

The Sculpture Trail

1. Lost for Words

Mild Steel

“Oh John!”
“Oh my lamb!”

These were the last words spoken by two of the victims who died in the Bold Venture Lodge flood disaster, as reported in the Blackburn Standard of August 30th, 1848.

2. The Wallpaper Tree

Stainless Steel

The designs for these ‘wallpapers-for-all-seasons’ were taken from original wallpapers by James Huntington (1826-1878) who worked at Belgrave Mill.

3. Flow

Stainless Steel

Spinning, turning and appearing to wind up and down, this sculpture represents the ebb and flow of the fortunes of Darwen and its people, particularly during the industrial era with its fluctuating periods of growth and enterprise followed by stagnation and depression in quick succession. It also refers to George Taylor, specialist creator of ‘Rainbow Effect’ calico print. In the early days of Darwen’s industrial development he set up his printing works in a spot near here, proudly calling it ‘Bold Venture’.

4. Huntington’s Parlour

Corten and Stainless Steel

James Huntington, wallpaper designer for the Potters of Darwen at Belgrave Mill, was ‘appreciated by many and esteemed by all’. When he died in 1878 he left a generous legacy to the workers at his mills, which they in turn acknowledged by erecting a three-tiered fountain in his memory, which once stood in Bold Venture Park.

A Victorian parlour is recreated here with this oversized table and chair in their woodland ‘room’. The applied decorative

shapes are taken from James Huntington’s wallpaper designs and refer to the rich fabrics that were also very popular at the time.

5. Silver Pheasant

Galvanised Mild Steel and Scrap Metal

Based on the golden pheasant, one of the most magnificent birds housed in the Hindle Aviary, with its light golden crest, deep ‘cape’ and elegant tail feathers.

6. Victorian Birdcage

Mild Steel and Stainless Steel

These birds fly in memory of the aviary that once stood in the park, donated by Mr. and Mrs. Hindle on the occasion of their silver wedding anniversary in 1901.

7. Pintailed Whydah

Galvanised Mild Steel and Scrap Metal

The pintailed whydah is a small brown mottled songbird approximately 12 cm long from Africa and was one of the 150 exotic birds once housed in the Hindle Aviary. In the breeding season, the male sheds its brown feathers and dons shiny black and white plumage along with a startling 20cm long flowing black tail.

8. Who Pays the Quarryman?

Relief carved into the face of the quarry by Thompson Dagnall

This relief sculpture brings to mind the original quarrymen and others who paid with their lives during the industrial history of Darwen while the mill owners amassed vast wealth. The title misquotes the phrase “Who pays the ferryman?” which refers to the mythic Greek ferryman who transports the dead to the underworld.

9. The Labyrinth

Where once the Huntington Fountain stood.

10. Hindle Aviary

Pergola in the place where the Hindle Aviary stood, with pebble mosaic by Maggy Howarth.



“I hope you’ve enjoyed the walk.” You look at him in surprise.
“It was great, yes, thank you for taking the time...”

Marjan Wouda, a Dutch sculptor, set up her home and studio in Darwen in 2000.

Her work can be found as far afield as Hong Kong, Mustique and new Zealand, with further public sculpture throughout the UK. Animals, stories and history are her main sources of inspiration.

“I particularly like making sculptures for outdoor green spaces where people are less hurried and more likely to take a little time to consider what they find on their way.”

www.marjanwouda.co.uk

Thompson Dagnall has been working as a sculptor since gaining a 1st at Brighton and then an MA at Chelsea in 1979.

Since then has been working mainly in carved timber and stone on a large scale, at first exhibiting but now working mainly to commission on public sculpture in the north west and occasionally further afield.

“I have been playing in the toy box for 35 years and will continue until someone catches me.”

www.thompsondagnall.co.uk

Huntington Heritage Trail

BOLD VENTURE PARK DARWEN

“You want to know more about Darwen’s industrial past? Come along.”

Project devised and managed by The Friends of Bold Venture Park and funded by the Big National Lottery and Groundwork Community Spaces. Supported by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. Sculptures by Marjan Wouda and Thompson Dagnall.

