

# AN INTRODUCTION TO MIDDLETHORPE HALL

Middlethorpe Hall, one of the hotels owned and restored by Historic House Hotels, is a splendid place to visit. It is situated close to York, one of Britain's most popular cities, noted for its wealth of Viking and Roman remains, medieval streets, outstanding museums and the famous Minster. The hotel lies to the south of the city, overlooking the racecourse, and is easily reached from all parts of the country. The journey from London by train takes only one hour and forty-five minutes.

It is a charming country house in a rural setting of 20 acres of gardens and parkland, furnished with antiques and objets d'art which would have appealed as much to its 18<sup>th</sup> century owners as it does to today's visitors. The house was built in 1699 for Thomas Barlow, a wealthy Sheffield ironmaster and recently celebrated its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is in the Queen Anne style and is everyone's idea of a perfect doll's house. Middlethorpe Hall has endured a chequered career and was 'rescued' in 1980 by Historic House Hotels after it had been used as a nightclub and left in a deplorable condition. Extensive restoration has re-created the house which was once let to the well-known diarist, traveller and gossip, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu who pronounced it "a very pritty place...and in every way proper for us."

The front door opens on to a stone flagged entrance hall, beyond which is a magnificent carved oak staircase leading to the first floor. The spacious drawing room, originally a ballroom for the entertainment of the Barlow family and their friends, is furnished with 18<sup>th</sup> century elegance. Ten bedrooms on two floors include two four-poster rooms and a suite, there are a further seventeen bedrooms in the 18<sup>th</sup> century courtyard, a garden suite and two self-contained suites in an adjacent cottage. The dining rooms at Middlethorpe overlook the gardens and provide an ideal setting in which to enjoy the food awarded three rosettes by the AA. Middlethorpe Hall is the only hotel in North Yorkshire to be awarded 3 Rosettes.

Before Historic House Hotels bought Middlethorpe Hall in 1980, the gardens and the lake had suffered severe neglect. Under the expert guidance of head gardener David Barker these have been restored to their 18<sup>th</sup> century splendour. Now guests can admire the rolling lawns and magnificent Cedar of Lebanon, wander through the fragrant rose garden and the unusual white garden and enjoy the warmth of the sun in the sheltered walled garden.

In 1999, Middlethorpe Hall opened its luxurious health spa, built behind the façade of two cottages across the lane from the hotel. It contains a heated indoor swimming pool with a whirlpool spa bath, steam room, sauna, an exercise area and beauty salon offering treatments using Clarins and E'SPA products. The spa is used by hotel guests and a small exclusive membership, and beauty treatments will be available for non-residents. The Spa has a programme of Health, Beauty & Bubbly Breaks which include dinner, bed and breakfast, champagne and treatments in the Spa.

Meetings at Middlethorpe Hall are held in the flexible Barlow Room which can accommodate numbers from 12 to 50 and there are sitting rooms which can be used for business meetings and private entertaining. In 1996 Middlethorpe received an award for "Most Excellent Business Meeting Venue" from the guide book publishers, Johansens.

Middlethorpe Hall and sister hotels Hartwell House in the Vale of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire and Bodysgallen Hall in Llandudno, North Wales are members of Relais & Chateaux, the prestigious international hotel consortium. Middlethorpe Hall has three Red Stars from the Automobile Association and a newly created RAC Gold Ribbon Award, which recognises hotels which have raised their standards to even higher levels. The hotel has also received four RAC Dining Awards for the overall quality of the complete meal experience.

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