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1st Anniversary

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Editorial

This Spring issue marks the 1st year anniversary of The Yorkshire Journal. It has become very popular, read by thousands of people throughout Britain and overseas. With all the support and encouragement given to us by our readers, we now continue into 2011 and hope you enjoy reading about more places and are able to head out and see some of them first-hand and discover just how beautiful Yorkshire really is. The daylight will soon be approaching twelve hours and with days increasing in length, now is the time of year to get out and about as the countryside begins to bloom. So with this in mind, highlighted in this edition are places to explore for all those itching to get out and about and shake off the winter blues. These have been combined with some indoor places just in case the splendid spring weather turns into April showers.

So first is a visit to the Roman Bath at York to discover why a visit to the baths was so important to the Romans. Our next story goes inside the Hull and East Riding Museum, Hull, to look at the Prehistoric wooden boatmen with their wooden boat. Then to St. Agatha’s Parish Church, Easby to look at the “Labour of the Months” which are medieval wall paintings. Following this is a history of Scarborough church and why hundreds of visitors from all over the world make a pilgrimage there every year. Our last feature is a visit to the city of Troy, which is a turf maze on the Howardian Hills.

In the Spring issue:

- The Roman Bath at York
  Sarah Harrison discovers what Roman life was like in York and why a visit to the baths was so important. She combines her visit with looking at other Roman sites in York.

- The Intriguing Roos Carr Model Wooden Boat Figures Found Near Withernsea, East Yorkshire
  Jeremy Clark looks at these very special Prehistoric wooden model figures of boatmen with their boat which have recently been restored.

- The Labours of the Months in St Agatha’s Parish Church, Easby near Richmond, North Yorkshire
  Julian Giles takes a look at these unique medieval wall paintings depicting rural agricultural life, termed the Labours of the Months in St. Agatha’s Parish Church Easby. They appear to be the only ones to have survived and he explains their enormous importance.

- St. Mary’s First Church, Scarborough, North Yorkshire
  This is the story of the first church at Scarborough up to the present day and how the town grew up around it. Find out what makes the church so important that hundreds of visitors from all over of the world make a pilgrimage every year.

- A Visit to the City of Troy, a Turf Maze near Dalby in North Yorkshire
  Marcus Grant makes a visit to the Howardian Hills to see the only historical turf maze in Yorkshire and finds out about its history.

But there is much more to these articles, please read and enjoy them. We welcome your comments.

Andrew Simpson
THE ROMAN BATH AT YORK

Discover what Roman life was like in York and why a visit to the baths was so important

By Sarah Harrison

The Romans realised the strategic importance of York where the rivers Ouse and Foss meet, so the 9th legion built a fortress on the north-east banks of the river Ouse in about AD71 when Vespasian was the Roman Emperor. For the next 300 years York, which the Romans called Eboracum a Roman version of the Celtic name meaning ‘the place where yew trees grow’ became a principal military base and town in Roman Britain. The Roman town grew up outside the fortress on the south side of the river Ouse. It was at York that Constantine the Great was hailed and proclaimed emperor by his troops in AD306 for it was from here that he was successful in leading his troops to victory over the barbarians north of Hadrian’s Wall.

A modern statue now stands in front of the Minster to commemorate the event but to most people Constantine will always be remembered for being the first to tolerate Christian worship and the first Christian Emperor of Rome.

The Discovery of the Roman Bath House

The fortress supported a garrison of 6000 legionaries and had its own bathhouse inside the south-eastern defences. Its remains were discovered in 1930 when renovation work began beneath a tavern to expand the cellar in St. Sampson’s Square. In 1970 the name Mail Coach Inn was changed to ‘Roman Bath Tavern’, and a glass floor was put over the remains of the bathhouse providing a view. This glass floor was replaced in 2000 by a small museum which is below ground and accessed through the Roman Bath Pub.

The bathhouse was possibly erected sometime during the early second century AD and was used exclusively by the soldiers. If fact it was not just a place to wash, but also to socialise and to play sports and games. In our terms it was a ‘leisure centre.’

Left: Statue of Constantine the Great in front of York Minster
**Taking a Bath, Roman Style**

The Romans did not use soap to wash with they sweated dirt out by vigorous exercise and spending time in the caldarium, the hot steam room. The remains of the Roman Bath mainly consist of the hot room and visitors can see tiles on the floor that would have supported the floor and allowed the hot air to circulate underneath. It worked like this; the floor was raised above the level of the foundations by about four feet, supported by columns of specially made tiles. This gave space for the hot air from the furnaces to circulate under the floor to heat the room above. The hot air then flowed up through flues in the walls and went out through vents in the roof of the building. In this way the atmosphere of the hot room was heated both from beneath the floor and behind the walls. Since the floor got very hot the soldiers had to wear sandals with wooden soles to prevent scorching their feet and had to avoid touching the walls with their bare hands.

*Above: Remains of the Roman Bath*

*Right: Part of a tessallated tiling pattern mosaic*

The next step was to have oil rubbed into their bodies by slaves who would then scrape it and take all the sweat and dirt off, followed by a cold plunge and massage. What is left of the probable cold plunge bath room in the museum contains a reconstruction of a section of floor from the adjoining hot steam room using original materials recovered from the site. This demonstrates the height of the original bath-house floor above the hypocaust heating system, and also shows an example of the tessallated tiling pattern mosaic which would have covered the original hot steam room floor. The furnace room for the bathhouse is beyond the perimeter of the Roman Bath Pub to the north and not visible. In most bathhouses these rooms were nothing more than lean-to structures, built of timber and hidden away from the main entrance to the baths. Slaves were required to maintain a high temperature for the hot rooms and approximately 40 slaves were needed to keep the baths running.

The Romans left York some time around 410AD. Then both the fortress and town, like most of Roman Britain fell into a period of decay and decline. A new invader fell upon the town; the Anglo-Saxons but that’s another story.