Research by Marjan Wouda with the assistance of Darwen Research Group and Darwen Library. Ideas, advice and sheet metal design support by Barrie Jackson. Scrap metal kindly donated by Rolled Alloys UK. Metal cutting by Castle Metals UK Ltd. Welding and metal fabrication by Luke Listers. Labyrinth and water feature contractor: Landscape Engineering Ltd. Engineering overseen by RSC Consulting Engineers. Photography by Matt Donnelly. Trail leaflet text by Jacqueline Harris. Leaflet design by Leanda Ryan.

Whydah Maquette



The Quarryman

You stroll into Bold Venture Park from Belgrave Road and turn left. Through the trees, swallows sweep and curve above the lake. In the branches, you notice words hanging in huge speech bubbles.

“Oh John!” proclaims one, whilst the other reads,

“Oh my lamb!”

What are they? You look around. On a bench close by, there’s a man looking at you from deep kind eyes, an old fashioned peaked cap on his head. He stands up.

“Do you want to know what they mean?”

You’re not sure what to say but nod slightly. His brown waistcoat and trousers are covered in a soft white dust that clouds the air around him as he stamps up the path in heavy boots. They make no sound. He stands beside you and looks out over the lake,

“They’re the last words of two victims of the flood.”

He looks straight at you.

“It was 1848 and there was a reservoir over there where the park lake lies today. It happened in the early hours of 23rd August. Darwen was hit by a terrible storm. The dam burst and the torrent of water raced down Peggy Brook towards the sleeping town. As it hit Water Street, people began to wake and raise the alarm. Water poured



“By now Huntington was a wealthy man living at Astley Bank. He organised a relief scheme for the workers and issued tickets for loaves and meal. Then, only a month after the strike ended at Potters, James Huntington died at the age of 52. But he still had one great surprise waiting for the mill workers. In his will he left eight weeks’ wages for every employee of the firm who had worked there for a year. Imagine what a day that was for them, even as they were so sorry to lose him.

“They put 5% of their money into a fund and built an ornate three tier fountain here in the Park in his memory. Sadly, it was demolished in the Second World War to provide metal for the war effort.”

You’re leaning forwards now, hands on the edge of the chair.

“You’re right. What a great man,” you say as you jump down.



“Those birds have long since flown from their enclosures, but they’re still here in the park for anyone to see with their imagination.”

into the houses, filling the downstairs rooms almost to the ceilings.

“Mrs. Turner ran downstairs and on reaching the water, dropped the child she was carrying. She caught its leg as it was about to sink. As the water raced into Bury Street, a young boy was swept out of his house and carried two hundred metres into Market Street where he was snatched up by John Hindle just as the water was about to pass underground.”

He turns back to you and holds your gaze.

“They were two of the lucky ones. Those who lived in the cellars in Market Street and Bury Street were trapped in their homes. Twelve people died in Darwen that night.” You both stand for a moment. Then he walks away down the path. You raise your arm,

“No, wait..that’s terrible...”

The man stops and turns.

“You want to know more about Darwen’s industrial past? Come along.”

As you walk, you notice that his hands are rough and covered with the same white powder, hardened into the creases and crevices.

“Have you come from work?” you ask.

“Aye, I work at the quarry.”

Now the dust makes sense. But something’s still a little odd. Is it the waistcoat? And where is the nearest quarry? You round the top corner and the quarryman stops by a huge oak tree, decorated with swathes of metal cut out in intricate curves and flourishes.

“Ah, now he was a man worth knowing. When he died, six hundred people turned out for his funeral. Not surprising either.”

You say quietly,

“What man?”

“James Huntington. He wasn’t a Darrener himself. Born in Surrey. He came to Darwen in 1864 and designed wallpaper for the Potters at Belgrave Mill.”

The metal sheets shift in the wind and

“We’ll leave James Huntington here. There’s something very different around the corner!”

You walk around the top of the park to come down on the other side of the brook. The water is rushing red and sunlight is breaking through the trees overhead, scattering shadows. He stops and peers upwards. You follow his eyes, searching the trees, and there on a high branch sits a beautiful silver bird.

The quarryman puts his hands to his heart.

