HISTORY AND HERITAGE YORKSHIRE

BRINGING THE COUNTY'S PAST TO LIFE

May 2025

The Fall of the Yorkshire Monasteries
The Gentleman who let a Government Fall
The Railway Children Returns to its Roots
From Cure to Comfort: Yorkshire's Seawater Baths

History & Heritage Yorkshire

FROM THE EDITOR

Summer is the perfect time to step outside and explore the heritage on your doorstep. With longer days and better weather, it's easier than ever to uncover the stories and landmarks that give your community its character. Whether it's a hidden chapel in the woods, a restored market hall, an old railway line, or a local museum, there's history all around us, often in places we pass every day without noticing.

Take a walk, strike up conversations, read the plaques, and look again at the familiar with fresh eyes. Exploring your local heritage not only deepens your sense of place but also helps preserve the stories and traditions that make each community unique..

Enjoy your summer.

John Heywood

THIS MONTH

Front Page: Tribute to Monet, Art Garden Allan Harris

FROM CURE TO COMFORT: THE RISE AND FALL OF YORKSHIRE'S SEAWATER BATHS

John Heywood

Tepid Swimming Baths, Scarborough (Writer's collection)

As sea bathing grew fashionable along Yorkshire's coast in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a wave of hot and cold seawater bathhouses opened to cater to the upper classes seeking health, privacy and refinement. From Scarborough to Bridlington and Whitby, these elegant facilities promised the benefits of the sea without the bracing plunge – offering marble tubs, steam rooms and, later, even swimming pools. Once symbols of luxury and wellness, many faded into history as seaside holidays and public leisure evolved with the arrival of the railways and changing tastes.

INDOOR BATHING: BEGINNINGS

In tandem with the rise in popularity of sea bathing in Yorkshire's coastal resorts came the opening of hot and cold seawater baths. Attracting those who could not – or would not – bathe in the open sea, their popularity rose. By 1798, there were two such establishments in Scarborough and by 1840 this had risen to five.

The first to open was operated by Wilson and Travis, two local surgeons. It was soon to be known as just Travis' Baths. Writing in his *History and Antiquities of*

Scarborough, Hinderwell described the baths as:

Situated at the entrance to the cliff and was originally opened in 1798. In 1822 it was rebuilt and the interior fitted up with every attention to comfort and elegance. The baths are of wood and marble, and are adapted for either plunging, sitting or the recumbent position. They are supplied every tide with the purest sea water and admit of every variety of temperature. Rooms are also fitted up for steam, vapour and shower baths.

THE OTHER BATHS

The author continued to depict other baths.

Harland's Baths *Are situated in what is called the New Road at the bottom of Vernon Place. The situation combines as much as possible, privacy with convenience. One of the baths has been fitted up for bathing in a sitting position.*

Contiguous to the original building is a little structure containing a plunge bath; intended chiefly for those, who for various causes, are prevented from bathing in the sea. These baths are constantly supplied with the purest sea-water.

Champley's Baths *These are situated in Mr Cockerill's Garden, nearly central between the Cliff and Brunswick Terrace. They are quite of modern structure and have a commanding situation. They possess all the accommodation of the others, and what some may conceive an additional advantage, one suite of rooms for ladies and another for gentlemen.*

Vickerman's Baths *These baths were erected in 1829, and adjoin the Marine House, situated on the beach. From their contiguity to the sea they are readily supplied with water and possess similar accommodations to the other.*

Wilson and Travis' Shower Baths from *Poetical Sketches of Scarborough* 1813

In 1825, the admission price for the baths would have been around 2s 6d for a warm bath with an additional 6d going to the attendant; a shower bath cost 1s 6d and 6d to the attendant. At these prices, the baths were very much the domain of the upper classes.

DIFFICULT TIMES

By the early 1860s, the baths in Scarborough were facing harder times. What had once been Harland's Baths was now the sanatorium while Champley's and Weddell's had disappeared. Public baths were opened under Bland's Cliff in 1859 with Turkish baths added a few years later. These were aimed at a very different market. Prices were lower, with visitors being able to swim in warm seawater for just 6d. Personal bathing cost 1s and opening hours were from 6am until 10pm. The baths closed in 1931 and the building (with the first floor removed) became Corrigan's amusement arcade.

THE GENERAL SEABATHING INFIRMARY

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to also mention the General Sea Bathing Infirmary, later the Royal Northern. Opened in 1804 on Foreshore Road, it was based on a successful, similar hospital in Margate. Among the diseases treated by a regime of bathing and fresh air was scrofula (tuberculosis). Thalasso-therapy (the seawater cure) had originally been propounded by Richard Russell. Such treatment had been the preserve of the wealthy and it was hoped that the new infirmary would expand the benefits to the less privileged.

In 1852, the infirmary was extended, incorporating two adjacent buildings taking the total number of beds to twenty-four. Eight years later, however, it had outgrown even this extension, and a completely new building was placed on its site. *The Bulmer's Guide* stated that the new infirmary had admirable internal arrangements and "would accommodate patients with bed, board and the best medical advice".

Sea Bathing Infirmary (Scarborough)

BRIDLINGTON

The first hot and cold baths were opened in Bridlington, by Benjamin Milnes, in 1803. The baths were provided in:

rooms replete with conveniences, built beneath the terrace, which supply the invalid or the timid with the advantage of sea bathing without the necessity of plunging into the open sea

After a lengthy period when the only available facilities were those on Cliff Terrace, George William Travis, in July 1874, opened his new baths to some considerable fanfare. The *Bridlington Free Press* dated 4 July reported that:

On the upper floor which is in fact on a level with the road are Ladies' Baths which comprise Turkish, Russian or Vapour and hot and cold salt or fresh water Baths. Each bathroom is fitted with everything appropriate. Descending to the floor beneath are Gentleman's Baths arranged in much the same manner and equally convenient and comfortable.

