

In March, Peter Hammond took us on a historical tour of Whitby. Most of our members listening to his talk had visited Whitby and many thought they knew it well but Peter could produce a few surprises for all of us.

The first abbey was destroyed by Viking Raiders, the second by Henry the Eighth's Dissolution of the Monasteries. The ruins remain as the town's distinguishing landmark on East Cliff together with the church of St. Mary close by.

Whitby with its secluded harbour became a flourishing fishing port and whaling station. Local timber encouraged shipbuilding. Captain Cook sailed in ships built in Whitby. His statue stands on West Cliff but the only statue to the captains of the whaling ships which provided the structural parts of stays, until corsetry went out of fashion, is the huge arch formed by two whale bones.

The Railway brought new prosperity to the town. The imposing Royal Crescent was built on West Cliff. Jet, fashioned in the town from locally mined supplies, became popular for jewellery and found a ready market after the death of the Prince Consort.

Many writers visited the town and drew inspiration from it. Bram Stoker's "Dracula" is set in Whitby and Elizabeth Gaskell's " Sylvia's Lovers". Lewis Carroll enjoyed the amenities as did Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins. Peter Hammond pointed out the various hostelrys favoured by the famous but he had plenty of recommendations of his own including, as promised at the beginning, fish and chips at the Magpie Cafe.

The interested audience had plenty to contribute to the evening. It must undoubtedly be a favourite destination for several of our members. Peter was thanked and applauded.