



OPENING DOORS

Newsletter of the York Mansion House Restoration Project



YORK
MANSION
HOUSE

In this issue

Updates on restoration work carried out over the last two months including:

Work undertaken to reveal a previous colour of the Mansion House exterior.

The focus on stripping back later additions to building to reveal the earlier features.

A hidden room found behind the back stairs.

The ongoing work in the basement and some interesting Roman and Viking finds.

An update on our first Hard Hat Tours and details of how you can join the upcoming tours.

The recent successes within our Oral History project.



Image: York Camera Club

Welcome to the third edition of the 'Opening Doors' newsletter.

If you've passed by the Mansion House recently, you will have noticed things happening at the front of the house. The scaffolding is up and information boards have been fixed to the hoardings.

Out of sight behind the blue doors, there's a lot more going on.

In this edition, we have an update on the renovation work, some interesting finds from the basement, another glimpse of our 'behind the scenes' education activities and a reminder of our Hard Hat tours - a chance to see inside the house for yourself as work progresses.



Construction Work Update

Over the past two months, our contractors William Anelay Ltd., have been hard at work both inside and outside the house.

Externally, scaffolding has been erected to enable Anelays to start cleaning the stonework by hand, scraping off surface dirt and loose paint. This has allowed samples to be taken for a closer analysis of previous colour schemes. It seems that at one time part of the house was painted duck egg blue! We'll bring you the full results in future editions.

Inside, work has focused on stripping back later additions to reveal the earlier features and original layout of the Mansion House. In particular:

- The 1960s kitchen flooring (asbestos compound tiles on a waterproof bitumen layer) has been completely removed, revealing Yorkshire stone flags with traces of red and yellow paint. The paintwork is probably 19th-century in date, but the stones may have been re-used from an earlier floor surface.
- The famous 'curved door' in the hallway (a 1999 addition) has been removed, along with the early 20th-century fire screen. This has really opened up the area, emphasising the grandeur of the staircase when viewed from the hall, as originally intended.
- On the first floor, 1860s additions to the back staircase have been stripped back to reveal a 'hidden room' behind the stair.

The next stage will involve structural repairs to the State Room ceiling. Scaffolding has been built to the full height of the room, to support the ceiling before work begins. Access will be from the floor of the Lord Mayor's apartment above.



Image: York Camera Club



Image: York Camera Club



Image: York Camera Club



Basement Finds

Due to the historical importance of the Mansion House site, York Archaeological Trust (YAT) were asked to carry out a watching brief in the basement area. Overall, they found a surprisingly 'clean' site, suggesting it had been well cleared before the house was built. However, a few intriguing finds did emerge, including:

- Part of the base of a flagon, which may be Roman in date
- A fragment of Viking Age pottery identified as Torksey ware
- A collection of animal bones and a shell, which appeared to have been deliberately placed in a wall cavity
- Wooden stakes placed vertically across the site before construction of the house, perhaps serving as a 'raft' to protect the building from groundwater, with a layer of cobbles for drainage.



Flagon Base



Torksey ware

Hard Hat Tours



Our first Hard Hat Tours, on the 18th February, were fully booked and proved a great success.

Participant comments included:

"Found the tour very interesting and the guide definitely knew what he was talking about! Would highly recommend this tour!"

"Good to see work ongoing. Our city will have a wonderful building"

Further tours will be held on 2nd April, 9th June, 29th July, 12th & 27th August and 23rd & 28th September.

All tours start from the Guildhall at 11am, 12:30pm and 2pm each day. Places are limited to 12 per tour and sturdy footwear is advised.

To book your place, contact Visit York - by phone on 01904 550099, by email at info@visityork.org, or in person at 1 Museum Street, York.



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Oral History Project Update

The target number of interviewees for the Oral History Project has now been reached - many thanks to all those who came forward.

Van Wilson, who is leading the project, will soon begin the process of incorporating the information obtained into a book. We also intend to make some extracts available on our website.

Meanwhile, if you have any memories or photographs of the Mansion House that you'd like to share, then do please contact us. We'd love to hear from you.

Restoration Fund

We are grateful to everyone who has already donated to our Restoration Fund. These contributions are helping to bridge the gap between the funding received from the Heritage Lottery and the actual cost of the Opening Doors project.

A list of major donors and grants received to date can be found on the Mansion House website.

Any donations, large or small are always welcome. For further information, please email or call us.

