



# R.O.Y.S

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Ridings Of Yorkshire Society



**Conference 2026**

**19th-20th June**

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York Explore Library, York



## Welcome to ROYS 2026

We're delighted to be welcoming you to York for our fifth annual conference, this year at the fantastic York Explore Library.

Once again we're lucky to have a mixture of new faces and returning friends of ROYS at this year's conference, for what promises to be a fascinating two days of talks. We're excited to return to our traditional two-day format, and hope that a return to a Friday and Saturday slot allows those with different weekday and weekend commitments to have a greater chance to attend.

Our venue this year is the York Explore Library, a stone's throw from York's famed landmarks such as the City Walls and York Minster. We hope that you will enjoy your time here, and get the chance to explore this historic city over the course of the two days.

We're immensely grateful to have been recipients of a grant from the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society, who have generously covered the conference venue hire for this year's event.

Finally, we'd like to reiterate our thanks to you for your participation, and we hope you enjoy the conference!

# Friday 19th June 2026

10:30

Arrival

10:50

**Welcome and Introductions**

11:00

**Keynote Speaker - Andrew McTominey** - *Reservoirs, Environment, and Identity in Modern England and Wales*

**Lunch Break (12:00-13:00)**

13:00

**Panel 1: Yorkshire-man about Town: Yorkshire Figures in National Society, 17th-18th Centuries**

Tony Pratt- *William Rookes (1719-1789) Barrister of Esholt Hall in the West Riding and Gray's Inn of Court, London: Judicial and Social Connections in the Latter 18th Century*

Letitia Lawson- *Samuel Lee Bapty: A Man of Many Parts*

**Break (14:00-14:15)**

14:15

**Keynote Speaker - Kate Giles** - *Pickering's Medieval Wall Paintings*

15:45

**Panel 2: Art and Devotion in the York Parish Church**

Kate Yarborough - *Passionately Made: Reader Additions in the Pavement-Pulleyn Hours, York Minster Library MS XVI.K.6*

Naoki Matsumoto - *Spec-tacular Glass: Concerning A Pair Of Eyeglasses In The Nine Orders Of Angels Window In All Saints North Street, York*

16:45

**Closing Remarks Day 1**

17:00

Finish

# Saturday 20th June 2026

10:30

Arrival

10:50

**Welcome and Introductions**

11:00

**Panel 3: By Land or Sea: Contested Transport Routes in Industrial Hull**

Ashley Borrett - *Battle for the Roads of Hull and East Yorkshire during the Interwar Years*

Emily Ingram - *Danger, Pleasure, and Pollution on Hull's Industrial Waterways*

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**Lunch Break (12:00-13:00)**

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13:00

**Panel 4: Power, Polity, and Conflict: Yorkshire in the Post-Roman World**

Andrew Breeze - *Bloodbath at Catterick*

Alex Harvey - *Little Kingdoms: Post-Roman Yorkshire*

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**Break (14:00-14:15)**

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14:15

**Panel 5: Pioneering Practise and Community in 19th-Century Yorkshire**

Sophia Lambert - *Burial Practices in the Bradford Reform Jewish Community, 1877-1914*

Carolyn Donohue - *The Retreat, York: History, Heritage and Community Memory*

15:15

**Conference Closing Remarks**

15:30

Finish

# Keynote Speaker - Andrew McTominey



Dr Andrew McTominey is Heritage Manager at Pennine Heritage, based at the Birchcliffe Centre in Hebden Bridge. He is also a Visiting Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University.

His academic work has focused on the history of waterworks and environment, including the recently published *Waterscapes: Reservoirs, Environment and Identity in Modern England and Wales* (London University Press, 2025). As Heritage Manager, Andrew is involved in managing the Grade II listed Birchcliffe Centre and spearheading Pennine Heritage's community outreach projects, exhibitions, and publications.

