The Yorkshire Journal

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*Special Issue*

York’s City Walls and Bars
Celebrating the Custom of the Bainbridge Forest Horn in Wensleydale
Aysgarth Falls in Wensleydale

A well-known beauty spot

Aysgarth Railway Station was opened in 1878 as part of the Hawes Branch line and closed in April 1954. Today Aysgarth Railway Station is disused but the Wensleydale Railway has plans to reconnect the line from Redmire where it currently ends, to Castle Bolton, Aysgarth, Hawes and eventually Garsdale on the famous Settle to Carlisle Railway.

The station was situated near the falls so LNER was able to promote rail travel to Aysgarth Falls and produced a beautiful poster advertising their rail services. In the poster on the right can be seen the Aysgarth Falls with water cascading over a series of broad limestone steps, but actually the falls are not that high. The poster is simply titled ‘Aysgarth Falls’ and dates to the 1930s by E. W. Haslehust.
Editorial

Last year we received many e-mails requesting information about the medieval walls at York, in particular about the wall walk. Many of our readers wanted to take a tour of the walls but had difficulty in finding the information they needed. Other readers had been on a wall walk with bought guide books to accompany them, but found them inadequate and full of errors. Because of the large number of enquiries from our readers, we decided to go on a York wall walk to find out why so many of our readers found getting information difficult. We soon discovered why. Getting a comprehensive guide required buying at least six guide books and then they do not cover all the interesting sites to be seen on the walls. The lack of maps, illustrations and incorrect information seems to be the problem. Sarah Harrison and Jeremy Clark, two of our well known writers decided to write an article on York’s City Walls and Bars in order to help all our readers who would like to undertake this walk on the walls and be informed about the sights to see. Their fascinating article is accompanied by maps and photos and they give a brief history of the walls and Bars, which gives a very good starting point for a walk on the medieval walls without having to buy many guide books to carry around.

This year Bainbridge, in Wensleydale celebrates 150 years of the African Buffalo Horn. For over 700 years in the winter evenings a horn was blown in the forest at Bainbridge to guide travellers who may have lost their way and got stranded, back to the safety of the village. The oldest horn to survive this custom is a cow horn, which is thought to date back to 1611. Then in March 1864 a new horn, believed to have come from an African buffalo, was presented to the village by Mr R. H. Harburn of Bishop Auckland to replace the old cow horn which was worn out. This was a great occasion for the village of Bainbridge and was marked by a procession walk to Askrigg led from the Temperance Hall and accompanied by the Bainbridge Temperance Brass Band. The horn blower, at that time, was dressed in a jacket, red breeches, white leggings and a cap with a feather in it. The rear consisted of about 100 school children carrying banners. The streets were crowded and along the way the Mayor delivered a speech. In 1864 things were much different in Bainbridge where the custom of the horn-blowing took pride of place. These days the tradition of horn-blowing during the winter evenings has not been held for several years and is sadly in danger of becoming an out dated custom. In Jean Griffith’s and Marcus Grant’s interesting article on The Custom of the Bainbridge Forest Horn in Wensleydale they explain the history of this custom, how important the forest was in medieval times and the horn-blowers of Bainbridge.

We hope you enjoy these two fascinating article in our special issue of The Yorkshire Journal.

Andrew Simpson
The city of York has been defended by walls since Roman times AD 71 when the 9th Roman Legion arrived at the point where the River Ouse and Foss meet. The first defences were simply made up of a ditch and earthen ramparts with a timber palisade on top. This palisade had been completely replaced by a stone wall by the 3rd century AD. These Roman fortress defences included four main gateways and their setting has influenced the York street pattern to the present day. In the centuries that followed the Romans, the defences fell out of use and virtually all of the Roman walls had been covered over by successive earth ramparts with the arrival of the Vikings in AD 866. These earthen ramparts were heightened again by the Normans who also built new gateways in stone. The walls have protected York, first from the Scots, when in 1319 an army led by the Earl of Moray reached the gates hoping to capture Queen Isabella and keep her hostage; and then Parliamentarians, who besieged the city in 1644. The final threat to the city defences came in 1745 when the Jacobite army of Charles Stuart threatened attack; the walls were repaired, although the threat eventually came to nothing. Minor damage to the walls was done in the 1800s but most of the walls, gates and towers still exist today.

If fact York’s City Walls are the longest of any town in England and are famous for the gateways into the city called Bars. The Multangular Tower in the Museum Gardens has Roman origins, but there are also remains of an Anglo-Saxon tower in the grounds of the York Central Library, which is the only Anglo-Saxon tower in England. Some parts of the city wall were renovated in the 19th century but most still exist in their medieval form dating from the 12th to the 14th century. They stand for most of their length of 2 miles (3.2 kilometres) on a massive earth rampart and in places concealing Roman walls.

The walls are built almost entirely of Magnesian limestone, quarried near Tadcaster, although some gritstone blocks have been used robbed from ruined Roman buildings. The curtain wall is generally about 6 feet wide (1.8 meters) and 13 feet high (4 meters), including the embattled parapet of 6 feet high (1.8 meters). The outer ditch, were once 60 feet wide (18.3 meters) and 10 feet deep (3 meters), however only water filled the ditches surrounding the Walmgate area. The only section which does not have a wall is between Peaseholme Green and the Red Tower, where there was once a huge fishpond in medieval times, No. 9 on the map. York castle and its moat also accounted for another gap in the otherwise continuous wall.

One of York’s main features are its four main gateways or Bars to the city through the encircling wall. These are Bootham Bar, Monk Bar, Walmgate Bar and Micklegate Bar. A fifth bar, Fishergate, was probably added later. At each point where the walls touched the rivers, four on the Ouse and four on the Foss, were towers with small gates, perhaps originally only for foot traffic, known as posterns. Interval towers were also constructed on the walls, although some have been destroyed or rebuilt.

Right: Map of the wall walk, starting at Bootham Bar No. 1
A Walk around the Walls

Starting the walk at Bootham Bar, No. 1 on the map and proceed clockwise around the City, but the wall walk can be reached at several points on the wall as well as at the Bars.

Bootham Bar stands on the site of one of the four gateways into the Roman legionary fortress of Eburacum. From here the Romans would have marched north to Scotland to extend their territory.

*Left: Bootham Bar in about 1820, the illustration shows the barbican that was removed in 1832.*

Although much of Bootham Bar was built in the 14th and 19th centuries, it also has some of the oldest surviving stonework, dating to the 11th century since it was constructed soon after the Norman Conquest. It consists of a passageway with arches at each end of a rectangular gatehouse with two storeys above. Its barbican was removed in 1832. Climb the steps up to Bootham Bar and then walk into the passageway where the heavy wooden portcullis that is fixed in place can be seen. The portcullis was saved from destruction in 1889 and was restored in 1951-2.

The hanging turrets on the outer side and upper floor were probably rebuilt after the siege of 1644 following damage from bombardment. The statues on top of the Bar were carved in 1894 to replace the crumbling medieval figures and represent a stone mason who holds a model of the Bar, the 14th century Mayor of York Nicholas Langton, who holds a scroll and a knight in medieval armour with a sword and shield. The coats of arms below were renewed in 1969. The historical association with Bootham Bar is that in 1405 Thomas Mowbray’s severed head was fixed at the gate and the heads of three rebels opposing Charles II’s restoration were placed here in 1663.

