

= York Castle =

York Castle in the city of York , England , is a fortified complex comprising , over the last nine centuries , a sequence of castles , prisons , law courts and other buildings on the south side of the River Foss . The now @-@ ruinous keep of the medieval Norman castle is commonly referred to as Clifford 's Tower . Built originally on the orders of William I to dominate the former Viking city of York , the castle suffered a tumultuous early history before developing into a major fortification with extensive water defences . After a major explosion in 1684 rendered the remaining military defences uninhabitable , York Castle continued to be used as a jail and prison until 1929 .

The first motte and bailey castle on the site was built in 1068 following the Norman conquest of York . After the destruction of the castle by rebels and a Viking army in 1069 , York Castle was rebuilt and reinforced with extensive water defences , including a moat and an artificial lake . York Castle formed an important royal fortification in the north of England .

In 1190 , 150 local Jews were killed in a pogrom in the castle keep , most of them committed suicide in order not to fall to the hands of the mob . Henry III rebuilt the castle in stone in the middle of the 13th century , creating a keep with a unique quatrefoil design , supported by an outer bailey wall and a substantial gatehouse . During the Scottish wars between 1298 and 1338 , York Castle was frequently used as the centre of royal administration across England , as well as an important military base of operations .

York Castle fell into disrepair by the 15th and 16th centuries , becoming used increasingly as a jail for both local felons and political prisoners . By the time of Elizabeth I the castle was estimated to have lost all of its military value but was maintained as a centre of royal authority in York . The outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642 saw York Castle being repaired and refortified , playing a part in the Royalist defence of York in 1644 against Parliamentary forces . York Castle continued to be garrisoned until 1684 , when an explosion destroyed the interior of Clifford 's Tower . The castle bailey was redeveloped in a neoclassical style in the 18th century as a centre for county administration in Yorkshire , and was used as a jail and debtors ' prison . Prison reform in the 19th century led to the creation of a new prison built in a Tudor Gothic style on the castle site in 1825 ; used first as a county and then as a military prison , this facility was demolished in 1935 . By the 20th century the ruin of Clifford 's Tower had become a well @-@ known tourist destination and national monument ; today the site is owned by English Heritage and open to the public . The other remaining buildings serve as the York Castle Museum and the Crown Court .

= = History = =

= = = 11th century = = =

York was a Viking capital in the 10th century , and continued as an important northern city in the 11th century . In 1068 , on William the Conqueror 's first northern expedition after the Norman Conquest , he built a number of castles across the north @-@ east of England , including one at York . This first castle at York was a basic wooden motte and bailey castle built between the rivers Ouse and Foss on the site of the present @-@ day York Castle . It was built in haste ; contemporary accounts imply it was constructed in only eight days , although this assertion has been challenged . The motte was originally around 200 feet (61 metres) wide at the base . As it was built in an urban environment , hundreds of houses had to be destroyed to make way for the development . William Malet , the sheriff of Yorkshire , was placed in charge of the castle and successfully defended it against an immediate uprising by the local population .

In response to the worsening security situation , William conducted his second northern campaign in 1069 . He built another castle in York , on what is now Baile Hill on the west bank of the Ouse opposite the first castle , in an effort to improve his control over the city . This second castle was also a motte and bailey design , with the Baile Hill motte probably reached by a horizontal bridge and steps cut up the side of the motte . Later that year , a Danish Viking fleet sailed up to York along

the Humber and the Ouse , and attacked both castles with the assistance of Cospatrick of Northumbria and a number of local rebels . The Normans , attempting to drive the rebels back , set fire to some of the city 's houses . The fire grew out of control and also set fire to York Minster and , some argue , the castles as well . The castles were captured and partially dismantled , and Malet was taken hostage by the Danes .

