

Wel come t o Bar l ey Hal l

This house belongs to York Archaeological Trust and is named after the Trust's first Chairman, the late Professor Maurice Barley. The oldest parts date from about 1360, when the Hall was built as the York townhouse of Nostell Priory, a monastery near Wakefield in West Yorkshire. A new wing was added in about 1430. Soon after, the Hall became the home of a leading York citizen, William Snawsell – goldsmith, Alderman and Lord Mayor of York.

The house was bought by the Trust in January 1987. Later that year a full archaeological investigation of the interior was carried out through one metre of deposits to the 14th century levels, revealing the remains of the floor of the Great Hall. Further investigations in 1990 and 1991 looked at the courtyard and found the remains of the exterior stairway to the Great Chamber on the first floor. Work to restore the Hall to its former glory began in 1990 and it re-opened to the public in 1993.

The furnishings and equipment you will see during your visit have been created to depict the Hall as it might have appeared in about 1483, when the Snawsell family lived here and Richard III was King of England. Many of the furnishings you will see have been carefully researched and handmade by craftsmen using medieval techniques.

During your visit you may sit on the chairs or benches, handle the objects displayed, and take photographs. Please be aware of the high sills at the entrances to rooms – watch how you step over them and look out for the candles when they are lit – they may drop wax or tallow on your clothes if you stand underneath them.



The Store Room

The first room, which is now the admissions area and shop, would have been a workshop or storeroom. It may also have served as makeshift sleeping place for the lower servants, such as the scullions who did the daily work in the kitchens.

The roof in this room has quite a lot of original timber (the darker wood). These timbers have been tree-ring dated to 1360, when this part of the house was built. King Edward III was then on the throne and York was approaching the height of its importance as the second city of medieval

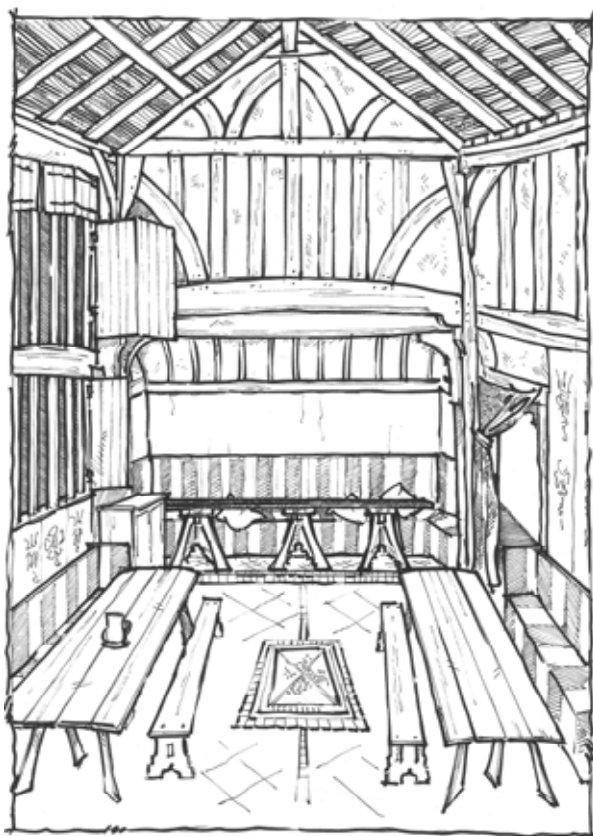
England. Look for the main timber, stretching across the middle of the roof. Where it joins the wall, furthest from the courtyard door, you can trace four straight lines and a diagonal, scratched across it. This is a fourteenth-century carpenter's mark. It told them to place this timber in the fourth main bay from the east and on the north side of the building.

The Steward's Room

Move into the next room, which would have been a second storeroom, called the Steward's Room. The herbs and straw you see in this room would have been used in bedding and to dispel any fleas that may have lived there

Whilst in this second storeroom, look at the "fenestral" window. This is made of linen stretched over wooden lattices and treated with alum, rosin and sheep's tallow. The recipe came from a fifteenth century manuscript and makes the linen both translucent and weather proof. These "fenestralls" were the first produced for several centuries.

Go through to the area at the bottom of the stairs – note the modern toilets are located here. Go through the doorway to your right into the Great Hall.



The Great Hall

The Great Hall was built in about 1430, on the site of an earlier hall. It was the room where the household ate alongside the family. The family sat at the raised high table and the lesser folk at the side tables flanking the central fireplace. There's a smoke hole directly above the fireplace. The hall has elaborate folding shutters at its windows with elaborate iron hinge-straps, which are copies of early 15th century examples in the Zouche Chapel of York Minster.

The far end of the hall, where the glass panel is now, originally opened directly onto an internal corridor between the front and back doors of the house, so the food prepared in the kitchen and buttery could have been carried straight across the corridor into the Hall. After the medieval period, when the house was broken up into smaller units, the corridor became a public alleyway, which it remains to this day. Later still, the hall itself was divided horizontally into 3 rooms, one above the other. The joist holes for one of the later floors can be seen in the beam above the glass panel. The Hall you see today has been restored to its original height and the tiled floor archaeologists discovered during excavation has been reconstructed.

Meals served here might have consisted of a first course such as beef and herb pottage, brawn in mustard sauce, a dish of thrushes in salt and cinnamon, and apple fritters. Later courses may have included lamb and ginger, curlew in a sauce of salt, sugar and river water, and creamed almonds. Dessert might have been wafers and sweet wine or spiced hippocras and figs with cheese.

