

York:
**What has
heritage
ever done
for us?**

York: What has heritage ever done for us?

20th June 2015

Proceedings and Reflections

Part of the 'How should heritage decision be made?' research project

Contents

- 1 Helen Graham, University of Leeds, Introduction

Part 1

- 5 Lianne Brigham, Richard Brigham, Peter Brown, Helen Graham, Paul Furness 'How should heritage decisions be made?' research project and the York: Living with History strand – an overview

Part 2

- 11 *What has heritage ever done for us?* Event held 20th June 2015
Lisa Pickering, York Stories, contribution before the event
- 13 Chris Steward, City of York Council Leader
- 16 Dave Taylor, City of York Councillor and Chair, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Committee
- 20 Peter Addyman, Chair, York Civic Trust and formally Director, York Archaeology Trust
- 23 Lianne Brigham and Richard Brigham, York Past and Present
- 26 Michael Hayes, Plastic Fortune
- 29 Victoria Hoyle, City of York Archivist, Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual
- 31 John Oxley, City of York Archaeologist
- 33 Helen Weinstein, Director, Historyworks

Reflections

- 39 Paul Furness, author *York: A Walk on the Wild Side*
- 42 Kit Heyam, LGBT History Month
- 44 Lisa Pickering, York Stories

October 2015



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Introduction Helen Graham

On 20th June 2015 we asked ‘what has heritage ever done for us?’, we did this as a way of drawing to a close the ‘York: Living with History’ strand of an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded research project which asked ‘How should heritage decision be made?’

The title of the event was meant to be a bit facetious, referencing Monty Python’s ‘what have the Roman’s ever done for us?’ sketch in *Life of Brian*. We threw the title out to imply that maybe heritage has done nothing (the intended response to John Cleese’s rhetorical question) and maybe heritage has done a lot (much as the Romans were said to have given Judea roads, sewage and wine in the sketch) and maybe, like Monty Python’s characterization of the Roman regime, heritage can be oppressive and dangerous. All these possible resonances, we recognised, could be said to apply to any consideration of the impact of ‘heritage’ on York.

The idea for event came from those of us who’d been involved in the York strand of the ‘How should heritage decision be made?’ project – Lianne Brigham, Richard Brigham, Peter Brown, Helen Graham, Paul Furness – reflecting on the work we’d done together. We wanted to use what we’d learnt through our research events and experiences, and the networks we’d developed, to build on our thinking about how we might increase participation in decision making about heritage in the city to explore how heritage affects life in York and to extend our focus to ask whether heritage can be a resource that helps us live well and democratically together.

How should heritage decisions be made? was funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities pilot project focused on the collaborative design of research. Between February 2013 and February 2015 a team of people coming from lots of different perspectives worked together; academics, policy makers, a Local Authority conservation officer, people shaping museum practice in participation and research and people who are activists about their own histories and heritage. We carried our research in lots of different places UK-wide and there was a strand of work – Living with History – held in York.

What has heritage ever done for us? 20th June 2015

The ‘What has heritage ever done for us?’ event was held as part of the Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities Festival in June 2015. We invited lots of the people we’d met and worked with – and the newly elected City of York Council leadership – to explore the event’s questions from lots of perspectives. As part of our research we’d been thinking of the city and heritage within it systemically, trying to notice which people, organisations and structures of decision-making are well connected and where the disconnections and exclusions happen. The aim of inviting lots written and spoken contributions was to bring different parts of the system, those at the heart of decision-making and those frustrated with the city, into open discussion.

What strikes me three months on from the ‘What has heritage ever done for us?’ event, reflecting on the contributions published here, is that heritage operated in two important ways in our conversations and in these proceedings. The first

way, which was anticipated by the event's quite instrumental question, was as a thing which in turn does things and can be made to do things: Heritage as a kind of tool. The second was heritage as a way of talking and imagining the city: Heritage as a kind of medium.

The final booklet for the 'How should heritage decisions be made?' project is subtitled 'Increasing participation from where you are', and is structured around four ways of working we identified that might help professionals and others, to develop new forms of legitimacy from a variety of different sources and networks:

Act: Make change from where you are

Act aims to encourage us all to start to make things happen.

Connect: Cross boundaries and collaborate

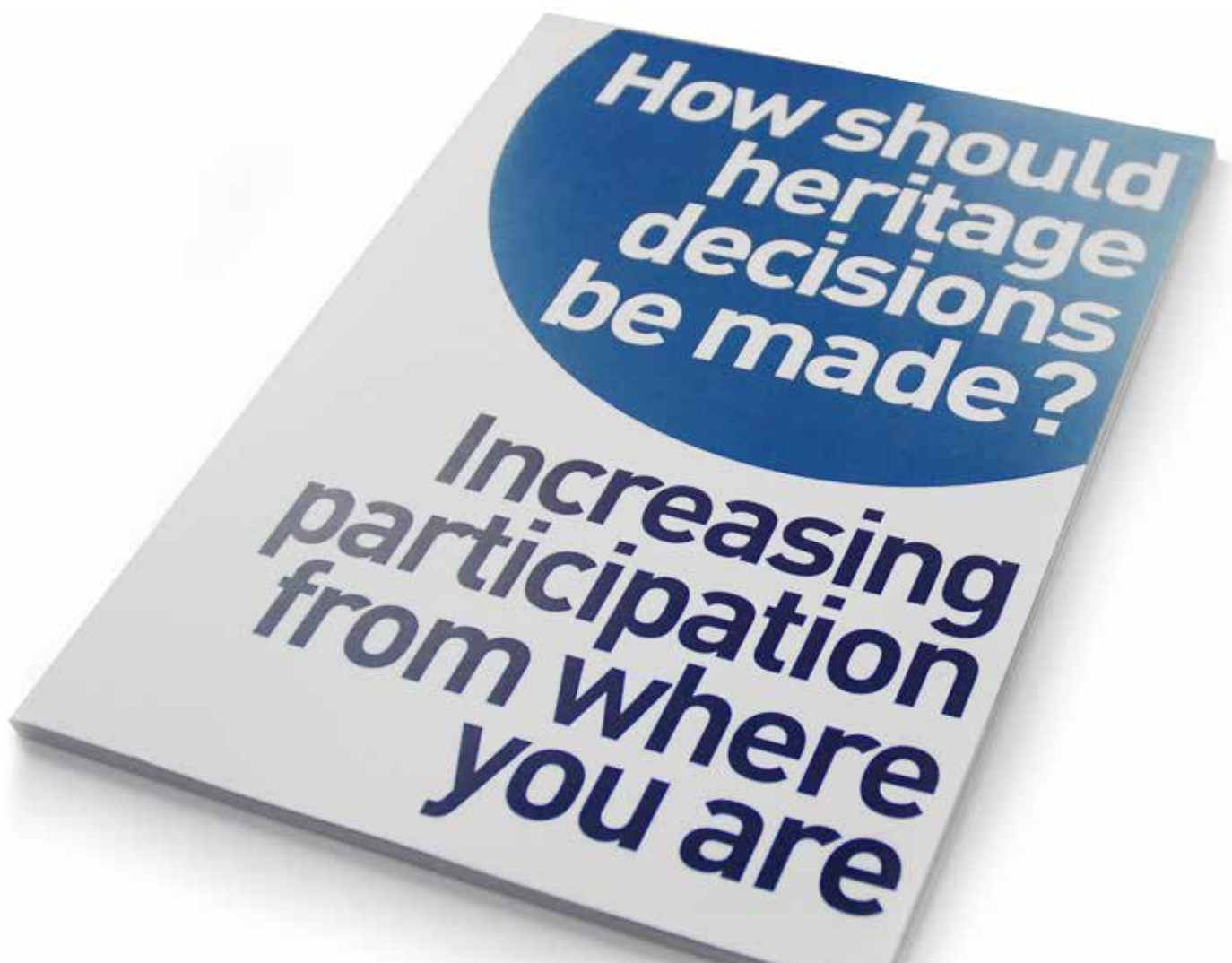
Connect draws attention to the importance of building networks across institutional boundaries and between professionals and activists.

Reflect: See your work through other people's eyes

Reflect is focused on the power of seeing issues from lots of different perspectives.

Situate: Understand your work in context

Situate was a way of evoking a key influence to our research methodology – systems thinking.



Heritage as a tool

The most positive reading of heritage emphasized the education benefits offered by York's archaeological heritage or the economic and cultural benefits which makes York a good place to live, something Peter Addyman and Cllr Dave Taylor noted.

A much more critical tendency tended to see heritage – or 'heritigisation', the process by which York has been packaged as heritage – as something which works to create an exclusive and boring monoculture in the city, Michael Hayes and Paul Furness argue along these lines. This is the kind of heritage that filters out everything but the safest or the most easily aesthetised, commercialized or simplified ideas of the past. The kind of heritage which makes York famous only for 'old buildings', tea rooms and people dressed up as Vikings.

Heritage as a medium

However, it wasn't in the role of a tool that heritage seemed the most powerful at the event. For much of the event, heritage was not evoked as a separable entity or phenomena, it seemed to act more as a way of talking about the city – a kind of medium. Medium in the sense of 'growing medium', like earth, compost, water.

At times heritage seemed more like the substance through which what York is, was and might be, was articulated and contested as well as cultivated and grown.

In this sense heritage gave a means by which many speakers, and contributors here such as Lisa Pickering, Kit Heyam, Paul Furness and Helen Weinstein, contest what York is to ensure the sense of what the city is can be stretched to fully recognize the lives of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, to indicate that the city isn't only white (a falsehood far too often said), to maintain a sense of working class culture or tradition and to remember the program against Jewish people in 1190 at Clifford's Tower and the long term negative impact on the reputation of the city amongst the Jewish community world wide.

Yet through these interventions heritage also seemed to give us a common substance through which to give form to the city's challenges and its inequities, not least in relationship to housing which is a very live issue as York is often cited as the most unaffordable city to live in with the north of England. With the Local Plan (which failed to be passed in 2014) on the horizon again and being developed under a new leadership, perhaps 'heritage' can loosely hold us in dialogue while we disagree, as indeed we did quite a bit on 20th June and as we're likely to in the coming years.

Democratizing heritage, heritage democratising York

If there was one blazing theme of both the UK-wide 'How should heritage decisions be made?' project as well as the York: Living with History strand and the event, however, it was transparency and the need for more thorough going participation in shaping what counts as York's heritage and its impact on the city's future, a point made powerfully by Lianne and Richard Brigham from York Past and Present in their contribution. A few controversial issues for the city – Reynard's Garage and Guildhall – were regularly cited as examples where public involvement had failed and as a result produced anger and disillusionment.

Responding to this wider sense of democratic deficit, both John Oxley, the City Archaeologist and Victoria Hoyle, the City Archivist emphasized the importance of sharing knowledge and archives to enable more involvement in decision making (Historic Environment Record and planning decisions for example) and for the city as a whole to make better decisions (drawing on our knowledge of past decisions to help make more informed decisions). In the subsequent discussions it was really clear that the city's councilor leader, Chris Steward, saw the enormous potential in this, a more pro-active and open public engagement earlier to prevent antagonism later.

A number of ideas emerged from the research and became crystalized at the event – from how to communicate better across council, organizational and community boundaries and about how the city's heritage might be used to engage more people in urgent issues facing the city. The latter has developed into the Histories Behind the Headlines, which the City Archives will be hosting in November 2015 with a focus on 'housing' where we will be using engagement with city archives, our historic environment and local memories and knowledge to enrich city-level public debate.

So what has heritage done for us?

A lot, most of us thought. When thought of as a tool some of what has been enabled by our framing of buildings, memories and objects as 'heritage' has been brilliant, some less so and, in fact, poses threats to the livability of the city. Yet when heritage is thought of more as medium and as open, dynamic and necessarily created together, there is even more social and political potential for an engaged dialogue about the future of the city. In the end the event suggests that it was not really about what heritage can do much *for* us, as what can be done *by* us and *through* heritage.

This booklet is in two parts. Part 1 offers a summary of the York: Living with History project conducted, as part of the UK wide research project in 2013-2015. Part 2 offers proceedings from the 'What has heritage ever done for us?'

Part 1 York: Living with History

‘How should heritage decisions be made?’ and the York: Living with History strand: Situating participation in heritage decision-making in a city’s systems

Martin Bashforth (York’s Alternative History), Lianne Bringham, Richard Bringham (York Past and Present), Peter Brown (York Civic Trust), Helen Graham (University of Leeds), Paul Furness (radical historian and writer)

All of us were involved in the UK-wide ‘How should heritage decisions be made?’ project. Here we want to share specifically an overview of what we did in York as a way of framing the proceedings of the ‘What has heritage ever done for us’ event.