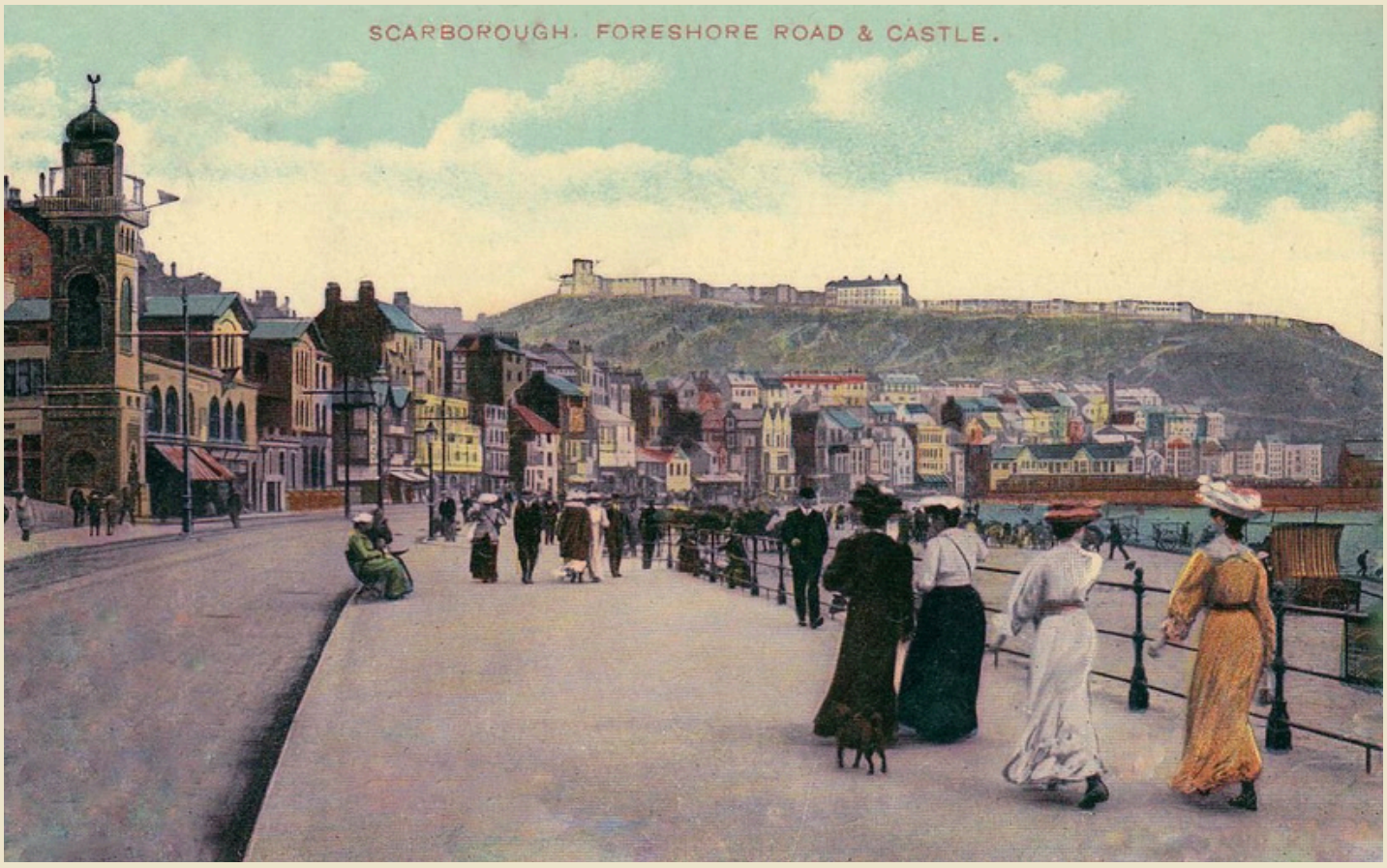
The sea baths were certainly beginning to move away from their original purpose and resembling more the spas we know today. Healthy? Yes. But also a place to relax and unwind.

Travis's Baths were still going strong in 1888 but under new ownership and known as Pool's Baths. It also had a steam laundry attached. A swimming pool was part of the attraction. Under various owners it survived until bomb damage in the Second World War caused its closure. Bridlington was sadly left without indoor swimming facilities until 1987.

WHITBY

The first seawater baths in Whitby, inventively named the 'The Sea Bathing Establishment' came into existence prior to 1828, although the facilities left something to be desired. For the price of 1s the bather was given a tin bath to use which would be filled with jugs of seawater from the harbour, after which he or she climbed in and bathed. Even then, one had to be properly and modestly dressed from below the knee to the neckline.

Two events were to have major changes on the resorts. The first was the dawn of the Victorian era, where morals and values were in marked contrast to those of the Georgian and Regency period that had just ended. The second was the introduction of the railways, which brought a completely new type of visitor to the coast.



Blands Cliff Turkish Baths, Scarborough closed in 1931

YORKSHIRE AND THE FALL OF THE MONASTERIES: FAITH, POWER AND RESISTANCE

David Broadhead

Byland Abbey (Barnyz)

Yorkshire played a complex role in the English Reformation. While the county was the birthplace of figures like John Wycliffe and Miles Coverdale, whose work laid foundations for Protestant reform, it was also home to a population that resisted the radical changes imposed by Henry VIII. Nowhere was this tension more visible than in the dissolution of the monasteries.

THE SITUATION IN YORKSHIRE

Though some monastic houses were poorly managed, the monasteries of Yorkshire were less unpopular than in other parts of England. They had long been woven into the social, economic and spiritual fabric of the region. Many provided education, employment, hospitality and alms. Nunneries like Wilberfoss and Esholt offered the only form of schooling available to girls of gentle birth. The Austin Priory at Guisborough helped train generations of young Yorkshiremen. Monks maintained roads, seawalls and bridges, particularly in isolated rural areas. For many communities, they were a vital refuge – both spiritual and worldly.

That all began to unravel in the 1520s, when Cardinal Wolsey, then Archbishop of York, began suppressing smaller

religious houses. Though Wolsey fell from power in 1530, his campaign was expanded dramatically under his successor, Thomas Cromwell, chief minister to Henry VIII. The immediate cause was the King's divorce from Catherine of Aragon and the subsequent break with Rome, but the real prize was monastic land and wealth. By 1536, the smaller monasteries were being closed across the country.

In Yorkshire, this sparked a deep sense of betrayal. Robert Aske, a lawyer from Aughton in the Derwent Valley, articulated the discontent of many when he declared:

The abbeys in the North gave great alms to poor men and laudably served God … the service of God is much diminished by the suppression, a great number of masses are now unsaid … the temple of God is ruffled and pulled down, the ornaments and relics of the church irreverently used, tombs of honourable and noblemen pulled down and sold … Several of these abbeys were in the mountains and desert places, where the people are ill-taught in the way of God; when the abbeys stood the people had worldly refreshment and a spiritual refuge … the abbeys were also one of the beauties of this realm to all men and strangers; noblemen found relief here in their need, their younger sons given a place in the abbeys and their daughters raised virtuously in the nunneries … abbeys that were near the sea maintained seawalls and dykes; they built and maintained bridges, highways and other such things for the common good.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF GRACE

These grievances led to the biggest popular uprising of Henry VIII's reign: the Pilgrimage of Grace. Beginning in Lincolnshire and spreading quickly to Yorkshire, the rebellion drew thousands. York, Hull and Halifax joined the cause.