Meals in houses such as Barley Hall would have been governed by complex etiquette and elaborate table manners. They also required very different tableware from that used today. The spoons you see were cast in pewter, and the acorn-ended spoon reproduces an original in the

Yorkshire Museum, which is possibly the work of a medieval pewterer working in Stonegate. The glasses would have been imported. These replicas are from Prague, where the Czech craftsmen have revived the techniques of the medieval glassmakers. Ordinary diners drank from turned wooden bowls, which are also depicted in this room. No forks were used at table, and diners normally provided their own eating knives. One of the knives you see here is replicated from a 15th century example excavated at Bedern in York. The rectangular pewter 'trencher bases' were used as individual chopping boards.

The table linen or 'napery' in this room would have been amongst the most prized status symbols for a medieval household. Linen illustrated social status; therefore the High Table was furnished with fine diapered linen, whilst the lesser folk made do with plainer versions.

The painted linen hangings in the Great Hall were very popular in late-medieval York, particularly amongst those who could not afford the more expensive figured tapestries. The linen canvas you see here was first sized with rabbit-skin glue and then painted with background colours of rich burgundy and green. Dyes for these textiles were produced using natural (vegetable) dyes such as those used in medieval times. Weld or Dyers' Rocket produces a strong yellow colour; this was over-dyed with blue woad or indigo to provide the green colour. The decoration is derived from the Book of Hours; a manuscript produced for the Bolton family in York, who may have known the Snawsell's, using pigments hand-ground from authentic ingredients.

When you leave this room go up the stairs on your right and at the top turn immediately right into the Parlour

The Parlour

Look out of the window in this room and you will have a good view of the roof of the Hall. The roof tiles are replicas based on surviving examples and are hung on oak pegs and hand-split oak laths. The tiles are torched underneath with mortar to keep out the weather.



In the roof of this room you will see a brass chandelier from Flanders, with a figure of the Virgin and Child. The original would have been brought into Hull during the period when they were very fashionable with the richer citizens of York. This replicated example was cast from an original, which hangs in St John's hospital in Bruges. The turned chair, the polygonal table with writing slope, and majolica vase in the Parlour are all based on Flemish paintings. The "red chest" is based on an original 14th century chest, which still retains some of its red colouring, in a church near Ripon.

Leave this room by the staircase here, and go down again to the ground floor, where you will find the Buttery and Pantry.

The Buttery

The buttery is the left-hand room of the two across the passage. This is where the wine barrels or butts were kept. The servant who worked in from this room was the butler.

Wine would have been claret from Gascony, or Rhenish wine, from the Rhinelands. Wine would have been for the gentry whilst commoner folk drank ale.

Barley Hall displays more than 20 different types of pottery mostly based on originals found in and around York, including local Hambleton greenware, 'Walmgate jugs' and purple Humberware. There is also imported Low Countries frying pans and salt glazed stoneware from the Rhineland. See if you can see the odd looking green glazed bowl which may have been used for drinking games. As the liquid sinks, two swimming stags are revealed.

The Pantry

The next small room is on your left hand side as you come out of the buttery door. The pantry is where food was plated up to take to the Great Hall, and where food was kept. Its name derives from the French '*pain*' or bread.

The pewter rectangles are trencher bases – an individual chopping board used at table.

To continue your tour, re-climb the stairs, and walk through the Parlour to the Gallery at the top of the main stairway.

The Gallery

This room is part of a brick extension added to the back of Barley Hall, probably during the late 1500's. The timber framed wall to the left of the door you have just come through was originally the outside wall of the medieval building and the windows further along, which look down into the Great Hall, were originally outside windows.

Look at the window opposite the Parlour door, which is made of horn strips. This is a replica, but horn windows were once quite common in medieval buildings, because horn was cheaper than glass. Cow horns were softened by soaking them in water and then cut and rolled into strips. The strips were not very large because only the semi-transparent central section of the horn can be used.

This room would have been the goldsmith's workshop. Alderman Snawsell was a goldsmith and Master of the King's Mint. At least three craftsmen would have been employed to work here as goldsmiths as well as apprentices, but most of the trade would have been in silver or silver gilt. These craftsmen would have served a three years' apprenticeship and were called "journeymen", because they got paid by the day, (*journée* in French).

Walk through the next door and you will find yourself in the Lesser Chamber.

The Lesser Chamber

This is one of the smaller bedchambers with an attic room for a servant above. There is quite a lot of ancient timbering in the roof here, including another carpenter's code mark, which can be found in the main crossbeam where this joins the wall containing the door back into the Gallery. This mark depicts two straight lines and a crescent, indicating the second bay on the south side of the building. This would have been the Lady's chamber.

Walk through into the end room, which is the Great Chamber

The Great Chamber

The Great Chamber would have been the grandest private room in Barley Hall. It was a combination of master bedroom, study, private dining room and inner sanctum for the master of the

house. Look up, and you will see one of the crown post trusses, which support the roof of this part of the building.

Leave this room either by the door in the far left hand corner or retrace your steps to the admissions area and shop.

The Courtyard

If you have descended from the Great Chamber via the external staircase you will be in the courtyard where you can see most of the house. The lower, two storey range built in about 1430 contains the Great Hall. The higher, 3-storey range – the one you have just left – houses the storerooms with the private chambers above. If you were an important enough person, you could go directly to the private rooms of the Alderman via the outside staircase.

Alderman Snawsell finally retired in 1492 on the grounds that he was “greatly diseased and vexed by many diverse sicknesses”. He probably died in 1494 or 1495 at the age of at least 80. About a century after his death, Barley Hall began its descent into obscurity. Its exterior was hidden by a brick skin and its very existence was all but forgotten. When York Archaeological Trust acquired it in 1987, the Great Hall range had recently been in use as a plumber’s showroom. Today, work continues on bringing the hall back to life through visits, events and costumed interpretation for school visits.

We hope that you have enjoyed your time with us and will visit Barley Hall again in the future