*Left: Plan of the Roman Bath-House*
See the remains of the Bath and finds in the Museum

On display in the museum are finds from the excavation, artefacts, a modern replica of a Roman soldier’s armour and weapons. Two tiles clearly show impressions of nails from the sandal of a Roman who trod on it before the tile had hardened after being made. Another two tiles bear the stamps of the legions that were stationed in York, the sixth and more famous ninth. There are fascinating and often humorous facts and figures about Roman life in York scattered about the museum on placards.

Above: The tile on the left bears stamp of a legion that was stationed in York. The tile on the right shows indents of nails from the sandal of a Roman who trod on it

Above right: This tile is one of several found in York that bears the mark of the ninth legion that helped build the Roman fortress of Eboracum. In the second century the legion vanishes from the historical record. This tile is on display in the Yorkshire Museum

Right: Roman toilet paper, a sponge-on-a-stick

Left: Illustration showing Roman Soldiers using a sponge-on-a-stick as toilet paper

Left: At certain times a re-enactor Roman Soldier stands outside the Roman Bath Pub on guard duty with his spear and shield.

Right: Roman oil lamps in the Bathhouse Museum

In the pub they will give you a free postcard showing the remains of the Roman Bath and the pub with your drink to remind you of your visit.

Right: Postcard of the Roman Bath
Other Roman Sites in York

The headquarters of the Roman legionary fortress was on the site of the Minster and substantial remains were uncovered during restoration work, including a 31ft. high column, which has been re-erected near the south entrance to the Minster. Other Roman sites that have been excavated include the remains a Roman Temple, near the foot of Lendal Bridge, and the site of a Roman bridge over the River Ouse. Some remains of the Roman city walls can be seen between Monk Bar and the Merchant Adventurer’s Hall and a more substantial section can be seen between Museum Gardens and the Central Library, together with the Roman Multangular Tower which has 10 sides and stands almost 30ft high.

Outside the city walls are the remains of a huge Roman cemetery near The Mount. Time Team, the popular Channel 4 Archaeology series visited York in 1999 and excavated a site in the garden of what is now the Royal York Hotel to prove that the cemetery extended as far as the hotel garden. This they did by uncovering three skeletons belonging to a young man, a mature woman and a four year-old girl and they also found evidence of a large mausoleum.

A large number of Roman finds are on display at the Yorkshire Museum including a marble sculpture of Constantine’s head, roughly double life size. It was probably made just after his accession and is believed to be the earliest portrait of him in the Roman world.

The Roman Bath Pub and Museum are located in the north corner of St. Samson’s Square, near the Minster and there is an entrance charge for the museum.

Above: A 31ft. high column, re-erected near the south entrance to the Minster

Right: The Roman Multangular Tower

Right: The head of Constantine, the Great, found in York, the original is roughly double life size. On display in the Yorkshire Museum

Left: Rome York, the fortress is on the north-east banks of the river Ouse
The Controversy over Prince Albert’s statue at Albert Park, Skircoat, Halifax, West Yorkshire

Halifax town in West Yorkshire has an elegant statue of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s Consort, on Nimrod, one of his favourite horses. It is located by the roadside as you leave the town centre for Huddersfield, at the junction of Heath Road and Skircoat Road. It stands on a small patch of green known locally as Sparrow Park.

The statue was originally located at Ward’s End in Horton Street enclosed by metal railings and was paid for by public subscription following the Prince’s death in December 1861. It was unveiled by Sir Francis Crossley on September 17 1864 in a formal ceremony preceded by a procession from the Town Hall involving military bands, clergy, a JP and other prominent citizens. Around 10,000 spectators watched the procession.

The unusual stance of the statue has given rise to much controversy. People at the time claimed that the renowned sculptor Thomas Thornycroft, (who also created the famous Boadicea statue on London’s Embankment), had sculpted the horse’s legs wrongly. A rumour also spread that Thornycroft had committed suicide on realizing his mistake. In fact the horse’s unusual gait is a kind of trot known as ambling, producing a smooth and easy ride. Prince Albert and Nimrod, the horse used as the model for the statue, would probably have favoured this style.

In actual fact, the sculptor, Thomas Thornycroft live on for another 21 years after completing the statue and eventually died at the age of 70.

The sculpture is 9ft high and stands on a 7ft Aberdeen granite pedestal. The statue is made of bronze and weighs around 1.5 tons. It was removed to Heath Park, Skircoat as it was then known, in June 1900 because of increased road traffic at Ward’s End. Nearly two years later the Improvement Committee decided to change the park’s name officially to Albert Park.

Left: Statue of Prince Albert at Ward’s End, Halifax in 1888, the Halifax town hall can be seen in the far background
Prince Albert’s statue at Albert Park, Skircoat, Halifax

Right: Statue of Prince Albert at Ward’s End, Halifax in 1888, the Prescott Fountain which was erected in 1884, can be seen in the far background.
The Intriguing Roos Carr Model Wooden Boat Figures

Found Near Withernsea, East Yorkshire

By Jeremy Clark

These naked wooden model figures of boat men with their boat were found in the Victorian era of prudery and were thought to be so shocking that they were hidden away from public view. We have come along way since then and recently the figures have been restored and are now on display in the Prehistory Gallery at the Hull and East Riding Museum for all to see!

*Left: This is how the figures looked on display in the museum after being re-assembled in the 19th century.
Four of the figures are fixed into the boat. Two have been given shields. The one on the left has been given a paddle as a right arm and the varnish on them can be clearly seen.*

They were found by some labourers in 1836 when cleaning a ditch at Ross Carr, about 5 kilometres north-west of Withernsea in East Yorkshire. On digging about two metres below the surface the labourers came across a collection of well-preserved wooden objects. These including “naked male warriors with shields and clubs” (originally they thought the paddles were clubs), a wooden box, a serpent-headed boat, and various other wooden articles which at the time was thought “too much decayed to remove”.