William conducted a widespread sequence of punitive operations across the north of England in the aftermath of the attacks in 1069 and 1070 . This " Harrying of the North " restored sufficient order to allow the rebuilding of the two castles , again in wood . The bailey at York Castle was enlarged slightly in the process ; buildings believed to have been inside the bailey at this time include " halls , kitchens , a chapel , barracks , stores , stables , forges [and] workshops " . By the time Domesday Book was written in 1086 , York Castle was also surrounded by a water @-@ filled moat and a large artificial lake called the King 's Pool , fed from the river Foss by a dam built for the purpose . More property , including two watermills , had to be destroyed to make way for the water defences . Over time the Baile Hill site was abandoned in favour of the first castle site , leaving only the motte , which still exists .

= = = 12th century = = =

Henry II visited York Castle four times during his reign . The royal chambers at the time were inside the keep for safety , and Henry paid £ 15 for repairs to the keep . During his 1175 visit , Henry used the castle as the base for receiving the homage of William the Lion of Scotland . Castle mills were built close by to support the garrison , and the military order of the Knights Templar was granted ownership of the mills in the mid @-@ 12th century . The mills proved to be vulnerable to the flooding of the two rivers and had to be repeatedly repaired .

In 1190 , York Castle was the location of one of the worst pogroms in England during the medieval period . The Normans had introduced the first Jewish communities into England , where some occupied a special economic role as moneylenders , an essential but otherwise banned activity . English Jews were subject to considerable religious prejudice and primarily worked from towns and cities in which there was a local royal castle that could provide them with protection in the event of attacks from the majority Christian population . Royal protection was usually granted as the Norman and Angevin kings had determined that Jewish property and debts owed to Jews ultimately belonged to the crown , reverting to the king on a Jew 's death .

Richard I was crowned King in 1189 and announced his intention to join the Crusades ; this inflamed anti @-@ Jewish sentiment . Rumours began to spread that the king had ordered that the English Jews be attacked . In York , tensions broke out into violence the following year . Richard de Malbis , who owed money to the powerful Jewish merchant Aaron of Lincoln , exploited an accidental house fire to incite a local mob to attack the home and family of a recently deceased Jewish employee of Aaron in York . Josce of York , the leader of the Jewish community , led the local Jewish families into the royal castle , where they took refuge in the wooden keep . The mob surrounded the castle , and when the constable left the castle to discuss the situation , the Jews , fearing the entry of the mob or being handed over to the sheriff , refused to allow him back in . The constable appealed to the sheriff , who called out his own men and laid siege to the keep . The siege continued until 16 March when the Jews ' position became untenable . Their religious leader , Rabbi Yomtob , proposed an act of collective suicide to avoid being killed by the mob , and the castle was set on fire to prevent their bodies being mutilated after their deaths . Several Jews perished in the flames but the majority took their own lives rather than give themselves up to the mob . A few Jews did surrender , promising to convert to Christianity , but they were killed by the angry crowd . Around 150 Jews died in total in the massacre . The keep was rebuilt , again in wood , on the motte , which was raised in height by 13 feet (4 metres) at a cost of £ 207 .

= = = 13th and 14th centuries = = =

King John used York Castle extensively during his reign , using the keep as his personal quarters

for his own security . The castle was kept in good repair during that time . During this period , the first records of the use of the castle as a jail appeared , with references to prisoners taken during John 's Irish campaigns being held at York Castle . By the 13th century there was a well @-@ established system of castle @-@ guards in place , under which various lands around York were granted in return for the provision of knights and crossbowmen to assist in protecting the castle .

Henry III also made extensive use of the castle , but during his visit at Christmas 1228 a gale destroyed the wooden keep on the motte . The keep was apparently not repaired , and a building for the king 's use was built in the bailey instead . In 1244 , when the Scots threatened to invade England , King Henry III visited the castle and ordered it to be rebuilt in white limestone , at a cost of about £ 2 @,@ 600 . The work was carried out between 1245 and 1270 , and included the construction of a towered curtain wall , a gatehouse of considerable size with two large towers , two smaller gatehouses , a small watergate , a small gateway into the city , a chapel , and a new stone keep , first known as the King 's , later Clifford 's , Tower .

