The Yorkshire Journal

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Special issue
In this issue:

Hull, City of Culture
Hull’s First Railway
Bronze Age Boats from North Ferriby
Paull Lighthouse

By Mick Evans

Trinity House of Kingston upon Hull built Paull Lighthouse in 1836. The sign on the front of the lighthouse tells us; the Wardens of Trinity House at this time were William Collinson and George Hall.

The lighthouse went out of use in 1870 when the sandbanks moved and caused the channel to shift, when this happened new lighthouses were built at Thorngumbald Clough and Salt End.

The cottages that surround the lighthouse were not built at the same time as the lighthouse, the terraces of small cottages already ran along the river front (the coastguard cottages) and also along Town End Road (Penny Cottages) with a clear space at the corner where the lighthouse was built as a separate, free-standing tower. A Mr Robert Thompson bought the land that the Lighthouse is built on in 1820. Cottages linking the two terraces to the tower were added on at a later time. Penny Cottages were eventually demolished, apart from the one attached to the lighthouse, and further extensions have continued since.

Today the 40 feet (12m) lighthouse is a Grade II listed building which has been converted into a 3 bedroom house.

Right: This photo shows the Paull Lighthouse on the north bank of the Humber Estuary. Photo by Howard Selina

Below: A view of the Paull lighthouse and the terraces of small cottages running along the river front. Photo by Martin J Fisher
About 60,000 people came out in Hull to watch a fireworks display and light show to mark the start of the city’s year as UK Capital of Culture. The light show told the story of Hull over the past 100 years

Cover: Hull Maritime Museum Photo by Mike Smith

Editorial

Hull is the UK City of Culture 2017 and is hosting a plethora of events throughout the year. To celebrate this prestigious award the autumn issue of the Yorkshire Journal is dedicated to Hull.

For our first feature Daniel Theyer takes us on a whirlwind journey through time in Hull from its foundation up to the present day. The reason why you will look in vain for red telephone boxes is explained before going on to a selection of famous people which Hull has produced. The first to feature is the poet Philip Larkin, a complex, outspoken, contradictory and talented man who was appointed University Librarian at the University of Hull in 1955, a position he held until his death in 1985. Then, with contributions by Margaret Mills, comes William Wilberforce; a man whose name is associated with the 18th and 19th century movement to abolish the slave trade, but who was also an admired politician and campaigning social reformer. Next Ethel Leginska, an unusual pianist of some renown. She refused to wear evening dress at her concerts, because music mattered not expensive fashionable dresses. Then Thomas Ferens, who financed the building of the Ferens Art Gallery. Today it includes many works of art which Ferens purchased himself, as well as works of historic and contemporary artists. This is followed by Sarah Harrison’s article on Amy Johnson, Britain’s most famous aviatrix, a Yorkshire heroine whose mysterious death may have been finally solved. The Waterson family comes next, in their time one of the most influential groups in the English folk revival, achieving near superstar status in the UK. Lastly, but not least is David Mark, the author of the acclaimed DS Aector McAvoy crime fiction series set in Hull.

In our next feature Stephen Riley gives an account of Hull’s First Railway that developed international shipping routes from its terminus at Manor House Street station (also known as Kingston Street station) adjacent to the Humber Docks which opened in 1840. It was demolished in 1858 after the Paragon Railway station was opened in 1848.

For our last feature in the series of Hull City of Culture, Jeremy Clark takes us back in time to the Bronze Age in his article on the Bronze Age Boats from North Ferriby, near Hull. These boats are Europe’s earliest known examples of sea craft. Both half and full size replicas have been built and tested. A full scale outline of the North Ferriby Boat with an information board can be seen on the Humber bank near the North Ferriby foreshore. It forms part of both the Yorkshire Wolds Way and the long distance Trans Pennine Trail.

But there is much more to these articles, please read and enjoy them.

We welcome your comments
Hull, City of Culture

By Daniel Theyer with contributions by Margaret Mills and Sarah Harrison

Oh how they laughed when Glasgow was declared European City of Culture in 1990. Unbeknownst to many Glasgow had strong music and visual art scenes, superb architecture and important art collections, and when a brilliant media campaign revealed these laughter turned to admiration. It was a similar story in 2008 when Liverpool became the second, and probably last, UK city to be nominated. In 2013 a new scheme commenced, the UK City of Culture, and the laughter decibel count soared when Hull was nominated as the successful candidate for 2017.

Above: Hull Marina originally the Railway Dock and Humber Dock converted in 1983. The marina is full of yachts and small boats and the whole area has been developed and tastefully restored. Photo by John Ward

As we approach the end of the year it is perhaps easier to see if Hull too will convert tears of laughter to cheers of appreciation. The initial response was to throw money at the project. Around £80 million. This was to upgrade streets and public buildings in the city centre and create a harmonious public space to better display its attractions. A complete makeover of the Ferens Art Gallery, a new 350-seat open-air theatre in the old Central Dry Dock and a makeover of the old Fruit Market, which has become a centre for galleries and other artistic businesses, were planned. The first two are complete, but the Fruit Market refurbishment was still pending as summer arrived. The street upgrading was still in full swing when the year began, but was almost complete by the time it was warm enough to linger outside.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary culture is defined as

1. The arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.
2. The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society.
3. The cultivation of bacteria, tissue cells, etc. in an artificial medium containing nutrients.
4. The cultivation of plants.

We can clearly discount definitions 3 and 4 in this context. I believe that the majority verdict on what is meant by “culture” in “City of Culture” is best satisfied by definition 1. Hence those peals of laughter. While Hull has a fine art gallery, an excellent theatre, and, largely thanks to Philip Larkin, a reputation as a poetry hotspot it is unlikely to qualify for the Premier League if it has to play according to these rules.

Looking at the events and exhibitions which have already taken place this year, or are planned to do so, promotion to the Premier League of Human Intellectual Achievement seems no more likely than it was before the budget was spent.

What does make much more sense is to assume that Hull have decided that their definition of culture is much more closely aligned with “the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society”. Looked at this way the blue nude event, the huge Gay Pride rally, the Uproots folk festival, the coloured lights in the tower blocks make perfect sense – as well as a spectacle. The first BBC Prom to be held outside London, despite containing mostly fairly serious classical music, was as notable for the raucous cheers greeting every mention by the presenter of the word “Hull” as for the quality of the Northern Philharmonia’s rendition of Handel’s Water Music.
Hull has always been different from the other towns in Yorkshire. As a major port it has looked outwards beyond the Humber, as well as inland to the manufacturing towns of the West Riding, much of whose output was funnelled through Hull Docks to Europe and beyond. Hull, Larkin said, is “a city that is in the world, yet sufficiently on the edge of it to have a different resonance”. To survive in the whaling and fishing fleets you had to be tough and resilient. This fostered a unique character, a distinctive accent, and a healthy distrust of, and disdain for, “foreigners”. If you don’t like us that is your problem is still very much the current attitude.

So it isn’t really a great surprise that Hull is celebrating the Year of Culture 2017 in its own way, doing what it wants to do. Yes, the rest of the country is welcome to come and see what is on offer, especially if they are prepared to spend generously, and if they don’t like it – tough. They don’t make it easy though, negotiating the official Hull City of Culture website takes a lot of stamina, it is high on style and light on useful content – and it is certainly not comprehensive.

The rest of this article will explore the development of Hull, its main industries and cultural development, and celebrate some of its better known inhabitants.

A Brief History of Hull

Hull dates back to the late 12th century, being one of a number of new towns established to further the growing trade of the early middle ages. It was founded by Meaux Abbey, 7 miles to the north, and known as Wyke upon Hull. Previously the site, although uninhabited, was part of the territory of the Hamlet of Myton. The River Hull was probably used for shelter in earlier times, the Scandinavian word for creek being vik, which is the origin of Wyke. The port of Wyke upon Hull was situated to the east of the River Hull, which was itself diverted into a newer, deeper channel.

Trade developed swiftly, its first recorded mention being in 1193 when wool collected for the ransom of Richard I was collected at ‘the port of Hull’ and wool soon constituted a major part of its trade. When King John taxed the ports of East and South England Hull’s contribution of £345 in 1203-05 was the sixth largest, far exceeding Hedon at £64 – a much older and more established port. Documentation is then absent until customs duties began to be collected on wool and hides in 1275. In the first 10 months 67 cargoes left the port, with 4,172 sacks of wool, 4,704 woolfells, and 39½ lasts, 75½ dickers, and 103 hides. The trade was dominated by foreign merchants. Slightly lower levels were averaged until 1291, when Edward I took over the port, now the third largest in England. Imports were chiefly of wine in this period.

In 1293 Edward I purchased the town of Wyke upon Hull from the Archbishop of Meaux, on advantageous terms. Part of the attraction was to use the port as a base for his Scottish campaigns. In 1299 he granted the town a Royal Charter. During the Middle Ages Hull, as it was commonly now called, cemented its position as the premier sea port on the eastern coast, dominating the trade with the Low Countries and the Baltic. Cloth joined wool and wine as the principal commodities.

Right: Holy Trinity and Market Place, Hull in 1888 by Frederick William Booty

The population of 7,500 in 1700 almost quadrupled in the following century, and the old medieval fortifications were torn down to allow the erection of a mass of warehouses, offices and fine homes by the wealthy merchants. Lacking a general quay each merchant family needed its own staiths for the loading and unloading of ships on the river Hull, close by the confluence with the Humber. Merchants’ houses jostled close together on the High Street, with gardens at the rear opening out to warehouses, granaries and the teeming activities on the private docks. The high street was equally crowded with wagons and carts bringing and taking away goods.
The main imports were timber, iron ore, yarn, hemp, flax and animal hides from Scandinavia, manufactured goods and dyes from Germany and Holland, and increasingly food for the growing population, wheat, rye, barley, beans, peas, beef, pork and butter with large quantities of wine. Going the other way were lead, wool, cotton, tools and cutlery.

Whaling added a new dimension in the 18th and 19th centuries, as did deep-sea fishing from 1850 until recently. During the industrial revolution development was still closely linked with trade, for example shipbuilding, sugar refining, tanning and oil seed extraction, and consequently heavy industry has never figured prominently. The thriving trade between Hull and inland ports along the Humber and its tributaries was heavily impacted by the coming of the railways, and later by an enhanced road network, which have both served to overcome the town’s remoteness.

The topography of Hull changed very little from the Middle Ages until the last quarter of the 18th century, housing in the Old Town being very densely packed. With the increase in trade in the 18th century the River Hull became increasingly congested, the west bank was lined with quays, wharves and staithes. Hull was unique in British ports in that it did not have a single legal quay. Along the entire length of the Old Harbour there was nowhere that cargoes could be checked by port officials. Finally the combination of evaded duty and river congestion in the Old Harbour led to the formation of the Hull Dock Company who built Hull’s first dock on ground on the northern perimeter of the city. The Dock was finally completed by September 1778. Outside London it was the largest dock, a third of a mile in length with an area of ten acres. It included the required legal quay.

The second dock (1809) was entered from the Humber and was called Humber Dock. Hull’s complete encirclement by water was accomplished in 1829 when a third dock was built joining The Dock and Humber Dock and was imaginatively named Junction Dock. The city of Hull was now virtually an island, bordered to the east by the River Hull, to the south by the River Humber and to the west and north by its three docks. Water had replaced the walls of the medieval city. Hull’s first residential suburb followed the construction of the first dock on land to the north of the dock itself. It was to be the home of wealthy merchants, traders, ship owners and other professionals.

The ever more crowded old town increasingly suffered from poor sanitation and contaminated water supplies from the River Hull, culminating in the cholera epidemic of 1849 in which 2000 perished. Subsequently the possible supply of pure water from springs was reconsidered. Engineers re-evaluated the water sources at Springhead and concluded that it couldn't supply the amount needed. However a local plumber called William Warden was convinced the “experts” were wrong and offered to supply the 4 million gallons of water a day needed from the Springhead wells - and the Town Corporation accepted his offer. He drilled a new well and started to supply 4.5 million gallons per day. Springhead waterworks were built to increase the rate and started a pumped supply of water in 1862. Meanwhile cheap housing was constructed in South Myton, and over the years expansion continued to the north and west.

Right: The original bore hole made by William Warden to test the possible supply rate.

Hull’s maritime connections were enhanced by the huge nineteenth century whaling fleet, and the deep-sea trawling industry, whose heritage was actually relatively short lived. Nevertheless it is an evocative image of Hull. It only began to develop in the 1840s following the arrival of fishermen from Devon and Cornwall. Merchants tried both to deny them landing space and to force them to move to Grimsby. Nevertheless their persistence and their increasing numbers established them as an important component of Hull’s business community. The trawlers were all but gone by the end of the twentieth century.
During the First World War this industry, employing many thousands of local men and women, was fundamentally altered by ‘total war’, as civilian fishing vessels and their men were drafted into the war effort at sea. By the end of hostilities, more than 3,000 trawlers had been co-opted for work as minesweepers along the coastline of North East England. This was not the only mass mobilisation on the home front in Hull. Many hundreds of women and non-combatant men contributed to the war effort by rallying support for the troops on the front, raising money for those injured and providing support for those home on leave.

Hull was the most severely damaged British city or town during the Second World War, with 95 percent of houses damaged. It was under air raid alert for 1,000 hours and was the target of the first daylight raid of the war and the last piloted air raid on Britain. Of a population of approximately 320,000 at the beginning of the war, approximately 152,000 were made homeless as a result of bomb destruction or damage. Overall almost 1,200 people were killed and 3,000 injured by air raids. More than 5,000 houses and half of the city centre were destroyed. Despite the damage the port continued to function throughout the war.

The city was rebuilt in a piecemeal fashion in the post-war period. A grand scheme, the “Abercrombie Plan”, was commissioned from Edwin Lutyens and Patrick Abercrombie but not carried out, well-connected voices ensuring the money was spent elsewhere. Several sites were still awaiting redevelopment in the 1980s. Hessle Road’s decline since the death of the fishing industry was halted gradually by a series of ‘prime-site’ development schemes, not all of them living up to their early promise.

**Whaling**

The first whaling ship left Hull in 1598 just after Greenland had been discovered. In those days the walrus and whales were caught and then taken to a beach where the blubber was cut off the carcass and melted down in big pots to reduce it to oil which was put in barrels and then floated out to the whalers anchored in the bays. In 1618 Jan Mayen Island, south of Svalbard was granted as the fishing ground solely for the use of Hull Corporation.