York is known as a heritage city. Mapping heritage decision-making systems and crucially how these systems are experienced by the people who live in the city, made clear the urgent need for alternatives to traditional forms of ‘consultation’. Instead we experimented with participative approaches and focused – not so much on ‘sharing your opinion’ or ‘having a say’ – but on action and argument.

York systemically: We started by mapping formal structures and informal networks which make up official heritage decision-making in the city. We then also – through lots of conversations at drop ins and on public stalls – infused these maps with the lived experience of being part of, and not being part of, these processes. There were people who were very well connected and had a lot of influence over what counts as heritage in York. But also we found people who wanted to take an active part who found it hard to get an ‘in’.

Mapping heritage decision-making systemically proved a powerful methodology. If you can see how formal structures and informal networks fit together, then you can start to notice key people and key points for increasing participation in decision-making.

We used ‘thinking systemically’ as a research methodology. We also found this technique useful for reflecting on our own practice and activism and for planning action and connection. Systemic thinking offers a way of thinking about heritage not in isolation or fixed but as a dynamic process which is produced, and shaped, by people, ideas and things and the way they interact – and don’t.

- Map processes
- Look for patterns
- Notice boundaries and disconnections

“We do Urban Exploring and all we wanted to do was go in and take some photographs of some ex-military hutments before they were demolished. We tried everything to get permission to go in. We phoned the Council. We got passed on to the Art Gallery. Then they passed us back to the Council. We were passed from pillar to post. Even to the point that we asked a security guard to take our camera and take photos – and the answer was still no. We thought we’ve had enough, we’re going to start something new. Start afresh. That’s when we started the Facebook group – now over 9000 strong – York Past and Present.”

Richard Bringham and Lianne Bringham, York Past and Present



Lianne and Richard and York Past Present have since worked with the City of York Council to conduct a number of public documentation projects, including of wooden buildings near the Guildhall. You can hear more about York Past and Present's recent develops in the transcript of Lianne and Richard contribution of the What has heritage ever done for us event below. Credit: Richard Brigham

'Us' and 'Them': We found that the word 'them' was used a lot in our initial mapping processes to refer to elected officials and council staff. This was directly linked to people's experiences of 'consultation' – the most common of organizational attempts at 'participation'. The use of 'them' revealed a sense of disempowerment over decisions: the feeling that consultation was a 'fig leaf' for decisions that already been taken. But we did also notice that the flip side of evoking 'them' seemed to be that it too easily absolved the person speaking of responsibility for taking the initiative or finding ways of sharing responsibility.

"Before it was like a 6ft wall with anti-climb paint on, whatever way we went it blocked you. It was only meeting some key people that we could see a way around the wall. You've got to find a way beyond the 'them' and 'us'. We're all working for a common goal, so let's work together."

Lianne Brigham, York Past and Present



“They” are people too!: There was also an important ‘lived experience’ dimension for those in decision-making positions. Some expressed a sense of being constantly being attacked, both by central government through recent cuts and by debates in the local press and on twitter.

Criticisms of ‘participation’: Yet we also ran into a number of people in decision-making roles who just didn’t believe in participation. The most common criticisms of participation we encountered were: that it undermines expertise, that the public can’t deal with complex information, it can’t be scaled and only attracts the usual suspects.

Experimental action: We devised a series of experimental public events, which aimed to model ways of breaking down the division of ‘us’ and ‘them’ by diversifying who is included in the informal networks influencing heritage in York, by ‘humanising’ those in decision-making positions while also addressing some of the hard-edged critiques of participation we’d unearthed.

“There is a danger in writing up research that you tell a nice neat story. While Peter, Martin and I had put in place a backbone of mapping and then experimental events, almost everything that’s been truly revelatory or that has shifted something has come from improvising and taking opportunities which arose as we went along – not least meeting Richard and Lianne in the first month of the project, admins of what was then a new Facebook page.”

Helen Graham, Museum and Heritage Studies, University of Leeds

Contesting what ‘York’ is: Paul Furness led two radical history walks as part of the research project. By pluralizing the sense of the city’s past, we aimed to open up a space for debate about the role of heritage in the city. The walk was then turned into a book, which in turn entered the public domain with a splash through a somewhat controversial York Press article. The press reaction made visible how control over heritage and class are intertwined in the city:

“There was a lot of coverage when we published the York: A Walk on the Wild Side book. In York Press it was centre spread, there was a news article, an editorial and a banner headline. It certainly worked – the saying that all publicity is good publicity is true. But the news article did put words into my mouth – about York ‘being twee’ – and I didn’t like the personal aspect of it, the number of people who told me to pack my bags and leave town. Yet I’m interested in the fact that what I wrote did touch a nerve. The controversy in the end wasn’t so much about the histories, it was more about what I said about the raucous drinking culture of the York races and Saturday night, ‘when York comes alive’. It was the challenge to that dull middle class mentality of a genteel city that riled people. It’s good to stir things up once in a while.”

Paul Furness, Writer and Historian, York



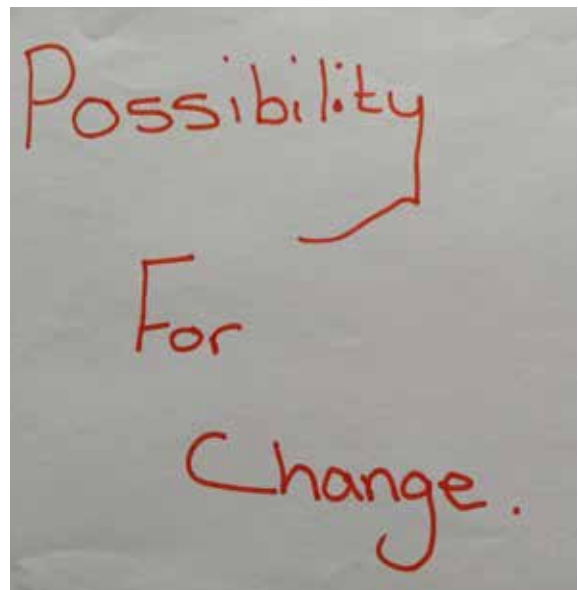
Paul Furness leading the Walk on the Wild Side in 2014, you can hear more from Paul in his reflections on the issues raised by the 'What has heritage ever done for us?' event below.

Arguments not Opinions: In response to both the general public consensus on 'consultation' and the hard-edged critiques of participation we'd encountered from decision makers, we modelled alternatives. We used as our case study the controversial brutalist building Stonebow House and began to explore the ways in which 'argument', instead of the 'opinions' usually asked for in consultations, might be used to address questions of scaling participation in decision-making. We also brought different types of expertise into active debate through events, Facebook and press articles and showed how to expand beyond what might be considered 'the usual suspects'. It wasn't that many people changed their minds but their engagement in the issues deepened and developed their perspectives. More solid ground for any decision – and the terms of any future decisions – emerged.

Atrocious brutalist architecture.

Part of York

'Stonebow House in Three Words' contributed as part of the Stonebow House event and through Lisa Pickering's York Stories website.



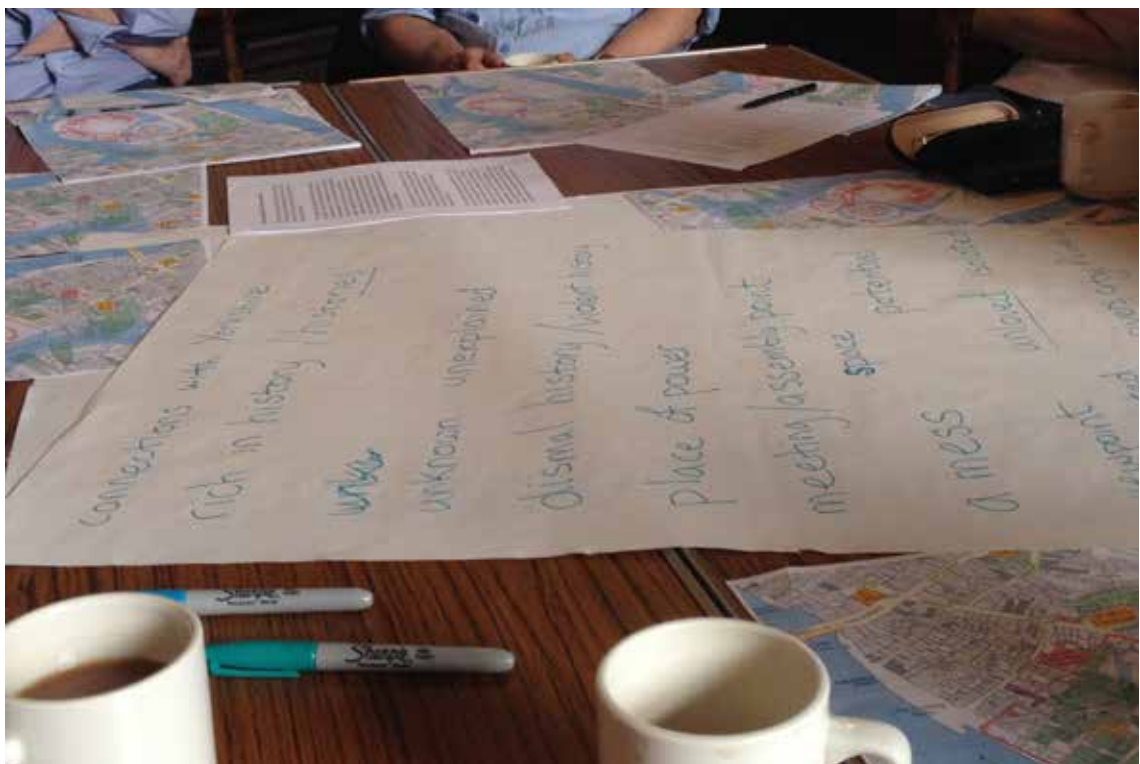


Stonebow House, often cited as York's least favourite building. Jon Wright – a consultant on in 20th century architecture and heritage – played a crucial role in showing how expertise can be engaged to enhance and develop public debate. Credit York Mix.

Proactive Community-Led Planning: We also explored proactive community engagement by modelling how community-initiated planning might work, focused on the Castle area.

“The Castle area meeting allowed a wide range of interested parties time to formulate a consensus on what would be the best (or at least the most acceptable) treatment of the spaces in and around the world class collection of historic buildings. Preliminary discussions with City Council officers have been encouraging and further meetings are planned.”

Peter Brown, York Civic Trust



Diversifying networks and crossing boundaries: Through doing these events we encountered some people who were as excited as we were about increasing participation in heritage decision-making, not least John Oxley, City Archaeologist who met Richard and Lianne first at one of the project's drop-ins. This 'magic networking path', as Richard has named it, both helped us understand the complexities of the city and also made possible the York Past and Present public documentation (urban exploration with permission!) of the city's Guildhall.

"We've found that networking works. There's like this magic path. You need to find one person and then they introduce you to their friends. There are two types of people in the council/organisations. The ones that want to work with people and want change; and those that don't. The key is find those that do want change and then they usually know other people who do too."

Richard Brigham, York Past and Present

"The principal benefit I gained from that was seeing how effective personal networking can be in broadening the constituency of people who might be involved in public decision-making around heritage issues. That takes effort, confidence and leadership – qualities that are not equally distributed but do have the benefit of encouraging involvement and collective work across a diverse range of people. Collectives have to be built, whether from inside or outside public institutions."

Martin Bashforth, radical family historian and part of York's Alternative History

The living stream sustaining York: Certain possibilities have certainly been opened up through our research in York, but other boundaries still seem quite intractable. Finding out what is going on is hard work and relies on people liking you or you being useful to them in some way – which isn't always easy to achieve! Sometimes offering to get involved and share responsibility has been very warmly welcomed – such as York Past and Present's work with the Mansion House – and at other times actively discouraged. Yet the most transformative moments in the project have come when people who hadn't met before, and perhaps wouldn't usually meet, have got together and started talking. We saw the 'What has heritage ever done for us?' event in June 2015 as just one space for these type of discussions.

"My organisation has, until recently, functioned in 'silo-mode', considering itself one of a small number of 'experts' engaged in the heritage decision-making process in York. Involvement in this project, however, has shown the benefits of a more democratic and inclusive engagement with a broad spectrum of opinion, thereby offering a more measured view on issues of common interest."

Peter Brown, York Civic Trust

You can find out more about the 'How should heritage decision be made project': <http://heritagedecisions.leeds.ac.uk/>

The York strand of the project can be followed here: <https://livingwithhistory.wordpress.com/>

Part 2

What has heritage ever done for us? 20th June 2015

Having introduced the wider project, we now share the contributions and reflections generated by the 'What has heritage ever done for us?' event.