In all eight wooden figures where found but four of them disintegrated on excavation. The remaining four wooden figures that survived together with the wooden boat and various other attachments which seemed to be arms, paddles and shields, were given to the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society, eventually became part of the collections of Hull Museum. A fifth figure was acquired by the museum in 1902 from one of the men present at the time of the discovery. He had apparently given the wooden figure which he thought was an 'ancient doll' to his daughter to play with.

**Restoration and Conservation**

A crude attempt to re-assemble the figures was made in the 19th century which resulted in four of the figures being fixed into the boat, each leg was stuck in one hole up to the ankle. None had feet. Two of the figures had shields, one was given a paddle as a right arm and all were glued or nailed on wherever they seemed to fit. Later they were put on display in the museum in this condition. The display looked suspended as if the small, curved yew boat with the head of an animal on which the figures were set was floating on water. The tall polished bodies of the wooden figures gazed powerfully with white quartzite pebble eyes.

More recently the figures have been conserved using the latest technical methods. First the Victorian glue and varnish were removed, then the wooden figures were carefully taken out of the boat. They were found to be between 35 and 41 cm tall, carved from yew wood and had quartzite eyes. After close examination it became clear that there were subtle differences between the figures. Each had been carved in an individual way and some have nostrils whilst others do not.
There are holes at the shoulders for the insertion of arms and it was later discovered pieces of curved wood, previously considered to be short arms, fitted perfectly into other holes and were actually intended as detachable male genitalia. The curved boat which is about 56 cm long with the head of a serpent or animal for the prow originally had quartz pebble eyes. The way in which the figures were fixed in the boat showed that there was not room for a fifth figure. So it would seem very likely that there were originally two boats complete with crews.

Date and Purpose of the Roos Car Figures

Samples of the yew wood which the figures were made from have been tested. This produced AMS radiocarbon date’s results for the first millennium BC, around 2,500 years ago, placing the figures in the Later Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. But to try and understand their purpose it is important to consider where they were found. In fact it seems that they were recovered from ‘a layer of blue clay’ suggesting that they were originally deposited in or near water. This also suggests that they were deliberately placed in water to honor their ancestors and make offerings to gods. This practice of depositing items such as metalwork and artefacts in rivers or marshes is in keeping with other sites in Briton in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age.

Flag Fen, near Peterborough, is one of the most important Bronze Age sites in Europe. It consisted of a wooden causeway and a ceremonial platform perfectly preserved in the wetland. A large number of broken bronze objects including many swords and personal items given as offerings to the watery fen were found. This supports the theory that Flag Fen was a site involved in religious rites where people came to honor their ancestors and make offerings to the gods.
More Wooden Figures Discovered

A few other wooden figures have been found in Britain and Ireland which date from about 1200 BC to 148 BC Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. They are made from a number of different woods ash, pine, yew or oak and are stiffly upright. Some are male and some, like the Roos Carr figures, have removable genitalia and so could be either male or female. Only one wooden figure from Ballachulish, Lochaber in Scotland is positively female. It was found buried in the peat in 1880 and is nearly 1.5m high and made from oak. The feet are not represented being sunk to the ankles in a pedestal. The head is large with an oval face and round chin. The long nose has been damaged and the eyes are quartz pebbles. The carved cleft between the legs has been exaggerated and both hands are placed on the abdomen, the right hand is above the left hand. It has been suggested that this wooden female figure is a ‘fertility goddess’ but who she was, or what she represented, is unknown. This wooden female figure was found in a peat bog, which overlooks the entrance to a sea loch. This was probably a sacred place and because the figure was found face down covered with the remains of wickerwork and several pole-like sticks nearby was probably housed in a wattle structure. The figure has been radiocarbon dated to 728-524 BC, Later Bronze Age/Early Iron Age. When it was found the figure was waterlogged and split on drying, which greatly distorted its original form. The eyes retain their quartzite pebbles but the nose has broken off.

Right: Distorted and split, the Ballachulish Wooden Female Figure. The quartzite pebbles used for the eyes can be seen

The most conspicuous of these wooden figures is the ‘Dagenham Idol’ discovered in 1922. This was found near a deer skeleton in a marsh peat deposit on the north bank of the river Thames at Dagenham. This wooden figure is 49 cm in height and is made from pinewood and has a round socket which may have been for removable male genitalia. It does not have arms and there are no holes to support them. The head is round with one remaining eye made from a small vertical piece of wood. The second eye has been broken off. This wooden figure also has pronounced round buttocks.

Recently part of a wooden figure has been found at Hillfarrance, Somerset. It was discovered whilst the authorities were investigating the site of a new flood defence scheme. It was found in a pit at the boundary of what is thought to be a prehistoric field system. Only the lower limbs and torso of the wooden figure have survived. This section is about 45cm long and 12cm in diameter consisting of a forked piece of oak, shaped with a bronze axe, the marks of which are still visible on the wood. It was found with the legs driven into the base of the pit with shards of pottery, a burnt stone and worked wood. This wooden figure has initially been dated to the Later Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, 1200-700 BC and it could represent a ritual deposit.

Left: The Dagenham Idol

A Further Model Wooden Boat Discovered

An unidentified carved wooden object which appears to be a model of a dugout canoe has recently been discovered at Clowanstown 1, Co Meath, Ireland (Mossop 2008). It was found on the lake bed of a possible fishing platform or a mooring structure associated with alder twined conical fishing baskets. The small model wooden boat is carved out of some sort of fruit wood 360 mm long, 80 mm wide and 45 mm in depth with raised prow and stern.
The lake attracted people from at least the Late Mesolithic through to the Earlier Bronze Age. However, based on research on the fishing baskets, which have been radiocarbon dated, it rather suggests that the wooden boat dates to the Late Mesolithic-Neolithic period around 4000-3850 BC making it the earliest kind of a model wooden boat to be found. It has also been suggested that it was given as an offering to the lake to honor the gods in very much the same way as the wooden model figures of boat men with their boat found at Roos Carr.

