

King Richard III House in Scarborough

A comprehensive investigation of the history and characteristics of the house as well as the popular belief that King Richard III stayed here during the summer of 1484

By Jeremy Clark



King Richard III House in about 1835

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Nowadays visitors to Scarborough walking along the seafront opposite the Harbour will undoubtedly come across an unusual, looking lopsided house sandwiched between other buildings but clearly much older. This is the King Richard III House, now a restaurant. It is so called because it is believed that King Richard III stayed here in 1484 when he was in Scarborough on naval business.

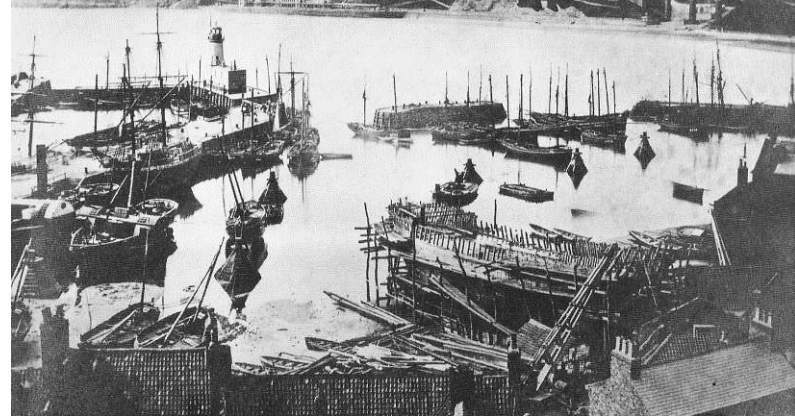
For fifty years King Richard III House was a museum with an antique shop next door. The building was bought in 1914 by E. Booth Jones, a Manchester antique dealer. His relative Edgar H. Burrows came from Birmingham to be manager. In fact during the First World War on December 16th 1914, German warships fired hundreds of shells into the town of Scarborough. Many buildings were destroyed but, fortunately King Richard III House escaped the attack which became known as 'The Bombardment'.

The Tindall family have a long history as shipbuilders in Scarborough from the seventeenth century. When James Tindall died in 1748, the Tindall yard passed to his son John. John Tindall the elder (1722-1773) married Jane Dowker of the Salton gentry family in 1745. They bought and lived in King Richard III house from the Cockerill family who were also shipbuilders in the seventeenth century and owned other property in Sandside. Their ten children were born there, and when Robert Tindall was born in 1764, there were ten gallons of gin at the bed head for visitors. The house became the residence of Robert Tindall (1764-1828), then it was used as the Tindall's office and stores, plans show the stems of ships being built on the sands opposite and reaching towards his house.



Above: Part of an engraving of Scarborough dated 1735 by John Settington illustrating the castle, St Mary's Church, harbour and ship-building along the waterfront. The position of King Richard III House as suggested by Christopher Hall, is indicated in the engraving largely hidden by the prominent Georgian building.

Right: The Tindall shipyard showing one of the last vessels, the barque "Thanes", on the stocks.



From 1755 to 1807, the Tindall yard produced the largest number of ships built in Scarborough.

Shipbuilding at Scarborough ended in 1863

The poor documentation of families and owners, from the Middle Ages onwards has made it impossible to compile a detailed and accurate history of families connected with the building. In about 1801 the Tindall's moved and the building was occupied by William Purcell a baker who made and sold ship biscuits or bread for every sailing tide. It next became an engineering shop owned by Thomas Varley. Some of the plaster ceiling was pulled down for shafting and machinery. It is also believed that the building was rented to a jet manufacturer. In 1830 Mary Forrest is said to have lived in King Richard III house, until she died in 1850. In about 1852 the bay windows were removed and the stone walls were plastered over to modernise the house. Subsequently the building became a greengrocers shop and until 1905, was occupied by varied tradesmen mainly fruiterers and greengrocers. However, in 1890 it was occupied by Lewis Plummer a coble owner and trawl net maker.

