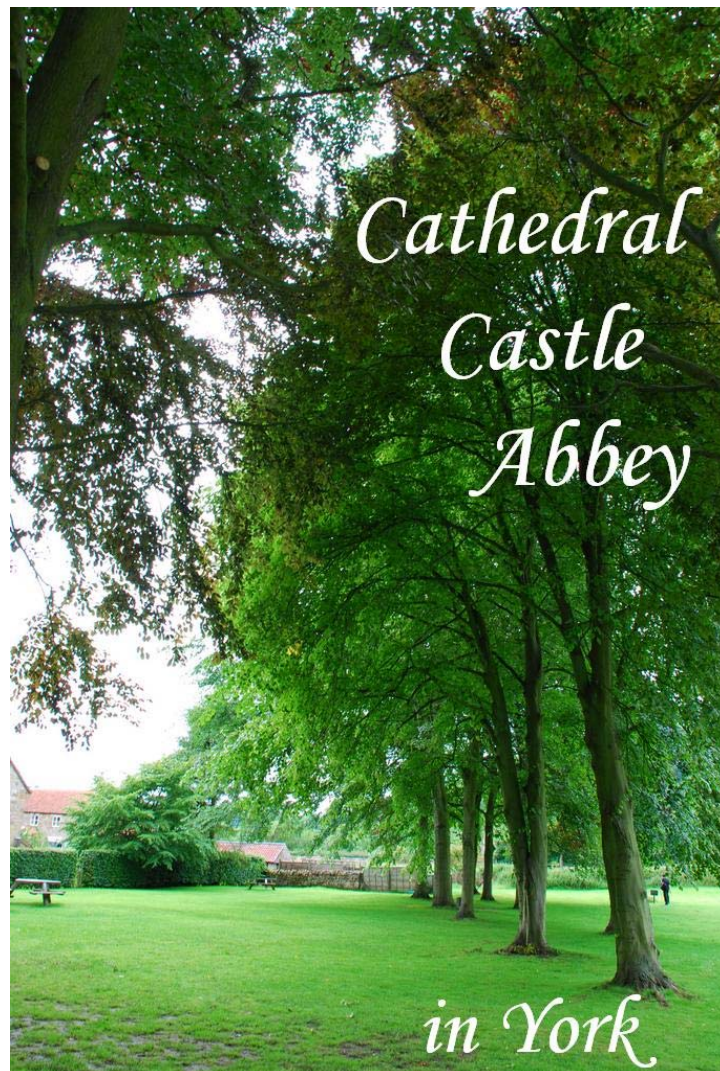


Study Tour Report for the  
Medieval Germany, Belgium, France and England  
(Cathedral, Castle and Abbey --- a day visit in York)



TANG Wai Keung / Helen KAM

## Study Tour Report for the Medieval Germany, Belgium, France and England (Cathedral, Castle and Abbey --- a day visit in York)

*During this 8-day tour in England, we were requested to present a brief on York around its history, famous persons, attractive buildings and remarkable events etc. With the float of the same contents kept in minds even after the tour, we are prepared to write a study tour report based on this one-day visit with emphasis around its medieval period.*

*York has a long turbulent period of history and, as King Edward VI said, "The history of York is the history of England". This report will start with a brief history of York, which inevitably be related to persons, events and places we came across during this medieval tour. The report will also describe three attractions in York, viz., York Minster and its stained glass, Helmsley Castle and Rievaulx Abbey.*

### **1 York's history**

The most important building in York is the York Minster, where in front of the main entrance, we found a statue of Constantine (*photo 1*). It reflects the height of Roman's powers that conquered the Celtic tribes and founded Eboracum in this city; from here, the history of York started.

#### **1.1 Roman York**

During our journey in the southern coast of England, Father Ha introduced to us the spots where the Roman first landed in Britain. In AD71, the Roman Governor of Britain, Quintus Petilius Cerealis, led his troops northwards from Lincoln to invade 'Brigantia'. Recognising a good military strongpoint, he based his camp at the juncture of two rivers, the Ouse and the Foss.

Having conquered the Brigantes, the Ninth Legion built a fortress on the site of their camp and called it Eboracum. On the departure of the Ninth Legion in AD120, the Sixth Legion took command of the fortress, which eventually enclosed 50 acres and housed a garrison of several thousand soldiers (*photo 2* is the soldiers).

