HERStory: Making Invisible Women Visible

Research notes

| Group Number and Researcher Name: Group 5 - Emily Bowen, Hannah Krull | |
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| Name of Research Focus: Winifred Rowntree | |
| Date of Birth: 16 October 1884 (York) | Date of Death: 11 March 1915 (York) |
| Main Reason to Research: Honesty Girls Club | |
| Are there any other connections to key geographical locations or people?  * Youngest daughter of Joseph Rowntree (owner of the Rowntree factory) * The Honesty Girls Club was located around the Leeman Road area and accepted girls and women who worked and lived there. * Club building located at 76 Stamford Street, Leeman Road, York * Family home in the St Olaves area * Married at the Friends Meeting House, York * She is buried in Friends Burial Ground, York | |
| Key Words: Honesty Girls Club, Rowntree, York, Quaker, Leeman Road | |
| Synopsis for website | |
| *[Max 150 words]*  Winifred Naish née Rowntree (1884–1915) was the youngest child of philanthropist Joseph Rowntree and, as in tradition with other members of the family, was active in her local community. At 17, she established her own organisation in the Leeman Road area of York that aimed to instil honesty and kindness amongst its members, and provide entertainment and education for local girls. The Honesty Girls Club (1902-1940) catered for girls aged 5-25 or until marriage, offering weekly classes in a variety of areas, such as morris dancing, copper work and needlework. Winifred sat as president of the club from its creation in 1902 until her death in 1915, during which time the club’s attendees increased from 24 members to 200. Winifred lived in York her entire life, marrying in 1907 at the Friends’ Meeting House, and had three children with husband Arthur Duncan Naish. | |
| What have you found out? | |
| *[summary of research]*  The Honesty Girls Club was established by the then 17 year old Winifred Rowntree as a way to provide education and entertainment for girls and women aged 5-25 who lived and worked in the Leeman Road area.[[1]](#footnote-0) She may have been influenced by her Quaker family upbringing and the generosity of her father’s own ventures in setting up three charitable organisations.[[2]](#footnote-1) It ran from 1902 to 1940 and served as a remarkable legacy for Winifred after her early death aged 30 in 1915.[[3]](#footnote-2) When it first formed the club originally had 24 members who met at a local adult school, but by 1913 it had 116 members and they had acquired their own purpose built building.[[4]](#footnote-3) In the classes, primarily for working class girls and young women, needlework was compulsory but they could also learn blouse-making, millinery, part singing, ameteur dramatics, old English folk dancing and modern dancing, swimming (during the summer months), allotment gardening and nature studies.[[5]](#footnote-4)  The club was run by an elected council of 12 seniors and was organised into five age groups where girls were able to attend until they were 25 or they were married.[[6]](#footnote-5) The girls were given a certificate of membership after they had attended the club for three years.[[7]](#footnote-6) Junior meetings were held on a Thursday evening for those aged 11-14, during which they were taught plain sewing, dancing and played games. Senior meetings on a Monday night involved needlework and dancing. Both meetings would finish with hymns and bible readings as was traditional during that time, even at clubs which were not associated with religious congregations.[[8]](#footnote-7) After their building was finished, the club eventually had its own library in which girls were able to spend their evenings even if they were not taking classes.[[9]](#footnote-8) Annual competitions were also held such as wildflower competitions in which prizes were given to those who collected the widest variety of flowers.[[10]](#footnote-9)  Clubs such as the Honesty Girls Club were often championed by upper/middle class women who ran them for working class girls as they were meant to be ‘reforming’ and ‘improving’. The Honesty Girls Club aimed to encourage kindness and respect amongst members and tried to benefit the local community through initiatives such as:[[11]](#footnote-10)   * + ‘Guild of Help’ - made baby clothes for local people out of recycled materials   + ‘Visiting Committee’ - called on any girl who missed a meeting to provide care and wellbeing support   + running events for the local community, such as the annual Christmas party for children in the local workhouse   The club continued after her death in 1915[[12]](#footnote-11), with her husband Arthur Naish, whom she married in April 1907,[[13]](#footnote-12) taking over as president, as well as previous members taking the roles of vice-president and secretaries who overlooked the committee of senior members.[[14]](#footnote-13) The club eventually ended in the 1940s as numbers of new members failed to increase.[[15]](#footnote-14) | |
| Why is this interesting and what impact have they had? | |
| *[What is it about their life that is interesting to you]*  The role Winifred had in providing education to local girls, albeit in a gendered sphere, seems to have gone unnoticed in the history of York. This is particularly surprising as she is daughter to the great Joseph Rowntree, so it would be assumed that her achievements would have been recorded as heavily as that of her siblings, such as Seebohm Rowntree. But even without the family connection, the club Winifred formed when she was only 17 years of age would have had a significant impact on the local area due to the very nature of its initiatives: the Guild Of Help, a scheme within the club, made baby clothes for locals out of recycled materials; the Visiting Committee called on any girl missing from a meeting to provide care and wellbeing support; running of local community events such as the annual christmas party for children at the workhouse. These initiatives focused on elements of society that are still of emphasis today - recycling, wellbeing, charity. | |
| Are there opportunities for follow up research? | |
| *[If you had more time or resources, where would you go to next]*  Further research could be conducted into the impact of the Honesty Girls Club on the local area, for instance the annual Christmas Party for children in the local workhouse. The origins of their funding also invites further research, and could present a further link to the Rowntree Factories if they acted as a sponsor. Items relating to the Club can be found in the Borthwick archives which could be a source of further research, including annual reports from the club, certificate of membership and example items made during the classes. Follow up research on Winifred’s personal life could also be conducted, from her childhood and experience as a member of the Rowntree family to the bringing up of her own children. | |
| In your research have you discovered any connection to the Castle Museum collections/sites | |
| *[Key collections/buildings or items held by YMT to support the research ]*  Collections relating to family members  YORCM : AA8011.5 Printing block bearing signature of Joseph Rowntree (father)  Example collections relating to family company  YORCM : 2002.314 Paper flyer for Rowntree chocolate creams (1879)  YORCM : AA6919 Paper advertisement for Rowntree Rock Cocoa (1883)  YORCM : TM285 Rowntree New Year Chocolate tin (1899)  YORCM : AA2288 Enamel Rowntree cocoa advertisement (1910) | |

