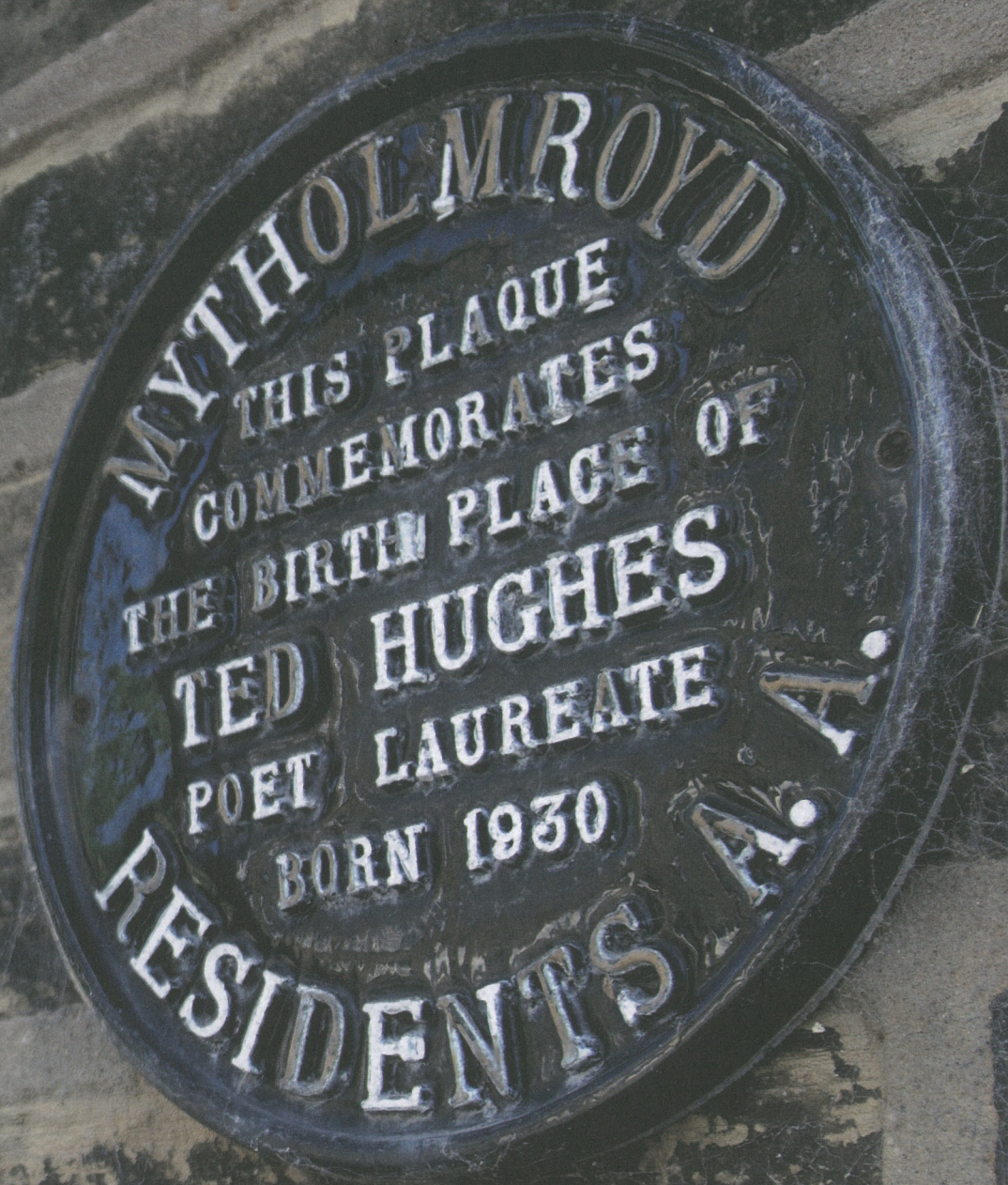


# ANOTHER RENAISSANCE MARKET TOWNS SUCCESS STORY

Ted Hughes' Birthplace, Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire



The Region's  
Development Agency



Ted Hughes was the poet laureate from 1984 until his death in 1998. His substantial and critically acclaimed body of work – poetry, translations of the classics, libretti and children's books – has assured his place in the pantheon of great British writers.

#### A literary pilgrimage

Hughes was born in Mytholmroyd, a town with a population of over 4,000, in Calderdale, West Yorkshire. 1 Aspinall Street, his birthplace, was acquired through Yorkshire Forward's Renaissance Market Towns (RMT) programme. Fittingly, the intention was to transform the building into a writers' retreat and self-catering holiday let.

This project was financed by a joint initiative between Calderdale Council, Halifax plc and Yorkshire Forward's RMT programme.

#### How it all began

1 Aspinall Street is not a property making capital out of a tenuous link with a celebrity who once slept there. The house was extremely important to Ted Hughes. It featured in his poetry, and he later spoke about moving from the house as a child:

*'That really sealed off my first seven years so that my first seven years seem half my life. I've remembered almost everything.'*

The idea of creating an attraction for literary fans and a writers' retreat was the brainchild of Royd Regeneration, the partnership established to involve local people in regeneration and supported through the Upper Calder Valley RMT programme.

#### Plan B proved better

Initially, the intention had been to develop a project which had been of interest to Ted Hughes himself: the renovation of Mytholmroyd's old railway station building. After greater scrutiny, the working group of volunteers concluded this project was unworkable. However, they realised that, as the town had such a famous literary son, the opportunity to create events relating to poetry and literature was very compelling indeed.

