



Sculptor Martin Jennings
Photo courtesy of Steve Russell Studios

Women of Steel

by Tracey Hebron

A new sculpture, Women of Steel, has been unveiled in Barker's Pool where the infamous blitz struck Sheffield in WW2 to celebrate a special group of women, now in their 80's and 90's whose exceptional work ethic, stamina and bravery in the steel factories went virtually unrecognized for years.

Now they can finally be remembered for their efforts, enabling their story to continue to live on and inspire.

During both World Wars, thousands of women were conscripted to work in the factories and steel mills to keep them running whilst the men were away fighting. The women took on these roles, which were often dangerous and physically demanding, alongside looking after their families, earning half the male workers' wages. The Women of Steel are an important part of Sheffield's history and an inspiration to many people today.

The statue is designed by sculptor

Martin Jennings, who sculpted the much-loved statue of John Betjeman at St Pancras station in London. He has created a piece that shows two 'women of steel', one in dungarees and a headscarf, the other in a boiler suit, her hair in a cap. It celebrates the bravery and determination of a group of unsung heroes.

Martin said: "At the end of the war, the women were dismissed from their work in the steel industry with little thanks. Now, by erecting this statue within the lifetimes of the surviving Women of Steel, we all have an opportunity belatedly to record our gratitude."

The campaign to honor them was launched in 2012 by Sheffield Council, which committed £28,000 to the fund. The response has been overwhelming and support has come from not just local supporters, but nationally and internationally, with recent coverage spotted as far as the United Arab Emirates.

A historic moment in Sheffield, it is great to see the women finally get recognised for their gutsy contributions to industry during the wars.



L-R is Kit Sollitt, Kathleen Roberts, STATUE, Ruby Gascoigne, Dorothy Silingsby