

Walk Through the United Kingdom and Ireland. 2026

9/21/2026 through 11/15

Results of Week 3 10/05 through 10/11

During this week we collectively walked 454 miles and had 25 participants. Sources for photos and other images are given in smaller front near the image. You can click on images to increase their size for a better view. A magenta line on the map for the week shows how far we walked that week.

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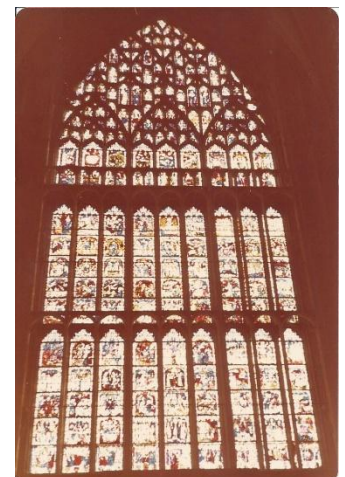
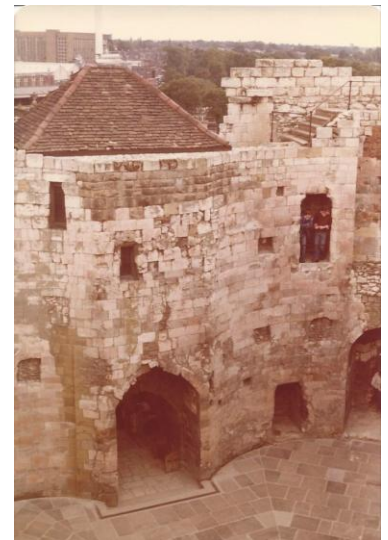
We left Hexham Monday morning and continued south toward York, one of your tour guide's favorite cities in England! York originally was founded by the Romans around 70 AD. It is situated at the point where the Ouse and Foss Rivers join together. It has a very famous cathedral, a castle, and some of the original city walls remain. It is located in the county of Yorkshire. However, there were various groups of settlers as early as 8,000 BC and the tribes changed over the centuries but the first real city was developed by the Romans.

We entered York through one of the old wall entrances. ©K. Scharer , old wall entrance, right, York Minster below left, Minster stained-glass window, below right. If you look at the background you can see some modern buildings in the

background of the city, But it retains much of the feel of an old Roman city. York initially was a Catholic city but prior to the reformation most Catholic churches were simply called Christian churches. In those days Christianity

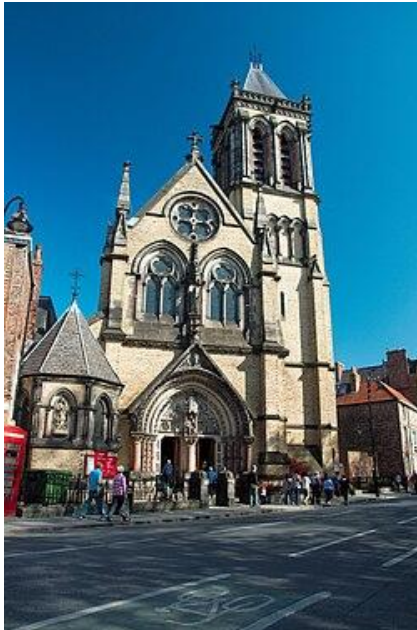
equaled Catholicism. We visited the beautiful York Minster. I am always impressed by the grandeur of this Cathedral and in awe of its beauty created so long ago. There were previous cathedrals in York; some were destroyed by fire and others during invasions or wars. The current Cathedral was begun around 1080

and finished by 1100 AD. It was considered to be Norman in architectural style. But by the 1200's, Gothic style reached a supremacy and the bishop ordered a new cathedral built so the old cathedral was demolished in sections as the new cathedral was being built on the previous foundation. The Bishop wanted a building that rivaled the Canterbury Cathedral and the York Minster was beautiful!. Work on the new Cathedral was begun in the 1200's but the church was not consecrated until 1472.



But in 1527, Henry the VIII declared separation of England's churches from the Roman Papacy because the Pope would not allow him to divorce and the Church of England was formed. The crown stole many buildings and the land holdings of the Catholic churches. Much damage was done to the York Minster in an effort to remove all signs of Catholicism from it. It was not until the 1700's that efforts were made to restore the church and it was named the Metropolitan Cathedral of York and the seat of the Anglican Archbishop. It is one of the largest Cathedrals in Northern Europe.

