

Artist Statement – 16 Baillie Street Mural

Artist: Hayley Garner

For this mural I want to tell a story that comes from Rochdale's own folklore and link it to a wider northern myth.

The main figure will be Betty Blomley, a woman remembered locally for collecting bent pins from the wishing well. People would throw the pins in while making wishes, and Betty, living on the edge of the community, gathered them up, straightened what she could, and sold them on to get by.

Because of this she was gossiped about and labelled a witch, but to me her story speaks of survival and resilience.

I'm tying Betty's tale to the figure of Mother Redcap, a recurring red-hooded character in northern folklore, sometimes a healer, sometimes a landlady, often misunderstood.

Both Betty and Mother Redcap show how women who lived outside the norm became figures of rumour and myth, but they also represent strength and independence.

In the design Betty will stand at the centre of the wall, in a red hood, with bent needles, threads, and bobbins falling around her amongst red roses. The roses connect to Rochdale's identity through the Lancashire symbol, and the threads and bobbins nod to the town's textile heritage.

My work often brings hidden or forgotten stories into public space, and this mural is about honouring the folklore that shaped Rochdale as much as its buildings and mills. I think it's a powerful way of tying the town's heritage to its identity today.

<https://www.spookyisles.com/wishing-well-of-rochdale/>