*Left: Bootham Bar, with the statues on top of the Bar and coats of arms below*  
*Right: The portcullis in the passageway*

Walk out of the passageway and onto the walls where, on your right, you can see views of the magnificent York Minster with its great twin towers at the west end. From Bootham Bar the wall follows the line of the Roman fortress defence wall and passes along the back of Gillygate shaded by leafy trees. As the wall begins to circle around, (if the foliage allows), it gives more fine views of the Minster and the Deanery Garden. This section of the wall has 5 towers three of which are semi-hexagonal and were probably added in the late 14th or 15th century. Keep walking along down this stretch of the walls towards Robin Hood Tower, No. 2, where the wall turns the corner. Robin Hood Tower is circular in design and was rebuilt in 1888 on the site of an earlier tower, by the Victorians, who thought that this was what a medieval tower should look like. Further along this section of the wall you will see the end of the Treasurer’s House on your right. This house was built in 1419 as a home for the Treasurer of the Minster. The wall then goes on a short way to Monk Bar, where the Richard III museum is located.
The large round Robin Hood angular Tower with battlements

**Monk Bar, No 3** probably replaced an earlier Roman entrance on the site. The Bar is a four-story gatehouse and is the tallest 63 feet (19.2 meters), the strongest and the most elaborate of the four medieval gateways. It was built in the early 14th century, including the now demolished (1825) barbican. The fourth story was added in 1484 by King Richard III. The Bar was a self-contained fortress with each floor capable of being defended separately. The passageway and two lower storeys have vaulted roofs. On the front of the bar are doorways to the barbican and the arch supports a gallery from which missiles and boiling oil could be dropped through holes, onto attackers who had broken through the outer gates. These are now all blocked up. The coats of arms, each below decorated canopies, are the Plantagenet Royal Arms and the Arms of the City of York. At the top of this large ornate gateway are six figures locally known as ‘boulder throwers’ because that is just what they are doing. These figures are posed and ready to throw missiles at their attackers and are probably 17th century replacements of earlier carvings.

*Above: Monk Bar in about 1820, before the Barbican was demolished*
On the second floor is the portcullis and winding mechanism which is the only one still in working order. It was last lowered in 1953 in celebration of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. On either side of it are doors to the tiny circular rooms in the turrets.

Left: The winding mechanism for the portcullis on the second floor, before the Bar was converted into a museum in 1992

One of these rooms was probably the Little Ease where recusant Catholics and mutinous apprentices were confined during the 16th century when the Bar became a prison. The side arches were added to Monk Bar in 1820 and the main arch widened for traffic in 1861.

Today, Monk Bar houses the Richard III Museum and is one of the entrances to York’s City Walls where you can enter rooms in the Bar. However, the stairs to get in and out of Monk Bar are very narrow with a low ceiling. The museum is in honour of King Richard III and offers an entertaining and informative look at the controversy that he has been unjustly maligned by historians. Entrance to the museum is on the first floor where the gift shop offers books, prints and general souvenirs. There is a small entrance fee to visit the museum.

Left: The gift shop and entrance to the museum

To continue the wall walk, go down the narrow stairs to the other side of Monk Bar, and climb up the stairs by the archway. Walk along the wall a short distance to the first set of steps. At the top of the steps look down over the wall on its outer side to the left where a domed brick-built Ice-House, No. 4 of about 1800 can be seen.

This ice house would have been used to store ice so that food could be kept cool during the summer months. The ice could be collected during winter, or might have been bought from ice merchants.

Right: Brick-built ice-house
A little further along is an information panel which explains about the remains of the Roman walls, a section of which is inside this length of wall. At this point looking down on your right are the remains of an interval tower and the eastern corner tower of the Roman fortress that have been excavated. The destroyed south-east wall of the Roman fortress ran from this corner to a multangular tower under the modern Feasegate by way of the south-east gate site where King’s Square now is.

![Remains of the Roman Fortress corner tower](image1)

Above left: The remains of the Roman Fortress corner tower. Right: The Merchant Taylors’ Hall

From this position can be seen the timber framed end wall of the Merchant Taylors’ Hall. This is a medieval guildhall constructed by the Fraternity of St John the Baptist (an organisation connected to the Taylors’ Guild) in the 14th century; it received new cladding in the 17th century.

![The Merchant Taylors’ Hall](image2)

Two arched openings can be seen in the wall at this point. They were lavatories for the guards or for a house built later on top of the walls.

The first tower along this section is the **Harlot Hill Tower, No. 5**, which is semi-circular; it has 19th century turrets but a medieval base and arrow-slits. From here can be seen more excellent views of the Minster.

![Harlot Hill Tower with two 19th century turrets](image3)

Below: Harlot Hill Tower with two 19th century turrets
Above: New Tower set in the corner of the wall

The next tower on this section of the wall is New Tower, No. 6. It has a 19th century parapet above a medieval base. This oval tower is set in the corner of the wall which now makes a curve and becomes smaller in size as it inclines and approaches Lathorpe Tower.

The Lathorpe Tower, No. 7, is where the wall now ends; built in 1370 it is set at an angle and supported on two buttresses with a pointed arch in between. Six re-used corbels, the earliest from the 12th century are incorporated into the stonework.

From this tower the wall originally continued for a further 70 feet (21.3 meters) to Layerthorpe Postern Tower No. 8, at the head of the bridge over the Foss. It was demolished when the Layerthorpe Bridge was rebuilt and widened in 1829.

Above: The Lathorpe Tower is where the wall now ends

The appearance of the rectangular Layerthorpe Postern Tower with an arched passage and gabled roof is well known from many drawings. It was probably built in the 14th century and heightened in 1604 to form a house over the passage.

Left: Engraving of the Layerthorpe Postern Tower by J. Halfpenny, 1807
The next stretch of the wall is about one third of a mile (half a kilometre) between Layerthorpe Tower and the Red Tower (from where you will pick up the wall again). This is on the other side of the river and can be reached by crossing over Peasholme Green and into Foss Island Road. This area was defended by a large pool, called the **King’s Fishpool, No. 9**. When the Normans dammed the River Foss at its junction with the Ouse to create a water-filled moat around the castle, they also formed a pool that was up to a quarter of a mile wide (about one third of a kilometre). The area became a royal preserve for fish and waterfowl. However, from the 17th century drainage began to take place and with the growth of reeds the area was gradually reduced until the pool finally dried up.

Continue walking along Foss Islands Road, with the chimney of the Victorian gasworks on the left, until the **Red Tower, No.10** is reached. The ‘Red Tower’ was built in 1490 as part of the strengthening of York’s defences ordered by Henry VII. Unlike the rest of the defences it was built of brick instead of stone, which was cheaper, and there was a large medieval tilery near by. The stonemasons resenting this smashed the tilers tools and threatened to maim or kill them. Consequently, when a tiler called John Patrick was found murdered in 1491 the wardens of the masons’ guild were committed for trial. However, they were not convicted. The tower’s name refers to the colour of the bricks. Its appearance has changed greatly since then; the original flat leaded roof with embattled parapet has been replaced by a tiled roof and most of the windows like the roof date from the restoration of 1858.

