

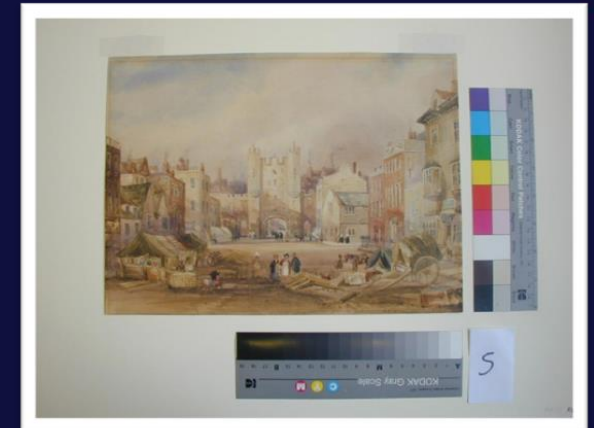
HERSTORY PRESENTATION, TEAM TWO,
LUCY RULE, ELLA GAUCI

THE CASE OF MARY STUBBS AND THE BAY HORSE INN

Mary Stubbs: the risks of innkeeping

Mary Stubbs (1812-1888) was the plaintiff in a sexual slander case that occurred in the consistory court in York between 1841-1842. At the Bay Horse Inn on Blossom Street, which her husband Samuel owned, she became the victim of sexual slander by a man named Israel Bradley. He called her a 'bloody thundering whore' and claimed that he had 'connexion with her in every part of the house even in the cellar'.

Instead of fearing Bradley, she sued him. She won her case after bringing in nine witnesses, and Bradley was charged with the full fine that he ultimately could not pay. She was one of few women in York's Church courts during this century that managed to win her defamation case with a full sentence given to the defendant.



Why Mary Stubbs?

Mary Stubbs was a working woman. Innkeeping was a business built on good word of mouth and moral character. In

1841 Mary faced an unfortunately common threat for women- that of sexual slander. She knew that any slight on her reputation would ultimately affect her business and her family. And she decided to face that threat with legal action.

She took back her good name by force, using the limited tools she had as a woman in her position. Women like Mary are often forgotten or minimized when piecing together the history of a city.

However, her determination to fight against a larger culture of sexual shame for no one but herself should be remembered as a proud moment for the women of York.

Your Collection

There are several links to items within the YMT collection to Mary and her life as an innkeeper. This includes the painting of Blossom Street shown above and the teapot to the right. These items provide insight to her life as it would have been in the day to day as well as general insight into Victorian innkeeping practices. These links include:

YORAG : R406

YORAG : R43

YORCM : AA10052

YORAG : R4046

YORYM : YORYM : 2001.10621.a-b

More details on these can be seen on our fact sheet.

