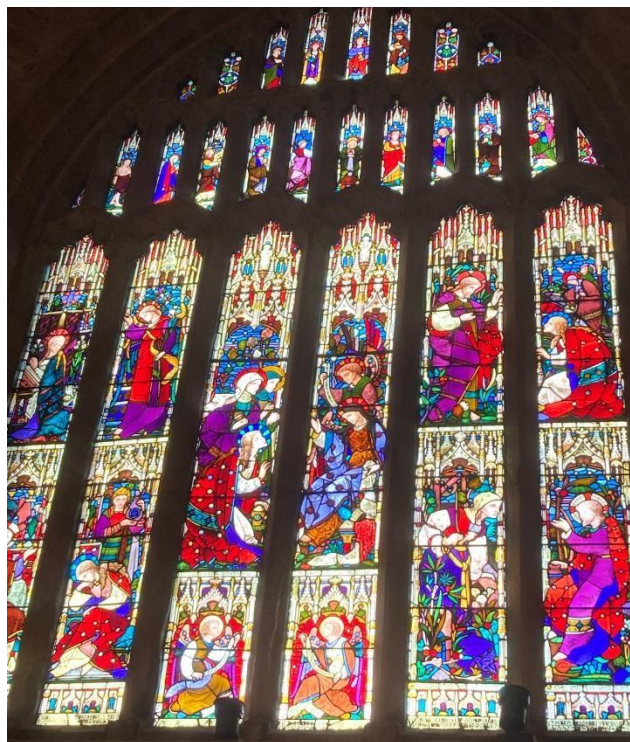


## Remarkable Women

Women have long played an important part in Christianity and in local, national and global affairs. The objects and windows found in Bradford Cathedral testify to the remarkable women who have had a positive influence on Christian belief and practice and who have worked to make the local community and wider world a better place.

### 1. Biblical Women

Some of the women who feature in the Cathedral are from Jewish and Christian stories from the Bible. Here are just a few.



The West Window is dedicated to women in the Bible, but it is also a memorial to a number of Bradford women. The window was installed in 1864 and bears the inscription:

With much love and as a token of affection to the memory of CATHERINE WELLS who died June 20th 1857 aged 65 years. Also of JANE WELLS who died October 20th 1860 aged 65 years, daughter of PETER and ELIZABETH WELLS, formerly of Bradford, by ANN WELLS and WILLIAM WELLS, their only surviving sister and brother.

Here are two of the many stories that are told in pictures in the West Window:

## **Naomi and Ruth - We are stronger together**

In recent times the news has been dominated by stories of people who have been forced to leave their homes in countries where they are in danger and to look for a new home somewhere else. This terrible situation is not just a modern problem. The story of Naomi and Ruth in the Old Testament (the Jewish Bible and part of the Christian Bible), tells many stories of such journeys and how refugees suffer when they face the loss of family, friends and familiar surroundings.

Naomi was a happy woman who lived with her husband and two sons in a land called Canaan (now in modern day Israel). They farmed the land. Then everything changed. There was a drought (no rain) and a famine (no food). Naomi and her family had nothing to eat and very little to drink; they had no choice, they had to leave to find food. They walked and walked until they reached another country, a land that belonged to different people. They were refugees and in need of asylum (safety); some people took pity on them, others were very unkind to them because they were strangers, from another country.

The family made a home and settled down the best they could. Eventually Naomi's sons both got married and for a while they were very happy, but people were unkind to their wives, because they had married foreigners, refugees from another country. 'It's not right!' the people said and called them names. Then things took a terrible turn for the worse.

Naomi's husband died and then both her sons died too. This just left the three women alone, living in a place where they were not liked or wanted. Naomi decided that she needed to go back to her own country. One of her son's wives decided to stay, but one- Ruth- decided to go with Naomi back to Canaan. She was brave, kind and loyal to her mother in law. She decided to make the long journey with Naomi, knowing that this time it would be her who would be a foreigner in a strange land. She took no notice when people said she was mad or stupid or called her names. Instead Ruth looked at Naomi and said to the older woman: 'Where you go, I will go; where you stay, I will stay; your people will be my people; your God will be my God.'

Together they went back to Naomi's home land. Once there they found a house and the famine was over, but they had no land to farm, they were very poor and had to rely on Naomi's relatives. Ruth wasn't proud, she went out to find some food; she went into the fields and picked up the dropped ears of wheat, the corn that people had dropped when harvesting their crops. She was in danger, on her own, in the fields; no family, no father, husband or son to protect her, but she didn't care, she wanted to take some food back to Naomi. She went with Naomi, she had stayed with Naomi and she felt it was her job to look after her, whatever it took.

