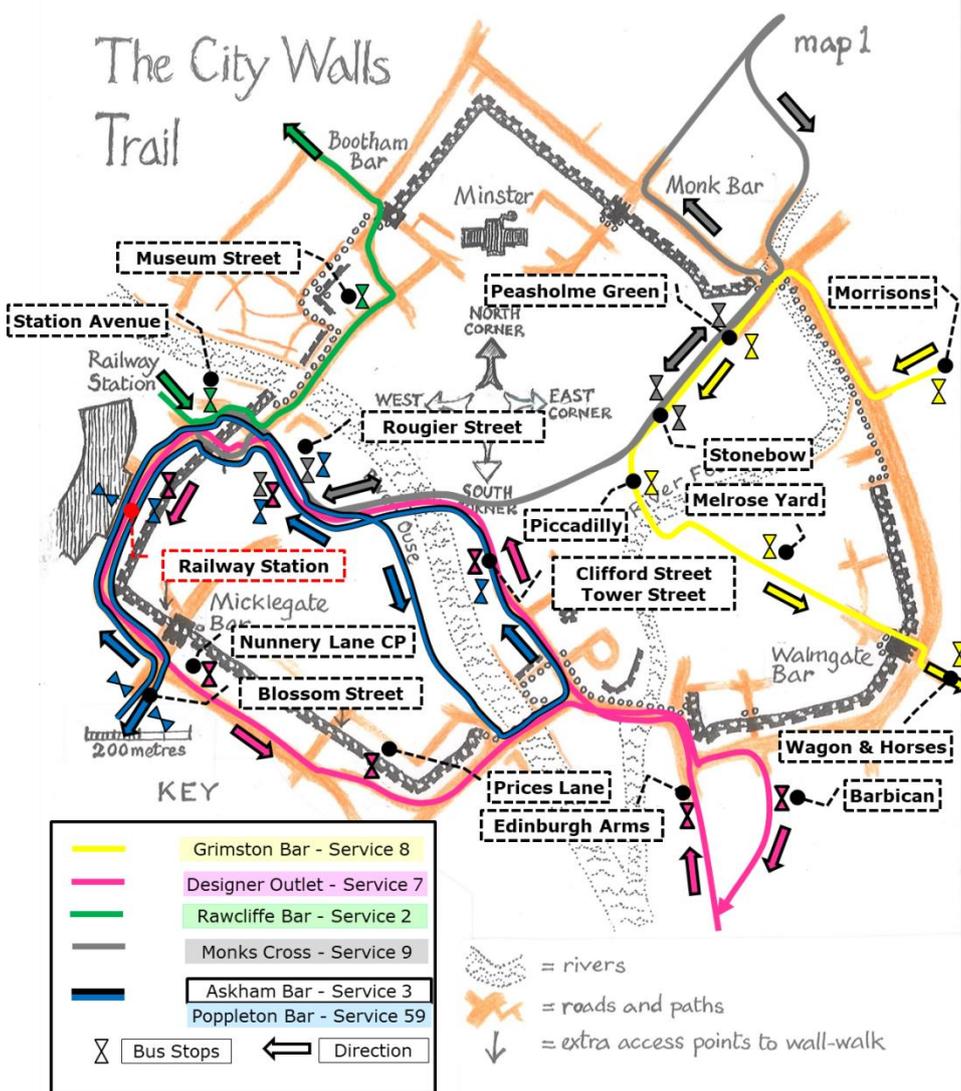




# Spring Rally Special 2019

## A Walk (not a Run) Around York's City Walls



This specially prepared self-guided walk for the Elvington Spring Rally weekend, uses York's Park & Ride network to offer opportunities to access the City Walls.

The guide 'walks' the walls in a clockwise direction and for each of the 6 Park & Ride routes suggests points from which you can begin your tour. These are embedded in the text and bookmarked in the commentary below.

The Park & Ride network has its car parks close to York's outer ring road which comprises the A1237 to the West & North and the A64 dual carriageway to the South and East.

Click on the link below to find out more:

<https://www.firstgroup.com/york/routes-and-maps/york-park-ride>

**Grimston Bar (YO19 5LA):** Alight at Morrisons supermarket, walk forwards to the main road, use the pedestrian crossing, turn left and pick up the walls at the Red Tower – top of P7. When you leave the walls at the end of (Monk Bar – Walmgate Bar East Corner 1 P6) turn right down Peasholme Green for your bus back.

**Designer Outlet (YO19 4TA):** Alight at Edinburgh Arms, walk towards the walls on your right & pick up the tour at Fishergate Postern (Walmgate Bar to Micklegate Bar South Corner Part 2). At Fishergate Postern on your return leg, return along the walls to Fishergate Bar to road level and through the bar, then over the pedestrian crossing to the Barbican stop.

