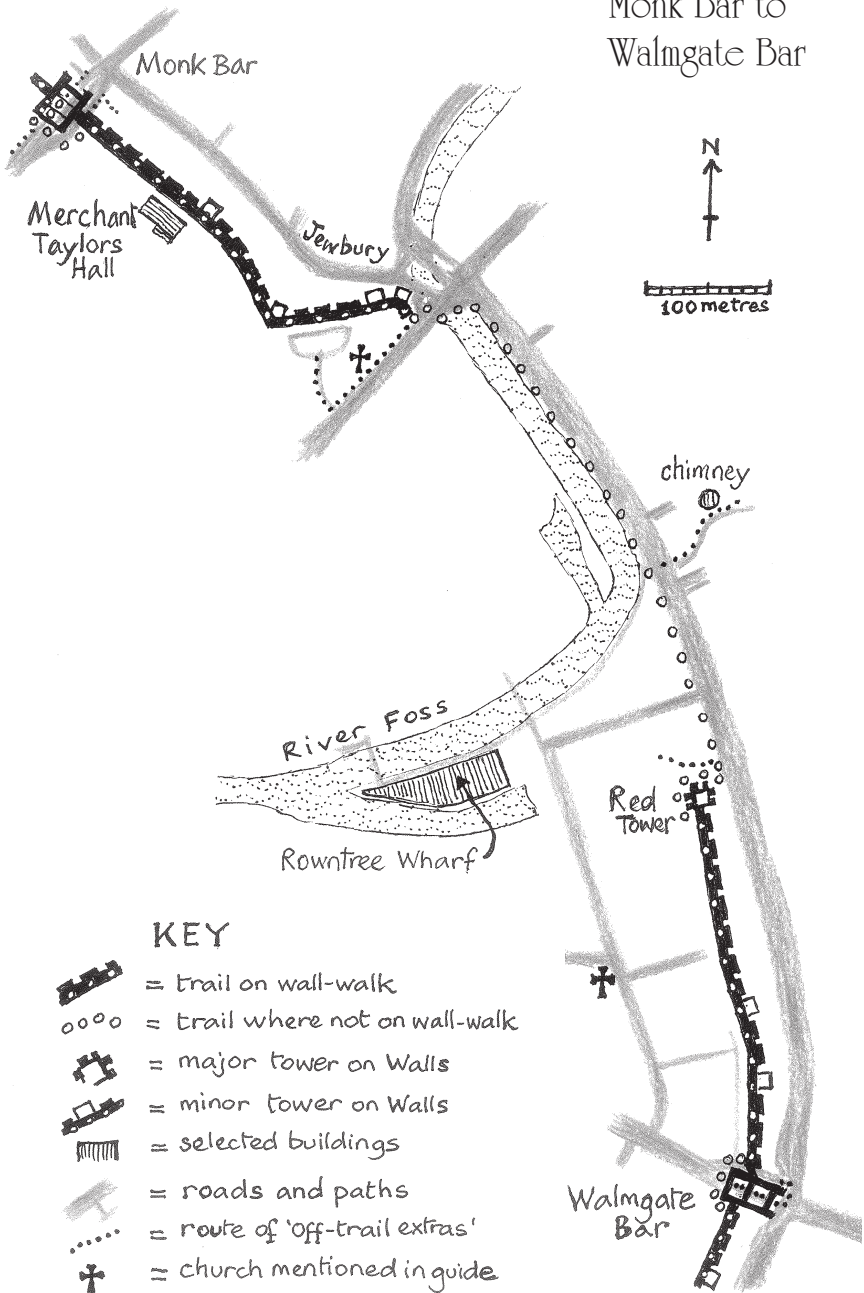


MAP OF TRAIL PARTS 4-7

The East Corner:
Monk Bar to
Walmgate Bar



THE TRAIL: 4. EAST CORNER PART 1

Basics

Part one of this corner starts with the roofless steps going up to the Walls at Monk Bar and ends where this section of Walls ends.

As soon as you get to the wall-walk you will see musket loops; these are probably from the English Civil War, to be aimed through by a kneeling man. The wall-walk you are on is probably from the late Middle Ages, though Victorians repaired it along with the battlements.

Very soon, on your left, you can see the brick dome of a Georgian ice house cut into the outer ramparts below you. 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 building looks duller as you get closer as it was mostly encased in brick by Georgian times. Between you and this guild hall archaeologists have cut into the inner ramparts and have left exposed a corner of the Roman legionary fort.