Hull’s part in the whaling fishery declined in the 17th century during the English Civil war. By the first half of the 18th Century things were once again starting to pick up when the Government gave a bounty for whaling ships. This was 20/- per ton of the whaling ship so even if the whaling trip was unsuccessful some of the expenses would be paid so making the risk much more acceptable. The Government also placed a duty on imported whale oil and baleen so making British whaling more competitive. Greenland was now the principal area in which whaling took place.

The ships used were wooden commercial vessels which normally would be crewed by about twelve crew but when whaling this would rise to over 50. Ships needed to be over 200 tons to carry enough stores out and cargo back and to house enough whaling boats, but if over 400 tons the vessel would be too expensive to fit out. To withstand ice the hulls were doubled in thickness with the addition of extra timbers externally and internally. Large beams were fitted from side to side of the vessel to prevent crushing stresses.
Once whales were sighted the small boats would be launched each with a crew of about eight. They would be rowed or sailed to get close to the whales where the harpoons were propelled into the whale. This was not to kill it outright. The idea was to stay in contact with the whale whilst it dived and tried to escape. Lines attached to the harpoon kept the boat in contact with the whale. Eventually the whale would tire and come to the surface. The dangerous part of the operation then occurred as the boat had to go close to the whale and try to kill it by lancing between its ribs to try to find its heart. The boats then had to tow the whale to the mother ship.

The principal species hunted was the Bowhead whale, approximately 20 metres long and weighing 120 tons. They were called Greenland Right whales as they were considered the right whale to catch as it was comparatively slow moving and not of an aggressive nature. It also had good quantities of blubber and baleen sheets.

By the 1800s Hull ships had about 40% of the whale trade and employed 2000 men. The whale oil was in great demand for lamp oil and for oiling machinery. The baleen was tough and flexible with a multitude of uses, such as umbrella struts and corset stays. The River Hull was busy with the processing of this cargo. Once the whaling had moved to Greenland the rendering of the blubber had moved from on shore to on boat. The whales were held alongside and the blubber cut off. Pieces were then placed in big pots that were heated to extract the oil. The baleen was cut out and roughly cleaned off and stored aboard. The rest of the carcass was cast adrift.

The high point of the Hull trade occurred in 1820 when 62 ships set out from Hull and returned with the products of 688 whales that brought in about £250,000. The stench of these ships would have been overpowering and the whale processing factories were distanced from 'well to do' housing. In Hull the Greenland Yards were up the river near to where the Whalebone pub is found today.

In 1821 nine vessels were crushed in the ice and investors withdrew so a third of the remaining fleet was withdrawn. In 1822 a further six vessels were lost and eight returned with no catch at all. Then the Government bounty was withdrawn so removing a further incentive. The advancement in science and the discovery of the uses of mineral and vegetable oil meant that the market also reduced for the whale products. In 1868 two vessels left Hull for whaling operations. These had been fitted with ancillary steam propulsion to make them more economic. They were the ‘Truelove’ and the ‘Diana’. This was the last time vessels set out and in 1869 'Diana' was lost in a gale near the mouth of the Humber at Donna Nook, 13 men dying, including the ship’s captain.

The history of whaling from Hull is well represented at the Hull Maritime Museum with exhibits regarding its history. There are models of the ships and weapons and instruments as well as skeletons of whales and dolphins and a world renowned collection of scrimshaw, an art performed by the crews of whale ships in their spare time on whale teeth, tusks and bones. A wonderful old museum, untouched by modern display techniques in most museums, if fact it should be in a museum itself!

The Yorkshire Journal

8
Scrimshaw

Where did the word “Scrimshaw” actually come from? It was probably derived from a Dutch or English nautical slang expression meaning “to waste time.” In other words, anything a seaman made in his off duty hours, when there was nothing else important to do on the ship was “Scrimshaw” Whaling voyages could last 3, 4, or 5 years, and several weeks or even months might pass between whale sightings. Without something to occupy their time the seamen may well have gone crazy in the cramped quarters and poor living conditions aboard these ships.

![Left: A good example of an Antique engraving of a whale’s tooth. It is very highly polished and shows a ship. In the collection of the Hull Maritime Museum](image)

Today, when people hear the word Scrimshaw, more often than not they think of the images cut or scratched into ivory or other materials to produce a picture, however, there were a number of other things that were produced aboard whaling ships that were also considered Scrimshaw. There were the hinges, latches and other whale bone and ivory fittings. Seamen would also use the whale’s teeth and bones to carve into umbrella and cane handles, animal figures, corset busks, various tools and tool handles, etc. Some seamen made small wooden boxes referred to as “Ditty Boxes” which were also considered Scrimshaw. The box might have ivory inlays and perhaps the sailor would trade some of his work for a piece of carved whalebone to fit into the top of the box. A wide variety of other useful or decorative items were also considered Scrimshaw, however, it was and still is the ivory whale’s teeth with pictures engraved on them that are the most sought after form of Scrimshaw.

In their natural form the ivory whales’ teeth had ridges and other imperfections that had to be removed before the engraving work could commence, the sailors removed the imperfections by first scraping them with a knife, then smoothing the surface to be Scrimshawed with sharkskin or pumice, the last step was to polish them to a high gloss finish with a cloth.

![Right: A collection of Scrimshaw on display in the Hull Maritime Museum](image)

On the whaling ships the Scrimshaw engravings were done with a pocket knife or, if the whaler was lucky, he might get a discarded needle from the ship’s sail maker. With the knife or needle the sailor would cut and/or scratch a picture into the polished surface. During the engraving process the sailor would rub a pigment into the cuts and scratches. As ink wasn’t readily available they would improvise with soot, lampblack or tobacco juice. A broad range of subjects were depicted on the whale teeth but the most common were portraits of the ship they were sailing on, portraits of wives or sweethearts back home, all kinds of sea creatures, mermaids and more. These items could be sold back at port to supplement the whalers’ often meagre incomes, or simply given to family or friends as keepsakes.
The cream telephone boxes

The beloved old red telephone boxes are a powerful symbol of Great Britain in the tourist brochures. Not so long ago early morning deliveries of glass pint bottles of milk to most households held similar pride of place. With BT’s recent announcement to scrap most of their telephone boxes, and the inexorable rise of mobile telephones red phone boxes might soon become a rare sight indeed.

Once again Hull is well ahead of the game, here red telephone boxes have always been as rare as hen’s teeth. That is because they are painted cream. And they don’t belong to BT either.

Why? Well this all dates back over a hundred years when the first telephone networks were constructed. In 1899 the Telegraph Act was passed, allowing local authorities to set up their own telephone systems to compete with the National Telephone Company (NTC) in rapidly expanding urban areas. 13 councils applied for a licence to do just this, Hull being one of them, and in 1904 opened their first exchange at Trippett Street Baths.

In 1911 the postmaster general bought out the NTC. Three years later Hull’s licence expired and could only be renewed if the council agreed to buy all nine National Telephone exchanges and infrastructure. They agreed to do so, at a cost of nearly £200,000. They were now the last municipally owned telephone system.

The next landmark was in 1936 when Sir Giles Gilbert Scott designed the famous K6 telephone box. This was installed nationally in its thousands, the first red phone boxes to be built extensively outside London. Hull installed the K6 too – but omitted the crown from the door and painted them cream. Why they should have chosen cream I have not been able to discover – probably just because they could.

The network suffered extensive damage in the war, but engineers worked the clock round to maintain services. In 1952 Hull introduced a “Call Father Christmas” service. The hopeful 20,000 callers must have been satisfied (or stubborn) as there were 35,000 calls in 1953. Other recorded information services followed, such as Bedtime Stories and Telechef (a popular service starting with meat loaf and adding ever more exotic recipes over the decades). Needless to say the Post office eventually caught on to the idea.

In 1964, the diamond Jubilee, a modern new central exchange and head office opened in Carr Lane. In 1987 legal experts concluded that the complex financial methods the council used to finance updates to the telephone service were probably illegal, and as a result the telephone department was transformed into a limited company, Kingston Communications (Hull) Plc on January 1st 1988. In the same year the network became the first fully digital network in Europe, and in 1998 KC launched the first commercial “fast internet” service in Europe.

In 1999 Kingston Communications was partially floated on the stock exchange. 50,000 people in Hull bought shares while the council retained a 41% stake in the company, a move that raised £257m for the council, making it one of the richest local authorities in Britain. The cash raised has been used on building projects such as a new sports stadium and a hi-tech aquarium called The Deep. Most of the Hull investors were extremely happy as shares in Kingston rocketed from their flotation price of 225p to a height of £15. Those who retained them longer were not so happy as they dropped like a stone with the bursting of the dotcom bubble and were below 50p in 2002 – they haven’t increased much since, then being 70p when the council decided to sell its remaining 157.5 million shares.

Today KC remains active and competitive, continuing to roll out ultrafast “lightstream” broadband. And the telephone boxes remain cream – except for the ones painted pink, or yellow and black!
Philip Larkin

You could say that Philip Larkin was destined to live in Hull, the city with which he will always be linked. Insular, complex, outspoken, contradictory, talented are adjectives that apply to both. He arrived there in 1955 at the age of 33, taking up the post of head librarian at the university, a position he would hold until his death 30 years later.

Philip was born in Coventry on the 9 August 1922 to Sidney and Eva, their only son. Sidney was a self-made man, rising to the position of city treasurer of Coventry, and the family enjoyed a comfortable middle-class lifestyle. It was not a particularly successful marriage, Sidney being increasingly difficult to live with as he aged and became profoundly disillusioned with life. This, together with his love of literature, had a profound effect upon his son’s character. After marrying Sydney, Eva became timid and nervous, seemingly dominated by her husband, increasingly self-pitying. It is very likely that his parents’ relationship was one of the chief factors in his relationships with women in later life – as well as producing one of his best known poems, This Be The Verse

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
They may not mean to, but they do.
They fill you with the faults they had
And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn
By fools in old-style hats and coats,
Who half the time were soppy-stern
And half at one another’s throats.

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
And don’t have any kids yourself.

Above: Philip Larkin a leading poet, 9 August 1922 - 2 December 1985, he died aged 63

Until the age of 8 Philip was educated at home by his mother and sister Kitty, 10 years his senior. His parents were delighted when he passed the entrance exam at King Henry VIII School, Coventry. He made only moderate progress academically, and was asked to repeat the year at age 12. This improved matters and he was often first in English, but poor results in languages, mathematics and science were the counterweight and there was some doubt as to whether he would pass the School Certificate. He did scrape through to join the Arts sixth form, where his performance improved dramatically, first in English and History, and third in French, German and Latin. He made several close friendships with pupils of varying social strata, and attitudes to authority. He became fascinated by jazz, and persuaded his father to buy him a saxophone and a drum kit.

In 1940 Philip passed his entrance exams to read English at St John’s College, Oxford, commencing in October – a year after the outbreak of war. This had a profound impact on University life, many potential students having already enrolled in the armed forces, and the remainder expecting a call up at any time. There was another factor at work for Philip, his father was a convinced Nazi supporter, having attended rallies in Germany before the war, and having taken his family on holiday there. Fortunately Philip was not in sympathy with his father in this field, as he was in his liking for beer and dislike of religion. In December 1941 he was sent for a medical examination prior to being called up. He was rejected because of poor eyesight, and was therefore able to complete the full 3 year degree course, graduating in 1943 with a first-class degree, much to his surprise.

Like many students little of his time was devoted to academic studies, hence the surprise. He was a popular student and made several good friends, almost all of them male. With the opposite sex he was shy and diffident, though he was attracted to Penelope Scott-Stokes, his first muse. Their relationship is unclear, but it seems that the rejection of his advances provoked him to write several poems inspired by her.
At Oxford he began writing in earnest, both poetry and prose, and, together with his colleague Kingsley Amis, formed a group called “the seven” who met regularly to criticize one another’s work, listen to Jazz and drink copious quantities of beer. He had some success with his poetry, having several poems published. His style at this time was heavily influenced by Eliot and Yeats. Prose was much more difficult, and, perhaps perversely, he felt that it was the greater art, and continued to work at it, producing several short works for discussion by “the seven”.

In 1943 Philip’s prose took an unexpected direction as he began to explore female styles, and devoted much time to writing girls’ school fiction under the pseudonym of Brunette Colman. It is difficult to understand why a 20-year old in a time of war should do this. Perhaps it was simple escapism. Also Oxford was very much now dominated by female students. At Philip’s final examinations there were 6 men out of almost 100 candidates. Trouble at Willow Gables and Michaelmas Term at St Brides were finally published in 2012. Philip also started work on a more serious novel, Jill, and after graduation he returned home to Coventry to continue working on it.

Job applications to the Civil Service and the Foreign office were rejected and a polite enquiry 3 months later from the Ministry of Labour asking what he was doing exactly prompted a quick search of the situations vacant pages of the Birmingham Post resulting in an application for a librarian in Wellington, Shropshire. The die was cast.

In December 1943 he took up the post. He found the work tedious, but it gave him time to continue his writing. He quickly showed he had an aptitude for the job, started studying for membership of the Library Association and was soon busy making improvements, and was able to secure finances to redecorate the library and to extensively restock it, as well as to employ an assistant. He was always ready to give advice to customers, and found an admirer in 16 year old academically-inclined Ruth Bowman. They soon spent time together outside the library, heedless of the wagging tongues in the small town, until Ruth left for King’s college London. It was while visiting her there that they became lovers. In 1945 his first poetry volume, The North Ship, was published. It attracted only one review, possibly written by the author himself!

In June 1946 he was appointed assistant librarian at Leicester University. Shortly afterwards he met Monica Jones, a new lecturer in the English department. She had been at Oxford at the same time as Philip and had also gained a first-class degree, but their paths had never crossed. They became friends in a relationship which was to develop and endure in the future. Over the next four years he made several unsuccessful job applications before he was appointed sub-librarian at The Queen’s University of Belfast in June 1950, to commence in September. During these 3 months his relationship with Ruth finally broke up as he and Monica embarked on the sexual phase of theirs.

While at Leicester Philip’s two novels, Jill and A Girl in Winter were published, but were not successful. While they contain passages of excellent writing and in many ways anticipated the wave of new novels of the 1950s, his principal characters lacked conviction and a sense of purpose. He spent many months attempting a third novel, starting and rejecting three drafts, but finally had to concede that he was not going to make a career as a novelist.