Naomi's cousin Boaz saw what Ruth was doing, he admired her loyalty; eventually he asked Ruth to marry him. He was brave enough to marry someone who was both a foreigner and a widow. He realised that Ruth was brave, devoted to Naomi and had chosen to stay with her and care for her. He knew that she was a good woman and didn't care that people called her names. They were married. Boaz was very happy, Ruth was safe and happy and they both looked after Naomi, who to her delight became a step-grandma! Ruth called her son Obed; when he grew up he had children and then his children grew up and they had children. Ruth's (and of course Naomi's) family grew and grew. From being unwanted and insignificant, she became the centre of a huge, loving family. Ruth was rewarded for her kindness, loyalty and hard work. The story proves that working together women are strong enough to overcome great hardships. We are all stronger together than we are apart.

### **The Samaritan Woman - We are all equal!**

The New Testament, part of the Christian Bible, tells lots of stories about Jesus' life and how he showed through his actions how people should treat each other. Jesus lived in Judea in what is now modern day Israel. He was Jewish as were his friends (who are also known as Jesus' disciples). In Judea there were people known as Samaritans. They were not regarded as being 'properly' Jewish and many people were very unpleasant to them as a result. They were to be avoided at all cost. Jesus obviously didn't agree with this!

This story begins as Jesus and his friends were travelling from the city of Jerusalem in the south, to Galilee in the north. To make their journey shorter, they took the quickest route, which was through Samaria. Tired and thirsty, Jesus stopped and sat by a well, known as 'Jacob's Well'; he stayed here while his disciples went to buy food in a nearby village. It was about noon, lunchtime, the hottest part of the day, and a Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. She went daily at this time to avoid other people (others went to the well in the morning and evening). She had been married more than once and for this reason and because she was a Samaritan, she was called names and bullied by other women who lived in the village.

Jesus spoke to her, breaking three Jewish customs. Firstly, he spoke to her despite the fact that she was a woman, alone and he was a man. Secondly, she was a Samaritan woman, and the Jews traditionally did not have anything at all to do with Samaritans. Thirdly, he asked her to get him a drink of water, although using her cup or jar would have made him unclean, because she was not orthodoxly Jewish. When his disciples returned they were shocked to see him talking to the woman and drinking from her vessel. However, his message was clear: no one should be bullied or left out because of who they are; being a woman is nothing to be ashamed of, quite the opposite and all people should be treated with respect and kindness.

People today sometimes judge others because they are different; they call them names or refuse to speak to them. Jesus treated people as individuals, accepting them with love, stressing that they were valuable in their own right, wherever they lived, whatever they looked like, whatever their religious beliefs and practices and whether they were male or

female. The woman at the well was happy to offer Jesus water, showing him kindness and respect; he did the same in return, while showing his disciples how we should all behave towards each other. His actions said very clearly, 'We are all equal and worthy of respect!'

**Possible activities:**

- Find the women above in the window (Lower row left hand side: Ruth, back view, carrying brown bag, Naomi with the white cloth; right hand side: Jesus and the Samaritan woman)
- Choose one of the stories to sequence in images
- Design a poster that encourages people to be friends, 'We are stronger together!'
- Write a 'Welcome Here' poem or 'No Bullying Here' poem
- Look at slogans designed to welcome refugees and asylum seekers today; design your own
- Make a single stained glass window panel that tells one of the stories
- Sketch your favourite window panel from the West Window, choose any and find out about the woman or women you have drawn.

## 2. The Elizabeth Mitchell Windows



Elizabeth Mitchell was a woman of independent means (she had her own money); she lived in Manningham in Bradford, she was a Christian and worshipped at the Cathedral when it was the Parish Church. She was able to help improve the Cathedral and was involved in its restoration, giving money for beautiful stained glass windows to be designed, sitting on important committees that made decisions about the Cathedral and providing the money for one of the World War I Memorial Bells, that hangs now in the bell tower. As far as we know Elizabeth never married; she dedicated a window to her uncle and his aunt in 1911/12 and when she died her nieces and nephews had one of these windows re-dedicated in her memory, a sign of what an important and much loved woman she was.

