

# Friends of York Walls



## Newsletter – Issue 2 December 2011.

Welcome to the Friends of York Walls newsletter. The Friends of York Walls is a voluntary non-profit making group. The group aims to help promote manage and develop York's Walls and Defences (including the Bar Walls, St Mary's Abbey, Clifford's Tower and The Castle) for the benefit of local residents and visitors. We organise and undertake practical work and organise public events in co-operation with the City of York Council and other like-minded groups or individuals. We seek to establish York Walls as a major worldwide attraction, one that the residents of York can take pride in, and residents and visitors can enjoy to the full.



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Website: <http://yorkwalls.org.uk>

This is our second newsletter, and a lot has been going on since the first newsletter was produced in late May 2011. We will aim to have at least two newsletters a year, maybe more depending on our activities and our resources.



The Friends of York Walls have been going just over a year now, initially as a small band of friends, and from March 2011 following a public meeting at The Bar Convent as a fully constituted group and a committee of 10. The number of members registered is currently 137 and is growing. More friends and volunteers are required to help with our planned activities. Please join us – its Free. We are now fully-fledged members of Community Voluntary Services. We are currently seeking Charity Status.

The Friends of York Walls group has been accepted as a full member of the international organisation "The Walled Towns Friendship Circle" who are dedicated to preserving, educating and promoting walled towns and cities around the world.



**During 2011 we have achieved quite a lot. Some of the activities have included: -**

### **Danny Aitken - walk on York's Walls:-**



On Saturday 9th July the Friends of York Walls supported 12 year old Danny Aitken, of Acomb, when he successfully walked the length of the city walls five times to raise money for The Prostate Cancer Charity after learning his grandfather was battling the condition. The Friends provided a water stop at the Robin Hood Tower.

### **Clifford's Tower Inspection:-**

An inspection of Clifford's Tower by the Lord Mayor Councillor David Horton was held on 23rd June 2011. He was presented with and accepted a scroll. The event was attended by 300+ school children. Many thanks go to Carr Junior, Fishergate Primary and St Georges Schools, and to the staff at Clifford's Tower, English Heritage and to students from York University for providing the music. All the party went up the tower and Carr School went to the Mansion House for juice & biscuits and a tour of the Mansion House by the Mayor.



### **Litter picking:-**

Some litter picking has been carried out around Clifford's Tower by FYW. Litter picking on the walls themselves has not been considered necessary as the City of York Council (CYC) maintain the ramparts & the walls quite well. FYW will continue to monitor the situation over the winter period. FYW have reported to CYC the unsightly rubbish in the River Foss between Layerthorpe & Red Tower.

### **Wall Walks:-**

FYW enjoyed a dusk walk with John Wonnocott when he was closing the walls at the end of the day. John has offered to carry out this event again sometime in the New Year. Watch out for further details.



### **Social evening:-**

A social evening was held at the Black Swan, Peasholme Green on 23<sup>rd</sup> September. It was an information giving evening and included an indoor "Wall Trail" treasure hunt. Details of the Fishergate Postern Tower restoration were on show. Positive feedback was obtained from those who attended, although numbers were low. Dr. Toni Bunnell informed those present of the family of hedgehogs found in Dean's park, and spoke of their welfare.

## Wild flower planting:-



Our chairman Keith Myers assisted with the wild flower planting at Queen Street and Dewsbury Terrace on October 13th. Volunteers from the Friends of York Walls and the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, in association with Buglife, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and the City of York Council helped to increase the wild flower diversity of the City Wall embankments by planting wild flower plant plugs into the existing grassland. The plug plants had been grown from locally sourced seed collected from flower rich grassland sites within York. The planting will add more colour and provide a better habitat and

food supply for pollinating insects, including bees and butterflies. The wild flowers included Knapweed, Oxeye Daisy, Birds Foot Trefoil, Cowslip and other species more likely to be seen in meadows.

## Family activity booklet:-

This booklet has been produced by Chris and John Dowell and a small team of helpers and is to be trialled in January by 12 families. There is also the possibility that local residents could get involved at the York Residents Weekend in January 2012.

## Illuminating York:-



During the four days of the Illuminating York event, October 26-29th Friends of York Walls organised a candle lit tour between 7-9pm every evening of the event. This provided a unique way to see York's heritage (including The Minster, Deans Park and The Chapter House) with a one-way walking route from Bootham Bar to Monk Bar along the wall lit by lanterns. FYW volunteer stewards helped by guiding people and answering any questions. Unfortunately due to bad weather and



safety considerations the Thursday evening's event had to be cancelled. We raised £310 towards FYW funds and 103 adults plus a number of children did the walk. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped to make the occasion a success.

## Walls Talk at Clifton:-

Friends of York Walls secretary Chris Dowell gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Our Heritage the Walls" at Clifton Parish Church on October 13<sup>th</sup> at 2pm.



## Parliament Street Stall:-

Sunday 13th November Friends of York Walls volunteers manned a "Charity Stall" opposite Marks & Spencer on Parliament Street from 9am – 4pm. The purpose of this event was to get feedback from members of the public and show our plans for the use of Fishergate Postern Tower. If readers have any views on this topic please get in touch with us.