New roads were constructed, a civilian town grew up outside the fortress walls and Eboracum became the capital of Lower Britain and a leading city of the Roman Empire. Several Emperors visited Eboracum and Severus held his Imperial Court there until he died in AD211. In AD306, Emperor Constantius Chlorus died in Eboracum and was succeeded by Constantine, his son. Constantine the Great as he became known was proclaimed Emperor and the proclamation is thought to have been held on the site of the present Minster. Constantine went on to found Constantinople and was the first Christian Emperor of Rome.

The Legions, who occupied Eboracum until around AD410, had their headquarters where the York Minster stands today and, during restoration work, Roman remains were discovered beneath it. These included a 31-foot Roman pillar that was re-erected and can now be seen near the Minster's South Entrance.

## 1.2 Anglo-Saxon York

There are many factors attributable to the subsequent fall of Roman Empire. Father Ha waked us up to think about this issue, while we were almost sleepy during the coach journey. Is it due to “over expansion of territories”, “breakdown of administrative system”, or some other reasons? We were in a puzzle about the correct answers. Anyway, the fact is that the Roman withdrew from Britain in the fifth century, and the Anglo-Saxons began their invasion.

York became Eoferwic under the rule of Edwin, King of Northumbria, and became an important religious centre. In fact, Edwin was instrumental in re-introducing Christianity to the city and was baptised at Eoferwic. Edwin married the Christian Princess Ethelberga of Kent who came north with her Chaplain, Bishop Paulinus. He baptised Edwin and many of his subjects on April 12 627, at one of the city's wells where a little wooden church had been built for them to worship in. This was the first cathedral of St Peter in York, with Paulinus as its first Bishop in the present continuous line.

Christianity also brought learning to York. In the eighth century, the great scholar Alcuin was master of the School of St Peter, which received students from all over Europe. By the time he left Britain to become master of Emperor Charlemagne's Palace School at Aachen (we were there on 9 July during the tour in Europe and *photo 3* is the Charlemagne's Octagonal Church), Eoferwic was the most important centre of learning in Britain.

### 1.3 Viking York

Subsequently, York came under the influence of Vikings. While the Kingdom of Northumbria was in the midst of civil war, the Vikings raided and captured York in 866. Ten years later the Danish King Halfdan shared out the lands of Northumbria from his capital, Jorvik, and the former warriors settled down to a peaceful existence.

Jorvik became a major river port, part of the extensive Viking trading routes throughout northern Europe. The last Danish ruler of Jorvik, Eric Bloodaxe, was driven from the town in the year 965 by King Eadred of Wessex who succeeded in uniting Northumbria with the southern kingdom. However, for another hundred years, the north was largely ruled by earls of both Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian blood.

During 1065-66, following rebellion of the local earls, there was invasion by the Norwegians and the defeat of their army at Stamford Bridge (we were disappointed of not being able to see this bridge during our journey, as it has been rebuilt in modern style). A few weeks later, the victor, King Harold II of England was himself defeated and killed at the Battle of Hastings by the Normans when William the Conqueror invaded the country. It is a significant battle that decided the fate of Britain, so it aroused our interest in visiting this battlefield on 17 July (*photo 4* is the post sign).

### 1.4 Medieval York

At the start of 1066, England was ruled by Edward the Confessor. By the end of the year, William the Conqueror was king after defeating Edward's successor, Harold, in Hastings. With three kings in one year, a battle of legendary in October (as the story tells and the film shows inside the museum of the Battlefield) and a Norman in charge of England, it is little wonder that people rarely forget the year 1066. Many historians view 1066 as the start of Medieval England.

Along with the building of castles and the establishment of Domesday Book (a record of census), William also introduced laws to control the English. However, what William

would have seen as conciliatory behaviour at the start of his reign, was not as well received as he would have wished for. After William came to York in 1069 to subdue rebellion in the north of England, the rule became far more harsh. The Domesday Book of 1086, describes York that “there was not a blade of grass between the Rivers Trent and Tweed”.

In time, however, York began to prosper. The Minster was rebuilt, and soon there were over forty parish churches, an abbey, priories, friaries and religious hospitals. York was once again becoming a profitable port and centre of trade, particularly in wool. King Henry I granted the merchants and craftsmen the city's first Charter, confirming their trading rights both in England and in Europe.