The Roos Carr figures will continue to fascinate us for many years to come. They provide a glimpse into a complex prehistoric world of ritual and religion which we can only wonder at.

The Roos Carr figures can be seen in the Hull and East Riding Museum, Hull in the Prehistory Gallery. Admission is free and it is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm, Sunday 1.30pm to 4.30pm.

*Below: Timbers from the track way at Flag Fen, Peterborough*
The “Labours of the Months” in St Agatha’s Parish Church, Easby, near Richmond, North Yorkshire

By Julian Giles

The parish church at Easby is located 1 mile south-east of Richmond, off the B6271 and is dedicated to St Agatha, a Sicilian Saint, who was martyred for her Christian faith in the third century. The church was built in about 1140. This was before the neighbouring Easby Abbey, which was founded in 1152; its inhabitants were canons rather than monks. The Premonstratensians wore a white habit and became known as the White Canons. Today the ruined Abbey is set in the tranquil, picturesque valley of the River Swale and can be reached via a pleasant riverside walk from Richmond. Most people visit the substantial remains of the Abbey, but overlook the church, which contains some fine medieval wall paintings.

In fact St. Agatha’s Parish Church includes wall paintings depicting medieval rural agricultural life, termed the “Labours of the Months”. They are not of a religious theme and refer to twelve agricultural activities that commonly took place in the months and seasons of the year, but only the wall paintings of spring and winter survive. The Labours of the Months have also been used to illuminate medieval manuscripts and they were seen as mankind’s response to God’s ordering of the Universe. The scheme of the Labours of the Months may have been painted on the walls of many churches in England during the medieval period, but the only ones that seem to have survived are those at St. Agatha’s Parish Church, Easby.
Brief History of the Wall Paintings in St. Agatha’s Church

The church of St. Agatha was originally the abbey church and the oldest part is the chancel which includes wall paintings of around 1280. They survived the obliteration of Protestant Reformation in the mid-16th century, after being covered up by layers of white wash. They were re-discovered when the church was renovated by Gilbert Scott in 1867-9. The wall paintings were then very emphatically restored by a firm of stained glass specialists Burlinson and Grylsse, who completely repainted the scenes. There may well have been some subsequent retouching of the paintings to clarify features including the heavy black outlines on the drawings within the lower tier on the south wall and the Labours of the Months.

The wall paintings are Secco - dry painted plaster, rather than Fresco - wet painted plaster and were restored by Perry Lithgow in 1993 with a grant from English Heritage. The scenes on the north wall depict the Creation of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden, their shame and expulsion from Eden. These scenes are in one tier bordered above by a bent riband pattern and below by a deep band ornamented with leaves and intertwined stems; this band extends to the west of the central window although no figurative scenes survive in the area.

In the window splays are representations of the Labours of the Months; a man sowing seed, pruning trees, tilling the soil and hawking. This scheme would have continued on the splays of all six windows, but only these four scenes have survived. The chamfered face of each window arch is decorated. The outer two with a red and white dog-tooth pattern, the centre arch with a series of red motifs which resemble the germinating seeds being scattered in the adjacent scene.
On the south wall the scenes are arranged in two tiers separated by a palm-leaf or a palmette border. Depicted within the upper tier they are: The Annunciation. The birth of Christ. The Shepherds and the Wise Men. The subjects in the lower tier are: The Crucifixion. The taking down of Christ’s body from the Cross. The burial in the tomb. The Entombment, and the Women at the Tomb. A bent riband pattern border continues across the top and a deep band of lozenge pattern borders the lower tier.

In the backs of a set of three stone seats recessed into the south wall in the chancel, called sedilia, are painted large figures of three bishops seated in mass vestments giving blessings with their right hand.
The Labours of the Months

At one time the Labours of the Months series would have been painted on all six window splays in the chancel covering twelve individual paintings of the series, one for each month, but only the four, in the window splays on the north wall of the chancel have survived, representing spring and winter. Although the parish church is earlier than, and entirely separate from the adjacent Easby Abbey the wall paintings may reflect contemporary farming activities on the monastic estates.

At the left is pruning, generally associated with the month of October, although there are regional variations. More often than not, it is vines that are being pruned, as in this example. Vines were cultivated on many monastic estates, and in the warm 13th century this would have been perfectly feasible even as far north as Easby. Grapes were cultivated primarily for wine. But sometimes it may have been hard to get a good crop. Then the grapes could be used instead to create a kind of vinegar called verjuice. This is a liquid from sour fruit and was in widespread use.

The man illustrated in the wall painting is using a long bladed handled knife in his right hand to prune the small branch that he holds in his left hand. He is warmly dressed wearing a very simple long brown sleeveless body tunic almost down to his ankles, belted at the waist and an under garment that has long sleeves. His head is covered with a hood that also covers his shoulders over his brown tunic. He looks as through he is wearing long boots, which may have been made of leather. The clothing of the medieval peasants was usually made of rough wool and linen.

Ploughing is followed by sowing, but the ploughing scene is absent and not represented in the window splays. Only a man sowing is depicted at the right, which is usually attributed to the month of April. The painting shows a man scattering seed from a large bowl supported by a cord around his neck, while a hopeful large black bird, either a rook or a crow looks on.

The man sowing is also warmly dressed in similar clothing to the pruner, his long white tunic hangs above his knees and his leather boots are cut away at the top in a V shape.

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The third Labour pictured at the left, shows a man tilling the soil, or breaking up lumps of earth with a shield-shaped spade, which has a long shaft and a small handle in the shape of a cross. The spade looks as though it is made completely of iron.

The man has both his hands round the shaft of the spade and his left foot is on the top of the cutting blade of the spade, seemingly finding it very tough work. He is either breaking down the earth before planting seeds or weeding. Once again the digger is warmly dressed in similar clothing to those of the pruner and man sowing.

