

SNICKELWAYS

The City is honeycombed by a maze of hidden alleyways, all with colourful stories. The Snickelways enable you to travel back in time through some of York's most picturesque backwaters

Mark Jones coined the word "Snickelway" in 1983 to describe all the picturesque alleys in his book, which is beautifully illustrated with fine line drawings.

The word is made up of three existing words: -

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| <u>Snicket</u> | - | passage between walls or fences |
| <u>Ginnel</u> | - | passage through building |
| Alleyway | - | narrow street or lane |

Other dialect words for Snickelway include:

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| Jiggers | - | Liverpool |
| Backcracks | - | St. Helens |
| Opes | - | Plymouth |
| Wynds | - | Co. Durham/Scotland |
| Twitchells | - | Hertfordshire |
| Jitties | - | Leicestershire |
| Twittens | - | Tunbridge Wells |

Highlights of the tour include: -

BOOTHAM BAR

In York "all the Streets are Gates, all the Gates are Bars and all the bars are Pubs"
'Gate' is from the Viking 'Gata' meaning a street; 'Bar' is French 'Barre' meaning a barrier or toll bar; and 'Pub' is of course a Public House.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL First Snickelway on tour

Name derives from - Either 1. Refers to Bootham Bar, 2. Or to a gateway into Minster Walls, 3. A prison, where Hole in the Wall pub now is, in which prisoners had to beg for food through a hole in the wall. 4.Or refers to punishment of immuring naughty monks, priests and nuns for sexual misdemeanours in Middle Ages. It is said they were walled up in a tiny cell in the Minster prison near west door of cathedral. (Alternative title of alley is 'Peculiar Lane' because it led to the ecclesiastical peculiar or exempt jurisdiction of Minster Yard), 5. Minster's civil prison where prisoners were not fed, but had to beg for food through a window or hole in the wall. 6. Pub adjoining Minster called 'Hole in Wall', which it is said you could get into during the service via a new blocked up doorway or 'hole in the wall' to get a drink.

COFFEE YARD

Named after a late 17thC coffee house down here, first one in York. But it was a printers area in 18thC, hence 'Printer's Devil' which may represent youngest apprentice in a printer's workshop, still called printer's devil!

BARLEY HALL

The 14thC 'Hostel of Nostell Priory' built 1360-1 as the Town House of Prior of Nostell, to stop the Monks going out to sample the nightlife! Later in 15thC leased to Alderman Snawsell. After the Reformation a right of way grew up through what had been screens passage of hall. Now being restored to its late 15thC appearance by York Archaeological Trust, though only a quarter of original timber survives.

GRAPE LANE

Was once "GROPE c . . t"! Lane, the mediaeval red light district, much frequented by the lesser clergy. The mediaeval deanery main gate stood where Freshney's Hotel now stands looking right into it all! Here stood St. Benet's Church, which owned many of the run down houses of ill repute in Grope Lane.

FINKLE STREET

Crooked Street from Germanic 'Winkel' - corner. Had a bend and narrowing on it to control passage of cattle etc. out of St. Sampson's Square (the market). Also known as 'Mucky Pig Lane' as led to Swinegate, the pig market. Or 'Mucky Peg Lane' - after a dirty lady

MAD ALICE LANE

Alice was hung in 1823 for poisoning her husband - she pleaded insanity but to no avail. Some say Madam Alice Lane ! Alternatively 'Waiting Women's Lane'!

UPPER HORNPOT LANE

The street of the Hornworkers and their rubbish pits. Also known as Cut Throat Lane! A lot of empty Mediaeval purses found in Mediaeval rubbish pits here and in Mad Alice Lane – relics of mediaeval muggings!.

COLLEGE STREET

After St. William's College, founded 1461 to control activities of chantry priests who served in Minster. Also known as 'Little Alice Lane', perhaps after a friend of chantry priests slim enough to slip in through the windows for nocturnal visits!

TREASURER'S HOUSE

Feb 1953 Henry Martindale an 18 year old apprentice heating engineer claims he heard a weird sound, faint at first, but then louder 'like a wireless coming though the wall; then it became apparent it was a horn being blown. Then he saw Roman legionaries in twos led by a horseman in cellar, marching through, all cut off at knees! He was fixing central heating pipes, fell off his ladder onto his backside. He hid in a corner on seeing ghosts, and was off work for 2 weeks with shock (this I have heard all first hand from Harry). He cannot have been lying as he later became a policeman. Believe it if you wish! Story came to prominence 1971 due to his description of insignia and uniforms of legionaries, Roman road found 18" beneath cellar and the Tourist boom!

BEDERN

Means 'House of Prayer'. Founded 1349 to control activities of Vicars Choral of Minster who had reputation for 'colourful nocturnal habits'! Even had a bridge across road to prevent them getting in street. Chapel and Dining Hall still survive - latter now a guildhall, but formerly a warehouse for Wrights Pork Pie Factory.

ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH

Goes back at least to Doomsday, and incorporates Roman sandstone blocks. Was closed at Reformation and in 18thC became a brothel, with a stable adjoining - the original 'Park and Ride' facility in York?!

KING'S SQUARE

The cat on rooftops is the trademark by York Architect, Tom Adams. When he was an architectural student he drew a tom Cat on his designs and now he puts cats on buildings he is pleased with

SHAMBLES

Street of Butchers - point out benches (flesh - shamels = Shambles), hooks etc. and Butcher's guildhall. In 18thC overhanging houses cut back to let in more air and light, and reduce fire risk; roofs put over to protect meat from rain and slops from chamber pots

WHIP-MA-WHOP-MA-GATE

'Whitna Whatna Gate' - was a street! Shortest street in City!?
Or could refer to whipping of adulterers etc. in 16th/17thC.

BLACK HORSE PASSAGE (Presumably named after a pub)

A short cut from Fossgate/Walmgate with 28 pubs to red light district. Black Horse Passage typical of the many alleys and the warren of slums in this area until cleared after First World War, and Stonebow driven through. Particularly in late 19thC was an area of poverty, crime and prostitution. This is said to be why the more respectable homes of Fossgate had high brick walls to separate them from Black Horse Passage.

In 1855 a scandal broke in York. Inspector Turner, in charge of the night shift in York's police force, was discredited, as it came to light that he was lessee of several houses of ill repute in the Stonebow buildings area and so was living off immoral earnings. When questioned these 'Nymphs of the Pave' revealed that 1 in 6 of their identifiable clients were policemen - often on night duty! One policeman arrested on Aldwark for being drunk and disorderly, absenting himself from his beat, entering a house of ill repute not in discharge of his duty, and being improperly dressed at the time of his arrest!