



Tyne & Wear Heritage Forum, engaging communities in the conservation of their local heritage

ANNUAL REPORT, April 2023- April 2024

Introduction

There has been little change in TWHF's position during the period under review with only one major development involving an extension of the conservation of local heritage to include natural heritage with the publication of 'Colours of Summer' published by the Lowick Heritage Group on the butterflies of the Lowick Parish area.

Establishing this area is an important element in the whole process of community, heritage conservation. This represents a way to extend community identity beyond traditional historic heritage concerns to include the landscape in which the community exists, the woodlands and grasslands fauna and flora that are also a key element in the identity of place. It is also, a way to extend membership of heritage groups to involve those interested in these aspects of conservation.

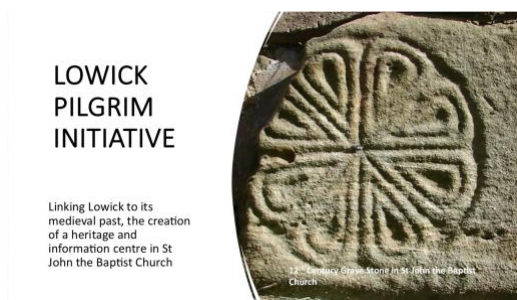
The natural features which have been a constant element in the history and identity of each place and particularly, during the industrial revolution have shaped the endeavours and employment of each community. Concern for the natural environment on a local community basis is in line with current concern over climate change and appreciating the natural world with the benefits to our health and wellbeing of activities taking place in the countryside around us.

The other more traditional heritage conservation projects with which TWHF has been involved remain as targets for future development but have been dormant due, as reported in the last annual report, to a number of key members being unable to continue as active members due to ill health. These are The Tyne Project and Lowick Pilgrim Initiative which are reported below.

Objectives and issues

The stated objective of the Tyne & Wear Heritage Forum to 'engage communities in the conservation of their local heritage' remains of central importance at a time when large scale housing developments are proposed, adding often to existing communities. There is a danger here that the particular and distinctive elements that give character and identity to a place disappear. There is a role here for existing heritage groups or for forming new groups to work towards linking communities to their past. Those coming to live in a community may be unaware of local history and the significant local heritage features provide an important sense of identity to each community and need to be conserved. which need to be preserved as methods to link a community to its historic past.

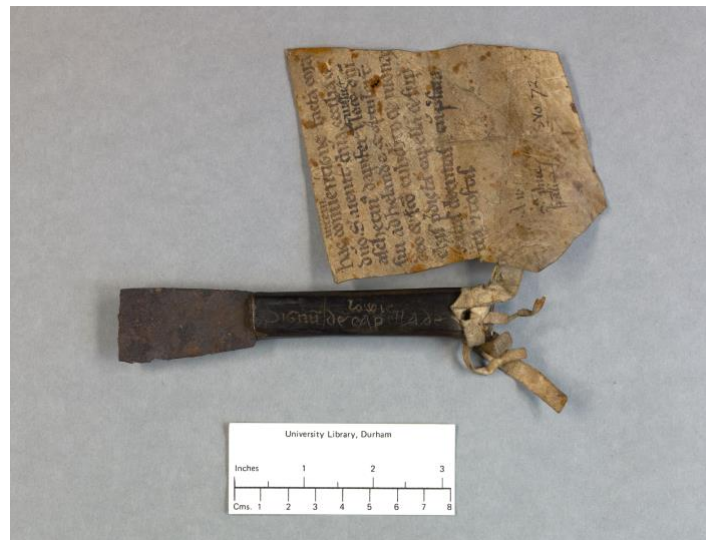
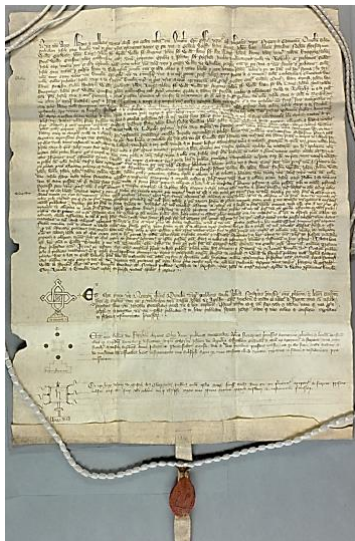
Those who engage with local heritage groups are often newly arrived in the community and can bring with them particular skills and experience but also, importantly enthusiasm from their occupation or previous history or heritage work. What TWHF needs to do is provide information and support heritage groups. Perhaps there is a place here for a TWHF publication.



A long term project to tell the story of Lowick's fascinating history for which there is little evidence in the surviving built environment and is therefore not well known. St John the Baptist Church has a key role here. One of 4 chapels associated with the monastery on Holy Island and the place which through history and now in the present time attracts pilgrims and visitors.

- Setting up a heritage centre a place to visit for pilgrims, visitors and members of the local community.
- Composed of: historic artefacts from the original medieval chapel
- Copies of historic documents: excommunication 1353; 12th century promise to monastery on Holy Island to pay tithes.
- Information on local fauna and flora

Copies of Key historic documents



The 1353 excommunication document the promisory note to pay tithes to the monastery on Holy Island 12th C

Lowick History

Lowick has a particularly interesting history uncovered by recent excavations of an iron age settlement by the archaeology section of Lowick Heritage Group at Hunting Hall and evident also, from the cup and ring marks present at Routin Lynn and also elsewhere within the parish. Early references suggest the community moved up the hill to where the Roman Devil's Causeway joined the pilgrim route to Holy Island

The Roman road from Hadrian's Wall came up through Lowick village to Tweedmouth, a way of supplying the legions as they moved north on their campaigns in North Scotland. The pilgrim route to Holy Island is of central importance to the village with pilgrims coming from the west to make their way to the monastery to worship at the tomb or later after its disappearance to Durham to the place where St Cuthbert lived

In addition to the physical elements used to help represent the history of Lowick, there is a concern to provide further documents and the facility for visitors to consult church documents through the creation of a heritage centre.

