

My Story With the Walls - Nana Zheng

The first time I saw the bar walls in York, I took it for granted, thinking it might be common in England. Also, it isn't that grandiose kind of structure compared with the walls in Xi'an. Still, I like this lovely structure.



The first time I visited the walls with GSA. It was also the first time I saw this kind of city walls, totally different from that I knew before.

But as I passed by the Fishergate Bar almost everyday when I went to King's Manor for lectures, I was quite delighted at the cramped side gates which look so antique. King's Manor is also located outside the walls. Going through the Bootham Bar, you will enter the medieval-look street and the Minster area.

When I started to get used to the rich antique atmosphere of York, I never thought of it that the city walls once experienced huge dispute over its fate. When it was time to think about my dissertation topic, the city walls came to my mind.

However, the walls are not merely a matter of research topic to me, they gave me a pretty fair excuse to get rid of the books, and have a wall break in sunny days.

I had been expecting a snow since I first came here. I always believe that any city would turn on its best look in snow. Unfortunately, the walls are closed to sightseeing under such weather condition. Anyway, walls covered with snow looks marvellous.



In spring, the daffodils spread over the rampart. I carried a map from the 1980 walls survey, and of course a camera, with me, and tried to look at the walls in an academic way. But finally, I ended up being an ordinary tourist, keeping pictures all around. Having shaken off the damp and cold of the past few months, people strolled leisurely beneath sunshine. I have noticed it long before, that sunshine in England is particularly treasured. At first, I can't quite understand the it, that the lawn is full of people taking sunbath when the temperature is not high enough. Now I realise how

rare the sunshine is here. No wonder people looked so cheerful. I came across a nice couple and asked them to take a picture for me, with the daffodils. When I saw my picture, I was surprised by the smile. This seems to be my favourite photo that I've ever had.



During easter, my friend came to visit me. She studies in Liverpool. When she went out the train station, she cried, York is so beautiful. Later she told me that York is the most beautiful city she'd ever been to in England. I showed her around the city walls that afternoon. Thank goodness, the weather treated us very well.



Anyway, I have to go back fighting with the thesis. I needed to conduct a survey among local residents to know their opinions on the walls. I was very lucky to meet many nice persons who were very willing to offer help. They were happy to let me attend the meetings of their residents groups, and I managed to get quite a few useful feedback from them. Many of them told me their stories on the walls. Some of them gave a very detailed comment on my questionnaire expressing their concerns on the bar walls.



Maureen, thank her so much for the kind help. She introduced me to the members in the Navigation and Walmgate Community Association to help me with my questionnaire.



Angela and Lesley (not sure if the spelling is right). Angela told people about the Red Tower Fair. At first, people were not very happy about the change of schedule. But finally, they became cheerful again and offered many ideas of how to organise that fair. After all, it was a long-expected activity.

When the summer comes, I can't resist the tempt to have a look at the walls in sunset, because it doesn't turn dark until very late. I've never saw the sun hanging up high at nine before I came here. Every time I saw the burning cloud outside my window, I would imagine what will it look like along the bar walls.



This is the cover photo on my dissertation. It took me for a while to decide which photo to put on the cover. At last, this one beat the snow one, because I think it looks warm and gives a

sense of local-bond.

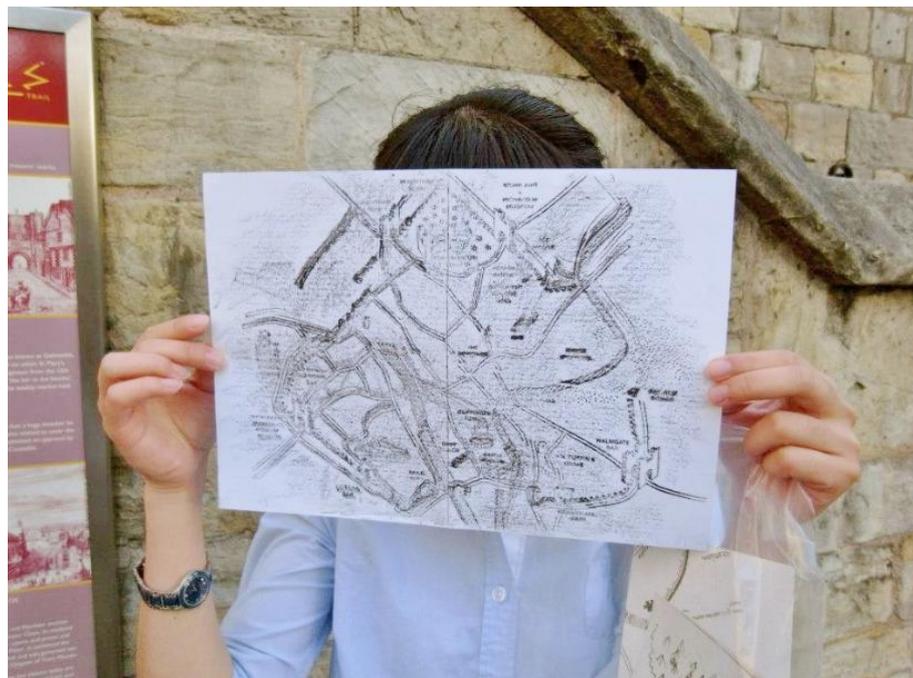


City walls at dusk is fantastic.

I asked my friends to walk the walls with me at dusk, and was very lucky to meet John Wonnocott, who was about to close the gates along the walls. We walked along with him and experienced an excellent guided tour.



When we completely got out of the dissertation, the first thing came to my mind was the bar walls, when my friends asked me to suggest something interesting in the city centre. We went to the Visitor Centre to get some rubbing packs. Although as they put it, it is very popular among "kids", who cares. We pretended to be kids.



Not very successful, a bit messy.



Sometimes I would think it not very good to build the station right outside the walls in terms of its side effect on the walls and traffic in that area. But every time I walk out the station, I really appreciate York people's cleverness. The scenery around the station is usually the first impression a visitor would have on this city. And a view of ancient walls in front of you will definitely improve such impression. And if you arrive at the city in the evening, go through the arch, see what will turn up - the walls shadowed with light, the minster terminating at the other end.