Though some nobility hesitated, others, including Lord Darcy of Templehurst and Archbishop Edward Lee of York, were eventually persuaded to support the cause. Even formerly loyal families like the Percys, Scropes, Nevilles and Fairfaxes sided with the rebels.

Marching under banners bearing the Five Wounds of Christ, the rebels hoped to restore the monasteries and reverse the changes to the Church. They gained control of most of the region. In Doncaster, they met the King's envoy, the Duke of Norfolk, who promised pardons and a northern Parliament. Trusting the Crown's word, the rebels dispersed. But a later uprising gave Henry the excuse he needed to break his promises. Robert Aske was arrested, dragged through the streets

20th century artist's interpretation of The Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 (Fred Kirk Shaw)

of York on a hurdle and hanged in chains from Clifford's Tower. Other ringleaders, including the abbots of Fountains and Jervaulx and the prior of Bridlington, were executed.

LINGERING HOSTILITY

By the time the larger monasteries were dissolved in 1539, resistance had largely been crushed. Some monks and canons quietly accepted pensions and the new order. At Bolton Priory, Prior Moone and fourteen brethren signed the deed of surrender. Moone received a pension of £40 a year; others received smaller sums. The priory church was spared, continuing as a place of worship for the local community and surviving today as Bolton Abbey.

Yet the memory of the monasteries lingered. Despite the executions, Catholic sympathies remained strong in Yorkshire. When Queen Mary I briefly restored Catholicism in the 1550s, she even considered moving her court to York. However, after her death in 1558, her successor Elizabeth I ensured that Protestantism would become the permanent religion of the realm. The monastic lands had already been redistributed among courtiers and nobles who had no desire to give them up.

Still, the discontent simmered. In 1569, the Rising of the North broke out, led by Thomas Percy, Earl of Northumberland, and Charles Neville, Earl of Westmorland. Their aim was to restore the Catholic Mass and release Mary, Queen of Scots. In Durham and Ripon, rebels reinstated the Latin rite. However, without enough artillery to take York, they retreated. The rebellion collapsed. Percy was eventually captured, sold to Elizabeth for £2,000, and executed in York. With his last words, he declared proudly: "I am a Percy, in life and death."

Though this was the last armed rebellion in the name of Catholicism in Yorkshire, it was not the end of resistance. In 1605, Guy Fawkes – born in York and educated at St Peter's School – was arrested in the Gunpowder Plot, the most famous Catholic conspiracy in English history. Fawkes, along with fellow Yorkshiremen Thomas Percy and others, sought to blow up Parliament and spark a rebellion. Once again, the attempt failed.

The monasteries were never restored but their legacy remained, preserved in place names, ruined walls and the continuing life of churches like Bolton. And though the Reformation had many champions in Yorkshire, it also had many who mourned what had been lost – not just buildings and rituals, but a whole way of life shaped by faith, generosity and community

Bolton Priory. (Tim Green, CC BY-SA 2.0)

WALTER HARRISON: THE GENTLEMAN WHO LET A GOVERNMENT FALL

John Heywood

Front Page News - Defeat by One Vote!

In March 1979, one of the most dramatic nights in Westminster history unfolded – culminating in a vote of no confidence that toppled James Callaghan's Labour government. Among the key figures that night was Wakefield's MP, Walter Harrison (right), whose actions have since become part of parliamentary legend. The fallout from that single lost vote ushered in 18 years of Conservative rule. The extraordinary events were later dramatised in the acclaimed National Theatre production, *This House*

AN "OLD-SCHOOL WHIP"

At the time, Harrison was deputy chief whip in a beleaguered Labour government clinging to power with no overall majority. Born and educated in West Yorkshire,

Harrison studied at Dewsbury Technical College before working as a supervisor electrician for the Yorkshire Electricity Board. A committed trade unionist, he served as a councillor on the West Riding County Council and as an alderman for Castleford, before entering Parliament in 1964 with a majority of nearly 12,000. He increased that margin in the 1966 election and served in the whips' office from 1966, becoming deputy chief whip in 1974.

Harrison was a tough, no-nonsense operator – an 'old-school' whip, both feared and admired. His job was unenviable: keeping a fragile minority government afloat through tight votes and shifting alliances. From spring 1977 until its collapse in 1979, every vote in the Commons was a battle for survival.

Writing after Harrison's death in 2012, BBC parliamentary correspondent Mark D'Arcy offered an insight into his remarkable skills:

Harrison ran one of the most effective whipping operations in parliamentary history, conjuring majorities out of thin air week in, week out. Famously, he provided disguises so that Labour MPs could vote twice in a division, after the Conservatives called an unexpected vote – in breach, he thought, of an agreed deal.

On one occasion, Harrison even registered the only half-vote in Hansard. Delayed by a stuck lift, he jammed his foot in the division lobby door just before it closed. After some wrangling, the authorities ruled he had been 'half in' the lobby – granting a demi-vote that once again saved the government.

AN HISTORIC VOTE

But the luck eventually ran out. On 28 March 1979, Margaret Thatcher tabled a motion of no confidence – and Labour lost by a single vote, 311 to 310. It was the first time since 1924 that a government had been brought down by Parliament in this way.

The real story behind that historic vote is one of principle and political honour. Speaking years later, Harrison revealed that he had chosen not to enforce a longstanding pairing agreement with his Conservative counterpart, Bernard Weatherill. Labour MP Sir Alfred Broughton, seriously ill and unable to attend the vote, would traditionally have been 'paired' with an opposition MP, allowing both to abstain. Harrison could have insisted on the deal – but chose not to do so.

Mark D'Arcy again picks up the tale:

Had Harrison insisted, Weatherill would have complied, and the vote, which was eventually lost by one, would have been tied. The government would have survived, but Weatherill would have been finished, and that seemed too high a price to pay to sustain a tottering government for another few days or weeks.

Weatherill would later become speaker of the House of Commons. Harrison stood down in 1987 and died in October 2012, aged 91. His role in that pivotal moment remains a powerful example of personal integrity in political life – and a reminder of how one decision can change the course of history.