Rejoining the wall at the Red Tower, the wall walk goes on towards Walmgate Bar. This part of the wall is low, as well as the rampart on which it stands. It was probably built in the mid 14th century but much of it has been restored. On this section are two solid rectangular towers and at the foot of the wall are a series of so called relieving arches that were built into the foundations of the wall, in order to strengthen the wall-walk way.
Walmgate Bar, No. 11 consists of a passageway with arches at each end capped by a rectangular gatehouse of two storeys. At the back of the gatehouse is a timber-framed projection supported on two stone columns. This was probably added in 1584–6. Walmgate Bar is the only bar still to have its projecting outer defence, or barbican, as well as its portcullis and 15th century inner wooden gates.

The first gatehouse was built in the mid-12th century, and the projecting barbican was added in the 14th century. Walmgate Bar was leased out as a house in 1376 and an annual rent of 10 shillings was paid. People were certainly living here before 1376 and they continued to live here until 1957. In fact the house was the birthplace in 1793 of John Browne, the artist and historian of York Minster. Heads were also displayed on this bar; in 1469 the head of Robert Hillyard, who took part in the Yorkshire rebellions of 1469 and in 1663, the head of a Farnley Wood conspirator.

The defences around the Walmgate area still had a timber palisade in 1315, and further work was done in the area in 1345, when an option was granted to a mason, Master Thomas Staunton, to carry out the work of replacing the palisade with a stone wall.

Walmgate Bar was the subject of some of the fiercest attacks during the Siege of York in 1644. The Parliamentarians set up five guns on the nearby Lamel Hill and in St Lawrence’s churchyard. From here they were able to pound the bar and the Walmgate area. Walmgate Bar was also mined; a tunnel was built underneath the bar and filled with explosives.

This attempt to blow up the gateway was stopped by the bar’s defenders who dug a separate mine to cut off this tunnel. The city surrendered to the Parliamentarians on 16 July 1644. Walmgate Bar had been badly damaged. Work began on restoring the bar in October 1645. The effects caused by the damage were not fully restored until 1648. In 1840 restoration was again needed, a tablet recording this restoration can be seen below the medieval royal arms over the main outer arch.

Today the gatehouse is a coffee shop run by Calvary Chapel. Customers are allowed onto the barbican.

To continue the wall walk, climb the stairs on the right side of the bar, which also leads to the coffee shop entrance. Walk along the walls until you reach Fishergate Bar. Some of the slanted openings in the walls of the parapet have been narrowed and made into gun loops. However, this stretch of the wall was largely rebuilt during the 19th century.

Left: Engraving of Walmgate Bar by W.H. Bartlett in 1828. The gatehouse, repaired after the Civil War, is in better condition than the ruined Barbican

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Fishergate Bar, No. 12 consists of a wide central arch, with a groove for a portcullis and two smaller pedestrian arches on either side. The present structure dates from 1442-3. The bar was badly damaged by insurgents during the uprising of 1489 against taxes authorised by Henry VII and was blocked with bricks. Marks of fire from this attack can be seen on the jambs of the central arch. The bar was not reopened until 1827.

Left: Fishergate Bar in 1813. It was unblocked in 1827 to allow access to the cattle market

The inscription above the central arch commemorates William Todd, the Lord Mayor of York knighted by Henry VII in 1487, for his support against Lambert Simnel, a pretender or claimant to the English crown. In return for the honour, Lord Mayor Toss paid for restoration work to 55 metres of the City Wall.

Continue along the wall. This section of the walls was built during the 14th century. The wall extended out westwards, then turns back southwards, probably to defend the end of the dam across the River Foss, and then turns sharply to the north.

Fishergate Postern, No. 13 is sometimes referred to as St. Geoge’s Postern or ‘near the Skarlepit’. It consists of a 14th century archway, which was reset when the adjoining tower was built in the 16th century. A slot for a portcullis suggests that there was originally a small tower to house the machinery. This is the only one of six original posterns constructed in the city wall to survive.

Fishergate Postern Tower would have stood on the banks of the River Foss. The present tower was built between 1504 and 1507, replacing an earlier tower which was known as Talkan Tower after Robert Talkan, Mayor of York, in 1399. This three storey tower is well-built of smoothly dressed and carefully jointed masonry. Originally it had a flat roof, but by 1676 it had been replaced by a tiled roof like the one exists today.

Left: Fishergate Postern Tower and a joining wall
Nearby is the reputed grave of Dick Turpin, the infamous highwayman hanged in York in 1739. His body was buried in the graveyard of St George’s Church, Fishergate, opposite what is now the Roman Catholic St George’s Church. On the Tuesday following the burial, the corpse was reportedly stolen by body-snatchers. However, the body-snatchers, together with Turpin’s corpse, were soon apprehended. Turpin’s body was once again buried, but this time with quicklime. To visit the churchyard, turn left up Lead Mill Lane. It is located at the back of St George’s churchyard on your left. Return to Fishergate Postern Tower to continue the wall walk.

The city wall defences stop at Fishergate Postern Tower. Cross Piccadilly, go over the bridge and walk past the Castle. The walls of York Castle provided the necessary fortification and the city walls would have restarted at Castlegate Postern, near the castle wall at Clifford’s Tower.

**York Castle, No. 14** occupies a strategic position between the Rivers Ouse and Foss and was first established in 1068, when William the Conqueror built and garrisoned the castle in York to subdue the northern rebellions. The motte and bailey castle was a timber construction and remained so until the 13th century. The motte was topped by a tower which was the stronghold and look-out post surrounded by a ditch and linked to the bailey by a bridge. The castle was protected on three sides by the Rivers Ouse, Foss and the King’s Fishpool, created by a dam constructed across the Foss.

In the 17th century, the castle bailey became the site of the session’s house and the grand jury house. In 1773-7, a new assize court and in 1780, a female prison replaced these earlier buildings. The prison was enlarged in 1835, with a circular Governor’s House and four radiating prisons blocks. A massive stone wall surrounded the whole compound. In 1935, the gatehouse, outer wall and all post 1824 buildings were removed. Today the Female Prison and the Debtors’ Prison are connected and house The Castle Museum.
In 1801 the gallows were moved from Tyburn on the Knavesmire to a site outside the castle, between the assize courts and the surviving castle wall. This was the infamous ‘new drop’, which would attract crowds to St. George’s Field on execution day. In 1868, the scaffold was moved inside the prison yard, away from public view.

Walk to the traffic lights by Clifford’s Tower and cross the road. Head through the gates into the park, where the city walls begin again. Castlegate Postern would have stood near this site, but was removed in 1826. It was probably built in the 14th century and was in a ruinous state in the 15th century. In about 1485 it was being used as a dwelling and a dovecote. Castlegate Postern had a narrow archway with a portcullis and a strong D-shaped three storey tower, which stood just beyond the wet moat. This postern was enlarged for coaches and carriages in 1699.

The short section of wall which still survives, running down to the River Ouse was never very high, and does not stand on a rampart. It now appears much lower, since the ground level has been raised to minimise the effect of flooding.

