

SECRET YORK



Discover what lies within the huddled maze of York's medieval streets; this walk takes you to fascinating buildings that other visitors miss.

All Saints Church, North Street

This 15th century church is arguably the finest medieval church in York with its High Church gothic atmosphere and ancient stained glass. Medieval fittings include a tip-up misericord seat in the chancel and an Angel Roof with curly haired angels serenading from above. The 15th century stained glass is a rare survival, escaping both Henry VIII and Cromwell, and including such scenes as a 15th century representation of the Nine Orders of Angels including a man wearing glasses and The End of the World with earthquakes, sea levels rising, the sea ablaze, comets smashing into the earth and global epidemics. The church also has a modern hermitage attached - the Hermit has gone but the squint survives through which he used to peer into the church to follow services.

Jacob's Well, Trinity Lane

This is probably the finest late medieval house in York. It was built in the 15th century as a house for some of the Chantry priests of Holy Trinity Priory. Upon the dissolution of the Monasteries, Isabella Warde, last prioress of St Clement's Nunnery, retired to this house and lived here until her death in 1569. Later it became a pub – hence Jacob's Well, i.e. a watering hole. The porch comes from the former Wheatsheaf Inn in Davygate and was moved in 1907.

See comical carvings of a husband and wife having a violent argument on the right side of the porch; on the right the woman is now a happy widow! The mischievous devil mask on the right is very amusing. The building was restored by Charles Anelay in 1992, and the topmost brick storey removed – it was too heavy for the timber frame. The Upper Room is used by the Butchers Guild as a Guildhall since they had to vacate their Hall on the Shambles in 1992. There is a fine view of the ruins of the Choir of Holy Trinity Priory from upstairs. In the main downstairs room is the 18th century Insurance plaque, originally outside, and corresponding insurance certificate, dating to the days when it was an Inn.

St Mary, Bishophill Junior

Despite its name, it is one of the oldest churches in York, and presumably the daughter church of the nearby St Mary Bishophill Senior, which may have Roman origins. It is the only remaining complete-roofed pre-conquest Viking period church building in York. It was already perhaps 100 years old when William the Conqueror landed; Eric Bloodaxe may have seen it. It is the only standing church tower not burnt down (or rebuilt) by William the Conqueror in 1069.

The tower is entirely built of re-used Roman stones from the nearby Walls, but the top stone are used as foundations and the Roman foundations in the top – so it is the Roman walls upside down!

Inside the huge tower arch is what is thought to be a re-used Roman arch, perhaps from some great public building, forum or Roman predecessor of Micklegate Bar. By the tower arch is a fragment of an Anglo-Scandinavian cross-shaft, perhaps part of a preaching cross predating the church building.

Holy Trinity Priory (1089-1538)

This is the oldest monastic site in York, as there was a 'Minster of Canons' here before the Norman Conquest. It was destroyed by fire in York in 1069 during the Harrying of the North. In 1089 it was given to the Benedictine Abbey of St Martin of Tours (Marmoutier) and became a daughter house or Priory. Most of the present church was rebuilt after a great fire in York in 1137 and dates from late 12th century.

It was dissolved by Henry VIII 1536-8, but it continued as a parish church after dissolution. In 1551, the Tower fell in a gale and destroyed the choir and transepts. So the church is now only half the height, length and width of pre-dissolution church. It is the only monastic church in York still in use.

Notice the medieval stocks, with only five holes. Legend says that there was a one legged sailor permanently drunk, so he made a set of stocks for him and for two other people! The truth is that they were being broken up for firewood about 100 years ago and a vicar rescued them, but one end was lost.

St Michael, Spurriergate

This church has been given a new lease of life as a Christian coffee shop and restaurant with mouth-watering homemade food and fairly traded goods. Avertable gem with beautiful medieval glass; an ideal place to pause for refreshment on a tour!

St Martin-Le-Grand, Coney Street

This 15th century structure was bombed out in the 'Baedeker' raid on 29 April 1942, and restored as a chapel of reconciliation in 1960. The former West window, which was taken out in the war for safekeeping, and now re-set, is notable with a portrait of the Donor Robert Seymour and scenes from the life of St Martin of Tours. St Margaret Clitherow, the Catholic martyr, was baptised here.

Guildhall

The Guildhall was built in 1447-8 for the Guild of St Christopher and St George. These were suppressed at Reformation. It was also used as a Common Hall for various trade guilds and by the City Council. In 1483 Richard III was entertained here on his first visit as King – look for the plaque on the north wall.

The hall was bombed out by incendiary bombs in the 'Baedeker' raid of 29 April 1942 and rebuilt. The Queen Mother reopened it in 1960. The roof timbers of oak, the windows and upper parts of the walls are all replacements. The stained glass window of the history of York is noteworthy – see the leaflet available free at Reception for details of what it depicts. There are also numerous displays around the hall about its history. Margaret Clitherow was tried here in 1586.

Committee Room 1 is the prosaic name given to the inner chamber called Room 1 (door in far left-hand corner of hall). This was where the inner council of the Guild and later the City Council met. The room is medieval, though re-panelled in 1679 (see the date above the fireplace). Look for **two secret passages**. One is to the left of the fireplace, and may have led down into dungeons below. The other is just inside the door on the left as you go in and is quite hard to find. It leads up to the roof, but it is too dark, steep and dusty to allow the public too far in. The ceiling is original, and includes some medieval roof bosses, such as The Virgin & Child and some modern replacements, such as the man with a forked tongue!

This fact sheet has been provided by YorkWalk. Established in 1990, YorkWalk offers a programme of themed walking tours of York throughout the year. This information is intended to assist journalists with information on different York themes and has been written to give a flavour of York's themed walking tours.

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