After a visit to the Minster, we went to see the Oratory Church of Saint Wilfrid. There has been a St. Wilfrid Catholic church in York since medieval times. The current Oratory Church of Saint Wilfrid was



built in Gothic Revival style. marsupium photography, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons,

exterior, left. Andrewrabbott, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior, right. There is a beautifully carved arch over the main entrance. The current St. Wilfrid's, completed in 1864, is beautiful inside with lovely sculptures and stained-glass, and art works. The present church was completed in 1864 and is one of the most perfectly finished Catholic churches in England, rich in sculptures, paintings, and stained glass. In the interior picture above, you can see some of the artwork. Currently the Oratorian Fathers are responsible for the church. We attended mass here while we were in York.



We also went to see the ruins of the St. Mary's Abbey in the city, left. ©K. Scharer, below left. Originally, the site held St. Olaf's church built in 1055. After the Normans invaded and destroyed St. Olaf's, the land was given to some monks who developed the Abbey and built a new church in 1088. What was once a very wealthy Abbey was destroyed following the reformation and the ruins are now part of the gardens for the York Museum.



Because of its location with two large rivers nearby, York prospered in manufacturing and was known for its fine fabrics. In the 1800's it became a hub of a new railway system and the city's manufacturing of candy grew into a major industry.



Before we left, we walked around part of the remaining city walls and saw the Merchant Adventure's Hall. ©K. Scharer, City wall and garden below, left, York Merchant Adventurer's Hall. The building is a guildhall built in the mid 1300's. A group of men and women with some influence in York joined together to form a religious group known as the Guild of Our Lord Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary. This group used the lower portion of the building as a hospital for the poor in the city. King



Henry, VI granted the group a royal charter in 1430 with the name of "The Mistry of Mercers". Queen Elizabeth I changed that name in 1581 to the "Company of Merchant Adventurers of the City of York".

The building itself is quite historic. It is the largest timber-framed structure in England that is still used for its original purpose The Great Hall is a timber-framed structure and was built over a five-year period. It is the largest timber-framed building in the UK still standing and used for its original purpose.



There is a chapel attached to the lower portion that is still being used for the patients and members of the Merchant Adventurers' Guild for worship. The structure is still solid and all of the timbers are held together using only wooden pegs. together by wooden pegs.

Michael D Beckwith, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons, Chapel left.

The Company of Merchant Adventurers is no longer involved in commerce but remains active as a charitable organization. The Company still owns the building and uses it for meetings.

Our final stop in York was to visit the remains of York

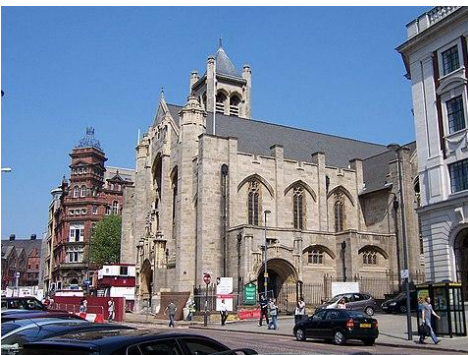
Castle, right. York Castle south tower by JThomas, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons; Clifford Tower, Amourgirl1, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, below left.



The fortified castle complex included castles, towers, courts, and prisons. Some of the buildings remain, while other parts are just ruins, today. The fortress was built on the River Foss as a defensive structure and

building began in 1068 by William the Conqueror to intimidate the Vikings who were nearby and continued over the centuries. It grew into a significant fortification for England. There were significant defenses on the Foss. The picture at left shows the ruined keep of the Normans known as Clifford's tower. There was a significant explosion in the fortress in 1684 which ruined its defenses but the jail continued to be used until 1929. There is a museum currently in the complex which gave us an interesting look into the past uses of the Castle.

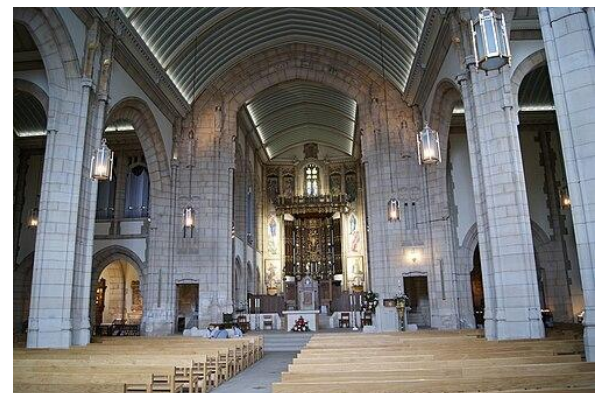
After completing our tour of York, we headed south and west for Leeds, only about 24 miles ahead but as we approached Leeds, we traversed some of the foothills of the Pennines mountains. The city is in the River Aire's valley. The city was a small, simple borough through 1200's but developed into a major center for wool trade during 1700's. During the Industrial Revolution, mills became a major source of income along with flax production, ironworks, engineering, and other industries. This growth in industry resulted in Leeds overtaking York in commerce activities. It has a very diverse economy with more private versus public sector jobs. It also has the fourth highest population of students and 5 major universities.



