

The Shambles (Slightly altered by Alison)

York's Most Famous Street

One of York's most popular tourist streets, The Shambles is a narrow cobbled (*Kopfsteinpflaster*) street with beautifully preserved Elizabethan buildings. (*Elizabeth ist 1603 gestorben.*)

- 5 Although today you'll find a mixture of shops and eateries, The Shambles was for centuries a street of butchers – and the main place where local people came to buy their meat. It is from this long history of sinew (*Sehne*), bone and gristle (*Knorpel*) that The Shambles gets its distinctive name.

All In The Name

- 10 The word 'Shamble' is believed to derive from the Old English word 'sceamel' meaning stool (*Schmemel nicht Stuhl!*) or bench (*Bank*). The original meaning gradually developed and it came to be used to mean the table or stall (*Stand*) on which meat or fish was displayed (*gezeigt, angeboten*) for sale and then cut and portioned.



- 15 The plural 'Shambles' was used about a single place where butchers met and meat was sold from stalls. There are many other towns in the UK with streets called Shambles including Chesterfield, Chippenham, Whitby and Worcester.

York's Shambles was a street of butcher's shops and houses, many of which had a slaughterhouse (*Schlacht...*) at the back of the house. You can still see the hooks (*Haken*) and wide shelves (*Regale*) – now shop windowsills (*Fensterbank, -brüstung*) – on which they would've displayed their wares (*Ware*).

- 20 The cobbled channel (*Rinne*) that runs along The Shambles between the raised pavements (*erhöhte Gehwege*) was used to dispose of (*entsorgen*) the waste – and it would have washed down the gentle slope towards Fossgate. Domestic waste was also thrown from the windows above the street adding to the unsanitary conditions (and we complain today if the binmen (*die Müllabfuhr*) are late!).



25 **Overhanging Buildings**

The overhanging upper floors (*Stockwerke*) are not just a quaint (*kurios*) design quirk (*Marotte, Kuriosität*) of The Shambles but in fact served a more practical purpose. It is suggested by some that the buildings were built in this way so as to protect (*schützen*) the hanging meat from the extremes of sun and rain.

30 Whilst they no doubt provided some shelter from the elements at ground level this wasn't their primary purpose. The overhanging upper floors allowed for greater floor and living space without obstructing and intruding on the street below.

These jettied floors are a common feature of Tudor architecture and could be seen in many crowded European cities and towns in this period.

35 **Nonsense (*Unsinn*) about The Shambles**

Some of the things you might read about The Shambles on the internet are laughably wrong. We've seen it said that "[in] some places the street is so narrow (*schmal*) that if you stand with arms outstretched you can touch the houses on both sides". Perhaps if you were Mr Tickle maybe. While the street is small by modern standards, it's definitely not this narrow.

40 Above ground level the buildings do lean towards each other, and at one point if you and a friend were to reach across the gap from either side your hands might just meet. However, this is definitely not possible on the main street itself. It makes you wonder whether the person who wrote this had actually ever visited York!



The Shambles Today

45 Although as recently as 1872 there were 26 butchers' shops on the street, now none remain. Today there are a mix of shops and places to grab (*not really grabschen but to take something to eat quickly – fast food*) a bite to eat.

50 With the buildings being so small they tend (*sind meistens*) for the most part to be independent businesses and give The Shambles a very different feel to your average high street. Among the souvenir sellers you'll also find jewellery, artisan bread and hand made chocolates.

- Monk Bar Chocolatiers, 7 Shambles – Artisan chocolatier with more than 60 varieties of luxury, handmade chocolates
- Roly's Fudge Pantry, 2 Shambles – Handmade fudge (and free tasters!)
- Lily Shambles, 11 Shambles – Contemporary silver jewellery shop
- Silverado, 42 Shambles – Independent shop specialising in contemporary jewellery

- Via Vecchia, 6 Shambles – Italian artisan bakery
- Ye Old Shambles Tavern, 44 Shambles – Decent beer, spot of grub and a bottle/gift shop.

The Shrine of Margaret Clitherow

60 Not all of the present day buildings are shops however. No. 35 is a shrine to one of the street's former residents (*Bewohner*) Margaret Clitherow. Married to a rich Shambles butcher and originally raised as a Protestant, she converted to Catholicism in 1574.

Clitherow ran a small religious school and also had Mass celebrated above the family shop. However, she was betrayed (*verraten*) to the authorities and put on trial for what were then treasonable activities (*Verrat*).



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Margaret Clitherow being pressed to death (*zerdrückt?* *zerquetscht?*)

Not wanting to expose her family and friends to either betraying her or denying (*verleugnen*) their faith in public she refused to enter a plea (*sie weigerte sich, Stellung zu nehmen*). The penalty (*Strafe*) for refusing to plead was to be crushed to death, a fate which she duly suffered in 1586.

70 She was beatified (*seliggesprochen*) in 1929 and then canonised (*heilig gesprochen*) in 1970 and is today known as one of the English Martyrs. The Shrine is open every day and Mass is celebrated every Saturday at 10am.

Visiting The Shambles

75 Although people talk about The Shambles as if its a tourist attraction, it is just a regular street – albeit (*wenn auch*) with some impressively old buildings. There is no charge to ‘get in’ and no opening or closing times – you can stroll along it whenever you like.

That being said, it is a tourist magnet. If you are planning to visit, we would highly recommend doing so first thing before the crowds begin to mass (it's obviously very quiet after dark too, but by then all the shops will be shut).

80 You can find your way onto The Shambles via three different parts of the city. You can turn off of the Pavement at the south end and walk up it, if you find yourself in The Shambles market you can cut through a snickelway, finally from Kings Square simply plot a course between York's Chocolate Story and The Duke of York pub and you'll find yourself at the north end.

<http://www.york-pm.co.uk/the-shambles/>