***The 13th Century***

***Think 13th century and think Magna Carta, England’s first Parliament and castles!***

**Power and conflict**

King John was made to sign the Magna Carta by his barons in 1215. This document has resonated through time and still underpins in fact and symbolism the rights and freedoms we enjoy today. In 1265 Simon de Montfort instigated the first English Parliament, although it was rather different in its power and status than today. By the end of the century, a strong king, Edward I had conquered Wales and defeated Scotland. However, Edward also encourage Parliament as a consultative body, which had members who could petition him as King and he would listen.

**Faith and Fears**

This is the century that saw Francis of Assisi. The Franciscan order he founded had a mission to the poor and still has followers today. Thomas Aquinas became the most influential theological philosopher of his times. Meanwhile, Fountains Abbey had left its poverty days behind and the Cistercian monks were very wealthy due to the profits of the woollen industry.

**Home and health**

Many Arabic medical text were translated into Latin in the 13th century. These brought the expertise of Islamic doctors to the west and were to be very important in the development of medicine in Europe. While battlefield surgery involved the skilled use of herbs, the problem of infection remained largely unsolved until the 19th century. The saying goes that ‘An Englishman’s Home is his castle’ and this was still the era of fortified castles. The local Sheriff Hutton castle was begun in the 1370s.

**Art and Architecture**

This century saw the beginning of the building of York’s 5th Minster. That’s the Minster we see today and the north transept and world famous Five Sisters window date from this period. So too does the Chapter House. It remains the largest medieval octagonal building without a central pillar. 

**News and views**

 “Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” This sounds a modern saying, but is actually one of the sayings of the Persian sufi Rumi from this century. Another of his is: “Let the beauty of what you love be what you do.”

**Wider world**

Marco Polo voyaged to Sumatra and China. Genghis Kahn became Great Kahn of the Moguls. A name that conjures many images, he is said to have fathered so many children that millions of people today are descended from him. Closer to home the Republic of Venice was founded. Its great wealth would dwarf the whole of England’s by the 15th century.

**Medieval remains**

The most talented mathematician of the age, the Italian Fibonacci, popularised the Hindu-Arabic number system that we still use and adopted place system. In York, as well as the many parts of the Minster that date from the 13th century, we also have one of our most famous landmarks. Clifford’s Tower has a name from the 17th century and stands on an 11th century motte, but the stone tower we see today dates from 1245-70.