We stopped first at Leeds Cathedral, formally the Cathedral Church of St Anne, left. Jungpionier, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Exterior of St.

Anne's; Mtaylor848, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior photo. The original

cathedral of St. Anne's had to be demolished to widen the street. This Cathedral is from 1904. St. Anne's received major renovations in 2006. The current cathedral was



built in the Arts and Crafts Gothic Revival style. We attended Mass during our visit. Later in our visit, we were nearby the Cathedral around 5:00pm and went in to listen to evening vespers sung by the choir. That was a wonderful experience!

The cathedral has 5 choirs that sing at Vespers and regular services in rotation. The choir members are

drawn from inner-city state schools and recruited through a singing program the church provides to those schools.



Next, we visited the Leeds Civic Hall. It was built in 1933 to house the local government offices. It is distinguished by its twin towers. Although you can't quite see from this picture it has two wings extending from the front with one somewhat longer than the other. Tim Green, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, Civic Hall, Left.

Leeds is known for its shopping centers and markets. It has the biggest covered market in Europe, known as Kirkgate Market., Victoria Gate,



right, the newest shopping center. The old Corn Exchange was turned into a shopping market when the corn exchange was no longer needed. It leases out spaces to various vendors. The city is a mix of old and new buildings as the images below

shop for what we wanted. And the stores were good about shipping to our homes which meant we did not have to carry them around on our walk! Leeds City Markets by Alan Murray-Rust, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, above center; Mtaylor848, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons, above right.

But it was time to head to Liverpool. We headed southwest to the west coast of England. Liverpool is on the eastern bank Mersey River. It became a city in 1880. Being on the coast contributed to the city's growth during the Industrial Revolution. Liverpool's metropolitan area is currently the fifth largest in England. The city not only received general cargo and materials such as cotton and coal, it also participated in the slave trade. During the 1800's immigrants from England and Ireland frequently departed from the Liverpool docks for North America. It was also a port for several well-known cruise lines such as Cunard, and ocean liners such as the RMS Queen Mary, RMS Titanic, and RMS Lusitania.

Liverpool is famous for its music. The most significant group, of course, was the Beatles but many musicians continue to record there still today.. Liverpool has the highest number of #1 hit records of any city in the world. The city also has a long-standing reputation for producing countless actors and actresses, artists, athletes, comedians, journalists, novelists and poets. Kim Cattrall, David Morrissey, Jason Isaacs, Scotty Road, Rex Harrison are just a few of the well-known people from Liverpool. And there are many art galleries national museums and parks in the city.

Because Liverpool is an international port, it has attracted a diverse population. It has the oldest Chinese community in Europe and the oldest Black community in the United Kingdom.

Our first goal was to find the Cathedral. The Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, officially known as the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King was completed in 1967. We attended mass while we were here. Diliff, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, both exterior and interior photos.



Because of the relatively larger number of Catholics in Liverpool, the city was selected as one of the 13 new dioceses when the Catholic Hierarchy was re-established in England in 1850. The Irish famine in the prior years had contributed to the growing Catholic population there. Prior attempts



to build a Catholic Cathedral were thwarted by various circumstances such as WW II reconstruction costs or other financial issues. And in one situation a cathedral was built but almost immediately started to deteriorate due to poor design. So, in 1959, the world-wide completion was announced for a design for the Liverpool cathedral.

The conical design for the Cathedral was selected from designs submitted in the competition. Concrete was the main building material with Portland stone. The Cathedral is built in concrete with a Portland stone façade. A roof of aluminum completed the design. The Cathedral is conical in shape with a wider base decreasing in size and then a tower in a tube-like shape rises further up toward the heavens. The interior is a circular design with the 10-foot-long Altar at one side of the circle and seating in a circular extending outward. The extended tube at the top is all stained glass and there are smaller inserts of stained glass where the walls meet the ceiling. The building has a 195 feet diameter and there are 13 chapels extended off from the main seating areas. The building is supported by two ring beams to which 16 flying buttresses are attached. If you look closely at the exterior picture you will see a wedge shape structure which is the bell tower for the Cathedral. It is certainly the most distinctive Cathedral I have ever seen. But this may prove to be a new architectural style for the future.