Walk towards the river and the remains of the Davy Tower, No. 15, it was named after a medieval tenant and stands at the end of the city walls on the bank of the River Ouse. Davy Tower was built in the 14th century, and was also known as Friars Minor Tower, due to its proximity to the Franciscan Friary. The appearance of the tower has been changed by the building of a brick summer house on the top of it in about 1750. From Davy Tower a chain could be stretched across the river to the corresponding tower on the opposite bank. This was Skeldergate Postern, also known as the Crane Tower, to prevent ships from sailing along the river. This would have stopped shipmasters trying to avoid tolls, but also served as part of the city’s defences. In fact in 1553 a chain was sold that used to stretch across the Ouse but was no longer used for that purpose.
Walk across the park towards the bridge. Climb the stairs and walk over the Skeldergate Bridge. Skeldergate Postern was a large gateway which had an archway with a turret on both sides situated next to Baile Hill on the banks of the River Ouse. It was removed in 1878 due to an increase in horse-drawn traffic.

*Left: Illustration of Skeldergate Postern in 1718*

This removal angered the Archbishop of York who sued the Corporation and won. The case is important as it effectively prevented the demolition of the rest of the City Walls, which were no longer required for defence, thereby securing the future of this ancient monument. The remaining wall between Baile Hill and the river was also demolished in 1878 to make way for the Skeldergate Bridge.

**Baile Hill, No. 16** is all that remains of a Norman motte and bailey castle that stood on this site. It was built by William the Conqueror in 1069 and the ditch that surrounded the artificial mound or motte was filled with water. It was constructed one year after Clifford’s Tower on the opposite bank of the river. Together these twin castles protected the city and controlled traffic on the River Ouse. In 1070 both the York Castle and Baile Hill Castle were destroyed by the Danes. William returned to York and the Danes retreated. The castles were repaired in the winter of the same year.

Baile Hill castle was probably not in regular use for long, and by 1200 it was no longer needed. In 1322 the castle was handed over to the Archbishop who rebuilt the defences, first in wood and then later in stone. The city obtained possession of it in about 1460 and during the Civil War it was defended by two cannons. Trees were first planted on the motte in 1722 and in time the bailey was used mainly for recreation, grazing cattle, archery practice and for traditional Shrove Tuesday games. Then like the bailey at York Castle, it was the site of a prison, built in 1802-7, but was only in use until 1868 and was demolished in 1880, when houses were constructed on the site of the bailey. Bailey Hill is an artificial mound and the area was occupied by the Romans. It also stands on the site of a Roman cemetery outside the *colonia* (civilian settlement) wall.

*Left: A panorama of 15th Century York showing Baile Hill Castle to the left of the River Ouse and York Castle to the right. It also illustrates Castlegate Postern at the foot of Clifford’s Tower with the wall running down to Davy Tower on the banks of the River Ouse. Across the river is Skeldergate Postern situated on the banks of the river. The short stretch of the wall from Skeldergate Postern runs to Baile Hill*
Walk into the tower and climb the stairs. This tower was construed in 1878, after the removal of the wall up from the river.

By entering the tower you can continue walking around the wall to Micklegate Bar. This section of the wall was built between 1317 and 1340 by the Archbishop Melton. At this time Baile Hill Castle was in the possession of the Archbishop of York. A number of mason’s marks on this section are similar to those found in the nave and chapter house of the Minster, which would suggest that the Minster masons worked on this section of the wall.

Keep walking along the wall, to the round south corner tower. This is the interestingly named Bitchaughter Tower, No. 17 written as ‘le bidoubtre’ in the mid 15th century. It was used as a prison and later as a cowshed.

Its present brick-vaulted inner room with a fireplace was made in 1645, when a guardhouse and gun platform was built here.

Right: Bitchaughter Tower used as a prison and later as a cowshed

Carry on until you reach Victoria Bar.

Victoria Bar No.18 is a relatively recent addition to the City Wall, which is why it looks different from the other more ancient gateways into the city. It was built in 1838 to improve access for traffic between Nunnery Lane, outside the walls and Bishophill, inside the walls. The Bar was named after Queen Victoria whose coronation took place in the same year. The two side arches are of a later date and were added as access for pedestrians as the main entrance became busier and road traffic increased. During its construction, workmen discovered that there had been an earlier archway, which had been hurriedly blocked by large stones set on edge, wooden piles and a mound of earth. This was the 12th century gateway known as Lounelith, meaning ‘hidden or obscure gate’. Although there are no records of this gateway being blocked, it is possible this was done to strengthen the city’s defences during the Northern Rebellion in 1569. There is an inscription over the central arch commemorating its construction.
Carry on walking, just beyond Victoria Bar to **Sadler Tower No. 19**. This semi-circular tower is thought to be one of the oldest surviving interval towers along the walls. It has good internal embrasures to its arrow-slits and a battered base of the mid-13th century type. The walls and towers in this section show signs of damage by canon shot.

*Right: The semi-circular Sadler Tower with its arrow-slits*

Continue on towards **Micklegate Bar No. 20**, which serves as the principal entrance to the city. Micklegate comes from Micklelith meaning ‘Great Gate’. As the main gateway into York from London and the South, Micklegate Bar has been the scene of much pageantry and many ceremonial receptions for kings and queens over the centuries. Royal visitors to the city have included Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VII, Margaret Tudor, James I, Charles I and James II (when Duke of York). Henry VIII was expected to come through this gateway; the Bar’s towers, turrets and battlements were emblazoned with the royal arms, but in fact he entered by Walmgate Bar. In more recently times, also, during state visits, our present monarch Queen Elizabeth II.

Micklegate Bar has three stories with a main Norman outer arch and passage wall which contains reused Roman masonry. In the 14th century the arch was extended with a barbican and heightened to house a portcullis. The bricked up doorways leading to the walkways around the barbican walls can be seen on the frontage. The barbican was demolished in 1826-7, as well as the inner timber-framed extension, like the one at Walmgate Bar that was probably built in 1585. The statues on top of the gatehouse above the high turrets of knights were carved by R. Ridley in 1950 as replacements for earlier ones. Its frontage bears the royal arms of Edward II under a helm with lion crest and two shields of the city arms.

*Right: Micklegate Bar in 1787, this painting by T. Hearne shows the barbican that was removed in 1827*

Micklegate Bar was the most frequented city gate, so severed heads of traitors and rebels were exhibited here in preference to the other Bars, although those were also used. They were intended as a warning, heads or other body parts were skewered on pikestaffs and placed on the roof. The heads of victims included Sir Henry Percy (Hotspur) in 1404, Richard, Duke of York in 1460, Lancastrian leaders captured at Towton in 1461, the Earl of Northumberland in 1572, and Puritan conspirators in 1663. The heads of Jacobite leaders, William Connolly and James Mayne were spiked here in 1746, decayed for seven years then, to the governments great indignation were stolen by a Jacobite tailor.
Today Micklegate Bar is a museum which explores York’s bloody history and battles that inflamed the city and the surrounding countryside, from the Viking invasions to the English Civil War. The stories of residents are brought alive in fascinating exhibitions, giving you a real sense of what it was like to live in this historic building.

Entrance to the museum is from the wall walk, where the gift shop offers books, postcards and general souvenirs. There is a small entrance fee to visit the museum.

