



Spirituality and Arts Trail: Angels and Gargoyles

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Angels are messengers from beyond the material realm and play a significant part in spirituality and the arts. Gargoyle literally means water/throat; carvings without the plumbing aspect are called grotesques. Common myth would advise us that they are to ward off evil spirits, however they often gave artisans the chance to play a little in their work; a little flourish of fun in a serious profession!

Take time to notice and contemplate on this trail, which takes in the unexpected and the soulful. To walk the core of the trail should take around three hours, though the excursion into the Dean Road cemetery would take longer. There are some steep inclines, especially Blands Cliff and the street up to St Mary's church.

Start at:

St Martin-on-the-Hill [Grid ref E10] and the four musician angels heralding the start of our journey.



The paintings are the work of R Spencer Stanhope and part of the church's rich Pre-Raphaelite heritage, the church also features period designers: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Ford Maddox Brown. Tours of church are available Tuesday mornings throughout the summer season at 10.30am and the church is generally open for visits mornings, Monday to Saturday (www.st-martin-on-the-hill.org.uk).

Free map available at venues across Scarborough.
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From the church walk along **St Martin's Avenue [Grid ref E11]** to the **Esplanade [Grid ref E12]** over-looking the sea. Turning left, we reach the **Spa Bridge [Grid ref G11]**. Just to the other side below the bridge is a more modern angel, the **Electric Angel Gallery [Grid ref G11]** (www.electricangel.co.uk) showing work by local contemporary artists.

Back on the bridge, in front of us, the Victorian **Grand Hotel [Grid ref H11]** on St Nicholas Cliff greets us with its majestic towers. The carvings at the top of the building are not well archived but two guardian-type angels appear above the carvings of men and women. Each of us mere mortals are said to have our own guardian angel to guide and protect us. Perhaps we could pause a moment and in the quietness of our minds ask them to continue the journey with us?

From St Nicholas Cliff we enter...

Bar Street [Grid ref I11], home to a range of independent and characterful shops. (The original bar or gate into the town was to the right of this street, between Westborough and Newborough. Below this bar punishments, such as hours in the stocks, were meted out to petty criminals.) At Christmas time, we will often find Bar Street be-decked with angels.

*Across from Bar Street is **North Street [Grid ref I10]** and the Angel Inn.*

Perhaps we might contemplate here the ancient Christian wisdom that we should endeavour to welcome strangers and, in so doing, have welcomed angels and not known it! Could this be the place to consider opening ourselves to the possibility of new people bringing joy into our lives and that we, in turn, might

be bearers of joy to others not yet known to us? This angel is the embellishment on the stern of a ship which is most fitting for Scarborough because of our port and fishing history.

*At the end of North Street we meet **Castle Road [Grid ref K9]** and just to the left we turn right into **Dean Road [Grid ref K9]**.*

Just before the roundabout, we are confronted by the former jail and its splendid grotesques. If we weren't already humbled by the circumstances bringing us to jail, these would certainly finish the job! The door is guarded by two splendid examples and those on the towers to either side also make sure they are covering all points of vision with their steely gaze.

(With more time, we might want to linger a while longer in this area to explore **Dean Road cemetery [Grid ref K5]** and the forgotten chapel (www.scarboroughcemeteries.co.uk). Here, of course, we find many depictions of angels, though the only singing heard is that of the pigeons and doves. The cemetery stretches onto the west underneath **Manor Road [Grid ref L3]** and joins with **Peasholm Glen [Grid ref M3]** where we find the large Winged Messenger (www.peasholmpark.com.)



Retrace our footsteps back as far as the start of Bar Street and turn left onto Westborough. Follow the road down as it turns into Eastborough. Keep walking and then take a right onto...

Blands Cliff [Grid ref I12]. This was one of the first roads for horse and carriage to be built between town and harbour. It was built by John Bland at a cost of £85 and completed in 1723. Here we see a huge angel adorning the wall. Some angels were bestowed with greater power and influence and this picture may put us in mind of Archangels or 'kickass angels' as this generation may term them!

On the wall directly opposite the saintly George and the Dragon battle things out in true medieval style (Blands Cliff Mural). This brings to mind the wrestling that we must all endure in our faith journeys. We may have to confront our own dragons; sometimes our own temper or other hindrances. Sometimes our own or other's critical voice. Yet, as with St George, we can find the resources to tame our dragons in order to unearth peace and harmony in ourselves and others. The **Blandscliff Gallery [Grid ref J12]** is on our left and has further information on the murals which are the brain-child of the gallery's owner. (www.blandscliffgallery.com)

*Turning left at the bottom of Blands Cliff, as we walk towards the harbour we may spot the grotesques sitting glowering atop various of the tourist attractions on **Foreshore Road [Grid ref I13-15]** as we make our way to the traffic lights. Turning left and we strike away from **Eastborough [Grid ref K14]** onto the cobbled cut-through taking us past the old Butter Cross and onto **St Mary's Street [Grid ref L14]**. This is part of the old town and we can enjoy its medieval character and imagine what life would have been like centuries ago. At the top we will find **Paradise [Grid ref M14]**, a reference to the monks' sacred space, and...*

St Mary's Church [Grid ref M14], the culmination of our journey.

The East window of the church is a celebration of all creation with the angels around the throne of God and the special place that we, as human beings, are given amongst the crowning glory. We may like to reflect here on the ancient story of Jacob who one night fell asleep and saw a vision of an angelic staircase, with angels ascending and descending carrying messages to and from God. We may like to enjoy a moment's reflection on anything we might want them to say on our behalf or be still and receive the gift of peace.

Full tours of St. Mary's are available Thursday mornings through to the end of July (www.stmaryschurchscarborough.co.uk). The church is open most weekdays, May to September, where we may be lucky enough to sample some of Ruth's homemade shortbread and arguably the best cup of tea since Henry II was on the throne!