Lisa Pickering, York Stories

Lisa Pickering is a writer and photographer who, since 2004, has been reflecting on the city through her website *York Stories: A Resident's Record of York and its Changes*. Lisa is the author of *Chocolate and Chicory: York and beyond, by bicycle* and *When the suburbs burned: a walk around 17th century York*. www.yorkstories.co.uk

Lisa contributed to the 'What has heritage ever done for us?' event through a short article published in advance of the event. In her piece, Lisa draws attention to the ways in which old and new; heritage and innovation are too often opposed, held apart as opposites. Lisa calls for those wanting 'to make their mark on the city' to do so with the grain of York's local distinctiveness and 'more sympathetically to the solidity that came before, the distinctive shape of what's already there'.

I'm one of those York born and bred people. I know we can be annoying when we go on about this, and that we can make other people who've moved here more recently feel like they're not accepted and don't belong. I don't want to do that, but I do have to write from the perspective of someone who has lived here for 40-plus years.

Heritage is what we inherit. And if you're born in a place and live in it for decades then you have a weightier inheritance to think about, assuming you've grown to have attachments and understandings about the place, as most of us do. I'm thinking not just of the built heritage but of a cultural heritage too.

Concerns about the protection of heritage are often dismissed as 'fear of change'. I've often thought, if I did fear change as much as members of the 'heritage brigade' are accused of doing then I'd be cowering in a corner silent and terrified by now, as there's been so much change.

York-born people of my generation and older have seen enormous changes in recent decades. The factories where so many people worked when I was a child are now part of our 'heritage' rather than workplaces. The city turned towards tourism and welcomed visitors, more recently it has seen a massive increase in the student population and residents who have graduated from the universities. This has changed the feel of the place quite dramatically. It's most noticeable probably in the Walmgate area, where we now have the interestingly named 'Student Castle'.

This has resulted in tension and difficulty between opposing perspectives, the 'new stuff' and the 'old stuff', those who want to make their mark on the city and those who want to protect its heritage.

I've found it troubling the way heritage and 'new stuff' have recently been set up as if in opposition by members of the growing creative sector. Heritage is often portrayed as some dull dusty thing getting in the way.

The UNESCO designation as a City of Media Arts and associated plans for the Guildhall provoked particularly heated debate, emphasising the divisions between different communities within the city.

'The proposal for the Guildhall complex is part of a bigger picture and demand being pushed through the city by the creative sector' said an article in oneandother.com. The UNESCO designation is 'about York pushing forward' suggested a recent piece in the Press. There seems to be quite a lot of pushing going on. It's no wonder some of us feel a little concerned, and fear that the things we care about will be pushed out of the way, destroyed or silenced. Recently on Twitter I noticed a photo taken in Beverley, in East Yorkshire, some decades ago. A photo of a bus going through Beverley's North Bar. The bus had a really unusual shape, at the top. Not flat and wide, but with the sides of the roof at an angle, forming a more pointed roof. The roof matched the shape of the North Bar's opening and allowed the buses to go through it. A solution to heritage being 'in the way' of the needs of 20th century life, an imaginative and thoughtful one, and a local one.



Beverley North Bar Bus. The importance of working with 'the distinctive shape of what's there'. Credit: East Riding Museums Service courtesy of Darren Kendre.

There's a message there for those wanting to drive through change in York. I hope that they'll take their journey through the city with more respect for what's already there, shaping their changes more sympathetically to the solidity that came before, the distinctive shape of what's already there, rather than driving through change regardless.

In Beverley, to help with traffic flow, they could have knocked down the bar. In York we nearly removed ours, and took the barbican from most of them. No doubt at the time the 'heritage brigade' were seen as trying to stand in the way of progress ...

For the future, I would like to see us broaden our awareness and appreciation of heritage to include the places and experiences perhaps more resonant to groups of people currently under-represented in the many dialogues about the city's heritage. Many voices remain unheard.

It's clear that those who know how to get support and funding will have a clear advantage, and that there are many people left on the periphery unable to influence decisions on heritage or have their stories and experiences recognised as part of York's story. I fear that the dominant narratives will end up wiping out or obscuring the local distinctiveness, ignoring what is already known. A challenge for the future is to make sure that the less visible heritage and the quieter voices are recognised and recorded.

Chris Steward, City of York Council Leader

Cllr Chris Steward represents Rural West York Ward for the Conservative Party and, since May 2015, has acted as Council Leader. Chris opened the event by setting out the challenges he sees for heritage in York in balancing development and conservation through the Local Plan. Chris drew attention to housing as a particularly contentious issue, and emphasized a commitment from his administration to open engagement with York residents arguing it is 'absolutely key to get more people contributing'. Below is an edited transcript of Chris's speech.

Good afternoon, everybody, it is great to be here. Obviously it is pretty soon after the election and York's future and how heritage featured in that was a key issue for the election. When I got invited to speak today it really made me think that it's far easier to write a party political leaflet saying we need to talk about York's heritage than to maybe explain what we think of by it.

I do think the whole 'what have the Romans ever done for us?' is a real parallel because obviously it is very true in York that we've had a lot of Roman influence. But equally so much of the great stuff about York we take for granted. I, myself, have lived in York all my life; it's a lovely place. We know we've got incredible buildings, city walls and everything like that and we've also got two thousand years of development. We're the most important city in the North. We are the second most important city to London and, as George VI famously said, 'the history of York is the history of England.' So we've definitely got something to build on and we've got something to help influence.

I did actually look up the definition of 'heritage' in the dictionary. I thought it was worth doing and got various definitions, which seems unusual but anyway. Everything from something inherited at birth, such as personal characteristics to anything that has been transmitted from the past or handed down by tradition. Which is really about how we've got this massive opportunity to influence things because things in York do change, they should change and we've got to think about what we want to preserve and enhance.

We have just had the election. The Local Plan was something Helen touched on in her e-mail invitation to speak today and, as many of you will be aware, the Local Plan looks at housing, employment, land, transport and the whole feel of York. I do actually think for all the stuff you will hear in the media, there is probably a far broader agreement on the heritage side across politicians of different parties than you might think. Where there is a big disagreement is on the level of housing, where that housing should be built and we as a party and we as a new administration are very clear. We do not think there should be anything like the level of development on the green belt that was proposed in the previous draft local plan. We think brown field sites should be prioritized for development for a number of reasons: from the point of view of enhancing urban regeneration to keeping the unique feel of York. I think York would lose a lot if development as previously proposed was to happen and, if you look at some of the sites, for example where we get housing to the ring road and then housing beyond really isn't the way forward for me. So there's hopefully lots of things we can work on.

There is even things where, although Dave Taylor may not like to admit to it, we and the Greens agree; I think we have a similar view on things like the local plan and hopefully heritage being at the core of that.

I do very much think this is the right format for today, just having a few minutes of us outlining our views and then in the main hearing from people what you think. Because whilst things like protecting the green belt are political things, it is our political view we don't want the vast housing as proposed. We want some housing at a lower level and in different locations but heritage really is something that has got to be about the whole of York and taking everyone with us.

Obviously York applying for World Heritage Status has been a very big thing over the recent years and I am not going to talk at all about that, except to say we all know York essentially one of the best cities around and it would be great to get that acknowledgement. So there are various decisions at the moment that we face, which are sort of weighing up the pros and cons of the heritage issues that concerns how we move forward, with also some of the questions that were raised about the affordability of York and the environment that we live in. Some of the buildings you may have seen are things like what will happen to Reynard's Garage? What will happen to the Maltings in Clementhorpe? But they are interesting examples of there's a financial aspect to things and there's a cultural aspect to things. In the case of the Maltings there are the housing aspects and there may be with the Reynard's Garage too, depending on what happens. But in both cases they are clear examples of where nothing has happened for years and years and years and that almost is the greatest wrong of all that they have just been left. So I know that it is absolutely key to get more people contributing and – I would say this wouldn't I? – I don't think the previous administration was the most receptive to contributions. But now we've got a different Council; we've done an administration with the Liberal Democrats but it is 'no overall control', which means that different Councillors have a say at different committee meetings and I think that is a positive and we will reach out wherever we possibly can be.

Two then current issues raised as examples during the event were Reynard's Garage and the Maltings in Clementhorpe. Reynard's Garage – or the former Airspeed Factory with connections to pioneering aviator Amy Johnson – proved the more controversial of two. Shortly after the event a decision was made to demolish the building.

Reynard's Garage. Valued by many for its art deco features and its connection to the Airspeed Factory. There had been hope that the Yorkshire Air Museum might take the site over. Credit: Ian Tempest



So how might York's heritage become a resource that helps us live together, was one of the event's questions? And also the issues about wages, affordable cities; well I think the key thing is about the city growing, the city changing. It always has changed; it always will change. If we think, for example, of Reynard's Garage that people will talk about the links with the air industry, they will talk about the links for holding trams in there; for me I will always know it as the place that was Lazer Quest, so, you know, it's been different things over the years. It is about how we get the best deal and I think that is about heritage working best when we really do protect what we've got, enjoy what we've got and savour what we've got.



York Guildhall, a building whose future is currently under discussion. Credit: Ian Tempest

Tourism is a key thing because we want the right sort of tourists, if we can say that. So we are increasingly getting stag and hen parties but there's a better way forward. Not to have tourists just as a commodity but to really share with them the brilliance of York. And I would just really finish on what is one of the toughest decisions that we are going to face at the moment, which is what to do with the Guildhall? And that is a fascinating project, and for me, you know, it comes back to the same sort of thing that the biggest wrong with the Guildhall at the moment is the fact that we've got this incredible building and very few people go and see it. You know, if you have friends here you might sort of say, we'll have a wander down and let's look round the Guildhall. I was talking earlier about the tours [with York Past and Present] that people can do. But in the main it's just totally neglected, totally unloved; so we've got to look at the city of media and arts and how that can have a role within the building through a viable business plan. But it's a combination of factors to preserve the old, to move with the new, times change but there really is not in any of this a right or a wrong answer. And there are certain things that we will think as politicians but I think in heritage, it is all about this journey of what we want to see in York, what we want to preserve and that is something where we hopefully can get far more engagement amongst residents going forward.

Dave Taylor, City of York Councillor and Chair, Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Dave Taylor represents Fishergate Ward for the Green Party. Dave opened by saying it was heritage – in the form the Castle Area Campaign against Coppergate II – that first got him politically engaged in York. Cllr Taylor was keen to see heritage as an ‘agent of change’ and of ‘regeneration, ‘I think too often in our city [...] heritage has been seen as an obstacle, a millstone. And yet it can be the opposite of that – it is a great attractor.’ A theme running through Dave’s talk was how to substantially increase transparency and public participation in the city’s decision making and concluded, ‘So I’ll leave you with a phrase, turning Helen’s question on its head perhaps, ask not what York’s heritage can do for you, but what you can do for York’s heritage?’ Below is an edited transcript of Dave’s contribution.

As has been explained to you I’m the Green Party Councillor for Fishergate and I am currently the Chair of the Learning and Culture Policy and Scrutiny Committee and I was also the Heritage Champion for York, a role which sadly Labour deleted. It was an unpaid, an unremunerated role, so I’m not quite sure why they felt the need to do that. However I have been speaking to the new administration to see whether we can restore that role for somebody. I am also Chairman for the Scrutiny Review into the Cultural Quarter for York and I am a life member of York Civic Trust. I have also worked with people like John Oxley on York’s bid for World Heritage Site status.

So, what has heritage ever done for us? Well I think perhaps one of the most important things is to educate ourselves about the past and how the past impacts on the present and the future; hopefully we can learn from the mistakes of the past and learn not to repeat them.



Clifford's Tower, Dave Taylor argues that previous development plans did not adequately respect the site's specific history, not least the 1190 pogroms against the Jewish community. Credit: Barry Pitcher

It was Clifford's Tower building that really got me involved in politics in York. The site of one of the first pogroms against the Jews here in York in 1190 and the Council wanted to plonk a shopping mall next to it, on the castle car park, back in 1998. And I got involved in the citizen's group called the Castle Area Campaign, with some people who are in this room here today and as well as York Civic Trust. We campaigned very hard for years on that, and the Council's plans, along with Land Securities, were defeated in a public inquiry in 2003. And the ancient monument of Clifford's Tower now stands as a symbol of the need to guard against religious intolerance. This is a theme, which has visited York and Yorkshire since, with minorities like the Catholics being persecuted and their terrorist response back in 1605, an old boy of St. Peter's School, Guy Fawkes, being the bomb maker, right up to the alienation of Muslims today. This is a thread of history from which we can learn.

I want to talk a little bit about how heritage can be an agent for change too. How it can play a part in regeneration and attracting inward investment and in renewing our economy. I think too often in our city, and elsewhere of course, heritage has been seen as an obstacle, a millstone. And yet it can be the opposite of that as it is a great attractor. When the Visit York survey people who come to visit our fair city, a steady 80% say they come here for the history and heritage. They don't come here to shop in Debenhams.