Clifford 's Tower is of an unusual design . The two @-@ storey tower has a quatrefoil plan with four circular lobes . Each lobe measures 22 feet (6 @.@ 5 metres) across , with walls 9 feet 6 inches (3 metres) thick ; at its widest , the tower is 79 feet (24 metres) across . A square gatehouse , 21 feet (6 @.@ 5 metres) wide , protected the entrance on the south side between two of the lobes . There are defensive turrets between the other lobes . Large corbels and a central pier supported the huge weight of stone and the first floor . Loopholes of a design unique to York Castle provided firing points . A chapel was built over the entrance , measuring 15 feet by 14 feet (4 @.@ 5 metres by 4 @.@ 2 metres) , doubling as a portcullis chamber as at Harlech and Chepstow Castles . The tower is believed to be an experiment in improving flanking fire by making more ground visible from the summit of the keep . Although unique to England , the design of the tower closely resembles that at Étampes in France , and may have influenced the design of the future keep of Pontefract Castle . Henry employed master mason Henry de Rayns and chief carpenter Simon of Northampton for the project , and the cost of the tower accounted for the majority of the overall expenditure on the castle during this period of work .

The new castle needed constant investment to maintain its quality as a military fortification . Winter floods in 1315 ? 16 damaged the soil at the base of the motte , requiring immediate repairs . Around 1358 ? 60 , the heavy stone keep again suffered from subsidence and the south @-@ eastern lobe cracked from top to bottom . Royal officials recommended that the keep be completely rebuilt , but , instead , the lobe was repaired at a cost of £ 200 .

Edward I gave wide @-@ reaching powers to the sheriff of Yorkshire for enforcing law and order in the city of York , and the sheriffs established their headquarters in Clifford 's Tower . During the wars against the Scots under both Edward and his son , York Castle also formed the centre of royal administration in England for almost half the years between 1298 and 1338 . Many Westminster institutions followed the king north to York , basing themselves in the castle compound . The existing castle buildings were insufficient to house all the administrative institutions ; a temporary building inside the castle was built for the Court of Common Pleas at the beginning of the period , and rebuilt on a larger scale during 1319 ? 20 . The Exchequer took over Clifford 's Tower . Other buildings around the city had to be commandeered to absorb the overflow from the castle itself . As a result of the extended use of the castle for these purposes , the law courts at York Castle began to compete with those in London , a pattern that lasted into the 1360s . The castle eventually acquired its own mint in 1344 , when Edward III decided to create a permanent mint in York Castle to produce gold and silver coins to serve the needs of the north of England . European coiners were brought to York to establish the facility .

Henry III extended the castle 's role as a jail for holding a wide range of prisoners . The sheriff was responsible for the jail at this time , and his deputy usually took the role of a full @-@ time jailer . Up to three hundred and ten prisoners were held in the castle at any one time . The conditions in which prisoners were held were " appalling " , and led to the widespread loss of life amongst detainees . Prison escapes were relatively common , and many of them , such as the break @-@ out by 28 prisoners in 1298 , were successful . When the Military Order of the Knights Templar was dissolved in England in 1307 , York Castle was used to hold many of the arrested knights . The castle mills ,

as former Templar property , returned to royal control at the same time . Edward II also used the castle as a jail in his campaign against his rebellious barons in 1322 , and after the battle of Boroughbridge many of the defeated rebel leaders were executed at York Castle .

By the end of the 14th century , the castle bailey was primarily occupied by the local county administration . It was used extensively as a jail , with prisoners being kept in the various towers around the bailey . The old castle @-@ guard system for securing the castle had changed into a system whereby the crown used rents from local royal lands to hire local guards for the castle . Increasingly , royalty preferred to stay at the Franciscan friary , between the Castle and King 's Staith on the Ouse , while their staff resided at St Mary 's Abbey and St Andrew 's Priory in the Fishergate area .

= = = 15th and 16th centuries = = =

In the 15th century , York Castle , along with Nottingham Castle , was considered a key security asset in the north of England , but investment even in these castles diminished . Repairs to York Castle grew infrequent from 1400 onwards , and it fell into increasing disrepair . Richard III recognised the issue and in 1483 had some of the most decrepit structures removed , but he died at the battle of Bosworth before replacement work could commence . By the reign of Henry VIII , the antiquary John Leland reported that the castle was in considerable disrepair ; nonetheless the water defences remained intact , unlike those of many other castles of the period . As a result of the deterioration , Henry had to be advised that the king 's councillors no longer had any official residence in which to stay and work when they were in York . The castle mint was shut down after the death of Edward VI in 1553 , and the castle mills were given to a local charitable hospital in 1464 . The hospital was then closed during the Reformation , and the mills passed into private ownership once again .