**Rawcliffe Bar (YO30 5X2):** This P&R is closest to the Mecure Hotel on the A19. Alight at the Museum Street heading left and enter the Museum Gardens (Micklegate Bar to Bootham Bar West Corner 1) two thirds way down P3. Use the same stop to catch your bus back.

**Monks Cross (YO32 9JU):** Alight at Peasholme Green and head left back to the traffic lights and Pelican Crossing on a bridge where you pick up the tour heading right following the River Foss (Monk Bar to Walmgate Bar East Corner Part 2, P6). When you leave the walls at the end of Monk Bar – Walmgate Bar East Corner 1 P6 turn right down Peasholme Green for your bus back.

**Askham Bar (YO24 1LW):** Alight at Blossom Street turning right and join the tour at Micklegate Bar on P2. Your return stop is again in Blossom Street.

**Poppleton Bar (YO26 6QF):** Alight at Nunnery Lane Car Park and walk back up to Micklegate Bar to join the tour. You can use the same stop for your return journey.

York still has most of the medieval walls that surrounded the city 700 years ago. The tops of these walls were partly rebuilt about 150 years ago so the public could walk along most of them & feel safer by having a tall parapet on one side of them. Locals sometimes refer to

"The Bar Walls" & it is a common mistake to think they are "Roman", as they were mainly built in the 13th century of Magnesian limestone & uniquely in England, were set on earthen ramparts.

They comprise 3.4km (2 miles) of surviving masonry & are the longest town walls in England. The accompanying moats have largely disappeared but the slopes of the ramparts are well known for the display of daffodils in March & April.

A walk round the walls takes about 2 hours & offers an opportunity to see the main features. There are four main bars (fortified gateways), two smaller gateways with more modern stonework, one postern (a very small gateway defended by a tower), frequent intermediate towers & details like window openings, arrow-slits, gun ports & sculptures. There are also good views of many important buildings. Opening: 8am-7.30pm



### Join the Tour here from the Askham & Poppleton Bar P&R

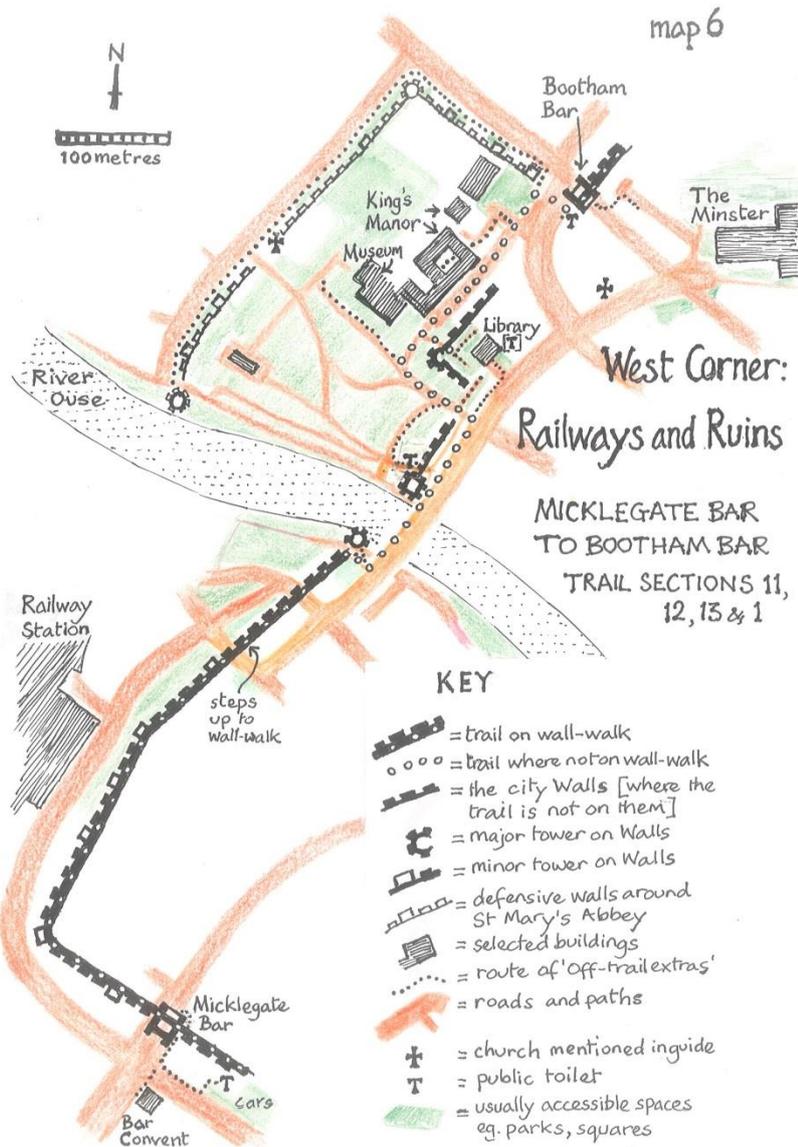
#### Micklegate Bar to Bootham Bar (West Corner Part 1)

Pass through the bar's left hand arch, climbing the steps & turning right to walk towards the corner tower. Look out for information boards & small brass markers in the paving. At the corner tower (it has a bench) the view out of the city gives you an idea of how much it has expanded in the last two centuries & reminds you that railways were the major cause of this expansion in Victorian times.

