

Baildon cultural connections

Baildon has a number of cultural connections which you may find of interest when walking around Baildon and the surrounding area.

In 1843, John Nicholson – known as the Airedale poet – fell into a swollen River Aire near Lower Baildon and died from the effects of exhaustion and hypothermia. His body was moved to the Bay Horse Inn (no longer a Public House) in Baildon where a post mortem was undertaken. Nicholson had worked in the wool trade and led a chaotic life in which alcohol played a big part until he signed up to the Temperance movement. Many of his poems were published by subscription in the 1820s.

In 1912, Bradford author Willie Riley published *Windyridge*, a hugely popular novel based on the village of Hawksworth, in which Baildon appears as “Marsland”. See <http://www.willieriley.org.uk/> for more information about the author and the book, which is still in print. The field paths from Baildon to Hawksworth give an opportunity to explore the country side of the book. There are vivid descriptions of walkers coming up the hill from Spring Woods to Hawksworth.

Twenty years on JB Priestley in his *English Journey* (1934), wrote about his home town and mentions Baildon Moor. Comparing the wide open vistas of the Moors to Montana or the Rhodesian plains, Priestley recalls vivid memories of camping in a wooden shanty on Baildon Moor with his friends “dividing our time between opening tins of beans, washing up, reading Walt Whitman and arguing or scuffling with one another.”

Published in 1940, Howard Spring’s *Fame is the Spur*, gives us the best fictional description of a winter walk up through Baildon in the 1880s. Chapter 12 finds Hamer Shawcross and Ann Artingstall setting out from Frizinghall in Bradford and walking to a hut on Baildon Moor after their wedding. The huts on Baildon Moor are still a part of the landscape, connecting us to a time when Baildon Moor was a place of escape for many from industrial Bradford, including Priestley.

After this, we look to films for images of Baildon. *Billy Liar* (1963) used a house in Baildon for the home of the Fisher family. *Monty Python’s Meaning of Life* (1983) had scenes on Baildon Moor. *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (1987) was partly shot in Baildon village and on the moor. See : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baildon> for more information.

A popular walk from Baildon takes us over Rombalds Moor and the opportunity to see the latest addition both to the cultural life of the area and to the physical landscape. Three of the Stanza Stones with poems by Simon Armitage, cut into stone by Pip Hall are located on Rombalds Moor in different locations. The stones connect the present creative life of the area with the wealth of prehistoric carved stones on Rombalds Moor. Also, some of the poems are carved on stones recycled from the mill buildings of the Bradford that Riley, Priestley and Spring were writing about. See: <http://www.bradfordwalking.org/Stanza-Stones-Trail-Guide.pdf>