

Welcome to the HERSTORY.YORK WALKING TRAIL

'The history of York is the history of England' but little of it focuses on the contributions and achievements of women. General history books about York mention around nine men for every one woman. Inspired by the centenary in 1918 of some women (over 30, with property) getting the vote, Herstory.York, a volunteer community history group, has gathered together the stories of 100 women 'Changemakers' active in York between 1918 and 2018. The project aims to raise awareness of, and celebrate the agency of these women. This walking trail highlights some of their remarkable stories. Find more on the Herstory.York website. We start our trail at...

1.YORK ART GALLERY and KING'S MANOR

York Art Gallery is in front of you with Kings Manor to your left.

Sally Arnup, born in 1930, was originally a teacher of sculpture at York Art School. She Sally later become its Head of Department. In 1974 she left to concentrate on her artistic career. Sally held many exhibitions in York from 1968 and her reputation steadily grew worldwide. You can see examples of her work, in York Art Gallery and in the courtyard of King's Manor, on your left, once home to The Council of the North and now for the archaeology department of the University of York

She was regarded as a renowned world leading animal sculptor. Sally created her sculptures from live animal models, from dogs to horses, rather than just through sketches or photographs. This approach she felt, allowed her to capture the unique character of her subjects. The animals sometimes stayed at her home studio for several weeks. With a disabled daughter and through fund-raising efforts, Sally established new provision for learning and work for those with learning disabilities in York.

With the Gallery now at your back turn right and walk down St Leonards (you will see the Theatre Royal over the road) then cross the road at the traffic lights into Blake Street. Walk past the Assembly Room and into St Helen's Square. Betty's and The Ivy will be to your left. In front of you is the Mansion House with York Guildhall down the alleyway on its right.

2.MANSION HOUSE and YORK GUILDHALL

Edna Annie Crichton

Edna Annie Crichton (1876 – 1970) was a remarkable woman. At the age of 25 she came to live in York, which was to be her home for nearly 70 years. Edna stood for election to York City Council in 1919. A Quaker, she sat as an Independent Councillor and for 15 years was the Chairman of the Housing Committee when, it was said, she visited every house that was due to be demolished through the Council's slum clearance programmes.

War broke out in 1939 and two years later Edna Crichton was elected by her colleagues to be York's first woman Lord Mayor. The tradition of male mayors in York had lasted for more than 700 years. In 1941-2 there were 52 members of York City Council, only two of whom were women.

In the early hours of 29 April 1942 York was bombed by the Luftwaffe. Over 70 people were killed, 190 injured and 9,500 homes destroyed or damaged. The medieval Guildhall was hit by an incendiary bomb and burned for most of the next 24 hours. Lord Mayor Edna Annie Crichton, whose own son had died as a Prisoner of War only months before, toured the city the next day, speaking to the bereaved and visiting the wounded in hospitals.

Edna always stressed the need for women councillors saying *“thoughtful men and women [should] elect a Council representative of all sections of the community.”*

At her memorial service she was described as ‘a little woman with the heart of a lion’.

Ivy Wightman

Ivy Wightman was the second woman to be Lord Mayor of York in 1961. She hosted the international Viking Congress held in York at the Mansion House. The congress delegates were charmed by her and her councillors and delighted to examine the city plate at the Mansion House. Ivy attended many meetings of committees and sub-committees in the realms of education, children and health as well as church services and political meetings of the conservative party.

Mona Armitage

Mona Armitage became the third woman Lord Mayor of York in 1968. Born in Tyneside, one of 11 children, her father was a furnace man. The highlight of Mona’s year in office was the Christmas cheer fund - when 500 old residents of an area of York cleared for rebuilding were entertained. She was a witty speaker and had a warm personality. On one occasion while waiting for HRH Prince Philip to arrive she was asked if she was alright - “petrified,” she said. However later she was so much at ease she called him “pet” in an unguarded moment.