# Keynote Speaker - Kate Giles

Kate Giles (BA, MA, PhD, York) is a buildings archaeologist with a specialism in the recording, archival research and theoretical interpretation of historic buildings. She is particularly interested in communal buildings of the medieval and modern periods, from guildhalls to parish churches, and how we tell their stories in ways that inspire interest and encourage people to visit and care for them today.

Kate trained as an historian and art historian and had a brief spell as an archivist at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, before discovering buildings archaeology at the University of York, where she did her MA and PhD before joining the Department full-time in 2002.

Kate is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, a Trustee of York Civic Trust and the Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust and former Council member of the Society for Medieval Archaeology and Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology.



# Tony Pratt

**William Rookes (1719-1789)**  
**Barrister of Esholt Hall in the**  
**West Riding and Gray's Inn of**  
**Court, London: Judicial and**  
**Social Connections in the Latter**  
**18th Century**

William Rookes (1719-1789) was a barrister in the second half of the eighteenth century and a Bencher of Gray's Inn of Court from 1760 until his retirement in 1787. His friendship with fellow Bencher Master in Chancery Edward Montagu resulted in numerous letters between the two men, discussing events at the Inn. In the eighteenth century the Inns of Court were central to the social and legal life of the judiciary. They provided accommodation, legal training, and a venue for social gatherings. They were not only places of residence but also centres for legal education, with barristers like Rookes and Montagu required to be members of one of the Inns. They played a crucial role in the legal profession, calling suitably qualified practitioners to the Bar and maintaining the standards of legal education. The Inns of Court were also involved in the governance of the legal profession, contributing to the establishment of modern law schools and influencing legal education for decades. However, although Rookes spent considerable time in London he also loved to be at his seat at Esholt (his wife inherited the estate) and the letters comment on festivities at Christmas and reflect on Esholt's Landscaped grounds, its 'trees, lawns and water', as well as usually hidden family issues, many of which were health related. This paper explores Rookes interactions with Montagu and events at the Inn during the turbulent eighteenth century as well as giving insight into family issues, showing the man behind the judicial position.

# Letitia Lawson

**Samuel Lee Bapty: A Man of Many**  
**Parts**

Samuel Lee Bapty could be described as an opportunist who was not afraid to switch careers in order to improve himself. He was by turns a sewing machine salesman, a medical electrician, the manager of the Alexandra Palace, and a director/manager of some of the largest Exhibitions of the Victorian period. He ultimately became very successful but then died in poverty.

Samuel Lee Bapty was born in Leeds in 1847. In 1872 he moved to Dublin and was a manager at 'Howe Machine Co.' By 1881 Samuel was described as a medical electrician. However, in 1882 he became manager of the Naval Exhibition in London. In 1885 Samuel applied to be the general manager at the Liverpool Exhibition, and in 1886 he applied to be manager at the 1887 Manchester Royal Jubilee Exhibition. In 1887 he attended a dinner in the Exhibition Dining Rooms in Saltaire which had been organised by Titus Salt Junior. On June 1 1889 he became the general manager at the Alexander palace. In 1890 he became the manager of the Edinburgh Exhibition and was married to Ohana Buhicrosan (one of the daughter of Tannaker Buhicrosan who had organised the Japanese village at the Edinburgh Exhibition).

The Edinburgh Exhibition was not a financial success, and Samuel Lee Bapty was arrested as he was about to take up the position of General Manager of the Jamaica Exhibition.

In 1901 and 1911 Samuel and Ohannason were living in Moss Side, Manchester. Samuel died on April 8th 1913. The only mention of Samuel Lee Bapty's death was in the *Shipley Times and Express*, which stated that 'he will be remembered locally as the organiser of the Jubilee Exhibition at Saltaire in 1887.'