By the Middle Ages, over a hundred crafts were being practised, and each of the same trade formed its own guild (the original spelling is gild). A guild would make sure that anything made by a guild member was up to standard and could be sold for a fair price. Membership of a guild was an honour as it was a sign representing a skilled worker who had some respect in society.

Medieval York was the second largest and most important city in England. The surrounding stonewalls and the bars (medieval gateways), were built during this time. In the city, we found the city walls which, as said, were built on top of the Roman stonewalls (*photo 5* is the city wall and *photo 6* is the bar at present). The Kings and Queens were frequent visitors and the Dukedom of York began to be conferred on the sovereign's second son (as it still is today).

Henry III's sister and daughter were both married in the Minster to Kings of Scotland, and in 1328 King Edward III married Philippa. (The last Royal wedding in the Minster was in 1961 when the Duke and Duchess of Kent were married there).

Richard II gave the city its first Sword of State, honoured its citizen number one with the title of Lord Mayor and created York a county in its own right. In 1397, the city staged a Royal Performance of the York Mystery Plays for the King - these religious plays were given by the Guilds and have since been revived with performances in modern York every four years during the York Festival.

Edward IV did not favour York because of its Lancastrian sympathies at certain stages during the Wars of the Roses. However, his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester, later

Richard III, had a great affection for the city and was a frequent visitor. It was at York in 1483 that his young son Edward was created Prince of Wales with much pomp and ceremony.

### **1.5 Tudor York**

During the Tudor time, York, as well as other great cities, underwent a period of decline (*photo 7* is a typical Tudor building adjacent to York Minster). This was when the wool industry became less important to York, trade drifted towards London. Furthermore, in 1533, King Henry VIII broke with Rome and set himself up as head of the church in England, York as an established religious centre suffered greatly. When we visited England on the first day on 15 July, inside the Cathedral of Façade at Canterbury, there was a burning candle standing on the floor (*photo 8*) where it was the Shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury from 1220 to 1538, but Henry VIII then destroyed it. The Dissolution of the Monasteries began in 1536 and York lost its abbey, priories, friaries and great religious hospitals. Similar destructions can easily be found throughout England. An example is the St Augustine's Abbey that we visited on the second day (*photo 9*, the entrance to the Abbey with sign indicating "Centre of Early Christianity"). This abbey was founded in 597 by St. Augustine, marking the rebirth of Christianity in southern England, however, it could not avoid the fate of destruction by Henry (*photo 10*) too. The sacred treasures were stolen or destroyed and many of its priceless treasures were found lost. In York as well as many other cities, the houses which were owned by the church were seized by the Crown and sold to royal officials and London Merchants.

Henry did, however, do York a great service when he set up the Council of the North in the former house of the Abbot of St. Mary's. This was now the administrative centre for the North and helped York to become an important city once again.

### **1.6 The Recent Centuries**

The Council of the North increased in importance and with it, York's revival and influence gathered momentum. James I and Charles I stayed there during visits to York and Royal Mint was set up. However, it soon became apparent that Civil War was inevitable and York was in attack.

Following the removal of the Royal Garrison from York in 1688, the city was gradually dominated by the local aristocracy and gentry, and became a social and cultural centre for wealthy northerners. There was a boom in putting up new public buildings, including the

Assembly Rooms, Assize Courts and Female Prison, as well as numerous hospitals. Coffeehouses became popular gathering places and so did the new Racecourse. In 1839, railway first came to this city and soon afterwards, it became a major railway centre. At the turn of the century, the railway employed over 5,500 people (now, there is a fascinating National Railway Museum in the city for commemoration). In the Victorian era, there was a rapid rise in the building of new churches, public buildings, banks, offices, schools and colleges.

### **1.7 The Present York**

Today, while trade and industry are still important, it is the preservation of its long and varied history, which has brought it world fame. From here, as visitors, we could not only hear about England's history, but also actually saw it and walked in it. We walked in ancient footsteps to recall moments in the past and we learnt history by putting ourselves on the spots where events took place. The ancient York is now the city's own major asset, as in 1968, the entire historic core of York was designated a conservation area (*photo 11* is the present city centre surrounded by ancient walls and buildings).