Dolly Cooper: An active trade unionist and politician 1921 - 2012

Dolly was an active Labour Party member in York for over 40 years. She helped re-establish the Labour Party after the war, with her husband Ken. Dolly became Lady Mayoress for York in 1984 and Lady Sheriff in 1988 and 1996. Dolly was a teacher in the early 1960s and then served on North Yorkshire County Council Education Committee. She was involved with: York Trade Union Council, Sure Start, the Jane Wright Charity and the Scouts group, later receiving the Queen’s Scout medal. She lost both her parents to tuberculosis early in her life. Being unable to afford Civil Service exams of £2, she worked in the wages department of Joseph Rowntree's instead.

Rachael Maskell

Rachael Maskell is York’s first woman MP. She reached the second highest swing of votes across the UK in the 2017 election and bucked the trend in the 2019 election maintaining a significant majority. She has served on the shadow front bench.

She is a socialist and believes in the equality of all and in social justice.

3.YORK CIVIC TRUST suffragette plaque

35/36 Coney Street

Continue down Coney Street keeping an eye out for the plaque on the right for the George Inn where Charlotte and Anne Bronte stayed in 1849 (nothing to do with Herstory but just of interest)

Further down on you right is the Blue Plaque commemorating the first meeting of the York Suffragettes in 1910-1911

The centenary of some women (over 30 with property) getting the vote in 1918 was the inspiration for the HERSTORY.YORK project which started in 2018.

June Hargreaves Born 1937

The way historic cities like York protected their heritage was transformed in the mid 1960s by a new law on 'conservation areas'. This was the idea of June Hargreaves a young, York town planner. June became York's Senior Planning Officer in 1961 and was later responsible for Development Control and Conservation. At that time, many councils were sweeping away historic buildings. Non-listed buildings could be demolished without permission. June however, strongly believed that all buildings in York were important.

June's work on historic building preservation helped to guide Government policy, ultimately leading to 8,000 conservation areas in England. Conservation areas include places of environmental and historic interest or importance. These are now protected by law against any major changes.

June worked for the City Council until 1988 and then as **a founder/director of York Archaeological Trust and as a member of York Civic Trust**. She received an MBE for services to conservation at the age of 37. June was also presented with the first ever Lord Mayor's Award in 2017 in honour of her contribution to preserving our city.

4.QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

Continue to the end of Coney Street, crossing directly over into Clifford Street. On the left is the passageway to the Quaker Meeting house.

Mary Hughes

Mary Hughes was a Quaker who in 1938 co-founded the York Refugee Committee which offered financial support and found homes for jews and political refugees escaping occupied Europe. She worked tirelessly on the committee which was very successful and by 1939 there were 118 refugees living in York. Many chose to stay after 1945.

Mary wrote, *'It is too much for me I know – but I'd rather die doing too much than too little....If you get behindhand a day with this Refugee work then its hopeless trying to catch up on it – it grows to enormous dimensions with each post and telephone call!'*

Joyce Pickard 1921-2017

Joyce was a quaker and spoke out strongly against war, inequality, and injustice. At the age of 38, Joyce was the headmistress of The Mount School in York. She campaigned relentlessly for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the York Peace Centre, the University of the Third Age, York Against the War, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and York Interfaith Group.

Joyce protested by laying down on pavements (as an anti-war protest in 2007), took part in a hunger strike about children dying in Gaza, and at the age of 70 years old campaigned against pit closures in Selby. In 2007, she was made an Honorary Freeman of the City of York.

5. YORK MAGISTRATES COURT

Still on Clifford Street and to your right is the Magistrates Court.

York's First Female Magistrates In 1919, the Sex Disqualification Act allowed women to join the legal profession. Sworn in as Magistrates on the same day were...

Almyra Gray 1862-1939

Almyra was active in healthcare and women's rights in York. In 1896, she formed a branch of the National Union of Women Workers and became its president in 1907. In 1913, she became president of the North and East Riding Federation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. After 1918, women with property over the age of 30 were allowed to vote, so Almyra founded the York Women Citizens' Association to prepare women to take part in public life. Almyra was involved with organisations such as the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child and the International Council of Women. Through them she championed the rights of mothers and their children who were being adopted.

