

Things You Didn't Know

- The abbey's name; St Mary of Fountains may come from the springs on the steep banks of the Skell valley and the fact that all Cistercian abbeys were dedicated to the Virgin Mary, or it may come from the abbey's guiding spirit, St Bernard de Fontaines, more familiarly known as Bernard of Clairvaux
- There are 8 species of protected bat in the abbey
- Most of the trees in Studley Park are over 300 years old
- Marriages and civil partnerships can be held on the estate
- The abbey provides a magical backdrop to open air theatre on summer evenings
- The stone from which the abbey was built was hewn from the outcrops on the north side of the valley
- Six religious services are held at the abbey throughout the year
- Each year on Boxing Day a pilgrimage from Ripon cathedral culminates in a carol service at the abbey
- The estate is open all year (unlike many other NT properties)
- From the middle of the 19th century the ivy-covered ruins of the abbey rose in fame and popularity as a visitor attraction. People would travel by train and arrive by car or charabanc and there were strict rules governing the behaviour of visiting parties. A poster from 1863 has survived announcing the grounds to be open two days weekly, Mondays and Saturdays at a charge of sixpence per head. Visitors could not eat, drink or smoke in the grounds and were asked "not to linger in the Abbey or Gardens but to move slowly forward". No such restrictions are in place today, visitors can stay all day and picnic wherever they like.