## Bar Convent Presentation:-



On Tuesday 22nd November The Bar Convent provided another venue for an information evening when Chris Dowell hosted a PowerPoint presentation entitled "The Walls, Friends and Foe". FYW chairman Keith Myers introduced the event and the presentation was followed by a discussion on what Friends of York Walls have planned for next year. Attendance was again rather disappointing but feedback was positive.

## Fishergate Postern Tower:-

An inspection and guided tour of Fishergate Postern Tower was hosted by John Oxley, City Archaeologist, earlier in the year on 10<sup>th</sup> May.

One of the biggest ongoing objectives of Friends of York Walls is to re-open Fishergate Postern Tower for community use. FYW have the full support of City of York Council and John Oxley in this venture and negotiations for the use of the tower for community use are progressing well. FYW are working in close partnership with CYC, John Oxley & English Heritage to bring Fishergate Postern Tower into community use.

The tower was built between 1504 and 1507 in place of an earlier structure known as Talken Tower - after Robert de-Talken who was a Lord Mayor of York. The tower is situated at the end of Piccadilly, opposite the Weatherspoon's "The Postern Gate" on the corner of Fishergate and Piccadilly. It has 4 stories which are linked by a narrow spiral staircase. The tiled roof was added in 1740. It was last used as an Artists studio.



We have made a bid for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund to refurbish the 500 year old tower and give it a new lease of life as a visitor centre and small cafe. The City of York Council has been asked to provide funding to complete repair work, which is essential to the heritage fund bid. CYC have now allocated £20,000 from their capital contingency fund to help carry out repair work to the tower. The money would go towards installing electricity, water, a toilet and kitchen, and fire precautions. Friends of York Walls are expected to provide matched funding through our own fundraising activities. We have been offered a peppercorn rent agreement should we gain usage of the tower. The Fishergate Postern Tower re-opening has received coverage by the York Press and on their website.

Plans have been produced detailing alternative proposals for the internal alterations to the tower. These include proposals to add a second staircase to improve accessibility, the provision of space for a small café, for exhibitions and for meetings. The plans and proposals have been exhibited at various FYW events. Public opinion on the proposals has been sought via a questionnaire.

## Looking forward to 2012 :-

### Fishergate Postern Tower – “Sponsor a Stone” :-

We will continue to work towards the ultimate re-opening of Fishergate Postern Tower throughout 2012. As already stated Friends of York Walls are expected to provide matched funding, through fundraising activities, towards the refurbishment and eventual re-opening of the tower.

The Friends of York Walls will be seeking to raise funds towards this project by inviting the general public and local businesses to "Sponsor a Stone".

For your sponsorship you will be allocated a specific and identifiable external stone, or stones, on an outside face of Fishergate Postern Tower York, and issued with a certificate to record your donation. Stone locations will be allocated according to availability and only issued once. Sponsors names, together with an optional messages, can be entered into a "Book of Sponsors" which will eventually be on display within the tower itself.

A picture of the tower walls and the stones you have sponsored will be displayed within the building when we achieve our aim of opening up the tower as a community/visitor centre, and possibly a small cafe. This is a unique opportunity to contribute towards a project to restore one of York's ancient monuments to public use. By sponsoring a stone or stones you contribute towards the Fishergate Postern Tower restoration work. Your sponsorship can be for yourself, is ideal as a gift for someone, or for a significant event or person in your life. The scheme can be used to observe a special occasion such as a birthday, a christening, a wedding, as a memorial or simply to convey a message.



Sponsorship is also being sought from local Businesses and Corporations whose names will be recorded in a "Book of Business Sponsors" and also credited in suitable Friends of York Walls literature, and eventually in a tower display.

This major fund raising activity will be officially launched in early 2012, and we are also looking at the possibility of opening the tower in its present state just over the York Residents Festival weekend on 28/29<sup>th</sup> January 2012. If you wish to contribute to the tower funds then please keep checking the FYW website and the local press for details. You can also fill in an application form, a copy of which is attached to the end of this newsletter.

If you have any fund raising skills and would like to help us with this venture then please get in touch with us via the usual channels. We are looking for someone to lead the fundraising team. We need volunteers and helpers to make this all happen. We also hope to add fund raising events to the 2012 calendar.

## Summer “Walls Festival 2012” :-



Friends of York Walls are applying for ward funding and other grants to start and hopefully continue to have each year a “Festival of the Walls” starting in July 2012. The results of Ward Grant Funding submissions are not yet known. Events, such as Country Fairs, Roman Gladiator Fighting, Music, Plays and Falconery displays, will be happening in community areas on and around the walls. We hope to kick start the proceedings with a world record breaking Mexican Wave!! If you would like to help at any of the above events please contact us.

The Friends of York Walls are now planning a Summer Festival 2012 around the ramparts and the walls. The aim is to bring different Friends Groups together as a community festival. An initial planning meeting was held on Monday 14th November at Acomb Fire Station, Boroughbridge Road, York headed up by Keith Myers. Any friends who can help us with this project, can assist us with the planning, or have any suggestions please contact Keith, our chairman, on [info@yorkwalls.org.uk](mailto:info@yorkwalls.org.uk) who will collate your suggestions and put them to the planning team.