The castle continued to be used as a jail , increasingly for local felons , and a location for political executions . By the 16th century it had become traditional to execute traitors by hanging them from the top of Clifford 's Tower , rather than killing them at Micklegate Bar , the usual previous location for capital punishment in York . In 1536 , for example , the political leader Robert Aske was executed at York Castle on the orders of Henry VIII , following the failure of Aske 's Pilgrimage of Grace protest against the Dissolution of the Monasteries . For most of the period the sheriffs of Yorkshire remained in control of the castle , although there were some notable exceptions such as the appointment of the royal favourite Sir Robert Ryther by Edward IV in 1478 . At the end of the 16th century , however , the Clifford family (Earls of Cumberland) , became the hereditary constables of the castle , and Clifford 's Tower took its name from the family at around this time .

The deterioration of the castle continued into the reign of Elizabeth I , who was advised that it no longer had any military utility . Robert Redhead , the tower keeper , became infamous at the time for taking parts of the castle to pieces and selling off the stonework for his own profit . Despite numerous attempts by local city and crown officials to halt this , Redhead continued to cause considerable damage before being forced to stop . Proposals were made to pull down Clifford 's Tower altogether in 1596 , but were turned down because of the strength of local feeling .

= = = 17th century = = =

Maintaining the castle was becoming increasingly expensive , and in 1614 King James sold the lease on Clifford 's Tower and the surrounding land to John Babington and Edmund Duffield , a pair of property speculators . In turn , Babington and Duffield sold Clifford 's Tower to a York merchant family . In 1642 , however , the English Civil War broke out between the rival factions of the Royalists and Parliament . Forces loyal to Charles I , under the command of Henry Clifford , garrisoned York Castle and the surrounding city in 1643 . York effectively became the " northern capital " for the Royalist cause . Clifford repaired the castle and strengthened the walls to permit them to support cannon , placing his arms alongside those of the king above the entrance . Clifford 's Tower 's gatehouse was substantially remodelled , losing its original medieval appearance . Baile

Hill , on the other side of the river , became a gun emplacement . The castle mint was reopened to supply the king 's forces with coins .

The war turned against the Royalist factions , and on 23 April 1644 Parliamentary forces commenced the siege of York . A Scottish army under Alexander Leslie came from the south , while a Parliamentary force under Ferdinando Fairfax came from the east . Six weeks later , Edward Montagu brought a third contingent to York , bringing the number of forces besieging the city to over 30 @, @ 000 men . William Cavendish commanded the city during the siege , while Colonel Sir Francis Cobb was appointed the governor of the castle . Despite bombardment , attempts to undermine the walls and attacks on the gates , the city held out through May and June . Prince Rupert , sent to relieve York , approached with reinforcements , and through clever manoeuvring was able to force the besiegers to withdraw , lifting the siege on 1 July . The next day , Parliamentary forces defeated Rupert at the Battle of Marston Moor , six miles west of York , making the surrender of York and the castle inevitable . On 14 July the city and castle surrendered to the Parliamentary forces , who permitted the Royalists to march out with full honours .

Parliament then appointed Thomas Dickenson , the local mayor , as the governor of Clifford 's Tower . Control of the castle rested with the post of mayor until the Restoration . Efforts were made to separate the structures of Clifford 's Tower , which Parliament used as a garrison , from the buildings of the bailey , which continued to be used as a prison . Oliver Cromwell visited Clifford 's Tower in 1650 , and received a salute from the guns stationed on top of it . The cost of the garrison was levied on the city of York .