Philip’s five years in Belfast were probably the happiest period of his life, and they marked his growing maturity as a poet. He privately published just 100 copies called XX Poems, had a number of poems in the 1953 Pen anthology and in 1955 The Less Deceived was published. It was this collection that would be the foundation of his reputation as one of the foremost figures in 20th Century poetry. His love life blossomed too. Admittedly with Monica distance meant that it was largely conducted through a lively exchange of letters, but they took several holidays together.

Right: Philip Larkin’s second-floor flat overlooking Pearson Park in Hull he rented this flat from 1956 to 1974
He also enjoyed a passionate and satisfying affair with a married woman, Patsy Strang and developed a platonic relationship with Winifred Arnott, a colleague from the library. Kingsley Amis was writing *Lucky Jim* at this time, and Philip gave him a lot of advice about the construction of the book, and later suggested a number of changes and refinements to a late draft. Its runaway success must have been a bittersweet experience for Philip.

In 1955 Philip was appointed University Librarian at the University of Hull, a position he held until his death 30 years later. Plans for a new university library had already been drawn up so he had to work quickly to ensure they represented the best way forward. He identified a number of modifications and improvements, all of which were agreed. It must be said that his first impressions of Hull were not very positive. In a letter he said: “I’m settling down in Hull all right. Every day I sink a little further.” In other letters he complained that Hull was “fish smelling”; “a dump”. But the comment: “I wish I could think of just one nice thing to tell you about Hull – oh yes, well, it’s very nice and flat for cycling” was certainly damning with faint praise.

Returning from a visit to Monica, he wrote to her:

Dearest,

Back to this dreary dump,
East Riding's dirty rump,
Enough to make one jump
Into the Humber -
God! What a place to be:
How it depresses me;
Must I stay on and see
Years without number?

A poem not intended for general publication! Probably much of this negativity was light-hearted banter, and once he found a comfortable flat after unsatisfactory short term lodgings he began to see things in a much more positive light. Subsequently he composed another poem about Hull which showed it in a very different light. It was simply called *Here* and remains one of his best-loved pieces – especially in Hull.

Swerving east, from rich industrial shadows
And traffic all night north; swerving through fields
Too thin and thistled to be called meadows,
And now and then a harsh-named halt, that shields
Workmen at dawn; swerving to solitude
Of skies and scarecrows, haystacks, hares and pheasants,
And the widening river's slow presence,
The piled gold clouds, the shining gull-marked mud,

Gathers to the surprise of a large town:
Here domes and statues, spires and cranes cluster
Beside grain-scattered streets, barge-crowded water,
And residents from raw estates, brought down
The dead straight miles by stealing flat-faced trolleys,
Push through plate-glass swing doors to their desires –
Cheap suits, red kitchen-ware, sharp shoes, iced lollies,
Electric mixers, toasters, washers, driers –

A cut-price crowd, urban yet simple, dwelling
Where only salesmen and relations come
Within a terminate and fishy-smelling
Pastoral of ships up streets, the slave museum,
Tattoo-shops, consulates, grim head-scarfed wives;
And out beyond its mortgaged half-built edges
Fast-shadowed wheat-fields, running high as hedges,
Isolate villages, where removed lives

The Yorkshire Journal 13
Loneliness clarifies. Here silence stands
Like heat. Here leaves unnoticed thicken,
Hidden weeds flower, neglected waters quicken,
Luminously-peopled air ascends;
And past the poppies bluish neutral distance
Ends the land suddenly beyond a beach
Of shapes and shingle. Here is unfenced existence:
Facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach.

Philip was a great success as a librarian in Hull, and was a great asset to the University. He was highly competent as an administrator, committee man and arbitrator. He treated his staff well, and he motivated them, using a combination of efficiency, high standards, humour and compassion. From 1957 onwards Larkin's secretary was Betty Mackereth, she came to know as much about Larkin's public and private life as anyone. During his 30 years there, the library’s stock increased by a factor of six, and the budget increased from £4,500 to £448,500. Philip encouraged his staff to take the Library Association examination, offering to coach them at lunchtime. Six signed up, and dropped out one by one for various reasons until only Maeve Brennan, a local 30-year old, single woman, actually took the exam in December 1960. To celebrate Philip took her out for dinner at the White House, the best restaurant in Hull. They were both attracted to one another and a romantic relationship started which was to endure for another 18 years, but Maeve was a strict Catholic, and could not countenance pre-marital sex.

Philip’s father had died in 1948, and his mother Eva became increasingly dependant upon Philip and his sister Kitty. In 1951 she moved to Loughborough from the family home in Coventry to be near Kitty, living alone there until moving to a nursing home in 1972 for the remainder of her life. She always hoped that she would be able to live with Philip, whom she adored. Philip visited frequently and wrote long letters to her twice a week – over 4,000 in all.

For most of the rest of his life Philip had to cope with intense relationships with three women, Monica, Maeve and his mother. Both Monica and Maeve wanted to marry him, but Philip had a dread of being tied down and losing his independence. Deep down he feared that it would stifle his creativity. Monica was his intellectual equal, a willing sexual partner, and shared his love of a coarse vocabulary and juvenile sexual humour. Maeve was an attractive and bright companion, with whom he was in love. On the surface this arrangement seems cold and calculating, the best of both worlds as it were, but nearer to the truth is Philip’s kindness and extreme loyalty – he couldn’t face hurting either woman by terminating the relationship.

Right: Philip Larkin outside Hull University where he worked as a librarian. He describes the city as ‘very nice and flat for cycling’

In his time at Oxford one of his fellow undergraduates, Robert Conquest, had introduced Philip to pornography, mainly in the form of girly magazines. Throughout his life Philip continued to subscribe, building up a large collection (which was efficiently removed and destroyed after his death). In 1958 he received a letter on Vice Squad headed notepaper saying that his name and address had been found on a pornographic publisher’s mailing list and legal action would be taken against subscribers. Philip was panic-stricken, he had visions of his name and photograph in the News of the World, losing his job, even going to prison. He contacted his solicitor about the legal position before Robert Conquest revealed that it was all a practical joke! Amazingly Philip ruefully appreciated the prank and remained on good terms with Robert. A major collection of poems, The Whitsun Weddings, was published in 1964, cementing his reputation as a major poet. He was the subject of an episode of the arts programme Monitor. The programme showed him being interviewed by fellow poet John Betjeman in a series of locations in and around Hull.
After the completion of the second phase of the library expansion in 1969 the library staff increased considerably, as did the number of students in the University. At this time student militancy was at its peak, sit-ins were rife, attitudes of students using the library changed, in Philip’s opinion, much for the worse. The large staff meant that Philip’s role was much more that of an administrator, distancing him from the staff, and inflating his workload. He was also increasingly in demand as a famous poet.

He had traded in his trusty bicycle for a car in 1964, and his alcohol intake had increased considerably, resulting in a large weight gain. He was becoming increasingly deaf. He was, quite simply, overworked. He needed a break. It came in the shape of a request from the OUP in 1966 to edit a new version of the 1936 Oxford Book of Modern Verse. After working on this for 4 years he asked for leave of absence from Hull so that he could utilise the Bodleian Library in Oxford. He was awarded a Visiting Fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford, for two academic terms. This was no easy task, but it did give him a much-needed break from the stresses at Hull. Yeats’ 1936 edition was by then well out of date, and was in any case generally acknowledged to be biased. Philip insisted on a change of title to The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse. Poetry being subjective everyone has their own opinion of which poems are important, so he knew that he was certain to ruffle a lot of academic feathers, whatever his choice. Privately he held strong opinions about certain poets, but strove to put these aside in his selection. The anthology was published in 1973 and was, on the whole, well received, particularly by Auden and John Betjeman. 43,000 copies were printed that year, huge for a book of poetry. Philip’s financial position was now secure.

In the period from 1973 to 1974 he became an Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, and was awarded honorary degrees by Warwick, St Andrews and Sussex universities. In 1976 he appeared on BBC’s Desert Island Discs, which he found a daunting experience. The programme is still available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p009n0l8. His final poetry collection, High Windows, was published by Faber and Faber in 1974.

Despite increased recognition for his work Philip became increasingly depressed. He was convinced that he would die in 64th year, as his father had done, and his thoughts were increasing dominated by mortality. In one conversation on the subject Maeve commented that he was absolutely right, he would die at 63, he was programming himself to do just that. He was still eating and drinking far too much. What concerned him most was that his creativity had almost dried up. He was never a prolific poet, every poem went through a long process of revision in his immaculately kept and dated workbooks. He asked several times for early retirement, but was always turned down; he was far too valuable to the University as an outstanding librarian and an asset as an internationally known public figure.

His personal life became even more complicated when he suddenly started a secret affair with Betty Mackereth, his secretary for 28 years, his poem “We met at the end of the party” being dedicated to her. His mother, Eva, finally died in 1977, leaving Philip with regrets that he could not have done more for her. Uncharacteristically Philip brutally ended his relationship with Maeve, leaving her hurt and humiliated. Monica had managed to take early retirement, intending to live in her holiday cottage in Northumberland. In 1983, she stayed with Philip after a severe attack of shingles, and stayed with him until his death.

After the death of John Betjeman in July 1984, Philip was offered the post of Poet Laureate. The offer came too late for him and he declined. The following year Larkin was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer. On 11 June 1985 he underwent surgery, but his cancer was found to have spread and was inoperable. He died four days later, on 2 December 1985, at the age of 63, just as he had predicted, and was buried at Cottingham cemetery. His plain white headstone reads “Philip Larkin 1922–1985 Writer”, Monica’s choice of words. Monica’s grave is in the same row, as is Maeve’s.

Despite controversy about his personal life and opinions, Larkin remains one of Britain's most popular poets. In 2003, almost two decades after his death, Larkin was chosen as “the nation's best-loved poet” in a survey by the Poetry Book Society, and in 2008 The Times named Larkin as the greatest British post-war writer. Three of his poems, “This Be The Verse”, “The Whitsun Weddings” and “An Arundel Tomb”, featured in the Nation’s Top 100 Poems as voted for by viewers of the BBC’s Bookworm in 1995. In June 2015 it was announced that Larkin would be honoured with a floor stone memorial at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

The Yorkshire Journal 15
A statue of Philip was unveiled on the concourse of Hull station, marking the 25th anniversary of his death. The bronze statue, showing him clutching a trilby hat whilst rushing for the train, stands seven feet tall. There is an official Larkin Trail, linking all the important places he is associated with, in the city centre and beyond. The 2017 Year of Culture had an exhibition featuring his love of music, unseen letters, photography and personal possessions.

Left: Philip Larkin’s statue at Hull Paragon Station

This excellent work was commissioned to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Philip Larkin’s death and was unveiled by its sculptor Martin Jennings

The text in Larkin’s shadow reads: “PHILIP LARKIN POET AND LIBRARIAN 1922 – 1985” beneath is the opening line of his 1964 poem The Whitsun Weddings “That Whitsun I was late getting away”, this is one of his longer poems

Most importantly he is still remembered and loved by many of Hull’s citizens. He may never have been given the official freedom of the city, but I think it is fair to say that he is regarded a naturalised “Cod Head”. And his most quoted poem, surely it has to be Annus Mirabilis?

Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(which was rather late for me) -
Between the end of the "Chatterley" ban
And the Beatles' first LP.

Up to then there'd only been
A sort of bargaining,
A wrangle for the ring,
A shame that started at sixteen
And spread to everything.

Then all at once the quarrel sank:
Everyone felt the same,
And every life became
A brilliant breaking of the bank,
A quite unlosable game.

So life was never better than
In nineteen sixty-three
(Though just too late for me) -
Between the end of the "Chatterley" ban
And the Beatles' first LP.
William Wilberforce

With contributions by Margaret Mills

William Wilberforce had a long Yorkshire pedigree, stretching back to ancestors in the small town of Wilberfoss, near York, in the reign of Henry II, and quite possibly further back to 1066. William and Robert were the favoured names in the family and it was another William, his grandfather who came to Hull early in the eighteenth century to make his fortune. His journey to Hull was short, his family having been prosperous farmers in the Yorkshire Wolds, and within a short time he was elected mayor. He married Sarah Thornton, a daughter of another wealthy trading family, and they had two sons, duly named William and Robert.

Left: William Wilberforce by John Rising, 1790, pictured at the age of 29. This portrait depicts Wilberforce at the time that the campaign against the slave trade was gathering momentum.

William, the future politician, was born in the family home on the High Street on 24 August 1759, being the only son of Robert, whose brother remained childless. He therefore became the heir to a large fortune gained in trade with the Baltic. He was a small and sickly child, with weak eyesight, and it was doubtful if he would survive. His parents elected not to send him to a private school, perhaps on account of his poor health, and neither was he educated at home. Instead he walked the short distance daily to Hull Grammar School. Eighteenth-century Grammar Schools varied enormously in educational standards, but here William was to have a lucky break. A few months before William started there James Milner was appointed as the new head teacher. Fresh from Cambridge University he quickly proved that he was an excellent teacher, and the school’s reputation was established. William prospered under this regime, being a willing and able pupil. Alas, after two years his father and elder sister died, and his mother became unwell. He was sent to live with his aunt and uncle in London. They found a place for him in a boarding school in Putney, where the quality of education could only be described as indifferent. The consolation for William was that he was able to spend vacations at his uncle’s villa in Wimbledon – then a village of 1,000 inhabitants several miles from London. He got on well with his aunt and uncle, and quickly developed a passion for the countryside.

His aunt and uncle were converts to Methodism. Like many others they were weary of the increasingly corrupt Church of England and were sympathetic to the teachings of Wesley. They introduced William to their church, and the new religion fired his imagination. When his mother found out about this development she was appalled, and immediately had him brought back to Hull. This second upheaval, at the age of 12, was very disturbing for William. His disappointment was confounded when he discovered that his old teacher, James Milner, had also converted to Methodism, so there was no question of returning to the Grammar School. Instead his mother sent him to a boarding school in Pocklington, where he was kept away from the perceived evils of Methodism by the Rev. Kingsman Baskett. He remained here for 5 years, where he was not required to work very hard, before going up to St John’s College in Cambridge.

