

SNAP SHOTS

Lived in Yorkshire 20 years, circumnavigated Bradford many times; spent the day in the city centre, addressing it with the shyness and boldness of a relative stranger.

by River Wolton

Boots. Bank Street. 16.40. One pink brotly. Sold by Sarah.

Shelter in Café Sublime. Cars slither down Cheapside.

Some things won't wash away: the marble pillars

of the Wool Exchange that rivalled Liverpool;

the sixty thousand jobs wiped out during the 1970s.

Kristan and Helen from the Games Shop befriend me

in mid-Kirkgate Are you lost? I take heart from the

eager, flickering heads - museum footage of a 1902

Sports Day - any of their grins could be those of

children heading home to Manningham or Heaton.

Navigate the hoardings of Broadway-to-be. Bricks. Sand.

Set up a tripod. Frame the shot. What shape is your city?

Contessa's come here on the Stagecoach bus to sell The Big Issue. She shows me photos of her baby daughter on her phone. Food here does not like her. Home was Romania.

In the Cathedral, *Blessed Are The Peacemakers* is cut from hessian in Aramaic. Threads drape the walls.

Saucepans are unpacked for Refugee Week.

I'm too shy to meet the Congolese who're shaking their umbrellas in the porch. Too shy to smile at the couple signing in the dark

at Tourist Information, watching *This Is Where We Live*.

Every TV in the land was once made here, at Baird's.

City Hall. 11.42. Under canvas, three turrets are sculpted from a heap of builder's sand.

Earth. Air. Water. All life needs. It's drizzling.

We're not at Glastonbury but we could pitch up

here, in litter's silt and strangers' warmth.

Damien and his mate from APS Security

will stay all night, stop clubbers pushing

through the fence and leaving handprints

on the yellow castle's dragonflies. Look up!

the big screen yells. A skyline strung with domes.

Could Mawson and Lockwood's stony saints

outlast all our festivals and lakes?