# Kate Yarbrough

**Passionately Made: Reader  
Annotations in the Pavement-Pulleyn  
Hours, York Minster Library MS  
XVI.K.6**

This paper derives from my MA dissertation research, which examines the accretion of reader additions in York Minster Library MS XVI.K.6 (c. ~1410-20). This study differs from previous examinations of the Pavement-Pulleyn Hours through its consideration of different York users, each of which imprint different values across the medieval and post-medieval period.

I first proceed with a codicological excavation which works atop previous studies of the book's additional scheme: eight single-leaf images which have been sewn into the book by its various users. I combine these studies with my own new sewing-hole evidence which suggests there was once ephemera sewn into up to 17 other locations in the book. The presence of early-fifteenth century text on four sections which were originally left empty reveals that a culture of addition was created by the first user and expanded by later ones.

I then focus more closely on the local and international ties expressed by the additional scheme. I am especially concerned with vernacular literary patronage between Mount Grace Priory and the York merchant-class laywomen of the York Corpus Christi religious fraternity, one of whom more than likely commissioned the Pavement-Pulleyn Hours. This Carthusian network contextualises the special agency the user(s) exercise in adding their own evocative images of Passion devotion; at the same time, the book's vernacular texts corroborate the role York laywomen had in circulation of Carthusian texts, as investigated by David Falls, Vincent Gillespie, and Johnathan Hughes.

Through close analysis of this manuscript, this paper reads these insertions as impressions of the hands and lives of medieval York people. Uncovering the leading hands of the user(s) disrupts the traditional producer-reader hierarchy of medieval manuscripts. Historical York users simultaneously maintained and adapted the additional scheme, interacting with previous readers while also reshaping the book to fit their individual values.

# Naoki Matsumoto

**Spec-tacular Glass: Concerning a Pair of  
Eyeglasses in the Nine Orders of Angels  
Window in All Saints North Street, York**

Tucked between two characters in panel 1c of the nine orders of angels window (s5) of All Saints, North Street, is a man wearing a pair of folding spectacles from c.1410, one of the oldest examples in medieval art. However, this figure feels out of place as Henry Johnston's 1670 sketch, the drawing used to restore this window from the pre-1960s chaos, does not feature it. To find the original placement of the bespectacled man, this paper sets out to explore all the possibilities of medieval depictions of spectacles, from individual representations of St Mathew and St Jerome to the depictions of apostles in the dormition of the Virgin Mary.

Ultimately, the most conclusive answer is that the spectacles belong to a St Catherine in a window positioned either in s3 or s4, near the altar dedicated to her. The philosophers Catherine debates are often wearing spectacles in medieval art. Within a light with St Catherine, we could have a monumental representation of her, perhaps with her traditional attributes such as a sword and her wheel but also at her feet, the philosophers, including our bespectacled friend. Catherine is not a stranger to York's artistic themes as she is present in many stained glass windows from York Minster and many other parish churches, but also in the Pavement-Pulleyn hours and the Bolton-Blackburn hours, the latter of which was likely owned by Alice Bolton, a parishioner of All Saints.

This research raises interesting questions concerning the employment of eyeglasses as a new invention in the middle ages and its iconographic potential for medieval artists. It also adds further to the originality of the iconographical choices of the stained-glass in All Saints and demonstrates the special devotional culture of late-medieval York.

# Ashley Borrett

**Battle for the Roads of Hull and East  
Yorkshire during the Interwar Years**

The rise of the motor vehicle represented one of the most significant social, cultural and economic developments of the early twentieth century. Britain's burgeoning motor industry in the interwar years created new and exciting travel and leisure opportunities for the car owner, while commercial transportation was transformed by new vehicle technologies. By the eve of the Second World War, private car ownership had exceeded two million, with almost half a million trade vehicles operating on the country's growing network of roads.

Yet motorisation also provoked deep anxieties. Alongside its perceived benefits, the motor vehicle was viewed as a social menace, facilitating dangerous and criminal behaviours. Road injuries and fatalities rose sharply during the interwar period, frequently framed as the product of criminality rather than carelessness. Contemporary commentators warned of a new class of professional criminal – the motor bandit – who exploited modern technology to carry out nefarious activities across boundaries, unhindered by an outmanoeuvred police force that was literally playing catch-up. This was also a period that witnessed the advent of the joyriding craze, with newspaper headlines heightening fears around juvenile criminality.