Roman, Medieval and modern buildings south of Monk Bar

Just past the guild hall, on the wall walk but partly behind railings, there is what's left of two toilets. These may well be medieval; opinions differ on who would have used them but they have been described as extremely public toilets. From this point the line of the Walls is less straight as it has left the ramparts the Romans started and is probably on Viking and then Norman ramparts. The next tower has been rebuilt by Victorians – with chimney-like little turrets. Outside the Walls near here you begin to see a three storey car park, which has been built on the site of York's medieval Jewish cemetery. The area is still called Jewbury but it was long uncared for as all Jews were expelled from England 700 years ago (only returning gradually after more than 300 years).

At the next tower (called "New Tower" since 1380) the Walls turn outwards to protect the medieval church of St. Cuthbert's. There is a small, quiet public garden immediately below you on the right and this is described in "Refreshments, Seats & Toilets" in the Appendix, and as an Off-trail extra on page 36. Just past the tower there are good views looking back to your left: a hint of a grassy ditch, the ramparts, the Walls and a little of the Minster.



Looking back when the Walls have swung east

THE TRAIL; 4. EAST CORNER PART 1

Details

Some say the musket loops were higher before the Victorian restoration and were for a musketeer standing with the gun against his shoulder. At least one of the loops, just after the steps up, seems to have been created by filling an embrasure in the battlements.

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 with brick but is mainly underground and was made around 1800. It would be filled with ice in winter so that this could be used throughout the rest of the year for iced foods and drinks.

On the opposite side of the Walls at this point you can see you are immediately above the excavated remains of a Roman interval tower in the walls that surrounded the legionary fort 1800 years ago. The first excavation here was in late Victorian times and the last was in the 1930s. The hole the archaeologists have left gets deeper further along the Walls so there you can see a tall wall by the corner of the fort. You can see these towers do not stick out from the Roman walls so defenders in the towers could not have attacked hostile Britons from the side as they approached the walls: perhaps the Romans did not fear this sort of attack. There is an information board on the wall-walk's railings about the Roman walls.

The medieval guilds of York were part trade association, part charity and part religious fellowship; usually you had to join one if you wanted to do business in the city. Tailoring was one of the biggest trades in



Musket loop made from embrasure

medieval York: there were 128 master-tailors in 1386 when records started. These were the full members of the guild, allowed to employ journeymen (paid by the day) and apprentices who would usually live in a master's home. This is one of several medieval guild halls in York.

Views

From just past the guild hall: The wall-walk soon narrows so it may be best to look around you before you get to the best view of Jewbury – shown by a star of David set in the paving of the wall-walk. Most of the site of the cemetery is now covered by the Sainsbury's car park but you can see the modest, metre-high, red granite plaque commemorating the dead, set into the nearest part of the car park's red-brick wall; its story is told below. To the left of this is Georgian housing. Turn further to the left and you are looking back at the Minster. The modern housing between you and the Minster here is very popular, and is thought of as successfully bringing people back into the city to live. This was a major planning aim in the 1960s.

Looking forward you'll see the ramparts and Walls turn east and get lower – but the best view of these is about 25 metres further on where you can also see New Tower (round with long arrow-slits) and where the Walls and ramparts end with two older, more angular towers, the first with shorter "musket loops".

Stories: Respect in Jewbury

It is unusual for an old place name in York to be so clear and helpful but, partly by accident, the place where medieval Jews buried their dead in York has long been called Jewbury.

There was a thriving Jewish community in 13th century York. Its members must have felt vulnerable as their religion made them the only religious minority in the country and meant they were excluded from membership of the guilds which controlled most trade in the city. They must have known of the terrible end of the 12th century York Jews (see "The Saddest Story" on page 65).

The Jewish religion taught then – and still teaches now – that the dead and their bodies should be treated with the greatest respect. In this teaching, the passing of time does not alter the need for respect, so archaeologists have come to recognise Jewish cemeteries by the lack of graves cutting across and through much earlier graves; Jewish grave diggers seem to have been exceptional in the care they gave not to disturb human remains. (Incidentally Shakespeare seemed to want the same care for his grave when he wrote: "Good friend, for Jesus sake

forbear to dig the dust enclosed here, blessed be the man that spares these stones and cursed be he that moves my bones"). But all Jews were expelled from England in 1290 so they could no longer take care of their cemeteries.