Cambridge University at that period was a very different proposition to today. Most of the students were there as preparation for a lucrative position in the church. William’s wealth enabled him to pay slightly higher fees to become a Fellow Commoner. For the extra fees such students could common (dine) at the Fellows’ table, and were exempt from many lectures and studies, and his tutors told him that he really did not need to bother with work! After a year of ignoring this advice William gave in and settled down to a life of socialising, doing just enough to pass the bi-annual examinations. As the end of his course neared he began to think about the future. Most of the options he quickly dismissed. He did not wish to go into the family business, which had been in the capable hands of the banker Abel Smith since his father’s death. The Church was out, his exposure to Methodism had ensured that. He had neither wish nor the financial need to enter a trade or profession.

The Yorkshire Journal 17
Instead he decided to become a Member of Parliament. He was popular, was good in front of an audience – and he lived in interesting times. The country was at war with America, big changes were in the offing, and there was a General Election coming up. Age or experience was no bar to becoming elected. Most electorates were small and easily buyable. Hull elected two MPs, so he declared his candidacy as an independent, paid out the money to transport and entertain electors and duly polled 1,126 votes, as many as his two rivals put together. It cost him the best part of £10,000. He took the oath at Westminster on the 30th October 1780.

He struck up a close friendship with William Pitt the younger, and, although remaining an independent, closely identified with his ideas. He quickly proved to be a skilful speaker in an unstable establishment. James Boswell commented, “I saw what seemed a mere shrimp mount upon the table; but as I listened, he grew, and grew, until the shrimp became a whale.”

Pitt became Prime Minister in December 1783, with Wilberforce a key supporter of his minority government. There is no record that Pitt offered Wilberforce a ministerial position in this or future governments. This could have been due to Wilberforce’s wish to remain an independent MP, retaining time for his other interests. Alternatively, Wilberforce’s frequent tardiness and disorganisation, as well as the chronic eye problems that at times made reading impossible, may have convinced Pitt that his friend was not suitable for the ministerial workload. When Parliament was dissolved in the spring of 1784, Wilberforce decided to stand as a candidate for the county of Yorkshire in the 1784 general election. Largely due to his outstanding speech at a meeting in York he was selected as a candidate by the Yorkshire Association. On 6 April, he was returned as MP for Yorkshire at the age of twenty-four.

Right: Portrait of William Pitt the Younger (1759-1806) who was Prime Minister for nineteen years. He considered that of all Politicians, Wilberforce had the greatest natural eloquence. He did not live to see the slave trade abolished.

In October 1784, Wilberforce set out upon a life-changing tour of Europe in the company of Isaac Milner, the brilliant younger brother of his former headmaster. On the journey they read The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul by Philip Doddridge, a leading early 18th-century English nonconformist. Wilberforce underwent an evangelical conversion, regretting his past life and resolving to commit his future life and work to the service of God. His conversion changed some of his habits, resigning from his gentlemen’s clubs, eschewing the theatre etc, but not his nature: he remained outwardly cheerful, interested and respectful.

At that time morals in London among the general population had sunk to a low level. Drunkenness, fuelled by cheap gin, was rife, as was prostitution and petty crime. A proclamation from the King to raise the moral tone fell upon deaf ears. Wilberforce approached his fellow MPs and social contacts with the intention of forming a “Proclamation Society” to promote practical measures to improve the situation. Whether this and other similar enterprises had any real effect is debatable, but the excesses of licentious public behaviour began gradually to decline, ultimately leading to the strict Victorian moral code.

In 1786 Wilberforce was asked by Sir Charles Middleton to propose the abolition of the slave trade in Parliament. This topic had first come seriously to his attention 3 years before when he met the Rev James Ramsay, who had been a medical supervisor in the slave plantations in the Leeward Isles. Ramsey briefly described the conditions the slaves were held in, and subsequently went on to write and publish a book on the topic in 1784. The slave trade was enormously important to the British economy, contributing almost 80% of foreign income so any attempts at legislation against it were sure to meet with strong commercial objections.

Wilberforce began to read widely on the subject, and in 1787 he first met Thomas Clarkson, who was gathering first-hand evidence on the slave trade. Their collaboration would endure for nearly half a century. William Pitt was sympathetic, and encouraged him to give notice of a motion on the slave trade to the House. Wilberforce was severely ill in January 1788 with what may have been ulcerative colitis, due probably to overwork, and was forced to convalesce for several months. Part of the treatment was a moderately high dose of opium taken 3 times daily, which continued for the rest of his lifetime. His addiction does not appear to have dulled his intellect in any way.
In May 1789 Wilberforce made his first speech to the House of Commons about the slave trade. He did not put forward a motion to end slavery in the British Empire, thinking that this was a step too far. Instead he proposed that the supply of slaves to the colonies be made illegal. He reasoned that this step would make the plantation owners treat slaves in a more civilised manner, and allow them to marry and produce offspring to provide a source of labour in the future. Wilberforce’s brilliant speech, together with many well-organised petitions to the house, alarmed the pro-slavery movement, who were reluctant to sacrifice their profits for a humanitarian cause. They proposed that the House of Commons should examine the evidence themselves. One of Wilberforce’s (many) failings was that he was too fair and unsuspicious, and, as his adversaries hoped, he agreed to this plan. The house began to hear evidence – but at a glacial pace, examining only a small percentage of the evidence by the end of the parliamentary session that year.

In January 1790 Wilberforce managed to secure an agreement that evidence could be examined by a small sub-committee, which speeded things up no end. Despite the interruption of a general election examination of the evidence was completed within a year and Wilberforce launched the first Parliamentary Bill to abolish the slave trade in a four hour speech in April 1791. However the French Revolution had taken place and war was imminent. Wars are expensive, so cutting off the lucrative slave trade was not politically acceptable. The Bill was defeated by 163 votes to 88.

By the following year public opinion was again moving towards abolition of the slave trade and a memorable debate took place in the House, Wilberforce being supported by speeches from William Pitt and Charles Fox. Alarmed at the possibility that the Bill might well be carried Lord Melville, the Home secretary put forward a proposal that it would be more realistic to gradually reduce the volume of trade over five years. This was carried by 230 votes to 65. But the compromise was in reality a mechanism to delay meaningful implementation indefinitely. The outbreak of war with France in 1795 ensured that parliamentary attention was almost exclusively concentrated on the threat of invasion and the national crisis.

Wilberforce was not deterred and continued to introduce Bills throughout the rest of the decade, attacking various aspects of the trade, trying to stop British ships supplying slaves to foreign domains, to reduce the number of slaves that could be carried on each ship to improve conditions. In the first years of the new century the climate again swung towards abolition, mainly because France resumed slavery in the French colonies, so opposition was no longer perceived as pro-French. In 1804 Wilberforce’s latest bill to abolish the slave trade successfully passed all its stages through the House of Commons, but it was too late in the parliamentary session to go to the Lords. In 1805 the bill was re-submitted, but this time was defeated in the Commons.

In 1806 a bill was successfully passed banning the participation of British subjects in the slave trade to the French colonies, largely eliminating the extensive practice of British ships sailing under flags of convenience to supply slaves to the colonies of countries Britain was at war with. Following Pitt’s death in 1806 there was a general election in the same year. Slavery featured as an election issue and more pro-abolitionist MPs returned to the House. Wilberforce was now working closely with the new Whig administration, and Lord Grenville took the unusual step of introducing an anti-slave trade Bill first in the House of Lords, where it would face most opposition. The Bill was passed by a large margin, and Charles Gray proposed a second reading of the Bill in the Commons in February 1807. Tributes were showered on Wilberforce as the Bill was passed by 283 votes to 6, and passed into law in March 1807. After nearly 20 years of campaigning this was perhaps Wilberforce’s finest hour.
Wilberforce refused to be defeated by the opposition he faced in passing the Abolition of the Slave Trade Bill. It took 18 years and countless defeats before it was finally made law in 1807. From that point onwards, British sea captains caught carrying slaves were fined £100 for every slave found on board.”

Alas this new law did not produce the benefits foreseen for the slaves. There was no noticeable improvement in their living conditions. Slaves continued to be supplied to British colonies, by countries which had not made the slave trade illegal. Britain had some success in limiting this by searching foreign ships intending to dock in the colonies. America too had abolished the slave trade in 1808, but foreign merchants frequently sailed under the American flag, knowing that Britain could not search the ships for fear of reprisals from America.

Wilberforce introduced a series of Bills to require the compulsory registration of slaves, which would allow illegally imported slaves to be detected. In 1816 he began, for the first time, to campaign for the abolition of slavery itself, which he believed must take place piecemeal. Overwork continued to take a toll on his health and in 1821 Thomas Buxton took over as leader of the campaign in Parliament, while Wilberforce remained the public figurehead. Resolutions for gradual abolition were rejected in the Commons in 1823 and 1824, but Wilberforce and the Anti-Slavery Society continued to campaign.

Ill-health drove Wilberforce to resign his seat in Parliament in 1826, declining a peerage, but he remained an active campaigner. The election of 1830 produced a more progressive government, and the 1832 slave revolt in Jamaica convinced them that abolition was the only way to prevent future riots. In July 1833 the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery was introduced, while commending Wilberforce for his work over the years. Wilberforce was now close to death, and on the 26th was told that the government had agreed compensation for the slave owners and that the bill was secured. Three days later he died, his life’s work accomplished. The following month the Lords passed the Slavery Abolition Act, abolishing slavery in the British Empire from 1834.
William Wilberforce will always be remembered for his enormous contribution in the abolition of slavery, but his other accomplishments are sometimes overlooked. His parliamentary career spanned 46 years, and during the entire time he remained an independent MP. From 1784 to 1812 he was one of two members representing Yorkshire, during which time he was diligent and attentive to the needs of his constituents, taking up many of their causes in the house, and communicating extensively with them. He was never offered ministerial appointments in the house, almost certainly because he was too independent to do so. He was usually loyal to the government, but had no hesitation in opposing it when he felt it necessary. Unlike most MPs, who only attended Westminster when there was business directly concerning their constituency, Wilberforce attended as much as he could, listening carefully to the speeches and debates before deciding which way to vote. He spoke on the vast majority of important subjects, as well as an extraordinary range of minor ones. When he spoke the house listened. As quoted in an obituary:

Mr Wilberforce possessed in perfection the two most essential attributes of popular declamation – the choicest flow of pure and glowing English, and the finest modulation of the sweet and powerful voice.

Driven by his unshakable faith he was unfailingly courteous to even his bitterest political foes – who not infrequently later became allies. His conversation sparkled, life was never boring when he was around. He was very loyal to his ever increasing number of friends and was a great family man, devoted to a wife, Barbara, who was certainly not his intellectual equal, and not a particularly competent housekeeper – but then he could never bring himself to dismiss a servant, no matter how old and infirm they became. They had six children, which brought them great joy.

Left: Barbara Spooner, in just eight days after their first meeting Wilberforce proposed marriage by letter, and Barbara accepted that same day, also by letter. They were married five weeks later. Theirs was a happy marriage that lasted till Wilberforce’s death thirty-six years later.

Sadly the eldest son, William, proved a great disappointment. He did not embrace his father’s religion, and spent his time at Cambridge drinking and gambling away a generous allowance. An attempt to become a barrister was quickly abandoned as he showed neither aptitude nor diligence. Farming was his next career, and having shown some promise looking after his father’s lands he was persuaded to invest in a dairy farm. His father supported this, borrowing heavily to raise the necessary capital. This enterprise was a total disaster, and within a relatively short time it was heavily in debt, amounting to £50,000. This was a huge sum, £4 million in today’s values. His father insisted on paying off the debts himself, which he could not do solely from his inheritance, itself much diminished over the years. He was therefore forced to sell his home in Highwood Hill, spending the rest of his life living with family and friends.

He is buried, at the insistence of his fellow parliamentarians, in Westminster Abbey. By burying him near to the graves of William Pitt and Charles Fox they made it abundantly clear that he ranked with the greatest parliamentarians of his time.

Right: The statue to William Wilberforce buried in Westminster Abbey next to William Pitt erected in 1840.
Wilberforce House is perhaps the most famous museum in Hull and is the birthplace of William Wilberforce, famous campaigner against the slave trade. The Hull Slave Museum was the first of its kind in the world, being established in 1906 on the first centenary of the abolition of the slave trade. The museum was closed in 2005 for a multi-million pound refit and reopened in 2007 transformed into a number of brilliantly lit rooms with educational interactive displays.

The museum tells the story of the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition, as well as dealing with contemporary slavery. The museum galleries also offer a fascinating glimpse into West African culture.

The permanent displays at Wilberforce House include journals and items that belonged to William Wilberforce, including original costume. There are many significant items linked to slavery and the campaign to abolish it.

Right: Statue of William Wilberforce outside the Wilberforce House Museum in 23 High Street, Hull
Left: This court dress frock coat and waistcoat was worn by William Wilberforce in London between around 1780 and 1830. The corded velvet is now very much faded to a green shade but was originally mauve.

Above: Model of 'Brookes' slave ship. It was based on an actual slave ship built in Liverpool in 1780-81 and co-owned by Joseph Brooks, a Liverpool Merchant. It was one of nine ships measured for the 1788 Parliamentary enquiry into the British slave trade. Two models of the ship were commissioned by the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson - this is the one he gave to William Wilberforce, MP for Hull. Wilberforce showed the model to Members in the House of Commons during the campaign to abolish the slave trade, using it as a visual aid to highlight the brutality of the Middle Passage. The ship was built to carry 451 people and the poster attached to the model (see page 20) shows the amount of space each individual would have. The overcrowding shocked everyone who saw it. Even more shocking is that records show that in 1783 the vessel carried more than 600 enslaved Africans across the Atlantic to the Americas. Photograph courtesy of Humber Museums Partnership

Left: These iron quoits were manufactured for the purpose of bartering them for slaves on the African coast.

Below: One of the brilliantly lit rooms with educational interactive displays.

Left: 18th century West African bronze figures of defending spirits.

Admission to Wilberforce House is free and it is open daily from 10 am and from 1.30 pm on Sundays.

The Yorkshire Journal 23
Ethel Leginska

You are probably thinking Ethel who? It probably won’t help I it tell you that she was born Ethel Liggins. Don’t worry if you are still in the dark, if you were to ask ten people at random in Hull city centre you would be lucky if more than one or two express a flicker of recognition.