But here is a building, which the Council is struggling to find a use for and we are responsible: York's Guildhall. The Guildhall itself which I am sure many people have been into, is used for occasional art exhibitions and there have been tours round organized by the great York Past and Present. There is the Guildhall itself, the Council Chamber and the wonderful Committee Rooms and there are some less lovely office buildings as well. But there could be a great attractor in such a fabulous location and I have been aware of a need for ten years or more for a business location where small digital and arts companies can co-locate, they can share projects and bid for larger pieces of work. And I think the restoration of the Guildhall, which we need to do could provide that incubator and it could be the springboard for those digital media companies to grow that lively technology sector in York. There needs to be a sound business case, of course there does, but the idea of a twenty-first century guild to take over the Guildhall is very appealing.



The gardens of St Antony's Hall, now home to the Quilt Museum and Gallery. Credit: Amanda Todd

St. Anthony's Hall, is another Guildhall previously used by the Borthwick Institute until 2004 when they abandoned it to move to new archive space at the University of York. I brought the Quilter's Guild of the British Isles to look at this building, as the Council was, at the time, clueless as to what they could do with it. There was some talk of possibly turning it into offices. But the scale of this hall, which is quite magnificent, was perfect for hanging large tapestries and it only has a window at one end and at the other end so there is a lot of wall space there for hanging these large tapestries, which could easily be damaged by strong sunlight. And you can see some of the exhibitions here and one of the more contemporary designs as well here. I discovered that York St. John has courses in design and I made the relevant introductions to the Quilter's Guild back in 2004. As well as the restoration of St. Anthony's Hall itself, this re-development, this regeneration, provided offices for York Archaeological Trust, hosted by the new landlord, York Conservation Trust, which took on the ownership of this building from the Council. The gardens are fabulous and run all the way up to the city walls. They were in a disgraceful mess, but are now superbly redesigned by Bishop Burton College, with the new Schoolhouse Gallery in the grounds and the Old Print Works, which was on this side now turned into a restaurant, the Le Langhe Restaurant.

I must bring you up to date with a couple of recent issues, both badly handled by the previous council administration. The Malthouse at Clementhorpe, which had been used as a museum store. A secret decision was made to flog it off to a developer and this has only recently entered into the public's consciousness. However, as the Malthouse was going to be restored, albeit converted to private flats, I didn't really object to this as I thought it would be a sensitive conversion.

I was more concerned about this debacle. The same secret process under the former administration would have left this building demolished. The director had refused to give me, over the course of about a month council officers had

refused to give me information about the process, which delivered to the Cabinet four choices of what to do with the building. 1) Knock it down and build a hotel. 2) Knock it down and build a hotel. 3) Knock it down and build a hotel. Or 4) knock it down and build a hotel. It's just scandalous really that that secret process took place with no opportunity for members of the public, and no opportunity for opposition Councillors at that time, to engage with it. I felt this would be a shocking loss of one of York's few Art Deco buildings of note. You can see some of the detailing here and with the associations with the author, Nevil Shute, he was a former aircraft builder, and Amy Johnson, the famous aviator, who invested in Shute's factory. I thought it deserved a better fate. Yorkshire Air Museum envisaged turning the structure into a 1930s experience to honour Shute, Johnson and the technological revolution of those times. This has been discussed with the Council long before the shoddy and shabby secret process, which took place to bring about its destruction. This battle is on-going. When the hotel bid was rejected I arranged a deal to save it with the last Labour leader, Dafydd Williams and to contract directly with the Yorkshire Air Museum. But now the Council are saying it's unsafe. It is probably no more unsafe now than it has been for the last twenty years.

So what has heritage ever done for us? Well without going into the sketch from 'Life of Brian', I would say that heritage gives us a tremendous amount, certainly in terms of its educative potential. If people took as much interest in their heritage as you do, if we all took an interest in the heritage it would be better. History and heritage is the bedrock of our tourist economy, as has been said. This supports 10% of employment in the city and it has the potential to attract inward investment to grow our target business clusters, as I have argued. Moreover I think it just adds massively to our quality of life and this is why I choose to live here in York and not in Rochdale, where I grew up and why I would never choose to live in a new town like Milton Keynes. But I would say Chris (gesturing to the Council Leader, Chris Steward) that maybe strategic building in the Green Belt is better than over-development in the city centre, which destroys the quality of life in the city. So I'll leave you with a phrase, turning Helen's question on its head perhaps, ask not what York's heritage can do for you, but what you can do for York's heritage?

Peter Addyman

Peter Addyman is the founding Director of York Archaeology Trust and current chair of York Civic Trust. Peter began by saying in answer to the event's question that he became an archaeologist because of the chance to come over as a teenager to get involved in digs in York. Then, having become a professional archaeologist, Addyman was called back to York to review a scheme in 1969/1970 which suggested that 'that five multi-storey car parks within the city walls were needed, proposed by the Esher Scheme'. Out of that work he 'recommended the setting up of what turned out to be the York Archaeological Trust and in the report that we presented we promised the city in return, and I quote, "a vastly enriched history, a vastly enhanced museum collection and massive educational, touristic and recreational benefits," and that has all happened.' Addyman concluded by arguing: 'So what has heritage ever done for us? The short answer is it's made us a lot more prosperous than we otherwise might have been.'

Thank you very much, I am not really speaking this afternoon I think as Chairman of the Civic Trust, I am speaking as me and, as you have heard, formerly an archaeologist of this parish. I am going to try answering this question from my own experience. That started for me in York in 1954. I was a schoolboy. I came over from Harrogate to York regularly to learn how to excavate in research excavations that were going on at that time in the museum gardens of the Yorkshire Museum. So the answer, the first answer I can give you, is that it sold me on archaeology and it set me off on a career that is still developing 64 years later. That happened in York and it was as a result of York's heritage. And what's the lesson from that? Well the lesson is that the archaeological heritage in York has done the same thing for countless hundreds of other people over the years, many of them now amongst the most distinguished archaeologists in the country, who gained meaningful experience of archaeology, often their first experience, and often absolutely first-class experience, in excavations and museums in York and in its university. So York has educated generations of archaeological scholars for the nation over the last forty years.

My next major experience here came I think in 1969/1970, when York was a flourishing city, believe it or not, pulsating with industry, with a huge carriage works, with two great chocolate factories, with a sugar factory and countless other lesser businesses generating huge amounts of traffic at going home time; lots of them on bikes but cars as well. And it was suggested that an inner ring road was needed to clear all that away; that an outer ring road was needed; that five multi-storey car parks within the city walls were needed, proposed by the Esher Scheme and massive city centre redevelopment was needed. So I was hauled up from a university post in Southampton at that time to advise on what even they was seen as a threat to heritage and especially of course the below-ground heritage, which was my forte. I think I and a couple of students assessed the threats, we recommended the setting up of what turned out to be the York Archaeological Trust and in the report that we presented we promised the city in return, and I quote, 'a vastly enriched history, a vastly enhanced museum collection and massive educational, touristic and recreational benefits,' and that has all happened.

New light has been thrown on the city's history through endless excavations; over 1,500 had taken place by the year 2000 on things like the Roman fortress or the Roman city, south of the river. Or the Anglo-Saxon town of Eoforwic, which to all intents and purposes was unknown at that time, except from the literary record. And then the hardly-known Viking town turned up and you now know it as Jorvik; nobody even knew the word in those days; and endless aspects of medieval and

post-medieval York have become elucidated. As you know millions have visited those excavations and, I am told, I am not sure I believe it, but I am told that upwards of 30 million people have now visited the Jorvik Viking Centre, about 40,000 school children every year for 30 years have had an intensive education in archaeology at Dig, the Archaeological Resource Centre in St. Saviour Gate, which itself uses a heritage building, St. Saviour's Church. Now if you work it out 30 years, 40,000 schoolchildren, 1,200,000 school kids have been educated about heritage in York. About 30,000 visitors annually go to Barley Hall, off Stone Gate in Coffee Yard. Out at Huntingdon there is one of the nation's few laboratories that preserves artefacts, especially water-logged wood, and they are currently preserving for the nation the timbers of a Dutch East Indiaman and also the famous Newport boat, a medieval boat, one of our best medieval boats, the best medieval boat that survives as well as, of course, masses of stuff from York. Besides the lab there is one of Britain's biggest and best artefact stores, the raw material for research on York for decades, probably centuries to come.

So what has heritage done for us through all this? Well I think we've already learned it has vastly stimulated heritage-based interest in York, it has vastly enriched York's history and it has provided unforgettable and inspiring educational experiences for schoolchildren from all over Britain and experiences that are available all the time, on their doorstep, for our own children who live in York. It has provided jobs, and jobs for over 40 years, for about 100 archaeologists on average and scholars, whose work has become an exemplar of excellence on a world scale, vastly enhancing York's international profile as a tourist centre, as an academic centre and as a centre for research and good practice. People come from all over the world to look at what we do.

Meanwhile what has happened to the two chocolate works? One has gone, one is much reduced. What has happened to the sugar factory? Gone without trace. What has happened to the carriage works? What has happened to all those jobs? Gone. And what has replaced them, well amongst other things a vast and vastly enlarged and enhanced tourist industry generating scads of jobs in hosts of sectors; accommodation, the food industry, retail, attractions ranging from Richard III to Chocolate Story, car hire, taxis, buses, car parking, printing, goodness knows what.

Yes, you say, but what's it done for us, the ordinary people of York? Well, after only two years the Jorvik Viking Centre was awarded the National Award for the Best Marketed Small Company in Britain – amazing! And this is what the citation said, and I am quoting this, 'Jorvik with an annual turnover at March 1987 of more than £2.5 million is now in the ninth position nationally amongst leisure attractions where an admission charge is made.

Now that can only be good for York's present day residents too.' Going on, 'Research recently conducted by the English Tourist Board showed that for every £1 spent in Jorvik, a further £7 is spent by visitors in the community.' And the Institute of Marketing commented, 'Imaginative marketing techniques have established that this living museum is one of the top leisure attractions with an impressive international reputation.' And now let's just think what that now means today. Say, as we heard before 30 million people have been through Jorvik at a modern equivalent price of £10 a head; if each of those pounds generates a further £7 for York's economy that adds up to £2.1 billion for York over the last 30

years. So what has heritage ever done for us? The short answer is it's made us a lot more prosperous than we otherwise might have been. And that underlines my final point, we can't afford to let our heritage go.

The thing that now brings streams of people to York and creates that benefit for our economy; we can't allow an irresponsible City of York Council let its heritage assets like the Reynard's Garage in Piccadilly, birthplace of some of Britain's most iconic early aeroplanes, fall into rack and ruin and then demand its demolition when it could be another huge visitor and revenue generator for York if only someone had the vision to see it. Come on City of York Council, I am sure you can do better.



The Jorvik Viking Centre – run by York Archeology Trust – has acted as a huge visitor attraction. Credit Ian Tempest

We shouldn't let the City of York sanction the most rudimentary of rescue archaeology jobs on a hugely important site, the remains of Medieval England's largest, second largest, hospital I think and the near unique remains of York's Royal Mint, if not the deposits from it just in case a season of pantomime might be missed in our theatre. The job that is being done there is not really an adequate job for the importance of the site. So come on John Oxley, wherever you are, come on City of York Council – I think there are too many geese in York but these particular geese and other geese like them could lay us golden eggs and we can't afford to slaughter them. Thank you.

Lianne Brigham and Richard Brigham, York Past and Present

Lianne Brigham and Richard Brigham from York Past and Present, who have been involved in the Living with History project and the wider How should Heritage Decisions be Made? research project. They opened by explaining that 'heritage has given us a sense of worth, a feeling of pride for the city we live in and I can honestly say it is something we never had before'. Lianne and Richard then talked about their experiences of getting involved in documenting Mansion House: 'this is involving over thirty members of the public to document the building, help pack the items and record'. Overall, they reflected that they found ways of making 'our voices heard, even if it does mean shouting at the top of them or being slightly annoying at the same time!'