Almost 700 years later in York there were just a few documents that suggested that there was once a cemetery where holes were to be dug as part of new building in "Jewbury". Archaeologists were called in to investigate the site before builders started work; this respect for the archaeological evidence that might otherwise be destroyed by building is legally required everywhere in old York because it is a designated "Area of Archaeological Importance".

The archaeologists discovered about 500 medieval graves and the skeletons in them – and wanted to dig further and do tests on the bones and teeth to discover more about the diet and health of the times. But, in spite of the lack of gravestones and lack of traditionally nail-less Jewish coffins, the care that had been taken in the lay-out of the graves helped make the archaeologists and modern religious Jewish authorities in England believe that this was a Jewish cemetery. This being so, the archaeologists felt they should do as the Chief Rabbi wished. This ended their research as he said: "Whatever the scientific and historical loss... the dignity shown to humans even centuries after their death can contribute more than any scientific enquiry... to the respect in which human beings hold each other". The skeletons were removed to a Jewish mortuary and then returned to Jewbury for a burial supervised by the chief rabbi in 1984, 700 years or more after they were first buried.



Respect in stone: the wall-walk's sign points to Jewbury where the tablet in the brick wall marks a medieval graveyard (off-trail)

THE TRAIL: 5. EAST CORNER PART 2

Basics

Part 2 of this corner was once part of a large, marshy lake that neither the Walls nor attackers could easily cross. The trail in this part starts where you come off the Walls at a complex of road junctions and bridges and ends where the Walls begin again at Red Tower. This part of the trail heads more directly south than part 1 and, with part 3, cuts off the angle of the east corner by going in a single slight curve to the next bar.

You have three flows of traffic to cross using traffic lights: turn right as you get off the walls and cross left to a small traffic island, then turn right to cross two flows of traffic to the pavement on a bridge over the River Foss. Turn left and stay on the pavement, walking beside the river. The river you walk beside here was made into a great lake – called the King’s Fishpool – by William the Conqueror around 1068 when he ordered it to be dammed to create a moat around his castle half a kilometre downstream. More than 700 years later the river was canalised and then Victorians raised the level of the silted up lake.

After a while the river curves to the right but you should walk straight on along the road. If you look down the river immediately after it has curved off to the right you’ll see a towered, red brick Victorian warehouse come into view. Barges travelled on the Foss and unloaded here (most recently for Rowntree’s sweet factory so it is called Rowntree Wharf). Now the warehouse has been converted into homes and offices – and it is mainly water birds that go up and down the river.

Soon you cross a side street called Navigation Road; soon after this you will see the Walls and you can get back on to them by going anti-clockwise round the Red Tower.



Greylag goose and ducks on what’s left of the King’s Fishpool

THE TRAIL: 5. EAST CORNER PART 2

Details

At the very start of this section of the trail there is an information board that shows how far the lake once spread from this point (the public toilets shown on this board have also disappeared now!). When the modern bridges were being built a cobbled Roman ford was found here – about five metres below the present bed of the river.

Before crossing the road you may wish to visit a hidden garden just off the trail – see “Off-trail extras: 1” on page 36.

Once you have crossed the Foss the trail along the pavement seems to have lost some of its way-marking brass studs when it lost its Victorian “York stone” paving slabs. Some find this the least interesting section of the whole trail but others call the Foss “the largest industrial archaeology monument in York” and remember that canals like this were the superhighways of Georgian times, vital for Britain’s industrialisation.

Views

From just over the bridge: you can look back at the bridge itself and beyond this at the Walls you have left together with the Minster. The bridge, with its round tower-like extras, quietly echoes the Walls but



A lights-laden junction and the Walls echoed in Layerthorpe Bridge

the road junction itself has been criticised for its muddle of multiple mixed poles and lamp-posts. A little to the left of the Walls is the medieval church of St Cuthbert's but the buildings around you are late Victorian or later, built on what had been a marshy lake. The tall brick chimney, across the road in the opposite direction from the Minster, was for a Victorian waste-incinerator. If you look down the River Foss you can see an arched metal footbridge (usually closed) which leads to a small nature reserve by a quiet backwater. This reserve was used to reintroduce swans to the river in the 1990s. As well as swans you can probably now see moorhens, coots, ducks and geese. The geese which are grey and fawn, with no black, are "greylag geese"; in medieval times they came to England for the winters but then lagged behind when other geese left. Consequently farm geese were bred from them and they were hunted for food. The King's Fishpool didn't only provide bream and pike to eat, it also provided waterfowl like these.