Ethel Liggins was born on 13 April 1886 in Hull to Thomas and Annie Peck Liggins, a builder and a governess. She demonstrated a marked interest in music at a very early age; at only two years old she haunted the organ grinder on the street. Her father took her to the opera and marvelled that she did not go to sleep during the long performances. Her mother decided that her daughter should not go to regular school but be trained in what she liked most. A Royal Academy teacher in Hull who shared Annie Liggin’s views taught young Ethel in piano and theory. She made her first public appearance at the age of six and soon became known as a child prodigy in the city. She made her debut at the Queen’s Hall in London in 1896, with works by Mendelssohn, Bach and Beethoven. In mid-1897 with support from wealthy patron Mary Emma Wilson she entered the Hoch Conservatory of Music in Frankfurt, Germany, where she stayed for some years.

She also studied in Vienna in 1900 with Theodor Leschetizky. In 1902, at the age of 16, she made her solo recital debut in London. A renowned singer of the era, Lady Maud Warrender, suggested to her that she change her name to more Slavic-sounding “Leginska” to boost her professional career. At the time, Polish and Russian piano prodigies like Paderewski were very much in vogue. She then went on tour in Australia in 1905, and performed in Europe from 1906 on. She married an American, Roy Emerson Whittern, and in 1907, the following year, they had a child, Cedric. In 1909 Leginska suffered what would be the first of three nervous breakdowns in her life. She separated from Whittern in 1912 and resumed her career, making her American debut in New York’s Aeolian Hall on 20 January 1913. She earned favourable reviews for the performance and decided to base herself in the city.

Leginska was also seen as somewhat daring for wearing her hair in a bobbed style and eschewing the formal, bare shouldered evening gowns that were standard stage gear for women performers in the classical world at the time. Instead she favoured an imitation of a tuxedo—a black velvet jacket, slim skirt, and white shirt, her reasoning for this was that this was her uniform, just as the standard uniform for male performers was a dark suit, she did not wish to go to the expense of a large and fashionable wardrobe to look good — her music was what mattered. For the same reason she preferred to perform on a darkened stage with only the piano keyboard illuminated. Her career began to accelerate around 1915, and she gave sold-out performances of piano works from German composers, such as the concertos of J. S. Bach and Franz Schubert. She was an extremely popular artist and won praise from the press for her demanding programs, her magnetism as a performer, and her innovations—for example, playing an entire Chopin program without an intermission.

After an unsuccessful custody fight for her son Cedric, she became outspoken about inadequate opportunities for women. She often spoke publicly about the challenges faced by the few professional women of the time. She also urged women to move forward and break down artificial barriers. She was already doing so herself by writing her own compositions, which she began around 1914. To further her knowledge, she studied composition with Rubin Goldmark and Ernest Bloch, and the first of her works to be performed publicly was a String Quartet, inspired by four poems by an Indian poet, which premiered in Boston in April of 1921.
In 1923, Leginska went to London to study orchestral conducting with Eugene Aynsley Goossens. The following year she worked with Robert Heger, conductor of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich and conducted a performance of her orchestral suite Quatre sujets barbares. Furthering her career she used her status as a performer to obtain engagements as a guest conductor of European orchestras by promising to play as soloist. In 1925, she made her debut as a conductor in the United States with the New York Symphony Orchestra in the Carnegie Hall. She ended her performing career in 1926 and turned to conducting, composing and teaching.

In 1925 she founded the hundred-member Boston Philharmonic Orchestra, which was a mostly male group that offered accessible ticket prices to classical-music lovers for one short season. She then established the Women's Symphony Orchestra of Boston in 1926. It toured twice before it folded in 1930. In December of 1928 she conducted a National Opera Company performance of Rigoletto at the Boston Opera House. This was breaking new ground; it was unheard of for a woman to conduct at the time and it ignited a media debate; detractors argued that women did not possess the intellectual rigor to handle the complexities of the job.

Living in London and Paris during the late 1930s, she had some notable students there, and in 1939 settled in Los Angeles. Again, she enjoyed a reputation as an esteemed instructor in her field, and her students of note from this later part of her career included James Fields, Daniel Pollack, and Bruce Sutherland.

During the war in 1943, she founded the concert agency “New Ventures in Music” with the slogan: “Youth Works!” The agency organized concerts with the Little Symphony Orchestra, where her students improved their abilities. With the support of many musical personalities, her concerts were a great success.

Her composing career continued for the remainder of her life, her third and final opera, Joan of Arc being premiered at Los Angeles 10 May 1969. Ethel Leginska died in Los Angeles of a stroke on 26 February 1970, aged 83.

It is really surprising that the career of such an innovative and successful woman should have been almost forgotten, being especially ironic when so much effort is being put into research to illuminate the lives and works of previously forgotten composers who lived 200, 300 or 400 years ago. Fortunately there is a small collection of recordings, as well as a number of piano rolls she created early in her career. Sadly only a few of her compositions have been published. After her death the Leginska estate was left to the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, who then sold off all the manuscripts of her work at a private auction. Unbelievably no records were kept of the buyers with the result that the majority of her considerable output was lost to the music public.
Thomas Ferens

Thomas Robinson Ferens was born in New Shildon, near Bishop Auckland on May 4, 1847. His father George, “a humble and honest person”, owned a small mill, possibly at East Thickley. “In old age, Mr Ferens recalled the happy times spent swimming in the mill stream,” recalled a newspaper in Hull.

He was educated first in Shildon and then at the Belvedere Academy, in Bishop Auckland, leaving aged only 13. As a third son, he would have had to make his own way in life, and his first job was a clerk in Shildon, at the Stockton and Darlington Railway's mineral department. After six years he left home to be a clerk at Head, Wrightson and Company in Stockton, where he taught himself shorthand.

It was shorthand that provided him with his great opening. In 1868, he saw an advert for the post of shorthand and confidential clerk to James Reckitt, in Hull. He applied and was offered the £70-a-year job. Reckitt and Sons was already a successful firm when Ferens joined it, producing household wares such as starch, washing blue and black lead. It had been acquired by Isaac Reckitt, in 1840 and was then run by his sons, George, Francis and James. They were Quakers, and they ran their business in “a sternly moral style” that fitted in well with Ferens’ own strict nonconformist views.

Ferens thrived in this religious atmosphere of hard work and duty. He was industrious and forward-thinking; moving swiftly through the company's managerial ranks. In 1874 he became works manager with a share in profits; in 1879 secretary; in 1880 general manager. He joined the board of directors in 1888 when Reckitt and Sons became a private joint-stock company. When James Reckitt died, 36 years later, Ferens was named joint chairman.

In Hull, Ferens continued to teach in Sunday School, a practice he began during his time in Stockton. While teaching at the Brunswick Sunday School he met Ester Ellen (Ettie) Field, a fellow teacher and a wealthy merchant’s daughter. They married in 1873 and continued to teach at the Sunday School for the rest of their lives. They had no children.

In 1894 Ferens was appointed a Justice of the Peace. In 1911 he was made a Freeman of the City of Hull. He entered parliament as Liberal member for Hull East in 1906, serving until 1918. Not a frequent speaker his personal and religious convictions are evident in many of his parliamentary contributions, particularly regarding temperance. He was also a champion of women’s rights.

From the time he started work, Ferens gave 10% of his income to charity. His earnings increased quickly, in line with the growth of Reckitt and Sons, affording him the opportunity to make ever more generous donations. By 1920 he was distributing £47,000 out of his annual income of £50,000.

Generous bequests included land for municipal playing fields and a boating lake, support for the infirmary and £250,000 towards the foundation of a university college in the city. His generosity was not confined to Hull, for example in 1924 he donated £30,000 to extend the Kingswood School for Boys, Bath. A year later, an extension to Farringtons Girls School, Chislehurst, Kent, opened thanks to a donation of a similar amount. In the same year a new post-graduate Theological College, to which he had donated £17,000, was opened in Cambridge for the training of Wesleyan ministers.
Above: SKIN, exhibition of artworks by Lucian Freud, Ron Mueck, Edouard Manet and Spencer Tunick in the Ferens Art Gallery

In 1917 Ferens purchased the site of a former church, Saint John's, in Queen Victoria Square in Hull city centre. He gave the land to the city, and also donated shares in Reckitt and Sons worth £35,000 to be used to build an art gallery. A competition was held to design Hull’s latest structure. Out of an incredible 79 submissions, it was decided that architects S.N. Cooke and E.C. Davies would be awarded the contract. The construction finally commenced in 1926, the Prince of Wales laying the foundation stone. So the Ferens Art Gallery came into existence.

The original core collection included works of art Ferens had purchased himself – contemporary artists and more historic ones. He also set up the Ferens Endowment Fund for future purchases of art and this is a really remarkable resource which has allowed the collection to evolve and grow right up to the present day – giving the Gallery security rare in today’s harsh economic conditions.

The gallery re-opened in January 2017, after a £4.5 million makeover which has left it looking wonderful. As part of the City of Culture events it will host the Turner Prize 2017 from 26 September 2017 to 7 January 2018.

Left: The Ferens Art Gallery
Amy Johnson - Britain’s most famous aviatrix

A Yorkshire heroine whose Mysterious death may have been finally solved

By Sarah Harrison

Amy Johnson CBE, 1st July 1903 - 5th January 1941, was born in Kingston upon Hull. She is best remembered for being the first woman to fly solo from Britain, to Australia. She left Croydon, south London, on 5 May 1930, flying her ‘Jason’ Gipsy Moth and landed in Darwin, Australia on 24 May, an epic flight of 11,000 miles. Her aircraft can still be seen in the Science Museum, London.

Amy went on to set an England to Japan record in a Puss Moth with Jack Humphreys in July 1931. With her husband, Jim Mollison, a Scottish pilot who had, during a flight together, proposed to her only eight hours after they had met in 1932, she flew in a DH Dragon nonstop from Pendine Sands, South Wales, to the United States in 1933. They also flew nonstop in record time to India in 1934 in a DH Comet in the England to Australia air race. In 1938, Amy divorced Mollison and soon after reverted back to her maiden name.

After her commercial flying ended with the outbreak of World War II in 1939, Amy joined the Air Transport Auxiliary, a pool of experienced pilots who were ineligible for RAF service. Her flying duties consisted of ferrying aircraft from factory airstrips to RAF bases.

Last year marked the 75th anniversary of Amy Johnson’s tragic death in the Thames estuary and in his e-book Amy Johnson: Hessle Road Tomboy, author and local historian Dr Alec Gill gives an intriguing insight into her life and death.

The mystery of how Amy may have died

It was on one of these routine flights on 5 January 1941 when Amy was 37, she took off alone in thick, freezing fog from Blackpool airport. She was delivering a plane to RAF Kidlington airbase near Oxford, a simple 90 minute flight. Amy went off course by 100 miles and four and a half hours later it would appear that she ran out of fuel. Amy bailed out, her plane ditching into the perishing cold Thames estuary. On bailing out she was spotted parachuting into the icy waters and calling for help. A dramatic rescue attempt followed, as HMS Haslemere set out to rescue survivors. Although Amy was seen alive in the water, a rescue attempt failed and her body was never recovered. Amy was presumed drowned, a tragic and early end to the life of Britain's most famous woman pilot.
The truth is somewhat more complicated and new evidence may finally explain why her body was never found. Hull Historian Dr Alec Gill claims that Amy’s death was deliberately covered up after she was accidentally struck and killed by the blades of a ship’s propeller. Furthermore he says that “Amy had never parachuted from a plane in her life so why did she then? My view, and it’s only speculation, is that she simply ran out of petrol and crashed”.

He has based his admissions on the comments made by the son of an officer who was on board the HMS Haslemere, the ship sent to rescue Amy Johnson from the water. Harry Gould, 84, whose father, also called Harry, was a Naval reservist on HMS Haslemere. Harry says “the ship had hit a sandbank and was put in reverse to break free, many of the crew were trying to help Amy, but with the ship moving they could not reach her”. Harry’s father saw she was getting too close to the stern and shouted up to the bridge, telling them “to cut the engines because they were going the wrong way”, but they did not listen.

One of the officers shouted back, “Don’t you tell me what to do!” If they had listened to him Amy might have survived. A few seconds later she was dragged under the boat. Everyone thought she had been cut to pieces by the propellers and there was no inquest.

There is support for his story, hidden in the official report, from RAF clerk Derek Roberts, whose friend Cpl Bill Hall was also on HMS Haslemere. It reveals how Amy drifted near the ship, identified herself and complained the water was “bitterly cold” urging the crew to “get her out as soon possible”. They threw her a rope but she could not get hold of it. Then someone dashed up to the bridge and reversed the ship’s engines. As a result, she was drawn into the propeller and chopped to pieces. The ship’s captain, Lieutenant Commander Walter Fletcher dived into the icy water, with a rope tied around his waist, to search for her. He was pulled unconscious from the river and died of hypothermia later that day without ever telling of what or who he saw. He was awarded the Albert Medal for his courage.

It was largely accepted before Dr Gill’s research that Amy drowned in the dangerously cold waters of the estuary after bailing out in bad weather conditions. This ship should have gone down in history as the ship that saved Amy’s life. Instead, historians are beginning to conclude that the propellers of HMS Haslemere killed her and that is why her body was never found.

This is still speculation as without a body and the lack of Fletcher’s account there is no evidence and it is possible that the details of her death were deliberately covered up. The Royal Navy did not want to admit to the Royal Air Force, or indeed a nation at war, that they had killed Britain’s favourite female pilot.

Many theories have grown up surrounding her mysterious death. Why did an experienced pilot get lost on a flight that should have lasted only 90 minutes? One suggestion was that she was shot down by anti-aircraft guns after being mistaken for a German bomber. Another theory says she was on a secret mission. The truth of what happened will probably never be known.
Amy Johnson’s life in Hull

Throughout her life, Amy rarely acknowledged her Hull roots and Dr Gill believes the perceived stigma of her family’s industrial heritage was something she could not live with.

Amy Johnson’s grandfather set up a fish business, Andrew Johnson Knudtzon in Hull in 1881 that still survives to this day, not that its continued existence would have pleased the aviator. Amy Johnson was born and bred on Hessle Road but often seemed to be embarrassed by her past.

Dr Gill is convinced that a lot of that was down to the nature of the family business, rather than the reputation of Hessle Road. Andrew Johnson Knudtzon ran what was called a ‘cod farm’, which involved processing the cheapest cod landed at Hull docks by drying and salting it before selling it on in countries like Germany and South Africa.