INTEREST IN SHEFFIELD HERITAGE PROJECT EXCEEDS ALL EXPECTATIONS: A MILLION HITS AND GROWING

Nick Duggan

The Hawley Collection (Nick Duggan)

A Sheffield collection, established by Ken Hawley at Kelham Island Museum, has gone viral and is playing a key role in keeping interest in the city's heritage skills alive.

KEN HAWLEY

The trust has over 100,000 objects including tools, cutlery, photographs, paper archives and ephemera related to Sheffield light trades. These were collected by Ken Hawley (right) over a 30 year period. He had no prior interest in collecting but one day went to demonstrate an electric plane at a coffin maker. He spotted an unusual brace on

the wall and asked: "Can I have it?" This was the start of something remarkable.

THE COLLECTION BEGINNINGS

Ken's background was that he owned a tool shop and was passionate about all things made in Sheffield. His interest was not only in the objects but how they were used and made. His collection was originally housed in his home, filling the sheds, attics and living rooms. The collection later moved to a base at Sheffield University, where Ken assembled a team of volunteers to begin cataloguing thousands of items. At this stage many of the volunteers had worked in the light trades industries but public access was not available. At the same time, Ken was a major contributor to the development and preservation of Wortley Top Forge.

In 1998 Ken's collecting was recognised with the award of an MBE, while by 2002, full registered museum status had been achieved. With the consolidation of the collection in a base, many new items were added and the space was again overflowing, including two outdoor containers. The idea to rehouse the trust in a purpose-built location at Kelham Island Industrial Museum was floated and fittingly it is now housed in the old saw works of Wheatman and Smith, hosted by Sheffield Museums but as an independent trust.

TODAY

The collection continues to grow and new volunteers have been recruited. The whole collection is displayed and stored on the site so visitors from all over the world can visit and view items. It is available for research and group visits, and external talk talks can be arranged. As a result of two successful Heritage Lottery Projects – 'Name on a Knife Blade' and 'Sheffield Treasures' – the collection is close to cataloguing 50,000 items. This includes probably the largest collection of planes, saws, micrometers and table knives in the world

One of Ken Hawley's legacies was he captured on film many of the last craftspeople in Sheffield. He also tried to recreate some of the craft skills himself. The trust created a YouTube channel that now has over eighty videos and talks on Sheffield skills and companies. The average number visits to the site by October 2024 was around 8,000 a month and had amassed a total of 450,000 hits. The past few months has seen an explosion of activity with the site sometimes receiving 20,000 hits a day and the number of visits has now exceeded 1.25m. The two most popular videos are of Ken recreating making a metal file, with over 400,000 views, and a video of Footprint Tools making augers having been watched over 160,000 times.

File making was a massive industry in the city and the good news is that Footprint Tools is still going strong. New videos are constantly being added to the site and recent talks about George Bishop, John Watts, Allen and Darwin, the Atkin Brothers, Martin and Hall and Stanley Tools are all proving popular. To access, just search Ken Hawley Collection Trust YouTube channel.

NAME ON A KNIFE BLADE

The other digital tool – 'Name on a Knife Blade' – from the Hawley Collection allows people to search to see if their family surname is on a Sheffield knife blade and also enables them to read about the history of any of the hundreds of Sheffield cutlery companies. It started when a volunteer began sorting out a pile of table knives. Did we already have them? Were they by a maker we already had but in a different style? It's a real challenge to keep museums relevant and we realised we were sitting on a treasure trove of Sheffield's history and heritage.

The original idea was to create a physical knife wall, but some of the knives were in

poor condition and only a few would be at eye level. With a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, we commissioned a developer to create essentially a digital knife wall. We exhibit digitally over 1,600 different names stamped or engraved on table knives. We also had histories of makers but none of their knives, and knives with no maker's history. However, Geoff Tweedale, the author of *Tweedale's Directory of Sheffield Cutlery Manufacturers 1740–2013*, kindly provided us with research on many of our knife companies and our team of volunteers have been filling in the gaps. We have two terminals in our gallery but the site can be accessed on a mobile phone or computer via the link below. Each entry now has the history of the company, a photograph of a knife and other background information. The site receives over 250 visits a day from all over the world and has exceeded 750,000 visits in total. Recent addition has seen all the city's scissor and razor manufacturers added. To access visit www.hawleyknives.com

Nick Duggan from the project at Kelham Island Museum (Nick Duggan)

Recently we had a gold-plated James Neil hacksaw donated, acquired some Graham Clayton pocket knives and a large two-handled saw. A magnificent tool chest, the Warrington Chest, has been donated. Working with the scrap metal artist Jason Heppenstall in 2024, we now have a stunning life-sized sculpture of a 'Little Mester' made out of Sheffield tools. One of the most stunning knives ever made, the Joseph Rodgers Year Knife, has just gone back on display and can be viewed in a 180-degree format on our YouTube channel. This knife was made in 1822 and has 2,000 blades, one for every year of the Christian calendar. It was recently gifted to the collection permanently by owners Stanley Black and Decker.

The Joseph Rodgers Year Knife (Nick Duggan)

The gallery at Kelham Island Museum is open Tuesdays to Sundays and volunteers are available Tuesdays to Fridays to answer enquiries and accept donations.

MARY WARD, FOUNDER OF CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Tim Guile

Mary Ward, St Joseph's Church, Bishop Thornton

"There is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great matters … and I hope in God it will be seen that women in time to come will do much."

BEGINNINGS

Mary Ward grew up in Yorkshire in a strongly Catholic family at a time when the practice of Catholicism was illegal in England. Three of her uncles were implicated in the Gunpowder Plot and were killed trying to escape arrest. Mary decided to go in a different direction. She is remembered today as a visionary pioneer of girls' schools and the empowerment of women within the Catholic church. Raised in different parts of Yorkshire and inspired by strong female role models, she was convinced that women and girls had an important part to play in civil society through education and learning. She championed the cause of women even when church officials stood in her way and tried to stop her mission. She is an example for women today.

ESCAPE FROM ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

In 1598, a group of English Catholic women settled in Brussels and set up a

convent as Benedictine nuns, an act of defiance against the repressive, anti-Catholic rule of Elizabeth I. Thus began a movement of Catholic women freeing themselves from the prospect of being shackled by marriage and, instead, spending their days in prayer, contemplation and a holy life. There, in the low countries and in France, they could practice Catholic devotions, regular masses and the sort of life denied them after the closure of monastic houses under Henry VIII and the repression of the Elizabethan state. A total of twenty-one convents and religious foundations were established as well as the continuation of one from the pre-reformation period. In total, just under 4,000 women entered these institutions, most of whom were English.

