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Friends of York Walls Newsletter - January 2021

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## Friends of York Walls Newsletter

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### Next Open Days:

Sat 23 January (Residents Weekend?) **CANCELLED**

Sun 24 January (Residents Weekend?) **CANCELLED**

Sat 20 February (Viking Festival) **Check website closer to time**

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## Coronavirus Update - Open Days

The Fishergate Postern Tower (FPT) opened on the previously planned dates during the latter half of 2020, and we were looking forward to our first open days in 2021, in January and February.

**However, the January dates have been cancelled, and February also looks in doubt.**

Please check news of the 2021 openings on our [website](#) closer to the time. The originally planned list can be downloaded as part of our [2021 leaflet](#).

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

## Coronavirus Update - Open Days

The Fishergate Postern Tower (FPT) opened on the previously planned dates during the latter half of 2020 and we now look forward to our first open days in 2021: Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th January.

#### check. The full list of 2021 openings is available on our [website](#) and can be downloaded as part of our [2021 leaflet](#).

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

## Plans for 2021 and 2022 (Bill Hill)

This is a good time of year to think about our plans and priorities for the next year or two. A summary of the short-list of our ideas is below. [Click here for the full text](#).

1. Start on the **Heritage Strategy** for FPT, focusing initially on the ground floor, the time-line on the second floor, and a central display table on the top floor.
2. Seek projects which **engage local people** in practical activities related to the walls, including repointing the inside of the FPT, as a heritage training programme.
3. Initiate a project to design and build a **working portcullis** outside the FPT.
4. Continue to partner with **St George's School** on the Twins Diary project and implement a School Assembly drama piece written by **Riding Lights**.
5. Run the **2021 York Walls Festival**, virtual or live, depending on the national restrictions.
6. Review our **social media and website**, including engaging a graduate for 6 weeks to help us assess them with a younger audience in mind.
7. Visit other **walled cities** to gather ideas on enriching the visitor experience of York's city walls.
8. Arrange training in **searching archives** so that people can seek information which might add to interpretation of the walls.
9. Work with the CYC Ecologist on plans to interpret the **ecological aspects** of the ramparts, including a nature trail.
10. Refurbish the **roof tiles on the FPT** to remove moss and ensure weather proofing.
11. **Install electrics** throughout FPT, including sockets and lighting.
12. Recruit more **volunteers and committee members**.

We will update you on progress with these items in future news-letters.

## The Red Tower

### Serving the Community from a 500-year-old Building (Ian Tempest)

*[We asked Red Tower to contribute to e-News, and hope they will do so regularly in the future - Ed.]*

The Red Tower on Foss Islands Road, built as a watchtower in 1490, provides weekly support to the local community in Walmgate and surrounding area every Monday morning.



*The Red Tower - Photo: Ian Tempest*

It is run by the Red Tower Community Interest Company (CIC) which has brought it back into public use for the benefit of the local and wider community. After a substantial internal upgrade, the Red Tower opened to the public properly as a community hub in 2018.

### **Responding to COVID-19**

After the first national lockdown the Red Tower reopened in Jun 2020, every Monday morning, for supermarket surplus food distribution to support local residents, with food distributed from the door of the Tower.

Whenever possible, under the regulations, volunteers have been able to use the garden space outside to enable the Red Tower's customers to meet up while socially distancing. Reassuringly many of the customers who used the Tower's services before the pandemic have returned, so it is clear the food distribution services are valued.

The Tower remains plugged into the support network of various other community agencies in York (Council, police, Citizens Advice, Older Citizens Advocacy, etc), and Directors and volunteers hope, in due course, to return to hosting more activities inside the Tower.



*Receiving a £333 cheque from Waitrose - Photo: Ian Tempest*

Many supermarkets make surplus food available to organisations across the city, including the Red Tower, that collect food from the store and distribute it to their local communities. The supermarkets include Tesco, Morrisons, the Co-Op, One Stop Convenience Stores and Waitrose. Over Christmas the Red Tower York CIC Community Hub received a generous gift of £333 from the York Waitrose store as part of its John Lewis/Waitrose Christmas community campaign 'Give a Little Love' which supports the FareShare and Homestart charities. Donations make a massive difference to those in need, many of whom are feeling the effects of surviving on a low income in today's troubled times, and they also help reduce food waste.

