

TOWN OF CULTURE IN STALYBRIDGE

# Take Note

A Day in the Life of  
Stalybridge

A Collaborative Community Project  
To capture moments across the Town

Led by The Write Catalyst

# Stalybridge Station

Market St  
SK15 1RF



Smooth, well-worn tracks flank a wild weed middle. Dark grey stones with straight lines and sharp edges rise up until the sky is bordered with arched metal motifs.

A breeze lifts my hair and brushes the coconut tang of dry shampoo into my face. Cool metal seats with haphazard occupants, all waiting for the same.

Heads turn in time to an artificial voice, pushing suitcases to a white line. A moment later, the deep bass of a train arriving rattles my ribs. Then, a piercing ting-ting of doors punctures my ears. There's the sharp, acrid taste of a silver whistle.

Finally, we're on our way.

*Cat Lumb*





# Stalybridge Carnival

Bayley Street  
SK15 1PZ

All the senses excited now, it is nearly time  
The dance school float awaits its turn to roll,  
festooned with garlands of once redundant CD's now  
reincarnated into a giant necklace, shimmering in the  
sunlight, competing with the gold chain reassuringly  
sturdy across the nearby mayoral chest.



Anticipation is tangible as the engine brings mechanical  
life to the temporary stage behind it.  
A most precious cargo replaces the usual inanimate  
contents it carries; smiling children proudly own this  
dusty stage today.

The 70's theme intensified by the costumes of the dancers,  
vibrant colours and patterns, a moving kaleidoscope  
weaving down a street that has the spirit of spinners from  
a different time etched in history.

Music erupts from a speaker, the  
dancers spark into life, answering  
some intrinsic call to move  
rhythmically; a call as ancient as the  
hills cradling this place we call our  
home town.



*Mara Tohill*



Valerie Eccleston



# Stalybridge Canal



He lifts his shovel, slicing through hard clay. Yet again, he tightens muscles, heaves the weight of claggy soil, the deep trench lengthening. A channel cutting through the town. A canal to carry goods and merchandise to Manchester, to Yorkshire. Further.

Already, new mills, rows of houses, rising up, spreading out. Less green now. Workers flooding in for wages, homes, a new security.

His sister tells him he is excavating change. Fanciful. Sitting in their room, the walls a mottled terrain of peeling lime-wash, she thrusts her needle through thick cloth.

‘A banner for the march,’ she muses. ‘The band will lead us. The field will fill with banners, a field of singing, celebration. One man, one vote. At last, our voices heard.’

His sister is the clever one. His labour pays for her to learn.

‘Change comes from us,’ she tells him. ‘That power - your arms, your legs. Your daily work.’

‘My toil- my graft,’ he counters. ‘Call it what it is.’

‘A channel,’ she insists. ‘As much as that canal you’re digging. We can shape how things should be.’



This is how she speaks, his radical sister, who sews, who sings and marches, manufacturing hope.

Once, just the bridge at Staly. A cottage or two, some grazing sheep, broom fashioned into besoms. Men grappled with hard issues - the speed of spinning; the vexations of weaving; getting precious goods to port. His canal the last piece in the puzzle.

They roped him in, harnessed his body. He has no understanding of the finer things. He can only wield a pick or light a fuse when rock resists. But his sinews sense a change; they tense and shudder to the rhythm of his labour.

He can smell tomorrow in the stubborn clay.





*Sandra Whitehead*

Trinity Street  
SK15 2BN

# Stalybridge Library



To enter I push open the massive heavy solid wooden doors.

I read the inscription as I have done many times over the years.

“Read Mark Learn and inwardly digest”

I see shelves of carved ornate bookshelves.

I am surrounded by the history and heritage donated to the people of Stalybridge.

I touch the strong wooden tables.

I push my fingers through the holes in the elaborately carved book cases.

I feel the cold marble busts of the Platt's more benefactors of the Town.





I can hear the Traffic outside.

There is a low buzz of the conversation from the other Library users.