*Left: Inside Micklegate Bar Museum displaying a replica of the severed head of Richard, Duke of York stuck on a pole*

*Above: Tofts Tower, a plain rectangular tower*

You do not need to descend from the walls but can walk through Micklegate bar to the next section of wall. It is only a short walk along this wall to the west angle Tower called **Tofts No. 21.** This is the only tower on this section of wall, which is a plain rectangular tower and there are many external buttresses along this wall. Tofts Tower was probably destroyed by the Scots on 4th July 1644 and restored by Edmund Gyles in 1645 with a platform and guard house.

In the 19th century part of the walls were rebuilt to allow the railway lines to pass through to the station. Before you turn the corner, it is possible to glimpse **two large arches No. 22** built to accommodate the railway lines. In 1839 a temporary station was built outside the walls, but was replaced with a permanent one within the walls which opened in 1841. Despite the addition of platforms, the station could not handle the increasing railway traffic. Also “through” trains calling at York had to reverse out of the station in order to continue their journeys; an inconvenience to railway staff and passengers.
A new through station outside the city walls, was planned and eventually built, opening in 1877. This is the present York railway station which you can see on your left, and at the time was the largest station in the world.

Left: Detail of York railway station that opened in 1877, illustrating the two arches and York wall. York Art Gallery

Carry on walking and in front of you lies the most famous view of the city. From the northern road arch, the wall drops gently towards the river.

Before you reach street level, look over the walls towards the river. You will see the 14th century Barker Tower, or the North Street Postern Tower No. 23, beside the River Ouse. It was originally built as a watchtower in the 14th century and was linked to Lendal Tower on the opposite side of the river by a great iron chain. The chain was stretched across the water to prevent boatmen from entering the city without paying tolls and acted as a defence during times of war.

In the 17th century the upper room with a flat roof was replaced with a conical tiled roof. The battlements can still be seen within the windows. Originally it had only one small square-headed narrow doorway through the wall called North Street Postern. This was replaced by the present wide arch and two side passages, built in 1840 by the railway, to access coal yards along the riverbank. Before Lendal Bridge was built in 1863 Barker Tower was leased out to ferrymen who operated a service across the River Ouse to St Leonard’s Landing. The tower has had several other uses including a mortuary in the Victorian period, for bodies pulled from the river. Today the tower is used as a coffee shop.

Above: Barker Tower, the present wide arch and two side passages replaced the North Street Postern in 1840.

Right: Illustration of the Barker Tower, the square-headed narrow doorway through the wall is the former North Street Postern. Also illustrated is a ferryboat, by G. Nicholson.
Walk along the walls until you reach street level. Turn left and cross Lendal Bridge towards **Lendal Tower No. 24** which dates from the 13th century. Every night the great iron chain was stored in this tower that stretched across the River Ouse to Barker Tower on the opposite bank. Lendal Tower was originally very similar to Barker Tower, but was entirely rebuilt in the 17th century and raised to four storeys to accommodate pumping machinery for York’s water supply.

In 1631 the tower became known as ‘the Waterhouse’ providing water pumped from the river throughout York by means of wooden pipes. The original pump was powered by waterwheel and then horse power, but was replaced in 1756 with a steam engine. The pumping engine ran efficiently until 1836 when it was moved to a purpose-built engine house. Lendal Tower was then returned to a more ‘medieval’ appearance with the lowering and restoring of the present windows and battlements. Only the lower story, with two embrasures, remains of the actual medieval structure. From then on Lendal Tower has had various uses as offices, stores and the Tower is now a private residence.

**Left: Lendal Tower in the 1850s before Lendal Bridge was built in 1863**

There is only a short section of the city wall from Lendal Tower beside Lendal Hill to the entrance of the Yorkshire Museum Gardens.

**Above: A short section of the city wall on top of the ramparts, viewed in the Museum Gardens, where it ends at the entrance gates. On the other side of the wall is Lendal Hill leading down to Lendal Tower and the River Ouse. Lendal Tower can be seen on the right where there is a gap in the wall by the trees**
Above: St Leonard’s Hospital inside the museum gardens. The remains of the covered entrance passage with a vaulted ceiling can be seen on the right. The insert is through the passage on the other side.

Now continue the walls walk inside the Museum Gardens and the grounds of York Central Library.

There is a gap in the wall where it ends at the entrance gates to the Museum Gardens; the former grounds of St. Mary’s Abbey, to St Leonard’s Hospital. Take the right-hand path as you enter the museum gardens and walk into St Leonard’s Hospital covered entrance passage and stand under the vaulted ceiling. To see the remains of the chapel and undercroft return to Museum Street, they are next to York Central Library on your left. Go through the iron railing gate next to the Library which gives access to the remains of the buildings.

Left: The remains of the Chapel
Below: The undercroft with vaulted ceiling, which is probably part of the infirmary

St Leonard’s hospital was one of the largest hospitals in medieval England. It was built at the expense of John Romanus, Treasurer of York Minster in the early 13th century and once supported 225 beds. In the 14th century it maintained up to 18 clergy, 16 female servants, 30 choristers, 10 private boarders and 140–240 poor sick people. St. Leonard’s Hospital was dissolved during the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII, when it was surrendered by Thomas Magnus in 1540.

Parts of the hospital can still be seen, including a vaulted entrance passage, an undercroft to the infirmary and a chapel, all of 13th century date. In 2000 St. Leonard’s hospital was one of three sites to be excavated in York by the TV programme Time Team (A Time Team Special, York live dig).
The rear of the Roman fortress wall that stretches away from St. Leonard’s Hospital, towards the Multangular corner tower, was adapted as part of the medieval defence wall. The face of this wall that can be seen in the Museum Gardens is typically Roman with regular stones and a distinctive band of terracotta tiles. However, on the Library side it is just a rough core, this is because it was never meant to be seen on this side, it was covered by an earthen rampart buttressed against the wall, which was removed in later centuries.

Walking on you will find yourself inside the ruins of the **Multangular Tower No. 25**. The Multangular Tower is so-named because of its 10 sides. The lengths of wall to either side of it are the only section of the Roman fortress wall to have survived above ground. The tower stood at the western corner of the Roman legionary fortress and is the last surviving of eight similar towers which protected the fortress wall. You can still see the distinctive bands of terracotta tiles which were used to decorate the Roman wall, and which continues towards St Leonard’s hospital. The Multangular Tower may have been built by the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus, who made York (Eboracum) his headquarters between AD 208 and 211, or by Constantine the Great who was proclaimed Emperor of Rome here in York in AD 306.

*Right: Map of the wall in the Museum Gardens and the grounds of the York Central Library. The grey dots are an alternative walk.*

The tower with its ten sides is almost 30 feet (9.1 m) tall. Originally there would have been three floors on the inside and a roof on top. Only the bottom six metres of this surviving masonry is Roman. The upper course with cruciform arrow slits was added to strengthen the fortification in the late 13th century. The tower and wall continued as defensive features long after the Romans had left. Inside the tower, seen from the grounds of the York Central Library, are stone coffins from various excavated sites of Roman York.