### Three Women and their Symbols

In the south ambulatory, behind the choir stalls there is a window to the memory of Elizabeth Mitchell and other loved ones, 'Lux perpetua luceat eis' (Let perpetual light shine upon them). The windows depict three very important and influential Christian women: Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Hilde of Whitby and Saint Ethelburga of Kent; it is fitting that the images of these three important women are now dedicated to Elizabeth Mitchell's memory as she herself was such an influential Bradfordian woman.



### Elizabeth of Hungary

Elizabeth (1207-1231) was born in Hungary. She began life as the daughter of King Andrew II. When she was only 14, she married the 21-year-old Ludwig IV, of Thuringia, a place that is now part of Germany. Ludwig supported her Christian charitable work; she had a small hospital built below their castle at Wartburg, with twenty-eight beds. She visited the patients to attend to their needs; at the same time, she oversaw the giving of food and other supplies to the poor and needy in the district around the castle. She was widowed young and suddenly she found that she was no longer welcome at the German court. She decided to dedicate her life to helping others. She became a Franciscan nun, caring for the sick and poor. The story in the window explains how she was miraculously saved from punishment, perhaps even death; she was accused of stealing bread from the castle to feed those in need, but when stopped by soldiers, she opened her cloak to reveal not bread, but roses. She lived a life of obedience to God, she was kind and always tried to care for those in need. She died at the young age of 24. Her symbol is the rose.

### Hild of Whitby

Hild (614-680) was born into a wealthy family and grew up in the Northumbrian royal court in the north of England. She was baptised by one of the first Christians to preach in the north of England, Paulinus, on Easter Eve 627, in the city of York. She was well educated and a strong personality; her views and actions had far-reaching effects on Christianity in

the North of England and she showed that a woman was as powerful and as intelligent as any man. When she was 33 she became a nun in the north east town of Hartlepool; she was taught by Saint Aidan, another famous monk and preacher (Saint Aidan's Chapel in the Cathedral explains more about his life and work - come and take a look!). She founded a double monastery for men and women at Whitby, which became a famous centre of learning and wisdom. As abbess, leader of the community, she would have been able to preach at the Celtic church services and give Holy Communion (blessed bread and wine) to others. She was one of the principal Celtic champions at the Synod of Whitby in 664, (a large meeting of Christians to agree on worship, practices and matter of belief), but she eventually accepted the ruling of the Synod in favour of Roman Catholic practice, which actually reduced some of her own power as a Christian leader. If you look closely at Hild's window you will see an ammonite (often called a 'devil's toe nail'!). These fossils are found on the beach at Whitby, below the cliffs on which Hild built Whitby Abbey. They also represent a serpent, which is always associated with the pre-Christian pagan religion. Celtic Christianity claimed to have driven the 'serpents' out of Ireland and the north of England. The ammonite is one of Hild's symbols because she championed Christianity and encouraged people to move away from pagan practices, towards those of the Celtic Church.

### **Ethelburga of Kent**

No one knows when exactly Ethelburga was born, but she died in 647. She was a Christian princess who lived in Kent, in the very south of England, but she moved north when she married King Edwin of Northumbria in 625. It is because of her that Edwin became a Christian and encouraged the people of Northumbria to do likewise. Pope Boniface sent her letters and gifts from Rome; she received a silver mirror and a gold and ivory comb from him, because the Pope said that Ethelburga's actions were a 'shining example to others'. After Edwin's death in 633 Ethelburga returned to Kent and established one of the first Benedictine nunneries in England (there was also a monastery on the site) at Lyminge, near Folkestone. She led the life of the nunnery as an abbess until her death in 647.

**Note: when you visit the Cathedral look carefully at the writing above the choir stalls. See if you can spot any familiar names there.**

### **Possible activities:**

- 'Interview' one of the three women; drama or creative/script writing
- Decide which of the three women is your favourite and draw her 'symbol/s'
- Think of one other woman you think is remarkable or special to you and design a symbol to represent them
- If you had to draw a symbol for Elizabeth Mitchell what would it be? Design a symbol to be displayed beneath her window.

### 3. Women and Remembrance

The Bradford Cathedral building commemorates people who fought and died in wars and those who campaigned for an end to war, in its artefacts, windows and memorials.

In Bradford, women were at the forefront of attempts to make sure that those who died in the First World War were not forgotten and that the need for peace was always remembered. In Bradford, women were successfully involved in raising money for many World War I memorials and symbols of remembrance, including the Cathedral's World War I Memorial Bells, the World War I Memorial Window, plaques and artefacts.