There is an Anglican Cathedral in Liverpool which is the largest Cathedral in England. It was begun in 1904 and finished in 1978. We chose not to visit this cathedral, since it had never been a Catholic Cathedral but we saw it when visiting the Catholic Cathedral of Liverpool, since it is quite close to the Catholic Cathedral.

For those on our pilgrimage who were teens and young adults in the 60's and 70's, one of the main attractions of Liverpool is that it is the home of the Beatles. And Ringo at 84 is still performing there! The Beatles are the best-selling music act of all time, with estimated sales of 600 million units worldwide. I



wondered if Taylor Swift or some other popular singer or musical act had surpassed the Beatles' record by now but the Beatles remain on top in 2026! They were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988, and each principal member was inducted individually between 1994 and 2015. In 2004 and 2011, the group topped *Rolling Stone's* lists of the greatest artists in history. *Time* magazine named them among the 20th century's 100 most important people.

We went to visit "The Beatles Story" which is the permanent exhibition depicting the success of the Beatles. The Beatles are probably the best-known sons of Liverpool. The exhibit is in a UNESCO World heritage site on the Albert

Dock. We enjoyed our visit to this museum!

We left Liverpool and headed south to Chester. The You Tube video link below is slightly longer than three minutes and will give you a nice overview of Chester. Just watch until you get bored with it!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYjN1PcKMNC>

As you can see in the video Chester has many old-style Tudor buildings. Our first stop was to visit the Catholic Church, St Werburgh's Church, right.

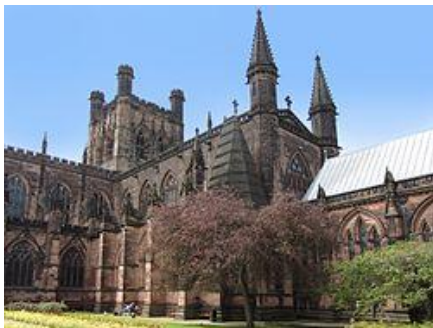
ReptOn1x, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons The first church dedicated to Saint Werburgh was built in Chester around 1800 on a different street. The current church building was erected on Grosvenor Park Road with the first Mass said on Christmas Day in 1875. There have been some renovations over the years but it still serves the parish well. We attended Mass here.

So, who was St. Werburgh (circa 650-700)? She was the daughter of a royal couple who lived in the midlands of England, where her father ruled an Anglo-Saxon state called Mercia. St. Werburgh had been educated in the Catholic faith by Chad who later was named Bishop of Lichfield and by her mother (who also achieved sainthood) while Werburgh was at home. She was granted permission by her father to enter the Abby of Ely which had been opened by her great-aunt.

She became the Fourth Abbess of Ely at a young age because of her great wisdom, succeeding her mother, her great-aunt, and her grandmother. St. Werburgh is known for reforming convents and monasteries across the Mercian kingdom, then ruled by her uncle. Upon her death, she was buried at the Hanbury Church in Staffordshire. Eight years after her death, her brother who had become king, decided to move her remains to a more visible location in the church at Hanbury. Upon opening the tomb, her body showed no signs of decay. This was considered a miracle. She was also credited with miracles during her lifetime. A shrine was built for her in the Hanbury church. Later when the Danes threatened Hanbury, her body was moved to the walled city of Chester for protection and placed in a church there. Later, the Chester Cathedral was built and her shrine became part of the Cathedral.

But with the dissolution of the Catholic churches convents and monasteries under King Henry VIII, St. Werburgh's shrine was broken up and her relics lost. The Chester Cathedral became Anglican. The stonework of the shrine remained in pieces. In 1876, those remaining pieces were reassembled and returned to the Lady's Chapel in the Anglican Cathedral which is named after St. Werburgh. We decided to visit the Anglican cathedral to see what remained of the shrine of St. Werburgh..

Originally built as the Abbey of St. Werburgh, the church was converted to an Anglican Cathedral as previously described. The former monastic buildings are part of the complex



Commons, reconstructed shrine, right.

