

SUMMER

at York Castle Museum

York Gala



The York Gala, also called the Grand Yorkshire Gala, took place in Bootham Park (the grounds of Bootham Hospital) every June from 1859 for the next 60 years. Later it reemerged as The Great Yorkshire Flower Show and Gala.

The Gala was first and foremost a floral and musical exhibition. People from around England were attracted to show their floral displays as part of the annual festival of flowers. There were cash prizes for winning entries. In 1871 the first prize was £500!

Tens of thousands of people travelled to York for this annual festival, where they could enjoy stunning floral displays, open air bands, circus entertainers and hot air balloon flights, as well as a firework display every night.

We hope to give you a flavour of these wonderful Victorian summers with our beautiful floral installation, musical Sundays and many more entertaining activities!



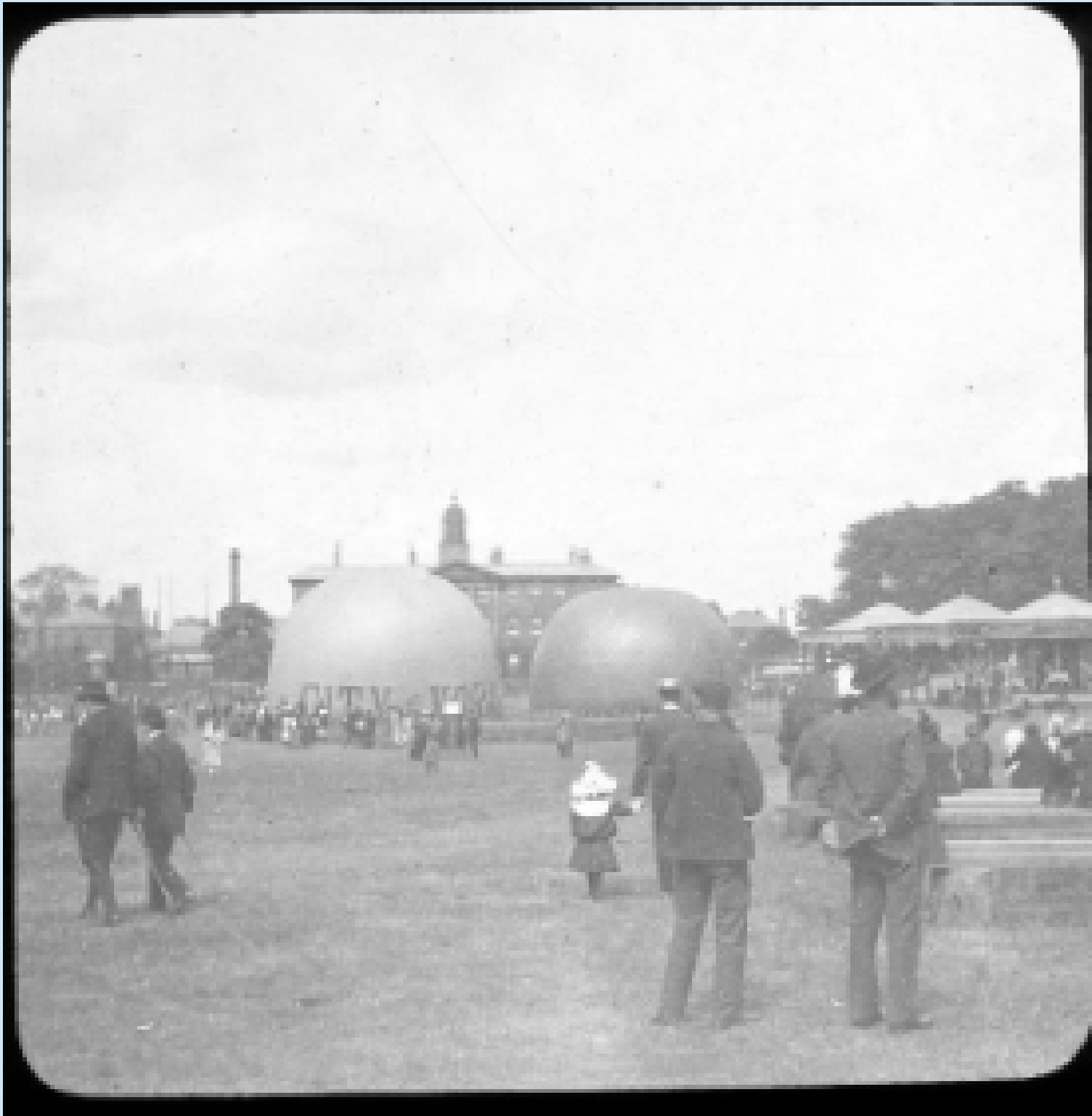


Figure 1 - An image of Bootham park during York Gala. Shows two semi-inflated hot air balloons and a merry-go-round. Image taken from a glass slide, dated between 1910-1920.

Copyright York Museums Trust (York Castle Museum).



Figure 2 - Entrance to Bootham Park and York Gala, adorned with a temporary decorative archway, flags and bunting.

Copyright City of York Council / Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd.

The Language of Flowers



The language of Flowers, or Floriography, has ancient roots back to the Middle East and Persia (Iran).

By the Victorian period, the concept of flowers holding meaning was well established. It was a popular way of telling someone you loved them, expressing condolences or as a show of friendship. Although today, most of these meanings have been long forgotten, we still see florists flooded with red roses for Valentine's Day, and in November poppies are a sign of remembrance.

In Victorian England flowers would be sent or given in small posies or bouquets often called tussie-mussies. Look out for our costumed staff on Kirkgate who can show you some examples and explain their meanings.





Figure 3 - Greenway, 1901



Figure 4 - Greenway, 1901

Posy for Friendship

A posy for a best friend, as a celebration of your friendship, to brighten their day or simply to let them know you are thinking of them.

Zinna for everlasting friendship

Apple Blossom for preference

