

Three more NCUK university towns (Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds)

Yorkshire is a proud county of Great Britain, not least because of its cricket tradition, but also because it is a 'shire' one of the very old administrative districts of England. It also boasts 'ridings', a word which derives from the old Norse word 'thryding', meaning it is divided into three parts. Forming an inverted triangle in the West Riding of Yorkshire are the three NCUK university towns of Leeds, Bradford and Huddersfield. In times past these commercially important centres were accessible by canals and later by railway. Today, they are easily accessible from anywhere in the world. Leeds-Bradford International Airport uses Amsterdam, Schiphol as a hub. Bradford was a boom-town of the Industrial Revolution and for a time was the Wool Capital of the world. Woolen clothing might not be the most appropriate for the Sri Lanka, climate, but are excellent for the cooler parts of the world. The textile tradition continued and for many years researchers at the University led the world in polymer science. Amongst the city's claims is the largest Hindu temple in Northern England and the second highest Muslim population in the UK. The 2010 Bradford Cricket League included three Sri Lankan players. Leeds is an impressive and self-confident city with big civic buildings and spacious streets. The University can make two enviable claims. In 1909 William Bragg arrived back in UK after 23 years in Australia to take up the post of Professor of Physics at the University. Here, in collaboration with his son, Lawrence, he invented the science of X-ray crystallography for which they were jointly awarded the 1915 Nobel Prize for Physics. Every physics student will sooner or later encounter the famous Bragg formula ($n\lambda = 2d\sin\theta$) and of course this work led on to our understanding of the structure of DNA. By contrast, a young man who had studied classics before transferring to English Language graduated from Oxford in 1915. It being the middle of the first world war he joined the army and lucky for us all he survived the Battle of the Somme, but was invalided home in November 1916. After a period working as a lexicographer with the New English Dictionary JRR Tolkien was appointed Reader in English Language at Leeds in 1920. The bedtime stories that he told his children during that time were later to become the Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings. Huddersfield lies 17km south of Bradford and is the birthplace of Rugby league. It too has a long liberal tradition. The Napoleonic wars had caused a major depression in the textile trade and mill owners, anxious to maintain their profit levels, were replacing hand-weavers with machinery. During 1811-12 groups of weavers and finishers, dedicated to the protection of their jobs by the destruction of these machines, gave their name to a word in the English language: Luddites. The movements started in Nottinghamshire, but it soon spread to Yorkshire and Huddersfield was the place where it moved from attacks on factories to the murder of a fierce opponent of their cause. Although the perpetrators were executed Parliament was forced to introduce welfare provisions for those forced out of work as well as regulations governing the working conditions in mills.