ROLES FOR WOMEN

Hemmed in by an anti-Catholic government in England and sexist authorities in Rome, Mary Ward stood firm in her resolve to speak up for females and to encourage others to support the cause of female education and service to the community they lived in. During the reign of Elizabeth I and the early years of the reign of James I, the role of Catholic women had advanced and become vital in the survival of English Catholicism. According to Bossy, there was a patriarchal revival among the English Catholic gentry around 1620. The reasons may have been that landed gentry tried to reassert their role as patriarchs in the family and their role in the wider Catholic community in England. In 1622, on the orders of James I, 4,000 Catholics were released from prison. According to Bossy, the population of English Catholics increased by about a half between 1603 and 1641. The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which Mary Ward founded, was an attempt to carve out a missionary role with an apostolate aimed primarily at girls and young women.

MARY WARD

Born into a Yorkshire Catholic recusant family, Mary Ward was remarkable for being one of the first women to believe that women should be actively involved in the apostolic life of the Catholic Church. Mary was born on 23 January 1585 at Mulwith, near Ripon in North Yorkshire, the eldest of the seven children of Marmaduke Ward and Ursula Wright, both from Yorkshire Roman Catholic families of the minor gentry. Marmaduke was bailiff to Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, who managed the Percy properties in Spofforth, near Wetherby, as well as his own estate at Mulwith. As a prominent nobleman in the court of Elizabeth I, the ninth earl was nominally a Protestant. However, the Percy family was still mostly Catholic and it was widely believed by many that Henry was a Catholic sympathiser.

She grew up sheltered among close and devoted Catholic relatives. She lived with her grandparents, Robert and Ursula Wright, on their estate in Holderness in the East Riding of Yorkshire for five years from 1590 but moved back to Mulwith when her grandfather was in his last illness. Soon afterwards the house at Mulwith was destroyed by fire, so her immediate family moved to the Percy estate at Alnwick in Northumberland. Mary, however, did not go with them. Instead, she went to live with other relatives, first in Nidderdale and then, from 1600 to 1606, with the Babthorpes at Osgodby near Selby. The influence of strong women in a highly religious household, with a priest secretly in residence and a daily regime of prayer and instruction, had a profound effect on the young Mary. The failed Gunpowder Plot of

1605 had terrible consequences for English Catholics. Some of Mary's relatives were killed trying to escape after the event. A member of the Percy family, Thomas, was one of the five conspirators in the Gunpowder Plot. He was shot dead whilst trying to escape. The Earl of Northumberland was implicated and spent seventeen years in the Tower of London.

By 1605, Mary came to feel that God was calling her to a religious life. She resisted pressure from her father and the offers of several suitors and, in 1606, she decided to pursue her religious convictions abroad at a time when it was dangerous to do anything the state or one's family did not approve of. This showed her iron will and determination to do what she believed was the right thing for her to do. The last of the suitors for her hand in marriage was Edmund Neville, the Catholic claimant to the forfeited earldom of Westmorland but, as with the others, Mary refused him. Initially, she chose the strictest form of contemplative religious life determined to give herself totally to God at St Omer in the Spanish Netherlands (now in the Pas-de-Calais region of northern France), where she joined the Poor Clare Order as a lay sister. At the time, convents were completely closed off from the outside world and the Catholic Church taught that nuns should always stay obediently within their walls under the authority of the Mother Superior and the bishop. Mary was admitted as a novice extern sister and, for a time, was content with her life in the convent. However, in May 1609, she was said to have received the first of a series of insights which inspired her to change her direction in life.

THE OUTSIDE WORLD

That year Mary had begun her own convent in Flanders to enable other women to follow their religious calling. The new institution thrived. However, Mary gradually concluded that she could do more valuable and meaningful work in the outside world. She was said to have felt that the Jesuit way of life, travelling anywhere where the pope felt they were needed, helping the sick, teaching the faith and founding new schools, was exactly what God was urging her to do. Widely known as the 'English Ladies', they set up a school for children in Flanders. It became so popular that in the following decades Mary went on to set up similar schools across Europe. The ladies later became known as the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and it was an attempt to carve out a role for unmarried women in missionary work, which would be based on the Jesuit mission but aimed at working with females. In 1611, she told her community that she had heard the words 'Take the name of the Society,' by which she understood the Society of Jesus or Jesuits founded by St Ignatius of Loyola. With the help and encouragement of Bishop Blaise of St Omer, Mary presented her plan to Pope Paul V. He in turn, commended her institute and held out high hopes of eventual recognition. Nevertheless, this did not lessen the opposition to her missionary work by some bishops. However, an anonymous English Benedictine, writing in 1616 about visits to Benedictine sisters in Brussels, Poor Clares at Gravelines and the Mary Ward sisters at St Omer, stated "the nuns in all three are English, and of such virtue and perfection that I have great hopes that by the prayers of these souls Our Lord may take pity on our unhappy country."

The rest of her life was spent in developing a congregation of religious women on the Ignatian model. For this she needed, and repeatedly failed to gain, Papal approval. Between 1622 and 1628 she founded schools for girls in Rome, Munich, Liège, Trier, Cologne, Perugia, Naples, Vienna and Bratislava; often this was at the

request of the local rulers or bishops, but Papal approval still did not follow. Three times she and her companions walked to Rome from Flanders, over the Alps: twice to try to gain this approval and the third time as a prisoner of the Inquisition following the suppression of her congregation by Pope Urban VIII in 1631.

