

Yorkshire Museum and Gardens

YORK MUSEUM TRUST

York Museums Trust is one of only eight non-national general museum services in the country, which has 100 per cent designated collections. This means that all its collections are designated for their national importance.

The Trust was formed on 1 August 2002 and it is responsible for the development and management of York Castle Museum, Yorkshire Museum, York Art Gallery and York St Mary's. York Museums Trust was created to run these public museums with the purpose of delivering a better service to both the citizens of York and visitors to the city.

YORKSHIRE MUSEUM AND GARDENS

(The Yorkshire Museum has recently undergone a £2 million refurbishment, and was reopened on the 1st August 2010. It was the biggest refurbishment the museum has undergone since it opened in 1830. The museum now boasts five new galleries which showcase some of Britain's finest archaeological finds from dinosaur fossils to Viking and Medieval gold treasures. Its new exhibits also include a brand new history of York, which takes visitors on a 2,000 year audio and visual journey of the city, and explains how important and powerful the city was to its Roman and Viking residents.)

Yorkshire Museum is a treasure house in the heart of York. It is set in a unique location – 10 acres of wonderful botanical gardens.

Here, visitors can discover some of the world's greatest and most beautiful archaeological finds. A host of Roman, Viking and Medieval riches are ready to be found again.

NEW EXHIBITIONS

As part of the 2 million pound refurbishment, the Yorkshire Museum now boasts five new exhibitions which treats visitors to view the colourful history of York, and....

Roman York- Meet the people of the Empire

A chance to view rare Roman artefacts found in York or Eboracum as it was known to the Romans. Learn how the Romans really lived in this busy cosmopolitan, multi-racial city, and see the belongings they left behind, including jewellery and gaming counters. Finally slip on a pair of sandals and walk like a Roman across a huge four metre square mosaic floor that was discovered in York.

Medieval York- The Power and the Glory

Enter the world of Medieval York, through this atmospheric exhibition, which is partly set amid the ruins of the medieval St Mary's Abbey. It takes visitors on a spectacular journey through the City in Medieval times, featuring two reconstructed shrines to St William, a collection of tools and pottery found in York and a silk cap imported from Iran. The exhibition displays some of the museums most impressive and spectacular artefacts such as the York Helmet, the Middleham Jewel, and the Vale of York Hoard, which was featured on the BBC Radio 4's 'The History of the World in 100 objects'.

Extinct- A Way of Life

This fun, family orientated exhibition gives visitors a tour of the weird and wonderful creatures which walked the earth millions of years ago. The exhibition is beautifully illustrated with a set of real dinosaur footprints, where you can try to match the dinosaur to the footprints, or even examine ichthyosaur poo to find out what these creatures ate. The exhibition then focuses on animals that have become extinct in more recent times including a Dodo skeleton and the antlers of a Great Deer. The final stage of the display moves to the present day as it showcases the skeleton of an endangered lion, an example of an array of species which can be saved through continued conservation efforts.

History of York Audio-Visual Spectacular

This fast moving film and sound footage takes visitors on a whistle-stop journey through York's two thousand year history, and shows how important York was to the Romans and Vikings.

Learning Level

Above the main gallery is the learning level, the Enquiry. It offers visitors the chance to dig deeper and find out more about the themes featured in the gallery. It also has two learning rooms or "labs", which focus on science and archaeology, when not booked they can be used by ordinary visitors to examine objects close up and explore further.

COLLECTIONS

*The Yorkshire Museum's collections have now all been awarded 'designated' status for their national and international importance.

Archaeology

Yorkshire Museum is internationally renowned for its amazing archaeology collections, which include treasures dating from the prehistoric to the 16th century. The core of the collection centres on the history of York, from its Roman foundation to the dissolution of one of the most powerful monasteries in Britain during the reign of Henry VIII.

Biology

The Biology (Natural History) collections at the Yorkshire Museum provide an internationally important resource for scientists studying biodiversity, genetics, comparative anatomy and many other related fields of research.

Many elements of the collection are not only scientific, but also of historical significance. Some of the specimens were the last of their species known and provide valuable information on their biology and anatomy.