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| Group Number and Researcher Name: Group 5 - Sophie Davies, Maria Witczak | |
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| Name of Research Focus: Henrietta Stannard | |
| Date of Birth: 13 January 1856 (York) | Date of Death:13 December 1911 (London) |
| Main Reason to Research: British novelist | |
| Are there any other connections to key geographical locations or people? Born in Trinity Lane, York  Only daughter of Henry Vaughan Palmer, rector of St. Margaret’s York (also an officer in the Royal Artillery)  Educated in Bootham House, York  First story published in York paper  Married Arthur Stannard at Fulford, York  Actress Hannah Pritchard, her great-great-great-grandmother  Son Eliot Stannard, screenwriter and director  Author Oscar Wilde | |
| Key Words: Writer, “Winter’s Weekly”, Society of Women Journalists, Writer’s club | |
| Synopsis for website | |
| Henrietta Eliza Stannard, née Vaughan Palmer (1856-1911) was a writer and journalist known under the pseudonyms John Winter Strange and Violet Whyte. She attended the Bothnam House school in York. Just 17 she published her first story in the York magazine. Born into a family with a long military history, her stories mainly focused on the army experience of the middle class. Her book “Booties' Baby: a story of the Scarlet Lancers”, sold two million copies within ten years of publication. After moving with her husband to London she founded “Weekly Winter” magazine which ran from 1891-1895. She accomplished literary success and was heavily involved in charity work, by donating money from the official  reading of her stories. From 1901 to 1903 she was a president of the Society of Women Journalists. The last years of her life were connected to London and Dieppe where she resided due to her husband’s illness. Henrietta died in 1911 due to complications after an accident outside underground station and is buried in Woking. | |
| What have you found out? | |
| Henrietta is mostly known under her male pseudonym John Winter Strange, which she used due to publishers' concerns that nobody would read military stories written by a woman. She wrote mostly for and about the middle class, to which she belonged. After getting her story published at the age of 17 in York magazine, her real breakthrough came when Family Herald weekly story magazine published her stories. After this she was successfully published in multiple publications. She married an engineer Arthur Stannard at Fulford York just after four months of knowing him. They shared four children: Audrey (Betty), twins Eliot (Bottles) and Violet (Beaufie) and daughter Olive. The family left York and moved to London where in 1891 she started “Golden Gates”. In 1895 the magazine changed its name to “Winter’s Weekly”. She developed a friendship with literary critic John Ruskin who became a godfather to her children. Between 1901 and 1903 she was a president of the Society of Women Journalists as well as a president of the Writers club in 1892. By giving readings of her own stories she raised money for distressed gentlefolk in the Anti-Vivisection League and the Anti-Crinoline League. Arthur’s illness caused the Stannard family to move to Dieppe. Her writing about the town highly contributed to the town’s tourist trade. After bankruptcy she started selling “toilet preparations”, which included skin and hair lotions.Her products won 6 golden medals between 1905 and 1911. From her letters, it can be concluded that she hated crinoline. In 1900, she was given a diagnosis of breast cancer and underwent mastectomy, which highly affected her health. Henrietta died in 1911 due to complications after an accident,, leaving only 547 pounds. She is buried in Woking.1 Her biography *John Strange Winter: a volume of personal record* was written by Oliver Bainbridge in 1916.   * York Herald interview with John Strange winter * Biography written by Oliver Bainvridge * newspaper portraits * text in The Yorkshire evening Post from 11.01.1893 * photo of her 3 children * photo of the church she was married at | |
| Why is this interesting and what impact have they had? | |
| Henrietta’s impact in the world of literature was so significant, publishing some of the most popular books of the day. She also led groups, such as the Society of Women Journalists and the writers club. Her success seems to have been almost completely forgotten and deserves more recognition. She exemplifies a whole body of female journalists and authors who made such key contributions to the literature of the day, and have been discounted or forgotten because of their gender. The genre of war stories is so male-dominant, even today, and for Henrietta to find such success in going against the grain is very inspirational. | |
| Are there opportunities for follow up research? | |
| With more time, we could look more widely into the impact of Henrietta’s stories in the world of literature and connect her with other Victorian female writers. We could also look more into the societies and magazines she founded and headed, other authors who worked on/in them and how they were published, received etc. Henrietta’s connection with London and Dieppe could also be looked into more closely. | |
| In your research have you discovered any connection to the Castle Museum collections/sites | |
| *[Key collections/buildings or items held by YMT to support the research ]* | |

1Seeney, Michael. “JOHN STRANGE WINTER AND DIEPPE.” *The Wildean*, no. 23, Oscar Wilde Society, 2003, pp. 25–37, http://www.jstor.org/stable/45270112.

1. <https://borthcat.york.ac.uk/index.php/honesty-girls-club> [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Rowntree_(philanthropist)> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. <https://borthcat.york.ac.uk/index.php/honesty-girls-club> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. <https://borthcat.york.ac.uk/index.php/honesty-girls-club> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. *Cocoa Works Magazine, May 1915* (Borthwick Archives: CWM/1914-16 page 1756) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=8913&h=24930720&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=7814> [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. <https://borthcat.york.ac.uk/index.php/honesty-girls-club> [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-14)