The Seaman's Mission Institute acquired King Richard III House in about 1908. The building was used to provide recreational facilities for boys under 16 who were considered too young to attend the main Institute. In about 1912 the mission allowed visitors to be shown around the house by the caretaker for an admission fee of 2d. The junior Institute closed sometime at the beginning of 1914 when Mr. E. Booth Jones bought the property and opened it to the public as a museum with his relative Mr Edgar H. Burrows as manager.



Left: This is probably the oldest photo of King Richard III house when it was occupied by Lewis Plummer a coble owner and trawl net maker in 1890. To the right with a long barbers pole is a tobacco shop. The building to the left is the Ye Old Buoy Inn which has steps and railings leading to a landing and the entrance door. In 1890 C. Horseman was the proprietor of the inn

Right: Another old photo showing King Richard III house. It was taken a few years after the above photo. The steps and railing leading up to the inn have been removed and the ground levelled. It has a flat front with a sign running over the top of the ground floor window and door which reads "LATE RESIDENCE OF RICHARCH III. MAY 22nd 1484. A table can be seen outside under the window displaying groceries and provisions with a woman sitting on a seat. This photo was taken in 1892 when the proprietor was a Mr. John Wray. To the right is a Tobacco & Cigars Stores with a long barber's pole. The sign along the top of the window reads "Gents Cutting & Shaving Room". In the doorway can be seen the owner standing on the left and a fisherman on the right. To the left is the Ye Old Buoy Inn, C. Horseman continued to be the proprietor in 1892





Left: Another old photo showing King Richard III house. It was taken a few years after the above photo. It has a flat front with the same sign running over the top of the ground floor window and door as in the above photo. Ye Old Buoy Inn to the left remains the same. To the right the long barber's pole has been removed, however shop remains a tobacconist but has change hands, the new proprietor being Joseph Sinfield in 1901

Right: This photo was taken in about 1908. It shows King Richard III house when it was taken over by the Seaman's Mission Institute. In front of the building is a group



of junior boys. This photo was probably taken when the institute was first opened. The flat front and sign running along to top of the ground floor window and door are the same as in the above photos. To the right is Cammie Fish and Chips shop run at the time by Benjamin Sanderson from 1905-1909