It was hard work and the girls who worked in ‘cod farms’ were not held in high regard. Like a lot of industries there was a social pecking order and whilst net braiders and herring girls were respected, the ‘cod farm’ girls were the lowest of the low. Amy knew this and she was embarrassed by it, so embarrassed that she did not even invite her own parents to Buckingham Palace when she was awarded her CBE in August 1930, or even to her posh Mayfair wedding to fellow ‘Playboy Pilot’ Jim Mollison in May 1932. It was a humiliating slap for her father, Will when he read about it in the newspaper.

Dr Gill says: “I think Amy was on the run from Hull roots, rather than being driven by her love of flying and her eagerness to break flight records.” But there’s no doubt her enigmatic life and mysterious death still fuels fascination in her amazing achievements.

Last year a life-size bronze statue to honour Amy Johnson was unveiled on Herne Bay seafront close to where she was last seen alive. It marks the 75th anniversary of her tragic and untimely death on 5 January 1941. The statue was created by Ramsgate artist Stephen Melton.

Amy Johnson 75th anniversary of her death was the start of the festival in the city of Hull celebrating her life and record-breaking flights.
Above: Amy Johnson motorcade in Sydney 1930. Photo by Sam Hood

Below: A full-size model of the aircraft used by Amy Johnson to fly solo from Britain to Australia has gone on display at the city’s Paragon railway station. Inmates of Hull Prison created the Gipsy Moth plane over a six-month period as part of the Hull City of Culture 2017 programme. It will stay on display for the remainder of the year as a tribute to one of the leading innovators in female flight aviation. The original plane remains on display in the Science Museum, London after a request was refused to loan the aircraft for an Amy Johnson Festival in Hull.
The Waterson family

Something about folk music binds families together more tightly than other musical genres. Presumably it has much to do with the traditional passing down of folk songs through the generations, and also because most folk songs are traditionally sung unaccompanied, so no expensive musical instruments were needed. Remove the distracting modern distractions like television, game consoles and mobile phones – indeed why not remove electricity too – and it is easy to see that singing folk songs together as a family on dark winter’s nights has left a legacy of names like the Copper Family of Sussex, The Clancy Brothers, the Watersons…

Left: Mike Waterson, far left, with John Harrison and Lal and Norma Waterson

The Watersons of course come from Hull

They were one of the first and most influential folk groups of the English folk revival, achieving near superstar status in the UK. Their rich voices dazzled listeners while the traditional songs they introduced to a wider public, many passed down in their own family for generations, became part of the repertoire for a generation of British folk singers. They didn’t record many albums, but those they did are considered benchmark recordings. In 1972 Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy married, and the group evolved into Waterson: Carthy, a band that continues to perform the traditional songs while adding their own contemporary flair. Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy were both awarded O.B.E.s for their contribution to British traditional music in 2003, Carthy in 1998.

The original Waterson siblings were Norma, Mike, and Lal (Elaine). They are partly of Irish gipsy descent. Their parents died while they were still very young; their grandmother Eliza Ward, who was a traditional singer, raised them and taught them many of the songs they later sang professionally. She was a tough but kindly character who ran her own business as a second-hand goods dealer. They formed a group with their second cousin John Harrison called The Mariners, singing mainly jazz standards and skiffle tunes. Soon they changed the group name to The Folksons and concentrated on traditional folk material, performing in The Bluebell at the folk club Folk Union One, which they had founded. It was there that they developed their unique vocal style and changed their name to The Watersons. Many people considered them a hard core group of traditionalists, but they were all gifted and adventurous singers and arrangers. Their use of polyphonic harmony was unlike anything that had come before them, while the interplay of the solo voices set a high standard for other folk singers. They collected hundreds of songs from East Yorkshire and introduced them to the world at large.

In 1965 Topic, a new folk label, recorded five songs by The Watersons for New Voices (1965 Topic) a compilation of traditional songs, other artists being Harry Boardman and Maureen Craik. Frost and Fire: A Calendar of Ceremonial Folk Songs (1965 Topic), their first full album, set a new benchmark for folk albums. The songs describe a typical year in Britain, from winter to winter, using seasonal songs including ancient trick-or-treat songs that had been unheard for many years. The critics raved about it.
The group became stars on the folk circuit and cut two more albums, *The Watersons* (1966 Topic) and *A Yorkshire Garland* (1966 Topic), ballads from Hull and Yorkshire. Norma got a DJ job at a station on Montserrat, a British possession in the Caribbean, and the group broke up until 1972 when Norma came back to Hull and the group reformed with Martin Carthy who married Norma shortly thereafter. Martin was already a well known folksinger and songwriter and he brought his own knowledge of traditional material to the band. This line up made three stellar albums –

- *For Pence and Spicy Ale* (1975 Topic/1975 Shanachie US), which shows Martin’s input taking them in a more contemporary direction,
- *Sound, Sound Your Instruments of Joy* (1977 Topic) a collection of pre-Victorian hymns and carols and
- *Green Fields* (1981 Topic) which features group, solo and duet arrangements of songs of the English countryside.

Shortly afterwards Lal and Mike stopped performing publicly, except for occasional family reunion gigs, although several solo and duo recordings did appear including

- the rare *Bright Phoebus* (1972 Trailer) a folk rock outing by Lal and Mike,
- *A True Hearted Girl* (1977 Topic) by Lal, Norma and cousin Maria Waterson,
- the solo *Mike Waterson* (1977 Topic),
- *Norma Waterson* (Ryko/Hannibal 1996) a low key folk rock set with Richard Thompson on lead guitar,
- two by Lal and her son Oliver Knight, *Once in a Blue Moon* (1996 Topic) and

Lal never intended to be a singer, she disliked performing in public, despite being probably the most musically gifted in the family. She went to art school and trained as a painter and weaver, for seven years she worked as a heraldic artist painting coats of arms, and continued to paint through out her career. Her writing blossomed during The Watersons’ four-year “retirement” from 1968. Lal started turning her prolific output of poetry into song form. She died of cancer at the tragically young age of 55.

Norma and Martin Carthy, with their daughter Liza began performing as Waterson: Carthy in the early 90s. *Mighty River of Song* (2004 Topic) collects 90 songs from various stages of their career on four CDs and includes a DVD with a documentary of their early days on the road *Travelling for a Living*.

The Watersons still occasionally regroup, in various guises, for concerts in Hull, always to packed houses. The latest concert was in April this year, as part of the City of Culture celebrations, with Norma showing that she can still “sing like a nightingale”.

HULL TRUCK THEATRE, HULL2017 & BBC RADIO 3

**THE FIRST FAMILY OF ENGLISH FOLK**

**PART OF UPROOT**
**EXPLORING HULL’S RICH FOLK MUSIC TRADITIONS**

The Yorkshire Journal 33
The family (and friends) have grown in numbers over the years, and even Elisa Waterson cannot give a definitive list! However the following list shows the main principals.

**Elaine (Lal) Waterson**  
Sister of Mike and Norma Waterson; member of the Watersons, the Waterdaughters and Blue Murder until her death in 1998

**Mike Waterson**  
Brother of Lal and Norma Waterson; member of the Watersons and Blue Murder. Died in 1911

**Norma Waterson**  
Sister of Lal and Mike Waterson; member of the Watersons, the Waterdaughters, Waterson:Carthy and Blue Murder

**John Harrison**  
Second cousin to Lal, Mike and Norma Waterson; member of the Watersons until 1966

**Bernie Vickers**  
Member of the Watersons in 1972

**Martin Carthy**  
Husband of Norma Waterson; member of the Watersons since 1972 and of Waterson:Carthy

**Eliza Carthy**  
Daughter of Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy; member of Waterson:Carthy, the Waterdaughters and Blue Murder since 1994

**Lucy Carthy**  
Daughter of Norma Waterson and Martin Carthy; married to Saul Rose

**Saul Rose**  
Husband of Lucy Carthy and member of Waterson:Carthy from 1996 until 2000 and again since 2007

**Tim van Eyken**  
Not related to the Watersons; member of Waterson:Carthy from 2000 until May 2007

**Marry Waterson (Maria Gilhooley)**  
Daughter of Lal Waterson and George Knight; member of the Waterdaughters

**Oliver Knight**  
Son of Lal Waterson and George Knight; record producer and guitar player

**Rachel Straw**  
Daughter of Mike and Ann Waterson; member of Blue Murder I

**Sarah Waterson**  
Daughter of Mike and Ann Waterson

**Eleanor Waterson**  
Youngest daughter of Mike and Ann Waterson; sings on some of Eliza's and Waterson:Carthy's albums

**Chris Collins**  
Mike's sister-in-law; she wrote some songs together with Lal and Mike
David Mark

David Mark is the author of the acclaimed DS Aector McAvoy crime fiction series set in Hull. He may not quite be in the same league as Ian Rankin and Peter Robinson, but he runs them close. Once you start reading his books it is not easy to put them down until the last page has been turned – always the hallmark of a good storyteller. Where other police procedurals fall prey to the one-man myth of crime solving, Mark’s stories are grounded in teamwork and inner politics and the chaos of cooperation. In other words, the way things actually work. It helps, too, that his characters are vividly rendered. Perhaps his characters are a little too vividly rendered to be fully credible, but the crime depicted that they are combating is all too chillingly real. He was a crime journalist for the Yorkshire Post in Hull for 10 years, so the background is always authentic.

From early childhood he wanted to be a novelist. He read compulsively, getting through all Agatha Christie’s books by the time he was eleven, and on the tough Carlisle estate where he grew up (coupled with the fact he played the clarinet) that was like sticking a ‘kick me’ sticker on his back. Thankfully, he boxed too. As David said “asking somebody to hold your clarinet case before a street-corner scrap is a surreal experience”. He used to pause movies halfway through and see if he could write the ending. When his was better, his hopes of writing stories for a living were raised. But when his ending was worse, he would retreat to the shed and smash planks with a hammer. He was certainly an unusual child, moody, philosophical, over-analysing, obsessive, creative, and introverted.

He managed to talk his way into a job as a trainee journalist at the age of 17 in 1995. Even then journalism was only a means to an end, it was the closest career he could find to that of an author. After working for a year in Carlisle he had stints in various towns, including Nottingham, before arriving in Hull in 2000. He finished his first novel when he was 21, and sent it off to a number of agents. Nobody liked it. Undeterred and with four years of journalism under his belt, he wrote another. This was a bit better, but again, the agents said no. So he wrote a third, which one agent liked. Unfortunately the publishers the agent showed it to liked the writing, but said it was “too dark” to publish.

So he wrote yet another book, trying to keep the darkness to a minimum. What was more important was the story. The characters. The setting. This time he tried writing something people couldn’t put down. Imagination had never been a problem for David, but this time the cocktail of ideas gelled into a winning combination. His main character was Detective Sergeant Aector McAvoy; a giant, timid, humble Highlander, living and working on an elite crime squad in Hull, supported by Aector’s wife, a beautiful young gypsy, his boss, the uber-feminist Pharaoh, and his nemesis. In a flurry of activity and a sense that something important was happening, he scribbled it all down before it leaked away. The story came together in one evening with a notepad and a bottle of Jameson’s as what would become The Dark Winter. He knew this novel was different. It went to his agent, who failed to find a publisher. So David turned to one of the editors he’d got to know during the previous round of submissions, who gave him the name of somebody he thought would like it. And so Oli Munson at Blake Friedmann received an email from David Mark, beseeching him to take a look. He did. He liked it. He liked it a lot. And within a month there were several publishing houses bidding for it, and it was being snapped up in Italy, Germany, Greece, Turkey, and, America.

The Yorkshire Journal 35
David is frequently asked why his books are set in Hull. His initial answer usually goes along the lines of – well Oxford and Edinburgh have already been taken. The real reason is of course that he knows the city inside out. He has lived around the area for 17 years and was a journalist in the city for two-thirds of that time. To quote David:

*I can describe the buildings because I know them so well. I know that if you drive down Southcoates Lane with your windows down you will smell the cocoa from the chocolate factory. I know if you head for Wincolmlee to avoid the traffic on Beverley Road, the stink from the tanners will make your eyes water. I know that the car park at the shops on Victoria Dock looks like the surface of the moon thanks to some kind of weird erosion that you tend to get when you in-fill an old dock and cover it with houses. I know that if you pop into The George on Land of Green Ginger, you’ll get chatting with an old sailor who drinks rum-and-blackcurrant and who takes taxis back and forth between his favourite pubs, four miles apart, after every round. I know the sort of customer you will see in Bob Carver’s chippy at lunchtime and the sort who will clip-clop an extra mile to try and find a falafel and hummus wrap on Princes Avenue. I know Hull, and I know how to write it.*

Following the publication of “*The Dark Winter*” in 2012, five more novels have followed annually in the series. A total of 10 books are planned, with one to be released each year. The full sequence in chronological order is:

- *Dark Winter* (Aector McAvoy, #1, 2012)
- *Original Skin* (Aector McAvoy, #2, 2013)
- *Sorrow Bound* (Aector McAvoy, #3, 2014)
- *Taking Pity* (Aector McAvoy, #4, 2015)
- *Dead Pretty* (Aector McAvoy, #5, 2016)
- *A Bad Death* (Aector McAvoy, 2015; Short story)
- *Fire of Lies* (Aector McAvoy, 2016; Short story)
- *Cruel Mercy* (Aector McAvoy, #6, 2016)

While each novel is a complete story in its own right, it is much better to read the series in order of publication, as there are strong overall themes. The good news is that the first novel is currently available from **A****n for 99p as an e-book, or, if you prefer a real book it is not difficult to find an inexpensive second-hand copy, and your library probably has at least one copy.**

In 2014 David sold the TV rights of his McAvoy series to a major television company. As yet they have not taken up their option (as far as I am aware). In 2018, a stage adaptation of Dark Winter will receive its world premiere in Hull.

Most of us would be happy with this success, though I suspect that David has not quite made it big enough yet to secure his future. Top authors earn seriously good money – but those below superstar level receive only a fraction of this. David writes a lot. He only writes one new McAvoy novel per year because his publishers dictate that this is the optimum. One he has worked out the storyline he produces thousands of words each day and in the time that he is not writing, he is composing lines and conceiving new characters.
To make better use of this “downtime” on 21st September 2017 he will release his first historical novel, The Zealot’s Bones, under the name D.M.Mark. Hodder and Stoughton describe the book as follows:

A blockbuster historical novel from bestselling author David Mark - which will appeal to his fans as well as anyone who loves Ripper Street, The Suspicions of Mr Whicher, and Antonia Hodgson.