York Past and Present have been involved in photography and packing up all the objects in York's Mansion House as part of their renovation and development Heritage Lottery project. Credit: York Past and Present

When we were asked what heritage has done for you? We thought this was an interesting question. Since forming York Past and Present over a year ago I have to say heritage has given us a sense of worth, a feeling of pride for the city we live in and I can honestly say it is something we never had before. When you look around where we live and take a look at the heritage that exists you soon come to realise not everything in this city is how it should be. You tend to realise your beloved city in some ways is crumbling around you. There doesn't seem to be anything we can do about it. Or is there? As founders of York Past and Present we set out with a couple of what seemed to be simple ideas; to engage the City of York Council in public participation and to start what was going to become a public archive. None of us thought this was going to be easy. In all fairness we had the same expectations a turkey had a week before Christmas. However, with our thoughts and ideas and a lot of stubbornness we embarked on a heritage journey that would take us to places we never even thought was possible. From our humble beginnings as a small Facebook group, over the past year we have increased membership to just under 8,000, a lot of whom actively participate in many of the things we do. We are a living, breathing, online community and we have achieved much more than anybody, including – we thought we could achieve a little bit. We have achieved a lot more. With the help of and continued support of people like Helen, Richard Pollitt, John Oxley, Victoria Hoyle – within the last year we have documented World War II huts, participated in an archaeological dig and photographed the Guildhall from top to bottom.



A picture of some wooden buildings near the Guildhall, documented by York Past and Present before they were demolished in 2014. Credit: Richard Brigham

But it doesn't stop there. Weekly tours of the Guildhall have been going for over eight months now and several hundred people have passed through its doors and arches and as we know, no other group does the tour as intensive and as informative as we do. Not bad for the members of Joe Public. As well as pride for what we are doing, we also meet every month and raise money for charity and York Past and Present members have raised over £900 for various charitable organisations in the last few months. Yesterday we were engaged in documenting the work that has now started on the Mansion House; this is involving over thirty members of the public to document the building, help pack the items and record. This has included packing, doing photography, 3D video imaging and interviews, again all done willingly by members of the public. York Past and Present, if anything, has brought the community of people together, not only to take an active interest in our heritage but also taking the ideas we have and putting them to use by helping to preserve both heritage and the history of our city. For us and I am sure I can speak for our members as well, heritage has given us a voice, a spark of interest and a way of participating in things that we feel we can make a difference in our city. We can make our voices heard, even if it does mean shouting at the top of them or being slightly annoying at the same time. For us the heritage is all about making a difference. It is about us, the public, having a voice and an opinion that not only can be heard but also listened to. By doing this it gives us the ability to save and record the history of our city for its future.

Lianne Brigham and Richard Brigham, York Past and Present

What we'd like to pass on is some advice for other people hoping to get more involved in heritage decision-making in their city.

- Build a community of people with the same interest.
- Meet key people based in Institutions (like in a University or in the Council). 'Be give your free time because it's volunteering that makes the connections'.
- Tap into these key people's networks.
- Crossover from social media to real life events and life live events back to social media.
- You need an idea to talk about [for York Past and Present this has been public documentation].
- Communication and language – you need to speak to different people in different ways.
- Gain more and more confidence from speaking to lots of different people – and seeing that they like what you are doing.
- Be generous to people in institutions / council. 'They can shut the door, faster than you can open it'.
- Don't settle for small things, keep your eyes on your main goal. 'Be like a child, be happy with what those in decision-making positions offer but always demand more'.

Michael Hayes, Plastic Fortune

Michael Hayes is one of the founders of Plastic Fortune which 'aims to build a network of creative young people in the city of York'. Michael began by arguing that 'York caters very well to the tourist and not so much to the resident'. Michael wanted to draw attention to all of the contemporary culture that is going on in the city – something they've been capturing with the People of York series. He gave one example of being at Inkwel where there was a gig in the shop for Record Store Day, there started off being around 30 people but as the gig went on the crowd started to block 'the street because loads of tourists want to see what is happening because something is happening. It is not something that has happened here, something is happening!' In structural terms Michael drew attention to how hard it was to live in the city as a young person and to find space to rent to start a business.

I'm from Plastic Fortune and we're a creative collective. We make films, we host events and we are opening our online store in September. Right, I read the research questions and before we get started I just want to challenge a bit of the terminology. It says we need to look at heritage decisions and I am going to argue that it is too precise a term for what we have. We don't have heritage decisions; we have a heritage culture where everything is sacred. So basically what I am going to try and offer is a new perspective, one that kind of gets ignored. Not the tourists, or the professional or the academic, just the people who have lived have to deal with living here.

I say 'deal with living here' because basically York caters very well to the tourist and not so much to the resident. So the future of heritage. Currently York is a city that did; it is not a city that does, which to be honest is a bit of a waste because there's so much goes on in the city but it's not put out there, which takes me to two of the major points I want to talk about. That is inefficiency in the way that we get things out there; what we do as well as what we've done. And the second point would that the reputation of York is so important to who comes here.

So, with my company we went out and we did a bit of surveying of people in the street and we just spent a day talking to actual people who were here visiting, living here, all that sort of stuff. And we asked them what are you doing? What do you think about York? The main two answers were drinking and old buildings. So basically that is York's actual reputation, which people see it as and despite there being a small clique of people who think that York is some far out bastion of technology and art, that might be true to 1% of the population. But if I go out on the street or I get someone from out there and go and show them the UNESCO City of Media Arts thing they go, what's that? Most people haven't heard of it, which is just such a waste. It is such a good thing and could be so powerful but it's not.

The reason it's a waste is because of how much we do right now. It's not that we need to grow things. We've got a frankly disproportionately good music scene for how small we are. We've got theatre companies that aren't like big ones like the Theatre Royal and the Grand Opera House – they are more DIY, they'll find a church that will host a theatre group for people who maybe can't afford the normal theatre ticket prices. And then magazines; we have Aesthetica, which is internationally renowned for art and design and it started here, right? Not many people actually know that, like of the general public and the people who matter don't know that and that is ridiculous because it is so successful and the fact that we don't advertise or demonstrate that we can do all these things to everyone is waste.

We need to demonstrate that we can do things, not that we did things. Because we've cultivated this image that basically that we are a heritage town; everything we do is steeped in history. It's quaint. Well the problem is you have a one-line reputation so only get certain sorts of tourists that visit. In fact two sorts actually, the ones who like to drink and the ones who like old buildings and that's it. So this reputation is causing a bit of a problem. We have two universities, we have quite a few, we did have quite a few tech businesses, but the problem is these people leave, especially people my age, like 22 because of two particular reasons. York shies away from supporting the creative industries in York and number two, housing. Housing is such a big problem. So what you have is a skills exodus – graduates leave.

It's actually a problem for businesses because, when I tell people what Plastic Fortune do and that our collective has designers, writers, presenters, everything, they are surprised. The question I'm asked is, I can't find a graphic designer. I can't find a filmmaker for my promotional video in York. Because if you put 'York' and 'designer' into Google and you get someone from New York. You put York, UK and you get a chair maker or something like that. We don't shout enough about it and the problem is then these people go, I'll hire someone from London. And this is genuinely true. They will hire people from London and they'll pay them the train fare to come up, they'll pay the hotel, all the expenses and then send them back down a few days later. Right? Now isn't that a waste of a business? It is taking away from people who are actually in the city and these people would love to know if there was a designer could do what they needed to do at half the price because of where they were.

We don't want to push heritage away because it is important and it adds to the beauty of the city and let's make no mistake about it. I mean York is pretty; and that sounds quite vain but it is a pretty place and you don't want to push it away but what we need to do is to find a new purpose for it. It needs to start supporting what is happening in the city. I think a good case in point is we went to go film the Inkwell on Record Store Day and if none of you have been to Inkwell, go there, vinyl, magazines, crafts, it's incredible – it's an independent shop and on Record Store Day they had an event in the shop and it holds about thirty people tops. So I filmed it there and it was full before I even began. So we started playing the music and after about five minutes people started congregating outside. So eventually it gets to the point where there's about thirty people inside and another thirty on the street, in Gillygate. It's blocking the street because loads of tourists want to see what is happening because something is happening. It is not something that has happened here, something is happening! So that plays it out and they all go and buy their vinyl and whatnot. I walk round to Parliament Street because there's an event going on there and I get there and there's a big stage, it looks expensive, very nice and there's a few bands and all the gear is there – but the music is nice and soft, it's quaint. It fits the reputation of York beautifully and the crowd? Seven people. That is just a waste, an utter waste, and all it does is just embellish the fact that York isn't a place for music. It isn't a place for independent vendors. It isn't a place for the people that live there.

So what is our solution to it? Well we need some perspective. We need to look at the fact that not every tiny little thing is sacred. There are some very old places in York and we are not looking at tearing things down or putting a hole in the city walls or anything stupid like that. It's being realistic and looking at things like

the Guildhall. It's a very old building; it is a beautiful building. But the inside of it needs to be used for something different. Now I don't really have too much of a view on the making it a media centre thing, I don't know if the amount of people who come into the city would support that but refurbishing buildings is what we need to do because the buildings need to stay. They are what people come to see. But the insides need to have a new purpose; they need to create new history.

If we've got 1,000 years of history, where is the next 1,000 years going to go. We need to start doing something. As the gentleman over there said, stop talking and do! So I don't see why there is such a reluctance to embrace something that could make York better. It is not about sacrifice. It is about taking the waste and making York better for everyone who lives here. So, for example, there is no open creative space. What it means is in cities like Manchester, Newcastle, Leeds they have these places that are either commercially bought, rented, or Council-rented where people can go in and create inventions and businesses can go in and test their new ideas in a way that is not going to penalise them if they get it slightly wrong. When they have a model, they can turn it into a financial model and then they can take this creativity and make money for York. But we don't have one. Partly the reason is because in York because if you want to rent somewhere out in York, it is really, really, really, really expensive. So unless you have a massive commercial backing, you have a problem. We have a problem with that. So what we need to do is to take a grasp of heritage. We need to start making heritage decisions, not heritage culture, we need to start making decisions and getting something done. Thank you.

Victoria Hoyle, York City Archivist

Victoria Hoyle is York City Archivist and a PhD student at the University of York, began by challenging our definitions of 'archive', 'I think that the Archive of York should be all the documents, ephemera, memories and captured moments that allow us to understand our past and relate to our present and enable us to make those justified decisions about how we can live well together'. Crucially Victoria argued that this wasn't just about the city's past. A more driven and engaged approach to archiving as part of the city's democratic life, Victoria argued, requires a different approach to 'cataloguing' and 'digitising': 'Rather than prioritising our decisions about how we make the archive accessible based on what was important in the past, we think perhaps about new priorities, about what is important now, and being more responsive. So, for example, if there is a debate in York at present over housing and sustainability and the green belt, perhaps the archive relating to that material should be prioritised for accessibility?'

I am here to talk about heritage from quite a different angle, specifically archival heritage. I'm not sure how many people here are familiar with York City Archive – has anyone visited? [About 40% of the audience raise their hands.] Well, you are a very unusual group. York's City Archive holds the records of the City Council and its predecessors for the last 800 years and it also collects material that represents active citizenship and life here in York. So, businesses, societies, organisations, families and individuals and it has been doing that for the last 60 years. We have recently re-opened to the public after our £1.6 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and since January we have had over 40,000 people through the doors. But unfortunately only a few of those people have actually used the original archival material.

I am going to start by talking about what is an archive? What is the definition of an archive? And normally an archivist's definition will sound extremely formal and it is usually about differentiating an archive from other things. This charter, or account book, or map is an archive because it is authoritative, official, valuable, this poster, or Facebook post, or family album not an archive because it is not those things. But the definition that I would like to offer you today isn't so easy to pin down. I think that the Archive of York should be all the documents, ephemera, memories and captured moments that allow us to understand our past and relate to our present and enable us to make those justified decisions about how we can live well together. To a greater or lesser extent I would argue that we are all archivists. I went to university and did a Masters Degree in Archive Management but that really only qualifies me to make a certain kinds of decision about what is important. Like all cities York is full of archival heritage. The archival heritage is not limited to the material which sits in a strong room in the Archive on Museum Street. It is in homes and businesses, it is in schools and it is in those dedicated collecting archives like the City Council but also at the Borthwick, the Railway Museum and the Minster. It is now increasingly online, it is on social media, it is on tablets, it is on your phone. Some of it won't last because it will live and it will die with the people to whom it matters now. Most of you here will have family photograph albums and documentation at home, which we pass down through our families. Parts of it will be preserved and taken care of and, hopefully, repurposed until such a time as it no longer survives or connects people to one another. That is what the City Archive I think aims to do with its material, but on a city-wide scale.

I would suggest that archives are essential for democracy; for making decisions, for knowing who we are and where we came from. At the moment the archive is visited by a very small number of residents. When we conducted a survey in 2011,

only 6% of people surveyed had ever visited the archive more than once and 14% did not even know that it existed. But in the future I would like to see the archive in York put to work in lots of different ways. I would like to see it used more as a resource by Council officers and also by residents, to access information about how the city governs itself. There is a huge and untapped depth of information in our collections about housing, about transport, infrastructure and education. That information not only helps us to recall our past decisions and revisit our old reports but situates current debates in context and I think that is incredibly valuable. It could also support people to investigate their own communities, their histories, their places, their spaces and the things that are important for them. I would like to think that there is a future where looking something up in the archive, visiting the archive, is the first step in designing solutions to problems and celebrating our past achievements. The archive is a body of knowing that is itself very little known at the moment. How do we do that? That's quite an ambition.

