

Trust Trail: Radical York

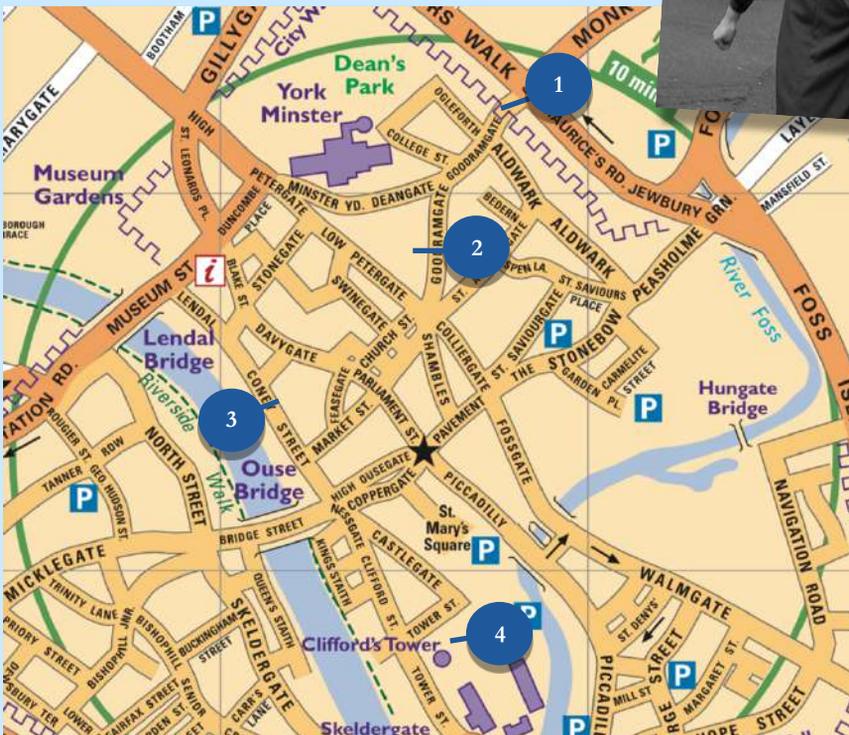
From a nineteenth-century, same-sex 'wedding' to the leader of a rebellion against Henry VIII, York's history is peppered with radicals: social, political, cultural.

But just how radical back then, and today, were these people, places and groups in York? What impact did they have on life in their own day and in the decades and centuries that followed? Some led unusual lives, some gave their lives, for causes that today may have been forgotten.

Take this walk-around of the city's historic trailblazers, visiting various spots that commemorate the radicals of York.



Map



Key

Plaques



Stop 1: Richard III (1452 - 1485)

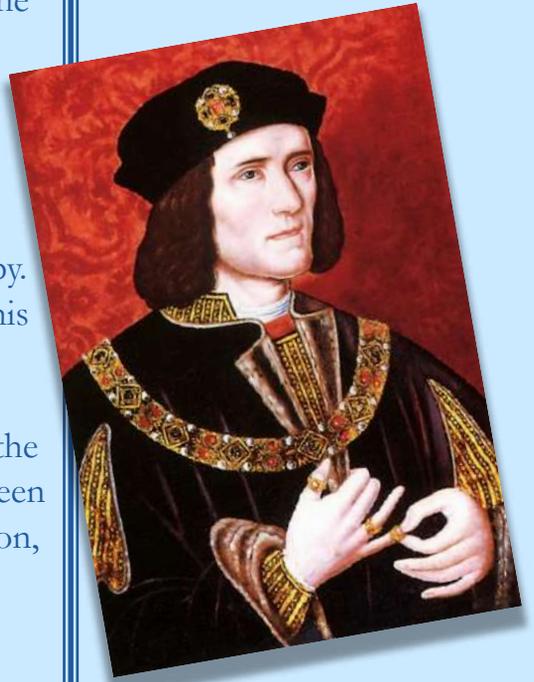
Monk Bar

Monk Bar is the largest and most ornate of the bars. It dates from the early-fourteenth century. It was a self-contained fortress, with each floor capable of being defended. Monk Bar has the city's only working portcullis, in use until 1970. Like the other main gateways, Monk Bar originally had a barbican on the front. Today it is home to the 'Richard III Experience' visitor attraction.

Richard was not from York, but had strong connections to the city as he was schooled nearby. King Richard visited York several times during his short reign, and stayed for three weeks in 1483.

Infamously known as the possible murderer of the two princes (his nephews, one of them the thirteen year old King Edward V) in the Tower of London, he usurped the throne in 1483 to much consternation. Radical yes, killer possibly.

His reign was turbulent, and the Wars of the Roses was only settled when he died at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, allowing the Welshman Henry Tudor to become King of England and head of a united York-Lancaster dynasty – the Tudors.