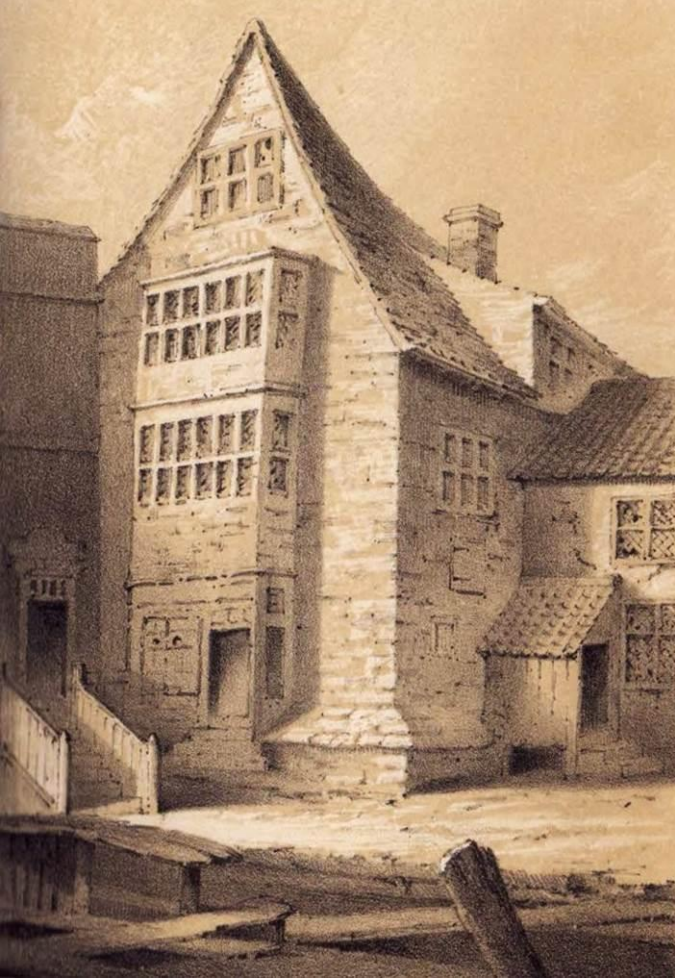


Left: This photo was taken in about 1912. The notice board on the wall to the right of the entrance door indicates that the building was King Richard III house and that is open to visitors for an admission of 2d. The second notice board lists the name of the caretaker to be contacted for visitors to be shown around the house and officials of the institute

In about 1915 Mr. E. H. Burrows converted the fried fish saloon, which it had become in 1910 into an antique shop

The three storeys tall stone building with an attic, overlooking the harbour, dates in part to the fifteenth century. It was extended by adjoining a two story hall on the east side and to the north with a rear range in about 1600. The original fifteenth century building then became the west-wing to the much larger stone-built house. The interior would have also been refurbished at this time. The building was considerably altered in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Sadly the owner Mr. E. Booth Jones was drowned on the Lusitania on May 7th 1915. The business and property from the estate was then bought by his relative and manager Mr. Edgar H. Burrows.



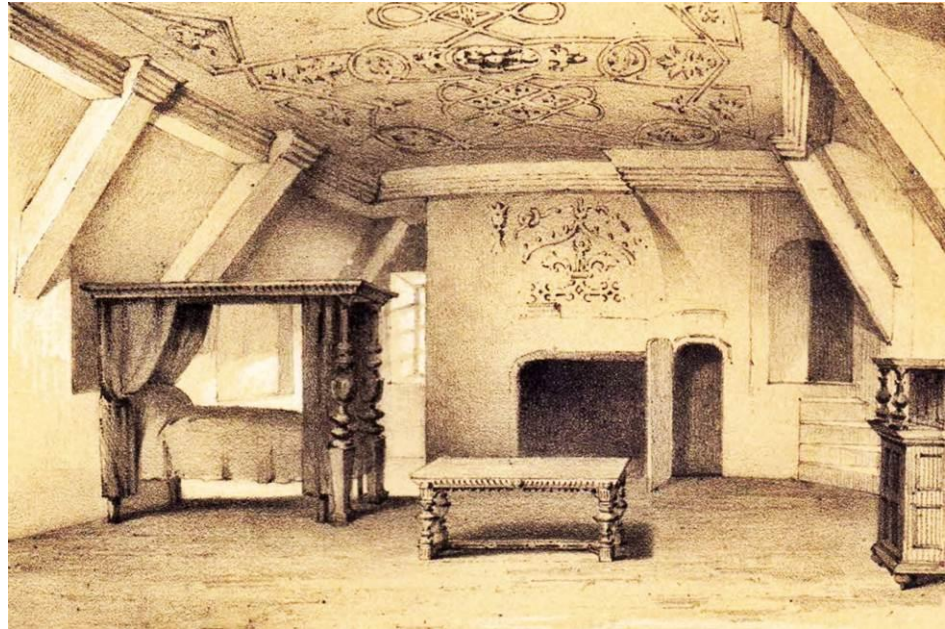
Mr. Burrows decided to rebuild the bay windows at the front, which were removed in the mid-1800s when the house was repaired and modernised and to uncover the stone walls. The replica bay windows were based on an early drawing by Miss Wharton, published in the *Scarborough Philosophical Society Reports of 1846-1865* and date to about 1835. Her drawing shows how it originally looked which enabled the builders to reproduce the bay windows and in actual fact were laid on the original foundations.