There are practical things that must be done. There is a body of material that the city currently stewards and Explore Your Libraries and Archives, which is my organisation, does that on their behalf. We have to make sure that that the archive as it exists now is searchable. It has to be navigable in lots of ways. You have to be able to visit it on site and you have to be able to visit it online.

Cataloguing, digitising, sharing – these are quite old stories for archivists and anybody I think in my position would tell you the same. But I would suggest that perhaps we need to approach this problem now in new ways. That, rather than prioritising our decisions about how we make the archive accessible based on what was important in the past, we think perhaps about new priorities, about what is important now, and be more responsive. So, for example, if there is a debate in York at present over housing and sustainability and the green belt, perhaps the archive relating to that material should be prioritised for accessibility? It can't be achieved using old ways of working either. We need to find innovative partners in the city among residents and visitors and the universities to help us tackle it. I think that volunteering and fund-raising and crowd sourcing are all part of this picture and I think that, finally, the day has gone when the archive lived in a locked room. The archive of York is increasingly out there. It is dispersed. There is no way that, as City Archivist, I can be the steward, nor would I want to be the steward for all archival heritage in the city. I see a future where the role of the city archivist is as a broker, is as a facilitator, who brings people together to share in archival heritage, which is local, individual, online and on the ground. In doing that I would suggest that we need to be challenging to traditional dynamics. We need to be more rapid; we need to be more democratically responsive and we need to be fearless. Thank you.

John Oxley, York City Archaeologist

John Oxley is York's City Archaeologist. John opened his talk with a thought for those who might be less enthused by tourism to the city: 'If you want to know what York might be like without the economic benefits that come along with the heritage industry, I always say to people, come and have a look at York on Wednesday in January because I think that is probably base level activity within the city'. John drew some connections between ideas of what heritage is – 'it is the micro- and macro-, the small level and the big level decisions that have been made in the past that give us the city that we live in today' – and how we might imagine 'conservation' as 'a dynamic process. It is the way that we make decisions today about what we take with us into the future.' John shared ideas he is developing at the moment for York's Historic Environment Record and, like Victoria, he is keen to see this as playing an active role in democratic engagement in the city today.

The event's title 'What has heritage done for us?' I think in many ways is a driving concept. What we have in York is this incredibly amazing city that has been given to us by the people who have been here beforehand. If you want to know what York might be like without the economic benefits that come along with the heritage industry, I always say to people, come and have a look at York on Wednesday in January because I think that is probably base level activity within the city. Heritage from my point of view is, as somebody else has already said today, about inheritance. It is about what we have been given, what we have inherited from past generations and from past decisions. And I think the decision-making aspect is very, very important in this because it is the micro- and macro-, the small level, the big level decisions that have been made in the past that give us the city that we live in today. Now that decision-making process today is generally lodged within planning and within planning there is this area called 'conservation'. And conservation can be seen as being a fairly negative process. I am sure a lot of people see conservation as a negative process.

So how does conservation fit into this concept of heritage? Well, for me, conservation is a dynamic process. It is the way that we make decisions today about what we take with us into the future. So conservation is about that decision-making process. It is about creating that next 1,000 years as Michael was saying. What do we take forward? What do we make the city? And, as an archaeologist, I am often asked where does archaeology begin? What is archaeological? Well for me everything is archaeological because everything is in the past. Where we are now is this point in time and so what we've done coming to this place today, the events that we've gone through, the things that are discarded, form something that we can study, we can appreciate and we can record and we can use. History begins now. So conservation is this sort of dynamic way of making decisions about what we want the future to be. Now in that process the key is information. Information, knowledge is power and if you have the right information available, if you have access to the information, then that can assist you in making decisions. It empowers you as an individual, as a body and you can then take part effectively in that decision-making process. How do you get your hands on that information? Well my particular area of concern is archaeology and I want to mention today a database, the Historic Environment Record. Now the Historic Environment Record today is a very impoverished database. Myself and my colleague Claire are going through a process of looking at how we can improve that data set and how we can make it more accessible. So we are starting a process of looking back at work we've done within the Council but also wanting to start conversations with the people around the tables, in this room and outside about how this Historic Environment Record might take

advantage, might include, might refer to, might bring forward, other sets of information that will make that a more authoritative, a more useful set of data. But more importantly, make it available in a way that makes sense to a whole range of audiences out there so the people can use that information in the way in which they want to use it. And it very much makes me feel, having listened to Victoria speak, that perhaps we need to go and work with Victoria. And in Worcestershire the Historic Environment Record is part of the archive service and there is a strong argument to say that it is just another archive and therefore bureaucratically it should be relocated within the archive service.

So we are working for the next couple of months to produce a proposal for the Historic Environment Record within the city. We need to talk to people in this room and there will be a little questionnaire going around, which I would gratefully appreciate if you could all just tick the different elements in it so you can tell us what your areas of interest and concern are. What we want to move towards is exactly what Victoria was talking about, which is how do we empower people to make decisions or to engage in the democratic process more effectively because you can only do that really if you have the information that allows you to engage effectively in that process.

And I think it also takes us to a very interesting contribution that Lisa from York Stories made [in her piece above]. Where she says that the challenge for the future is to make sure that the less visible heritage and the quieter voices are recognised and recorded. And that also said that the less visible heritage and the quieter voices are able to use the information to make the case for whatever it is that they are interested in and incorporated and embedded into future decisions. So, for me, the Historic Environment Record is a pretty turgid technical place to work but the potential it offers everybody sat in this room, everybody in York, the opportunity to be able to pull information forward that allows them to say, this is why we shouldn't be knocking down Reynard's Garage; this is why John Oxley has got it completely wrong at the Theatre Royal and they shouldn't be doing what they are doing there. This is why we should be looking at the history of cultural activity in York over the past ten years and looking at what we were doing back in the 90s and how that has contributed to where we are today and how that might take us forward into a much more exciting future than perhaps might be the case otherwise. So that's a very strange way to talk about this idea that I want you all to help me put together a new Historic Environment Record for the city – but I wanted to situate that exercise within this decision-making process and the concept of information empowering people and encouraging people to engage in that democratic process.

Helen Weinstein, Director, Historyworks

Helen Weinstein, Director, Historyworks Helen Weinstein is a History Professor and the Director of Historyworks which supports the practice and theory of Public History in the UK by promoting education programmes and partnerships and by collaborating with partners to develop media interpretation. Helen's talk focused on her recent work on Clifford's Tower and the Eye of York which came about after she moved to York ten years ago. She became 'Jewish in a public way' as she began to deal with the legacy of the 12th century pogrom. This is a complicated past to navigate because the Jewish community was killed at the site of Clifford's Tower on 16th March 1190 and there is little interpretation publicly available. English Heritage is now 'on a journey to present Clifford's Tower in a much more layered way'. Helen has been working to bring stakeholders together, including York Museums Trust, York Civic Trust, English Heritage, the Jewish communities in and around York, and the City Archaeologist 'to rethink the site'. With her background in television, film making and digital content, Helen has also highlighted the value of 'digital' technology in helping us tell more complex stories about York 'so that multiple voices, multiple layers of resources and multiple materials can be lodged there'.

Thank you very much for inviting me. I have had an interesting journey in York, a ten year story from 2005 to 2015. During this decade York has gone from a place of stasis, where I felt it was quite hard to have a voice in heritage decision-making, to a position today when there really is an opportunity to be heard, for multiple voices to be consulted and a new way forward developed for more inclusive policymaking. The heritage project I have been most closely identified with in York is a public engagement project that I began as an 'out-Jew' at the University of York. This hadn't been something I'd encountered in the workplace before – about being Jewish as an historian in a public way. But when I arrived at York to be a History Professor, there were hardly any senior Jewish academics on the campus. It seemed expected that I would participate in a leadership role at public events – particularly by giving public readings and speaking at civic events, for example at Holocaust Memorial Day. There was no identifiable Jewish community in York during these years. There was no synagogue either, although individual Jews who didn't travel to nearby Leeds or Knaresborough, did gather for the major Jewish holidays. Recently, a liberal congregation has been founded, meeting regularly in the Quaker Meeting House at Friargate. But ten years ago, our modest aim was to mark our Jewish identity publicly by commemorating both the pogrom at Clifford's Tower and Holocaust Memorial Day. Out of this, an identifiable group developed which could start to have our voices heard within the civic landscape of York.

Clifford's Tower is the site of the 1190 pogrom against York's Jewish population and has led to York having a very negative reputation amongst the Jewish community world wide. Credit: Richard Bringham



After I arrived at the University my new line manager, the Head of History did not support my involvement. He felt that I was stepping outside my area of expertise and that I shouldn't be working on the commemoration and the interpretation of Clifford's Tower. I had to distance myself from this view and instead think about what my role should be at the University of York. I was a Professor who happened to be a Jew, and I was also a Public Historian and a Director of The Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past. In fact, as an academic, I thought my role was not only to study the public engagement of the past, but also to enable everybody in York to feel that they had a voice in the interpretation of their heritage and that they also had valid expertise to offer heritage practitioners and policy makers, in exactly the manner that is being discussed in this room. We all have expertise that we can bring to this kind of question. And from the Jewish community's point of view, there wasn't any choice. Something had to be done which involved my working with the Jewish community. I teamed up with the City Archaeologist, John Oxley, to lead walks on the history of Clifford's Tower. We sought to inspire conversation and confidence for the public and the Jewish community in particular to handle the complex interpretations of the 1190 massacre and, at the same time, develop a narrative from first settlement to the present day. Hundreds attended the walks. As Director of the Institute I invited heritage practitioners to work with me and we started to rediscover the complicated past of Clifford's Tower management and archaeological record, and also its research history and interpretation over the twentieth century. My conversations with English Heritage were positive. A key moment came when we realised that the daffodils on the mound have six petals on them. These six petals represent the Star of David. English Heritage had forgotten the significance that those daffodils on that mound – the mound that is shown on all those pretty postcard pictures represent. They are a special kind of daffodil. They were donated by the American Jewish Foundation, after many years of campaigning, to represent the Star of David. They were actually developed to flower earlier than any of the traditional daffodils surrounding York's walls, in order that they are in bloom when the massacre is commemorated on the 16th March. It was an example of our engagement with English Heritage, to help them start thinking about how we could recover and re-consider all aspects of the history of the Tower.

Daffodils, Clifford Tower, 'donated by the American Jewish Foundation, after many years of campaigning, to represent the Star of David and to flower earlier than any of the normal traditional mound daffodils'. Credit: Chrisse_Mac via Flickr. Creative Commons Attribution Share Alike]



Before our recent gatherings to share knowledge and expertise, English Heritage was presenting the site in two primary ways: a place that was about castles and knights with a nice picture of a castle at the top of the steps and the place where you could get some of the best views of York. This meant that for the Jewish community the site was a place well served by commemoration though not by interpretation. But once we started to work together, we've organized learning days for English Heritage practitioners to learn from the community, share expertise and develop understanding. For reports of the learning days, go to:

<http://historyworks.tv/projects/2014/11/02/york-castle-project/>

As historians what do we do? One of our tasks was to consider how best to present a story familiar in headline form - medieval Jews were massacred in York. And the obvious partners for me to start working with were York City Council and York Museums Trust (YMT). The Castle Museum is part of the wider complex of the Castle fortification which includes Clifford's Tower, so although the museum has no Jewish objects, YMT is involved. It has actively supported a community project to allow a mass audience to engage with the Jewish History of York. This is something we have done together in partnership with the City Archaeologist, John Oxley. I started bringing university students and academics to the project to provide a digital resource that translated all the current research into an easy to-access audio trail. What we came up with was a story that started to layer the Jewish experience as well. Because it can be difficult if you are a Jew in York. You are asked all the time, what is it like to live here? Isn't it awful, that all the Jews were massacred in 1190? Many international Jews I met had heard there was a 'cherem' (a prohibition) that you shouldn't actually reside in York, stay overnight in York or eat in York, because of the massacre. There were so many myths around that we had to investigate further. I contacted numerous international rabbinical scholars to provide guidance if not answers about these claims. We began by conducting walking tours around York with the Jewish community from Leeds, from Middleborough, from Halifax. We found out more and discovered this story together, especially about the former Jewish congregation that met above a carpenter's shop on Aldwark between about 1890 and 1978. We were able to bring the history of the Jewish communities of York into the modern age, telling the story of Jews returning to York in the 19th and 20th centuries and the impact of the University in drawing back Jews to live in York both as an employer and as an attractive place of learning for students. If you would like to access the free guide called "The York Jewish History Trail" you can find it as an updated audio guide (with scripts in pdf) by clicking on the sections on audiboom and downloading the map and materials here:

<http://historyworks.tv/projects/2014/11/02/york-castle-project/#audiobooscripts-york-jewish-history-trail-by-historyworks>

It's been fascinating to help set up a community project but also to be in the fantastic situation of being able to reclaim this history within English Heritage as well. So English Heritage are now on a journey of participatory learning with the Jewish community. We are all better equipped to consider Clifford's Tower in a much more layered way. In thinking about the past, you have to travel in two directions at the same time. Sometimes they converge; sometimes they do not. First, making sure it's not only the trauma of 1190 that is focused on, because that actually makes some Jews in York feel very uncomfortable. But secondly, it's

been important to tell that story within a larger narrative. Because, for example, the Quakers of York in the late 1930s raised money for Jews, particularly young people who didn't have a family affiliation or who were too old to come on Kindertransport. Their funding was used to sponsor young Jewish people who were hosted by York families. Some of those children are alive in York today; those young people are now in their 80s and 90s. Many of them became Quakers or Anglicans. And it is right that they have a place where they can now tell their story. The other thing that has been really important is for the Jewish community to think of the whole history of Clifford's Tower within a Castle complex, and not solely as a place where Jews were murdered.

