HERStory: Making Invisible Women Visible

Research notes

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| Group Number and Researcher Name: Team 1: Asha Lunniss & Beth Jones | |
| Name of Research Focus: Ann Sykes Swaine | |
| Date of Birth: 1821 (baptised 15th Sept.) | Date of Death: 1883 (21st June 1883) |
| Main Reason to Research: Swaine was one of the first women in York to be involved in the Suffrage movement and was engaged with local social & educational questions. | |
| Are there any other connections to key geographical locations or people?  * Parents Edward Swaine and Martha Sykes * Other similar women e.g Lydia Rous, Emma Fitch and Agnes Smith etc. * Lived in 1 The Crescent Micklegate, off Blossom Street (for the last few decades of her life) * Speeches at the Victoria Hall Goodramgate, and various other meeting halls in York | |
| Key Words: Suffrage, Feminism, Education, Literature, Liberalism, Philanthropy | |
| **What have you found out?** | |
| Ann Swaine was a British writer, suffragist and philanthropist concerned with improving higher education for women; she has been described as “an active, clear-thinking woman who divided her time between philanthropy, feminism, publishing, translation, and domestic and familial duties.”[[1]](#footnote-0) She was a Unitarian, and was heavily involved in Sunday School and cookery school work in York. In the 1881 census, she described herself as having ‘no proper trade or education’ and was living in her father’s household along with three servants.[[2]](#footnote-1) Her description of herself in this way suggests frustration with the (lack of) opportunities available for women, and other contemporaries wrote this in the census deliberately as a political act. *See appendix.*  INVOLVEMENT IN THE YORK SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT:   * Swaine was one of the first three women in York known to have lent their names to the women’s suffrage campaign (along with Emma Fitch and Agnes Smith) as part of the first mass women’s suffrage petition presented to the Commons in June 1866.[[3]](#footnote-2) *See appendix.* * She addressed public meetings on women’s suffrage, such as in April 1880 at the Victoria Hall Goodramgate alongside Lydia Rous (a former headmistress of The Mount) - “the thrust of the meeting was to discuss women’s support to promote the election of Liberal MPs in York, which was seen as the best way of securing votes for women at that time.”[[4]](#footnote-3) *See appendix.* * It is interesting that she campaigned for women’s suffrage despite her father’s beliefs about the exclusion of women from the franchise. *See appendix.*   INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL EDUCATION:   * Ann Swaine was very “active in local education”[[5]](#footnote-4) - she gave speeches campaigning for women’s education rights, and supported the national campaigns for the extension of university education to women. * She was also very involved in the Sunday School Association (pushing for free education). * Swaine was an honorary secretary of the Yorkshire Ladies Educational Council and a member of the Ladies’ Council of Education of Yorkshire. *See appendix.*   WRITING:   * She wrote a collection of short biographies called ‘Remarkable Women as Examples for Girls’ for the Sunday School Association that was published in January 1882. The fact that this text was reviewed in the media (e.g the Leeds Mercury) at the time indicates that it was clearly quite impressive and influential. *See appendix.* * The Englishwoman’s Review (a feminist periodical 1866-1910) commented after her death in 1883 on how Swaine’s writing showed her pragmatism and common sense, specially stating that her collection of biographies were “characterised by clear good sense and unsensational treatment.”[[6]](#footnote-5) It also is full of praise for Swaine and her influence. *See appendix.* | |
| Why is this interesting and what impact have they had? | |
| This research about Ann Swaine is interesting because it serves as a lens into broader early campaigns for women’s suffrage and educational opportunities in York.[[7]](#footnote-6) She also had a lasting impact because she played a part in laying the foundation for later feminist activism, such as the formation of the York Women’s Suffrage Society in 1889 and the NUWSS president Milicent Fawcett speaking in York at the Friends’ Meeting House Friargate in September 1908 - these events would not have been possible had it not been for the work of Ann Swaine and her contemporaries.[[8]](#footnote-7) | |
| Are there opportunities for follow up research? | |
| * Look at the original records from the organisations mentioned (e.g the SSA, and the YLEC) in order to further understand their local involvement in women’s suffrage campaigns. * Research the other women involved in the local suffrage movement at this early stage and their relationships with one another, in order to better understand the nature of this activism | |
| **In your research have you discovered any connection to the Castle Museum collections/sites** | |
| This research is linked to the YMT in the sense that it demonstrates how individual women have shaped the city of York and that the legacies of their activism are still visible / important even today. We have found objects in the YMT collections about women’s daily life during the 19th century (such as clothing) that would support and contextualise this research in an exhibition format. There are also links with the YMT’s research that was undertaken in 2018 (to celebrate the centenary of women gaining the vote) that would be relevant to this important earlier period of women’s suffrage campaigning and help to connect the past and the present regarding this topic. | |

1. Heloise Brown, “Swaine, Ann Sykes,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, September 23, 2004, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://www-oxforddnb-com.libproxy.york.ac.uk/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-56272;jsessionid=4338710CAF2804D9F937D57816DB7AB4>. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. “Ann Sykes Swaine in the 1881 England Census,” *Ancestry*, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://search.ancestry.co.uk/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=7572&h=25928886&tid=&pid=&queryId=be2829dce0ad73b551708cf1065b3085&usePUB=true&_phsrc=mnr13&_phstart=successSource>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. “Presenting the 1866 petition,” *UK Parliament*, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/parliamentary-collections/1866-suffrage-petition/presenting-the-petition/>; “1886 Suffrage Petition names,” *UK Parliament*, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/parliamentary-archives/1866SuffragePetitionNamesWebFeb18.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. Miss Ann Swaine, *Women’s Suffrage: History and Citizenship resources for schools*, accessed June 16, 2021. <https://www.suffrageresources.org.uk/database/1291/miss-ann-swaine> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Brown, “Swaine, Ann Sykes.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. “Obituary,” *The Englishwoman’s Review* 14, (1883): 331-332. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. Krista Cowman, “The Militant Suffragette Movement in York,” *Borthwick Paper* 110, (2007): 5-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. Michael Waters, “Suffragettes,” York Civic Trust, accessed June 16, 2021, <https://yorkcivictrust.co.uk/heritage/civic-trust-plaques/suffragettes/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)