I notice the Illicit rustling of sweet papers.

A loud *sch!* from the old men keeping warm seated at the tables reading newspapers.

There is the musty smell of the old reference books,

Yet the sweetness of the Librarian's perfume wreaths through the air.

I taste violets, their sweetness in my mouth.

I taste the sweet and sour taste of the forbidden sweets.

“No eating or drinking in the Library!”



I am overwhelmed by memories from my school days.

I am back here doing my home work with my friends in the reference Library.





# Stalybridge Country Park



Off Huddersfield Road  
SK15 3EY



Wherever you turn in Staley, you see the hills. They lurch and buckle above the terrain, observing, brooding. They curve around the landscape, enclosing concertinaed histories of a people, of lost tribes and of aggregate communities. They hug the valley into life and remember its many deaths.

Their vista is expansive: here is woodland, clustering in the dip beneath the straining dam-wall of a reservoir. Trees populate the ground where once sat stone-built mills, placed there for permanence. Until.



Here sandy paths meander through a wooded maze and, daily, horses' hooves mark time once more, their owners riding now for pleasure not for need, their iron shoes an echo of those heavy metal clogs trooping to the tomb of daily toil, their footfall muted by an engine-room's rude roar, by the whirr of millwheels, by the slap and crash of belts and pulleys.





The hills look down. Their dipping flanks constrain the spreading waters, whilst upon their arching backs move grazing horses, sheep and cattle; their ears are pinpricked by the shrieking grouse; their grassy coats are criss-crossed by stone walls and harsh, wire fences. They wince as shining diggers carve ever-deepening scars into their shaggy camels' humps, extracting endless bounty- gritstone and golden sandstone, easy quarry. Aggregates. They cower beneath cruel wildfires that consume their peaty flesh and singe their souls. It was ever thus.

The seasons and the centuries roll on, clothing the hills in successive swathes of snow and bubbling heather.

This is a land of revolutions. This is a people quarried and contained, until... Until. The people take their rhythm from the ranging hills.

Yet, for all of this, the hills are smiling. Watching from their bulging heights, slumbering through dense nights and waiting for the sharp rays of the morning sun, they sigh, resigned, and smile. Wherever you turn in Staley, you can see- the hills are smiling!



*Staley Hills by Valerie Eccleston*

# Sarah England School of Dance

Clifford House | SK15 2JL



*Mara Tohill*

I know, as I open the door, a bell will signal my imminent arrival upstairs.

It is a timeless jingle, a sound that transports me back to another favourite place, one from my childhood, the sweet shop.

How powerful that a bell can link delights from my past to the anticipation of happiness I know I will feel dancing in the studio today.

I can almost taste a sherbert lemon as I put my dance shoes on.

The studio is flooded with light and music, my fellow dancers staking their claim to a place on the dance floor.

We are a troupe now we are together, eager to begin, like horses champing at the bit.





Rhythm jostles with beat, intricate steps engage my brain, leaving no room for mundane problems to intrude.

Keep out, I am dancing, my mind warns my tumbling thoughts.

Pictures of tiny dancers captured in a precious moment of time are suspended upon the wall.

They are symbolic of all who have danced before and for those yet to arrive.

This place, this school of dance, is a place for the mind, body and soul to be joyful and free.





# Stamford Park

Stamford Street  
OL6 6RW



*Cat Lumb*

Men chattering like birds, their accents deep as the  
green where their distinctive bowls roll.



Spots of yellow mark their target, bended knees  
following strides of defeat or glory.

Chairs unfolded, cushions placed on walls for  
comfortable spectators, clutches of conversation  
captured in fresh air.

Breeze blown trees shuffling over footsteps and coats  
discarded in the brightness of sunshine on the periphery  
of the flat, manicured lawn.

A distant *thrumm* of machinery as wildness is tamed  
elsewhere.

Dog walkers and families pass me by, shoes scuffed on  
tarmac as they meander to and fro.

With loving memories settled on seats erected by those  
left behind under the grey tinged skies.





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