York Civic Trust: Blue plaque event nominations (2026)

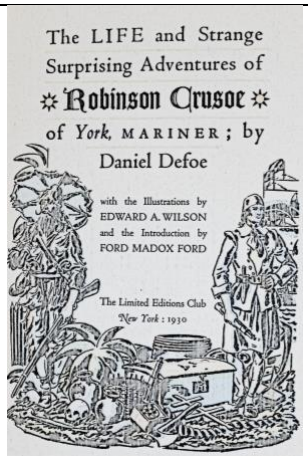
This year, York Civic Trust is inviting members to consider a different kind of blue plaque. Rather than focusing primarily on notable people or buildings, we are asking which stories, events, organisations and moments from York's past deserve to be remembered?

The 12 nominations below span more than eight centuries and range from medieval miracles and royal musters to women's history, literature, social reform, photography, archaeology, street art and post-war European friendship.

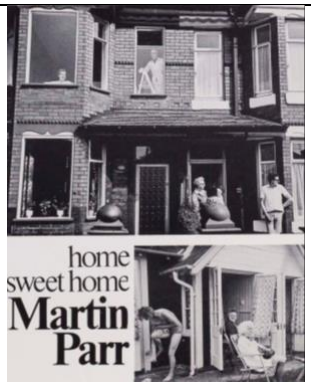
They are deliberately varied – some are well-known, while others have largely disappeared from public memory. Each offers a different way of telling the story of York and its people.

Members will be invited to vote for their 3 preferred nominations at the York Civic Trust AGM on 1 October 2026 (register here: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/york-civic-trust-annual-general-meeting-tickets-1999660361972 .)

Or you can email your 3 favourite plaque nominations, in order of preference, to duncan.marks@yorkcivictrust.co.uk

1	St William and ‘miracle’ at Ouse Bridge (1154)		When Archbishop William of York returned from exile in 1154, Ouse Bridge collapsed beneath the crowds gathered to welcome him. Tradition holds that although many fell into the River Ouse, nobody drowned, an event regarded as William's first miracle and central to his canonisation and York's medieval identity as a city of pilgrimage.
2	Charles I and up to 70,000 gather on Heworth Moor (1642)		In June 1642, Charles I gathered around 40,000-70,000 gentry and other local men on Heworth Moor as he prepared to raise an army, creating one of the largest military gatherings in English history. The mustering marked the final collapse of relations between Crown and Parliament and directly preceded the outbreak of the English Civil War.
3	Grace White and *York Mercury* (1719)		On 23 February 1719, printer Grace White published the *York Mercury*, York's first newspaper, from her printing house in Coffee Yard, Stonegate. Having inherited part of her husband's printing business, White became one of York's pioneering female printers and helped establish a newspaper industry that would flourish in the city throughout the following centuries.
4	“Robinson Crusoe” departs from York (1719)		Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* begins with Crusoe leaving York against his father's wishes before embarking on the voyage that leads to his famous shipwreck. Published in 1719, the novel became one of the world's most influential works of fiction. Skeldergate, from where overseas merchants traditionally were required to live and trade in York, provides a fitting location to commemorate one of literature's most famous characters and where his story begins.

5	York Female Friendly Society founded (1788)		In 1788 reformers Catherine Cappe and Faith Gray founded the York Female Friendly Society, enabling working women to contribute towards financial support during illness. Growing from their pioneering work in female education and employment, the society survived for almost two centuries.
6	Bill Richmond's York fights (c.1790s)		After arriving in England from slavery in America, Bill Richmond trained as a cabinet maker in York before becoming Britain's first Black sporting superstar. Racially motivated challenges led him to fight in York, including contests on The Groves, establishing an awareness of his skill that led to his remarkable boxing career in London and national reputation.
7	Richard Oastler's Anti-Child Labour March (1832)		In the 1830s, Richard Oastler led thousands of mostly West Yorkshire textile workers through Castlegate to demand an end to child labour and excessive factory hours. The demonstration became one of the defining public moments of the Ten Hours Movement, helping build support for legislation that transformed the lives of working children across Britain.
8	York's first female General Election voter (1918)		On 14 December 1918, Sarah Booth, a 48-year married woman originally from Northumbria, now living at No.134 Haxby Road, became the first woman recorded as voting in York in a parliamentary election. It followed the Representation of the People Act (1918), which marked a historic expansion of political participation, including for many women. (Although, equal voting rights for women would not be achieved until 1928).

9	York “Twinned” with Münster (1957)		York established its twinning partnership with Münster in 1957, building a lasting friendship with the German city in the aftermath of WW2. The partnership has fostered reconciliation and mutual understanding through educational, cultural and civic exchange.
10	Martin Parr's *Home Sweet Home* Exhibition (1974)		In 1974, York's Impressions Gallery staged Martin Parr's *Home Sweet Home*, the exhibition that launched one of Britain's most celebrated documentary photographers. Founded in 1972, Impressions was among the UK's first dedicated photography galleries and became internationally influential in promoting contemporary photography and visual culture.
11	JORVIK Viking Centre opens (1984)		On 14 April 1984, York Archaeological Trust opened the JORVIK Viking Centre on the site of its remarkable Coppergate excavations. Reconstructing the sights, sounds and even smells of Viking-age York, its innovative combination of archaeology, reconstruction and immersive interpretation helped transform how history was presented to the public. More than 20 million people have since visited JORVIK.
12	*Bustin' Loose* – graffiti competition (1988)		In 1988, York-born graffiti artist Keith Hopewell worked with City of York Council to organise Bustin' Loose, one of Britain's first and largest open-call graffiti and street art festivals. Held inside the then near-new Foss Bank car park. A later Hopewell mural, *A Wise Old Gesture from a Childish Mind* (1994), survives there, illustrating York's early, and somewhat surprising, embrace of street art as public art.