

Catherine Ormond

1768-1840



Vale &
Downland
Museum
Wantage

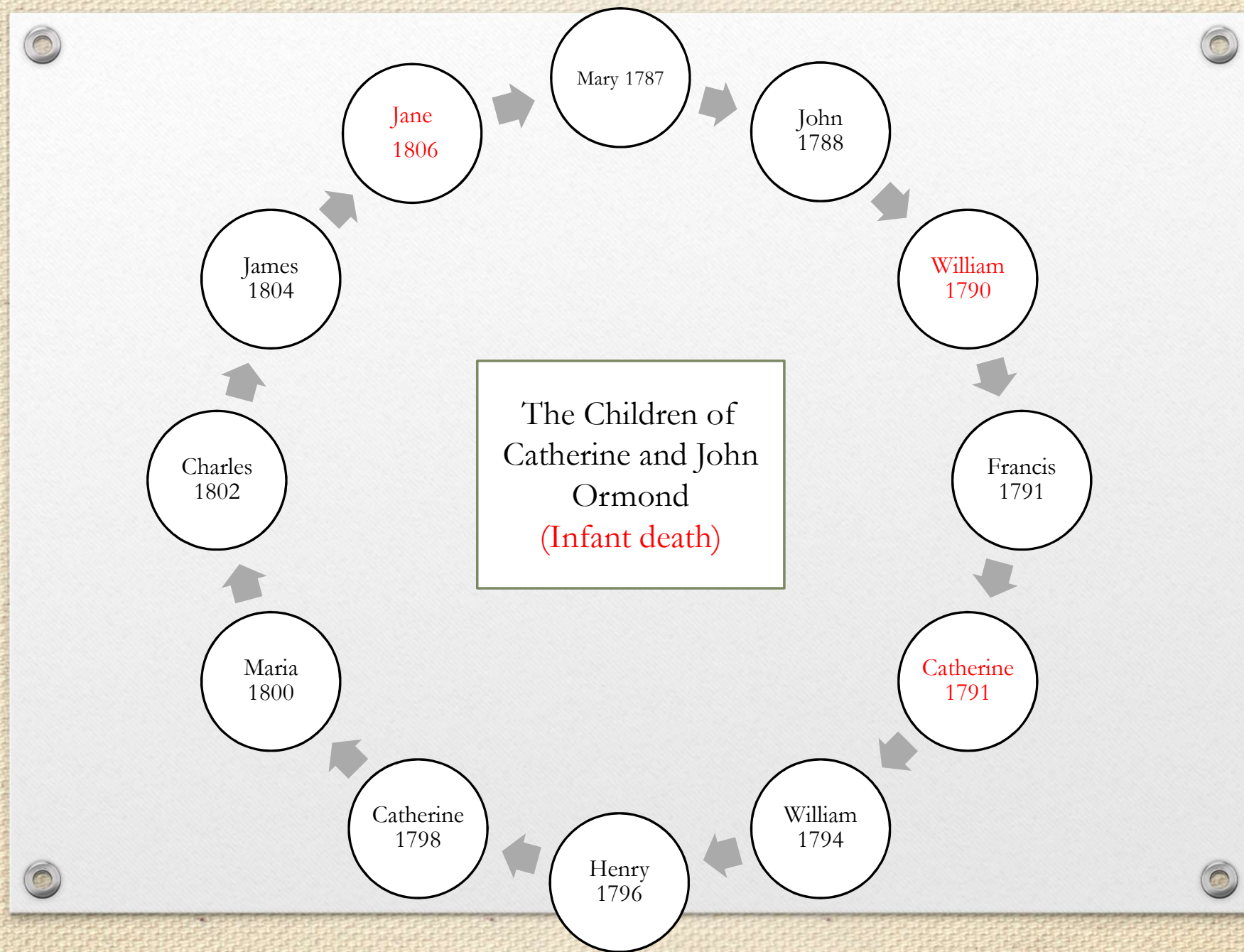
- Catherine Kirby aged 18, married John Ormond with her parents consent on 18 April 1786 by licence in Wantage's Parish church.