Mary Ward by Leon Gerard Crep, courtesy of https://www.findagrave.com

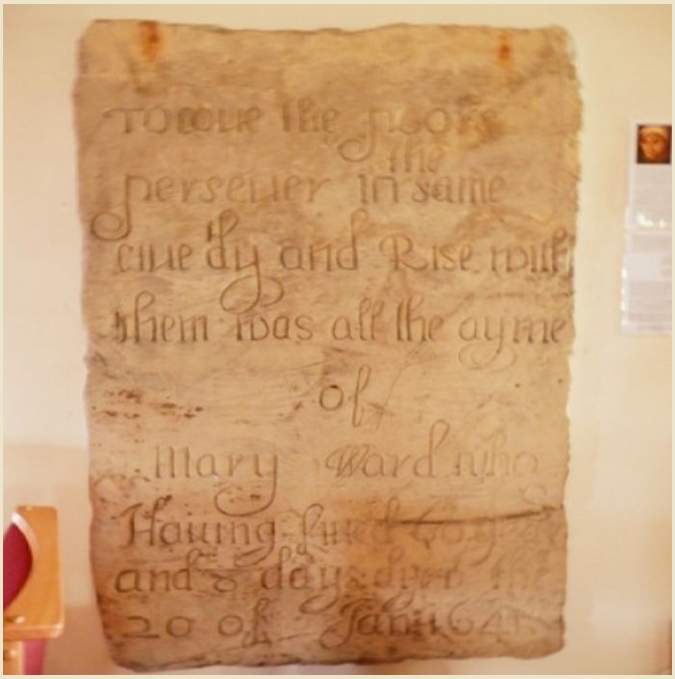
MARY AND THE PAPACY

However, such an active role for women did not always sit well with the Catholic Church. In 1631 Pope Urban VIII passed a law closing the schools and condemning the 'English Ladies'. Mary Ward was even arrested as a heretic and imprisoned for nine weeks. Between 1629 and 1630, several communities and schools were suppressed on the orders from the Vatican. Mary was still convinced that the pope might become supportive and consequently wrote a letter in April to her communities in Liège, Cologne and Trier telling them to disregard any orders of suppression since they came not from the pope but from a cardinal who was possibly jealous of their success. She also sent one of her first companions, Winefrid Wigmore, to visit different communities. Winefrid encouraged the sisters to obey Mary as their superior and not to listen to the Papal Nuncio, which seemed to increase rather than reduce the tensions between Rome and the English Sisters. At the time, unenclosed, self-governing female communities were unthinkable, whilst the reforms of the Council of Trent had forbidden new religious congregations and confined religious women to enclosure only. Mary was stubborn and unwilling to compromise and accept a form of restrictive enclosure and supervision. Otherwise, she might have obtained official approval. However, she preferred to face the dissolution of her congregation, imprisonment, the imputation of heresy, and disgrace rather than abandon her conviction that "there is no such difference between men and women that women may not do great things … and I hope in God it will be seen, that women in time to come will do much."

ENDINGS

On being summoned to Rome in 1632 to face charges, Mary was granted an audience with the pope at which she declared: "Holy Father, I neither am nor ever have been a heretic". She received the comforting reply: "We believe it, we believe it". No trial ever took place, but Mary Ward was forbidden to leave Rome or to live in community. By 1637, for reasons of health, Mary was allowed to travel to Spa in the Ardennes, 40km from Liege, and then on to England. She spent some time in London and then moved north, with some of her ladies, to the village of Hutton Rudby near Stokesley in the North Riding of Yorkshire where she was allowed to occupy a house owned by the local recusant Ingelby family of Ripley Castle. After a short time, she and the ladies moved to York, some miles to the south, where there was more support and friendly Catholic families. There was fierce fighting around York as part of the

English Civil War at the time. Her illness worsened and she died surrounded by some of her oldest friends, on 30 January 1645 at Heworth Manor, York. It was not easy to find a burial plot for a Catholic, partly because of the law and partly due to danger of desecration. The vicar was bribed and she was buried in the nearby parish church of St Thomas in Osbaldwick. Her burial took place on 1 February 1645 and was attended by people from around York. Despite the persecution of Catholics at the time, Mary Ward was much admired and revered by many local people.



Grave of Mary Ward at St Thomas' church, Osbaldwick, York, courtesy of https://www.findagrave.com

LEGACY

Following her death, an early member of the 'English Ladies,' Frances Bedingfield, set up a school in York at the Bar Convent, based on Mary's beliefs that women should be more active in the Catholic Church. The school, in a different form, exists to this day elsewhere in the city. By the end of the seventeenth century the institute was well established in Germany and was poised to expand into Austro-Hungary. By this time it had a foothold in England in London and York. Compromises were inevitable to survive. In many instances, houses became semi-monastic in their lifestyle, but the educational apostolate continued to flourish. Most significantly, the memory of Mary Ward lived on, despite a second Papal Bull of 1749 that re-emphasised the prohibition on recognising her as foundress. Many of her letters and other historic material were destroyed, but the memory of what she had wanted lived on. Connelly states that more than 200 years after her death, her heroic virtue and extraordinary holiness was at last recognised by the church when Poe Pius IX formally recognised the institute she founded. Mary Ward was a courageous woman with ideas which were ahead of her time and the recognition of her Institute and the acceptance of the church after the Second Vatican Council to leave the matter of enclosure or work in the community to the women themselves. Her intention was to unlock the potential of 50% of the Catholic population and in that she could now be said to have had some success.