From just after the arched metal footbridge on your right: you can look over the river and through the weeping willows to the nature reserve with its backwater and get a small impression of what this whole area was once like in summer, when the waters of the lake sank and many low islands appeared. The shallow lake stretched for about a hundred metres in front of you and more than 200 metres behind. The road that runs along the river here is called Foss Islands Road. It is part of what York calls its inner ring road, and is almost the only part that looks anything like the 4-lane road-around-the-Walls that some people were planning for York about 50 years ago; the plan was strongly opposed by local groups and it was defeated, partly because it was thought that such a road would be a poor setting for the Walls.

Off-trail extras: 1. Hidden garden

A small quiet, public garden just below and inside the Walls was mentioned on page 30 in the "Basics" section for the first part of this corner. It is an attractive space and has many benches. The two entrances are easy to miss and are about 80 metres from the Walls trail. As soon as you come off the Walls turn right and follow the pavement around instead of crossing the roads and bridge on your left. You will pass the medieval church of St Cuthbert's then find the entrances on your right, just before the Quilt Museum (which is housed in a medieval guild hall called St Anthony's Hall; the garden is called St Anthony's Garden).

As you reach the entrances you may be tempted by the look of the Black Swan, an old and popular half-timbered pub a little ahead of you



St Anthony's Garden (off-trail extra)

on the other side of the road – this is very understandable but at least have a look at the hidden garden first, it is lovely.

Off-trail extras: 2. Café

The café of Morrison's supermarket, with a toilet next to the café, is conveniently close to the trail. It could not be better signposted because it is at the bottom of the huge (by York's standards!) Victorian chimney you see to your left as you walk along the river. Leave the trail by a crossing to your left when you are just past the closest point to the chimney, then go up a short red-brick path till you get to the red-brick chimney. You'll see an entrance to the supermarket just in front of you. Inside there is everything you'd expect of this expanding, Yorkshire-based supermarket chain – even a small display about "the Destructor", the Victorian incinerator the chimney was built for (the Story below has more details). Morrison's originally wanted to write "Morrison's" down the chimney but was told this was not how York dealt with its historical heritage!

Off-trail extras: 3. Picnic benches

When you first see the Red Tower you will see a small garden between you and it – this is part of Rosemary Place. It has benches, picnic tables and a few things for young children to play on – and even some bushes of rosemary. You are surrounded here by some of the most conveniently placed council housing in York. It is allocated especially to people with mobility problems.



Rosemary Place and the Red Tower (off-trail extra)

Stories: York's rubbish

When William the Conqueror caused the great lake to form here it was called the King's Fishpool. Laws strictly limited who could fish the lake or even have a boat on it – and there were laws to try to prevent its being polluted by rubbish being dumped in it. Records say that in 1407 there was a 100 shilling fine for “throwing filth into the Foss to the prejudice of the royal fishery”. This was at a time when half a shilling was the fine for fouling the River Ouse!

Medieval York was notorious for its problems with rubbish. In 1330 Edward III sent a clean-up order to York's mayor beginning: “The King, detesting the abominable smell abounding in the said city more than any other in the realm from the dung and manure and other filth and dirt wherewith the streets and lanes are filled and obstructed...”. At one time the people who lived in the poor bit of the city beside the lake complained that they could not hear the priest in their parish church because of the noise of dogs fighting over the butchers' waste dumped outside.

In the early 19th century what was left of the lake was seen as a health hazard. It smelt and this was thought to be linked to sickness like the cholera epidemic of 1832. So instead of trying to keep the area clear

of rubbish, the corporation decided to concentrate rubbish here to help build up the ground level – people were paid a bounty by the corporation if they dumped a cartload of rubbish in what was once the King’s Fishpool.

When the ground level was thought high enough York people still brought rubbish here. In 1899 the big chimney was built for an incinerator which burnt the city’s rubbish. It was called “the Destructor” but it did more than destroy because it was part of an early attempt at energy efficiency. The chimney was shared with an electricity generator and when rubbish was burned the heat was used to generate steam which worked a stone crusher, a mortar mixer and, if there was any energy left, the generator. Waste is still managed near here: 200 metres east of the chimney, where the edge of the lake once was, is York’s central waste and recycling centre.



The Destructor’s chimney and the River Foss