#### The Calderdale Council house

As luck would have it, the house in which Ted Hughes was born came up for sale around this time. With funding from Yorkshire Forward's Upper Calder Valley RMT programme, the house was acquired by Calderdale Council.

The completion of the project was achieved with the impetus and stewardship of The Elmet Trust.



This non-profit organisation of volunteers is dedicated to promoting the work of Ted Hughes. The Elmet Trust now leases the property from the Council, and has worked in conjunction with Royd Regeneration, Calderdale Council, Halifax plc and Yorkshire Forward. Together, they have financed and completed the project.

#### The Elmet Trust's structure

The trust's status is currently that of a non-profit organisation consisting of local volunteers, but it is now applying for charitable status. It has a board of directors and an elected chair. And all income from the property is invested into the ongoing Ted Hughes project.

#### The achievement

In his capacity as patron of The Elmet Trust, Simon Armitage, the renowned and award-winning local writer, was present at the official opening in June 2008.

Hughes' birthplace – which can be rented at [www.yorkshire-cottages.info](http://www.yorkshire-cottages.info) – has been renovated in a manner sympathetic to the past yet mindful of its current use. All proceeds go to the trust, which is responsible for the property's upkeep and maintenance.

Because The Elmet Trust's intention was that the house would be somewhere people could stay in comfort, it rejected a preserved-in-aspic feel: the house is not a museum. So although an interior designer was employed to recreate a 1930s interior reminiscent of that of Hughes' childhood, there are also modern comforts and appliances – such as the very un-'30s wireless broadband.

But, of course, the people drawn here from all over the world will get to enjoy far more than just a building. They'll have the opportunity to experience the stunning landscape of the Calder Valley that inspired much of Ted Hughes' greatest poetry.



### What next?

The development of Hughes' birthplace is just the beginning. There is now a three-year business plan for the Ted Hughes project in Mytholmroyd. This includes:

- The development of a literary/poetry trail
- The establishment of a festival linked to Hughes' birth.

### Project milestones

#### 2003

Initial idea for the Ted Hughes project. Network Rail approached about an empty listed building.

#### 2005-2006

The Elmet Trust was set up.

#### 2006

Ted Hughes' birthplace was purchased. Yorkshire Forward funding was applied for and approved.

#### 2007

A feasibility study was undertaken. An interior designer was commissioned for the house. Renovations began.

#### 2008

**June** The official opening.

### Key successes

- The property has been in great demand since its opening in June 2008.
- Visit England has awarded the attraction 3 stars (only the lack of a garden prevented it from garnering a fourth).
- Numerous articles have appeared online and in the national press, including the front cover of the Independent on Sunday's travel section and British Airways' High Life magazine.
- A bond has been forged with Manchester University, and its creative writing summer school has brought visitors to Mytholmroyd from as far afield as the US.

### Financial summary

#### Capital costs

##### Costs

Feasibility study	£35,000
Purchase of property	£130,000
Building works (internal and external)	£80,000
Interior designer	£1,500
Council fees for electrical work and planning	£1,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£247,500</b>

#### Funding sources

##### Source

Yorkshire Forward (RMT)	£165,000
Calderdale Council	£80,000
Hebden Royd town council	£5,000
Private sector (HBOS)*	£50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£300,000</b>

\*This donation from HBOS is held in a fund to use as match-funding at a later date.

### Lessons learnt

- Everything appeared to be in place: there was a listed building; there was an idea for a Ted Hughes centre; a local architect was involved; funding for the project was at hand. Little wonder that the idea had much time and effort spent on it. But then came the feasibility study, and everything changed. Clearly, a feasibility study is vital – even if everything appears at first glance to be feasible. Much deliberation is required as to the form such a study should take. As is the decision of when, during the process, to commission it.
- It's important never to underestimate the importance, however slow-moving it may at first appear, of the local authority's support.
- Always use good-quality materials and fittings.



### Operational finances

#### Income

##### Rent

High season @ £300 (10 weeks)	£3,000
Mid-season @ £260 (26 weeks)	£2,600
Low season @ £200 (16 weeks)	£3,200
Full occupancy total	£8,800
<b>Total based on 30-week occupancy</b>	<b>£7,500</b>

#### Feasibility estimate

#### Costs

##### Services

Lettings (15%)	£1,120
Cleaning/laundry (part-time employment for 1 person)	£1,200
Insurance	£500
TV licence	£130
Incidentals	£350
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£3,300</b>

##### Overheads

BR council tax	£1,000
Services	£1,200
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£2,200</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,500</b>
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>£2,000*</b>

\*This figure is based on 60% occupancy. The break-even point is estimated to be 40% occupancy.



## CONTACT US

If you would like to know more about our work in the region's market towns contact our rural capitals team on 0113 3949600 or email [holly.forquilha@yorkshire-forward.com](mailto:holly.forquilha@yorkshire-forward.com) or visit [www.yorkshire-forward.com/markettowns](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com/markettowns)

## More about this success story

To find out more about the Ted Hughes project, please visit [www.theelmettrust.co.uk](http://www.theelmettrust.co.uk) or [www.yorkshire-cottages.info](http://www.yorkshire-cottages.info)  
Alternatively, contact:

Eric Alston  
Park Cottage  
Park Lane  
Mytholmroyd  
HX7 5BL  
07768 257726

Steph Hiscott  
Yorkshire Forward  
Mercury House  
4 Manchester Road  
Bradford  
BD5 0QL

01274 386908  
[stephanie.hiscott@yorkshire-forward.com](mailto:stephanie.hiscott@yorkshire-forward.com)



Yorkshire Forward  
Victoria House  
Victoria Place  
Leeds LS11 5AE  
[www.yorkshire-forward.com](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com)