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ROMAN SIGNAL STATION – Scarborough Castle

Roman Signal Station:

The first occupants of the Castle headland formed a village settlement in the early Iron Age, although the earliest visible remains are those of the Roman Signal Station.

It was late in the Roman occupation, soon after A.D. 370 when the Signal Station on the Castle Hill was built. These signal stations were erected to cope with piratical raiders, but although manned by garrisons, their prime purpose was not defence; they were intended as look-out stations from which warning of enemy approach could be sent along the coast and to inland Roman garrisons.

(Source: Sir Alfred Clapham)

THE CASTLE

The remains of the Castle dominate the town, and well illustrate the great advance in the scale and skill of castle building effected during the latter half of the twelfth century. The first ward is entered through a barbican, the second across a bridge which was rebuilt in 1937-38; there was a third ward to the north, and in the innermost, or bailey, stands the square keep, still in part 80 feet high, with three storeys above a basement 55 feet square. South-east of it, excavation in 1888 revealed foundations of a hall with great chamber, kitchen, etc; and in 1921-25, Mr F G Simpson excavated the plan of the chapel and other buildings near the edge of the sea-cliff.

The Roman Signal Station was also excavated by him on this spot: it had consisted of a high square tower within a bastioned curtain-wall, berm, and ditch, and belongs to the well-known series of signal stations built on the Yorkshire coast later in the fourth century, to give protection against Saxon and other sea-raiders.

The excavations here also revealed the pits of an Early Iron Age settlement, established by immigrants apparently from the Low Countries at the very beginning of the period probably within the fifth century B.C.

(Source: Mr P K Baillie Reynolds)

The following are some landmarks in the history of the Castle:

- ▶ Some 70 or more years after Hardrada raided Scarborough, William le Gros, Earl of Albemarle, who led the army of the Yorkshire Barons at the Battle of the Standard, fought in 1138 near Northallerton, built the first Castle at Scarborough.

- ▶ King John visited Scarborough Castle in 1201, 1210, 1213 and again in 1216. King Edward I held court at the Castle in 1275 and, when Richard III visited Scarborough in 1484, one of the towers on the curtain wall was occupied by the Queen.
- ▶ In all, the Castle underwent five sieges, in 1312, 1536, 1557 and in 1644-45 and again in 1648.
- ▶ In the Civil War, Scarborough was ultimately the only royalist port on the East Coast, and it was not until 1645, with the garrison worn out and stores exhausted that the Castle surrendered to Parliament.
- ▶ For more than a year (1665-66), George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, was imprisoned in the ruined Charles' Tower of the Castle. Here he suffered great hardships, before he was leased by order of King Charles II.
- ▶ Construction of barrack in 1746, following the alarm caused by the Jacobite Rebellion the previous year.
- ▶ In 1914, during the Great War, the German fleet bombarded the town and Castle. The keep was damaged and the 17th century barracks almost entirely destroyed.

PARISH CHURCH OF ST MARY

The Church of St Mary belonged to the Abbey of Citeaux, but passed to Bridlington with the confiscation of the property of the Alien Houses. The twelfth century church was probably an aisle-less building and a must larger new church was begun around it c.1180. The W. front, formerly with two towers, is the earliest part of this structure and was followed by the nave arcades of which the arches sit irregularly upon cylindrical piers. This may mean that the bays and piers were inserted individually in the walls of the earlier nave. The western part of the S. arcade has a thinner wall and a different type of pier rather later date than the rest. The surviving S. transept was built in the second quarter of the fourteenth century and late in the same century the barrel-vaulted chapels were added to the S. aisle and a second aisle was added on the N. The aisled chancel was rebuilt about the middle of the fifteenth century. It was much damaged in the siege of the Castle in 1644-45, and ruined by the fall of the central tower in 1659; the N. transept also fell into ruin. The present tower was built in 1669 and the outer N. aisle in 1848-50. In a detached part of the burial ground is buried Anne Brontë, who died on 28 May 1849 aged 28.

(Source: Sir Alfred Clapham)