Left: This drawing is by Miss Wharton and dates to about 1835 before the three storey bay windows at the front were removed. There are steps leading up to the front door of the house and another set of steps with a banister on the sides leading to the entrance to the building on the left. The ground level is much lower compared with photos of the building. The projecting boards and plinth indicate that the sea reached near the front of the building in the early part of the 1800s

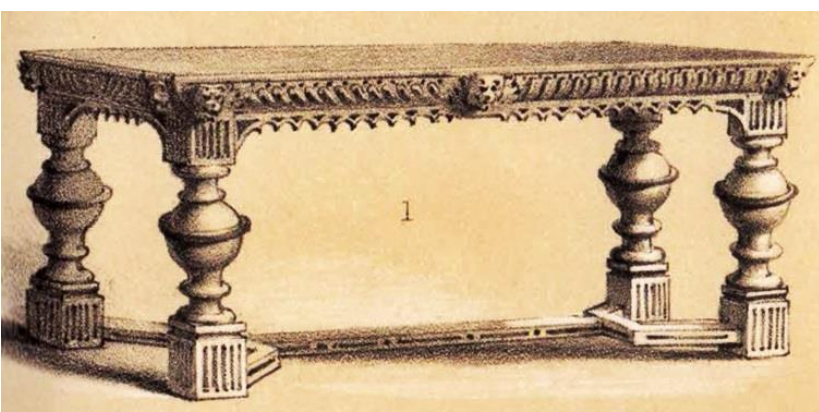
When Miss Wharton made a drawing of what has been called the 'King's Bedchamber', on the second floor, in about 1808 it was furnished with an elegant heavy legged table, a cupboard and a four poster bed. This furniture was disposed by the Tindall's in about 1808. The table went to Troutdale manor

house then given to John Wharton. Eventually the table was passed on to Mr Roberts, late curator of the Scarborough Museum who sold it to Mr William Flounders an antique dealer. He in turn sold it to Major Brooke of Leeds. The four poster bed and cupboard went to Joseph Taylor, who presented them to the Duchess of Leeds before his death in 1810. They were reported to be in Hornby Castle in 1879. When the Hornby Castle estate was broken up in 1930, the furniture was sold off at auction and most of the house was demolished.

Also in Miss Wharton's drawing can be seen the steeply-gabled roof, which has a decorated plastered ceiling below the attic. There is also decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast.

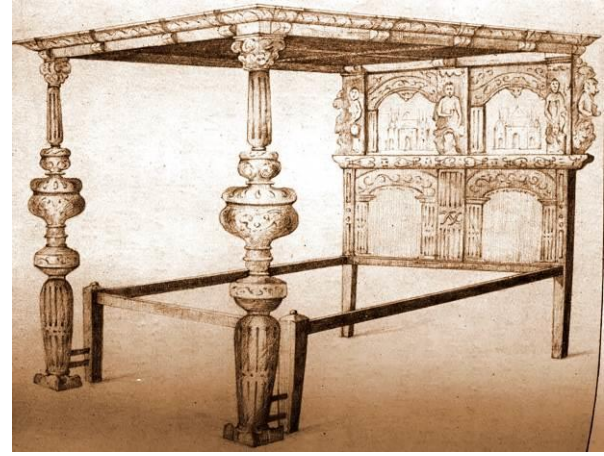


Right: Miss Wharton's drawing of the 'King's Bedchamber' illustrating the furniture, the decorated plastered ceiling and pattern on the chimney breast. To the right of the fireplace is the entrance door to the room and further to the right can be seen the steps leading to the attic door



Left: Detail drawing by Miss Wharton of the elegant heavy legged rectangular table with scrolling foliage front frieze with possibly lion faces. In style and design it is likely to be Dutch and dates to about 1600-1650

Right: Drawing of the four poster bed by John W. Whaley, illustrating the beautiful design with its intricately carved head board



