

# KNARESBOROUGH

## Blue Plaque Guide

Created by  
*Knaresborough  
 Civic Society*

### History of Knaresborough

The beautiful town of Knaresborough is steeped in history and is home to the country's longest continually run market, the oldest Chemist Shop as well as Mother Shipton's the oldest fee paying tourist attraction. The town has royal connections that go right back to the very first Maundy alms which were distributed here by King John in 1210. The castle became the luxurious summer home of the Royal Court of Edward III and his popular wife Queen Philippa in 1331. During the Civil War, the castle was besieged by Parliamentarians and eventually surrendered in 1644. Many other historical characters are associated with Knaresborough. These include Saint Robert, a much revered holy man and hermit, the prophetic known as Mother Shipton as well as the remarkable civil engineer John Metcalf known around the world as Blind Jack. A selection of contemporary, independent shops and eateries are within easy walking distance of public transport services and pleasant green spaces. Rich in history, culture, fun and leisure, Knaresborough has something for visitors of all ages.

### Waterside Walk

Start at Bond End/Conyngam Hall car park. Round trip 3.4 miles (70 minutes).  
 A stroll along Waterside by the viaduct leads you past the Old Manor House built originally for King John. A little further downstream and closer to the weir are the Indigo Mill, Dye House & Castle Mill buildings, which played significant roles in Knaresborough's highly respected linen industry. During the Civil War, the castle was besieged by Parliamentarians and eventually surrendered in 1644. A water wheel was erected at the weir in 1764 to pump water into town up the side of the gorge. Further along is the site of one of the country's first gas works, installed by John Malam in 1824. Crossing over into Abbey Road and continuing downstream you'll find a house carved by hand into rock in 1770 and next door the Chapel of Our Lady of the Crag, dating from 1408. Near the end of Abbey Road is a cave, which was a medieval pilgrimage site and home to St Robert.

### Blue Plaques

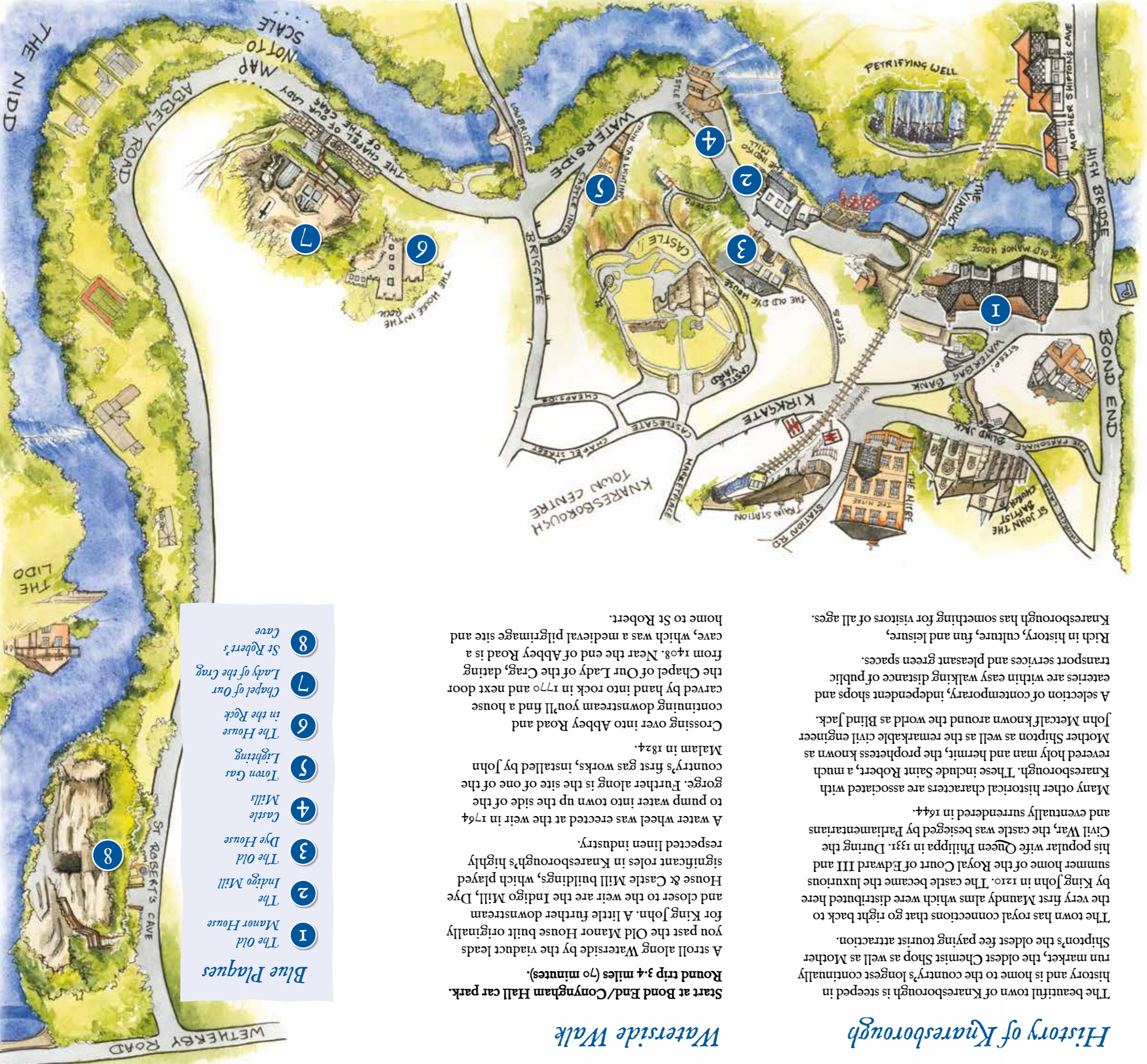
- 1 The Old Manor House
- 2 The Indigo Mill
- 3 The Old Dye House
- 4 Castle Mills
- 5 Town Gas Lighting
- 6 The House in the Rock
- 7 Chapel of Our Lady of the Crag
- 8 St Robert's Cave



