



Jenny Agutter returns to Oakworth Station in 2005 – 30 years after making 'The Railway Children'.
© Yorkshire Post

Made in Yorkshire

A major new book chronicles the county's astonishing film-making heritage. Tony Earnshaw reveals the inspiration for a project that became an obsession.



Laurence Harvey as Joe Lampton, the heartless social climber in 'Room at the Top' pictured in the council chamber of Bradford City Hall in 1965. © Yorkshire Post

IT was difficult to spot the actors among the extras thronging the station. Peering into the crowd I could just make out Paul McGann as he bundled two little girls and his screen wife, actress Phoebe Nicholls, into the carriage of a steam train. Moments later a bemused looking Bob Peck, playing an officious factory owner, asked: 'Arthur, what in heaven's name is going on?'

Thus a key scene in 'Fairytale: A True Story' was officially 'in the can'. Lurking behind a pillar, I was able to observe the mechanics of the film-making process at close quarter. Further down the platform my colleague Jim Moran caught the action on film courtesy of a long lens and a lot of patience.

Over the years Jim and I have covered several of Yorkshire's biggest movies. We watched as Jane Horrocks warmed up for her big number in 'Little Voice', filmed inside a lonely club on top of a fog-shrouded clifftop in Scarborough. Then there was Pete Postlethwaite, clambering his way to the top of a perilous peak during the filming of 'Among Giants'. 'Made it, Ma. Top o' Tesco's!' he crowed as he self-deprecatingly misquoted a famous film line by the great Jimmy Cagney.

Ray Winstone was still burnishing his image as a tough guy when he lost his temper (with himself) during the shooting of 'Fanny and Elvis' in Hebden Bridge. The location was high on the moors – far enough away from daily ▶



Ewan McGregor, Tara Fitzgerald and Pete Postlethwaite filming 'Brassed Off' on location at the Piece Hall, Halifax, in 1995. © Mark Herman/Steve Abbott



Playwright Kay Mellor and actress daughter Gaynor Faye – writer and star of 'Fanny & Elvis' shot in Hebden Bridge. © Yorkshire Post



Irving Rapper's crew sets up a crane in the centre of Malham in the 1950s for a scene in 'Another Man's Poison', starring Bette Davis. © Bryan Percy

life so that passers-by wouldn't be perturbed by the burly Londoner's fire, brimstone and cheerful profanity.

Anyone who has ever been an extra in a movie tends to remember great chunks of detail about what should, in reality, be the most inconsequential things. Yet experiencing even the briefest brush with a film star, whether an established name or a newcomer on the verge of a breakthrough, provides memories that last a lifetime.

I confess I am fascinated by the process of making a movie on location. And Yorkshire can claim more than its fair share. The experience of observing from the sidelines on 'Wall of Tyranny' planted a seed that has been germinating for 20 years. Perhaps without even realising it, I began amassing a wealth of information on the county's astonishingly broad heritage of film-making.

As a journalist on a range of local weeklies – from Cleckheaton to Harrogate to Pudsey and Wetherby – I squirreled away stories, interviews and pictures taken by photographer colleagues. When I joined the Yorkshire Post in 1994 I enjoyed incredible access to an array of films shot in the Broad Acres, often working with Jim, a fine and gifted photographer with an innate knack for being discreet. Some of those movies became significant hits; others ▶



Dustin Hoffman on York Station during the filming of 'Agatha' in 1977. © Yorkshire Post



Crowning moment: filming the coronation of Elizabeth I (Cate Blanchett) in York Minster. Lord Burghley (Richard Attenborough) leads the procession. © Yorkshire Post



Richard Attenborough, Jamie Foreman and Cate Blanchett in her breakthrough role as the Virgin Queen in 'Elizabeth', outside York Minster in 1997. © Yorkshire Post

Classic Yorkshire films include 'Kes', 'The Railway Children', 'This Sporting Life' and 'The Dresser'

vanished without trace. Yet all of them were documented in some considerable detail by Jim and me.

Over the years I became aware that I had gathered a unique archive of material. Jim's photographs, taken for the Yorkshire Post, represented the icing on the cake. We talked often of combining my words and his pictures to form the basis of a book.

Two years ago, we got our chance, and the book 'Made in Yorkshire' was born. Yet drawing together the list of featured films proved more problematic than I had ever considered. It began with the movies Jim and I had covered together, titles like the aforementioned 'Little Voice', 'Fairytale – A True Story', 'Among Giants', and 'LA Without a Map'. Then there were classics that could not be ignored, such as 'Kes', 'The Railway Children', 'This Sporting Life' and 'The Dresser'. And, in among such a rich line-up, were films we had previously not even been aware of. I never knew that Bette Davis had made a thriller in the Dales in the early '50s, filming 'Another Man's Poison' in Malham with new husband Gary Merrill. And I was staggered to learn that Paul Newman had been part of 'Lady L', made by writer/director Peter Ustinov at Castle Howard. His leading lady was the statuesque Sophia Loren.

Suddenly 'Made in Yorkshire' became a much larger project, and one that required a staggering number of illustrations. Enter the film extra or, as these good people prefer to be known, the background artiste. ►



Michael Palin, star of 'A Private Function', prepares to receive a Lifetime Achievement Award at the 14th Bradford International Film Festival from close friend and writer Alan Bennett. © Jim Moran



Suburban Leeds becomes Belfast, circa 1979, for the filming of 'Monk Dawson' in 1996. © Yorkshire Post



Tough guy Ray Winstone during the shooting of 'Fanny and Elvis' in Hebden Bridge. © Yorkshire Post

I had interviewed a fair number while drafting my various location reports, and generally they added what editors call 'colour' to any feature.

Extras are any self-respecting reporter's eyes and ears on a film set. As non-professionals they absorb everything going on around them with an understandable fascination. And, crucially, they tend to keep a photographic record of their experiences. Jim and I realised we had stumbled upon a treasure trove of unpublished material.

Hollywood icon Bette Davis made a thriller in the Dales in the early '50s

We gradually amassed a surfeit of riches on movies as diverse as 'Agatha', 'Yanks', 'Billy Liar' and 'Turn of the Tide', one of the earliest movies made in Yorkshire, and one that occupied a significant place in the county's film history.

Some of it we used; some we did not. But alongside interviews with people like Morgan Freeman, Ralph Fiennes, Ken Loach and Julie Christie there is a constantly fascinating selection of images from more than a century of film, and all of it made in Yorkshire.

'Made in Yorkshire' has 272 pages and more than 300 photographs, it is published by Guerilla Books at £25, contact: info@guerilla-books.com or call 020 8758 1716. The book will be launched at the National Media Museum, Bradford, August 15. Tony Earnshaw is Artistic Director of the Bradford International Film Festival.



On a foggy cliff top above Scarborough, actors Philip Jackson, Ewan McGregor and Jim Broadbent mug for the camera during a lull in filming on 'Little Voice' in 1997. © Yorkshire Post