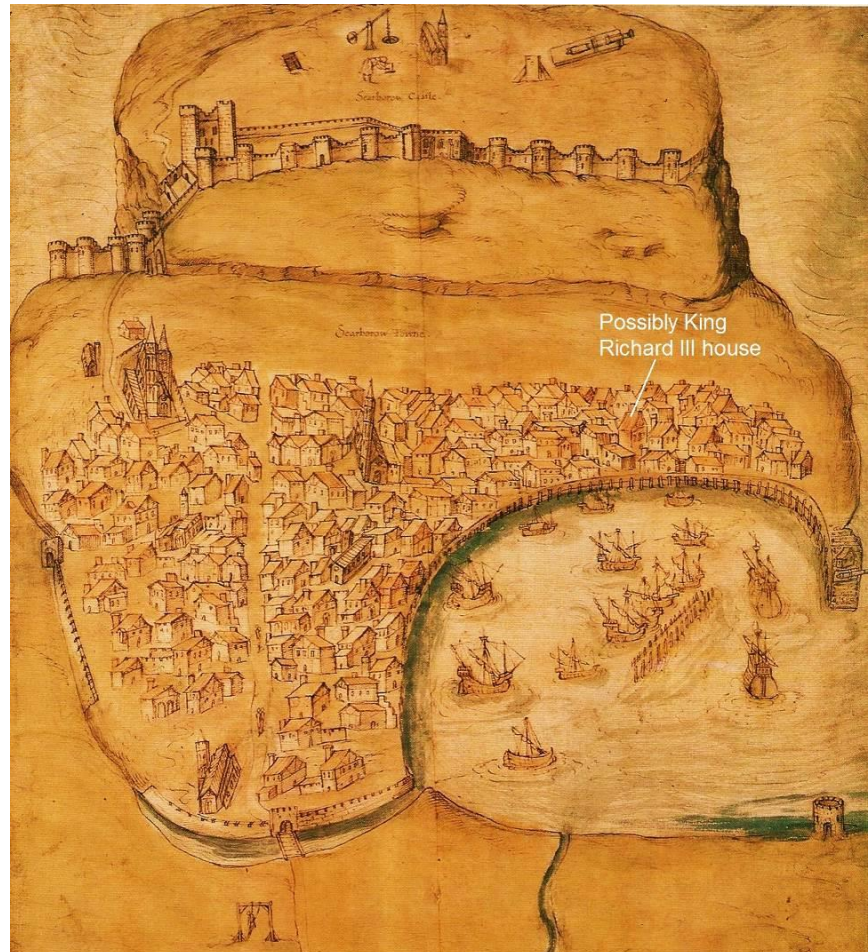
From Miss Wharton's drawings and the detailed drawing of the four poster bed by John W. Whaley it seems likely that the furniture in the King's Bedchamber are genuine seventeenth century pieces. The four poster bed is typical English in style, which perhaps dates to 1560-1620. The cupboard is probably later, perhaps 1600-1650 in date but in style and design is more Dutch than English. The elegant heavy legged table is about the same date, 1600-1650 and again is of a type more typically found in Holland than England. The Dutch connection with the furniture may have something to do with the Cockerill and Tindall families being shipbuilders in the seventeenth century and possibly trading with the Netherlands. It also seems likely that the furniture was installed in the house when it was owned by the Cockerill's in the seventeenth century.

When Mr. Burrows began restoring the interior in 1915 he discovered blocked-up old stone doorways on one side of the building and on the other side early windows which had been filled in, showing that it was not only part of a much larger house but was also a detached building. These extensions to the building do not remain today. The earliest illustration of King Richard III House is in John Settingington's pictorial engraving of Scarborough dated 1735. According to Christopher Hall it illustrates the building of King Richard III House partly obscured by a prominent Georgian building. Between 1780 and 1800 the adjoining two storey hall and the rear west-wing of the building were demolished leaving in part the original fifteenth century house standing, which remains today and the area around the building redeveloped. To the east side a lower small building was attached and to the west a larger building was constructed. Today the King Richard III house is a Grade II listed building.



Above: A close up of John Settingington's engraving of Scarborough dated 1735 illustrating the position of King Richard III House largely hidden by the prominent Georgian building. It shows ship-building in progress close by.