The St. Werburgh's cathedral (pictured on the left) also includes other buildings of the former Abbey. Stephen Hamilton, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left. The cathedral's construction began in the 900's but has had extensive modifications over the years. user:mcginnly, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia

It always pains me to see the beautiful medieval or earlier Catholic Cathedrals and churches which were confiscated in the 1500's, especially since many of the Churches or Cathedrals which were allowed to be built in England since the mid-1800s do not have the same sense of grandeur, partly due to the limits of British building rules.





After seeing the Shrine to St. Werburgh, we went to see the Chester Castle. The city of Chester is a walled city with most of the walls intact with only about 330 feet missing. We saw the wall in some places as we toured the city. City Walls Chester by Richard Hoare, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

The castle sits on a hill in the S.W. section of the city. It was built around 1070. And as we explored it appeared as if the castle actually became part of the wall. We found out that the wall was added later.

Chester Castle by Jeff Buck, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left; Below the castle



walls is the River Dee which is important defense-wise. The River Dee meanders through the town as it heads out to sea, so having a fortress on a hill would have been very useful in preventing invaders from arriving from sea and through the River. The castle was added to on various occasions, the latest being in the early 1800's when some neoclassical buildings were added. Some of the most recent buildings are in use today by the Crown Court and also for a museum.

Another reason we stopped in Chester was to see Hadrian's Wall. The map at right shows the route of Hadrian's wall across England. Its primary purpose was defensive; The goal was to keep northern invaders, mostly Scots, out.

Nilfanion, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, route map of Hadrian's wall.



The wall passed



near Chester. It was a wall of stones about 8 feet wide and 12 feet high when it was built but many of the top layers of stone were removed over the years for construction of buildings. There were also deep large ditches on either side to the wall to further deter people for entering or leaving. Along the walls were various other defensive structures: Garrisons for soldiers in large forts, smaller buildings about every mile to facilitate communication along the walls and some turrets to serve as watchtowers.

Steven Fruitsmaak, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, Section of Hadria's wall.

From Chester we headed southeast to Nottingham. I think most of us learned about Robin Hood as children and loved the notion of stealing from the rich to help the poor! Nottingham has a castle, of course, which now serves as a museum. For a quick overview, this link will take you to a 2.5-minute video which shows Nottingham's major attractions, including a statue of Robin Hood.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xj-ql6njfsl>

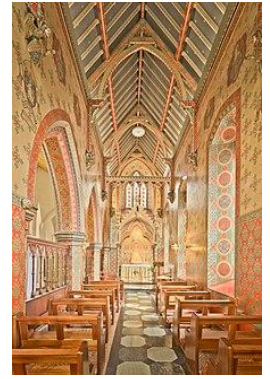
We went to find the Cathedral first. The Cathedral Church of St. Barnabas is a Roman Catholic

and is shown below, left. User:Hassocks5489, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons The cathedral was build in the mid 1800's, fifteen years after England passed the act ending most restrictions on practicing the Catholic religion. In 1852 it was elevated to one of the first four Catholic Cathedrals in England and Wales since the reformation!





Diliff, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, interior view of the nave left. Michael D Beckwith, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, right. We went to Mass at the Cathedral before continuing our pilgrimage.



Any aficionado of Robin Hood would want to see the castle and what is left of the surrounding forest, so we went there next.

Nottingham Castle is pictured below, left. When

Richard the Lionhearted returned

in 1194 from the crusades, his castle had been occupied by the

Sherriff of Nottingham and Prince John's supporters.

Richard was able to re-capture his castle after a siege.

Nottingham castle by Kim Fyson, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons, left .

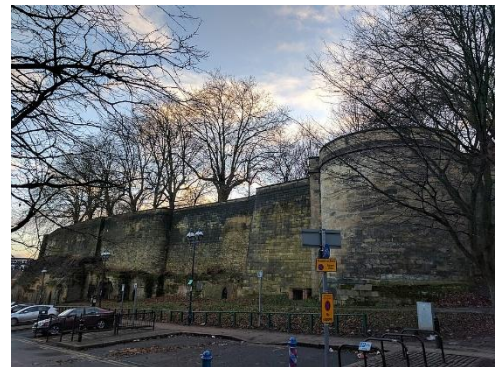
Enchufla Con Clave, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons, Outer walls of the castle Bailey.



The story of Robin Hood suggests that Robin Hood is helpful in getting

King Richard's castle back into Richards control.

From Nottingham we continued to Birmingham, where we will begin exploring next week!



Thanks for participating!
Your Tour Director,
Kathy Scharer