*Below: The Multangular Tower and wall in the Museum Gardens*

*Above: Inside the Multangular Tower in the grounds of the York Central Library*
There is a 19th century doorway through the wall adjoining the tower which leads into the museum gardens where the outside of the Multangular Tower can been be seen. Returning to the inside of the tower, from here the mediaeval city wall was built in front of the Roman fortress wall and ran to Bootham Bar. This is the final section of the wall which only survives for 200 feet (61 meters). It was cleared away for St. Leonard’s Place in 1832–5. The rampart has been removed internally between the Multangular Tower and the structure known as the Anglian Tower No. 26 which revealed the buried Roman fortress wall.

Right: *The Anglian Tower built in a breach through the already ruined Roman wall, on the right is the cobbled surface concealing the foundation of the city wall. The Multangular Tower can be seen in the background*

The defences were successively heightened on Danish to Norman earth ramparts and the line of the defences gradually shifted outwards until the medieval wall came to be built in about 1260. Some of the stages by which this happened are represented in the successively higher ramparts shown in the cross-section beyond the Anglian Tower.

Left: *The Anglian Tower with two narrow arched side doorways*

The Anglian Tower is a square tower with two narrow, arched, side doorways and was vaulted in stone. Its front projects slightly from the front of the Roman wall, but its two sides would mostly have been obscured by the Roman rampart that also covered the back face of the wall. It was covered by medieval ramparts until it was rediscovered in 1839 and excavated in 1969. The tower had been built in a breach through the already ruined Roman wall, probably between 600 and 700, although there is no evidence for the exact date of its construction. All the Roman and later ramparts which originally covered the remains of the Roman wall between the Multangular Tower and the Anglian Tower were removed in the 1970s.

Right: *Four successive layers of defences near the Anglian Tower, indicated by the blue text in concrete blocks, 1. Roman bank 1st-4th century, 2. Dark Ages 5th-10th century, 3. Norman bank 11th-12th century, and 4. Medieval bank of the 13th century.***

Retrace your steps to the doorway through the wall and at the path turn right. Follow the path with the medieval wall on your right past King’s Manor until you come out at Exhibition Square. If you cross the road here you come to Bootham Bar where this walk originally started.
From here you can retrace your steps back into the Museum Gardens and look around the ruins of the Abbey of St Mary or visit the Yorkshire Museum, which contains artefacts from Roman and Medieval York.

**Times and Safety**

The walls are open everyday from 8.00 am to dusk, except when there is a risk of ice resulting in slippery conditions or in the event of bad weather. The closing process starts at Fishergate Postern travelling anticlockwise. The walls are closed on Christmas Day. Care must be taken on the walls; there are steep steps and unguarded edges. Children should be closely supervised. No dogs are allowed on the walls except guide dogs, they are unsuitable for wheelchairs and cycling is not allowed.

**The Yorkshire Museum, which contains artefacts from Roman and Medieval York**
The coming of the Railways and Tourism

In 1839 George Hudson, known as “The Railway King” brought the railway to York which eventually became a major railway network. Between the 1920s and 1940s the ‘golden age of train travel’, York offered visitors a wealth of historic attractions. To promote these and to entice passengers, the railways produced a number of advertising posters that dealt with the historical side of York. They illustrated York Minster, the medieval walls and Bars, and The Shambles; becoming a familiar feature on station platforms and in waiting rooms. The National Railway Museum in York has over 7000 railway advertising posters that cover more than 150 years of railway history. ‘Classic Vintage Yorkshire Railway Posters’ has been published in the journal (TYJ 2 Summer 2011).

The poster on the far left shows Bootham Bar in the shadow of York Minster. It is titled ‘York’ and dates to the 1960s, by Kenneth Steel. The middle poster shows a view of York’s medieval walls with its sloped banks full of daffodils; in the background is York Minster. It is titled ‘York in Daffodil Time’ and is dated 1950, artist unknown. The poster on the near left is titled ‘York’ and is of Monk Bar, which is the tallest gatehouse. It also houses the Richard III Museum. This poster dates to the 1920s and is by Fred Taylor.

The poster below illustrates Bootham Bar and part of the city walls with the towers of York Minster soaring in the background. The poster is titled ‘Relics of 20 Centuries Encircled by City Walls, York’ and it dates to the 1920s and is by Fred Taylor.

The above poster on the right is an interesting view of Lendal Bridge over the river Ouse. York Minster soars in the background with Lendal Tower on the other side of the bridge. In the foreground is Barker Tower with steps leading down to the River Ouse. Crossing over the bridge is the army on horseback pulling a WWI Gun Carriage. This poster is titled ‘Walled City of Great Antiquity, York’ and is dates to the 1920s, by Fred Taylor.
The Custom of the Bainbridge Forest Horn in Wensleydale

Celebrating 150 years Of the African Buffalo Horn

By Jean Griffiths and Marcus Grant

Above: Bainbridge showing the large wandering village green

The village of Bainbridge is located about 7 kilometres east of Hawes and about 8 kilometres west of Aysgarth along the A684 road in Wensleydale, North Yorkshire. The village is also situated in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and is overlooked by the distinctive flat topped hill of Addlebrough which is the site of an Iron Age fort. Not far away is Stoney Raise Cairn, which is one of the largest cairns in Yorkshire. The River Bain, frequently referred to as the shortest river in England 4.5 kilometres long, overflows from Semer Water, a natural lake, cascades over waterfalls before passing under the A684 Bridge and joins the River Ure just north of Bainbridge.

The best known legend of Wensleydale is that Semer Water drowned a village after the people living there refused charity to a beggar. Today Bainbridge is spread out around a large wandering village green, surrounded by a variety of grey stone and white painted houses and shady trees, with daffodils in the spring and sheep grazing in the summer. On the village green is an old set of stocks, which are a reminder of past punishment. Bainbridge also has a local inn, the Rose and Crown which is one of Yorkshire’s oldest hotels, dating from 1445, although its present appearance suggests an early 19th century one. It is recorded in the parish register that in 1500 the housewives of Bainbridge were tippling on the Sabbath at the Rose and Crown instead of attending Divine Service.

Above: The Rose and Crown dating from 1445

Right: Stocks on the village green
To the east of Bainbridge located on Brough Hill, a natural grassy hillock is the site of the Roman fort of Virosidum. It was built at about the end of the 1st century AD and was almost continuously occupied until the end of the Roman period in the early 5th century AD. The Bainbridge Roman fort, although isolated, occupies a strategically strong position controlling the principal pass through the Pennines. It was connected by roads, northwards to Stainmore, southwards to Ilkley, east to York and westwards via Ingleton to Lancaster. This strategic network of military roads linking forts surrounding the Dales enabled the rapid movement of troops.

The Forest of Wensleydale

After the Norman Conquest by William I in 1066, large areas of the English countryside were turned over to Hunting Forests. Hunting was one of the most favourite sports enjoyed by the Normans, followed by Medieval Lords and Nobility. However, this does not necessarily mean that forests were densely wooded. A forest needed both open country for the hunt and woodland for shelter and food. The main game animals were red, fallow and roe deer and wild boar. The forests also contained fields, commons and populations of peasants. Forest status also placed the area directly under the control of feudal landowners and strict laws were enforced preventing those working on the land from interfering with the chase. The punishments for breaking these laws were harsh and ranged from fines to in the most severe cases, death, the courts that levied these punishments were held at Bainbridge. Because of these forest laws the local peasants who lived on the land faced strict restrictions on their lifestyles. They could not drive the deer from their fields and were banned from enclosing their land by fencing or other means as this restricted the hunt. Also they were not allowed to hunt game to provide food for their families. The forest laws were therefore extremely unpopular with the local population, who were unable to continue in their way of life that had existed up until Norman rule.