Right: This is the earliest plan of Scarborough drawn in 1538 for Henry VIII as part of a military survey of the coast. It clearly shows the town wall with two gates and the harbour beneath the castle on the headland. This plan was drawn at the time the original house was standing, where Richard is reputed to have stayed in 1484. There is a tall building illustrated near the harbour and in design and style it looks remarkably like the house of the present-day building standing on Sandside overlooking the harbour



Restoring the interior was no easy task as the thick walls were covered with boarding, plaster and wallpaper and the rooms had been sub-divided into several sleeping quarters. All of this was stripped away to reveal their original state with old stone doorways, fireplaces, beamed ceilings and windows. On the ground floor oak rafters rest on a massive beam of about 1600, supported by stone corbels that showed traces of the bullocks' blood applied as colouring. Only two sections of a decorated plasterwork frieze survived. They were identified just below the rafters above the stone doorway that formerly led to steps to the second floor, but now gives access to additional setting for the restaurant, with the second sections further to the right. The decoration is in the form of fleur-de-lis scrollwork and the frieze probably ran around the four walls decorating the room.

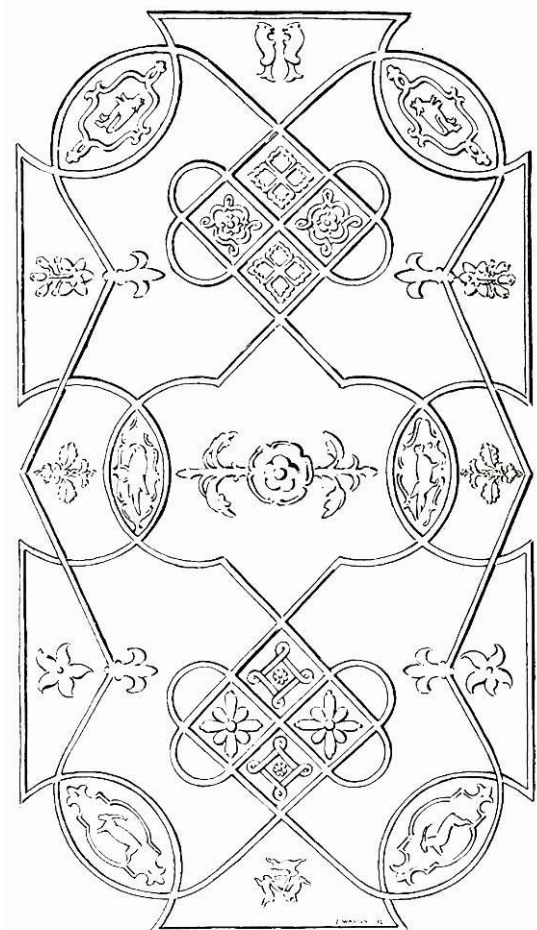


Left: Decorated plasterwork frieze of fleur-de-lis scrollwork above the stone doorway. Courtesy Sara Griffiths

The elaborate decorative plasterwork of the ceiling on the second floor, known as the 'King's Bedchamber', survived all the previous alterations. However, it was hidden beneath coats of whitewash

obscuring the finer details in the plasterwork. When Mr Burrows cleaned away the dirt and the thick layers of whitewash the impressive fine decorated plaster ceiling was revealed.

It was decorated with a geometrical multi curve and square panel's pattern of thin ribs. The central feature is of the York Rose, the Arms of Richard III and prominently displayed at each of the four corners is the bull of the Nevilles (the family arms of Anne of Warwick, Richard's Queen). The decoration also includes fleur-de-lis, foliage, sea serpents, parrots and a group of three rabbits each complete but possessing only three ears between them. The plasterwork is probably the work of local plasterers undertaken in about 1600 when the interior was refurbished.



Right: Drawing of the decorated ceiling on the second floor

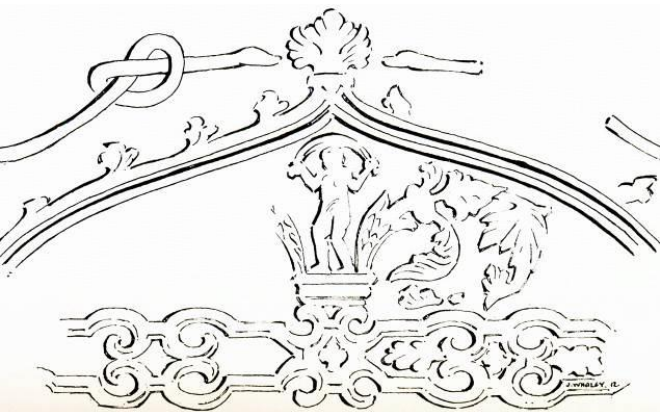
Above left: Illustrating the multi-curve pattern with a central rose. Photographs Courtesy of Sara Griffiths

Left: This photo shows one of the bulls, fleur-de-lis, flowers and the central rose.



The decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast also survived but suffered some damage. The decoration consists of a gothic pointed arch, with decorative scroll work and the centre piece depicts a figure on a plinth

Right: Decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast.
 Courtesy Sara Griffiths



Left: Detail drawing of the decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast



After restoration work was completed to the three large rooms to something like their former appearance Mr. Burrows equipped them with antique furniture of various periods and with collections of domestic pewter, copper, and brass ware. These were displayed in the three rooms alongside suits of armour, swords and curiosities.



Left: The ground floor showing the original oak beams and stone fireplace with a roasting spit in front. A suit of armour stands to the right of the fireplace. The decorated plasterwork frieze can just be seen below the rafters and above the stone doorway leading to steps to the second floor. This room is filled with a large range of antiques

In the stone-flagged floor, half concealed by the oak chest, which can be seen on the right, is a trap-door to the cellar, where it is said, although without foundation, that there is an underground passage that leads to the castle

Right: This first floor room was named the Kings Hall, the fireplace can be seen set in the middle of the wall, with steps on the right leading to the second floor known as the King's Bedchamber. It is full of furniture and objects set around the room. To the left of the fireplace, standing against the wall is what looks like an Egyptian Sarcophagus





Left: This room is known as the King's Bedchamber, the decorated ceiling can just be seen at the top of this old photo and the decorative plasterwork on the chimney breast. To the right of the fireplace is the entrance door and farther right are stairs leading to the attic. As with the other rooms it has been furnished with antiques and furniture

One additional curious feature that Mr Barrows included in the building was a stone carving of King Richard III he bought in the Midlands. He set the sculpture on the outside wall next to the entrance protected by an iron grill. This grotesque stone effigy chained by the neck with a crooked body, holds a skull in one hand, wearing a metal crown on his head, the feet are cloven and was supposed to have portrayed the character of King Richard III. Conversely, his physical condition and appearance were not a magnification of his character. This little grotesque stone figure was sadly stolen a few years ago and has not been recovered. It is believed that it was

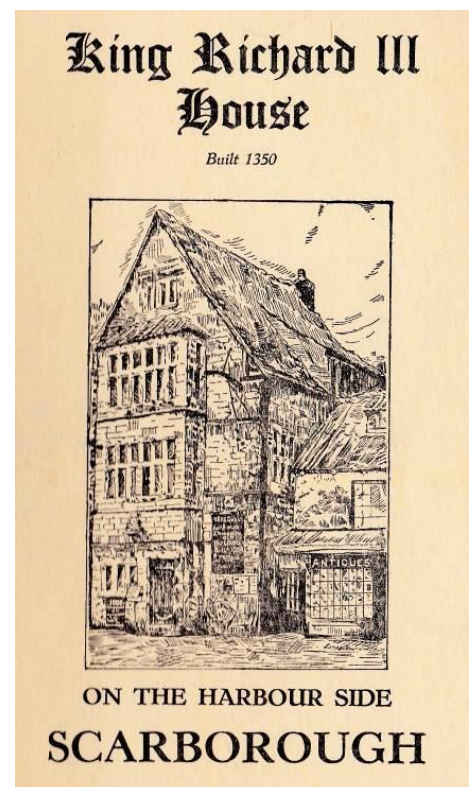


thrown into the harbour, but this cannot be proven. The iron grill was removed after it was stolen. However, the grotesque stone effigy was not an original feature, its intention was to intrigue and encourage visitors to the museum.