Proceed through the bar towards Goodramgate

Stop 2: Anne Lister (1791-1840)

Holy Trinity Church, off Goodramgate

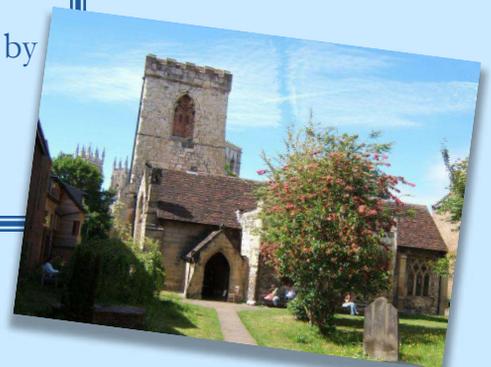
Often referred to as ‘the first modern lesbian’, Anne Lister defied the social conventions of the age. She inherited Shibden Hall, in Halifax and lived there openly with a female partner.

We know much about Lister’s life today thanks to her coded diaries, which extend to 27 volumes. By the time of her death in 1840, they contained around four million words.

In 1832, Anne pursued 29-year-old Ann Walker, heiress to an adjoining estate, and, in 1834, Ann moved into Shibden Hall where the two women lived openly as a couple. Having previously exchanged rings and made marriage vows, Anne Lister and Ann Walker attended the Easter Sunday service at Holy Trinity Church, Goodramgate, York, on 30 March 1834.

Anne records the event in her diary: *‘At Goodramgate church at 10.35; Miss W- and I and Thomas staid [for] the sacrament... The first time I ever joined Miss W- – in my prayers – I had prayed that our union might be happy – she had not thought of doing as much for me.’*

Receiving communion side by side was interpreted by the two women as a blessing of their union. York’s first same sex wedding – perhaps?



Walk via Church Street, Feasegate, and the turn right onto Coney Street

Stop 3: York's Suffragettes

36 Coney Street (opposite 'Next')

In 1908, Emmeline Pankhurst addressed an open air meeting in Exhibition Square in York and lobbied women workers at Rowntree's Cocoa Works during their lunch hour, trying to drum up support. In 1910, a branch of the Women's Social and Political Union was established in York. Their mission today would be unthinkable, but back then was radical: to allow women the right to vote in elections.

York's suffragettes opened an office where they could be contacted and hold meetings. Initially this was at No.35 Coney Street (since 1910, the premises in Coney Street have been renumbered and the property concerned is now No.36, which is where you stand now). Right in the heart of 1908 York, meetings proposing radical action to protest for a move to equal voting took place at this spot.

In 1914, suffragettes interrupted services in Bishopthorpe Church and York. Later, suffragettes in the upper and dress circles at York Theatre Royal threw down suffrage leaflets, and attacks were made on pillar boxes by pouring in phosphorous.

The wider women's suffragist and suffragettes movements (of which the suffragettes were more radical and co-ordinated disruptive protests) wound down their activities during the First World War.

Women over 30 were enfranchised in 1918, with equal voting rights with men coming in 1928.



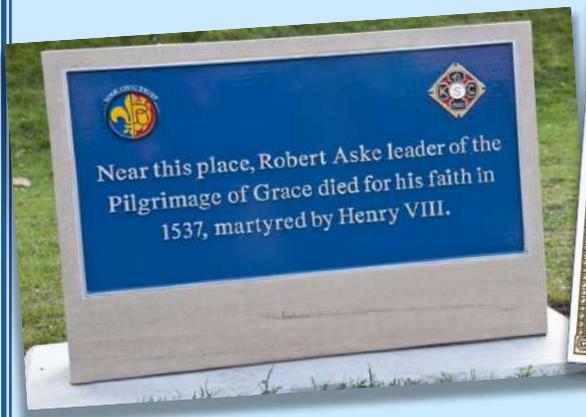
Walk to Clifford's Tower via Castlegate or Cliffrd Street

Stop 4: Robert Aske (c.1500 – 1537)

Clifford's Tower

We end here at Clifford's Tower, with two radicals of a very different nature. Why is Clifford's Tower called Clifford's Tower?

The site of many deaths including the massacre of the Jewish population in the Middle Ages, the history of this site is bloody and peppered with tales of execution, punishment and death. The castle was originally made from wood, but after three fires was eventually rebuilt in stone in 1245. Why Clifford's Tower? It isn't entirely clear when or why the Tower got its present name. Originally it was simply known as the King's Tower. The name may well be a reference to the fact that Roger de Clifford was hanged at the tower in 1322 for opposing Edward II. The opposition to the conqueror of Wales by de Clifford must have served long in the memory in York – if the story is true.



At the entrance to the Tower is a plaque commemorating the Jewish massacre: On 16 March 1190 a wave of anti-Semitic riots culminated in the massacre of an estimated 150 Jews – the entire Jewish community of York. On the opposite side of the Castle stands a blue plaque to Robert Aske, leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace (*illustrated above right*) and opposer to the rule of Henry VIII.

The Pilgrimage of Grace was a popular uprising in 1536, led by the lawyer, Robert Aske, who protested at the King's dissolution of the monasteries in England, the break with the Catholic Church, imposition of Protestantism, and is seen as the most serious political threat that Henry VIII faced to his rule. When the rebellion failed, Aske was charged with treason and executed at Clifford's Tower – a fate that befell many of his co-conspirators.

End of Trail

We hope you enjoyed it and learned a lot.
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