## **2 York's Attractions**

On 21 July, the group started the journey from Cambridge to York. On the route north, we were impressed by the green fields, farm animals and the British style countryside. After a four-hour drive, we reached our destination, the St. John University at York, where Rev. Gregory Hoyland, Head of Programme for the Certificate & Diploma in Christian Studies, met us and brought us touring around this historical city. As pointed out in the above paragraphs, England received a great influence from Normans, during the medieval period. The Normans brought in, on top of laws and census, enormous stylish buildings, such as churches and castles. Certainly, in York, a city of medieval characters, representatives of those constructions can easily be found and become the local attractions. Within the time limit of one afternoon allowance, we exhausted it in the York Minster, Hemsley Castle and Rievaulx Abbey.

### **2.1 York Minster**

During the medieval time, churches were allowed to impose charges and keep the revenue. Peasants and town dwellers, in view of salvation, were willing to pay for baptisms, marriages and deaths, contribute tithes (a tenth of their yearly worth to the church), and work on church land without monetary reward. The huge monies accumulated enabled the

church to construct a splendid building. During the reign of William the Conqueror, churches were basically of Norman style, which was derived from the ancient Romans. Perhaps due to primitive technique in construction, they are usually of round shaped (*photo 12*), were made of large stones, with thick walls and pillars, but small windows. However, since 1200, it has come into Gothic era. They have some special architecture features including large towers and spires, pointed arches and flying buttresses, vaults and aisles of timbers made, and large windows featured with stained glass.

York Minster was first built as a small wooden church, and then rebuilt into a stone made building before the medieval period. Following the then prevailing fashion and with sufficient financial supports, the size of church was enlarged by additions built in different periods of time and of different styles, and finally it has become the present splendour Gothic cathedral (*photo 13*).

#### 2.1.1 A wooden church :

As outlined in section 1.2 above, a small wooden church was built for the baptism of the Anglo Saxon King, Edwin of Northumbria, who was baptized on Easter Sunday in the year 627. Almost immediately afterwards, Edwin ordered that this small wooden church should be rebuilt in stone. However, Edwin was killed in battle in 633, the task of completing the stone Minster fell to Oswald.

#### 2.1.2 A stone church:

A small stone church built on the same site as the original wooden one was enlarged over time. It survived through the Viking age in York but was badly damaged by fire in the year 1069 when the Normans finally took control of the city of York. Once the Normans had taken control of the city a decision was taken to build a new Minster on a fresh site to replace the old fire damaged Saxon Minster. Around the year 1080 the Norman Archbishop Thomas of Bayeux started building a cathedral that in time became the Minster today. This vast Norman church was completed around the 1100. During the mid twelfth century the Norman church was enlarged at both East and West, this may have been due to fire damage sustained in 1137, but this now seems unlikely.

#### 2.1.3 Transformation:

In 1215, Walter Gray became archbishop and was to serve the cathedral for 40 years. It was Walter who started to transform the Norman Church into the Minster look like today. Firstly the South and North transepts were built, Walter died before they were completed.



In 1291, work began on the Nave (western end); this was completed by around 1360. Work then transferred to the East end with the building of the Lady Chapel and then the Quire; this was completed by around 1405. In 1407, the central tower collapsed and work on its replacement was not finished until 1433. Between 1433 and 1472, the Western towers were added and the Minster finally completed. The Minster that we know today had taken about 250 years to build (*photo 14*).

#### 2.1.4 The fires:

From 1472 until 1829, the fabric of the building changed very little although there were big changes to the way in which worship in the Minster was carried out. In February 1829, Jonathan Martin deliberately started a fire in the Quire. This act of arson resulted in the destruction of the entire east end roof, timber vault and all the wooden furniture of the Quire. Just 11 years later, a second accidental fire destroyed the Nave roof and vault.

#### 2.1.5 Restoration:

In the twentieth century, two major events affected the building. Between 1967 and 1972, major work was undertaken to stop the Central tower collapsing. This involved close cooperation between engineers and archaeologists, but no trace of the earlier Saxon Minster's were uncovered. On the 9th of July 1984, fire broke out in the South Transept after the Minster had been hit by lightening. The damage, resulting from 3 hours of fire, took some 4 years to fully repair and restore. Since 1984, work has been ongoing to maintain and restore this ancient building.