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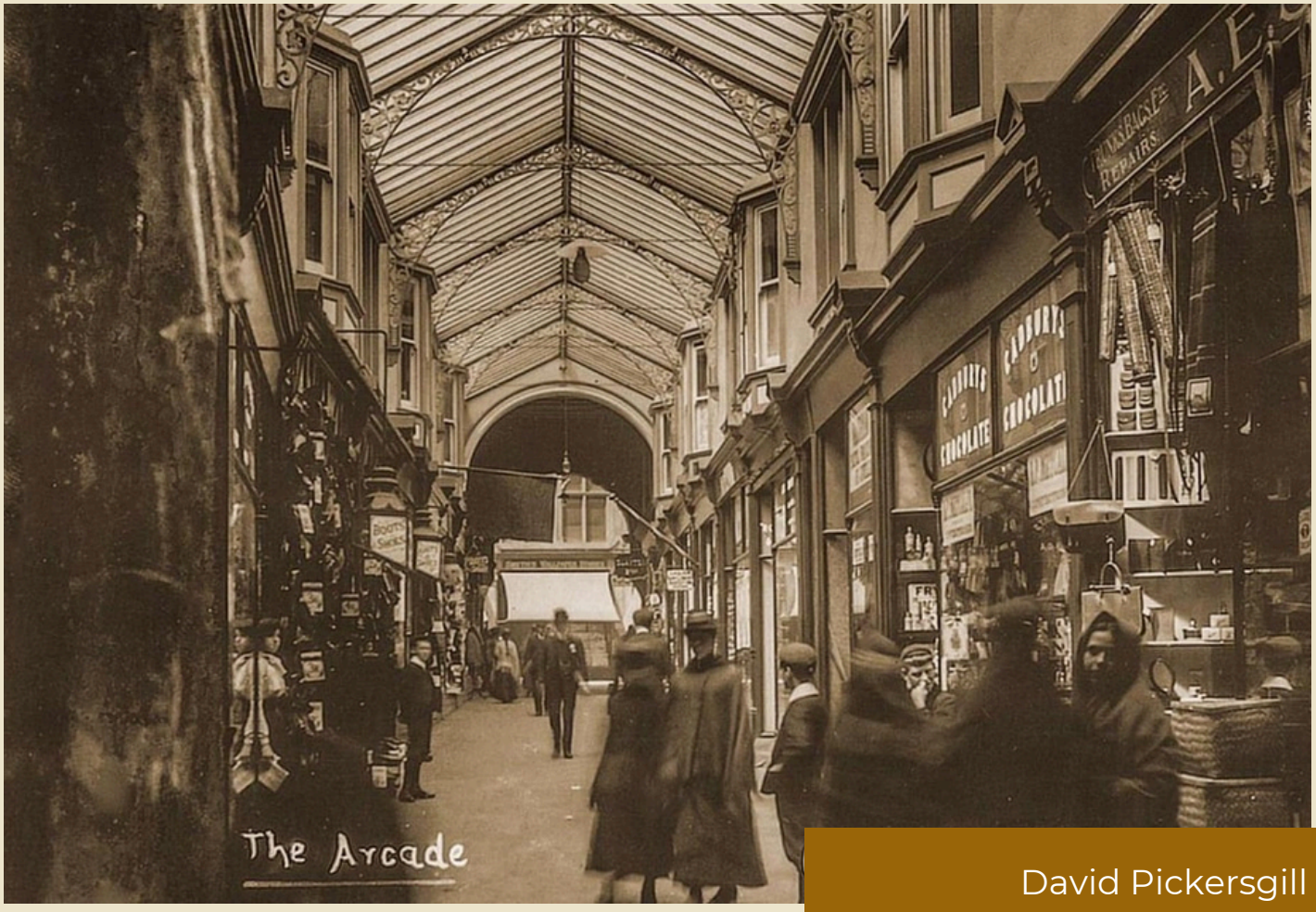
ARCADIAN VISION: BRINGING A DEWSBURY LANDMARK BACK TO LIFE



David Pickersgill

Early 20th century postcard of The Arcade (The Arcade Group)

The magnificent Victorian arcades of Leeds are one of the jewels in Yorkshire's architectural crown, attracting visitors from far and wide not just for their upmarket shops but as a spectacle in themselves. However, only ten miles down the road from their opulent splendour lies another arcade which has experienced both prosperity and decline in its 136-year history but which, after more than a decade in the doldrums, is currently poised on the cusp of a renaissance.

BUCKING THE TREND

The recent stories of The Arcade in Dewsbury and its counterparts in Leeds are a microcosm of wider civic trends of the past thirty or so years, during which a small number of major cities have thrived, attracting investment, service-based employment and new retail offerings, while numerous post-industrial towns have experienced a spiral of decline, losing jobs, retail and cultural facilities. However, by adopting an innovative community-led approach, Kirklees Council and the not-for-profit Arcade Group are confident they can not only bring the tarnished jewel in Dewsbury's crown back to life but sustain it as a long-term focal point for the town centre's regeneration.

The Arcade, Dewsbury, Early 20th century. (The Arcade Group)

HISTORY

Designed by Huddersfield architect Albert Holmes Kirk, The Arcade was a reflection of a town at the height of its fortunes on the back of a booming textile industry. While less ostentatious than its city counterparts, nevertheless its carved stonework, elegant shopfronts and ornate wrought iron roof structure created a destination for shoppers which the people of Dewsbury took to their heart. Its fortunes ebbed and flowed with those of the town but local sentiment suggests that its popularity was at its height in the 1950s and 60s, with another golden era in the 70s and 80s, when it hosted a wide variety of shops which are still fondly remembered. Memories of these times have been the subject of a fascinating book of recollections contributed by townspeople. The Arcade was refurbished in the late 1980s, with restored shopfronts, relaid paving and new lighting, and enjoyed a period of renewed popularity.

RECENT TIMES

The twenty-first century, however, has not been kind to Dewsbury town centre, as wider economic and social changes (both within Dewsbury and beyond) combined with more specific events – not least the closure of Marks & Spencer – to cut footfall and prompt the closure of numerous businesses. While many of these factors were beyond local control, nevertheless it has also been suggested that the principal problem affecting The Arcade was negligent absentee owners, whose actions drove out tenants to the extent that the last shop closed in 2016. Four years later, amid fears for its future, the building was bought by Kirklees Council.

THE ARCADE GROUP

In that same year, 2020, the Arcade Group was established by a group of Dewsbury businesspeople, with the aim of securing a ten-year lease on the building from the council and then running it as the

country's only community-run shopping centre. It was constituted as a community benefit company in 2022 and took on the lease later that year. Meanwhile, Kirklees had applied for a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant and was awarded £4.4m in June 2023 to restore the building and enhance its facilities, while later that year a community share offer raised almost £130,000 for the Arcade Group to pursue its vision.

The Arcade just before final closure (The Aracde Group)

THE VISION

This vision is that The Arcade will contain twenty units: sixteen ground-floor retail units in the main corridor and four 'bookend' hospitality units – two at each end – intended for cafés, bars or restaurants. A new feature will be eight first-floor workshop spaces for use by artists and creatives, while on the second floor will be a large function room and several smaller units suitable for office space, meeting rooms and community use. The plan is for restoration work to be completed in late 2025, with the building opening to the public shortly after.

Crucially, the Arcade Group is committed to ensuring only high-quality retailers will be permitted, ensuring The Arcade provides a unique retail and hospitality offering and becomes a 'destination' for the people of Dewsbury and beyond. The not-for-profit aspect means much lower rents will be charged than in commercially-operated retail premises, giving tenants the best chance of establishing a viable long-term business.

An Arcade Group spokesperson said: "There couldn't be a better setting for creating a vibrant and viable retail centre in Dewsbury town centre than The Arcade. Not only will the restored building look truly amazing, and be an attraction in itself, but it will also offer a sense of security and shared purpose for tenants. It's a perfect setting for creating a virtuous circle, where the success of each business contributes to the success of all the others.

"The retailers in The Arcade will have a group of members, shareholders and volunteers supporting them to make a success of their businesses. The board and shareholders will ensure that there is much more to attract shoppers in The Arcade than merely things to buy: events, activities, exhibitions, workshops and so on. Anyone who rents a unit in The Arcade will benefit from the input of this wider family of enthusiasts.

