

A Melting Pot of Bradford Radicals – Look around at the Cemetery's gravestones: they commemorate many who came and made this city their home.

Bradford is known for being a melting pot of nationalities, having welcomed migrants from all over the world in the mix; Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Russia, Poland, Italy, Belgium, the Basque Country, West Indies, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Ukraine, Czechia, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Syria, amongst others.

Bradford also has a reputation for rebelliousness. Rapid expansion in the Industrial Revolution created a huge gap between rich and poor, resulting in social tension. Our activists have fought passionately for change: in working conditions, voting rights and the provision of services. One early reformer, Benjamin Godwin plot U A553, was concerned with the most basic of human rights: freedom. As part of the Bradford Anti-slavery Committee, he helped to secure the 1833 Act that abolished slavery in the British Empire. At least one freed slave, Abraham Johnson, sought sanctuary here; the artist Sowden drew him as part of his Bradford Characters series. In 1848, Bradford Chartists marched in strength in the Manchester Road area of town in support of the rights of working people. The government sent in armed troops but there was no violence and the Chartists faded away.

Julia Varley plot U H372 was a Bradford Suffragette, who campaigned for equal voting rights for men and women (Universal Suffrage). She was one of the first female leaders of the trade union movement and supported strikers at Manningham Mills, protesting pay cuts in 1891. Although the strike was unsuccessful, it led to a new political party being created to represent the working class.

The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was formed as a national organisation in Bradford in 1893 with Keir Hardie as Chair. The ILP became the foundation stone of the Labour Party, formed in 1900.

Barbara Castle, who grew up here, was inspired by Keir Hardie and Bradford's history of radical socialism, going on to be the youngest female MP in 1945.

Later, as Transport Minister, she introduced the breathalyser, the 70mph speed limit, and the requirement to install seat belts in new cars, saving many lives.

Timeline

1832 Bradford represented in Parliament for the first time by 2 Liberal MPs

1847 Bradford Corporation established

1893 ILP's first national congress in Bradford

1897 City status granted

1928 Universal Suffrage

1945 Railways and coal mines nationalised

1974 West Riding became West Yorkshire; Ilkley, Keighley and other townships became part of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

1985 Mohammed Ajeeb became Bradford's Lord Mayor, the first Asian to hold this role in the country

1995 & 2001 the Bradford Riots

2010 Bradford attained 'City of Sanctuary' status for providing a safe place for people escaping from persecution or danger.

2011 Naveeda Akram became the city's first Asian woman Lord Mayor

2022 Bradford awarded 2025 City of Culture

Can you spot any other Bradford Radicals buried here?