Inside the Walls on your right you will see office buildings which are used for railway-related work & you now cross 2 large arched openings in the Walls, that were created to allow trains to steam into York's early station in the 1840s.

Outside the Walls you have the later Victorian station & the hotel built next to it. Further along you see the Walls arching over two roads (built to give city people access to the later station), these lead the eye to **Lendal Tower** & then to the Minster across the river.

Closest to you on the right is the light coloured mix of buildings that make up the new council offices (these include the 1840s railway station) & a new hotel. Beyond these opposite the first road archway is the elaborate 1906 railway office building (now a hotel) & the contrasting, simple, white memorial is to the war dead of the railways.



From the top of the last 2 arches you can see, to your right the Aviva building built on the river bank in local Magnesian limestone & thought to be the best modern building in central York.

At the very end of the wall-walk the trail turns right to the pavement. If you go to the steps to your left you see the medieval **Barker Tower**, now a very small café without a toilet called the Perky Peacock.

The archways through the Walls beside the tower replaced a medieval postern gate which survived until an early railway company needed better access to its coal yards.

Continue onto the pavement.

Turn left & cross **Lendal Bridge** towards **Lendal Tower** (a former waterworks structure now a restaurant), beyond it a short section of non-accessible Walls & on to the main entrance to the **Museum Gardens**.

**Join the tour here from the Rawcliffe P&R**

In the **Museum Gardens** the trail goes along the main path

(bearing right) & on your right behind the lawn, is the **Multangular Tower** with a section of Roman wall leading up to it. These are York's best Roman walls above ground, built of neat, small, pale limestone blocks with a stripe of red tiles running through them.

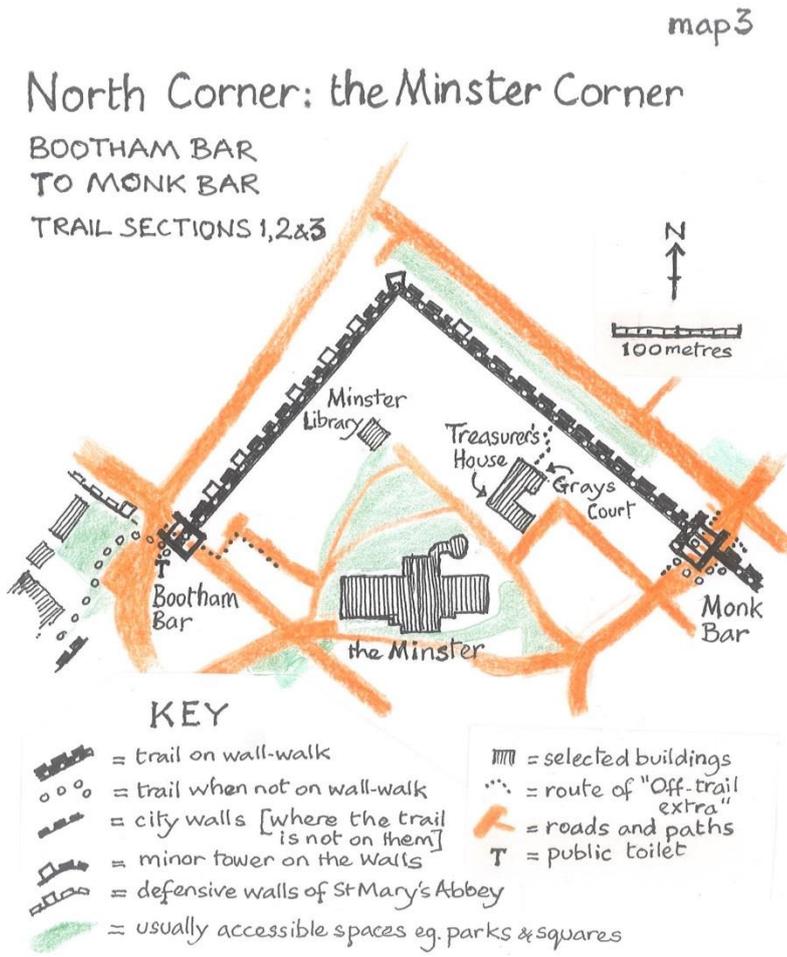
They were built at the corner of the legionary fort, possibly at the time when the Emperor Constantius was based here. The tower doesn't belong to a single time period; it is capped by a medieval wall which is pierced by tall, cross-shaped arrow slits. Moreover, the Roman wall has a red stripe about 3 metres from where it joins the tower; this may well be a repair of cannon ball damage from the Civil War.