#### 2.1.6 The title:

Minster Churches are churches established in the Anglo Saxon period as missionary teaching churches. York Minster is the Church of the Archbishop of York. where he has his seat, called a Cathedra, which makes York Minster a Cathedral as well. Not all Minsters are Cathedrals, and not all Cathedrals are Minsters, but York Minster is both. The Minster since its foundation in 627 has always been named after St Peter. The full legal title of the Minster is "The Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of St Peter in York".

#### 2.1.7 The made:

The Minster is a Medieval Gothic cathedral made from magnesia limestone came from about 12 miles from York. The roof and main vaults were all made from wood, mainly oak. Most of the vaults, although made of wood, were plastered and painted white.

### 2.1.8 The stained glass:

The Minster has one of the best collections of stained glass in England. There are 128 windows, containing about 2 million individual pieces of glass. The Great East window of York Minster is the single largest area of medieval glass in the world, as it is about the same size as a tennis court. A glass painter called John Thornton made it between 1405 and 1408. A copy of the contract has survived and indicated that John Thornton was paid £56 in 1408 for three years work. Today this £56 would be worth about £300,000. One of the most famous windows in the Minster is the Rose window (*photo 15*). In 1984 there was a serious fire in the South Transept roof. The heat from the fire produced about 40,000 cracks in the glass. The window was then removed and the glaziers spent two and a half years repairing the damaged glass.

### 2.1.9 The relics:

In the crypt of the Minster is a stone coffin that contains the remains of St William of York. William was a 12th Century Archbishop credited with one miracle while alive and many after his death. He died, possibly poisoned, in 1154 and was canonised in 1227. Until the reformation, his remains were housed in a large shrine in the Quire. The shrine was dismantled completely at some point between 1538 and 1553. During excavations in the 1960's, the coffin was rediscovered and moved to its present location in the crypt.

## 2.2 Stained Glass Manufacturing

York Minster has a single largest area of medieval stained glass window in the world. No wonder why Rev. Gregory Hoyland deliberately told us about this treasure and it reminded us the make of stained glass while we were inside the Stained Glass Museum (*photo 16*, entrance to the Museum) in the Ely Cathedral (*photo 17*) on 20 July.

### 2.2.1 The make:

References to stained glass in England date from the 7th century, and by the 12th century it had become a sophisticated art form. The making of stained glass windows has hardly changed since the 12th century. A stained glass window consists of pieces of coloured glass held together in a latticed web of lead. The glass has previously had details of faces, hands and drapery painted and fired on to it in black or brown paint. About the year 1300, yellow stain was discovered. This had the ability to turn white glass yellow or blue glass green, and was extremely useful in the highlighting of hair, haloes and crowns. Stained

glass continued to flourish in England until the Reformation of the Church in the 1540s, when changes in religious outlook undermined the need for sacred art (*photo 18*).

### 2.2.2 Medieval Techniques:

In the first quarter of the twelfth century, a German monk, who adopted the pen name Theophilus, wrote a description of the techniques of making stained glass. The basic methods have hardly changed. Glass was made by melting sand, potash and lime together in clay pots. It was coloured by the addition of metallic oxides - copper for red, iron for green, cobalt for blue and so on. This is called pot-metal glass. Pot-metal glass, especially red glass, was often too dark to transmit much light. To overcome this, 'flushed' glass was made by dipping a lump of white glass on the blowpipe into a pot of red glass and then blowing. This provided sheets of glass with a thin surface layer of colour. Later, parts of this layer could be removed by grinding with an abrasive wheel; this produced two colours, red and white, on the same piece of glass.

Because paper was scarce and parchment very expensive, the full scale outline of the design for a stained glass window was drawn out on a whitened table top. The designer would indicate the principal outlines of his drawing, the shape and colour of the individual pieces of glass to be used, and the position of the lead strips (*calmes*) that would eventually hold all the pieces of glass together. The panes of coloured glass were cut to shape with a 'grozing iron' and laid on top of the drawing. Through the glass, details of the drawing - faces, hands, drapery etc. - could be seen and these details were traced with an iron oxide pigment on the surface of the glass.

