife's Emily Millhouse for an Introduction to Amphibian Identification. This online talk will run through the main identification features for our native amphibian species

TCV
The Conservation Volunteers

#Joininfeelgood



DEC
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Introduction to Amphibian Identification, Ecology and Surveying Methods

by TCV Scotland [Follow](#)

Free

One of our members sent me the above TCV notice about a 'frog course', for possible inclusion in e-News. At first I couldn't see a link with the walls... then I spawned an idea. Once we have exhausted the scope for describing and conserving vegetation on the ramparts, perhaps we should look start looking at the wild-life. Perhaps even re-create a moat complete with amphibians?

Tree Gifts (Simon Mattam)

What do trees give walls-walkers at the moment?



Autumnal colour west from Bitchdaughter Tower: Photo: Simon Mattam

Fall colours

The first photo (above) shows some of the beauties of the fall ['fall' matched 'spring' and was an old English name for the season before it was American]: the warm autumn colours, the rough rugs of leaves under the trees and the reveal of bare branches and twigs. The small red-brown tree is a Rowan or

Mountain Ash, what Burns called 'the bead-bonny ash' because it is red from its plentiful bead-like berries as much as from its reddening leaves. It's not related to the tall ash but has a daintier version of the ash leaf, and one much more likely to develop good autumnal colour.

I think the big balding trees beyond the Rowan are London Planes with, perhaps, some Sycamores. Sycamore leaves are probably the least likely to look lovely in the fall - they tend to be disfigured with the Tar-spot fungus - making them look as if some madly hyper-active pirate has been giving out the black spot, telling every leaf that it's been condemned to die.

Black and white fungi



Silver and strange near Red Tower - Photo: Simon Mattam

While it is difficult to like the black blotches of the tar spot fungus there are three common black fungi I do find attractive. Like the Tar-spot fungus they all have common names that describe their appearance vividly and very well: King Alfred's Cakes [like rounded, very burnt cakes, cut them open to see thin concentric lines of white], Dead Man's Fingers [blackened, smallish, swollen, sometimes misshapened fingers with white inside] and the Candle-snuff fungus, illustrated above.

These were photographed in mid-November and were quite old then; they start out looking like black, burnt flattened candle-wicks [=candle-snuff], except that they branch a little. When the tip, then more of the 'wick', gets covered in white powder [from asexual spores, says my book] this looks even more like its namesake.

All three of these fungi live on dead wood so this group in the grass close to Red Tower are the 'gift' of a tree that has been cut down and now appears only at the level of the earth around it. It looked to me like flat black trodden earth till I saw what was growing from it.

Protector Trees

When they live in patches of grassland that people keep mowing down, trees often protect the plants immediately around their trunks from mowing. Sometimes chemical sprays are used to lessen this 'problem'; this seems to be done around the city walls where non-trees [like walls and raised curbs] protect plants, but this year I've not noticed any anti-flower spraying around trees. As a result, tree trunks beside the walls in mid-November were still surrounded by a few taller flowering plants; the one photographed here is the smooth sowthistle.



Tree-protected plants near Red Tower - Photo: Simon Mattam

I think 'sow' was added to the name to suggest a use for this plant, as with Hogweed, also common around the walls and in most 'waste' ground'. Pigs may well have eaten these here, they used to be grazed on the land by the walls - though legal action was taken against some grazers. Whether this action was mainly to protect the grazing for others or to protect the ramparts from pig-damage I am not sure, pigs are not dainty eaters.

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

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 [virtual] 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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