The trail turns right immediately after the Multangular Tower (off the main path to the museum) & first right again up a little path that takes you to a gate through the walls where you can look inside the tower.

Retrace your steps & turn right, leaving the Museum Gardens by a larger gate. The Walls on your right are not accessible & they stop suddenly, having been demolished to build a new road (St Leonard's Place) almost 200 years ago. The trail continues into St Leonard's Square passed **Kings Manor**, with a statue of the Victorian painter **William Etty**, who campaigned to protect the Walls & bars, who looks towards **Bootham Bar**.

This bar is best seen from the square outside it. Looking from here you can see the oldest visible part of the bar, the round Norman arch [about 900 years old] & the medieval fort above it [about 700 years old] with its cross-shaped arrow slits. The painted stone shields on the front of the bar are modern replacements & show a royal coat of arms & York's coat of arms [gold lions on a red cross of St. George].

## Bootham Bar – ‘Minster Corner’



The 3 statues on top of the bar are by a Victorian mason who had his workshop beside the bar, they show a medieval Lord Mayor, knight & mason & replaced earlier statues.

The **toilets** at Bootham Bar are newly re-opened after upgrading & will cost you 40p. Their entrance is just to the right of the steps.

Ascend to the top of the steps, look left across the road & you will see where the Walls were breached in the 1830s to accommodate the new road junction; to their left is York's main **Art Gallery** & the **King's Manor**. Move on through the heavy, anti-pigeon gate & into the room above the arch. A portcullis is on your left & a 19th century wall is on your right.

From the 19th century slit windows on your right, you can look into York along **Petergate**, which follows the line of one of the 2 main roads running through the Roman Fort; not quite as straight as it was 19 centuries ago.

Walk out onto the wall-walk which the Victorians built beside rebuilt battlements on walls that were medieval. These walls are on an earth rampart that was started by the Romans but was heightened to cover what was left of the Roman walls.

Described as **Minster corner**, this section has three good views of the **Minster** as you continue to look to your right and approach the **Robin Hood Tower** at the corner. The present Minster having taken 250 years to build has all the three major Gothic styles. The simple spear-shaped windows in the central portion are the oldest ones in the current structure, in the "early English" style of the 1220s. The large garden below you at this point belongs to the Dean, who is in charge of the Minster & its grounds.

**Robin Hood Tower** is Victorian & there is no known link to the popular folk hero who preceded it. There are benches plus a good view of the next portion of wall & the ditch outside it; a once deeper ditch ran all around the Walls. There is a carving of crossed keys set into its paving to remind us that the Minster is dedicated to St Peter who the Bible says was given the keys of heaven. The top of the next tower was also built by Victorians with two novel small turrets.

Look outside the walls to see **Lord Mayors' Walk**, laid out as a paved tree-lined promenade in Georgian times. The old-looking building on the far side of this road was a Victorian college that has developed into York's second university, the **University of York St John**.

If you look inside the Walls there is a linked complex of old buildings on your right, which were once all part of the **Treasurer's House**; a National Trust tourist visit all of its own.

70 metres further on there are steps that provide access to the splendid house & garden of **Grays Court**, a hotel which welcomes non-residents to their garden & parlour bar for drinks, teas & light lunches. In 1887, the owner of this garden & the Dean reluctantly relinquished what they saw as 'rights' to "their" parts of the Walls, to enable public access throughout this section.

During the construction of this wall-walk the Victorians took advice from experts in medieval military architecture. However, they included features uncondusive to defensive warfare, e.g. some slit windows are at the wrong height & some are too narrow to aim from.

Continuing on from Grays Court's garden, there is an image of a Roman helmet set into the paving which marks the site of the north-east gate of the Roman legionary fort of Eboracum. It is thought that York's north-east gate was moved to Monk Bar 700 years ago because Minster priests did not like a major route going through their part of the city.

Ahead you will see **Monk Bar** with its wild men threatening to throw stones from the top of its extra storey.