The fourth and last remaining painting in this series is shown below left. This illustration is unlike the others because it represents Hawking or falconry, which is not a farming activity. Sometimes the Labours of the Months are simply called the ‘Occupations’ of the months, and this title is perhaps more appropriate here. Hawking is represented by the month of August, and judging by the young rider’s rather light clothing, August is very likely to be the intended month at Easby as well. Hawking or falconry became one of the favourite pastimes in the medieval period.

The young hawker sitting on his smart horse is well dressed with a short sleeved shirt, knee-length trousers, long stockings, pointed shoes and a sleeveless cloak. He could well represent a young Nobleman, but what is not certain is the species of hawk on the young man’s right hand.

_left: A young hawker on his horse painted in one of the window splays on the north wall of the chancel_<

_right: Portrait from the Codex Manesse, illustrating a young Hawker on his horse_
Also in the chancel is a plaster replica of an extremely rare, early Christian, carved stone cross. The original, which dates from the late 7th or early 8th century and quarried near Whitby, is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The first church at Easby was built on the site of the original stone cross, which was regarded by the builders to be too crude, so it was broken up and used as convenient building stone in the church. It was preserved there until it was found in the wall of the church and reassembled in the 20th century.

Early Christian missionaries roamed the country, carrying “rood staffs” which were long wooden poles with a cross at the head. These were set up in the centre of communities and the local people would come out to the place to hear the missionaries preaching the gospel. These village folk were the very first church congregations in Britain, even though there were, as yet no church buildings. The early Christians adapted the Celtic custom, which was to mark an important place with rough stone pillars and so these early Christians set up stone crosses in place of their rood staff crosses. The sites of the stone crosses later became sites for the building of churches. As the early rood crosses had been made of wood, they usually had ornate carvings and this idea was carried over and applied to the stone crosses. The carvings on the Easby cross represent the apostles and a vine scroll in which are set birds and animals.

The church like the abbey is open free of charge to the public every day. So next time you visit the abbey don’t forget to have a look inside the church at the medieval wall paintings of the Labours of the Months. Although there are only four scenes that have survived they are now the only ones to be found painted on the walls of a church anywhere in England.

*Right: Map of St Agatha’s Church and Easby Abbey*

*Below: St Agatha’s Church next to Easby Abbey*
The parish church dedicated to St. Mary stands prominently above the town and harbour with Scarborough Castle looking down on it. There has been a church on the site for over 800 years, but nothing was known about the first church built on the present site. That was until extensive internal improvements began inside the church and this gave the Scarborough Museum of Regional Archaeology, the opportunity to carry out an archaeological excavation to investigate the development and history of the church. However, it was a limited rescue excavation with a team of five members of the local archaeological society. Work was carried out over four days so as not to hold up the re-repaving of the floor. The excavation was confined to the nave area of the church on either side of the stone paved aisle.

The Excavation

After workmen took up the old wooden floor, archaeological work began by removing the debris and rubble. On clearing this area, part of a wall foundation was revealed, about 3 feet below the surface the footings of which cut into the clay. Further investigation showed that this wall clearly formed part of a much earlier building on the site.

It was rectangular in plan measuring some 40 feet by 25 feet. The walls were 3 feet 6 inches thick and 4 feet thick at the west end and all joints were mortared. The floor was made of mortar about 6 inches thick and would have been untiled. Only in the thirteenth century did some churches acquire partial flooring in glazed ceramic tiles. A small doorway into this building would have been in the centre of the west wall where unfortunately it was not possible to excavate because of the paved aisle.
Graves Found

During the excavations three graves were found outside this early building. They were lying in shallow graves on either side of where the doorway would have been; two of them situated side by side. The feet of these skeletons were resting against the west wall, but no stone grave slabs were found covering them. These three graves would have been part of the graveyard belonging to the original church on the site. Another three graves were found inside the area of the building, which had been cut through and seriously disturbed the original floor. The earlier burials in these graves had been cleared or shovelled to one side to make way for the later ones. These re-used graves do not belong to this building found on the site. Fragments of fourteenth century pottery discovered in them, suggest they belonged to this period and once again no stone grave slabs were found for them. Throughout the excavation finds were recovered which included pottery from the early thirteenth century to the seventeenth century together with nails and thirteenth century tiles. However, none of these finds came from the small rectangular structure.

The First St Mary’s Church Discovered

*Plan of St. Mary’s Church, Scarborough showing the site of the first church built on the site. The dotted lines outline where the aisled choir and north transept once stood. (Reproduced from the Victoria History of the Country of York, North Riding 1914).*

This exciting discovery is the first church built on the site of St. Mary’s less than a century after the Norman Conquest. The absence of any associated archaeological finds for it makes exact dating difficult. Only by looking at the historical events that led up to its construction and the events that occurred after, is it possible to trace the history of this first church.

Shortly before the Norman Conquest a small Saxon chapel was built within the partly ruined walls of the Roman signal station situated on the headland of Castle Hill long before there was a castle. It dates from about the year 1000, possibly a beacon chapel, whose priests might act as coast-watchers and light-keepers to help protect the Saxon shore. By this time there was a small fishing settlement around the harbour below the headland. In 1066 the settlement and the small chapel were sacked and burnt by Earl Tostig, Lord of Falsgrave, the bad brother of King Harold, in alliance with Harold Hardrada, King of Norway. A huge bonfire was lit on the headland of Castle Hill, and they fired fire bales to burn down the houses below one after another. Those who were left were slain and all their belongings seized. Scarborough was left abandoned but for a short time. The small town may have suffered a second burning in 1069 during the ‘Harrying of the North’. This was when the North of England revolted against William, who retaliated with such viciousness that between York and Durham the land was left uncultivated and the townships uninhabited for five years. These events may explain why Scarborough gets no separate mention in the Domesday Survey of 1086.
Above: Aerial view showing St Mary’s Church circled in relation to the Castle.