After painting, the pieces were fired in a small furnace for sufficient time to fuse the paint to the surface of the glass, and then relaid on the table and assembled by the glazier, using strips of lead H-shaped in section, which allowed the glass to be slotted into the grooves on each side. The lead provided a strong but flexible bond. The intersections of all the lead strips were then soldered, and oily cement was rubbed into all the joints in order to make them watertight. The panels were then held in place in the window openings by a grid of iron bars set into the masonry.

From the early fourteenth century a further range of colours varying from a pale lemon to a deep orange could be achieved on one piece of glass through the discovery of 'silver stain', a silver compound painted on the back of the glass and then fired in a kiln. By the mid sixteenth century many different coloured enamels were being used. As a result, windows began to be painted like easel pictures on clear glass of regular rectangular shape, with lead *calmes* no longer an integral part of the design. These techniques prevailed from the 17<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the craft declined and skills were lost.

### 2.2.3 Technique Rediscovery

In the 19th century, there was a serious attempt to rediscover the techniques of the medieval glazier. Men like the antiquarian Charles Winston, and the architect A W N Pugin helped to re-establish the scholarly principles for a Gothic Revival of stained glass. As a result of Winston's technical experiments of the 1850s, the quality of coloured glass approached that of the medieval glaziers. Today almost all parish churches and cathedrals contain Victorian windows. Their quality and craftsmanship are now widely recognised.

While we were in the Stained Glass Museum, we found that contemporary designs were included in its displays. Panels by some of the most influential stained glass artists of the 20th century form a permanent part of the collection. In addition, contemporary artists regularly lend work, so that the exhibition reflects changing tastes and styles. We learnt that it is also the policy of the museum to encourage new talent by exhibiting the work of young artists illustrating the fact that stained glass is very much a living tradition. It is regret that we were not allowed to take photographs of those displays.

## 2.3 Helmsley Castle

There should be many attractions yet to be visited in the city of York, viz., the medieval shopping streets, the city walls, the inside of York Minster, the remains of the Jorvik and the Yorkshire putting (oh sorry, it is for dinner), however, we decided to head outside the city to Helmsley Castle for eye-witness of another Normans construction.

When Normans gained control over England, they had to create an impression that they were feared by the English in order to avoid possible uprisings. Castles were regarded as a symbol of power and could be acted as a deterrent, so they were built extensively in England. Initially, they were made of wood, probably because of quick and easily construction and soon afterwards, they were made of stones, which would not rot easily. Castles then became larger and stronger than wooden ones, as we could find in Hemsley Castle (*photo 19*).

### 2.3.1 The history:

The Hemsley castle was first constructed in wood around 1120 by Walter l'Espece and upon his death, the castle passed to his sister Adelina who had married Peter de Roos. In 1186 their son Robert de Roos began work on converting the castle to stone. He built the two main towers, the round corner towers and the main gateway on the south side of the castle (*photo 20*). William's grandson, Robert, inherited the castle. He became Lord of Helmsley from 1258 to 1285 and hence it started to be called Helmsley Castle.

Helmsley Castle remained in the possession of the de Roos family until 1478 when Edmund de Roos sold the castle to Richard, Duke of Gloucester who later became Richard III. After Richard III's death at the Battle of Bosworth, Helmsley castle was restored to Edmund de Roos.

During the English Civil War, the castle was besieged in 1644. Parliament subsequently ordered that the castle should be slighted to prevent its further use and so much of the castle's walls, gates and the eastern half of the east tower were destroyed. The castle was later sold to Charles Duncombe, a banker and politician who was knighted in 1699 and became Lord Mayor of London in 1708. Now, it is owned by Lord Feversham of Duncombe Park, but in the care of English Heritage.

#### 2.3.2 The Helmsley Town:

Surrounded by spectacular banks and ditches, the great medieval castle's impressive ruins stand beside the attractive market town of Helmsley (*photo 21*). Most of Helmsley's surviving stonework defences were raised during the late 12th and 13th centuries, by the crusader Robert de Roos and his descendants. They include a pair of immensely strong 'barbican' entrances and the high, keep like east tower, unusually D-shaped in plan, which still dominates the town.

