

Published by The Yorkshire Journal August 2020

# A Selection of Yorkshire-themed Poems

By Peter Donnelly



Peter Donnelly lives in York and has degrees in English and Creative Writing from the University of Wales Lampeter.

He has been published in *the South Bank magazine*, *the Beach Hut*, *the Dreich*, *Writer's Egg* and *the Poetry Village*, as well as several anthologies including the Ripon Poetry Festival anthology '*Seeing Things*'.

As well as poetry he has written prose, drama and critical essays. He tweets as @PJ\_donnelly and is on Instagram as donnelly1947

## ***Perhaps Painted in Peace Time***

*after Frederick Elwell*

Had he known  
that garden  
before it was his own?

Or the mother, daughter  
and pet dog,  
were they really there?

What do they speak of,  
surely not the coming conflict?

Do they admire the red tulips  
he would later tend,  
the lawn he wouldn't have to mow,  
the magnolia tree,  
orange flowers you can only just see?

Could they hear the noise in North Bar  
of newly invented cars,  
within their high walls  
like those of a convent?



## ***A Train Ride to Knaresborough***

I don't go to the castle or Mother Shipton's Cave,  
nor boating along the Nidd.

I walk up through the Bebra Gardens  
to the town, have tea at Scarlett's,  
buy books, cake tins, second hand shirts, a jigsaw  
from the many charity shops.

I admire the Art in the Mill,  
the Christmas trees in St John the Baptist,  
the views of the railway bridge.

I don't mind missing the views from it,  
content with those of fields, trees and deer,  
plant pots on platforms in Poppleton, Hammerton and  
Cattal.



*Poppleton station*

## ***Aysgarth Falls in July***

Had the car park not been full  
we'd not have driven on to Castle Bolton

where the picture from the calendar came to life.  
We wouldn't have seen meadowsweet

or meadow cranesbill  
as we walked to the Lower Falls

and back a slightly different way,  
over the old railway line.

We'd still have come by Middleham,  
passed Jervaulx Abbey

and driven back through Leyburn,  
stopped in Bedale for a pint of milk,

then down what was once the Great North Road.  
We'd have eaten our picnic by the Ure

not in a field as I did with others  
far away on this day long ago.

I'd still have known today  
was my English teacher's birthday.



## ***Bicentenary Discovery***

I pause outside Next,  
look to see if there's a sale on  
and learn that it was once the George Hotel  
where Anne Bronte spent one night  
with her sister and their friend  
in the last days of her life.

Going up the escalator  
I wonder how she managed the stairs,  
where her room would have been.  
Outside I think how would Coney Street  
have looked in 1849, which way  
did they walk to the Minster?

Where did Charlotte buy their clothes  
for Scarborough? No Next Sales then.  
Like the novels and poems they may have written  
we'll never know these things,  
or why I found this plaque today,  
two hundred years after Anne was born.



*York as it was around 1849*

## *Jervaulx Abbey*

The route becomes familiar,  
three times I've travelled it this year.  
We don't turn right at West Tanfield  
as the 159 does, past Nosterfield.

Nor do we get the view  
from Masham Bank which you do  
from the high up seats of the bus.

There is the sound of wild geese  
as we get out of the car, the rain  
has stopped, the sheep appear tame,  
at home amongst oak and sycamore trees.

There never seems to be a breeze,  
the air as still as the water in the fish pond  
or the ferns with their fronds  
that grow against the ancient walls  
in the grounds of the more recent hall.



## ***Wensleydale Faith***

I'm most grateful for my vision  
when I walk on Leyburn Shawl.

As I look across to Penhill  
nothing worries me at all -

not the mud beneath my feet,  
nor the chance of missing the last bus back,  
or not being able  
to get a snack

at the Posthorn Café, though I know I will.  
The view could not be greater;  
the hills and trees  
suggest to me a creator

who gave me eyes to see  
and lips to tell,  
and hope that all  
would be well.



*Leyburn Shawl*

## ***Walking by Water***

I love to walk by water,  
in the country and in town.  
My favourite place is Ripon Canal,  
I pace it up and down.

I gaze at boats and barges,  
admire moths and meadowsweet.  
Whatever the time of year,  
I barely feel the cold or heat.

Through the lanes of Littlethorpe,  
I like the homeward walk as well.  
For a change I choose the woods  
by the River Skell.

All views of the cathedral  
never fail to please.  
But there's often something unexpected -  
a heron, a kingfisher, fallen trees.



*Ripon Canal at Rentons Bridge*



## ***When the Ouse Floods***

It has rained in the Lakes  
so we can't go to Rawcliffe Meadows  
and search for its source  
or even to Fulford Ings  
seeking Tansy beetles  
where it stretches out  
towards the Humber Estuary.

We must be content  
with our views  
from the bridges of the city -  
Lendal, Skeldergate,  
the path by the railway line;  
the back of Mansion House  
and the rest of what must be  
Coney Street  
and Spurriergate.



## ***New Season, Old City***

When the daffodils begin to flower  
on the city walls and Clifford's Tower,  
croci bloom in the Museum Gardens  
and frost no longer hardens  
the ground where I walk,  
I know it is spring in York.

Treasurer's House will soon be  
open, Beningbrough Hall is already.  
The Christmas lights have at last come down,  
on a weekend you can move in town.  
In my flat the amaryllis bud appears  
against lilac curtains like a ship in the sea  
or a rocket in space  
about to flame.



## ***May the Seventeenth***

I found a new walk today.  
The descent to Walmgate Stray  
was like the wardrobe door into  
Narnia, except it wasn't winter.

Before I knew  
it I had more than a view

of open countryside,  
the suburbs no longer beside

me. The cattle were as tame  
as Aslan, they came

to be stroked. Seeing  
Sutton Bank was like being

there and spotting York  
Minster from the White Horse.



*Walmgate Stray*

## ***The Best Parts of York***

Of course there is the Minster,  
the city walls and Clifford's Tower,  
the things poets and novelists  
have written about before.

But for me they are  
the places I didn't know were there,  
or did but never went in,  
Holy Trinity, All Saints Pavement,  
the tiny garden behind the Medical Society.

There are parks to rival the Museum Gardens  
at both ends of the river.

The shops in the suburbs survive,  
those on the high street shut down.

The Spurriergate Centre  
closes and re-opens  
in the middle of town.



*the tiny garden behind the Medical Society*