This paper examines contemporary attitudes to motorisation in Hull and East Yorkshire, arguing that the region's urban and rural characteristics played a key role in shaping anxieties about transport-related offending. Drawing on local newspapers, police records, court reports and municipal debates, it demonstrates how class bias and pre-existing fears about crime and criminality influenced both official and popular reactions to road users. These responses were often complex and contradictory, with blame shifting between motorists, lorry drivers, cyclists and pedestrians – a congested battleground in an era of rapid technological change.

# Emily Ingram

**Danger, Pleasure, and Pollution  
on Hull's Industrial Waterways**

The people of Hull have long possessed a connection with open drainage channels. For decades, these urban waterways have served as a means of managing water and safeguarding against the peril of floods – a common occurrence in Hull, which is second only to London for flood risk in the UK (Giliberto, 2024). They have also historically provided underserved communities with space for leisure pursuits like swimming, ice-skating and fishing. Yet, those who enjoyed these “sinuous” drains in the past were particularly vulnerable to “a perennial source of deadly danger” (Hull Daily Mail, 1895:3), through risk of accidental drowning or exposure to polluted waters. Contemporary reports continue to warn of the environmental hazards of Hull's drains, with the BBC recently describing the Beverley and Barmston Drain as “black” and “greasy” (BBC News, 2024).

Using these waterways as a case study, this ongoing research project seeks to build upon the concepts of “productive nostalgia” (Smith and Campbell, 2017:613) and “heritage from below” (Robertson, 2008:143) to form a mixed methodology of oral history and memory, co-produced archival research and environmental workshops. When combined, these methods aim to empower local communities with knowledge of the links between urban drainage channels and the multi-faceted impact of water pollution. By showcasing some early data collected as part of the research, the paper will delve deeper into the rich, yet often overlooked, social history of drainage waterways, charting how their waters have served to shape life, health and death in the City of Hull from the mid-19th to the late 20th century. It will also ask how participatory heritage can help foster an authentic intergenerational understanding of water cultures of the past and present: and how this might inspire new ways for us to live well with water in the future.

# Andrew Breeze

Bloodbath at Catterick

Amongst Yorkshire's earliest historical documents is Aneirin's "Goddodin", a series of bardic laments for North British heroes slaughtered in an attack on the English at "Catraeth" or Catterick. Aneirin's verses, giving a vivid picture of aristocratic society in the Dark Ages, are best known from K. H. Jackson, "The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem" (Edinburgh University Press, 1969). Yet one problem has been when they were written. Research on the Battle of "Degsastan" described by Bede now answers the question. Both conflicts would be fought in 603 as part of a two-pronged attack upon the Angles of Northumbria. Aneirin's "Gododdin" will thus be a Yorkshire poem as well as a Scottish one, revealing the barbaric luxury and ferocity of the Celtic warriors whom Aneirin mourned in it.

# Alex Harvey

Little Kingdoms: Post-Roman Yorkshire

After the so-called 'withdrawal' of Roman legionaries from northern England, multiple competing polities emerged amidst the power vacuum, scrambling over land and resources, speaking a mixture of Celtic and Germanic dialects. These 'successor states' are often placed as stepping stones on a linear narrative; hurdles to jump over before we get to the unification of England and the consolidation of Yorkshire as a county. Some of their names might be familiar, like Northumbria and Elmet, but this talk will go further: Haethfelthland, Dunutinga, Balne, and more. Not only will it shed light on a maddening miscellany of deeply obscure Early Medieval realms, but also highlight their individual stories, positioning post-Roman Yorkshire not as a pit-stop en route to 'the good stuff', but an anthology of unique beginnings, informed by the disciplines of historiography, archaeology, and place name studies.

