

ENRICHING YORK

York Civic Trust's City
Enhancement Fund





Why do so many people feel passionate about York?

Words like heritage and beauty, history and archaeology always come to mind. Much of the pleasure that York gives is appreciated simply by walking round, feeling the ambience, admiring the streetscape, buildings and public spaces. Heritage, though, is as much about the future as the past.

Since 1946 York Civic Trust has worked in partnership to preserve the past to enhance the present and improve the future. The City Enhancement Fund, created by Professor Sir Ron Cooke, and celebrating ten years in 2023, has made visible improvements across the City - with the help of vital and generous sponsorship.

Our projects to enhance public spaces, have been able to make a tangible difference in locations as far afield as Acomb, Clifton, Poppleton and Tang Hall as well as in the City Centre. This is something to be celebrated. Now we are taking the opportunity to look forward to what more can be achieved, in projects large or small. What improvements would enhance your environment and have a positive impact on your lives?

Your Trust needs YOU! You can help with ideas and suggestions, with your skills and interest as volunteer project managers, with your sponsorship both financial and in-kind, or with opportunities for collaboration. Together we can make a difference.

Elizabeth Heaps
(Chair of City Enhancement Fund)



The way York looks and feels, its “ambience”, is vitally important - its subtle combination and exciting juxtaposition of architectural styles, distinctive streetscapes, open spaces and vistas, diverse materials and embroidered details. This unique context underlies the city’s popularity for residents and the millions of visitors, and it’s fundamental to the city’s future. But it is easily ignored and, often unwittingly, abused.

The way York looks and feels, its “ambience”...

It is an enduring challenge to protect, conserve, enhance and sustain what we value most about York. Since its foundation, the Trust has accepted this challenge. In recent years the Trust's City Enhancement Fund, created with generous contributions from Civic Trust members and the public has reinvigorated the city through many restorations and embellishments, such as Exhibition Square, the West Offices railings and gates, the Kings Manor coat of arms, the Fossgate Banner, the Foss Bridge lamps, the restored “Bile Beans” wall, the new star on the Stonegate banner, and several historic plaques. And reducing street clutter and A-boards, for example.

Getting on with these important tasks requires constant surveillance, planning and, above all, cash. The Trust's plan for working through its City Enhancement Fund is bold, timely and vital. So, congratulations to the Trust for continuing to carry the banner of York forward. Please, let's all support it!

(Sir Ron Cooke, York Civic Trust's City Enhancement Fund)



Established 1946

In 1946 York Civic Trust was established by the people of York to preserve, sustain and enhance our city. Green and urban spaces alongside places of historic interest and beauty were recognised as being key to residents' cultural life and well-being. From the outset, in collaboration with many others, the Civic Trust has raised funds, delivered projects and invested in regular maintenance to meet these objectives.



Recognising those elements of York that are an important part of people's lives and ensuring that they are maintained and even restored has always been a priority. Maintaining much loved signage, instantly recognisable building features and the emblems that demonstrate the standing of the city on a national level has sat alongside providing new city enhancing features – trees along the River Foss, a fountain outside York Art Gallery or a statue of Constantine beside York Minster.

The Civic Trust also recognised the intrinsic value of buildings having new lives and not being removed from the city's streets. Churches, townhouses and medieval halls have all been repaired, restored and found new lives across the city.



“These men have a right to be remembered.”

When we think of war memorials in Britain, it is often the list of the names they record that is the most hard hitting: the sheer scale of how many names, the same surnames indicating multiple tragedies amongst families, and the bluntness of a name without insight of the person beyond the name, their character, the way they smile and laughed.

The £18,000 repairs the Trust oversaw for the Acomb War Memorial in 2018 were therefore one of our most emotive projects in recent times. More so as it was completed just in time for that year's Remembrance Sunday – marking the centenary of the end of WW1.

The Acomb war memorial was sympathetically cleaned, and stonework repairs effected, including a re-carving of the WW2 'Book of Remembrance', of which many of the names had worn away.

War memorials are often at the heart of local communities, as shown by the 400 people who attended a special open air Remembrance Sunday service that year at the memorial in Acomb. Amongst them was Estra Eastwood. Her brother, Kenneth Woodall, died in 1941 aged 18 when his ship was sunk by a German U-Boat. His name is inscribed along 78 other servicemen on the memorial's 'Book of Remembrance'. On hearing that the Trust was set to restore the memorial, “I was over the moon,” said Estra. “These men have a right to be remembered.”



“The Police are instructed to apprehend anyone playing with or dirtying the water”

For many of us Clifton Green is simply that fenced, grassy area we drive past on our way to the city or home. How many of us knew it had a charming historic horse trough, complete with tiled roof canopy on it?

