

A TRIP TO EUROPE

Ninth article in the series by Miss Margaret Laundry.

ENGLAND (Continued)

As was our custom on arriving in a "new" city we headed directly for an information center to collect pamphlets and inquire about city tours. We found in York instead of the usual competitive tours a system of volunteer guides who after some study devoted their Sunday afternoons and off hours to walking tourists through the most interesting parts of the old city. Strangely enough our guide was a young Australian woman who found this not only an interesting pastime but a good way to meet people.

"The History of York is the history of England". She pointed out parts of fortification walls built by the Romans almost 2,000 years ago, added on to by the Saxons, Normans and so on, each era distinguishable by its style of building or its typical bricks and mortar. York was at one time a completely walled city and $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles of this wall are still standing - just a nice walk along the top of it for a Sunday afternoon. Of course as the city expanded it built outside the walls. As we walked through the old streets we saw torch snuffers at many doorways, long inverted metal cones, where, in the days before street lights, night travellers could extinguish their torches. Wide mouthed lead drainpipes running down the sides of the older houses had most unusual designs with grotesque heads or simply the initials of the builder and the date.

A city in England is distinguished from a town not by a population of over 12,000 as in Canada but by the presence of a cathedral. Yorkminster (minster meaning a cathedral or seat of a bishop), placing York in the city category contains the oldest stained glass in England dating back to 1200. Did you know that genuine stained glass casts a clear light not a reflection tinted by its own colours as does the coloured glass of today? The secret of producing stained glass died with its makers and has never been rediscovered. The windows at the back of the high altar are as large as tennis courts but due to the immense proportions of the whole church they did not look their size. In the left transept stand the "Five Sisters Window", standing 57 feet high, a memorial to the five women's war services and adopted from a tapestry worked by two sisters. The pattern is a geometrical design of many colours containing over 300,000 pieces and none more than 2 inches in diameter. The Lantern Tower, a large

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A TRIP TO EUROPE (Cont.)

square, arising from the center of the building was not so called as might be thought from its shape but due to the fact that it originally held a lantern which guided travellers thro a nearby forest.

Holy Trinity Church a very tiny version of the minster has preserved as it was over a 100 years ago with a rough uneven stone floor, tall wooden box pews (where sitting with your back to the Minister was quite acceptable, and a special walled in chapel on one side of the nave for those with infectious diseases who were not allowed to mix with the general congregation. A "squint" or large puphole in the wall allowed the priest to synchronize his communion with that being given at the high altar. In many parts of the church could be found the symbols of the old guilds or trade unions. In the corner of each stained glass was a pixie with long beard, the symbol of the York glass makers guild. On the corner of the pews was a small mouse denoting the carpenters guild and so on.

We left York (not having tasted Yorkshire pudding) for Newcastle-on-Tyne where the English spoken resembles a compromise between Scottish and Irish. Then we followed west close to the English Scottish border, beside the Roman wall which was originally built to keep back the barbarian tribes to the north, (all Scots please note). We crossed over a wooden bridge marked England on one end and Scotland on the other and stopped at a small inn, originally a hitching post for stage coaches, in Gretna Green. This little town has a long and colourful history spiced with the tales of its marrying blacksmith who wed many underaged couples who had run away from their homes in England against their parents wishes. The procedure was not banned by law until as recently as 1940.

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