### Monk Bar

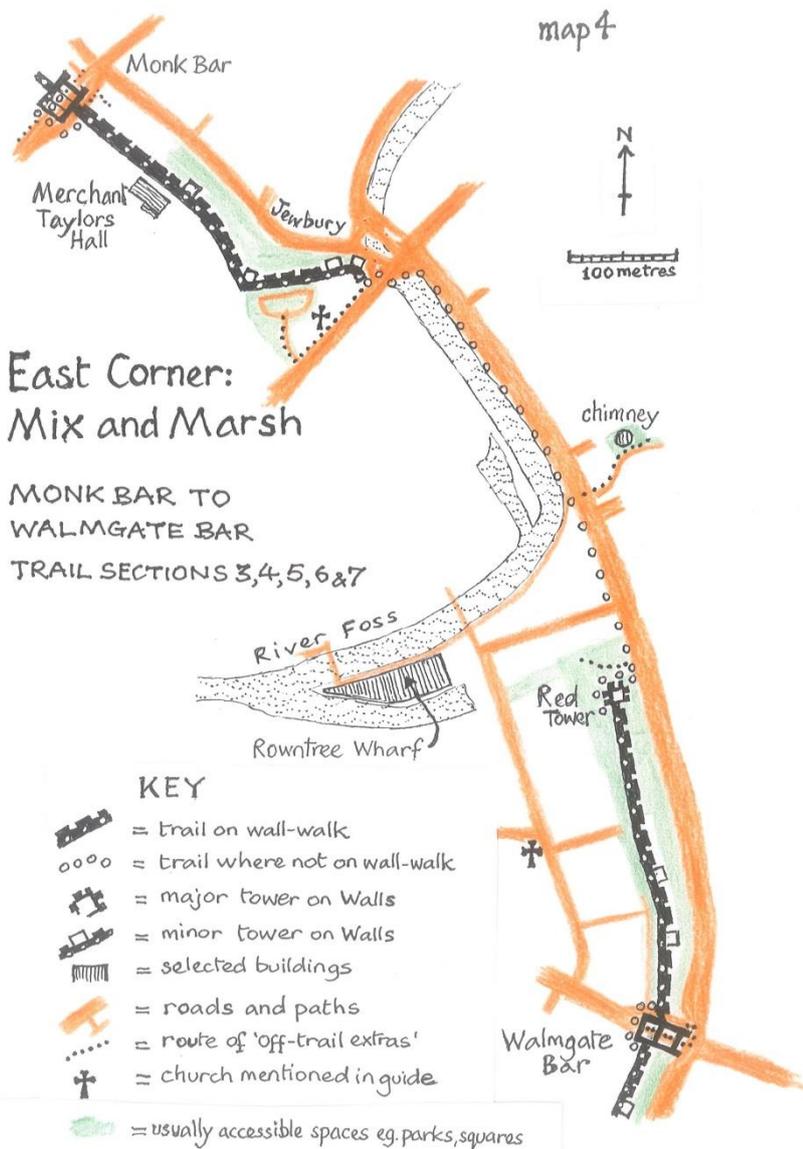
This bar is probably 700 years old & you turn right, to avoid a little museum with the bar's medieval toilet & a portcullis complete with the winding machinery. You go down narrow, low-roofed, steep steps.

Turn left at the pavement & enter the bar's arch, which is a cycle path & look across to a blocked doorway in the arch wall.

This was from the times when traders would be stopped as they went through these bars & made to pay "murage". Murage was a tax on goods being brought into York for sale, a tax which went to pay for the Walls & for the murage-collector who came through this door.

Go to the exit of the arch, look up to see the spikes of the portcullis, waiting to slide down between its grooves & seal off the entrance. In medieval times the ground under the portcullis would have allowed its points to fix it firmly in the earth [not to pierce attackers caught underneath as it came down!]. A portcullis fixed in this way has none of the weak points of an ordinary door with hinges or lock. It is thought that every gate through the Walls once had a portcullis, but only **Monk Bar** has a complete example.

In the early 19th century all the bars except **Walmgate** had their **barbicans** demolished, mainly because they got in the way of traffic. (See Walmgate bar on page 7)



### Monk Bar to Walmgate Bar (East Corner Part 1 – see map on previous page)

Retrace your steps to the city side of the arch & then cross the road at the traffic lights [traffic comes both ways], where the trail continues up a staircase in front of you.

Just beyond the top through the parapet on your left, you can see the brick dome of a Georgian **ice house** cut into the outer ramparts below you. The place for the best view of the ice house is shown by an ice symbol set in the paving of the wall-walk. The house is a bit like an igloo in reverse, it is built around 1800 with brick but is mainly under ground.

It could be filled with ice in winter so that this could be used throughout the rest of the year for iced foods & drinks.

At this point you also have a good view of a large medieval building partly cut into the inner ramparts ahead of you, this is the **Merchant Taylors' Hall**. The medieval guildhall is one of several that survive in York. The guilds were part trade association, part charity & part religious fellowship; usually you had to join one if you wanted to do business in the city.

Between you & the guildhall archaeologists have cut into the inner ramparts & have left exposed a corner of the **Roman legionary fort**. From there the line of the Walls is less straight as it has left the ramparts the Romans started & is probably on Viking & then Norman ramparts.