The ten World War I Memorial Bells attest to the impact of the First World War in Bradford and beyond; they are a lasting testimony to the tenacity of Bradford's people, from all walks of life, men and women, young and old, rich and poor. These people came together to ensure that those who gave their lives for others in the Great War were remembered whenever the bells rang out: *'over the valley, to those at football matches, at work, at their business, in mills and at home'*.<sup>1</sup>

Church bells are the largest and loudest musical instrument; they could be described as the sound of Christians in the community. They have rung out across Bradford for centuries, calling people to prayer, heralding special occasions in the City's story and marking national events. The first Christian priests in Bradford would have rung a hand bell to call people to worship. By the 8th century, a single Sanctus bell would have hung somewhere in the church building, possibly in a bell cot. The Church of St Peter's first peal (group) of four bells was installed in the tower in 1666. By 1735 there were eight bells. These were recast and made into ten bells in 1846. Today there are 12 bells in the tower in no small part due to the endeavours of Bradford's women.

#### Remarkable Women and the World War I Memorial Bells

In 1919 (the year after the end of the First World War and the year in which the Parish Church of St Peter became a Cathedral) both the tower and the bells were in a poor condition. In 1921 new bells were cast in memory of those who fought and died in the First World War and to give thanks for victory, freedom and peace; this was an expensive endeavour and the majority of the money raised to pay for the Bells was obtained by the women of Bradford.

Lady Mary Elizabeth Godwin, widow of the first Lord Mayor of Bradford, Sir John Arthur Godwin, donated a bell; Elizabeth Mitchell, a local woman of independent financial means donated a bell in memory of her nephew, Captain Edward Alexander Shepherd, who was killed in 1916 in France. Sarah Bilson donated money for a bell in memory of her husband.

Obviously, these were all 'women of means', they had plenty of money; but a huge amount of money for the bells was raised by women who remain anonymous. Money was collected

---

<sup>1</sup> Yorkshire Observer October 1921.



for a bell by the Cathedral's predominantly female Sunday school teachers and one bell was provided as a result of donations from the mothers of Bradford. Twenty-four women are listed as 'key collectors of pledges' for the bells in the Parochial Church Council Minute Book for 1921 and several held prominent roles on the council and World War I Memorial Committee.

There is little doubt that without one particular man there would be no World War I Memorial Bells - Joe Hardcastle. The bells were his idea, but it was the hard work of Bradford's women that helped make the idea a reality. When Joe started ringing the bells in

---

1888 only men were bell ringers. Joe welcomed the first woman bell ringer in 1916. She is recorded in his journal as Mrs James Cotterell (Emily). Women have played their part in keeping the bells ringing ever since. If you are lucky enough to be able to visit the Bell Tower look for Emily's name on the role of honour and notice how many other women have rung the World War I Memorial Bells, sending out a hope for peace across the city.

### Possible activities:

- Using the bell template write a message for peace that you would like to 'ring out' across the city
- The Cathedral needs more bell ringers. Design a poster to attract bell ringers to join the 'band' here at the Cathedral.



## 4. Bradford Women and World War I

Often when we think of World War I we think of men, particularly those who fought and died and sometimes of those who refused to fight. It is less common to focus on women and their stories, however women played a huge part in the War, both in places of conflict and on the home front; like men, not all women saw the war as justifiable. Female opinions on the War varied greatly, even the Suffragette movement was divided between those who saw the War as being necessary and a patriotic struggle and those who campaigned for peace and thought the suffering and loss of life were unacceptable.

Whatever their opinion, women fulfilled important roles during the war years. In Bradford (and on the front line) they became nurses. At home many were tram drivers or post women; they worked in factories and on the land. For some women, working was doing their bit to help the war effort, for others it remained a matter of necessity as it always had been. For others it was a chance to seize new opportunities and experiences. Many of these women were the mothers of the men and boys who were fighting; others of course were their daughters, sisters, wives or girlfriends. There is little doubt that the majority of women were touched in some way by the War. At the Cathedral women kept the Sunday school open and ran bazaars to raise money for injured soldiers. They knitted warm clothes for men and boys fighting on the front line and looked after those who returned injured.

Although many women helped the war effort, in September 1917 The Bradford Women's Humanity League held a protest. 3,000 women took part in an anti-war demonstration, marching across the City from the Textile Hall on Westgate to Bradford College. The protesters were accompanied by a marching band and carried banners bearing slogans such as: *"The Boys in the Trenches want Peace"* and *"I want my Daddy."* One of the many symbols of peace is a dove. As you walk around the Cathedral see where this symbol appears in the Cathedral.

