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York saint's shrine on show for first time in 400 years

St. William was York's only Saint and had two shrines in York Minster and the remains these shrines are to be exhibited together for the first time in 400 years, forming part of the new medieval display when the Yorkshire Museum in York. The oldest shrine to St William of York, dating from 1330, has not been seen by the public since it was mostly destroyed by Henry VIII during the dissolution of the monasteries. A second shrine, dating from the 15th century, will also be on show but in a much more complete state than previously seen since it was destroyed.

Andrew Morrison, curator of archaeology at York Museums Trust, said: "St William is York's only saint and regarded as one of the most historically important in the north of England. He was unusually crowned Archbishop of York twice. For 300 years thousands of pilgrims came to York to worship his shrines, which became bigger and grander over time and were reportedly the scene for many miracles. "As you would expect the shrines were beautifully made by the finest craftsmen in the north. We are delighted to be able to put some of the most interesting and incredible parts of the shrines on show together for the first time in four centuries."

The older of the shrines would have been positioned above the tomb of St William in York Minster. It is made of incredibly intricate carvings, created by some of the most skilled craftsmen in the country at the time. It includes figures depicted in great detail. The 15th-century shrine would have been positioned near the high altar of the Minster. For hundreds of years the shrines' remains were hidden underground and were uncovered during building work on what is now Precentor's Court near the Minster. Enough of the 15th century shrine was uncovered to put it on public show in the Yorkshire Museum. A later excavation uncovered more of both shrines and the combinations of all of these parts, which have been painstakingly restored, will make up the new display in the Yorkshire Museum.



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