Local residents are of course more ‘in the know’, and through their Clifton Green Management Committee contacted the Trust to see what might be done to give the green a general uplift and in particular the trough.

The improvements included removing weeds and excess foliage, repairing tiles, and repainting the wooden fence that runs around the perimeter of the green.

The trough itself is listed (Grade II) and dates to 1883. It was built due to the generous donation of Maria Husband, who lived locally. Today it is a reminder of the agricultural tradition of what was Clifton village, now very much consumed within the York urban area.

The project saw a detailed and deep conservation clean of the stonework and the reinstatement of a water supply. This included a metal sign that hangs above the trough: “The police are instructed to apprehend anyone playing with or dirtying the water”. Testament to historic misdeeds, no doubt!



‘Raised by Friendship’

History is underpinned by the act of remembering, caring enough to recall. A family tragedy on the River Ouse in August 1830, which led to the loss of six children aged from 6-19 of one York-family.

The Tragedy stirred so much emotive consternation within the people of York at the time that a memorial grave was constructed for the victims at St Lawrence Church, all paid for by public subscription. While regrettably the city's two rivers have continued to bring personal and public tragedy on many times since 1830, the Rigg Monument – named after the family of the victims - fell out of public awareness over time. It consequently became damaged, derelict and overgrown.



This was until Martin Marsh, the son of the former vicar at St Lawrence contacted the Civic Trust in 2015 to see what might be done. Just as the original moment brought York people together, the £24,000 cost of the repairs was shouldered by two York property developers, donations from Members of the Civic Trust, and the wider general public.



“A Wonderful Experience”

Given its antiquity and extensive ‘cast list’ of historical characters associated with York, it is perhaps surprising that the city has only four figurative statues. Three of these – William Etty, George Leeman and Queen Victoria – are made of stone and by sculptor George W. Milburn; the fourth – Constantine the Great – was commissioned by the Trust and created in bronze by Phillip Jackson in 1998.