You'll find Knaresborough Civic Society blue plaques at important historical sites across town and this leaflet contains a map to guide you from one to another. If you manage to visit them all, you'll scale the gorge from riverside to castle top and along the way gain a distinctive insight into Knaresborough's evolution through the ages.

If you'd like to give Knaresborough Civic Society your support, we can be a collective voice when local views are sought. Please follow the links on the website [www.knaresborough-civic-society.org.uk](http://www.knaresborough-civic-society.org.uk) for more information on membership.

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## Blind Jack

John Metcalf is known affectionately around the world as Blind Jack and was born here in 1717.

After becoming blind at the age of 6, Jack was determined not to be held back and joined his friends in all of their pursuits. As an adult he became proficient on horseback and was an accomplished musician.

After successfully building a road between Minskip and Ferrensby, he embarked on a near thirty-year career as a civil engineer, specialising in building solid roads across bogs and marshland.

Jack was the first road engineer of distinction, preceding Telford and Macadam.

## Mother Shipton

Mother Shipton was born Ursula Sontheil in 1488 during the reign of Henry VII and is England's most famous Prophetess.

Legend has it that she was born during a violent thunderstorm in a cave on the banks of the River Nidd here in Knaresborough.

Her mother, Agatha, was just fifteen years old and with no family and no friends to support her, Agatha raised Ursula in the cave on her own. Ursula spent most of her days around the cave making remedies and potions with the flowers and herbs she studied alone in the forest.

## St Robert

St. Robert was born Robert Flower the son of Touk Flower, mayor of York, some time in the early 1160's. He was well educated but chose to live piously as a hermit & found solitude in a cave by the river Nidd in Knaresborough. His brother, Walter, funded the building of a small chapel on the site.

His fame as a holy man and friend of the poor spread, and people came in vast numbers to visit him, including King John in 1216.

St. Robert died on the 24th September 1218 and to the last he remained loved and respected by the people of Knaresborough.

## Town Walk Round trip 2 miles (45 minutes).

Long-stay car parks are available at both ends of town and the railway station is in the middle, which allows you to choose the most convenient point to start your tour. Along the way, you can visit Conyngham Hall, the site of the former Knaresborough Zoo and further along Bond End is the Knaresborough Inn, formerly the Dower House and now a convivial pub with well appointed rooms. Nearby is St. John's House, adding to the area's historic charm.

The birth place of Blind Jack was in the vicinity of Knaresborough House and the Parish church & nearby the Mitre was named in honour of Bishop William Stubbs of Oxford who was also born in the area.

White Horse Yard was home to Eugene Aram a convicted murderer and around the corner on the edge of the market place is where a small 13C Jewish community was located and the almshouse for the poor was sited.

Opposite the Oldest Chemist shop in the market place is the old Town Hall and behind the Police Station is where eleven men were convicted of riotous behaviour only to be hailed as heroes on their release.

Just off Castlegate, in Green Dragon Yard is the Old Flax Mill part of Knaresborough's prestigious linen heritage and slightly further afield is King James's School established in 1616 by the Rev. Robert Chaloner with a charter from King James I.



### Blue Plaques

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- 11 St John's House
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- 13 Blind Jack of Knaresborough
- 14 Mitre Inn
- 15 Eugene Aram
- 16 The Oldest Chemist Shop
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