Jeannie Mercer 1880-1969

Jeannie, a teacher, moved to York with her husband. She had been very active within the Co-operative Movement, and this gave her the experience to be appointed as a Magistrate, which she did in 1920. During World War Two (1939-45) Jeannie served on the Food Control and War Distress Committee. She also had a strong interest in trade and labour matters, including the Women's Labour Advisory Committee. Jeannie retired from the bench in 1955, having served for 35 years.

Another notable woman magistrate was...

Irene Whittaker

Irene Whittaker was Head of Queen Anne Grammar School in 1960 and nationally was the driving force behind the design of the 16+ exam introduced in 1986. In 1972 she became a magistrate and remained for 23 years including work on the family panel.

In July 2000, Queen Anne School closed and a final garden party was held which 1,200 past and present pupils, teachers and parents attended. Irene Whittaker opened proceedings and said, 'We're here to celebrate, not to mourn. What we're celebrating is 90 years of education in this place which is a great credit to the City of York.'

6. CASTLE MUSEUM

Continuing ahead into Tower Street, on your left you will see Clifford's Tower. The safest place to cross over here is by the traffic lights and this will take you to Castle Museum to your right.

(Herstory Exhibition, refreshment stop!?)

Violet Rodgers Wloch

Violet Wloch was the first woman Curator of York Castle Museum. She worked alongside Dr John Kirk whose collection of bygones opened as the Castle Museum in 1938.

When doctor Kirk died in 1940, Violet ran the museum into the late 1940s.

She was one of the first women to achieve the Museums Association Diploma.

After the war a new male curator was appointed and Violet was forced to take a pay cut.

She left the museum having contributed hugely to its success.

Violet said, 'When I came in 1938 the doctor was beginning to get rather uneasy. He had a weak heart and a wary eye on the progress of Hitler. In almost his first conversation with me he said "I'm going to die soon, girl, and there's going to be a war. If I don't get my museum opened first it will never be opened. We've got to hurry!"'

Kate Atkinson

Kate Atkinson's first novel, 'Behind the scenes at the museum' won both the 1995 Book of the Year and First Novel Whitbread Book Awards, and was dramatised for radio in 2000. The book grew out of short stories she wrote while working in a variety of jobs to make ends meet. It was inspired by a dream she had about walking around the Castle Museum, York, where the exhibits in the street scenes came to life.

As a student she was denied a doctorate from Dundee University but said, "Your life is made by the failures in it, not the successes." Later the university offered her an honorary degree but she politely refused.

7. YORVIK CENTRE

With the Museum behind you continue through the Car Park, crossing the road to the side of Fenwicks (Public Toilets here) to the Jorvik Centre.

Elizabeth Hartley

Elizabeth Hartley became the first ever Keeper of Archaeology at the Yorkshire Museum in 1971. She helped obtain the iconic Middleham jewel, the Coppergate Anglian helmet, and the Gilling sword for the Yorkshire Museum collections. She masterminded spectacular exhibitions including on the Vikings which helped raise funds for the excavations at Coppergate. She was described as "a most determined, imaginative and devoted American expert – whose legacy to her adopted city will extend far into the future".

Hopefully the passage by the side of Fenwicks will be open, if not you will need to retrace your steps, back across the road to the car park, keeping to your left you will find a passageway along the side of the river that takes you onto Piccadilly. The Merchant Adventurers Hall is over the road.

8. MERCHANT ADVENTURERS HALL

Maud Sellers: Guild Member 1861-1939

She was the first female member of The Company of Merchant Adventurers of the City of York, in nearly 400 years. As honorary curator in 1918 she worked tirelessly to restore the building and translated and published significant quantities of York and Yorkshire medieval archives. Despite York Adventurers Company being often regarded as a male-only organisation, Maud took on an important and vital role in the history of the Company and the Hall. She reveals to us the key role that women like her have played in conservation, management and organisation.