Just past the guildhall to your left, set into the parapet wall & partly behind railings, is what's left of two toilets. These may well be medieval, opinions differ on who would have used them though they have been described as extremely 'public' public toilets.

The next tower has been rebuilt by Victorians with chimney-like little turrets. Outside the Walls opposite a marker in the path is a three story car park, built on the site of York's medieval Jewish cemetery. Called **Jewbury** it was long uncared for as Jews were expelled from England in 1290 by Edward I, only returning gradually after more than 300 years.

At a round tower called "**New Tower**" since 1380, the Walls suddenly turn outwards, probably on Norman ramparts, to protect the medieval church of St. Cuthbert's. Between the walls and the church is a small, quiet public garden. Continue on to descend the steps & complete this section.

**Monk Bar to Walmgate Bar** (East Corner Part 2 – see map on previous page)

Part 2 of this corner was once part of a large, marshy lake [The King's Fishpool] that neither the Walls nor attackers could easily cross. It starts where you come off the Walls & ends where the Walls recommence at the **Red Tower**.

Turn right as you come off the walls & negotiate the network of Pelican crossings on your left and then to the right to access a pavement on a bridge over the **River Foss**. Turn right & walk beside the river. **Join the tour here from the Monks Cross P&R**

The river was made into a great lake by William the Conqueror around 1068 when he ordered it to be dammed to create a moat around his castle half a kilometre downstream.

Along the River Foss you can see an arched metal footbridge [usually closed] which leads to a small nature reserve by a quiet backwater. In medieval times migrating Geese were hunted for food in addition to the bream & pike which could be fished from the 'Pool'.

More than 700 years later the river was canalised & then the Victorians built up the level of the silted-up lake. What was left of the lake was seen as a health hazard, it smelt & was thought to be linked to diseases such as the cholera epidemic of 1832.

After centuries of being used as an illegal 'dump' [with heavy fines], the corporation decided to concentrate rubbish here to help build up the ground level; people were paid a bounty if they dumped a cartload of rubbish into the King's Fishpool.

There is a toilet in **Morrison's supermarket** [next to its café] across the road to your left marked by a tall chimney. If it's a café your'e after, hold on until you get to one at **Walmgate Bar**. The tall chimney is what remains of a Victorian waste incinerator, where rubbish was burnt & the heat was used to generate steam for a stone crusher, mortar mixer & electricity generator. Morrison's originally wanted to write "Morrison's" down the chimney as a signpost, but was told this was not how York dealt with its historical heritage!

Carry on walking along the pavement of Foss Islands Road as the river curves away to your right.

**Join the tour here from the Grimston Bar P&R**

Cross Navigation Road & very soon you see **Red Tower** on your right.

### **Monk Bar to Walmgate Bar** (East Corner Part 3)

At the **Red Tower** the Walls start again & the trail leaves the side of the road & goes right to join the wall-walk behind the tower. The tower was built of brick at the end of the Middle Ages when money was short in York & cheaper materials were used.

Victorians heavily repaired the ruined tower & built up the land around here [by about 2 metres] so the tower seems much lower than it did when it guarded the large marshy lake of the Kings Fishpool.

As you follow the path around the tower note the "garde-robe" [toilet] that sticks out a little from the wall, less the hole that would have allowed human waste to drop down here straight into the lake. Ascend the wall-walk steps & continue forward.

On the city side of this part of the trail there is mainly council housing from the mid 20th century to replace very poor housing present in Victorian times. Just after where the housing is set back, look down a road to your right to see the medieval towered church of **St Margaret's**; a reminder that the Walls were still protecting the old city here.

The wall-walk widens into a rectangular interval tower less than 100 metres before **Walmgate Bar**, where a modern block of flats comes very close to the wall. At this tower the wall-walk goes up a step or two & below you under the paving there are 2 sets of steps going down to the rampart, presumably once part of the early recreational wall-walk.

This part ends with **Walmgate Bar** & fairly good views of the bar as you approach it. The next section of the trail begins as soon you get to the pavement.

### **Walmgate Bar**

This is the only bar which still has its medieval **barbican** & which seems to show the scars of military attacks. The trail continues by crossing the road at the traffic lights to your right & up the steps in front of you to the next section of the Walls.

As you approach the steps look left down through the bar's archway, to the roofless passage of its barbican. It was this passage known as the "killing ground", that was the defence provided by the barbican. If attackers broke through the gate that would have closed off the far end, they were surrounded on all sides by manned walls above them with the bar's portcullis barring their way.

The survival of the barbican resulted from a political confrontation. In the mid-Victorian era the councillor representing this area [one of the Rowntree family] claimed that the council had failed to remove the barbican & improve the roads in this area because the people living in it were so poor they were thought not to matter. He wanted the barbican & the Walls to be knocked down to bring more space & cleaner air, but the Lord Mayor refused, not wishing to the man who sanctioned the loss of part of York's heritage. The council later redeveloped the area.