The First St Mary’s Church of 1120-1135

The first castle at Scarborough probably had its beginnings in the reign of Stephen (1135-54). It was begun before the death of Henry I in 1135 by William le Gros, Earl of Albermarle, who in 1138 defeated the Scots at the Battle of the Standards, near Northallerton. As a result of this victory Le Gros became a great power in the north, and was created Earl of Yorkshire by King Stephen. He selected Scarborough as the ideal place for building his castle, which was his main stronghold. The construction required a large labour force, so there must have been a small settlement here at this time living and working around the harbour at the foot of the headland.

The castle was already begun if not finished by 1138 and the small chapel on the headland was cleared away for a second new chapel in about 1140, which was a little larger than the previous one. The first small aisles church on the site of St. Mary’s would have been standing before Le Gros chose Scarborough for his castle. It is likely to have been built about 1120-1135; some of the local people would have been recruited to help to build the Earl’s castle. This tiny church would have provided accommodation for the parishioners and served the needs of the small community living here during this period. In 1154 Henry II came to the throne and in the following year he seized Scarborough Castle, among others, in pursuance of his policy of reducing the power of the barons. Le Gros, who had been administering like a king for a long time, at first refused to yield, but ultimately surrendered his castle to the king. He died at the grand old age of 83 at Bytham Castle in Lincolnshire in 1179. After Henry II had taken over Scarborough Castle he started developing it. He built his keep between 1158 and 1164; the curtain wall was extended along the whole landward face of the cliff, which may have been based on the fortification of William le Gros. The entrance to the castle was extended outwards along the neck of land connecting the headland with the town. The road that led to the entrance passed by St. Mary’s church. By now the fishing community had been established and Scarborough’s population was growing. A bigger church was now needed to accommodate the increasing community.
The Second St Mary’s Church built on the Site in about 1180

Shortly after the castle was modified the small church was knocked down to make way for a bigger one around 1180. Work first began on the new church by building two western towers. This was followed by the construction of the narrow north and south aisles the walls being supported by the nave arcading. New north and south walls were built. The foundation walls of the first church were used to support three of the nave’s five circular solid pillars on the north side and three of the five solid pillars on the south side, which are all different in shape and size.

This is the oldest surviving part of the church dating from the latter years of the 12th century. The chancel arch at the east end of the nave is also of the same period as the west towers that form part of this church. This new church was not quite completed when Richard the Lionheart set off on the Third Crusade. He sailed from Dover on the 12th December 1189 and almost his last act the previous day was to give the revenues of this church of St. Mary to the Abbot of Citeaux. The church remained under the control of the Cistercians for the next two centuries. Before this, there were other priests and brothers in the town, serving the small church and the castle chapel.

Scarborough Fair

King Henry III established a fair at Scarborough by charter in 1235 and it was held in the town until 1788 and is now only remembered in the famous folk song.

Are you going to Scarborough Fair
Parsley, Sage Rosemary and Thyme
Remember me to one who lived there
She once was a true love of mine.

During the next 250 years Scarborough expanded and prospered and with it the church. In the town, weavers and potters had been established and among the community there were also other craftsmen, traders besides the fishermen. Also among them, working at the castle were masons, carters, carpenters and slaters. Major rebuilding of the church began in the mid 14th century when the north wall of the church was knocked out to make way for St. Nicholas aisle and was replaced with an arcade of pillars and arches; a new north wall was then constructed. St. Nicholas is important to fishermen of Scarborough being the patron saint of mariners. The north and south transepts with a central tower were completed in the 14th century.
Beyond the central tower was the great perpendicular aisled choir or chancel built about the middle of the 15th century. Between 1380 and 1400 the south aisle wall of the nave was taken down and a series of four chapels and a porch were incorporated into the church. They are believed to be dedicated to (from the east) St. James, St. Nicholas, St. Stephen and St. Mary. Of these St. Mary’s chapel is double the size of the other three chapels. The west doorway itself built between the Norman towers dates to the 14th century.

Right: This illustration shows the view from the castle over the town and how St. Mary’s Church would have looked in around 1400.

Left: The central tower
The brief outline above is the history of St. Mary’s church as it stood up to the 15th century. This historical interpretation of the church is based on a combination of archaeology, architectural and medieval documentary evidence. The church accommodated greater congregations before half of it was shot down in 1645.

**St Mary’s Church, completed in the 15th century, comes under cannon fire**

In January 1645 Scarborough came under direct threat from a Parliamentarian force of 3000 Scots under Sir John Meldrum, a Scottish soldier of fortune. Sir Hugh Cholmley was Governor of the castle and held the town and harbour until February, but once these had fallen he was cut off in the castle with no retreat. At dead of night the Roundheads brought up the largest cannon in the kingdom into the church, trundled it through the choir and knocked out the great east window. The church’s saddest hour had come. From this vantage point they trained their guns on the Royalist held castle. For over five months the castle was besieged, with the guns in the church bombarding the medieval stonework.

The castle guns in retaliation completely demolished nearly half the church and seriously damaged the remainder. At last the Roundheads succeeded in splitting the castle keep in two and on July 25, 1645 the castle was given up. The north transept and the north wall of the church shared the same ill fate as the great choir or chancel being knocked down by cannon fire.

![The cannon inside St Mary's Church](image)

After 15 years of wind, rain and decay the central tower weakened by the castle gunfire collapsed in 1659 causing further damage to the remaining chancel and the north wall. Following a national appeal in 1660 by way of a letter read in churches throughout the country and with money raised from the rich and poor, the church was repaired and rebuilt in nine years, but regretfully not to its former glory. Sadly there was not enough money to attempt to replace the north transept and the great choir, which were destroyed by gunfire from the castle during the Civil War.

![St Mary's Church showing the ruins of the choir and the north and south aisles](image)
St. Mary’s church started from simple beginnings becoming more complex as time passed. The early church was reduced to foundations and built over by a new church; it was unrecognised until excavation took place.