The village of Bainbridge was a clearing in the forest, developed in the 12th century to manage the Forest of Wensleydale, also known as the Forest of Bainbridge. In 1227 Ranulph, Son of Robert, Lord of Middleham, claimed that his ancestors had founded Bainbridge to accommodate twelve foresters, each being given a house, nine acres (3.6 ha) of land and two acres of plough land. Each forester had two law-officers under them who were responsible for supervising the administration of the forest, controlling poaching, grazing on pasture and the sale of timber, kindling wood, thorn thickets and brushwood which were considered as essential sources of revenue. In the 12th century a Master Forester was appointed, which was an important and powerful position, often granted to a member of a prominent family in the dales. Wensleydale encompassed a patchwork of forest which covered an extensive area spread along the Ure Valley to the edge of Westmorland about 28 kilometres in length and 10 kilometres in breadth. The Forest included Arkengerthdale and part of Stainmore. Middleham was, for a long time, the centre of government for the Forest of Wensleydale and each area had a slightly different history. Although a King never hunted in the Forest of Wensleydale the Lords of Middleham Castle and Richmond Castle would have been frequent visitors hunting deer and the wild boar with their followers, lances, horns and dogs.
However, in point of fact King John did visit Knaresborough on seven recorded occasions between 1206 and 1216. He combined business with pleasure and during his short two-day visits he would take the opportunity to hunt deer and boar in the Forest of Knaresborough, centred round Knaresborough Castle. King John came close to hunting in the Forest of Wensleydale which is situated to the north of Knaresborough Forest.

*Left: This medieval illustration shows King John hunting a stag in the forest. Hunting deer was usually undertaken with bows and arrows and dogs. Rabbits which can be seen looking out of their burrows to find out what the noise is about were also hunted by sending trained dogs or ferrets down the burrows. (British Library)*

In amongst the medieval hunting forest, Lords established smaller scale deer parks where populations of roe, fallow and red deer were preserved for hunting. The deer parks of Wensleydale were enclosed by a substantial dry stone boundary wall that had been built in 1465-66. Three deer parks were owned by the Lordship of Middleham. All three had stone boundary walls and hunting lodges. They were located on the highest ground, now only distinguishable as earthworks.

Hunting deer was always the pursuit of the nobility in the medieval Yorkshire Dales, but the right to hunt vermin and lesser beasts was sought after too. In 1296, Peter de Thoresby a parson of Aysgarth but living in Bainbridge was licensed to chase ‘hare, fox and cat with his own dogs’. The keeping of hunting dogs was also a status symbol. The medieval peasantry were banned from keeping anything other than ‘small dogs’ in the hunting forest, but hunting dogs would have been kept in kennels in the medieval deer parks. The royal hunting forests reached their peak in the 13th century when nearly a fifth of the country was given over to them. It was estimated in 1538-9, the number of fallow deer was 610 with 60 red deer which roamed the Forest of Wensleydale. After this time, their popularity waned and by the late 15th century they had mostly fallen out of use and been sold off. In fact the once great Forest of Swaledale was the last refuge of the red deer, as late as 1723. By the late 18th century most of the land was enclosed by stone walls and turned over to sheep, cattle and farming.

*Left: A map of Royal Hunting Forests in Yorkshire. No. 7 is Wensleydale Forest which covered an extensive area spread along the Ure Valley to the edge of Westmorland (Modified Map by Ron Scholes)*
The Custom of Blowing the Bainbridge Forest Horn

In 1345 Sir Peter Routh was chief forester of the Wensleydale forest and every winter night at nine o’clock, from the feast of Holy Rood, September 27th to Shrove Tuesday, (also known as Pancake Day) the forest horn was blown with three long sounding blasts from the village green to guide travellers making the difficult journey through the dark depths of the Wensleydale Forest, who may have lost their way and got stranded amongst the mountains, back to the safety of the village. This was not an uncommon event in medieval times when travelling on foot was usual. In fact the forest was populated with wolves which were the greatest danger in the forest and the Foresters at Bainbridge brought their cattle into shelter every night for fear of attack. The forest was difficult to navigate in the middle ages, guides and guards were frequently employed to escort and protect travellers through the forest, for which a toll was paid. The function of blowing horns was originally part of the forester’s duty and in the middle ages the foresters themselves may have taken on the task of blowing the horn in turns. In fact horn blowing was a feature of forest life. Travellers who had lost their way or found themselves in danger blew horns to summon help, horns were blown when animals were moved from one forest pasture to another as proof of the action, and the foresters blew horns to announce their arrival.

The custom of blowing the Bainbridge forest horn many have carried on long after hunting in the forest fell out of use in the late 15th early 16th century. However, no list of horn blowers appears to have been drawn up. This may be because the job does not entail a fee of any kind or dress to go with the duty. Also there is no system in place to appoint a forest horn-blower; unlike the Ripon Horn-Blower. The story of the Ripon Horn-Blower is included in ‘Historical Ripon in North Yorkshire’ which has been published in the journal (TYJ 4 Winter 2012). Over the years the duty of the forest horn-blower was often handed down from father to son in the village to carry on the custom and until the wireless came, people timed their clocks by it in winter.

By tradition, many of the horn-blowers have come from the Metcalfe family in Wensleydale. The first recorded horn-blower seems to have been a woman named Ann Metcalfe; she was succeeded by her son, James Metcalfe, and in about 1837 by his son, Richard Metcalfe. Next was James Metcalfe, junior, brother of Richard. James Metcalfe who was also known as ‘Aud Jim Purins’, to distinguish him from the many other families of that name. He gave up as horn-blower in 1864 at the age of 87 years, having blown the horn for over 70 years, from beginning as a young lad. This James Metcalfe was remembered for being an excellent horn blower, keeping up a loud long blast. After James Metcalfe’s death in 1864, one of his sons, also named James Metcalfe succeeded him as horn-blower, but failed to blow the horn at the proper hour.

Throughout the years Bainbridge has had many horn-blowers, but only 2 horns have survived the 700 year old custom. The original cow horn is believed to date back to 1611 and still exists. It is not blown any more and is in safe keeping at the Rose and Crown where it can be seen. This cow horn was probably used by Ann Metcalfe and was last used by James Metcalfe’s son who failed to blow it on time in 1864. Then a new horn was presented to the village of Bainbridge and James continued to be the horn-blower. The cow horn was housed at Bolton Castle when it was a museum. There are various carvings and scratch marks on the horn, of these a cross can be made out and two initials W and F or E. However, it is not known when these carvings where made or who the initials W and F or E belong to.

