

# WOMEN'S HISTORY IN YORK MAP



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## 1. The Cruse sisters

*College for Mistresses, 1843-1854 (now York St John University)*

In July 1846, the Committee of the Two Dioceses appointed three sisters (Winifred, Catherine and Mary Cruse) to lead a recently established Female Training School in York. This was a sister institution to the Training School for men founded in 1841 on Lord Mayor's Walk. Winifred and Catherine Cruse closely supervised the first 40 women students, who were not allowed to leave their accommodation on 33 Monkgate and go into York without prior permission. The sisters also created a timetable as strenuous as the men's, running from 6am to 9.45pm, and including additional domestic chores.

## 2. Catherine Cappe and Faith Gray (1780s)

*St. Andrewgate*

These two female philanthropists are recognised for their pioneering work to reform the education and employment of girls in a local hemp factory in the 1780s, which led to the foundation of the York Spinning School on St. Andrewgate in 1782. This charity school offered paid work and rudimentary education to girls, who also received financial relief from the York Female Friendly Society: another initiative of Cappe and Grey to alleviate the conditions of working class women throughout their lives, in sickness, confinement and old age.

## 3. Female Prison

*Now York Castle Museum*

In 1780, a new wing of the Debtor's Prison was constructed to hold female felons and curb prison overcrowding. Located opposite the Crown Court, the building was commended by visitors, such as the prison reformer John Howard, for its gender segregation. However, male debtors soon populated the wing, which also housed a chapel and wards for the sick.

## 4. Mary Bateman (1768 - 1809)

*Gallows Site, behind York Crown Court*

Whilst York Castle is remembered for halting Dick Turpin's adventures, little is known about female outlaws of the time, such as Mary Bateman. Called the 'Yorkshire Witch' (for her trade in poisons, spells and other magical frauds), she was convicted for murder at the York Assizes and hanged at noon on 20 March 1809 outside the Castle. After her execution, her corpse was publicly exhibited at Leeds General Infirmary, and relics of her skin were sold as protective charms.

## 5. Kate Atkinson (1951- )

*York Castle Museum*

Born in York, Kate Atkinson set her first novel *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995) in her home city. Inspired by her childhood visits to York Castle Museum, Atkinson's novel won the 1995 Whitbread Book of the Year Prize. Kirkgate, the museum's famous recreation of a Victorian street, features prominently in the text as a space where the narrator Ruby Lennox can contemplate her own complex family history. Atkinson has continued to write critically acclaimed fiction including *Life After Life*, which won the 2013 Costa Novel Award.

## 6. Mary Ellen Best (1809 - 1891)

*Castlegate*

Mary Ellen Best was a renowned watercolourist of domestic life in early Victorian York. She grew up on Little Blake Street near the Minster, before spending three years in France with her family after the Napoleonic Wars. She later settled back in her hometown, in Castlegate, which she depicted through a series of interior scenes. Her compositions (around 1,500 in total) focused on the everyday life of middle-class households and gained her fame in Britain and Germany, where she died in 1891.

## 7. Margaret Clitherow (1556-1586)

*The Shambles*

Daughter of the Sheriff of York, Clitherow converted to Catholicism in the early 1570s. She was imprisoned for her faith (then prohibited in England) in York Castle, where she spent at least two other periods of incarceration. At her house in the Shambles, Clitherow constructed a secret room in which to hide persecuted Catholic clergy – this was discovered and she was tried at the Guildhall and sentenced to death. On 25 March 1586, Clitherow was pressed to death near the toll-booth on the Ouse Bridge. She was canonized in 1970 as one of the 40 English martyrs. The Bar Convent holds a relic – her hand.

## 8. Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821)

*Stonegate*

Born in Bury St Edmonds, Inchbald left her home at 18 for the London stage. She married Joseph Inchbald – a fellow Catholic and actor – and the two travelled to Edinburgh and Yorkshire, performing with Tate Wilkinson's company in the Yorkshire Circuit. Inchbald went on to write numerous popular plays and two novels, *A Simple Story* and *Nature and Art*. Joseph died in Leeds and Elizabeth went on performing with Wilkinson's company, staying with Mr and Mrs Tyler, fellow performers, in Stonegate.