Pansy for a friend you think of often

Eucalyptus for protection and to strengthen the bond of friendship



“... and there are pansies; that’s for thoughts.”

Shakespeare, Hamlet

Figure 5 - Phillips, 1825

Posy for Courting



A posy to share with a new love, to thrill them or to announce your exclusivity.

Blush Roses for a blossoming romance

Cornflower for hope in love

Sweet William for gallantry

Dahlia for external love and commitment

Figure 6 - Greenaway, 1901

Posy for New Beginnings

A posy to celebrate a new addition to the family, or a new adventure in someone's life.

Spring Crocus for youthful delight

Daisy for innocence and childhood purity

Lilac for first love

Gypsophilia for purity and innocence



Figure 7 - Phillips, 1825

Floral Installation on Kirkgate

Ivy – fidelity / marriage

Magnolia – love of nature

Forget me not - true love

Snowball - bound

Lilac purple - first emotions of love

Stock - lasting beauty

Sunflower – adoration

Sweet pea - delicate pleasures

Morning glory – affection

Mimosa – sensitiveness

Iris - message / flame



I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Red and White Roses

by Thomas Carew

Read in these roses the sad story
Of my hard fate and your own glory.
In the white you may discover
The paleness of a fainting lover;
In the red the flames still feeding
On my heart, with fresh wounds bleeding.
The white will tell you how I languish,
And the red express my anguish;
The white my innocence displaying,
The red my martyrdom betraying.
The frowns that on your brow resided,
Have those roses thus divided.
Oh! let your smiles but clear the weather,
And then they both shall grow together.

The Cherry

by Richard Allison

There is a garden in her face,
Where roses and white lilies grow;
A heavenly paradise is that place,
Wherein all pleasant fruits do grow;
There cherries grow that none may buy
Till cherry ripe themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose
Of orient pearl a double row,
Which, when her lovely laughter shows,
They look like rosebuds fill'd with snow;
Yet them no peer nor prince may buy
Till cherry ripe themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still,
Her brows like bended bows do stand,
Threatening with piercing frowns to kill
All that approach with eye or hand
These sacred cherries to come nigh,
Till cherry ripe themselves do cry.