

# The Streets of York

## Numbered Streets

Have you ever wondered why so many towns have streets named with numbers such as First Avenue or Second Street, or why North, South, East and West Streets are so common, even when positioned in the centre of a town? York has South Street and North Road, as well as Twelfth Road down to Sixth Road.....what happened to East and West Streets and why did the numbered streets stop at six?

Early York was designed primarily on a rectangular grid system, the same town planning system used by the Romans when they developed new cities across Europe, a system that was called centuriation. This system typically made use of squares of 2,330 feet (710 metres) on a side, intended for land distribution to settlers, the resulting streets often named numerically. The same system was used for planning cities in the United States with the famous Fifth Avenue being an obvious example of a numbered street. Streets in Britain were usually based on mediaeval pathways between villages so the centuriation system is not commonly seen there.

York is lined up along the Avon River with the original North and South Boundaries marked by South Street and North Road and the original Eastern Boundary marked by the Avon River, there is no record of a Western Boundary other than Ulster Road. The east/west streets were numbered starting in the north east of the town and originally ran from First Street to Twelfth Road with the lower numbered streets being much shorter as they ran up to the river. As blocks were purchased streets tended to gain names according to who lived or purchased there – with some of the numbered streets eventually disappearing. In York's case First to Fifth streets are sadly no more.