Geology

Be transported 200 million years back in time to when Sea Dragons were both 'The Hunters and the Hunted'. This gallery shows visitors the ancient fossil remains of these creatures from a time when dinosaurs ruled the land, but the seas and oceans teemed with marine-reptiles. Thousands of fossils held in the geology collections at the Yorkshire Museum are from the Yorkshire coast, inland quarries, rivers, road and railway cuttings. Many of the fossils were collected in the 19th century, but can still be found along the Yorkshire coast today.

Given the Yorkshire Museum began collecting rocks, minerals and fossils in 1822, long before many other Museums (the Natural History Museum had not even been built!), its collections became extensive in their content and geographical spread. The geology collections include material from every continent of the globe and cover the whole of the history of life on Earth.

Astronomy

The York Observatory, in the Museum Gardens, is the major part of Yorkshire Museum's Astronomy Collection. It was built in 1832 and 1833 and is the oldest working observatory in Yorkshire.

Its 4 inch refractor telescope was built by York man Thomas Cooke in 1850, who went on to make the then-largest telescope in the world. It was installed in 1981 when the observatory was restored.

The Observatory also houses an 1811 clock which tells the time based on observations of the positions of stars. It was once the clock by which all others in York were set and is still always four minutes, 20 seconds, behind Greenwich Mean Time. In the mid 19th century it would cost sixpence to check a timepiece against the Observatory Clock.

The collection also includes telescopes which are kept with other scientific instruments at York Castle Museum.

During the 1780s leading astronomers John Goodricke and Edward Pigott were based in York and laid the foundations of variable star astronomy, this is the study of stars of varying brightness. Goodricke has a college at the University of York named after him and Pigott was the first English man to discover a comet then have it named after him.

MUSEUM GARDENS AND BUILDINGS

The Yorkshire Museum & Gardens were originally established as a private, scientific and botanical feature for the members of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society.

The site is a scheduled Ancient Monument as well as a National Listed Garden. Some of the trees are national champions and the gardens are also home to diverse wildlife.

The Yorkshire Philosophical Society acquired the Museum site between 1827 and 1843. After purchase, the design for the botanic gardens was completed by Sir John Naysmith.

Multangular Tower

This was originally a corner of the Roman fortress. Only the lower six metres are Roman; the larger stones were added in the late 13th century to strengthen the medieval fortifications of the Abbey and City.

St Mary's Abbey Ruins

This Benedictine Abbey was once the wealthiest and most powerful monastery in the North. The second church to be built on this site, it was completed in 1294 and is in the Early English style. The abbey fell into ruin after the dissolution of the monasteries in 1539 instigated by King Henry VIII.

Hospitium

This is thought to have been a guest house for visitors to the Abbey. The oldest parts of the ground floor date back to the 14th century. The timber framed upper story has been restored in modern times. The ruined gateway dates back to the 15th century and was probably the entrance to a passage that ran down to the river.

St Mary's Lodge

This was built around 1470. Important visitors to the Abbey would have stayed there. The remaining arch dates back to the 12th century and was once the main entrance to the abbey grounds.

The Yorkshire Museum

Commissioned by the Yorkshire Philosophical Society to house their geological and archaeological collections, it was officially opened in February 1830, making it one of the longest established museums in the country.

Observatory

The octagonal stone observatory was built between 1832–1833 and may have been designed by J Smeaton who designed the Eddystone Lighthouse. The 4.5 inch telescope, originally built by Thomas Cooke of York in 1850, was installed in 1981 when the observatory was restored.

Manor Cottage

Designed in 1844 and looking back to the English Tudor style, it was built using magnesium limestone from the Abbey ruins.

Museum Gardens' Lodge

Designed by G F Jones this example of the Victorian Gothic revival was built in 1874 and is the offices for the Yorkshire Philosophical Society.

Tempest Anderson Hall

This was added to the Yorkshire Museum in 1912 and is an early example of the use of reinforced concrete. It still reflects a classical influence echoing that of the main museum building.

The Yorkshire Museum is open daily 10am to 5pm.

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