Left: The grotesque stone effigy with a skull before the protective iron grill was put in place. It was stolen a few years ago and has not been recovered. The iron grill was removed after it was stolen

Over the years the museum attracted a small number of visitors and the antique shop next door helped to finance the museum. When Mr Burrows died his son, C. H. Burrows took over the business with his wife. They produced a booklet for visitors to the museum outlining the history of the building which also gave some details of King Richard III's stay in Scarborough. Regrettably Mr Burrows and his wife sold the building in 1964 and it became a café and then restaurant which it remains today.

Right: The museum booklet outlining the history of the building, written and published by C. H. Burrows



King Richard III in Scarborough

After he was crowned in 1483, King Richard III made a northern tour. He was at Scarborough on May 22nd 1484 and again from 30th June to 11th July. His purpose was to assemble a fleet to fight and to resist the expected invasion of Henry Tudor, later Henry VII. It is reputed that King Richard III stayed in the house named after him on the foreshore during the summer of 1484. He might well have found this location beside the harbour within view and easy access of his ships more convenient than the castle. Nevertheless, he did stay for a time at Scarborough Castle because writs, warrants and other documents were sealed by him on 22nd May and 5th July and were 'given at the castel of Scardeburgh'. In fact he was the last monarch to reside at the castle. However, Royal orders issued after 5th July were 'given at Scardeburgh' so it is possible that Richard did stay in the house built on Sandside in the fifteenth century for a few days, even though there is no conclusive evidence to confirm this.

Although not recorded in documents, the original house is thought to have belonged to Thomas Sage (cira.1430-1497), one of the town's leading burgesses and the richest ship-owner. He was a very wealthy man who had property in the area and was well-disposed towards Richard.

In 1485 King Richard III granted Scarborough a new charter, making Scarborough a county rather than a borough. This was subsequently revoked after his death by Henry VII.

King Richard the III (2 October 1452 -22 August 1485) was King of England from 1483 until his death in 1485 at the Battle of Bosworth Field. He was the last king of the House of York and the last of the Plantagenet dynasty. His defeat at Bosworth Field was the last decisive battle of the Wars of the Roses.



After the battle Richard's body was taken to Leicester and buried in the Church of The Grey Friars. His body was found in 2012 during an archaeological excavation and on 26th March 2015 his remains were reburied in Leicester Cathedral rather than in York Minster as many of his supporters had hoped.

Left: A facial reconstruction of the head of King Richard III with blond hair and blue eyes. DNA testing suggests that this would have been his colouring



Right: A plaque in remembrance of King Richard III inside Leicester Cathedral



Left: Aerial view of the harbour and front at Scarborough. King Richard III house can be seen in the blue circle. To the right is the curtain wall of the castle, which extends along the whole length of the promontory overlooking the town. At the top right is the Barbican and Gatehouse to the castle

When the building was taken over as a café in 1964 a few alterations were made to the interior on the ground floor. The stone fireplace was removed and replaced with a flight of stairs to a newly built kitchen at the rear. The stone-flagged floor was covered with wooden floorboards and the blocked-up doorways to the former Antique shop next door were cleared to make entranceways to additional setting areas of the restaurant. The stone walls and the oak rafters which rest on a massive beam were retained in their original condition.

Right: King Richard III house as a museum in the 1950s with an antique shop next door



Left: King Richard III House as a café in 1986



Despite these few alterations it has kept its medieval appearance which it had at the time of King Richard III, even though there it is uncertain that he actually stayed here.

Today the restaurant is smartly decorated and has a good atmosphere. Full suits of armour are suitably placed while parts of armour decorate the stone walls.

However the second floor, known as the 'King's Bedchamber', which has the elaborately decorative plasterwork ceiling with the York Rose, the Arms of Richard III, is not open to the public. The remains of part of the fleur-de-lis scrollwork frieze can be seen on the ground floor of the restaurant on the east wall above the stone doorway giving access to the additional seating area. There is also seating outside in front of the building with views of the harbour.

Right: King Richard III restaurant today, with visitors setting outside



Acknowledgements

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