After the Restoration of Charles II , the pre @-@ war owners of the property laid claim to Clifford 's Tower , eventually being granted ownership . A garrison continued to be stationed there , however , which prevented the owners from actually occupying or using the property . Repairs were made to the tower , and it became a magazine for storing gunpowder and shot . Attempts were made to restore the condition of the moat , which had become badly silted . Some political prisoners continued to be held at the castle during the Restoration period , including George Fox , the founder of the Society of Friends .

The county facilities in the bailey were expanded during these years , with improvements to the Grand Jury House and the Common Hall , but by the 1680s the role of the military garrison at York Castle was being called into question . Sir Christopher Musgrave produced a report for the Crown in 1682 ; he argued that it would cost at least £ 30 @, @ 000 to turn the castle into a modern fortification , producing a proposal for the six bastions that such a star fort would require . This work was never carried out . Meanwhile , the garrison and the castle had become extremely unpopular with the people of York , who disliked both the cost and the imposition of external authority .

On St George 's Day in 1684 at around 10 pm , an explosion in the magazine destroyed the interior of Clifford 's Tower entirely . The official explanation was that the celebratory salute from the guns on the roof had set fire to parts of the woodwork , which later ignited the magazine . Most historians , however , believe the explosion was not accidental . At the time , it was common in the city to toast the potential demolition of the " Minced Pie " , as the castle was known to locals ; suspiciously , some members of the garrison had moved their personal belongings to safety just before the explosion , and no @-@ one from the garrison was injured by the event . The heat of the fire turned the limestone of the tower to its current , slightly pink , colour . The now @-@ ruined tower was returned fully to private ownership , eventually forming part of the lands of the neighbouring house and gardens belonging to Samuel Waud .

= = = 18th century = = =

By 1701 , the conditions of the county jail had become scandalous and the decision was taken to redevelop the area occupied by the old bailey . A local tax helped to fund the development , and the king agreed for the ruins of St Mary 's Abbey to be cannibalised for building stone . Three new buildings were erected to the south of Clifford 's Tower . A new county jail , built between 1701 and 1705 by William Wakefield , was placed on the south side , closely resembling the fashionable work of John Vanbrugh . The local architect John Carr then built the Assize Courts on the site of the old

Jury House between 1773 and 1777 on the west side , and oversaw the replacement of the Sessions House and Common Hall by the Female Prison between 1780 and 1783 on the east side . The Female Prison and county jail were later combined to become the Debtors ' Prison . Both of Carr 's buildings were designed in a distinctive neoclassical style ; the Assize Court building was particularly praised at the time as being " a superb building of the Ionic order " . The castle courtyard was grassed over to form a circle in 1777 and became known as the " Eye of the Ridings " because it was used for the election of members of parliament for York .

Visits by the prison reformer John Howard as part of the research for his book *The State of the Prisons* found these prisons flawed , but in relatively good condition compared to others at the time . The Debtors ' Prison as a whole was an " honour to the county " of York , with " airy and healthy " rooms , but the felons ' wing of the prison attracted some criticism . The felons ' wing was " too small " and had " no water " for the inmates ; felons were forced to sleep on piles of straw on the floor . Indeed , conditions were so bad in the felons ' wing that nine prisoners suffocated in one night during 1739 .

Just outside the main walls , the castle mills had become increasingly ineffective from the 16th century onwards because of a reduction in the flow of the rivers driving the water @-@ wheels . As a result , in 1778 they were rebuilt with a new steam engine to drive the machinery ; this steam engine caused considerable discomfort to the prisoners affected by the smoke and noise .

= = = 19th and 20th centuries = = =

Criticism of the castle prison increased at the end of the 18th century . The facilities were felt to be inadequate and the crowds of spectators who gathered outside the prison to see inmates being taken into York for execution unseemly . Attempts were made to improve the way executions were carried out from 1803 onwards : the former castle courtyard , the Eye of the Ridings , was used for this purpose instead , although crowds still gathered outside the bailey to watch the slow deaths of the prisoners . By 1813 the execution process had been sped up by the introduction of the " short drop " method of hanging , allowing the unusually rapid execution of fourteen Luddite agitators at the castle in 1814 . Overcrowding in the jail was now also a problem , with up to 114 prisoners being held at any one time ; occasionally , around forty prisoners awaiting trial had to be kept in the jail yard for lack of space elsewhere .