In 1849, Hull is a city forgotten and abandoned; in the grip of a cholera outbreak that sees its poorest citizens cut down by the cartload. Into this world of flame and grief comes Mesach Stone, a former soldier, lost upon his way. He's been hired as bodyguard by a Canadian academic hunting for the bones of the apostle Simon the Zealot, rumoured to lie somewhere in Lincolnshire. Stone can't see why ancient bones are of interest in a world full of them...but then a woman he briefly loved is killed. As he investigates he realises that she is just one of many... and that some deaths cry out for vengeance.

The last word on how the good folk of Hull feel about their city must go to Vicky Foster. Printing the words of her poem “Why I love where I live” in this journal really does not do the poem justice. To hear her recite it with a proper Hull accent go to http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p050830l

Above: Weeping Window, a cascade of ceramic poppies as part of Hall’s City of Culture. There are several thousand handmade ceramic poppies in the cascade, they are suspended on towering metal stalks. In the background is the iconic building (not Café Nero) of the Maritime museum. This sculpture was first seen at the Tower of London in 2014. Photo and caption by Andrew Simpson
Hull’s First Railway that developed into international shipping routes

By Stephen Riley

Hull is short for Kingston-Upon-Hull, Hull being a river that originates from springs in the north Yorkshire Wolds and runs into the River Humber. Kingston refers to the fact that King Edward I (known as Longshanks) acquired the lands in the area from the monks of Meaux Abbey in 1293. Their abbey was situated about 7 miles to the north of Hull and to export wool from their estates they built a shipping quay at the junction of the river Hull and Humber. Hull is not mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, according to the survey the area was ‘waste’. Later a small fishing settlement began to grow up along the river banks which developed into a small town around 1280 that consisted of some sixty houses, a gaol, a court-house and a church. This is what King Edward I bought and exchanged other lands for in 1293 with the monks of Meaux Abbey when he was looking for a port in the north-east of England.

Right: King Edward I, 1239 - 1307. Reign 1272 – 1307. After his death he became known as the Hammer of the Scots

In 1299 King Edward I granted by charter two markets to be held in Hull on Tuesdays and Fridays and the annual fair was extended to 30 days, showing its importance both as a town and place of trade. In April 1300 the King visited Hull to view his newly-created Borough of Hull. Thereafter Hull soon developed as a busy port and the title of ‘King’s Town upon the River Hull’ was created.

For many years prior to the king creating the medieval new town it could only be reached by water, no roads led to or from Hull. The only access overland was via the dangerous, and often impassable route, along the banks of the River Humber. It was not until much later that the king ordered roads to be built to link his new town with the neighbouring towns and hamlets such as Beverley. The problem with these early roads, is that they were often prone to flooding from the River Humber. This constant flooding over the centuries made the roads dangerous for travellers and required to have them constantly repaired. In the 1700s the area was drained several times to help improve the situation.

When the Turnpike Act was passed in 1745 roads were improved, stage coaches, carriages and carts began to be more frequent. A daily stage coach was established to run to Selby, in connection with coaches to Leeds and Manchester. A coach also ran to Doncaster, crossing the Ouse at Booth Ferry. However by 1850 most turnpikes began to decline following the arrival of the railways. In the 19th century trade flowed along the rivers and canals, but such journeys were slow and often dangerous with unpredictable currents on the river. With the advance of the railways the wool mills of West Yorkshire were able to link directly to the ships at Hull.

Planning the Hull and Selby Railway

The Leeds and Selby (L&S) Railway line opened in September 1834. In the following year a new Company, known as the Hull and Selby Railway Company was formed and James Walker and Alexander Comrie, who had surveyed the Selby line were commissioned to scout out a route to Hull, and reported their findings to the company in August 1834. Their report concluded that ‘the countryside between Selby and Hull is favourable for a railway, being free of buildings and nearly level. A line of 30 miles can be laid which, except for two or three places, can be said to be level.’

38 The Yorkshire Journal
Their survey plans included a number of bridges to be built over the rivers and a canal, which would be unavoidable. These were over the Ouse at Selby, the Derwent near Hemingbrough and the Market Weighton canal, as well as the question of how to approach Hull, either along the river to the south end of Humber Dock, or across open land to the north end. However, they were confident that these obstacles could be overcome. This would be the first terminal railway to be constructed in East Yorkshire and was expected to bring in more trade.

Their objective was for Selby to be established as an important transport crossing point, being on north-south routes between London and Scotland, and east-west linking Liverpool and Hull with the rivers and canal systems. The contrast between the straightforward one hour rail journey between Leeds and Selby and the hazardous six hour river voyage from Selby to Hull was clear. One contemporary commented that ‘should there be a Hull and Selby railway, a man could leave London at 9 am and be in Hull for 9:30 pm!’

A favourable report was sent to Parliament in November 1834, suggesting an overall cost of £340,000 about £35 million in today’s money. The economic predictions of John Exley, a Customs Officer at Hull had a positive response in the Hull papers which persuaded two Hull bankers, Messrs Liddle and Henwood, to advance an initial sum of £20,000 but other moneys were difficult to come by.

However the project was met with great opposition from large landowners who feared that the introduction of the railway would very largely decrease the value of their properties along its route. Such objectors had to be reconciled. Robert Raikes of Hull claimed the railway would cross his estate in front of his mansion and be a ‘great eyesore’.

Earl Petrie in Selby was concerned that his river wharves would become more difficult to approach due to the new bridge required, and this would lessen his revenue from trade. In addition, a Barlby Bank property that he owned would be destroyed. The City of York Corporation voiced their opinion that a new bridge would obstruct navigation to York on the Ouse. There were several other more minor complainants.

As is often the case, dispute resolution came down to money and the opponents were effectively bought off. Mr. Raikes had the line of the railway suitably altered to avoid his estate and was given a gift of £10,000 around £1,000,000 in today’s money.

The required extra finance was eventually raised locally and also from London (£90,000) and Liverpool (£20,000). The case for rail infrastructure connecting areas of economic activity had been made.

*Right: A company share of £12.10 shilling in the Hull and Selby Railway Company dated 1845*

The Act of Parliament authorizing the line received Royal Assent on 21st June 1836, and construction began on what was a straight line railway over level ground for 30 miles or so. Beyond the curve to the east of Selby Swing Bridge it is over 20 miles to Ferriby, the longest length of straight railway in England.

*Above: The Hull and Selby Railway line in black. (Illustration courtesy of Railscot)*
The Grand Opening of the line

Manor House Street station (also known as Kingston Street station) was Hull’s first railway station. It was adjacent to the Humber Docks and opened in July 1840. This was the original terminus station of the Hull and Selby Railway which opened with some pomp and ceremony, among scenes of wild enthusiasm at both Selby and Hull.

The opening of the line took place on Wednesday 1st July 1840, as it happens it was a miserable rainy day with so much rain that the procession planned to parade through Hull had to be cancelled, but the Manchester and Hull Unity of Oddfellows paraded through the main streets accompanied by several bands playing tunes. Mr. Levitt and his orchestra performed at Railway Street playing a number of melodies which delighted the gathering. Holy Trinity’s bells rang out, and a special noon chiming told lucky ticket holders to board.

Various engines and carriages had arrived over the line in the days before, and the first train left Hull at 12:10 pm, pulled by the locomotive ‘Kingston’, passing through Hessle it was given a lively loud cheer before arriving in Selby at 2:15 pm. Passengers had two hours to explore Selby and partake of a buffet at the George Hotel, now the Londesborough Hotel, on Market Place.

At least five locomotives made the trip, including ‘Prince’ which is said to have managed a return journey in 65 minutes! On returning to Hull, Mr. Levitt and his orchestra were once again on hand to entertain the evening celebration, and over 750 dishes on 15 tables were available in the Manor Street building.

A series of speeches were delivered by dignitaries, followed by many toasts. In the audience was George Hudson, the Railway King.

The initial timetable saw services leaving from Hull at 7 am, 10 am, 3 pm and 6 pm. The first week of service saw over 4,500 passengers, and the trains remained popular, meeting the requirements of both trade and commuters.

Right: A bill announcing the ceremonial opening of the line on 1st July 1840. The line was officially available for public use on the 2nd July.
The first timetable (see page 40) for the Hull and Selby Railway conveyed information on the opening of the line and on services provided including times. The illustration at the top of the bill is in solid black in the form of a locomotive and carriages. It shows the order of arrangement from left to right, the engine and tender, goods waggon, second-class carriage, first-class carriage, and third-class carriage, but on this occasion the third-class carriage is occupied by cattle. It is recorded that when the passengers were transported in the third-class carriage a great number of hats were lost and colds were caught, this is hardly surprising as the carriage was open to the environment. There were in fact some seats in the open third-class carriages but more often than not there were far more passengers than seats and their heads and shoulders were exposed not only to the elements, but to smoke and burning cinders from the locomotives.

In 1841 the number of passengers carried by the Hull and Selby Railway totalled 212,000, ‘without the slightest accident to any of them.’ This was the beginning of the cheap day tripper, and it is recorded that on August 22nd, 1844 an excursion train from Hebden Bridge and Luddenden Foot in West Yorkshire carried some 3,200 passengers to Hull in 82 carriages. At the time this was the longest train that had visited Hull.

Hull’s First Railway Station

The terminus in Hull was not the familiar Paragon Station of today, but rather a building close to Hull Docks. This was not a minor building. The Hull Packet newspaper of July 1840 describes the Manor House Street station looked towards Humber Dock and Kingston Street. It was faced with white brick and stone, it contained railway offices as well as public rooms. The ground floor had a large entrance hall, offices with long windows reaching from just under the ceiling to floor level and a booking office.

A noble staircase led to the luxurious director’s room and secretary’s office, as well as waiting rooms. It was here that the banquet was held on the opening day of the Hull and Selby Railway. The train shed was lit by 42 clear glazing panels and held up by 22 iron columns. There were 4 tracks of rail, and platforms along the whole length of the shed. An acre of water tanks, warehouses and sidings were nearby, with one line leading from the main line direct to the dock head.

After the Paragon Railway station was opened in 1848, Manor House station became a goods depot, before being demolished in 1858 to make way for a new goods complex which served until 1961. Today railway lines in the cobbled road surface along with two wagon turntables are all that remain as the site has largely been taken over by the Freedom Quay development.

Left: This entranceway once took wagons into the yard behind the warehouses. Now it leads into the carpark for the flats in the warehouse next door. A railway line in the cobbled road surface can be seen running through the entrance

Right: A turntable and a railway line in the road is a reminder of Hull’s first railway

The area that was the goods station is now shared between modern housing, a car park and a workshop for yacht repairs. In the 19th century rail travel was able to transport passengers and goods, it was also a time when Hull was ruled by steam, which would eventually see people and cargo arrive at Hull’s docks, take the train across England to Liverpool then onwards to the New World!
When the Hull & Selby Railway opened on 1st July 1840, there were several intermediate stations, serving the small towns along the line. They were built with modest facilities and goods yards. One station named Cliffe was renamed Hemingbrough in 1874 and this was the only station on the line to close as a result of the Beeching Report in 1967. Wressle was listed for closure under Dr Beeching, it remained open as a closure would cause local hardship. The next stations on the line are Howden and Eastrington, the Staddlethorpe station was renamed Gilberdyke in 1975, Broomfleet, Brough, Melton Halt, Ferriby and Hessle all remain open.

By 1845 the Hull and Selby Railway had a working arrangement with York and North Midland Railway (Y&NMR) and the Manchester and Leeds Railway. In 1846 the Hull and Selby Railway had built a branch line to Bridlington that connected up with the York and North Midland network from a junction at Dairycoates just to the east of the present Paragon Railway station. Then in 1847 the Manchester and Leeds Railway became one of the original constituents of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

The Paragon Railway station

Hull was now developing into a thriving commercial centre with a number of Docks increasing in international trade. The railway companies decided that it would make sense to create a new station nearer to the town centre. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1847 allowing the building of a new station and the branch lines to connect it.

The Paragon Railway station was designed by G. T. Andrews with the adjoining Station Hotel that opened in 1847. The Hull station was a new terminus for the growing railway traffic and now the Hull and Selby Railway linked up with the Scarborough line. From the 1860s the station also became the terminus of the Hull and Holderness and Hull and Hornsea railways.

Above: The Paragon Railway station on the right with the Station Hotel on the left. In the foreground is Paragon Square with the Boer War Memorial, Hull around 1905

Left: A tinted postcard of about 1910 taken from Paragon Square it shows the Paragon Railway station and the Boer War Memorial
Above: This map of 1914 shows the Alexandra Dock, extended Victoria Dock, and Victoria Pier at the lower centre, Town and West Docks, and the rail systems of the Hull and & Barnsley Railway and the North Eastern Railway

In July 1885 Cannon Street railway station was opened by the Hull Barnsley & West Riding Junction Railway & Dock Company. It was the terminus for the Barnsley railway, but it never reached Barnsley, stopping a few miles short at Stairfoot. The name was changed to the Hull & Barnsley Railway in 1905. Its railway to Alexandra Dock opened 16 July 1885 to manage shipments. The station closed to passengers in July 1924 when services were diverted to Hull Paragon railway station.

Promoting and Marketing Hull’s Railway and Shipping Travel

Once the important towns were linked for transporting goods, passengers quickly followed. Now creativity posters were designed to promoted rail travel. The poster on the left dates from 1907 and shows a flying express between Hull, York, Newcastle and Edinburgh by North Eastern Railway, the artist is unknown. Luncheon cars are included on the train and from Hull to Edinburgh via York and Newcastle and vice-versa the travelling time is advertised as 5 hours.

The Docks of Hull have always been a significant employer and a mainstay of the local economy. Through the years the various railways companies developed sizeable fleets and in 1935 five of them were combined to form the Associated Humber Lines Ltd. Their function was originally as managers, not owners, but this changed in the late 1950s. They stopped their own operations in 1971 but continued as managers for another decade. Once formed this company produced a lot of railway advertising posters.
This is a 1936 LNER/LMS poster by artist Montague Black (1884-1961). It is a wonderful aerial map showing steamship routes operated out of Hull.

