

# Stories of the past in tunnel beneath Saltaire



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THE streets of Saltaire are busy with tourists, as well as those who live, work and study in the historic village. Many would have no idea that beneath the UNESCO World Heritage Site is a tunnel - once used to transfer Royal guests - linking two of Saltaire's landmark buildings.

Today - World Heritage Day - we're going underground in Saltaire, to a 'secret tunnel' revealed in a new film.

Produced by Bradford Through the Lens, a YouTube channel exploring hidden and unusual spaces in the district, the video is presented by local historian Andrew Bolt and Maggie Smith, Trustee for the Saltaire Collection, who lead us through the tunnel linking Victoria Hall and Exhibition Building. The tunnel isn't safe enough for public visits, so this is a fascinating tour of a little known part of Saltaire history.

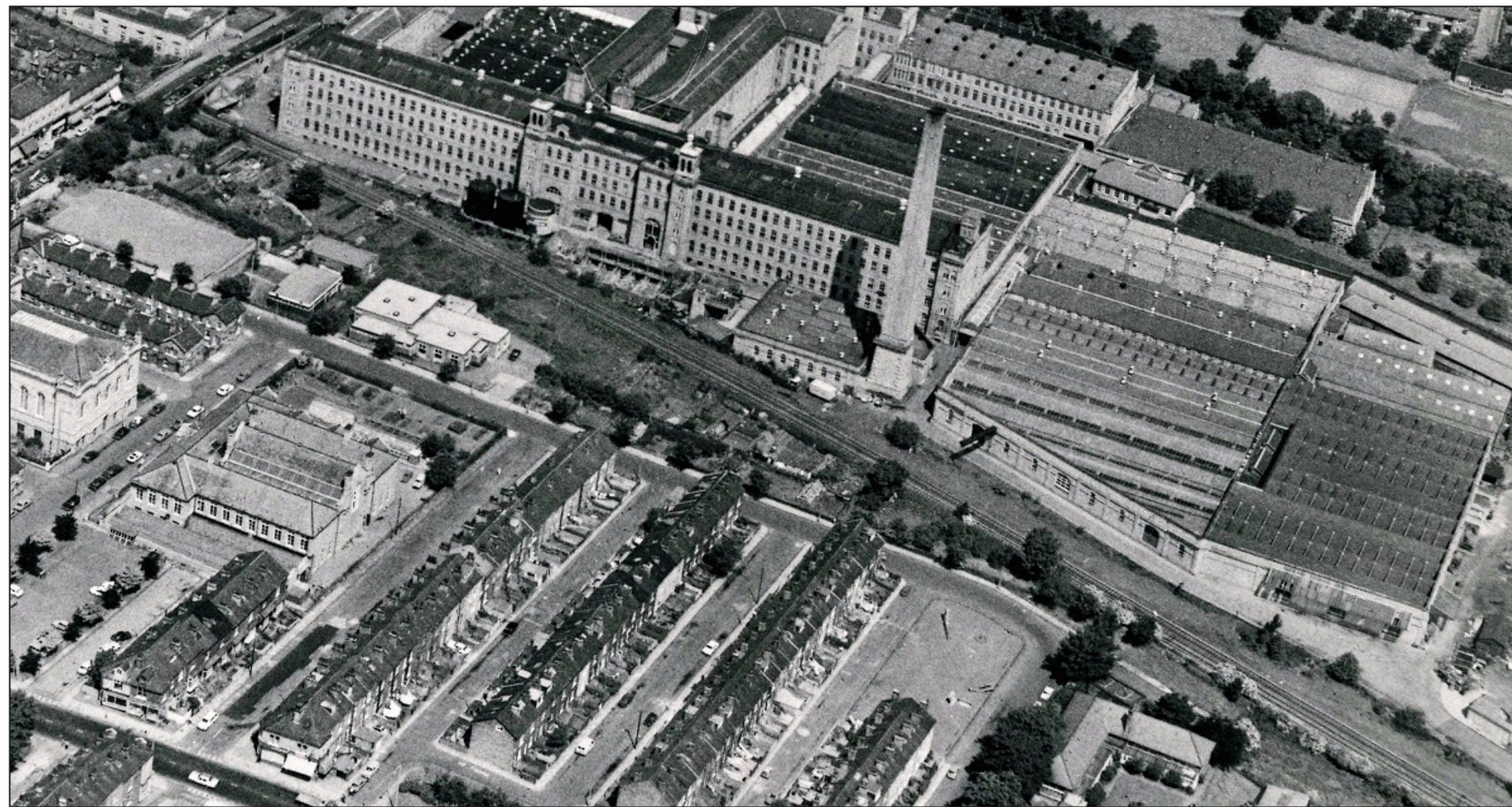
Maggie and Andrew head through a side door in Victoria Hall to a dimly lit tunnel at the back of the building. There are iron girders in the roof and, Andrew notes, Exhibition Road is directly above. The tunnel, enabling students and workers to get to and from studies in both buildings, was built for the Yorkshire Royal Jubilee Exhibition in 1887, celebrating Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

By this time Sir Titus Salt had died and the Salt business was in financial crisis. Salt's son, Titus Salt Junior, aged 10 when Salts Mill opened, was keen to develop his father's legacy. The Saltaire Club and Institute (today known as Victoria Hall) had been established by Sir Titus Salt as a place for "intelligent recreation"; with such facilities as a reading room, a library, a chess and draughts room, a 600-seat lecture hall, a science laboratory, a school of art, classrooms, a gymnasium and rifle drill rooms. But Salt Jnr found the building had insufficient space for students, usually textile workers, to study art and science. Both subjects, says Maggie, were important to the textile industry, in terms of textile design and the science of processes such as dyeing and finishing. So Salt Jnr decided to build a School of Art and Science on land behind the Institute, and announced plans for a great exhibition there to celebrate the Royal Jubilee and to show off art and technology in Saltaire. He mortgaged Victoria Hall and the Salt Schools to fund the new building (now Exhibition Building). Ticket sales from the exhibition, running from May to October 1887, were to help pay the building costs.