A survey of the present church identified five main periods of construction from about 1120 to 15th century. The north transept, the central tower and the great choir unfortunately did not survive the Civil War of 1645. Although some of the architecture is a challenge to historians the first church built on the site in 1120 is no longer a mystery and can be recorded as part of the church’s history. Half of the remaining keep belonging to the castle can be viewed from where the aisled choir or chancel of St. Mary’s church once stood.

Visit St Mary’s Church

There are lots of interesting things to be seen in the church, particularly mediaeval stone carved heads and sculptures. A curious one is at the apex of the chancel arch depicting a humorous carving of a man and a woman fighting over a moneybag, which is firmly grasped, by the woman. But high on the list for visiting St. Mary’s is Anne Brontë’s grave and headstone, which lies in the eastern churchyard. She died in Scarborough on the 28th May 1849 at the age of 29. Anne Brontë holidayed here and at Filey where part of her novel Agnes Grey is set. The wording on the gravestone reads:

**HERE**

LIE THE REMAINS OF

**ANNE BRONTË**

DAUGHTER OF THE

REVD. P. BRONTË

Incumbent of Haworth Yorkshire

She died Aged 28

May 28TH 1849

At the time of Anne’s death, major restoration work was being carried out at St. Mary’s Church, where Charlotte her sister, had chosen to bury Anne. For this reason the funeral was conducted at ‘Christ Church’. Charlotte only re-visited the grave once on 4 June 1852 a few days after the third anniversary of Anne's death. On her arrival at Scarborough she discovered five errors in the inscription on Anne’s gravestone, and had to arrange for it to be refaced. It still carries one error today stating Anne ‘died Aged 28’: she was, in fact, 29.

Her grave has become a place of pilgrimage for hundreds of visitors from all over of the world. However Anne’s gravestone has been subjected to weathering and erosion over the years and has become illegible in places. A new plaque has now been installed at Anne Brontë’s grave to ensure that visitors will be able to read the inscription for years to come. The plaque explains that there is a mistake on the original headstone inscription, which states that Anne Brontë died aged 28.

*Right Above: Anne Brontë’s weathered and eroded headstone*

*Right Below: The new plaque installed in 2011*
Scarborough Castle

Scarborough Castle is just a short walk further up the road from St Mary’s Church and is well worth a visit.

Before the castle was built on the headland it was occupied by Iron Age settlers and later the Romans constructed a signal station which consisted of a square tower set within a square courtyard. This was part of a system that relayed warnings of sea borne Saxon raiders to inland Roman garrisons. Later part of the Roman signal station was adapted as a Saxon chapel.

Scarborough Castle is a former Medieval Royal fortress situated on a rocky promontory between two bays and the town.

Left: Scarborough Castle keep, photo by Jeremy Clark

The first medieval castle was built by William le Gros, Count of Aumale, in the 1130s. He constructed a wall on the landward side of the promontory and built a gate tower where the keep now stands and a chapel. When Henry II came to the throne in 1154 he demanded the return of all royal castles, and Scarborough, which was built on a royal manor, was one of the castles reclaimed by the Crown. Henry II improved the Castle by adding a large three-storey square keep on the site of the previous tower and building a wall to protect the inner bailey. The work, which took 11 years to complete, finished around 1169.

The castle continued to be maintained by later monarchs. John added the King’s Chambers and further strengthened the curtain wall, which now had 11 half-towers. Henry III began the twin-towered barbican to guard the approaches to the main gate. It was finally completed around 1350 in the reign of Edward III. Two notable sieges took place one in 1312 when Edward II’s favourite, Piers Gaveston took refuge there. A shortage of supplies forced him to surrender within a fortnight. During the Civil War in 1645 the castle was besieged twice by Parliamentarian forces. The artillery bombardment by them caused half the keep to collapse within just three days. After the Civil War in the 17th and 18th centuries part of the castle was used as a prison. In 1745, during the Jacobite Rebellion the castle was strengthened again and temporary repairs were carried out. A barracks containing twelve apartments that could accommodate 120 soldiers and three batteries were also built to protect the town and harbour. Two faced south and the other was on the north side of the castle yard.

Right: A reconstruction of Scarborough Castle as it would have looked around 1350 occupied and busy. The service buildings (stables, brewery, armoury, etc.) are shown around the walls of the inner bailey. The Great Hall has a raised roof along the two lines of posts whose bases remain, and the kitchen is separate but connected. By Ivan Lapper © Courtesy of English Heritage Photo Library

The castle was severely damaged during the First World War when on 16 December 1914 Scarborough came under naval bombardment by two German warships, SMS Derfflinger and SMS Von der Tann. The castle was severely damaged by more than 500 shells directed at it and the town. As a result of the damage the barracks were demolished.

Scarborough Castle is managed by English Heritage.
A Visit to the City of Troy, a Turf Maze near Dalby in North Yorkshire

By Marcus Grant

The turf maze known as ‘City of Troy’ is located on a remote roadside verge, high on the Howardian Hills, between the villages of Brandsby and Dalby in North Yorkshire. It is sometimes called the Skewsby maze because of its proximity to that village and is now the only historical turf maze in Yorkshire!

The Turf Maze

The little turf maze is just 26 feet wide (7.9 m) by 22 feet (6.7m), it is of classical design and is in excellent condition with seven circular paths that encircle the central area which are banked towards the centre to allow easy walking, although the total circuit walk takes less than a minute. It is also the smallest ‘ancient’ turf maze in Europe. However its location was moved in c.1900, when the original maze was destroyed by wagons, carts and also by workmen repairing the nearby road, so its exact age remains a mystery. It has been suggested that the maze was of ancient origin, but it may only date to 1860, when the workmen repairing the road cut the new maze away from the route. In fact the design was copied from a drawing in a local newspaper. Another version of the story states that it was modelled on a carving on a local barn door. Either way, its atmospheric situation makes it an interesting maze to visit, especial in mid or late summer, when the adjacent fields and hedgerows are ablaze with wildflowers.

