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# ELIZABETH FRY

**"WE LONG TO BURN HER ALIVE!"...**



...wrote the Reverend Sydney Smith of Elizabeth Fry in 1821. Her saintliness was too much for some. Born in Magdalen Street in 1780, Betsy Gurney became Britain's greatest ever female humanitarian crusader, bringing the fate of prisoners and asylum inmates to the world's attention.

After her death her daughters published forty-four volumes of her journals, carefully removing all traces of human weakness. Perhaps what they hoped to conceal was their mother's lifelong struggle with crippling anxieties, nightmares and phobias. She hated dark places: was tormented by thoughts of death. As a child she feared the sea, and dreamed of being washed away and drowned. Fry died of a stroke at Ramsgate in 1845, perhaps still haunted by the sound of the sea.

On her 17th birthday she wrote in her diary: *"I am a bubble, without reason, without beauty of mind or person: I am a fool. I daily fall lower in my own estimation. I am now seventeen, and if some great circumstance does not happen to me, I shall have my talents devoured by moth and rust."*

We think we can agree, she needn't have worried about that.

# Eadbald, Eadgar and Elfric

Three of the first names to come down to us from early Norwich, or Northwic as it was then called. These moneyers ran the Norwich mint during the reign of Athelstan (924-929), and their names appear on the silver pennies pictured below. The mint was probably in the Magdalen Street area, on the defended North side of the river.

Money-makers had to observe strict regulations – they were subjected to gruesome punishments if the coins they produced were of insufficient weight or purity.

*“If a moneyer is found guilty his hand shall be cut off and fastened up on the mint. But if he is accused and wishes to clear himself, then shall he go to the hot iron and redeem the hand with which he is accused of committing the crime.”*

The hot-iron ordeal meant the accused must carry a burning hot pound of iron a distance of three feet. His hand was then bound up, and unwrapped after three days. If the hand had healed, the moneyer was freed, but if it had gone septic, his guilt was proved and the hand was cut off!



*Sketch of a Northwic penny of Ethelred the Unready (978-1016), moneyer Maninc, by Sarah Ellis 2019.*



Google image

## ELIZABETH BENTLEY

**Though we may no longer appreciate her overblown romantic verse, Elizabeth Bentley overcame great odds to become a published Norwich poet.**

She was born in 1767, the only child of a cordwainer or maker of shoes, who taught her to read and write despite a stroke which left him paralysed on one side. It was rare for a working-class woman of that era to be literate, let alone write greatly admired poetry on a wide range of subjects, including nature, the philosophy of education, the abolition of slavery and the celebration of women's lives and achievements.

She died in Doughty's Hospital, an almshouse for the poor, in 1839.