### **Possible activities:**

- Design a poster to encourage women to help on the 'home front'
- Write a slogan for a peace banner to carry on the Women's Peace March.

## **5. Poppies and the Memorial Window**

The red remembrance poppy was the result of the American, Moina Mitchell's, efforts to raise money for veterans. The idea was developed by Anna Guirin in France and adopted by General Haig in 1921 (the year in which the Memorial Bells first rang out across Bradford). It is an international symbol. The Women's Co-operative Guild campaigned for the word peace to be inscribed in the centre of the poppy. They were unsuccessful and so introduced their own white peace poppy in 1926.

You can see red poppies and sometimes white poppies laid near the World War I Memorial window. Like the Bells, this window was paid for by charitable donations after World War I and many women were involved in raising funds. It now reminds us of all conflict and how this touches the lives of people across the world. It is interesting that there is no reference to women in the window (not even a nurse), an omission perhaps when many were involved not just on the home front, but in important roles on the front line also.



### Possible activities:

- Make a poppy, red, white or purple. You could make all three!
- Write a wish for peace on a poppy template or a remembrance thought....plant these in a poppy field (tray of sand!)
- Look at the modern CND or 'peace' symbol'. Design your own.

You can find more activity ideas and resources at

<https://bradfordcathedral.org.uk/education/digital-resources/seasonal-resources#remembrance>

## 6. Louisa Pesel and Bradford's Khaki Club



The Khaki Club was a Bradford based organisation for servicemen returning from World War I, it was particularly aimed at those who were injured or suffering from shell shock.

Established by women, the Khaki Club had a restaurant, games room and library. It was run mainly by the Bradford Women's Police Patrol, which had been set up to ensure women mill workers could return home safely at night. Women volunteers encouraged recovering servicemen to participate in handicrafts and to learn new skills.

Louisa Pesel was a leading light in the Khaki Club, she believed in using arts and crafts as an aid to rehabilitation. Born in 1870 and brought up in Bradford Louisa had an amazing life,

travelling widely. She was an embroidery artist, textile historian, teacher and writer. Louisa attended Bradford Girl's Grammar School and studied textile design at the National Art Training School (later, the Royal College of Art) in London, a big step for a woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She later travelled and went to work in Greece, where she lectured and taught; she was promoted to be the director at the Royal Hellenic School.

Louisa returned to Bradford in 1907. She continued to make beautiful embroidered art work, based on her research and experiences when travelling. She exhibited her work at the Victoria and Albert Museum and lectured widely, receiving an award in 1914 from the traditionally all male Worshipful Company of Broderers; a first for a woman! During World War I, Louisa taught embroidery to Belgian refugees in Bradford and became actively

involved with the Bradford Khaki Handicrafts Club, established towards the end of the war to offer occupational therapy to traumatised soldiers. Lady Elizabeth Mary Godwin, who donated one of the Cathedral's Memorial Bells, was also a patron of the Khaki Club and many Bradford women helped with the activities, food and care provided by the 'Club'. The Handicrafts Club was set up with the support of the Abram Peel War Hospital.

Louisa designed activities to help recovering servicemen to learn new crafts and skills; she taught them at the club and helped them to recover from the trauma of the war. One of the things that the servicemen produced was an embroidered altar cloth, now known as the 'Khaki Altar Cloth'. This was eventually donated to the Cathedral and is usually on display in the Chapter House, a lasting testament to the work of Louisa Pesel. In 2020 it was loaned for an exhibition at Two, Temple Place in London, but it will return home soon and you may ask to see it when visiting the Cathedral. It is pictured on the previous page, on the altar, in the Cathedral's Peace Chapel.

### **Possible activities:**

- Try some embroidery; design a cross stitch pattern
- Make sketches of the Khaki Altar Cloth and design your own cloth for a special table or an altar cloth
- Blue plaques are often erected in memory of certain people. If one was going to be erected in memory of Louisa, what information would you put on it? You only have 50 words maximum! Design a plaque for Louisa - it doesn't have to be blue!

## 7. Postscript - Visiting the Cathedral

When you visit the Cathedral, as you walk around the building, please also look for evidence of the many remarkable women who have had an influence on the Christian faith, but also those of importance close to home who have had an impact on Bradford and the world beyond. Look out for artefacts, objects, plaques and windows that testify to their impact and contribution. Women are and always have been remarkable and it is important to remember that 'her-story' is just as important as 'his-story'... not only on International Women's Day, but every day.

