ST ETHELBURGA (AETHELBURH)
An evangelist to a king

THE CRYPT FONT*
As you make your way down into the Crypt, you will see a font on your right. Can you find this image of St Ethelburga of Kent? She was a Christian Princess and when King Edwin of Northumbria wanted to marry her, she agreed on the understanding that she could continue to practise her religion. Their daughter Eanflid was the first infant to be baptised in the North of England. Ethelburga persuaded Edwin to convert to Christianity and he was baptised in 627 AD, building the first Anglo Saxon York Minster to house the baptismal font. Without Ethelburga’s influence York Minster may never have been built. After Edwin’s death, Ethelburga returned to Kent and founded a Benedictine convent.
*Accessible route via the South Transept.

ST WILLIAM’S WINDOW
As you make your way out of the Crypt, step onto the ramp and look up at the fabulous St William’s Window. Can you spot Lady Beatrice and her dog in the bottom right-hand panel? She is shown kneeling at an altar in a window that celebrates the life and miracles of St William of York. Lady Beatrice used her wealth to fund this iconic window, making her the only female donor of a window and one of the most important medieval patrons of York Minster.

STOP 7

STOP 8

STOP 9

LADY BEATRICE DE ROOS
15th Century promoter of the arts

FRANCES MATTHEW
A woman of exemplary wisdom

LADY CHAPEL EAST WALL
Kneeling here you will find Frances Matthew, a well-educated Protestant Christian also known for her excellent needlework. When her husband died in 1628, she donated his library of 3000 books to the Minster to safeguard religious learning for the future. The original plaque described Frances as ‘a woman of exemplary wisdom, gravity, piety, bounty ... not only above her sex, but the times’ and praised her ‘great care to advance learning’.

ST HILD OF WHITBY
An adviser to kings and princes

St Hild, or Hilda is also remembered on this font and was the great-niece of King Edwin. She was brought up in his household and baptised into the Christian faith at the age of 13. Hild became a nun and then abbess at Hartlepool before founding Whitby Abbey. In her role, Hild was abbess to both men and women and it is said kings and princes came to her for advice. In 664 AD, Hild hosted the Synod of Whitby, one of the most momentous meetings in Church history at the time which determined the date of Easter in England.

WOMEN IN THE MINSTER
Following in the Footsteps of Women of Faith

WELCOME TO YORK MINSTER

We invite you to follow in the footsteps of these inspirational women of faith who have played a part in creating this magnificent building, a little piece of Heaven on Earth. Sometimes as leaders, at other times behind the scenes. Creating exquisite embroidery, designing fabulous floral displays, using their wealth, learning and talents to support the life of the Minster.

As you finish your tour, think about the women who influence you today and how you in turn might inspire women and girls of the future.

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Included on the wooden panels is Edith Cavell who helped 200 British men escape German occupied Belgium. She was sadly executed for War Treason, but her bravery continues to inspire others today: ‘Standing as I do in view of God and Eternity, I realise that patriotism is not enough, I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone’. Edith is remembered in the Church of England’s calendar of saints on 12 October.

As you make your way up the Nave, on your left you will arrive at the Bell Founder’s Window. You will see many gold and silver bells in the stained glass and this scene depicts workers at the bell foundry. Can you spot a woman on the right of the panel identified by flowers in her headdress? This little insight into 14th century industrial life reminds us that women were often part of the work force at this time.

The first large window on your left remembers St Catherine, a young woman who refused to renounce her Christian faith in the 4th century AD. Catherine tried to persuade Emperor Maxentius that persecuting Christians was wrong which resulted in her imprisonment. Maxentius sent 50 of his best pagan philosophers to persuade Catherine to reject her faith but after spending time with Catherine, they all left having converted to Christianity. Catherine was strapped to a wheel used for torture but as she touched it, the wheel shattered and so Maxentius beheaded Catherine around 305 AD aged 17 or 18. If you look up, you can see this image of Catherine and the wheel at the top of the window above you.