The poster below is one of a series showing dock activity but also route information. Rather interestingly there is no British Rail Totem logo on this poster even though it was issued by the British Transport Commission. The artist of this exquisite poster is signed as by ‘Johnston’ and is dated to 1961.

Hull docks controlled a well-integrated series of railway quays and freight handling equipment that would have been expected of a shipping line with a railway heritage.

The poster on the right is also by BR and the artist is Johnston dated 1961. It shows either MV Bolton Abbey or MV Melrose Abbey, both built in 1958. The ‘two abbeys’ were sister ships of 2740 tonnes each, and were capable of carrying cars and 88 passengers, working the Hull-Rotterdam route as the poster shows.

The funnel depicted on the posters shows the heritage of Associated Humber Lines (AHL). These were the company colours of the Goole Steamship Company founded in 1846. It was taken over by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (LYR) in 1905, but the company identity was retained. Even when the LYR was itself absorbed into the LMS in 1923, the same identity was retained.
Humber shipping interests of the LMS and London & North Eastern Railway (LNER) were combined into the Associated Humber Lines (AHL) in 1935, although individual companies retained their titles. Also included in the merger were The Goole Steam Shipping Company, The Hull and Netherland Steam Ship Company and Wilson’s & NER Shipping Company (The Wilson Line). The combined fleet was considerable and for many years held a very strong position for cross-North Sea services to Holland, Germany, France and Denmark. As well as operating out of Hull, ferries ran from both Goole and Grimsby.

The Hull & Netherland Steam Ship Company was formed in 1894 to run services between Hull and Dutch ports. In 1908 they were taken over by the North Eastern Railway (NER) becoming part of the London & North Eastern Railway in 1923. Shipping interests were managed by Associated Humber Lines in 1935. The Goole Shipping Company operated routes from the Humber ports of Goole, Hull and Grimsby to a wider range of European destinations including Amsterdam, Antwerp, Dunkirk, Gent, Zeebrugge, Vlissingen, Hamburg and Rotterdam. They mainly operated small cargo/passenger steamers, but in 1906, the LYR stated a summer service from Hull to Zeebrugge with the Fleetwood steamer Duke of Clarence.

It can be seen that the railways of the time were already starting to think about an integrated transport system. When the amalgamation occurred, in 1935 the newly formed AHL was strong with a good customer base. Some of their ships were old but slowly these were replaced. In 1948 British Railways was formed and shipping interests fell under the auspices of the British Transport Commission, who also inherited hotels, docks and inland waterways, plus road haulage services. AHL eventually became part of the Road Haulage Executive and in the mid-1950s began ordering their own ships to serve on several routes.

Right: This poster shows three of the 12 ships that used to sail from the Humber ports. At the bottom is probably MV Fountains Abbey, in the centre is Whitby Abbey but at the top is the trio of ships named after Yorkshire cities, the Wakefield, Leeds or the York dating from 1958/9

Notice that there is no reference to British Railways, it refers to Ellerman’s Wilson Line.

Once the railways linking Hull with Selby and Leeds, the wool mills of West Yorkshire were connected directly to the ships, to help export the goods. Hull developed links with many parts of the world.

Victoria Dock was built to the east of the River Hull and opened in 1850. Albert and William Wright Docks were constructed on the western bank of the Humber. St. Andrew’s Dock followed in 1883 and the fishing fleet operated from this dock.

In October 1972 the docks were closed to commercial traffic due to the changing needs of the fishing industry. In 1975 they were transferred back to the Fishing industry.

Left: This LNER poster advertising the port of Hull for importing wool. It illustrates the capacity of a large shed filled with bales of wool. This poster is by Frank Henry Mason dated to the 1930s.
Many goods came through the port, but historically wool was regarded as the premier product. The West Yorkshire textile towns depended on wool imports from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa and the facilities at Hull for this commodity were excellent.

Above: An aerial poster view of the Main Docks at Hull. It advertises Hull as Britain’s cheapest port. The artist is Henry George Gawthorn (1879-1941) and it is dated 1929.

Below: This LNER poster is of the St. Andrew’s Dock, it shows a scene full of energy and vitality as trawlers unload their catches in wooden crates, watched by many buyers eager to obtain the best fish.

There are a number of boats in the docks and the early morning sun setting the sky to gold. St. Andrew’s Dock was originally designed for the coal trade, but when opened in 1883, it was earmarked solely for the fishing industry. With the expansion of the freezer trawler fleet, it was decided to move the fish docks to a new building at Albert Dock in 1975 and St. Andrew’s Dock was closed.
In 1985 the dock was filled in and the western part has been redeveloped into the St Andrew’s Quay a multi-million pound retail park, but in former times it was a hive of activity, and the home of the Hull fishing fleet. At the end of the 19th century there were more than 6,000 trawler visits per year, as the dock became one of the major landing sites for North Sea fishing.

*Right: This British Railway poster of the landing of the catch shows what it must have been like. The noise, the activity and the atmosphere of the period has been captured. This poster is by Jack Merriott (1901-1968) and dates to the early 1950s*

It was a bustling place, with the UK’s busiest telegraph office, large repair shops, fishing support services, massive cranes and extensive railway sidings, all to help speed the many catches on their way to markets all over Britain.

The decline of fishing stocks, beginning around this time, signalled huge changes for Hull. Years of over-fishing eventually caused the docks to close and move to a smaller facility. When built in 1883, it cost over £400,000 but on closing, to develop the new St. Andrew’s Quay retail complex many times this figure was needed to revitalise the area. The role of Hull docks has changed, it is now used by more than one million passengers per year and more than ten million tons of cargo enters and leaves the port.

*Left: This photo was taken looking over the disused eastern end of St Andrew’s Dock towards the Lord Line building. It shows grass growing in the disused fish dock*

The Lord Line building seen in this photo was built in 1949 for the Lord Line trawler fleet and St. Andrew’s Dock was a huge fish dock opened from 1873 to 1975. It was for many years the busiest of all Hull’s docks. The Manor Property Group is planning to redevelop the site into a ‘maritime educational campus’.
Bronze Age Boats from North Ferriby, near Hull

*Europe’s earliest known examples of sea craft*

By Jeremy Clark

The village of North Ferriby in East Yorkshire is located at the foot of the Yorkshire Wolds on the north bank of the River Humber, approximately 7 miles west of Kingston-Upon-Hull. Between September 1937 and 1963 Christopher and Edward (Ted) Wright discovered three Bronze Age boats immediately southeast of the village on the Humber foreshore, not far from their home. All three boats are similar in design and constructed of oak planks that are sewn together with yew withies and all were originally about 16m long.

![Map of the Humber estuary and the site of the Bronze Age Boats at North Ferriby](image)

*Above: The location of the Humber estuary and the site of the Bronze Age Boats at North Ferriby*

In 1937 the mildly erosive action of the waves on the glutinous clay had exposed the ends of three massive worked planks just above the level of low tidal. This was the first Bronze Age boat to be discovered by Ted Wright and his brother Bill. In November 1940 Ted found the keel plank of a second boat about 60 yards upstream.

However, the events of World War 2 effectively halted work until 1946, when the remaining parts of both boats were lifted and transported to the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. The two boats were subsequently dated to the Bronze Age.

*Right: The mid-ships area of the North Ferriby Bronze Age Boat 1 excavated in September 1938*
In March 1963 Ted Wright discovered the remains of a third boat next to the first which was removed to Hull and East Riding Museum. The boats are generally referred to as Ferriby Boats 1, 2 and 3. Small parts from two more boats were unearthed in 1984 and 1989.
Description of the North Ferriby Boats

The most complete was Ferriby Boat 1 made of huge oak planks and all three boats would have originally been nearly 16m in length with a maximum beam of about 2.5m. The boats had flat bottoms like a raft with the ends and sides curving up like a large canoe. The planks were fitted together by boat-builders who had drawn on the technology that made no use of metal parts. Their rectangular planks were stitched to each other with individual twisted yew branches. The seams were caulked with moss and capped by oak laths for water tightness. It has to be assumed that the boats were paddled and there is room for up to eighteen paddlers, with nine timbers or thwarts across the boat which could have been used by paddlers or passengers to sit on. What is not clear is whether the boats had a masts and sails at this time although they are known in the south in Bronze Age times.

Left: Reconstructed drawing of what the North Ferriby Boat may looked like

Above: Detailed drawing of the North Ferriby Boat 1, the most complete of the three boats discovered

Dating the North Ferriby Boats

In 1958, Carbon-14 (a scientific method used for samples which were once alive such as bone, charcoal, wood and leather) gave a date of 750±150 BC for the Ferriby Boats, confirming their Bronze Age origin. In the 1980s this was refined to circa 1300 BC for the Ferriby Boats 1, 2 and 3 but Ferriby Boats 4 and 5 were assigned a much later date of 400 BC. Later dating gave 1900 BC for Ferriby Boat 3 and 1800 BC for Ferriby Boats 1 and 2 as a result of which the Ferriby Boats were rightly acclaimed in March 2001 as Europe’s earliest known examples of sea craft. Similar boats have now also been recognised from Kilnsea, East Yorkshire (1870-1670 BC) and from Dover, Kent (1300-1200 BC).
Replica of the North Ferriby Boat

In the summer of 2004 a half scale replica of the North Ferriby Boat was built to try and find out what they could carry, how they were sailed and powered. This replica was built by naval architects Edwin Gifford and John Coats with the help of Ted Wright in Southampton. On completion sea trials in Southampton were carried out. The results give some hint as to how the boat could have been used.

The trials showed that the boat could be paddled using the paddle blade found with the remains, a sail would have been a superior form of power for the boat. The design and method of construction allowed the boat to ride waves and land on rough beaches. This would mean Bronze Age crews could have made long sea voyages and landed safely on unfamiliar coasts. In suitable weather they could have crossed the North Sea perhaps in three or four days.

In 2005 the half-size replica North Ferriby boat that had been built and tested in Southampton was brought to the River Humber where the original had once sailed. The replica was formally named ‘Oakleaf’ and launched into the River Humber on 16th January 2005.

Oakleaf became an international celebrity after featuring in the 2005 BBC’s widely-acclaimed ‘Coast’ documentary series. The half-size replica was shown sailing on the River Humber with presenter Mark Horton and Hull archaeologist Dr Ben Gearey who suggested that there may have been a boat yard at North Ferriby nearly 4,000 years ago in the early Bronze Age. The vessels themselves where found partly dismantled perhaps for recycling into new ones. This year the discovery of the North Ferriby boats was once again highlighted by the adventurer Paul Rose in the BBC’s ‘Yorkshire Wolds Way’.
With the help of The John Good Shipping Group and Andrew Marr International, Ferriby Heritage Trust secured the replica boat and brought her back to North Ferriby to help raise the public awareness of their local heritage. Oakleaf arrived in North Ferriby on the 16th February 2008.

Right: Reconstructed drawing of what the North Ferriby Boat may have looked like in the Early Bronze Age

The Morgawr Replica

In 2012-13 a full size reconstruction based on the Bronze Age North Ferriby boat 1 was built by volunteers at the National Maritime Museum Cornwall in Falmouth, as a collaborative effort between the National Maritime Museum and the University of Exeter. The Morgawr, as she is known was successfully launched down a slipway into Falmouth Harbour, Cornwall on 6 March 2013 for initial trials. The 15m long boat weighs 5.5 tonnes dry and once she had taken up water became an estimated 7 ton craft and was built out of two massive oak logs using replica methods and tools such as Bronze Age axe heads and chisels. Morgawr is part of a long-term experimental archaeology investigation into Bronze Age marine technology and to learn about Bronze Age boat building techniques and to test the nautical capabilities of the craft. Her maiden voyage was manned and paddled by the 18 volunteers who had built it on two short trips. It was more seaworthy than expected, the boat picked up speed and could be steered and turn easily. She has also been sailed by members of the Helford River Gig Club to test her manoeuvrability and speed. The Morgawr Replica is on display next to the Maritime Museum.

Left: Trials of the full size reconstruction of the Bronze Age North Ferriby boat 1 named Morgawr in the Falmouth Harbour

Right: The 15m long replica Morgawr boat in the Falmouth Harbour
North Ferriby is situated at the foot of the Yorkshire Wolds which are noted for prehistoric activity from the Neolithic onwards. The Ferriby site was an ideal point of departure for east/west travel along the Humber or as a crossing-point to the south bank. The boats were large enough to carry not just people but animals as well. They could have been used by the immigrants of the early Bronze Age who came from the Low Countries and settled in the north east of England. The Ferriby boats were a means by which ideas, such as the decorative design of pottery, and trade goods such as Baltic amber and metals could arrive on the Humber shore. The boat provides important historical evidence, and it is believed there may be more boats waiting to be discovered.

A full scale outline of the North Ferriby Boat with an information board detailing the history of the boats can be seen on the Humber bank near the North Ferriby foreshore. It forms part of the Yorkshire Wolds Way and the long distance Trans Pennine Trail.

Left: A full scale outline of the North Ferriby Boat with a plaque which reads: ‘This memorial to Ted Wright 1918-2001 depicts the outline of the oldest known boat in Europe built and sailed from this foreshore 4000 years ago’. In the background is an information board explaining the history of the North Ferriby Boats.

Right: Ted Wright, MBE, amateur archaeologist and Fellow of the Royal Society of Antiquaries who discovered the Ferriby boats was born on June 21, 1918. He died on May 18, 2001 aged 83.

Left: Wooden model of the North Ferriby Boat 1 that Ted Wright is holding in his hands.

Below: Model of the North Ferriby Boat 1, with a replica wooden tool found near Boat 2 in 1946. It is believed to have been used to twist and tighten withies stitches.

A Bronze Age axe hafted onto a modern wooden handle used for cutting the wood of the boat are on display in Hull and East Riding Museum.
Since Hull’s Bee Lady Jean Bishop, 91 won her Fundraiser of the Year Award at the Pride of Britain ceremony, the city has been buzzing with excitement that Jean has finally got the recognition she deserves.

To mark Jean’s 14 years fundraising achievements, in which she collected more than £100,000 for Age UK, communications provider KC has given one of their iconic cream telephone boxes a stripy make over in her honour.

*Below: The box, outside the company’s Carr Lane HQ, painted in Jean's signature black and yellow and even has antennae!* Photo by Janet Ulliott