“Ah, the romantic Mr. and Mrs. Hindle.”

You fold your arms and lean against a tree, smiling, and wait for him to continue.

“They celebrated their Silver Wedding in 1901 by building an aviary here in the park. They filled it with over a hundred and fifty exotic birds, including orange cheeks and waxbills, avadavits so tiny they would escape through the wire, saffron finches, the



you’re caught by how like strips of wallpaper they are.

“That’s right,” he says as if he can read your thoughts, “the patterns are taken from his designs. He was such a success, they made him a managing partner of the firm in 1875.”

The branches and sky dance through the cut outs.

“Of course that wasn’t what made him so popular with everyone. There was more to him than that. If any of his workers suffered from typhoid, he paid for their medicines and doctors’ bills. Mind you, it was what he did the year he died that is remembered.”

He turns and walks up towards Manor Road.

“What did he do?” you shout as you walk quickly after him.

“All in good time. There’s something I want to show you first.”



pintailed whydah, scarlet banded cut-throats, bronze mannekins and the golden pheasant.

“Those birds have long since flown, but they’re still here in the park for anyone to see with their imagination.”

You look up at the Silver Pheasant and wink at it, before chasing after the quarryman, who is whistling now, the sound mingling with the racing water and the birdsong.

You almost crash into him as he stops abruptly. In fact you think you did, but you must have misjudged the distance because you felt nothing. He’s doing a strange dance, as if dodging a ball. You nearly laugh but then you see what he’s looking at. Above you hangs a Victorian birdcage and behind it flutter five silver birds.

He stops to ask you,

“Are they caged or are they free?”

At first you don’t understand. Then you move to where he is and the birds slip into the cage. You move to the right, and they fly free.

“Your choice,” he laughs as he sets off down the path.

As you reach the pool, he turns towards the bank. He beckons you and says in a whisper,

“Can you see it?”

“What am I looking for?” you whisper back.

“The Whydah bird.”

And there it is in full flight, its wings

He crosses the road to Top Park and takes the right hand path, stopping after a few long strides.

“Look at it, spinning and winding up and down, just like the fortunes of Darwen.” The falling metal spiral catches the moving shadows of the leaves and branches as it turns. He turns and moves on, climbing the path.

Suddenly, he veers off and into a clearing. In their woodland ‘parlour’, stand an oversized Victorian table and chair decorated with the same flowing patterns you have seen before.

“Are those more of James Huntington’s designs?”

The quarryman grins.

“Yes they are. Why don’t you sit in the chair and I’ll tell you what happened in 1878, the year he died.”

You jump up onto the chair and shift backwards to get comfortable. He sighs, takes a deep breath and begins.

“It was a bad year. The Franco-Prussian war affected business right across the region and there was a 10% cut in wages. It led to the biggest strike among Lancashire mill workers ever recorded, affecting 10,000 workers in Darwen.



outstretched and its extravagant tail feathers falling and curling through the air. “You see? It’s still here!”

He’s walking back towards the road now.

“I hope you’ve enjoyed the walk.”

You look at him in surprise.

“It was great, yes, thank you for taking the time...”

He interrupts you,

“Just one more thing.”

Entering the lower park, he heads to the left, leaves the path and walks into the deep shadows of a bank below a stone face at the edge of an old quarry. You blink and can no longer see him. Then you hear his voice.

“There used to be two quarries here, before the park, one near the top of the waterfall and one where the lake is now.” You scramble onto the bank but he’s nowhere to be seen. There’s no sound, and then you realise that you haven’t heard his footsteps throughout the whole walk.

Round the corner there is an exit onto Manor Road and you run out and check up and down the street, but there’s no sign of him. You walk back to the stone face, wondering what he was trying to show you. Then you see it. There’s the suggestion of a man in the stone. Stepping back, you see a sign telling you about the figure in the rock:

“This relief sculpture is a reference to the original quarrymen and others who paid with their lives during the industrial history of Darwen.”

You stop reading. Surely he can’t be... you shake your head, telling yourself not to be silly.

Your heart is beating fast now and you walk over to a bench to sit and think, but all you can think about are the people in the flood, James Huntington and his kindnesses, and those birds, still flying.