On 16th March 1190 that stone building was not there. It was a timber structure. Many Jews from Yorkshire and nationally and internationally are unaware of these basic facts that Clifford's Tower has been modified or rebuilt on numerous occasions. Their learning journey needs to be the other way too, so that they have a broader historical understanding of the others who have died around that site and why. For example, there is significant evidence of Roman burials from archaeological excavations – skeletons, sarcophagi, burial objects – showing that the Castle area was previously the site of a Roman cemetery. Moreover, the mound and tower is also unique historically because the Castle fortification was used by the Crown to govern the north and has been the site of violence and death over many centuries. Not many know that it was used for political repression after the medieval period. For example, Robert Aske was hung from a cage to die a painful traitor's death in 1537 for his role in the revolt called 'The Pilgrimage of Grace'. Later on, notoriously, it was the site where the Peterloo protestors were incarcerated after the massacre at St George's fields in Manchester in 1816, and before that 17 Luddite activists were brought to be executed in 1813. So if archaeologists find a body, it is not necessarily a Jewish body. And it has been revelatory in thinking about heritage issues to learn these things together. So I have found the journey of being a heritage practitioner, and I guess, in some ways a heritage leader, in the University quite tricky to navigate. It has been a valuable learning experience to work with English Heritage and help them collaborate with the stakeholders, particularly in the Jewish community, to share some of the good practices we have in York of sharing knowledge and ideas across sectors. And I think that is one of the points I want to underline. What we have learned, as all the groups have come together for re-thinking Clifford's Tower site, is that we are dealing with a layered history and we need to make space for multiple voices. We need to have our conversations about planning in an holistic way. We need always to be working in partnership. We need to try and keep these conversations open and collaborative so that ridiculous decisions made in ignorance that provoke campaigns.

In my view, the best way learning can be easily shared is to put information on the net. I mean isn't the Web fantastic? It allows you to share, immediately, whatever you have learnt. No one can say now that they don't know about the multiple burials around the site because we've produced lots of documentation, lots of bite-size thumbnail histories, as well as deeper historical reports. The same with Helen Graham's work, it is very easy now to inform the Council and be continually learning together. As someone said earlier, knowledge gives a certain power here. So my way forward, coming from this experience, is that academic expertise can be very useful. It can be harnessed within this kind of learning about difficult heritage, but unless it is translated, unless the academics can be guided into new ways of working, so they are working with the community

instead of talking at the community, it is not easy, particularly in a small city like York to change the dynamic. But I think we have to work continually at that. At the learning days I organized in January 2015 about the histories of Clifford's Tower, Graham Bell said that the issue with the area seems to be one of a space left over after parking rather than the usual problem of space left over after planning. We have been able to bring stakeholders together, York Museums Trust, York Civic Trust, English Heritage and also the City Archaeologist, to rethink the site. And I am very heartened that these discussions have begun to consider whether there could be an underground car park. Unfortunately the existing car park is a million-pound generator for the Council; it's a lot of money from a very small space but it's a horrible space - difficult to walk across, unsightly and deeply unattractive. If we can build a consensus that a car park is not appropriate between these different civic sites, wouldn't it be wonderful if it was a green area; if it was a place where young people could have a hub and have public art and different events and activities for communities instead of being an eye-sore in the daytime and a place for anti-social-behaviour at night? It could become a really vibrant place of pleasure and leisure and learning.



The controversial carpark near Clifford's Tower. Credit Ian Tempest

In sum, recent years have seen intense discussions about the redevelopment of the York Castle site. The possibility of improving the site would encompass the area occupied by the car park, Clifford's Tower, the Eye-of-York, Tower Street, and the River Foss. If discussions can continue across sectors with the public involved on an equitable basis, there is a fantastic opportunity to establish the area as a public and civic space, remaining faithful to the current open-air nature of the site and its historic traditions. What we have learnt with the journey of the Jewish community is that there is a thirst for knowledge about uncomfortable

pasts to be presented however difficult they were. Moreover, if the York Castle area can be landscaped as a connected heritage site, the history of justice and power over the centuries will be introduced to this and future generations. I believe that the UNESCO win for the Arts and Media Hub is a great opportunity. Also, York is one of the only places in the UK that has Wi-Fi offered freely in the centre of the City. This means we can now have a virtual space where so much of the learning about the site can be shared. As John Oxley was talking, I was re-remembering a great piece of practice, Bristol's 'Know Your Place' project. Bristol City Council started on the journey of sharing their heritage and planning resources a long time ago, with all their maps, all their archives and the kind of work that you guys are doing at York 'Past and Present' pinned on to a whole web structure to share knowledge within the city. Young people in Bristol are doing amazing art work around heritage, challenging people to think about the heritage spaces. This communication is possible because they have made a viable civic space along the harbour, alongside the virtual space of 'Know Your Place'. We could replicate that idea around the York Castle area. And, most importantly, really use the digital opportunities available now so that multiple voices, multiple layers of resources, multiple materials can be lodged there. When I first arrived here in 2005, there was this static picture, which is what Clifford's Tower kind of symbolised to me then, a kind of uninformative, unimaginative fixed narrative that didn't tell you very much about the City of York either in the tourist guides or on the explanatory panels. Now an authoritative thumbnail voice can be replaced by using the web and using digital platforms. There can be a shared collective site like 'Know Your Place' so that York can have a space for knowledge sharing and multiple voices, freely available on site at the swipe of a smartphone or tablet. This future can be one of advocacy and activism, rather than starchy heritage that can only repeat the kind of stories that feel safe.

York may be a very old city, but embracing new technologies and thinking imaginatively about how best to reveal and explain its rich and varied history can only enhance its status as a 'must-visit' tourist attraction and add another layer to the level of civic pride felt by most of its inhabitants.

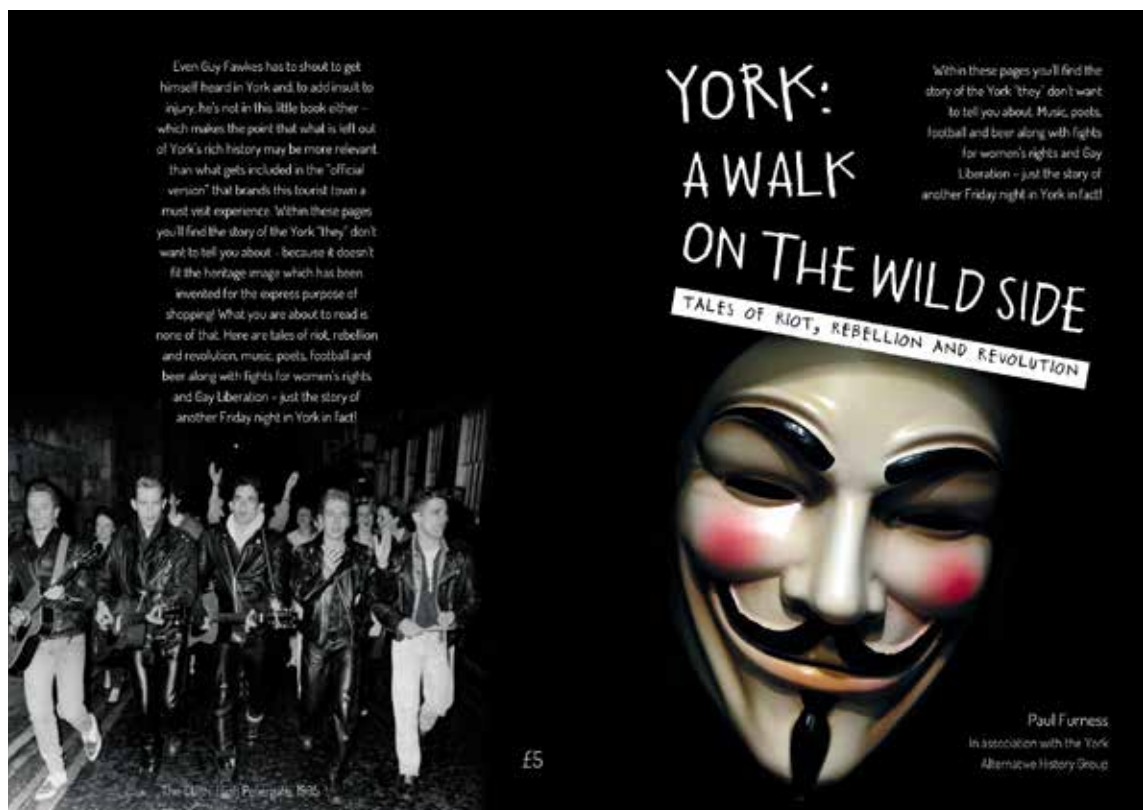
Paul Furness, author *York: A Walk on the Wild Side*

Paul Furness is a writer and radical historian of York and Leeds and is author of *York: A Walk on the Wild Side* (2014). Paul was involved in the 'How should heritage decisions be made?' research project and ran a number of history walks for the York: Living with History strand of the project. Paul wasn't able to attend the event but has contributed his reflections of the question 'what has heritage ever done for us?'

There's no future in nostalgia.....

When Bloodaxe, the important – and Northern – poetry publisher issued *Home and Away* by Steve Ellis in 1984, it included a poem called 'In the City Art Gallery, York' which, when Ellis was growing up in the city, was free for him – and the mothers with prams, romancing school kids and visiting families who populate his poem – to visit. Not so now. When York Museums Trust was set up by the Council in 2002, the new Chief Executive told a packed meeting of Friends of York Art Gallery that 'art should be free'. 13 years later it described itself as a 'cultural business' and cost £7.50 to get in – excluding, at one stroke, the likes of not just Ellis but Harland Miller, too. The son of a Rowntree's chocolate worker, Miller is not represented in the York collection despite being our only representative of the Young British Artists to be in the Tate and major overseas galleries – the Dutch love him. Having worked as a model for Sam Taylor Wood (better known these days as the director of *50 Shades of Grey*), his big, brash canvasses of northern towns based on the front covers of old Penguin books include, of course, one to his home town – 'York, So Good they Named it Once'. But this neglect is hardly surprising from a town that lets the birthplace – the old Lawrence Street Working Men's Club – of an important 19th c artist, Henry Scott Tuke, fall to rack and ruin.

York: A Walk on the Wild Side, Paul Furness developed this publication as part of the 'How should heritage decisions be made?' research project.



Down the road from here is the Mecca Bingo Club on Fishergate whose car park sits on the site of the Rialto cinema, an Art Deco gem which was ran by the father of John Barry – who wrote most of the James Bond theme tunes as well as ‘Midnight Cowboy’. The Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Louis Armstrong all played here. It was demolished, to make way for a car park, in 2003 – which was just as needless as the destruction of the John Bull pub on Layerthorpe back in 1994 to give a car sales showroom a forecourt. Years later, English Heritage owned up and said sorry – this was, indeed, a building which should have been saved.



John Bull Pub, controversially demolished in 1994 ‘to make way for a car sales forecourt’ Credit: York Explore



The Norman House, just off Stonegate. Sometimes entry is now prevented with a shut gate. Credit: Ian Tempest

Will the same apology be given in hindsight after Reynard’s Garage on Piccadilly goes to that great landfill in the sky sometime soon? Having turned down numerous requests from the Yorkshire Air Museum to turn this former aircraft factory, where the novelist Nevil Shute worked, into a city centre money spinner, the wreckers balls are ready to swing as I type. Add to this the slow erosion of the alleys and snickets – the Norman House off Stonegate and the one at the side of All Saints, North Street, both spring to mind – which are fast becoming gated communities, then times they are indeed a changing.

