



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

In the early hours of Monday 9 July 1984, York Minster was struck by lightning and suffered one of the worst cathedral fires of modern times. The damage that was done in just a few hours took over 4 years to be rebuilt and restored.

The cathedral has today announced a special programme of events and services to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the blaze, remembering the devastation caused and giving thanks for the dedicated and talented individuals who helped to rebuild and restore the magnificent building we see today.

The Very Revd Dominic Barrington, Dean of York, said: “Like every Christian church, York Minster stands as a sign of hope and new life, for that is the central message of the Gospel.

“In the summer of 1984, people watched in horror as flames consumed the roof of the South Transept, but (not for the first time in its existence) the cathedral survived this fierce fire, and continues to offer that message of resurrection within and well beyond the city, diocese and county we are called to serve.

“I hope you will join us this year as we mark this significant anniversary.”

The full programme is as follows:

Worship

A Service of Commemoration to mark the 40th Anniversary of the 1984 Fire

Tuesday 9 July, 5pm

To mark the 40th anniversary of the 1984 fire, York Minster will be hosting a service of Choral Evensong which will include special prayers and readings, as well as a sermon by the Archbishop of York.

The Choir of York Minster, led by Robert Sharpe, Director of Music, will perform a selection of reflective music including Bernard Rose's responses; Psalms 47, 48, 49 for the 9th evening; Herbert Sumsion's Magnificat and Nunc dimittis in A; and Hymn to the Creator of Light by John Rutter. Ben Morris, Assistant Director of Music, will play Cecilia McDowall's Sacred and Hallowed Fire on the cathedral's Grand Organ.

All are welcome to attend, no booking is required.

Sightseeing activities

New exhibition – Out of the Ashes

Saturday 29 June – 1 June 2025

Discover the story behind the 1984 fire that threatened to destroy York Minster through a new exhibition – Out of the Ashes – commemorating the 40th anniversary of the blaze.

The exhibition journeys through the dramatic events of 9 July 1984, when the roof of the South Transept was struck by lightning. It details the heroic rescue efforts, clean-up operation and four-year restoration using eye witness accounts.

See fire damaged furniture that survived the blaze and images from York Minster’s archive, including original drawings for six roof bosses designed by Blue Peter competition winners. Visitors will also have the chance to explore other major fires in York Minster’s history and find out more about restoration and conservation today.

Entry to the exhibition is included with a general admission ticket.

New trail – On This Spot

Saturday 29 June – Saturday 30 November 2024

Stand in the footsteps of those who saw the 1984 fire and its aftermath by following a new digital-visual trail – On this Spot.

Scan QR codes placed in and around the cathedral to unlock dramatic archive photos revealing the shocking events of 9 July 1984. Each stop on the trail will include chance for reflection and prayer.

Entry to the trail is included with a general admission ticket.

Fire anniversary guided tours

Saturday 29 June – Monday 30 September 2024

Throughout the summer months, York Minster’s expert volunteer tour guides will explore the cathedral’s rich history, with a special focus on the 1984 fire. Visitors can choose from a York Minster Guided Tour, Stained Glass Tour, or Family-Friendly Discovery Tour.

Guided tours are included with a general admission ticket, subject to availability.

Events

PHOENIX

Saturday 19 October - Saturday 2 November.

Experience York Minster in a new light this autumn when the cathedral is illuminated with PHOENIX, a brand-new sound and light projection.

The story of the 1984 fire is not just one of damage caused to one of the world's most magnificent cathedrals, but also a story of bravery, resilience, and determination to rebuild. PHOENIX will commemorate the bravery of those that responded to the fire, celebrating the resilience of York Minster and the people of York through their own words, in the very place where it happened.

PHOENIX is a major new projection mapping and sound installation by award-winning artists Ross Ashton and Karen Monid which will transform the nave of York Minster. The installation is bespoke, having been specially created to bring the cathedral's unique architecture and history to life. Ashton and Monid also created 'Northern Lights' in 2019 and 'Platinum and Light' in 2022, two spectacular installations which attracted tens of thousands of people to the cathedral.

The events will help raise funds for the continuing restoration of the cathedral's fabric. York Minster is one of the world's most magnificent cathedrals, but with the current building dating from the 13th century, it is a fragile masterpiece which needs constant care.

PHOENIX will open on Saturday 19 October and run each evening until Saturday 2 November.

Tickets priced at £7.50 will go on sale on Tuesday 9 July via yorkminster.org.

Activities for schools

Poetry on Fire

Designed for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, 'Poetry on Fire' is an interactive two-hour journey to discover the three major fires of York Minster.

Pupils will follow a fire tour around York Minster and enter the world of arson, accident and an act of nature. They will collect fiery vocabulary to compose a collaborative class composition, and step into the shoes of key characters and roleplay the fearless firefighters before reciting their rhythmic rhymes.

Traitor on Trial

Designed for pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, 'Traitor on Trial' is an immersive two-hour experience exploring the world of Jonathan Martin. Who was he? Why did he set fire to the Minster? What did he take with him from the scene of the crime and what did the witnesses say about his character?

Pupils will study the sources and evidence to decide what should happen to this complicated and intriguing character. They will take part in a mock trial to decide Jonathan Martin's fate.

Both workshops will be available from Monday 3 June as part of York Minster's Learning Programme for schools.

The York Minster Shops

York Minster Firewood Pens – last chance to buy!

Take home a piece of York Minster's history with our popular firewood pens.

The handcrafted biro and fountain pens are turned from 13th century oak timber recovered from the South Transept of York Minster after the 1984 fire. Made by a local York craftsman, each pen comes complete with a Chapter of York Authentication Certificate and presentation box.

Limited stock available. When they're gone, they're gone!



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