The suitability of the prison was finally brought to a head at the 1821 assizes in York , when an official complaint was made and an investigation begun . The decision was taken to purchase Clifford 's Tower and the Waud house , with the aim of demolishing them both to make room for a new , more modern prison . Sydney Smith , the famous wit , writer and vicar of Foston @-@ le @-@ Clay , successfully led a campaign to save Clifford 's Tower , emphasising the historic importance of the location for the surrounding city . An alternative proposal , put forward by architect Robert Wallace , would have seen the conversion of Clifford 's Tower back into a habitable building to form the hub of a radial prison design , but this was turned down .

In 1825 , Clifford 's Tower and the Waud house were purchased by the county of Yorkshire at the cost of £ 8 @, @ 800 (£ 665 @, @ 000 at 2009 prices) . The new prison buildings , designed by architects P. F. Robinson and G. T. Andrews , were constructed in a Tudor Gothic style , including a gatehouse 35 feet (11 metres) high and a radial prison block , protected by a long , high stone wall . The prison , considered to be the strongest such building in England , was built entirely of stone to be both secure and fireproof . Dark grey gritstone was used in the construction to produce a forbidding appearance , although the prison itself was considered healthy and well ventilated . Clifford 's Tower played no part in the formal design of the prison , although the talus , or sloping edge of the motte , was cut away and replaced by a retaining wall to allow more space for the new prison building . The backyard of the Female Prison , concealed from public view by the new wall , was used for hangings from 1868 onwards . The Prison Act , 1877 , reformed the English prison system , and York Castle gaol was passed into the control of central government the following year . It was used as the county prison until 1900 , when the remaining prisoners were transferred to Wakefield Prison , and from then onwards the facility was used as a military prison instead .

By the early 19th century , dredging and other improvements to the river Foss had made it possible to import flour into York by river , reducing the economic significance of the castle mills . In 1856 , the castle mills were finally demolished as part of a further sequence of improvements to this part of the river . The King 's Pool that formed part of the castle 's water defences was drained . With the construction of several new bridges near the castle , the site became " surrounded by roads instead of moats " .

In 1890 the Prison Commissioners agreed to declare Clifford 's Tower a national monument and to conserve it as a historic location . In 1902 Clifford 's Tower was given to Yorkshire County Council , together with a grant of £ 3 @, @ 000 (£ 242 @, @ 000 at 2009 prices) arranged by Lord Wenlock for conservation and repairs . The removal of the talus and the damage to the castle stonework in the 16th century had put excessive pressure on the supporting motte , causing a recurrence of the 14th century subsidence . Sir Basil Mott , a leading Victorian engineer , installed concrete underpinnings to stabilise the structure beneath the gatehouse . By the early 20th century , Clifford 's Tower was regularly open to visitors , and in 1915 it was passed to the Office of Works as a national monument .

= = Today = =

York Prison finally closed in 1929 , and the Tudor Gothic Victorian prison buildings were demolished in 1935 . The Assize Courts building now houses the York Crown Court , while the former Debtors ' Prison and Female Prison , together with a modern entrance area , are now the Castle Museum . The circular grassed area between these buildings that was once known as the " Eyes of the Ridings " is now known as Castle Green , or the " Eye of York " . Clifford 's Tower is the most prominent surviving part of the original medieval fortification , although the stone steps up the side of the motte are modern . Fragments of the bailey wall , parts of the south gatehouse and one of the corner towers also survive .

The castle is classed as a Grade I listed building and a Scheduled monument . The site , managed by English Heritage , is open to the public . Until the 1970s , the pogrom of 1190 was often underplayed by official histories of the castle ; early official guides to the castle made no reference to it . In 1978 , however , the first memorial tablet to the victims was laid at the base of Clifford 's Tower , and in 1990 the 800th anniversary of the killings was commemorated at the tower . Recently , commercial interests have sought to introduce retail development to the area surrounding it . Citizens , visitors , academics , environmentalists , local businesspeople and Jewish groups have opposed the development with some success , winning a lengthy and bitter public inquiry in 2003 .