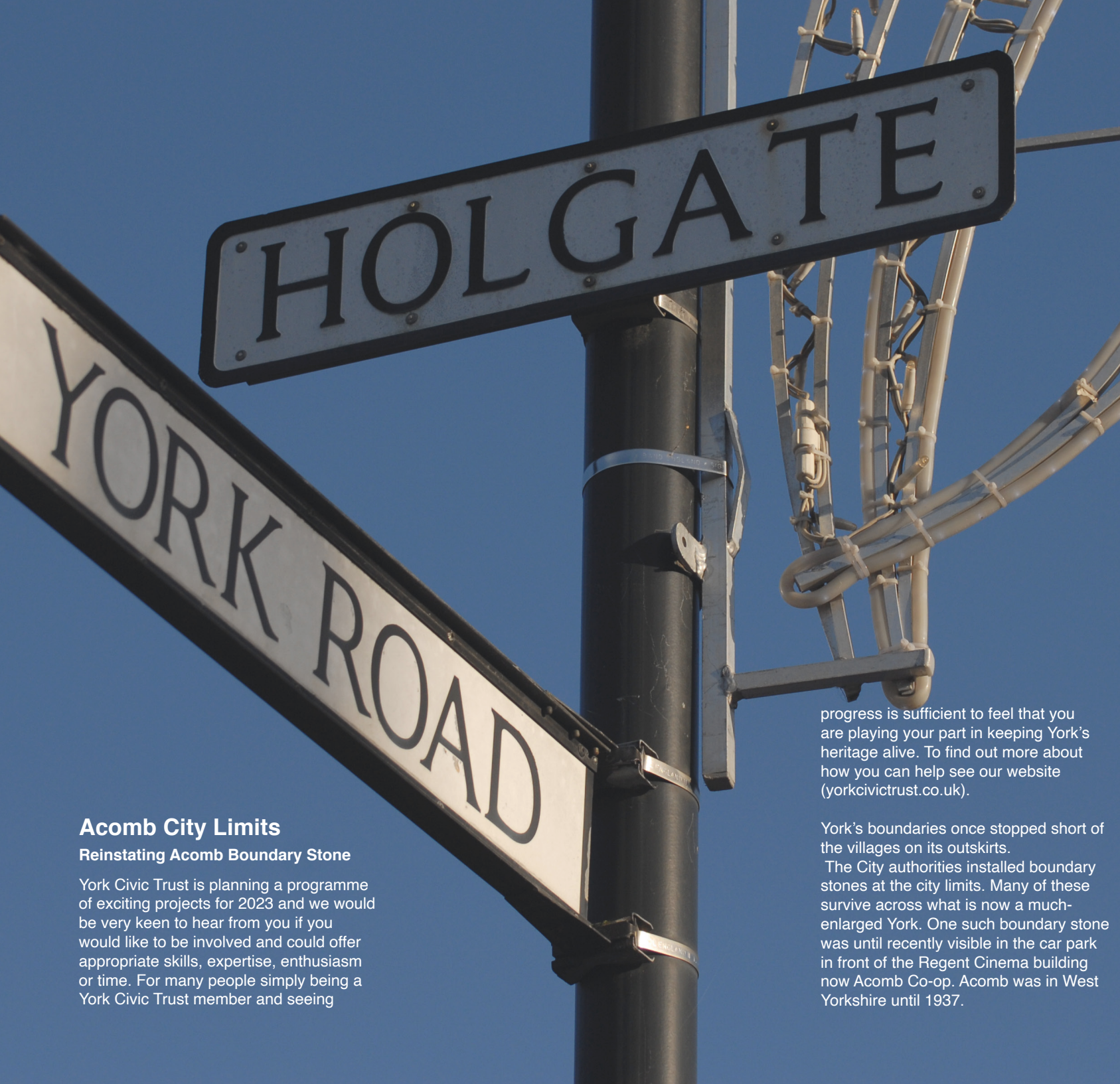


Be they bronze or stone, such statues require regular conservation repairs, especially given our city's traffic congestion creating air pollution, the inclement Yorkshire weather, and temptation too strong for some to remove Constantine's sword!

The three Milburn statues were given a conservation treatment in 2018 by Alaina Schmisser of Rook Heritage Consulting. The statues each presented unique conservation challenges given their locations- particularly Etty, who is located directly adjacent to a fountain and has a historic shelter coat!

Alaina found the most rewarding part of conserving the Milburn statues to be the interaction with members of the public, many of whom were curious about the conservation process and made repeat visits as they were invested in seeing the outcome. “A lot of conservation occurs in laboratories or behind the scenes, so having the opportunity to share the history of the statues and their material issues with interested visitors from the local community was a wonderful experience”.





Acomb City Limits

Reinstating Acomb Boundary Stone

York Civic Trust is planning a programme of exciting projects for 2023 and we would be very keen to hear from you if you would like to be involved and could offer appropriate skills, expertise, enthusiasm or time. For many people simply being a York Civic Trust member and seeing

progress is sufficient to feel that you are playing your part in keeping York's heritage alive. To find out more about how you can help see our website (yorkcivictrust.co.uk).

York's boundaries once stopped short of the villages on its outskirts.

The City authorities installed boundary stones at the city limits. Many of these survive across what is now a much-enlarged York. One such boundary stone was until recently visible in the car park in front of the Regent Cinema building now Acomb Co-op. Acomb was in West Yorkshire until 1937.



The Civic Trust responding to local residents and councillors would like to reveal this hidden piece of Acomb's history. Modern tarmac will need to be removed and a new setting made for the stone alongside some interpretation to make sure it is not forgotten. York Civic Trust will be working with the landowner, City of York Council and local history groups. To complement this project the Civic Trust and its members are looking to survey and record nearly 100 boundary stones that are spread across York.

Information to find out how you can contribute to this project in any way can be found at the end of this booklet or on our website (yorkcivictrust.co.uk).

Fade To Blue.

Until 1977 a cooling tower once stood on the bend of the River Foss. It was famously recorded in L.S. Lowry's paintings of York and was linked to the city's electricity power station on Foss Island Road by a small iron hump-backed bridge. The bridge allowed power station staff to access the site of a cooling tower – now a nature reserve without a 20-minute walk involving crossing the river further up at Layerthorpe Bridge.

Originally constructed by the Monk Bridge Engineering Company in 1931 and seen by hundreds of thousands of people each year using Foss Islands Road this remnant of York's industrial past needs renovation. The bridge last painted green but now faded to blue is rusting. York Civic Trust will work with City of York Council, Northern Powergrid, the River Foss Society and the Environment Agency to commission a feasibility study to refurbish the bridge and hopefully undertake the required work in 2023.

The bridge has been painted a number of colours over its 90 years and the Civic Trust are interested in any photos or views on what colour the bridge painted for the next chapter of its life.





In 2023 the Civic Trust will be working with many partners to celebrate amongst others the life of JB Morrell one of the most influential people in the development of 20th century York and to revitalise plaques on the Roman Column outside York Minster and hard painted early plaques across the city centre. If you have a person who you think should be celebrated with a plaque then please do explore our website (yorkcivictrust.co.uk) we are always happy to collaborate to celebrate the lives of the York's trailblazers.



Celebrating The Lives of York's Trailblazers.