#### 2.3.3 The Mansion:

Helmsley is not only a medieval fortress. During the Elizabethan period, the Manners family remodelled the castle's chamber block into a luxurious mansion (*photo 22*), whose fine plasterwork and panelling still partly survive (*photo 23*). The castle's first and last military trial came during the Civil War. Held for King Charles, it endured a three-month siege before being starved into submission in November 1644 by Parliamentarians under Sir Thomas Fairfax, who was seriously wounded in the fighting. Fairfax then dismantled the defences but spared the mansion, subsequently it became the home of his daughter and her husband, the profligate Duke of Buckingham.

#### 2.3.4 The English Heritage:

Demoted to a romantic backdrop when later owners moved to nearby Duncombe Park, Helmsley Castle has recently undergone a thorough makeover by English Heritage, making it more accessible to a wide range of visitors. This includes a brand-new visitor centre also providing tourist information, an audio tour, and an imaginative hands-on exhibition in the

mansion range. Displaying a fascinating array of finds from Civil War cannon balls to early tableware, this exhibition explores the social and domestic as well as the military aspects of the fortress.

## **2.4 Rievaulx Abbey**

Monks were supposed to be in small groups, living in tiny and isolated homes, liked hermits. However in Medieval England, they gradually started to live together in small communities to share the same beliefs and values. They were strictly structured and all work within a monastery. The way monks lived was based on the book of rules written by St. Benedict around 530AD. He expected that all monks should make a vow of poverty and live the life of a poor person; he believed that all monks should vow to obey an abbot at all times; he also expected that monks should make a vow of chastity and that they should not marry. St. Benedict also believed that monks should live together as a family and within a community with an abbot as the head of that community.

Life of a monk was harsh; however, the monastery, as well as the church, might be wealthy as analysed in section 2.1 above. The monks were considered very holy men and performed important tasks within the community. Some monasteries had hospitals attached to them as described in section 1.4 above, and the monks offered medical treatment. Some monasteries were renowned centres of learning and culture, just like the early university in Oxford. To appreciate the life of a monk and the construction of an abbey, we carried on our journey to head to Rievaulx before the end of the day (*photo 24*).

### **2.4.1 The history:**

Rievaulx Abbey is a former Cistercian abbey, headed by the Abbot of Rievaulx, located in the small village of Rievaulx, about 30 minutes walk from Helmsley. When Rievaulx Abbey was founded in 1132 by twelve monks from Clairvaux Abbey as a mission centre for the colonisation of the north of England and Scotland, it was the first Cistercian abbey in the north. With time, it became one of the great Cistercian abbeys of Yorkshire, second only to Fountains Abbey in fame.

### **2.4.2 The life:**

The remote location was ideal for the Cistercians, whose desire was to follow a strict life of prayer and self-sufficiency with as little contact as possible with the outside world. The Abbey lies in a wooded dale by the River Rye, sheltered by hills. To have enough flat land

to build on, a small part of the river had to be diverted to a point several metres west of where it formerly flowed. (The monks altered the course of the river three times during the 12th century.) The trace of the old river is still visible in the Abbey's grounds. This is one illustration of the technical ingenuity of the monks, who over time built up a very profitable business mining lead and iron, rearing sheep and selling wool to buyers from all over Europe. Rievaulx Abbey eventually became one of the greatest and wealthiest in England (*photo 25*), with 140 monks and many more lay brothers, receiving grants of land totalling 6000 acres (24 km<sup>2</sup>) and establishing daughter houses in England and Scotland.

#### 2.4.3 The decline:

However, towards the end of the 13th century, the Abbey had incurred a great deal of debt with its building projects and lost revenue due to an epidemic of sheep scab. This ill fortune was compounded by Scottish raids in the early 14th century. To make matters worse, the decimation of the population caused by the Black Death in the mid 1300s made it difficult to recruit new lay brothers for the manual labour. As a result, the Abbey was forced to lease much of its lands. By 1381, there were only fourteen choir monks, three lay brothers and the abbot left at Rievaulx, and therefore some buildings were reduced in size.

#### 2.4.4 New lifestyle:

By the 15th century, the original Cistercian practices of strict observance according to the letter of Saint Benedict's rule, had been abandoned in favour of a more "comfortable" lifestyle. It was now permitted to eat meat, more private living accommodations were created for the monks, and the abbot now had a substantial private household.