Step in Arts Council funding. When York Council responded to the clarion calls to revamp the salacious night time economy, it did so by kick starting an arts festival called Vespertine, a Latin word that York Press was obliged to translate (and thereby becoming instantly elitist) for its readers, informing them it was something which happened after dark. An event that hasn’t yet quite delivered the cultural goods, it was kicked into the grass by the underfunded and disliked by some Arts Barge project and the johnny come lately Great Yorkshire Fringe, set up in Parliament Street by a Yorkie working the West End as a one off taster. So its back to the barren landscape of ‘cultural business’ of filmed opera (nowhere big enough to put the real thing on in York) and women dressing as skivvies at the Treasure’s House or sallow youths as blood soaked victims of medieval torture at the York Dungeon. In fact, if you have a passion for dressing up as someone ripped limb from limb in a dubious past and telling porkies to visitors you can make a fortune in York – which is why the London tourist shops and buses advertising ‘London Necropolis Ghost Tours’ are turning up everywhere over 200 miles from where they should be! ‘Cultural business’ sits on ideological quick sand and, while Romans and Vikings rule the roost in York, the rest of the 2000 year old story of Yorkshire humanity gets sidelined and stultified through a toxic mixture of both ignorance and neglect. Gone is the fact that history is made in the here and now that we have to look after today for someone else’s tomorrow.

Shafted, too, is the richness of character that made York what it was but can no longer get into its Art Gallery without digging deep and forking out.

The sad reality of cultural business is that only the second rate sells. A good example of this is David Starkey appearing at the last York Literature Festival while the locally born Steve Ellis has never read or, even more depressing, that Jack Mapanje, the Malawi born poet who came to York as a refugee and has lived here for over 20 years, has not been asked to read also. There is a frustrating feeling that something has gone awry in York, that a wrong turning taken some time ago has led us up the yellow brick road to nowhere – that mindless place where mediocrity and the status quo are celebrated as time stands still (quite literally, in the case of York, as many of the historic clocks in the city streets no longer work!).

So what's to be done? For a start off we can own up to our failures – looking at what York hasn't got instead of tub thumping all the time about what it HAS got will improve the place no end. I'm reminded of, some time ago now, when the Belgian city of Bruges decided it was getting too frumpy for its own good and decided to up its tourist offer by using culture not as a business but as a creative way to bring the town (which is not so unlike York) into modern times. The council then decided to commission a number of well known contemporary artists to design a range of quality souvenirs which sold like hot cakes and brought visitors flocking. Another example of this new found cultural confidence came when playwright Martin McDonagh was asked to write the script for In Bruges - one of today's cult films. Imagine that in York! Sadly, no. The city needs its eyes prised wide open by its own past in order to invigorate its future. It's easily done. It also needs to loosen up and put music clubs like Fibbers back centre stage where they belong (it moved from the main street of Stonebow to the back street of Toft Green) and give events like York Pride prominence in the city centre instead of hiding it away at the back end of the Knavesmire. York needs to take a long, hard stare at itself. Only then can it cast of its fancy dress and leap into the real world of contemporary culture. Putting a hefty price tag on a shed load of crockery in the Art Gallery while selling racist golliwogs in Shambles gift shops is not going to do it. A braver approach is needed in order to move forward. After all, there is no future in nostalgia.

All dressed up as Vikings, crucial part of the educative function of York's archeology or 'fancy dress'? Credit: Barry Pitcher



Kit Heyam, LGBT History Month

Kit Heyam is Outreach Coordinator for York LGBT History Month. Kit worked with Helen and York's Alternative History to put on the Rainbow Plaques event in February 2015. The 'What has heritage ever done for us?' event was held on the same time as York Pride, Kit has instead contributed some reflections on the event's question.

When you think about York's heritage, do you see LGBT stories? If your first encounter with the heritage of this city is the story marketed by the tourism industry and packaged as a unified impression by popular understanding, the answer is almost certainly no. Those with the most power to shape impressions of York's history – those who work in tourism, marketing, museums – have largely focused on its civic and strategic importance rather than on the identities of the people who shaped and populated the city. While some organisations are making a concerted effort to shift this focus – notably the Castle Museum (who are actively expanding their LGBT-related collections) and York Explore (who are pursuing the idea of an LGBT archive) – others still, implicitly or explicitly, perceive LGBT history to be irrelevant to the heritage story they want to tell.



One of the cardboard plaques developed for the LGBT History Month Rainbow Plaques day.



Kit puts up a plaque on Rainbow Plaques day in February 2015.

In part, this relative absence of LGBT stories from what we instinctively consider to be 'York's heritage' reflects a general exclusion of marginalised groups. It is illuminating, for example, to compare York to Manchester, whose mainstream heritage story does include radical political movements (Chartism, the Peterloo massacre) as well as LGBT history (through Manchester's early role as a centre of northern gay life). By contrast, York's presentation of its heritage does not focus on ordinary working people; this gap could potentially be filled by the National Railway Museum, but it currently lacks substantial York-specific interpretation. However, it also reflects a wider problem facing proponents of LGBT history in every city: by modern conceptions at least, 'LGBT' is not something people do, but something they are. Actions make history books; identities may be included as ephemeral context, but are rarely foregrounded as integral.

As York LGBT History Month, our aim is therefore not just to highlight past actions that relate to LGBT activism or the direct expression of LGBT identities, but to reframe the writing of history as an exercise that customarily and necessarily records the whole selves of historical figures. Doing this

provides a valuable indication of continuity for marginalised groups whose history and existence has previously been denied or erased, and an important acknowledgement that actions are rarely entirely divisible from the identities of those who accomplish them. It's easy to argue that performative LGBT-related acts, such as the 1834 wedding of Anne Lister and Ann Walker at Holy Trinity Church on Goodramgate, should be included in the York guidebooks; it's harder, but no less important, to fight for the mention of W.H. Auden's sexual orientation as a matter of course when recording the fact he was born in a house on Bootham. Focusing only on LGBT history as it is manifested through events contributes to its ghettoization: to the perception of it as a separate strand of history, rather than as an aspect of all the other strands (political history, literary history, military history). It is crucial, too, to ensure that less positive aspects of York's LGBT history are incorporated into York's story alongside milestones of equality. When looking back at the people imprisoned in what is now the Castle Museum, we must remember the people imprisoned there for sodomy; when looking back at the psychiatric hospitals at Naburn, Clifton Park and Bootham, we must remember those treated there for identities or acts not accepted by their societies. Too often, when LGBT history is embraced, it becomes a selection of celebratory milestones on a linear progression towards full tolerance and equality; while it is important to celebrate our past, it is equally important (when recording the history of a still-relevant issue) to bear witness to past injustice and tragedy.

How might all this be achieved? It requires the involvement of a cross-section of heritage organisations – including, but not limited to, those nebulous and inaccessible tourism bodies. It requires York's LGBT stories to be consistently made visible, thus prompting the remembrance and recognition of others. It requires, too, encouraging people to widen their conception of 'history'. York LGBT History Month has promoted a focus on personal histories – our 'rainbow plaques' event, co-organised with this research project, was an example of this, as was the Castle Museum's call for objects during LGBT History Month 2015 – and we are keen that this should continue. Most of all, it requires a willingness from all parties not to dismiss LGBT history as irrelevant, but to think instead about the ways in which it might be relevant. If we continue to conceive of history as a stream of events, we are in danger of erasing the people – and the identities – that made those events happen.

Lisa Pickering, York Stories

Lisa, acting as a resident journalist for the event, wrote soon after her reflections on the event

My initial impression, on seeing the number of people attending the event, was surprise at how many people cared about the city's heritage enough to spend a Saturday afternoon discussing it. I should know this of course, but I spend a lot of my time engaging with heritage-related issues while sitting at a computer in a room on my own.

The speakers and discussion made me think more about the many perspectives on what 'our heritage' might be. There's clearly shared heritage, and a general acceptance that certain historic buildings are very obviously 'our heritage'. But I was surprised too to see how many people mentioned the Reynard's garage/Airspeed building, which is still, in many people's eyes, just an 'eyesore', not 'heritage' at all. But clearly in this room, at this event, its significance was recognised.

I appreciated in particular the 'long view' given by some of the speakers who have been working with and for York's heritage for many years. It has taken me years to develop an understanding of its many layers, and I'm still working on it. In my increasing awareness and engagement I've appreciated being able to email knowledgeable people with experience and perspective, like Alison Sinclair, when I wanted to include accurate and helpful information on yorkstories.co.uk to raise awareness of planning applications regarding heritage assets (unlisted, industrial, 'Local List' buildings). As was mentioned in the discussions, the work needed to increase engagement and participation needs people to do work which is generally unpaid, and requires energy and enthusiasm and time, and this perhaps needs more recognition and appreciation.



2007: Recording the remnants of buildings in the Hungate area, before demolition and redevelopment.
Credit: York Stories



On Carmelite Street, in the Hungate redevelopment area, in 2006. A large student accommodation block now occupies the site. Credit: York Stories Credit: York Stories

I'm often struck by the many different versions and perceptions of York. This was perhaps particularly obvious when listening to Michael Hayes, who expressed frustration at not enough happening. My perception, based on my interests and concerns, is often that too much is happening to keep up with.

In talking about the Local Plan, which will shape York in the future, Chris Steward emphasised what's seen by many as a crucial aspect – protection of the city's green belt. Not wanting to build on green fields is a recognition that the natural environment is also part of our heritage. But nature also creeps into our built-up areas on many of those 'brownfield' sites (often quite green), where we also often still have a few remnants of still under-appreciated industrial heritage. The clearance and redevelopment of brownfield sites has meant the loss of industrial heritage on a large scale. I tried to record on camera what was left of it in 2004, and since then.

As someone who has often wondered what past residents thought about their green fields being built on I liked Victoria Hoyle's suggestion that the archives should be 'about what is important now, and being more responsive', that they could be prioritised for accessibility on issues of current concern such as this. Reading the thoughts of earlier residents of the city in generations past is always illuminating and can help form a more measured perspective on changes in the present. I've appreciated the way the archives have been opened up and made more accessible, particularly online. The recognition that 'the city archives' aren't just in that one building but are spread across the city, held by individuals, seems an important point.

Helen Weinstein's contribution was the one I thought about the most on my way home, and later, as she conveyed clearly the difficulties of telling the stories of Clifford's Tower, discomfort with the way the building is portrayed, and the lack of understanding, and as she explored the depths and complexities of traumatic histories, and how to mark them. I was one of the York children who grew up here drawing pictures of Clifford's Tower as an iconic building representing the city's history when we were given projects in class. It wasn't until I was in my 30s, putting my first 'York Walks' photos online and finding on the BBC website an article on the history of Clifford's Tower entitled 'York's blackest day' that I began to fully recognise and appreciate the meaning and significance of the site. Helen's contribution deepened my awareness of the many layers and interpretations and perspectives.

As someone who has been making websites and putting information online for about fifteen years now I was particularly interested in the role the internet was seen to have, the hopes regarding how it could be used. I've been observing the online world long enough to know that you can't have one place as some kind of central repository, we have to accept that many different platforms and channels will be used. Also that much of the good and useful stuff has been made by people individually just getting on with it, their diverse heritage and their making in the now.

If we're wanting to influence heritage decisions then we do need to link up more effectively in the online world, beginning with more recognition of what's already there. There are some excellent online resources but the links between them often aren't there. Including links to sources used to be standard practice, but in an age of widespread 'sharing' I fear we're losing those connections, as resources that record heritage have images ripped from their context, histories adrift.

Talking with Danny Callaghan about issues involved in 'DIY heritage' and heritage activism was helpful in relation to my ongoing work at www.yorkstories.co.uk and with associated projects I was starting work on at the time of the event. Aspects of York's cultural heritage and recent history still seem quiet/absent/invisible behind more dominant narratives, but it's up to us to record them. I'll continue to do my bit in 'DIY heritage' and in information sharing on issues related to local engagement and the planning process where I can.

Things have changed and shifted so much in the last few years in terms of increasing engagement with heritage-related issues, and I hope that this momentum can be sustained and built on, with similar events in the future.

Acknowledgements

The 'What has heritage ever done for us?' event took place in the context of the 'How should heritage decisions be made?' project. The full research team is:

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Paul Manners Director, National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

David Robinson Technical Editor and Musician

John Stanley Writer and Electronic Musician

Martin Swan Musician and Educator

Jennifer Timothy Senior Building Conservation Officer, Leicester City Council

Rachael Turner Director, MadLab and The Ghosts of St Pauls (HLF All Our Stories)

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York:

**What has
heritage
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