

GEORGIAN YORK

Many fine Georgian buildings still remain in York, reminders of an elegant era when York was seen by the wealthier classes as an alternative to London – somewhere to build fine town houses and enjoy themselves.

Assembly Rooms and Mansion House

The Assembly Rooms, now an Italian restaurant, were designed by Richard, Earl of Burlington, in 1731, and were some of the earliest neo-classical buildings in Europe. The Mansion House, today the official residence of the Lord Mayor, was built between 1725 and 1730, although no one is sure who the architect was. The house now holds one of the finest collections of civic silver in the country, including a solid silver chamber pot with matching whistle!

Bar Convent and Red House

Other notable buildings of the era are the Bar Convent (still a working convent), with its beautifully tiled courtyard, and the Red House near the Minster, now Red House Antiques and home to an impressive collection of Georgian, Victorian and art deco artefacts.

Fairfax House

Perhaps nowhere sums up Georgian York as well as Fairfax House, one of the most distinguished 18th century town houses in Britain and now the ideal backdrop to the Noel Terry Collection of Furniture, also one of the finest of its type. Built in 1762 a stone's throw from Clifford's Tower, the house, charming and perfectly proportioned, is a perennially popular visitor attraction.

It is easy to imagine the wealthy neighbourhoods of York in the reign of King George III: coffee houses, beautiful gardens, fine public spaces such as St Helen's Square (created in 1745 out of the graveyard of St Helen's Church) – even the Knavesmire Racecourse, which staged its first races during George's reign. The railway age swept away much of Georgian England, but what remains in York is a precious reminder of the city's most elegant manifestation.



Some useful contacts:

Assembly Rooms

Now houses Ask Restaurant
4 Blake Street, York
Tel: 01904 637254

Fairfax House

Castlegate, York
Tel: 01904 655543
www.fairfaxhouse.co.uk

Red House Antiques Centre

Duncombe Place, York.
Tel: 01904 637000
www.redhouseyork.co.uk

Bar Convent Museum

Blossom Street, York
Tel: 01904 643238
www.bar-convent.org.uk

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Media contact: Kay Hyde, Head of PR & Communications.

Tel: 01904 554451 Email: Kay.Hyde@makeityork.com