It was a delightful long weekend break enjoying both the genteel charm of Harrogate and some of the finest castles in the country. David King (Castellarium Anglicanum Vol. II, 511-12) records Yorkshire’s 108 castles plus 16 vanished. Total 124: 36 Masonry castles, 62 Earthwork castles etc. Of those 108, the conference attendees managed ten of the best, three of which were in the old ‘West Riding’ (Skipton, Harewood and Markenfield Hall) and seven in the ‘North Riding’. So there is plenty of scope for a return visit.

Those 10 (see above) were: Skipton; Middleham; Bolton; Richmond; Sheriff Hutton; Helmsley; Cropton; Pickering; Markenfield Hall; Harewood. No finer date range, architecturally rich, well-tended, cared-for castles can be found anywhere. It is difficult to pick out what might be called ‘outstanding’ as each site has its own virtues and interests but for this writer, Richmond, Skipton, Helmsley, Pickering and Bolton stand out in the memory. Perhaps the good weather added an extra attraction to the most agreeable venues.

Thanks go to the following: Peter Burton (organiser); conference handbook texts: the late Philip Davis; Malcolm Hislop (Bolton), John Kenyon (Middleham and Helmsley); many of the texts are also included in the various Journal summaries. Alastair and Morag Fife assisted in various ways in enhancing our knowledge, appreciation and visitor experience. Speakers and site guides included John Kenyon (Helmsley and Middleham), Malcolm Hislop (Bolton), Erik Matthews (Cropton and Richmond), Shaun Richardson and Ed Denison (Sheriff Hutton), not forgetting the estate staff at Harewood.

The evening lecturers included local experts David Mercer (Castles of the North Riding Revisited) and Shaun Richardson (14th century castles in Yorkshire). A special thanks also to the owner of Skipton castle, Sebastian Fattorini, for making us most welcome and for his keen interest in the history of the castle’s fabric and in our attempts to unravel it in just two hours. We hope more can be done on this in the future.