Artefacts from the original Lowick Chapel



12th C. gravestone tympana from above chapel door original window h



Glass door
with view of
stained glass
window of John
The Baptist

On the Baptist Church has a heavy wooden door which is a barrier
ve and main church from the tower. The tower is a significant element
pace which needs to be brought more into use. A glass door or
or opens up the tower and brings light into the nave of the church.

The church artefacts can be placed on the current bare wall at the back of the nave or possibly in the tower. Although stone objects and therefore heavy, they can be fixed in place with supports as in Brace path Church in County Durham.

Two of the important historic documents as illustrated above can be part of those used to represent the history of the church and the important link with the monastery on Holy Island. There is also, the possibility of providing an illustrated time- line to record the history of Lowick through dates and illustrations of key events in the village's history.

Tyne View Project



Thomas Hair's view of the Killingworth waggonway end where coal is shipped into the colliers.

A positive meeting took place with Vicky Cuthbertson head of North Tyneside Regeneration Team. This provided the chance to explain TWHF's work with the NTR's waggonway project and to express concern that there have been no new developments. This was apparently due to those from the regeneration team charged with the project had either retired or were unavailable.

It was explained that TWHF was very concerned of the need to follow up unfinished business, particularly because those most concerned with the project to have the former waggonway recognised had sadly passed away .

Unfinished business concerned the placing of figures of former miners on the Victorian bridge (as illustrated on Thomas Hare's 1840 sketch of Wideopen colliery). There was also the ambition to create a suitable viewing point to mark the end of the waggonway at the point – as shown in Hare's sketch above – where the coal waggons emptied the coal into colliers for transportation to London. The view of the Tyne from this point was seen as a suitable way to celebrate the whole of this important waggonway with its close links to Killingworth and the creation of the railways.

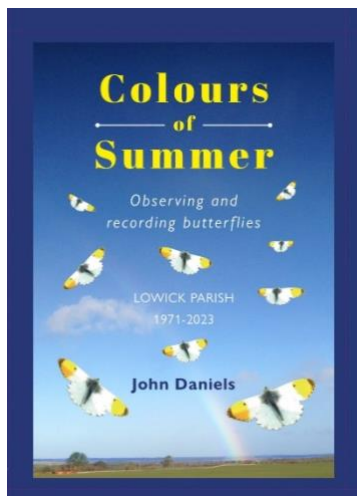
TWHS's work with North Tyneside's Regeneration Team has – as with many other heritage initiatives to act as a catalyst to help communities to engage with their heritage. In this case it is about persuading North Tyneside that this is a feasible project

with huge potential for highlighting the key role of the North East in the industrial revolution.

A further meeting with Vicky Cuthbertson will need to be set up and perhaps look to encourage Kim McGuinness, Mayor of North East England to look at the potential for a scheme of this kind.

colours of summer

TWHF's heritage work has and continues to be concerned with identifying significant



local heritage features and working with local heritage groups as they seek to conserve them. Developing suitable strategies to undertake the conservation required but also, importantly to publicise these historic elements and to identify their importance as providing a way to link the modern world to the community's historic past. Many conservation projects of this kind involve elements of the built environment whose importance to the local community are easy to identify.

The natural heritage is more difficult to identify but one way forward here is to publicise different aspects of the local flora and fauna through researching and publishing details of for example here, the different species of butterflies present within the community.

Working through Lowick Heritage Group it proved possible to apply for a grant with the Community Fund (Barmoor Wind Farm). The £1,200 granted enabled the publication of this study of local butterflies which also, helps identify important areas within the parish for wild life conservation and in this way builds on work already undertaken by the Lowick Heritage Group on significant historic, local heritage features. The publication has been made available to local libraries, schools and to visitors to the region through copies being distributed to holiday lets.

It is hoped to extend this work drawing on field studies already undertaken to provide a more general view of the fauna and flora of the Lowick parish area. Further grant applications would be made to the Community Fund (Barmoor Wind Farm).

This innovative Lowick Heritage Group initiative could act as a template for other local heritage groups to undertake work on the local flora and fauna as a way to identify important wild life sites within their communities.

Accounts

Financial Report

There have been no direct financial transactions involving the Tyne & Wear Heritage Forum. The only funding coming from the Barmoor Wind Farm, Community Fund of £1,200 towards the publication of 'Colours of Summer' reported above and this was organised through the Lowick Heritage Group.

Conclusion

While this report does not indicate high activity on the part of TWHF. The need for the continued existence of the charity is clear.

The Lowick Pilgrimage initiative is one project which is now moving forward again and has considerable potential. There is also, the incorporation of the natural world as a valid element in any local heritage conservation work.

The problem in the past few years is the lack of a structure of governance and of enthusiastic members prepared to carry out the work as secretary and/or project manager. Persuaded of the value of an organisation that encourages local heritage groups to protect significant local heritage features at a time when the dramatic programme of new house building is likely to lead to communities ignoring local heritage and the sense of place which is such a key feature in making people feel they belong, a way to provide a sense of identity.

A way forward is perhaps to produce a guide to Heritage ACT! Setting out the experience of TWHF with those innovative ideas such as 'make your own heritage trail' – set up during the pandemic and the work done to access different local communities with Northumberland Libraries which definitely raised TWHF's

A priority for TWHF would therefore be to seek sponsorship towards the publication of a guide to community conservation heritage projects, drawing on the experience of the last few years.

John Daniels,
Chairman TWHF,
January, 2025