

Norfolk Record Office Information Leaflet 30

Some Famous Great Yarmouth Inhabitants

1. John Perbroune

Little known today, Perbroune was the Nelson of his time. He was born in Great Yarmouth and his house was at or near the Conge. He was bailiff for Yarmouth no less than 13 times between 1312 and 1339 and was also MP for the Borough. He was Lord Admiral of the navy north of the Thames under Edward II and Edward III. His great victory was the Battle of Sluys: he led the English fleet which annihilated the French navy - the French are said to have lost 160 ships and 15,000 men. Perbroune died in 1343.

2. Sir John Fastolf

Fastolf was born in Yarmouth in 1378. He fought many battles against the French including Harfleur and Agincourt. He was made a knight of the garter for his part in the capture of Granville. His Yarmouth house was on the North Foreland, on the land now between George Street and the river: he also had houses in Norwich and London. In 1443 he obtained a licence to build Caister Castle and he took up residence there in 1449. He died in 1459 at the age of 80 and was buried in St Benets Abbey (not in St Nicholas Yarmouth, although other family members were buried there). He left his estates to fund a college in Caister but this came to nothing and the estates were eventually used to support Magdalen College Oxford instead.

3. Miles Corbett

Corbett was the son of Sir Thomas Corbett of Sprowston. He studied law and became recorder of Yarmouth in 1625 and one of its MPs in 1626. His Yarmouth house off the Market Place (later the Weavers' Arms) has a plaque to him on the wall. When Civil War broke out in 1642, both Yarmouth Corporation and Corbett himself were keen supporters of Parliament against the King. Corbett was Cromwell's lawyer and one of those who sat in judgement on Charles I and signed his death warrant. When the monarchy was restored in 1660 Corbett's life (like all those who had signed Charles's death warrant) was forfeit. He fled to the continent but was eventually captured at Delft. He was brought back to England and hanged, drawn and quartered with two other regicides at Tyburn on 19th April 1662.

4. Daniel Defoe

He visited Great Yarmouth and published an interesting account of the town in his *A Tour Through Great Britain* in 1724. His most famous book *Robinson Crusoe* begins with a storm at sea off Great Yarmouth.

5. David Service

Service was born at Cardross in Scotland in 1776. He worked in Yarmouth as a shoemaker but he also published poetry. His most famous work is *The Caledonian Herd Boy*. He also was a notorious drinker, was in the stocks for drunkenness in 1816 and died in Yarmouth Workhouse in 1828 aged 52. He is buried in Yarmouth churchyard. He lived in Row 27 and his shop boasted a sign which read:

*Old Boots and Shoes Cheaply,
Are Here Repair'd Neatly,
As if for brave Admiral Jervis,
For Strength they're intended
And well they are mended
For Cash Paid to me -DAVID SERVICE*

6. George William Manby

Born at Denver in 1765, Manby became Barrack Master at Yarmouth in 1803 and lived in the Naval Hospital. In 1807 he saw the gunship *Snipe* sink near the harbour mouth with the loss of 67 lives and this inspired him to invent a system of throwing a rope out to ship using a mortar: the crew could then be hauled to safety. It was first used in 1808 to save the lives of all seven people on the brig *Elizabeth* stranded 150 yards off Yarmouth Beach. The apparatus was installed in coastal stations throughout Britain and Manby received grants from Parliament in 1820 and 1823. Other inventions such as an unsinkable boat (from which he had to be rescued when it sank off Gorleston) were not so successful. He married twice but had no children. In later years he lived at Southtown. He died in 1854 aged 90 and is buried in Hilgay churchyard where his gravestone depicts his lifesaving apparatus.

7. Sarah Martin

Sarah was born at Caister in 1791. Her parents died when she was a child and she was brought up by her grandmother. She lived in a rented room in Row 57 and worked as a seamstress. From 1819 she dedicated her life to helping the prisoners in Yarmouth goal. Recognising that a major problem was boredom, she taught the women sewing skills, and the men to make hats, bone spoons etc. She taught the illiterate to read and write and held a religious service every Sunday. She also raised money for a fund to help look after prisoners when they were released from gaol. For years she would accept no payment, but poverty forced her to accept £12 a year from the Corporation for the last two years of her life. She died in October 1843 and is buried in Caister churchyard: the epitaph on her stone was composed by her. The Bishop of Norwich said over her grave 'I would like to canonise Sarah Martin if I could'.

8. John Sell Cotman

The famous Norwich School artist lived in Southtown from 1812 to 1823: two of his children were born here. He made several engravings and etchings of

Yarmouth scenes. The cottage where he lived still exists (now 83-4 Southtown Road).

9. Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens stayed at the Royal Hotel in Yarmouth in 1848 and 1849, and also at the Feathers in Gorleston where there is a plaque to him. He described Yarmouth as 'the strangest place in the wide world' and he merits a place in these notes because he immortalised the town in his book David Copperfield.

10. Mary and Anna Sewell

Mary Sewell was born Mary Wright in 1797 in Felthorpe. She married Isaac Sewell at Lammas Meeting House (they were both Quakers) and moved to Yarmouth where Isaac owned a grocer's shop. They lived in the house on Church Plain Yarmouth now known as Anna Sewell House: their daughter Anna was born in this house in 1820. The family moved to London very soon after and did not return to Norfolk until 1867 when they moved to Catton.

Mary's most famous books were ballads with a moral content. The most famous was Mother's Last Words about two orphaned chimney sweeps. It was published by Jarrold's of Norwich and sold more than a million copies. The follow-up, Our Father's Care about an orphaned watercress girl sold almost as well. Anna wrote only one book Black Beauty: this was also published by Jarrold's and has become one of the best-selling and most loved children's stories of all time. Anna did not live to see its full success, dying in 1878. Mary died in 1884 and both women are buried in the Quaker graveyard at Lammas.



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