For more information on the history of the Red Tower and current activities, see the website [www.redtoweryork.org.uk](http://www.redtoweryork.org.uk)

## From the Walls Manager (Louisa Hood)

### **Tower 2 Stabilisation**

Work to stabilise Tower Two continues. Following archaeological findings, we are now agreeing variations to the scheduled monument consent with Historic England and look forward to getting back on site after Christmas, with plans tweaked. The FoYW committee attended an online talk hosted by CYC and featuring Ian Milsted, York Archaeological Trust Regional Manager. Ian gave an in depth description of the archaeological works at Tower Two and we hope to follow up with another talk when findings have been analysed.

### **Floodlights for Bars**

CYC have placed an order for replacement floodlights at Micklegate Bar, Bootham Bar and Monk Bar. The new lights are more efficient and much smaller than the existing lights, some of which are defunct. The new lights will light the bars in white light, but are also colour changing so the bars can be lit up to mark special occasions in the local and nation calendar, like at Clifford's Tower.

### **Conservation Management Plan**

We have our first draft of the refreshed city walls Conservation Management Plan and condition survey, which will help shape the way the walls are cared for over the next few years.

*[The FoYW's response to the draft will be included in next month's e-News, Ed.]*



## Volunteers [Always] Needed

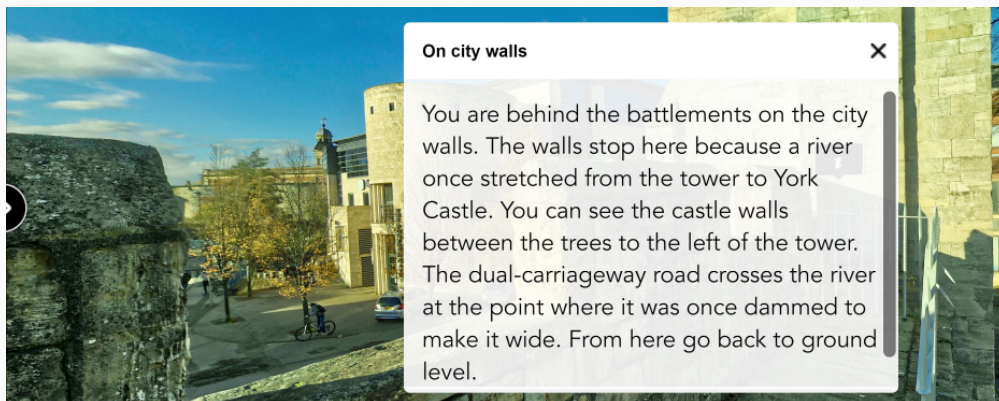
As always, we would like to welcome more volunteers to help run the Friends of York Walls and especially to greet visitors at the Fishergate Postern Tower. If you think you might like to join us, please email [friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofyorkwalls@gmail.com) or just turn up for a chat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

We are also looking for volunteers to help support the 2021 York Walls Festival on the weekend of August 14th/15th. Any help very gratefully received. Please contact [yorkwallsfestival@gmail.com](mailto:yorkwallsfestival@gmail.com)

## Christmas Quiz Answers (Simon Mattam)

Simon asked two Christmas Quiz questions last month

1. Try to find the error in a draft [virtual tour](#) commentary caused by a camera position being changed a couple of feet when Jonathan re-did some photos to get more sunlight in them.



**Answer:** The commentary for this view from the City Walls is about York castle's curtain wall and the Castle Mills Bridge, a view blocked by a merlon [= high bit of battlements].

2. Does anyone know what inspired the golden top [on the new direction sign]?



**Answer:** Possibly the gold-painted base of a plastic bottle I fixed on top of the previous fingerpost a year or two ago. It had battlements to make it resemble the medieval tower symbol used on the brass studs of the City Walls Trail and was put there to attract attention to an easily ignored sign.