"The people of Dewsbury are desperate to see an enhanced retail offer in the town centre. Thousands of local residents are keen to shop regularly in Dewsbury again, but currently don't do so in greater numbers for various reasons. We genuinely believe that the people of Dewsbury will cherish The Arcade again. They will use it – so that they don't lose it!"

BEFORE AND AFTER

Ready for restoration work to begin (The Arcade Group)

THE ARCADE GROUP MISSION

We want to create a 'destination' where people will come not only to enjoy shopping, but also to have a coffee, eat a meal and engage with the other non-retail attractions and events at The Arcade. We hope that people will come to The Arcade to spend quality time, rather than merely popping into town just to get what they need. We want to create an eclectic mix of small, independent, artisan, creative retail outlets. We want to host a bar, a restaurant and a café to add to the night-time economy (the four bookend units can open at night). Most of all, we want people to enjoy shopping in Dewsbury again!

CGI image of the completed project (The Arcade Group)

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN RETURNS TO ITS YORKSHIRE ROOTS FOR BRADFORD 2025

History and Heritage

The Railway Children, Bradford 2025 (Guy Farrow)

This summer, *The Railway Children* comes home — not just to the tracks it made famous on screen, but to the region that shaped its identity. As part of Bradford 2025: UK City of Culture, York Theatre Royal, Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, and Bradford 2025 have joined forces to stage a new production of Mike Kenny's acclaimed adaptation of E. Nesbit's classic novel.

First published in 1905, The Railway Children has become one of Britain's best-loved children's books. Its enduring appeal lies in its blend of domestic drama and larger social themes — from unjust imprisonment to the experience of displacement. Nesbit's story, seen through the eyes of three children forced to leave London for a new life in Yorkshire, has long been recognised for its progressive ideas and emotional depth. This new production keeps the original setting while expanding its reach for modern audiences.

LITERATURE BROUGHT TO LIFE ON HISTORIC RAILS

The production will take place along the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, the preserved heritage line that famously

The Green Dragon, Keighley and Worth Valley Railway. (©Tom Marshall)

served as the filming location for the 1970 film adaptation. Audiences will board a steam train at Keighley and travel through the countryside to Oxenhope, where an adapted engine shed becomes the performance space — placing the story quite literally back on the tracks.

Director Damian Cruden revives his celebrated staging of the play, which was first performed at York's National Railway Museum in 2008 and later at London's Waterloo station, winning an Olivier Award. This new version has been reimagined specifically for Bradford's City of Culture programme and incorporates modern themes while staying true to the novel's original message.

A STORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

At its core, *The Railway Children* is a story about change: social, personal and political. It reflects the shifting world of early 20th-century Britain — a world of steam trains and empire, but also of inequality and reform. Nesbit's work was ahead of its time in its sympathy for outsiders and its subtle commentary on justice, family and class. These themes are given renewed relevance in this production, with the children's family portrayed as British-Indian and the presence of a Russian refugee, Schepansky, emphasised as part of a broader story about sanctuary and belonging.

Adding to this, Stand & Be Counted Theatre, the UK's first Theatre Company of Sanctuary, has created an immersive audio experience for the train journey, developed with people who have sought refuge in Bradford. The initiative ties into the city's long-standing identity as a place of welcome — and connects Nesbit's themes with present-day stories of displacement and home-making.

A STRONG YORKSHIRE CONNECTION

Nesbit never named the railway line in her novel, but generations of readers have come to associate the story with Yorkshire,

especially after the 1970 film rooted it so firmly in the Worth Valley. This production celebrates that connection. As Noel Hartley of the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway notes: "Our railway has been the home of *The Railway Children* since the 1960s. Hosting the stage version here during Bradford 2025 feels like a full-circle moment."

LOOKING AHEAD BY LOOKING BACK

While this is a family show, it's also a piece of living literary heritage. The production not only brings one of Britain's most influential children's books back to its spiritual home, but also offers a fresh lens on its enduring ideas. It reminds us that stories written more than a century ago still have something to say about who we are, and how we live.

The Railway Children runs from 15 July to 7 September 2025, with half-price tickets for children under 16. Tickets are on sale now

The Keighley and Worth Valley Railway (Dave Palmater CC BY-SA 2.0)

Step back in time with the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway — a beautifully preserved five-mile heritage line that runs from Keighley to Oxenhope, cutting through the heart of Brontë Country and some of Yorkshire's most picturesque countryside.

Originally opened in 1867 to serve the rural communities and textile mills of the Worth Valley, the line was closed by British Railways in 1962 as part of widespread cuts to local rail services. But it was far from the end. In a remarkable act of local determination, a group of volunteers formed the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway Preservation Society, raising funds and carrying out hands-on restoration work to save the line. Against the odds, they succeeded and the railway reopened in June 1968, just weeks before the final mainline steam services ended across Britain.

Since then, the KWVR has become one of the country's most iconic and well-loved heritage railways. Its steep gradients, stone-built stations and authentic period carriages offer more than just nostalgia — they provide a working window into Britain's industrial past. Visitors can ride behind vintage steam and diesel locomotives, explore restored Victorian stations, and experience railway travel much as it would have been over a century ago.

The line boasts a special connection to film and literature. It rose to international fame as the location for the 1970 adaptation of *The Railway Children*, cementing its association with the classic story and attracting generations of fans to its platforms. It has featured in numerous productions, from *Yanks* to *Peaky Blinders*, but *The Railway Children* remains its defining link to British culture.

THIS MONTH'S GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

DAVID BROADHEAD

Now retired , David is fascinated by the ecclesiastical history and buildings of Yorkshire. His other many and varied interests, he says, are what keeps him young.

TIM GUILE

Chair of the English Catholic History Association, Assoc. FRHistS and author of over 20 articles on late medieval/ early modern ecclesiastical history. His area of interest is Catholic recusancy during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. He is a speaker, writer and teacher. He comes originally from Yorkshire and has an interest in Yorkshire history. He has given papers and talks including one in Leeds in 2023.

NICK DUGGAN

Nick worked as a teacher and lecturer in Sheffield, becoming the advisor for Vocational Education to the Council. On retirement he started to volunteer at The Hawley Collection, based at Kelham Island. He has been successful with two lottery projects – Name on a Knife Blade and Sheffield Treasures. I love Sheffield and celebrating what it made and still makes."

DAVID PICKERSGILL

David Pickersgill lives in Castleford and studied local and regional history at the University of Leeds, gaining an MA in 2005. He is particularly interested in medieval rural society, 19th century education and railway history.