Over 150 plaques celebrate people and places of York. Most are in the city centre with others stretching as far as Amsterdam. Starting in 1950's York Civic Trust each year has installed new plaques and now and again a statue, a fountain or even a Roman column. We are proud to have been the first city to have installed a rainbow plaque celebrating LGTBQ history by recognising the marriage of Ann Lister and Ann Walker at Holy Trinity Church on Goodramgate in 1834.

After a while, often several decades, our plaques require refurbishing. Some of the first were hand painted on wooden panels and the weather has taken its toll. Others have survived much longer than the fixings used to secure them.





Street Name Plates

Street name plates have been used in Britain since at least the 1630's. Each era brings a new style, font, material and even colour to naming streets. Street signs can also be unexceptional and not reflective of the place that they are part of. A recent regeneration project in Lambeth to replace neglected and damaged signs adopted for a font – Albertus - which had been designed by a local graphic designer, Berthold Wolpe, for all of its new signs.

Whilst York cannot boast signs dating back to the 17th century (that we know of) it has many signs that are very personal

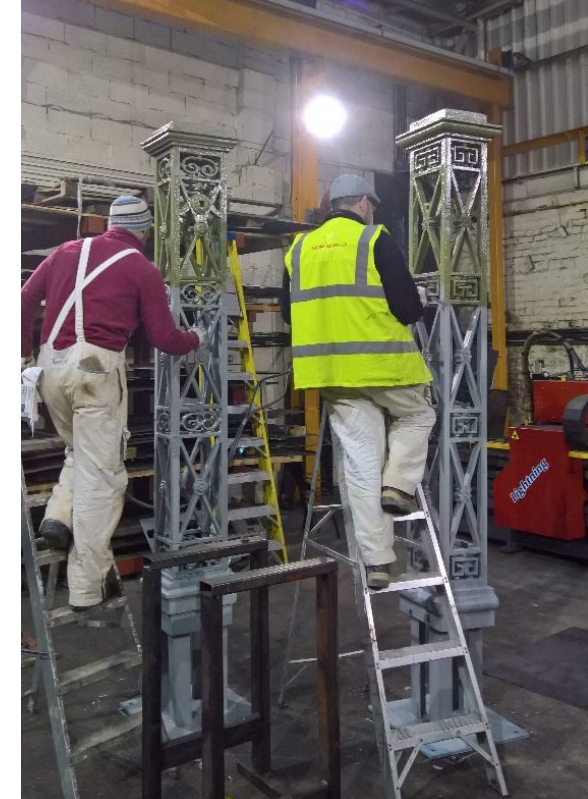
– hand painted in a particular font – and spread across the city. Many of these are now fading and in need of refurbishment. Following appeals from our own members and York residents the Civic Trust has agreed to explore working to restore and maintain these signs over the next few years. As a UNESCO designated creative city with a strong tradition of craft excellence the Civic Trust will work closely with designers, local historians and traditional sign writers to replenish York's historic street signs.

If you know of a hand painted street name board then please do let us know.



Join in – Do you have skills, time and experience to offer?

Our programme of projects and on-going maintenance runs throughout the year and if you think you have the appropriate skills and experience or time and enthusiasm to be part of our programme then we would be happy to hear from you.



To complement the Acomb boundary stone project in 2023 members of York Civic Trust will be helping to survey and record the nearly 100 boundary stones that since the medieval period have outlined the extent of the ever-growing city and areas within it. The boundary stones are spread across the city and maybe something that you walk past everyday and have not realised what it is.

In order to be able to undertake our repainting of the painted street boards and plaques York Civic Trust will be asking members of the public to identify examples across the city in need of some refreshment. If you are a skilled sign writer or are training to learn these skills then the Civic Trust would be very happy to hear from you. There are many other opportunities to be part of the Civic Trust's City Enhancement Fund in the coming years. The best way to find out how is to join the Civic Trust and help support our work.





For over 75 years, people like you have played their part in protecting and caring for York's heritage through the work of York Civic Trust. Thanks to your support, we have been able to protect, conserve and sustain some of our city's most-loved heritage.

York Civic Trust's City Enhancement Fund has a proven track record of delivering projects that add to the historic significance and ambience of the city. The success of these projects has only been made possible through the generosity of people and organisations in York making donations or raising funds to support our work.

The Civic Trust has the long-term future of the city at its heart. The city of the future will be for the young people of today and future generations to enjoy. If you are considering a Gift in your Will in the future and would like to be able to ensure that future generation enjoy the city that is close to your heart we would be very happy to talk to you about the options that are available to you to support the work of the Civic Trust now and in the future. Please feel free to contact Andrew Morrison, Chief Executive on info@yorkcivictrust.co.uk.

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Minerva Statue repainted in 2014 by York Civic Trust.