After crossing the road, the access to the Hall is difficult, steps and a slope. Alternative route? If you have the time a visit is well worth it. Continue along the footpath by the side of the Hall brings you out onto Fossgate.

On your left after the bridge you will see the Old Hospital with an interesting plaque showing that the building was once a hospital and school endowed by Dorothy Wilson in 1717.

9. Old hospital by bridge on Fossgate

CATHERINE CRANE

Catherine Beatrice Crane (1903 – 1979) trained at the London School of Medicine. In 1936 she was appointed assistant Medical Officer of Health for York and Chief Medical Officer for maternity and child welfare for the city. She became York's Medical Officer of Health in 1946, and stayed in that post for 22 years until 1968.

On 1 August 1947, during a visit to York, the Queen congratulated Dr Catherine Crane on her post – **the first woman in the country to gain such an appointment**. She was particularly interested in preventative medicine, organising a campaign to advertise the link between lung cancer and cigarette smoking.

In 1952 her pioneering work brought together the local authority and mental hospital medical personnel to form York Mental Health Service. She was also responsible for setting up a cervical screening service in the late 1950s.

Lucy McBean Ross

Lucy McBean Ross qualified in medicine in 1912 (one of the early female medics). She was Medical Officer at the Grey Coat School, 30 Monkgate, set up for girls who were orphaned or from poor families. She was also a House Surgeon and one of three administrators of Anaesthetics at the York County Hospital in the mid-1920s.

10. YORK MINSTER

Back over Fossgate Bridge continue along Fossgate, crossing over into either The Shambles or Petergate.

If it is not too busy a stroll down the Shambles is always interesting. Again, not part of Herstory but you will see the Shrine of Saint Margaret Clitherow to the left, worth a short diversion

If time or pedestrians don't allow, keep walking down Colliergate, past at the start the shortest passage in York, Whip-Ma-Whop-Ma-Gate, then Kings Square crossing over Market Street and on to Church Street. Ahead you will see The Minster. Although there is a charge to enter The Minster a visit really is a must. As well as the spectacular architecture, seek out the Five Sisters Window restored by Helen Little.

Vivienne Faull

In 2012 Vivienne Faull was appointed as the first woman Dean to York Minster. She was ordained deaconess in 1982 and priest in 1994. From 2000 she served as Provost, then Dean, of Leicester Cathedral – becoming the first woman Dean in the Church of England.

Asked whether women have to work harder than men to be seen as successful, she replied: "In my first twenty years or so, you had some independence, but if you did something badly, it tended to be put down to the fact that you were a woman. And if you did it well it was simply down to you as an individual. Performance is always being judged, but as a woman you are more vulnerable in this judgement."

Brenda Swinbank: Ground-breaking researcher & archaeologist Born 1921. In 1954 she was the third British woman to be awarded a PhD on the archaeology of Britain. Her collaborative work on York Minster excavation was regarded as an 'unprecedented triumph' by Richard Atkinson, Chair of the Excavation Committee. After studying Modern History in 1946 at Durham University, Brenda went on to gain a PhD 'The Vallum Reconsidered'. She walked the full length of Hadrian's Wall during the research. Brenda became Assistant Lecturer in Archaeology at the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire and was made a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1958.

In 1973, Brenda began a unique collaboration with Derek Phillips (archaeologist in charge of the excavations at York Minster 1967-73), undertaking the interpretation and publications relating to archaeological finds. As a professional archaeologist, Brenda juggled domestic household duties alongside her work.

Helen Little: Window restoration at York Minster **1872-1933**

Despite most memorials being dedicated to men who had fought in the First World War, Helen managed to highlight the tremendous contribution and sacrifice women had also made. The Five Sisters' window was restored by women for women at York Minster. This memorial acknowledges and records 1,400 women's names who gave their lives in 1914-1918.

Here our walk finishes. We hope you have enjoyed this short tour of the important sites of some of the hidden women who have had an influence on the development of York over the past 100 years.

For further information please visit our website www.herstoryyork.org.uk