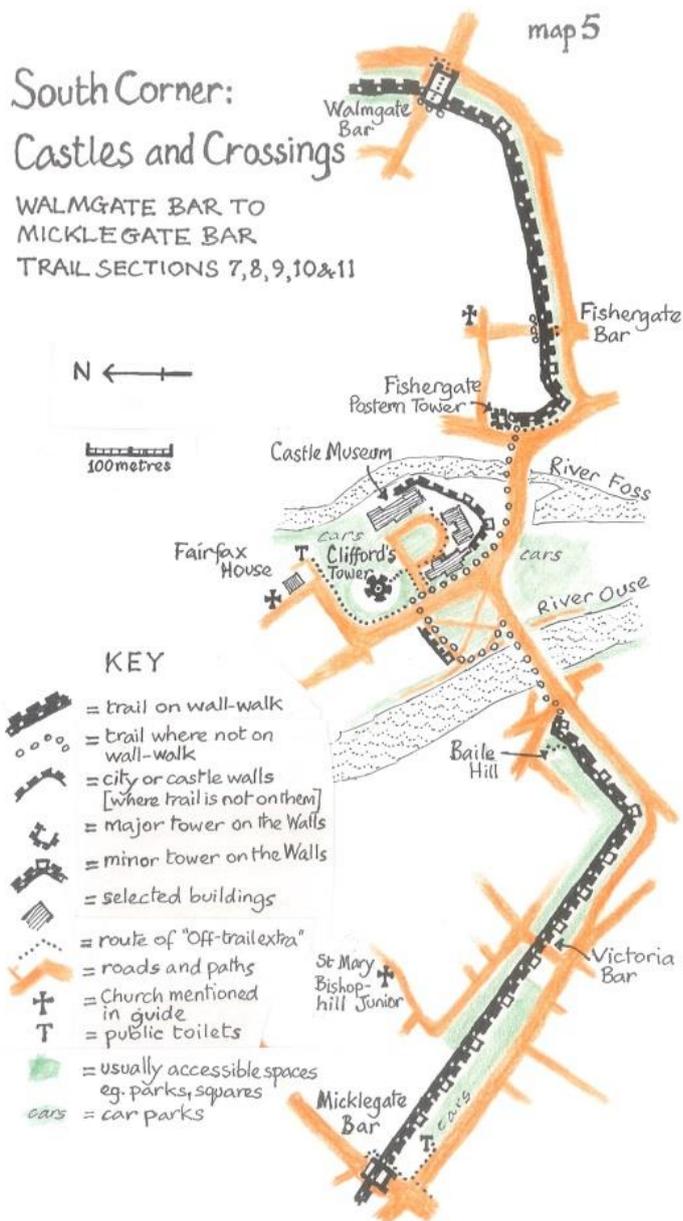
At the steps up to the next section of the Walls, turn back to the bar to see the extension to its living space that was added to the bar at the time of Queen Elizabeth I. There is a small, church-run café you can visit there from the same steps, with an upstairs worth visiting where if you ask you can see glimpses of the barbican, portcullis & toilet behind the counter-bar downstairs.

The door to the barbican wall-walk is to the left in the wall behind the counter-bar; the portcullis is like heavy trellis shelving disappearing behind cupboards; the toilet, though not itself medieval, is attractively fitted into medieval walling at the right.

The last time that the Walls were attacked was also the only time that York has been besieged with armies circling the city. This was in 1644 during the English Civil War. Walmgate Bar was badly damaged by cannon fire but it also came under secret attack from below ground.

Parliamentarian forces were digging a tunnel, which was probably planned to go under the bar itself, to be filled with gun powder & blown up. The defenders captured a parliamentarian soldier, who revealed the 'plot' & they dug down & flooded the attackers tunnel.

## Walmgate Bar to Micklegate Bar (South Corner Part 1)



This corner starts at the south side of Walmgate Bar & ends where the Walls end at **Fishergate Postern Tower**.

The Walls here are generally very low on the inside. As you leave the 1<sup>st</sup> interval tower & walk on towards **Fishergate Bar**, there are good views of the Walls in front of you.

Look outside the Walls as you approach the bar, to see the **Barbican** concert venue where the televised national snooker tournament is held.

You are forced off the Walls to cross a little road at **Fishergate Bar**. This bar was so badly damaged in an attack in 1489 that it was left bricked up for 340 years. Some stones in the archway are pink from when the bar was burnt in this attack.

From Fishergate Bar look right, past the Phoenix pub to see the end of a Victorian church on the right & opposite it on the left an older churchyard, this is where **Dick Turpin**, the highwayman & folk hero is buried.