# Sophia Lambert

Burial Practises in the Bradford Reform Jewish Community, 1877-1914

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were characterised by changes in burial practices across Britain and Europe, including the opening of out-of-town cemeteries and the competing burial ideals of the family grave versus 'hygienic burial' in single-person graves. But to what extent did Jewish burial practices in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Britain differ from those of non-Jewish communities? This paper will use the Bradford Reform Jewish Cemetery as a lens to explore the changes and continuities in adults' and children's interment practices within minority communities from the cemetery's opening in 1877 until 1914. Comparing burial practices in this Jewish community with those of local non-Jewish sites, such as Beckett Street Cemetery in Leeds, will provide a more nuanced, regionalised picture of the development of burial practices in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Britain. I compare the layout of the Reform Jewish Cemetery with that of the Leeds General Cemetery to determine the extent to which the former was a hierarchical landscape, which contradicts Jewish belief in the equality of all in death. This paper will also explore how Jewish burial practices differed by age and social class, using previously unseen documents to conduct case studies of individuals buried in the Reform Jewish Cemetery, including children who died in the Bradford Union Workhouse.

The introduction of cremation in the late nineteenth century changed burial practices and cemetery landscapes forever. In Jewish communities, cremation sparked debates concerning whether the practice contradicted Jewish law and whether the cremated remains could be interred in a Jewish cemetery. The Bradford Reform Jewry were among the earliest to break away from the 3,000-year-old Jewish tradition of earth burial in favour of cremation. This paper asks who were among the first Jewish people in this community to be cremated and how cremation impacted the Reform Jewish Cemetery's landscape.

# Carolyn Donohue

Valley Mentality? Identities, localities, and being a Bradfordian

In the history of mental healthcare, the pioneering role of The Retreat is well-known. Opened in York in 1796, it was purpose-built for healing and advocated for the compassionate treatment of patients, a focus on wellbeing that contrasted with the use of restraint and invasive therapies. Alongside this internationally significant place in the development of mental healthcare, The Retreat also holds a special place in the heart of the community. Mention the site within the city and many people will have a personal connection to its important history. A new collaborative research project, funded by the Institute for Health and Care Improvement at York St John University, is currently working to capture the memories of those who lived, worked at, and visited the site. These stories are being collected not only to add modern voices to the institution's rich historic archive, dating back to the 18th century, but also to inform creative ways of preserving those stories for the future. This paper will highlight the fascinating recent history of The Retreat and show how community memories are shaping the future of engagement with the site and its important heritage.

## With thanks to:

This year's conference was kindly supported by a grant from the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society, who generously agreed to cover the costs of venue hire for this two-day event.

We are immensely grateful for this award, and would encourage attendees with an interest in Yorkshire's past to visit the society's website at [www.yas.org.uk](http://www.yas.org.uk) for more information on the wider society, its subject-specific sections, and its own exciting programme of talks and events - including their own Yorkshire History Conference on Saturday 10th October, also in York.



**The Yorkshire Archaeological  
& Historical Society**



# ROYSCast

Alongside the conference, ROYS also publishes a podcast: ROYSCast. Hosted by Jonny Farley and co-hosts from across the committee, the podcast aims to provide researchers, academics, professionals, and individuals working on Yorkshire's past with a platform to share their work and story with a wider audience than they might traditionally reach. So far, podcast topics have covered Yorkshire's involvement in the Third Crusade through to the ongoing partnership between the cities of Hull and Freetown in Sierra Leone.

Season 2 of the podcast is now underway, with new episodes available via the QR code below.

If you would like to listen to the podcast it is available on all major platforms, just search for ROYSCast or use the QR Code.

If you would like to get in touch with the podcast with a question or would like to arrange an episode yourself you can reach the team at [royscast@gmail.com](mailto:royscast@gmail.com)

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