



Breach of Promise to Marry : A History of How Jilted Brides Settled Scores

Denise Bates

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'The marriage day was fixed, the wedding dresses were bought, the wedding tour was planned out, the wedding guests were invited. The day came but not the bridegroom...''While Dickens' embittered spinster Miss Havisham stopped all her clocks on her wedding day and 'never since looked upon the light of day', the reality was much brighter for thousands of jilted women. The real Miss Havisham's didn't mope in faded wedding finery – they hired lawyers and struck the first 'no-win, no fee' deals to sue for breach of promise. From the 1790s right up to the 1960s, jilted women (and sometimes rejected suitors) employed a range of tactics to bring false lovers to book. Denise Bates uncovers over 1,000 forgotten cases of women who found very different endings to their fictional counterparts: Mary Ann Smith forged evidence of a courtship to entrap an Earl. Catherine Kempsall shot the man who denied their engagement, Gladys Knowles was awarded a record £10,000 in damages by a jury in 1890, Daisy Mons discreetly negotiated a £50,000 settlement from a Lord Based on original research, this social history of breach of promise shows that when men behaved badly hell had no fury like a woman scorned!As featured on Woman's Hour, in the Daily Express, Irish Mail on Sunday, Sheffield Star, Discover Your History Magazine, Eastern Daily Press, Portsmouth News, Norwich Evening News, Glossop Chronicle, Tameside Reporter and Hull Daily Mail

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