Back on the Walls you soon turn right at a rectangular corner tower, & you see **Fishergate Postern Tower**, which guards a small late medieval gateway that's to your left as you get to the bottom of the steps at the Tower.

This is the only postern gate left in the Walls, being seen as an inconvenience to traffic!

The tower is also guarding the dam on the River Foss, where the dual carriageway road now turns left & crosses the **River Foss** over Castle Mills bridge. The dam was to flood the **castle's** moats, which have been filled in, but you can see what remains of the castle wall.

## Walmgate Bar to Micklegate Bar (South Corner Part 2)

Go through the small arch by Fishergate Postern Tower & cross the road [Picadilly] immediately in front of you.

**Join the tour here from the Designer Outlet P&R**

Follow the right hand pavement of the dual carriageway over the **River Foss** with the south wall of the **castle** to your right & its drawbridge pit.

Continue along the pavement which turns to the right [Tower Street] until you reach a road on your right providing access to **Clifford's Tower** [the castle's keep & look-out post] on its steep man-made hill & the **Castle Museum** plus **1705 prison** [with café & toilets]. The tower's hill dates from 1068 when William the Conqueror came to York & realised it needed a castle & 500 soldiers to keep it conquered. When his wood castle was destroyed within the year, he rebuilt & extended it in stone to form part of the city walls.

Cross **Tower Street** via the pelican crossing & turn left then right into the gardens towards the **River Ouse**. These gardens have long been common land, once used for archery practice, washing & drying clothes & starting processions.

The Walls start on your right, but appear low as the ground has been raised to lessen flooding. Walk towards the banks of the Ouse where **Davy Tower** has been turned into a house. Turn left along the river bank & then left to steps going up to **Skeldergate Bridge** which crosses the **River Ouse**. The small tower built into the bridge originally housed the winding mechanism that allowed the near section of the bridge to be raised to let tall ships through for the first hundred years of its life. It is now a café.

On the other side of the river is a hill to match that of Clifford's Tower.

Cross the bridge & the road from your right and take the steps into & through a Victorian tower which take you to a flat topped hill. It was created for one of William the Conqueror's wooden "motte & bailey" castles about 950 years ago. The motte was the hill for the castle keep, the bailey was the defended space next to it. The Victorian tower replaces a medieval wall that ran down to a postern gate & tower at the river's edge. In medieval times the river could be sealed off as a route of attack, using a chain that ran from this tower to Davy Tower on the opposite bank.

Continue along the wall-walk through the **Bitchdaugher Corner Tower** [origin of the name unknown] and then over the top of an arch called **Victoria Bar**, in honour of the newly crowned Queen Victoria. During its construction a medieval gate was revealed.

Soon there is a sign set into the paving of the wall-walk to tell you to look slightly to your right to see some 100 metres from the ramparts, the oldest church tower in York. The tower of **St. Marys Bishopill junior** was built of Roman stone some years before the Norman Conquest.

From **Sadler Tower** just after Victoria Bar look outside the Walls to your left & almost a kilometre away you can see the clock tower & structure of York's second largest sweet factory, **Terry's**. Locally owned, it was taken over & closed by the multi-national **Krafts**.

Closer & a little to your right is a late Victorian school looking a little like a palace-castle in a Disney cartoon. Built when the law had just been changed to rescue those under eleven from employment, it is pleasing to imagine that its architect, like Disney, wished to delight children. Continue walking to **Micklegate Bar**.

**Micklegate Bar** is called the principal bar because it guards the main road south, it's the place where monarchs are greeted & it's the main place where the heads of people these monarchs called traitors were displayed. Notice the modern stone figures on the battlements as you approach the bar. This is probably where the heads would have been spiked; the latter ones being from supporters of Bonny Prince Charlie in 1745.

The back of the bar is relatively new [1827] but the bar is basically a much-renewed 14th century building on top of a Norman archway, with a room built above that archway around 1200. The small museum inside the bar has a charge for entry and is run by the York Archaeological Trust. You are however welcome to look around its shop just inside the museum. Going in also lets you explore some of the inside of the bar, although the museum is less impressive than the one at Monk Bar. Go down the first steps.

**For those joining the tour part way through turn back to P2 to continue**

**or** turn left along the pavement & cross Nunnery Lane at the 'lights' & on your left is the **Bar Convent**; its café is through its main entrance about 20 metres further along. The convent is a fine Georgian building which also houses the oldest Roman Catholic nunnery in England & a free museum. It has more substantial meals than many cafés, free leaflets & a shop.

*This walk was prepared by Keith Lea with edited extracts from a comprehensive guide to the City Walls produced by the Friends of York Walls [www.yorkwalls.org.uk](http://www.yorkwalls.org.uk) to which the author gives due acknowledgement.*

*In addition to information signs along route there are Quick Response (QR) codes which can be scanned using a smartphone to link to the relevant pages on the website.*