



Researching women's history at Explore York Archives

Although women's history has flourished since the mid-twentieth century, women continue to be under represented in historical research and publications. Despite making up over half of the UK's current population, women's past achievements and contributions to both the public and private spheres still lack the recognition they deserve.

The Civic and Community collections at Explore York Archives contain unique sources that can help to reveal the hidden histories of York's women. This guide is by no means exhaustive, but is intended to provide an overview of collections and resources that could be used as a starting point for researching women's lives.

Key Collections

Below are some of the collections* we hold that relate specifically to individual women, or women's experience. We are taking in new collections all the time, so please check our catalogue for recent additions.

- AWG** York Association of Women Graduates, 1989-2012
- CRI** Edna Crichton, Lord Mayor of York, 1941-1960s
- CYG** York Association for the Care of Young Girls and York Training Home for Girls, 1880-1960s
- DYS** Lillie Dyson Letters, 1890s
- LEM** Iris Lemare papers, 1902-1997
- MHD** Diaries and Letters of Mary Hughes, 1910-1950
- MPP** Autobiography and papers of Millicent Price, 1935
- PEN** York Penitentiary Society, 1822-1953
- SCW** York Standing Conference of Women's Organisations, 1943-2000
- STU** Vivian Stuart papers, 1968-1986
- WWI** Women's Institute, Wheldrake Branch, 1925-2020
- YFF** York Female Friendly Society, 1786-1986

*records less than 100 years old are subject to the Data Protection Act 2018



Civic collections

Evidence of women's lives, activities, and even their voices can be found throughout our collections of Civic archives. These sources detail women's experiences of health, housing, welfare and education, as well as their contributions to the civic life of the city.

PLU Poor Law Collection

Our Poor Law archive offers opportunities for researching women's experience of poverty and welfare. This collection could also be used for evidence of women's roles within the pre-1948 welfare system.

Y York Civic Archive

Our main series of Civic records constitutes nearly half of our holdings, so the opportunities here are endless! Records that could be mined for women's stories include:

- Records of staff
- Civil Defence records
- Committee minutes
- Education and school records
- Records relating to crime, punishment, health and housing

Community collections

Our community collections comprise records of individuals as well as local community groups and organisations, such as: sporting clubs, theatre groups, musical societies, trades unions, political organisations, and businesses. These records offer scope for studying women's involvement in a variety of professional and recreational arenas.

Family History

If you are interested in researching women in your own family you can access a wide range of records online through Findmypast and Ancestry. Free access to the library editions of both sites is available in all the Explore libraries.

Photographic collections

You can find a wide range of women's lives documented in our photographic collections. Some of these images have been digitised and are available to view on our York Images website.

<https://images.exploreyork.org.uk>

These records offer a rich resource for studying women's history in York. However, we are always looking to expand our collections, to provide a more representative account of York's citizens, past and present. If you are aware of any organisations or individuals who hold archives relating to women's history please contact us.

We recognise though that some archive collections are best kept in local communities, as they support a sense of place and community identity. If you are looking for advice on how to create your own archive, or how to preserve what you currently have, please get in touch.





Other resources

There are a wealth of websites and resources providing helpful information on women's history. Here are a just few to get you started on your research journey.

Archives Hub

<http://archiveshub.ac.uk>

A search portal for archives held at over 350 institutions across the UK.

The Borthwick Institute for Archives

www.york.ac.uk/borthwick/

The Borthwick's holdings include the York NHS archive, the Rowntree Archive, Church of England and nonconformist records, and records of societies and organisations.

Clements Hall Local History Group

www.clementshallhistorygroup.org.uk/

An active local history group with a focus on the Scarcroft, Clementhorpe, South Bank and Bishophill areas of York.

North Yorkshire County Record Office

www.northyorks.gov.uk/county-record-office

Historic and current records for the study of North Yorkshire and its people

Women's histories – The National Archives

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/womens-histories/

A list of current resources for women's histories on The National Archives website.

HERSTORY.YORK

www.herstoryyork.org.uk

Celebrating women who have made a difference to the City of York

Yorkshire Women

www.historytoherstory.org.uk

Yorkshire Women's Lives online, 1100 to the Present

York Oral history society

<http://www.yorkoralhistory.org.uk/>

An excellent resource for researching the lives of York women in the 20th century.



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Libraries and Archives

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