#### 2.4.5 Dissolution:

The Abbey was dissolved by King Henry VIII in 1538. At that time there were said to be 72 buildings occupied by only an abbot and 21 monks, attended by 102 servants, with an income of £351 a year. Henry ordered the buildings to be rendered uninhabitable and stripped of any valuables such as lead (*photo 26*, the South Transept at present). The Abbey site was granted to the Earl of Rutland, one of the Henry's advisers, until it passed to the Duncombe family.

#### 2.4.6 Restoration:

In the 1750s, Thomas Duncombe III beautified the estate by building the terrace with two Grecian-style temples, which now called Rievaulx Terrace & Temples.

#### 2.4.7 Archaeology:

Over the past few years, the site has become something of an archaeological treasure, with unexpected discoveries shedding new light on the lives of the monks, and the extensive renewal and rebuilding of their abbey church in the Early English Gothic style. Archaeologists continue to study the landscape around Rievaulx, revealing the remarkable extent of the abbey's influence and industry. Their discoveries are showcased at the site's annual archaeology day in July, and within the on-site museum. The ruins of the Abbey are still standing and are yet impressive today (*photo 27*). They are now in the care of English Heritage.

#### Reference:

- 1) York Tourism Bureau: <http://www.york-tourism.co.uk/information/>
- 2) City of York Council: <http://www.york.gov.uk/>
- 3) History Learning Site: <http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk>
- 4) English Heritage:  
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.001001001013009003009>
- 5) Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rievaulx\\_Abbey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rievaulx_Abbey)

Totally: 6002 words





Photo 1: Statue of Constantine



Photo 2: Roman soldiers



Photo 3: Charlemagne's Octagonal Church



Photo 4: Battlefield post sign



Photo 5: York city walls



Photo 6: Bar





Photo 7: Tudor building



Photo 8: Cathedral of Façade at Canterbury



Photo 9: St. Augustine's Abbey



Photo 10: St. Augustine's Abbey



Photo 11: York city centre



Photo 12: Norman style round church





Photo 13: York Minster



Photo 14: York Minster



Photo 15: Rose window of the Minster



Photo 16: Stained Glass Museum



Photo 17: Ely Cathedral

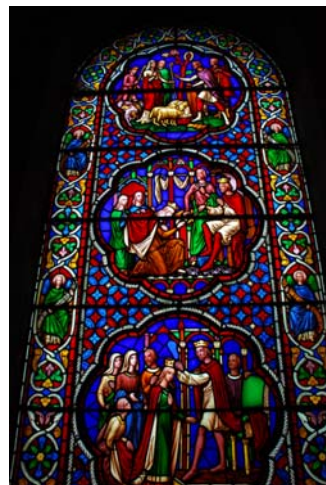


Photo 18: Stained glass



Photo 19: Hemsley Castle



Photo 20: Gateway in Hemsley Castle



Photo 21: Market town of Helmsley

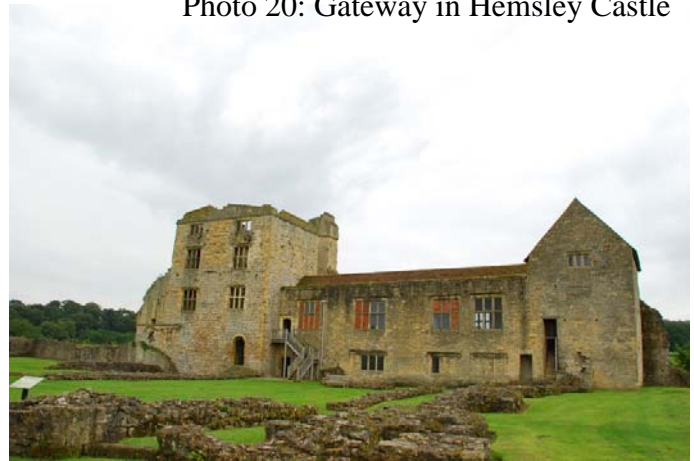


Photo 22: The mansion



Photo 23: Mansion inside



Photo 24: Rievaulx Abbey





Photo 25: Rievaulx Abbey



Photo 26: South Transept of Rievaulx Abbey



Photo 27: Ruins of Rievaulx Abbey