## 9. Grace White (d. 1720/21)

*Coffee Yard, Stonegate*

The widow of John White, Grace White inherited half of her husband's business on his death in 1716. She introduced York's first newspaper in 1718/19, *The York Mercury*, which was sold from York to Hull and printed on her own press in Coffee Yard, Stonegate. *The Courant* was sold across North Yorkshire. Her son, John White, also established *The York Courant* in 1724.

## 10. Ann Ward (1759-1789)

*Coney Street*

Following her husband's death in 1759, Ann Ward took over his printing and newspaper business, including *The York Courant*. Ward not only managed her husband's business, but turned the paper into 'a journal of superior class'. One of her first publications in 1759 was two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne. Ward managed the business for 30 years, dying in 1789 after conducting 'one of the largest printing establishments in the North of England'.

## 11. Judi Dench (1934-)

*York Theatre Royal & Museum Gardens*

Award-winning actress Judi Dench was born in Heworth. Both her parents had connections with York Theatre Royal; her father was the company's GP, and her mother worked in the costume department. From 1947, Dench attended the Quaker girls' boarding school, The Mount. In 1957, she starred as Mary in the York Mystery Plays in the Museum Gardens, and later won a place at the London Central School of Speech and Drama. Her career has included successful runs with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre, as well as a host of television and film roles. A walk at the bottom of Lendal tower is named for Judi Dench.

## 12. Hannah Mills (1748 - 1790)

*York Lunatic Asylum (now Bootham Park Hospital)*

Hannah Mills was a Quaker woman from Leeds, whose death in confinement at York Lunatic Asylum raised major concerns about treatments of mental illness in eighteenth-century Britain. During her six-week stay at the institution, Friends of her acquaintance had been denied visits to support her faith and see her condition. Her death led William Tuke, a local tea merchant, to establish the Retreat in York: a pioneering private asylum providing patients with a caring atmosphere, akin to that of a Quaker family, which is still in existence today.

## 13. Grey Coat School for Girls (1705 - 1950)

*60-62 Marygate*

The Grey Coat School for Girls was founded in 1705, alongside the Blue Coat School for Boys, by the City Corporation to lodge, feed and educate poor girls over the age of eight. The school was a success, owing to its benefactors Frances Thornhill and the wife of Archbishop John Sharpe. More spaces were in fact needed, and in 1784 the school moved to Monkgate, where accommodation was offered to pupils until the 1950s. The initial building, housing the school on Marygate, is still visible today.

## 14. Lady Middleton

*Skeldergate House*

In 1659, Anne Middleton funded the building of Skeldergate House. Anne was married to Peter Middleton, the Sheriff of York. Skeldergate House was initially built as an almshouse for twenty widows of York freemen. An original statue from the 1659 building can be seen above the front door. The building has been part of a large hotel since the 1970s but many original architectural features remain.

## 15. Mary Ward (1585-1645)

*Bar Convent, Micklegate*

Born in 1585 in Ripon, Mary Ward travelled to France to become a Poor Clare at the age of 15. When she grew tired of the restrictions placed on Catholic religious women, she founded her own order based on the Society of Jesus – sending her pupils back across the channel to the English Mission. Ward was the niece of two of the Gunpowder Plotters and certainly understood the dangers for Catholics in early 17<sup>th</sup>-century England. Her order was suspended in 1630, in spite of Ward's repeated (and arduous) journeys to Rome to plead for her cause – and she returned to Yorkshire, where she died during a siege in 1645. She is buried in Osbaldwick. The Bar Convent in York was founded in 1686, when Catholicism was still prohibited, as a school for girls and a home for Mary Ward's followers, the Congregation of Jesus.

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