The tunnel runs beneath Exhibition Road. Pic: Andrew C Bolt



Catherine Crossley, Titus Salt Junior's wife. Pic: Saltaire Collections



Aerial view of Saltaire, taken in 1976, showing Victoria Hall and the Exhibition Building

The Exhibition was staged across a huge site, with temporary structures and a garden. "It was designed to put Saltaire on the map," says Maggie. Attractions included a taxidermy stand, railway engines, toboggan rides, a rifle gun stall, re-created scenes of the Crimean War and watch-making demonstrations by Bradford's famous Fattorini jewellery family. The event also boasted the biggest outdoor marquee in England and a Japanese village (which was later moved up to the fun fair at Shipley Glen) and tea house. "This was a big

area, before the houses there were built," says Andrew. "There were lots of displays, both in the outdoor space and in the Exhibition Hall. It was like a mini Crystal Palace." Adds Maggie: "There were lots of plants, from the Milner Field greenhouses, and artwork from the Prince of Wales' own catalogue." The School of Art and Science was completed in April 1887. On May 5, 1887 Princess Beatrice, youngest daughter of Queen Victoria, opened the Exhibition. She and her husband,

Prince Henry of Battenberg, stayed at Milner Field in Gilstead, home of Titus Jnr. Hand-painted menus and place mats made by Salt's wife, Catherine, for the Royal visit are today in the Saltaire Collection. Souvenirs from the Exhibition are still offered to the Collection. "The tunnel beneath Exhibition Road enabled the Royal guests to move about in private. In the video, a tape is shown across the floor, marking the end of the World Heritage Site boundary - in the middle of Exhibition Road. Despite Salt Jnr's efforts to show off Sal-

taire, the Exhibition wasn't a financial success. It drew more than 800,000 visitors but, says Andrew, "It was too ambitious for this obscure little place." "Sadly, it didn't make enough to cover the cost of the Exhibition Building. It made a loss of £12,000 - £2.1 million in today's money," says Maggie. "It was a huge debt to leave the Salts School governors." The strain took its toll on Salt Jnr: On November 18, 1887, the day he was due to meet the governors, he fell ill at home. "He went for a walk in the garden then went

to lie down. Age 44, he died of a heart attack," says Maggie. Salt's wife, Catherine, and William Fry, head of governors at Salt Schools, worked for many years to pay off the debt. Despite the tragic outcome, Salt Jnr's legacy lives on. He was keen to exhibit students' work in Exhibition Hall and the following year it opened as a technical school. Since 1888 it has continued to provide education and is now part of Shipley College. If only he'd known that his dream of providing vocational education, as a memorial to his father, would

come true. Bradford Through the Lens was set up by historian and photographer Riaz Ahmed and researcher Imtiaz Sabir. "Bradford Through the Lens focuses on untold stories related to Bradford's heritage, using such an effective way of bringing these histories to public attention," says Maggie. "In the case of this Saltaire tunnel, it is the only way that large numbers of people can gain access to this story." \* Visit youtube.com/@BradfordThroughTheLens



Titus Salt Jnr was ambitious. Pic: Saltaire Collections



Saltaire tunnel- an important part of the World Heritage Site's history. Pic: Andrew C Bolt



Artist's impression of the Saltaire exhibition of 1887. Pic: Saltaire Collections



Victoria Hall was originally the Saltaire Club and Institute

## Society hits right note for carnival funds



ILKLEY Amateur Operatic Society has been awarded primary beneficiary status for this year's Ilkley Carnival.

The society, which is celebrating its centenary, will receive the major share of profits raised at next month's Ilkley Carnival, with the remaining funds divided between Ben Rhydding Scouts and Guides. Ted Killan of IAOS said: "Being the main beneficiary is a massive help to the Society and our commitment to maintaining Operatic House in our centenary year. As well as being our rehearsal space, it's a much-used community hub, with approximately 250 local people benefitting from activities here every week.

"We have discovered dry rot within the fabric of the building. Funding from Ilkley Carnival will be a huge help in enabling us to repair the affected parts so it's fit to serve the community of Ilkley for another 100 years!"

Ilkley Carnival chair Andrew Stacey added: "Awarding the group primary beneficiary status also reflects the wider importance of the arts in Bradford district which has been awarded City of Culture status for 2025.

Ilkley Carnival takes place on May 1, with a parade from The Grove to East Holmes Fields parade ground. Pictured: Andrew Stacey joins Ilkley Amateur Operatic Society young performers, L-R Jacob Troake, Matthew Disney, Lottie Tunstall and Lily Troake in celebrating the primary beneficiary status.

## Grants of up to £2k available

GROUPS are being encouraged to get in touch with Bradford Council to find out how a new grant can help them become more accessible.

The Friendship Support Grants of between £250 - £2,000 are for groups in the Bradford district that support people with a sensory impairment or are living with dementia and have ideas of how to expand or develop their group to help people build friendships, live independently or to engage with the community.

A series of workshops are being held to explain how groups can access the grants as well as support in completing an application.

Everyone is welcome to attend the workshops and find out more.

There will be a workshop on how to apply on Wednesday, April 19, between 1pm and 2.30pm at Touch IT, Morley Street Resource Centre, 124 Morley Street.