



Tyne & Wear Heritage Forum,
engaging communities in the conservation of their local heritage
ANNUAL REPORT, April 2024 – April 2025

Introduction

This has been another year more concerned with developing local heritage concepts rather than the achievement of conservation activities. As time passes it becomes more centred on local issues associated with where members live. This means a concentration on Lowick in North Northumberland and a variety of actual or identified projects there and continued concern to put in place the proposed measures in Wideopen.

There are clear conservation activities which need attention, some that are ongoing and others that identify new concerns. The proposed project for the waggonway has not currently been picked up by the North Tyneside Regeneration Team.

Primitive methodist chapel, Lowick



The Primitive Methodist Chapel on Main Street Lowick is a good example of an important building which marks a particular period in the history of Lowick in the 19th Century as the development of coal mining and lime quarrying brought in numbers from outside the area to work in these flourishing industries.

This attractive chapel with some interesting architectural features was bought by someone from outside the village who left it to his children but it has remained empty and in an increasing state of dereliction over the last ten years. It does however represent, if money could be found for its restoration, a small attractive house in a village which increasingly attracts holiday makers or purchase of properties for holiday lets.



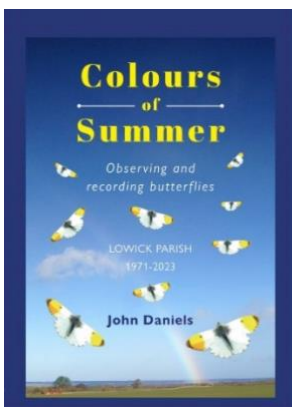
Action:

1. Find current owners of property and communicate with them
2. investigate possibility of some funding for the initial preservation of the property
3. in order for it to be placed on the market.

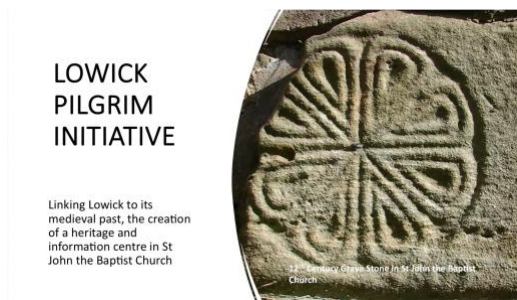
Colours of Summer

'Colours of Summer' published by the :Lowick Heritage Group on the butterflies of the Lowick Parish area has continued to provide a resource for drawing attention to the importance of local wildlife and the important local sites. A way to extend heritage to include natural heritage which generally does not feature in traditional heritage activities

A talk at Bowsden Village Hall followed up by a field trip and a further talk at Wooler with a number of copies of the 'Colours of Summer; book. The book has been available at various village occasions such as the Lowick fete shown below.



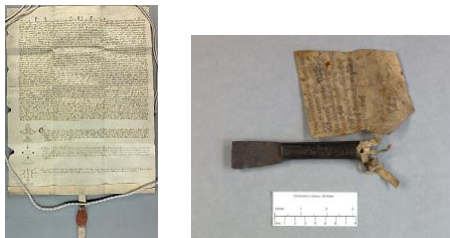
Every opportunity has been made to publicise this, the first publication on any aspect of the local natural heritage. In addition a children's book on the language of butterfly wings is planned using the money raised through donations (an original grant for the publication was given by the local Barmoor Wind Farm Community Fund.).



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

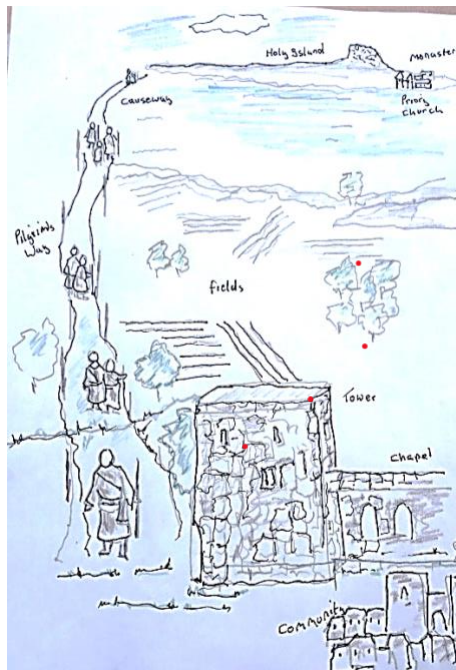
Lowick History, proposal to set up a heritage centre

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

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.



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



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

The back of St John the Baptist Church has a heavy wooden door which is a barrier separating the nave and main church from the tower. The tower is a significant element of the church, a space which needs to be brought more into use. A glass door or partially glass door opens up the tower and brings light into the nave of the church should be the first measure put in place.

A second element is the placing of a mural to the right side of the door representing the journey of pilgrims from the middle ages from Lowick where they would find a guide to take them across the dangerous causeway to Holy Island.

Current searches are taking place to find a suitable artist to produce this mural. A new mural in Berwick Station Waiting room is one avenue being explored.

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 Hare'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.

Vicky Cuthbertson has been contacted to discuss progress on this important initiative and to look to encourage Kim McGuinness, Mayor of North East England to look at the potential for a scheme of this kind.

Conclusion

TWHF can be seen as a catalyst to identify heritage concerns and encourage local groups to take appropriate action. At a time of considerable change when the national emphasis is on building new houses, it becomes increasingly important to be able to protect any buildings or features which provide a reminder of past historic and industrial times. Any change that takes place has to be concerned that the quality of place, which gives each community a special identity is not also damaged.

John Daniels,
Chairman TWHF,

January, 2026

ACCOUNTS

Finance

No separate financial transactions have been carried out for this financial year, with any business covered by the Lowick Heritage Group (*Colours of Summer*).

Therefore, for the financial year 01/04/2024 - 31/03/2025 our income total was £0 and our expenditure was also £0