Maze or Labyrinth?

Turf labyrinths, or turf mazes, as they are popularly known in Britain, were once found throughout the British Isles. As a group they were, and still are, commonly known as ‘mazes’, although the terms ‘maze’ and ‘labyrinth’ are no longer considered interchangeable. A maze is an entertaining puzzle with many dead ends or alternative routes that may be taken, but a labyrinth consists of one path which twists and turns but leads inevitably to the centre. Some turf labyrinths are formed by cutting away the ground surface to leave turf ridges and shallow trenches, the convoluted pattern of which produces a single path to be walked, which leads to the centre of the design.
Most turf mazes were between 30 and 60 feet (9-18 metres) in diameter and were usually circular, although square and other polygonal examples are known. The designs employed are a curious mixture of ancient classical types.

The City of Troy Name

Many turf mazes in England were named ‘The City of Troy’ or variations on that theme presumably because, in popular legend, the walls of the city of Troy were constructed in such a confusing and complex way that any enemy who entered them would be unable to find his way out. Welsh hilltop turf mazes cut by shepherds, were known as ‘Caerdroia’, which can be translated as ‘City of Troy’, or perhaps ‘castle of turns’, unfortunately no historic examples survive.

The Date of Mazes

Turf mazes are very difficult to date. Most are poorly documented and there is little evidence of them existing prior to the late mediaeval period of the 13th/14th centuries onwards. Although their patterns are clearly very ancient, there seems to be no reliable way of accurately dating a turf maze, because they have to be re-cut regularly to keep the design clear, which is liable to disturb any archaeological evidence. Only a small number of mazes can be dated to the 16th and 17th centuries and a few are as recent as the 19th century.

The Purpose of Turf Mazes

There has been much speculation about why turf mazes were cut and what they were used for. Folklore and the scarce contemporary records that survive suggest that they were once a popular feature of village fairs and other festivities. Many are found on village greens or commons, often near churches, but sometimes they are sited on hilltops and at other remote locations. Because some turf maze sites were close to religious establishments such as churches or abbeys, was often believed they were used by penitents who would follow the paths on hands and knees, but there seems to be no documentary evidence for this. Turf mazes are soon overgrown and lost if regular repair and re-cutting is not carried out. In many villages this was performed at regular intervals, often in connection with fairs or religious festivals. Today only eight historic examples survive in England. However a recent replica of a former maze, at a nearby location at Comberton, Cambridge was recreated in 2007.

The eight surviving historic turf mazes in England are always a pleasure to visit, although some are more difficult to find than others. Few are signposted and several are situated in remote locations, away from main roads or on hilltops, approachable only by footpaths. They are to be found from Hampshire in the south to Yorkshire in the north, and almost without exception, are beyond the reach of regular public transport and will require some planning to visit.

Modern turf mazes have been made for a variety of reasons. Some are private and used to aid contemplation or meditation, much as a mandala would be. Others are tourist attractions.
Lost Yorkshire Mazes

In Yorkshire there are four examples of lost historic turf mazes. One such was at Holderness, between Marfleet and Paull, in East Yorkshire, near Kingston upon Hull. It was called ‘The Walls of Troy’ and had a unique dodecagonal, twelve-sided layout which was illustrated in 1815. It measured about 40 feet (12 metres) in diameter.

*Right: Drawing of the twelve-sided Holderness maze based on the 1815 illustration*

The turf maze that once existed at Asenby, North Yorkshire was reported to be damaged in 1908. It was situated at the edge of the village along a public footpath near the remains of the Norman motte and bailey castle. Here the ground slopes gently upwards to a roughly circular area approximately 50 feet (15 m) in diameter, which is the site of the maze. All that remain of the turf maze, are a few odd bumps in the ground. It is located in an attractive area, which could be very much improved if the maze were restored.

The one at Ripon, North Yorkshire had an unusual spiral centre but was ploughed up in 1827 and traces were visible in 1872 of the one at Egton, North Yorkshire, near Whitby, both are now sadly destroyed.

It has been estimated that there may once have been as many as 80–100 turf mazes in Britain.

How to get to the City of Troy Maze

The City of Troy maze is approximately 14 miles north of York, between the villages of Brandsby and Dalby in the Howardian Hills, North Yorkshire. It can be approached by following the B1363 out of Brandsby as far as the crossroads. Turn right at the Dalby and Terrington signpost then sharp left. Continue for a mile or so, past a small wood on your right and you will see the maze surrounded by a low wooden railing. Despite its remote location, the City of Troy receives regular maintenance and is usually to be found in good condition. The low wooden railing that protects the maze has been replaced and a new sign board and seat have been recently installed. The information board at the maze explains its history with an illustration and how to walk the maze. Visiting is possible at all times.
The City of Troy, a Turf Maze near Dalby in North Yorkshire

This maze is the only surviving instance in the North Riding of an ancient game, mazes pass under various names in different parts of England such as Julian Bower, Robin Hood’s Race, Shepherd’s Ring, Walls of Troy or City of Troy, the last mentioned being the name by which this example has always been known. This is interesting and shows the early association between Yorkshire and Scandinavia where Trojeborg, Troy Tower, is the name given to similar mazes. The game and its origin are forgotten. Reference to it can be found in Shakespeare’s “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” written in 1594.
The Multangular Tower in the Museum Gardens, York is the most noticeable and intact structure remaining from the Roman walls. It was constructed as part of a series of eight similar defensive towers. They were built on the orders of the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus, who lived in Eboracum, as Roman York was known, from 209 to 211 AD. It has ten sides and is almost 30 feet (9.1 m) tall. The lower courses are original Roman stonework, though the upper course with arrow slits is a later medieval addition.