## FPT Virtual Tour and Street View (Simon Mattam)

We haven't made any progress with the virtual tour inside the FPT but have discovered that parts of the walls are now in Google's Street View.



Google Street View near Walgate Bar

It is possible to virtually go along on the city walls for about a mile: from Red Tower to Fishergate Postern, from Bootham Bar to Robin Hood Tower and from Barker Tower to Toft Tower, by the railway station.

## Follow us on [Twitter!](#)

**YorkWallsFriend** @YorkWallsFriend · Dec 27, 2020

...

Five years ago today Fishergate Postern Tower was photographed by Rob McDermott. The water rose 40cm up the ground floor walls. After the [#York](#) [#floods](#) our [#volunteers](#) helped clean up in January. Meanwhile, [@RedTowerYork1](#) helped support the local community. [#OnThisDay](#) [#heritage](#)



## Ruined Tower? (Simon Mattam)



In mid-December this is what Clifford's Tower looked like from just off the City Walls Trail.



*Clifford's Tower being renovated - Photo: Simon Mattam*

The second photo (below) is on display there to show what they are building inside the tower. English Heritage's builders seem to have started work on filling the centre of Clifford's Tower with wooden floors [and, I think, a ramp].



*How it will look inside after the work - image: Hugh Broughton Architects*

It looks as if that 'airy/scary' experience of walking round the top of the walls of the ruin is gone for good. It's closed at the moment for the building work, of course, but the things they are building will mean the experience is gone. I think it is a shame that this will stop being available, but it will be interesting to

see what they have done - perhaps we'll be able to go into the medieval toilets there for the first time - the main ones were half-way up the walls and I think that I have read that they once had a way of being flushed by water coming from the roof.

[Read more here.](#)

## White Christmas (Simon Mattam)



*Snowy wax caps - Photo: Simon Mattam*

York missed the snow on Christmas Day but, thanks to the mild weather up till then, it had snowy wax caps [mushrooms] on goose-nibbled slopes by the City Walls Trail. I photographed these just below where old castle wall meets the back of the crown court.

These are the commonest of the wax caps as they will appear on close-cut [or close-nibbled] grassland after as little as 5 years free of artificial chemicals. It seems some wax caps need 50 years. Wax caps come in all the colours of the rainbow and usually look 'as neat as wax', as people used to say. There are a few mushrooms that you can find at any time of year but these are said to stop appearing in November or December.





*White archangel this Christmas by the city walls - Photo: Simon Mattam*

Because of the mild weather there were quite a number of flowers to be seen on the ramparts on the days running up to Christmas. The most Christmassy was white archangel because of this old name for it and because it is said to have been fed to young turkeys. I photographed this patch of them at the edge of the ditch below Robin Hood Tower just before Christmas, but there were still some flowers there on Boxing Day.



*Close to New Tower: white archangel earning its name?' - Photo: Simon Mattam*

It can look very showy. This, and perhaps even the suggestion of the rounded tops to folded wings, may explain the name. This photograph of it growing in the city walls was taken in the summer: it has a very long flowering season.

It is more commonly called white dead nettle. 'Dead' because it doesn't sting, though it has very similar leaves to the unrelated stinging nettle and grows in similar, 'waste' places.

Its nectar is at the bottom of a tube so longer tongued insects like bumble bees can feed on it. Humans can eat the flowers and leaves – and many medical uses have been suggested, several to do with its lessening bleeding - perhaps these were originally suggested by its whiteness. Perhaps this New Year we need it most for the qualities Gerard praised more than 400 years ago when he said it could make “the heart merry...and make the vitall spirits more fresh and lively”.



*Adam and Eve in the bower? - Photo-Simon Mattam*

Just looking at the flower may have this effect, this Boxing Day photo shows the rounded hood of the flowers from underneath. The black-and-gold anthers surrounded by the shaggy white hood, give this flower another name: Adam and Eve in the bower. Perhaps they are a slender couple – or I have heard it suggested that the anthers represent the soles of the couple's feet.

**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

Baz Jones - 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 [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](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk)

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



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