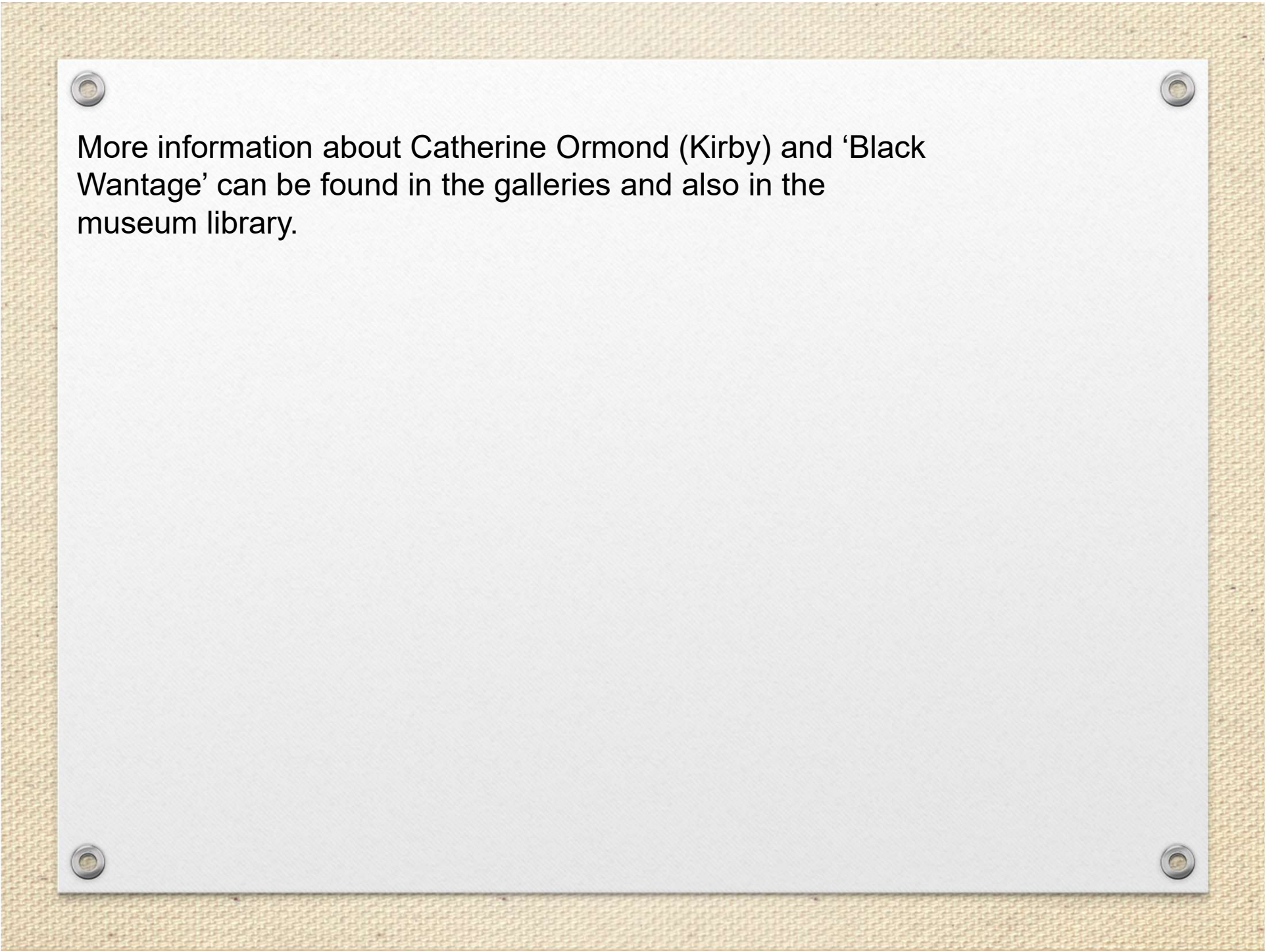
- Originally from Wallingford, Catherine's father ran a successful Ironmongers in Wallingford Street, Wantage.
- Married for 54 years, Catherine's father gifted them upon their marriage their home 'Gibbons' which was situated next to the Bear Inn in the Market Place. 'Gibbons' became a grand home full of expensive and exotic items for the era, details recorded of items purchased by Catherine for the house include Venetian blinds and the family's love of Walnut furniture. 'Gibbons' became the Ormond family home for four generations.

- The Ormond family retained many letters and bills which were then passed down the following generations. Catherine's diligence has helped the Vale and Downland team, to have an insight into daily life in Wantage during the 18th and 19th century.
- The Ormond family took part in many parties then held in the town. From Catherine's letters we have obtained various cake recipes including Rice cakes, Ginger cakes and almond cakes. We have also discovered preserving techniques and the family's tendency to use Brandy in both food and drinks. Brandy was bought by the gallon. From our records we see that in early 1792 10 gallons of Brandy were bought at 6/6 a gallon, then due to the Napoleonic war brandy costs increased to £1 3 0 per gallon by 1806.





- Catherine and John had 13 children over a twenty year period, eight of these survived childhood. *Catherine's letters written and received from her children and other family members, give us a great insight into the social history of the time.*
- Several of their children went on to become Solicitors and Doctors themselves. One also emigrated to Canada!
- *Francis joined the navy as a mid-shipman at the time of Trafalgar, his letters home gave first-hand news of the battle (a voice recording of this letter can be found in the galleries in the Ormond family home).*
- *John and Henry trained as doctors, with Henry continuing to practise in Wantage.*
- *James and William became solicitors, with William campaigning to improve conditions in Wantage, resulting in the Wantage Improvement Act passed in June 1828, this brought about the end of an era known as 'Black Wantage'.*



More information about Catherine Ormond (Kirby) and 'Black Wantage' can be found in the galleries and also in the museum library.