Above and left: The cow horn dating back to 1611

Right: Carved initials W and F or E
The New Horn

A new horn was presented to the village in March 1864 by Mr. R. H. Harburn of Bishop Auckland to replace the old cow horn which was worn out. The occasion was marked by considerable celebration. A procession of great pomp and ceremony was led from the Temperance Hall accompanied by the Bainbridge Temperance Brass Band. The horn blower was dressed in a jacket, red breeches, white leggings and a cap with a feather in it; he also carried both the old and new horns. The rear consisted of about 100 school children carrying banners. The procession walked to Askrigg, where the streets were crowded and along the way the Mayor delivered a speech.

The new horn is said to have come from an African buffalo, it is about 78cm long decorated with brass fittings created by a local craftsman Mr. J. P. Addison of Askrigg. On the brass fitting around the bell end it is exquisitely inscribed in the shape of a shield and says, ‘Presented to the village of Bainbridge, by Mr R. H. Harburn, Bishop Auckland who brought it from South Africa, January 16th, 1864’.

James Metcalfe was the first horn-blower in 1864 to blow the new horn. He was subsequently succeeded by James Horner who was better known as ‘Jam’. He was the Bainbridge horn-blower from 1884 to 1899. James Horner was renowned for sounding a deep, long blast as regular as a clock. A tailor by trade, however he had a meagre income and found it difficult to sustain himself, particular in winter when finding a meal was difficult. In the summer he was employed as a watcher by the Askrigg Angling Association, and was able to supplement his small income by acting as guide to visiting anglers, and was particularly useful in pointing out water pools where most fish could be found. As a rule they acted very generously towards him.

A tombstone was erected in Askrigg churchyard by a few friends, to his memory as horn-blower and watcher for the association, with the underlined text, ‘For they were Fishers’.
Jack (Bonny) Heseltine was next to take up the position of the Bainbridge horn blower, but very little is known about him. He could have been the horn blower for about 15 years. This is because James Chapman carried out the duty for a short time and was photographed on 5th June 1918 as the horn blower and holding the new horn.

Right: James Chapman Bainbridge horn blower holding the horn, 5th June 1918

Jamie Metcalfe was the next horn blower and took up his duty in about 1920. James was the village cobbler and horn-blower for 30 years, he died in 1950.

Left: Jamie Metcalfe standing on the village green next to the stocks blowing the horn

Jack (Jammy) Metcalfe took over as the Bainbridge horn-blower after his father, Jamie Metcalfe died in 1950. Jack was a farmhand working at the Brough Hill Farm and stone mason. He was horn blower for 36 years and died at the age of 83 in 1983.

In his youth Jack was a member of the Bainbridge Brass Band, which was disbanded about the time of World War I. After the war Jack joined the band at Askrigg and when this company disbanded he became a member of the Hawes Prize Silver Band. In fact Jack was a member of the Hawes Band for 48 years playing the trombone.

Left: The Bainbridge Brass Band in 1911, taken at Middleham Castle at the Coronation celebrations of George V

In this old photo can be seen many members of the Metcalfe family.

Right: Jack Metcalfe on the village green blowing the Bainbridge horn. He is dressed in his Hawes Prize Silver Band uniform
In 1956 Jack was interviewed by W. Mitchell, whose ambition was to sound the Bainbridge forest horn, which he did, but with difficulty and not very well. Jack explained that it was easy to blow the Bainbridge horn; you have to strike the right note and then be able to maintain it. The Bainbridge horn has quite a big mouthpiece and takes a lot of wind to blow it. Each of Jack’s three loud blasts were recorded, they lasted about seven seconds. On a still night the three mighty blasts from the horn echo among the hills and can be heard three miles away. In February when the Bainbridge horn blower’s duty comes to an end until September, Jack used to take the horn to the village shop one year and the Rose and Crown the following year. It was put on show with a collection box nearby and all donations were given to the horn-blower. Nowadays both the old and new horns are kept at the Rose and Crown with a donation box installed waiting for the next horn-blower to keep up the custom of horn blower which is paid by voluntary contributions.

Left: Jack Metcalfe on the left, blowing the original cow horn with his great-nephew Alistair Metcalfe aged 6 on the right, blowing the curved African buffalo horn on the village green

Photo courtesy of Margaret Metcalfe

Young Alistair Metcalfe became the Bainbridge horn blower at the age of 10 in 1984. He took over from his great uncle Jack Metcalfe after he died in 1983. Alistair had always taken an interest in the tradition. He had become an apprentice to Jack, standing in for him when he occasionally had the night off. When Alistair was 10 he explained that “you need a lot of puff and it makes my arms ache if I hold it up too long, but I am getting the hang of it. I blow it just before I go to bed”.

Right: Alistair Metcalfe aged 10 the last Bainbridge forest horn-blower in 1984 with the old cow horn and the curved African buffalo horn on the village green

Photo courtesy of Margaret Metcalfe

Throughout Alistair’s school days he was able to sound the horn on most nights and on occasions at weddings and he also gave demonstrations to visitors. From Low Mill, an outdoor pursuits centre, at Askrigg, groups regularly attended Alistair’s horn blowing in the evenings on the village green as part of their educational activities. After Alistair finished blowing the horn he explained the history of the custom and answered their many questions. Some of the group tried to blow the horn with great difficulty.

However, when Alistair went to collage in 1990 and then on to university, he could no long continue the tradition as horn-blower and no appropriate horn-blower seems to have taken on the duty. The tradition of horn-blowing during the winter evenings has not taken place for several years, except for the Metcalfe gathering in 2005 when once again a Metcalfe sounded the forest horn in Bainbridge. Alistair has moved away from the village and is now a school teacher in Skipton, so he can no longer continue the tradition of the Bainbridge horn-blower.

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Bainbridge is a very ordinary sort of place and just a typical Yorkshire Dales village where little happens. There is in fact not much to keep a young person in the village. Alistair explains that one of the problems of being a young horn-blower in Bainbridge is that during the winter months when the horn is blown at 9 pm every night, the horn-blower has to stay in the village during this time. The Bainbridge forest horn-blower would be more suited to a retired person, like the Ripon Horn blower Mr George Pickles who takes his duty very seriously. He carries out the ceremony of blowing the horn every night at 9 pm, come snow, rain or shine.

For now the 700 year old custom of blowing the horn at 9 pm every night during the winter months in Bainbridge is on hold until a suitable person can be found to carry on the tradition.

In fact this year marks the 150 anniversary of the presentation to the village of the African buffalo horn by Mr. R. H. Harburn of Bishop Auckland. There is now hope, with this anniversary that the custom will not fade out into obscurity and will eventually come alive once again.

Both horns can be seen in reception at the Rose and Crown in display cabinets. They are kept safe awaiting the next Bainbridge forest horn-blower.

*Left: The two Bainbridge forests horns on display at the Rose and Crown*

*Above right: In the glass case the African buffalo curved horn presented to the village in March 1864 by Mr. R. H. Harburn of Bishop Auckland to replace the old cow horn which was worn out*

Yorkshire’s oldest hotels dating from 1445, although its present outside appearance suggests an early 19th century one. Inside there is wooden panelling, carved low wooden beams and an open stone fireplace.
Aysgarth railway station

Today the Aysgarth Railway Station is disused but the Wensleydale Railway has plans to reconnect the line from Redmire where it currently ends to Castle Bolton, Aysgarth, Hawes and eventually Garsdale on the famous Settle to Carlisle.

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