The proposed locations include the Red Tower & Bishophill. Activities will be invited from local communities. Possible 2012 dates have been identified as 7<sup>th</sup> July Bishophill - ‘Tofts Fair’; 14<sup>th</sup> July - Mayor “walks the walls”; 21st July - Red Tower Fair. Proceeds, if any, will go to the Lord Mayors charity.

Some of the activities suggested and being planned are:-

Birds of Prey,  
Music / 50 Piece orchestra,  
Doggy competition,  
Mini Steam Train,  
Fire Engine,  
Scarecrow Competition - involving local schools,  
Punch & Judy, and many others.



## York Mystery Plays - August 2012 :-



Teaming up with York's Mystery Plays in August 2012 the Friends of York Walls will be assisting “Front of House” to sell programmes, etc. In summer 2012 this bold and dynamic new production sees the plays return to York Museum Gardens, for the first time on this scale since 1988. A 1400 seat bespoke theatre is being built around the ancient walls of St Mary’s Abbey to house this international event, which celebrates the York 800 City Charter birthday and the 2012 Olympics.

Friends of York Walls have promised to provide at least two people to be at each performance of the plays - from the dress rehearsals at the end of July to the final productions on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2012. We desperately need your support, so please contact us if you want to be involved in this unique event. Register at [ymp@yorkwalls.org.uk](mailto:ymp@yorkwalls.org.uk) for more information which will be available closer to the start of the plays.

## STOP PRESS ~ Clifford's Tower – winter closure !

Since English Heritage announced that Clifford's Tower would be closed on weekdays during the winter season Friends of York Walls have been negotiating to provide limited weekday opening times. These discussions now seem to have been partially successful, with limited opening for guided tours on Wednesdays and Thursdays a high probability. Watch out for more news on this topic. Volunteer guides are required, training given !



### Future Events:-

We will be planning further social and fundraising events during 2012. Watch the website and local press for further information and details.

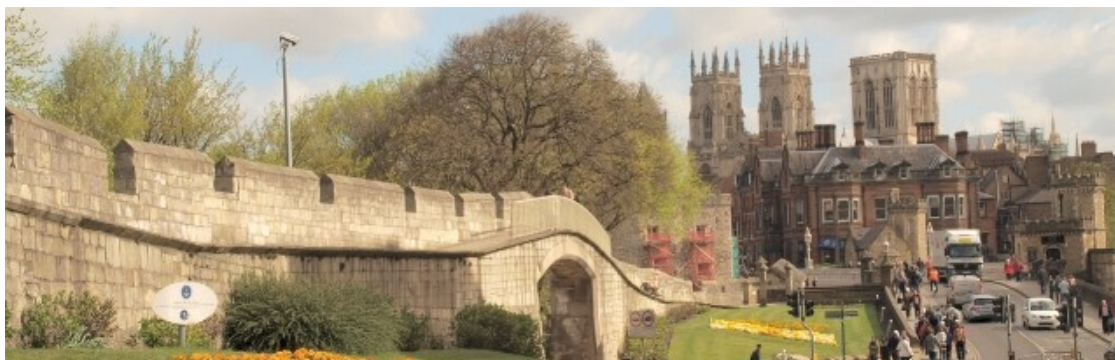


If you would like to get involved with any of our activities, help us with fund raising, or just want to give us your feedback then please get in touch via Email: [info@yorkwalls.org.uk](mailto:info@yorkwalls.org.uk) or the website: <http://yorkwalls.org.uk>

If you do not have internet access then please contact our Membership Secretary John or Chris Dowell on 01904 337308. If you are not already a member of Friends of York Walls then consider supporting and joining us – it's FREE ! – but any donation would be gratefully received.

### So, as a final message from our Chairman –

*"I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work this year. We have I feel made a difference to the popularity and knowledge of The Walls. With lots more community events planned for next year, which is a special year in York's history, it will be another busy year for the committee! To all our members - we thank you for your support during 2011. We look forward to your continuing interest and support in 2012. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year". Keith Myers, Chairman, The Friends of York Walls.*



Newsletter edited by Alan Fleming, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

## To sponsor a stone please complete the form below :-

I wish to make a personal donation of £.....

( A donation of at least £20 per stone is suggested. )

*Please make cheques payable to "Friends of York Walls" ,  
or pay via the <http://yorkwalls.org.uk> website donate button,  
or make a payment direct to our HSBC account:  
Sort Code 40-47-31 Account No. 84372549  
HSBC, 13 Parliament Street, York, YO1 8XS*

Name of Sponsor .....

Stone No(s) Requested .....

### Optional entry in the "Book of Sponsors" :-

Name .....

Optional Message (Max 20 words please)

.....  
.....  
.....

*(Friends of York Walls reserve the right to refuse any inappropriate message.)*

Signed by .....

Please give us your contact details for receipt and acknowledgement.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Post Code .....

Phone No. ....

Email .....

E & OE

### Please return any completed forms to :-

The Secretary, Friends of York Walls, c/o 45 Ullswater, Woodthorpe, York. YO24 2RY