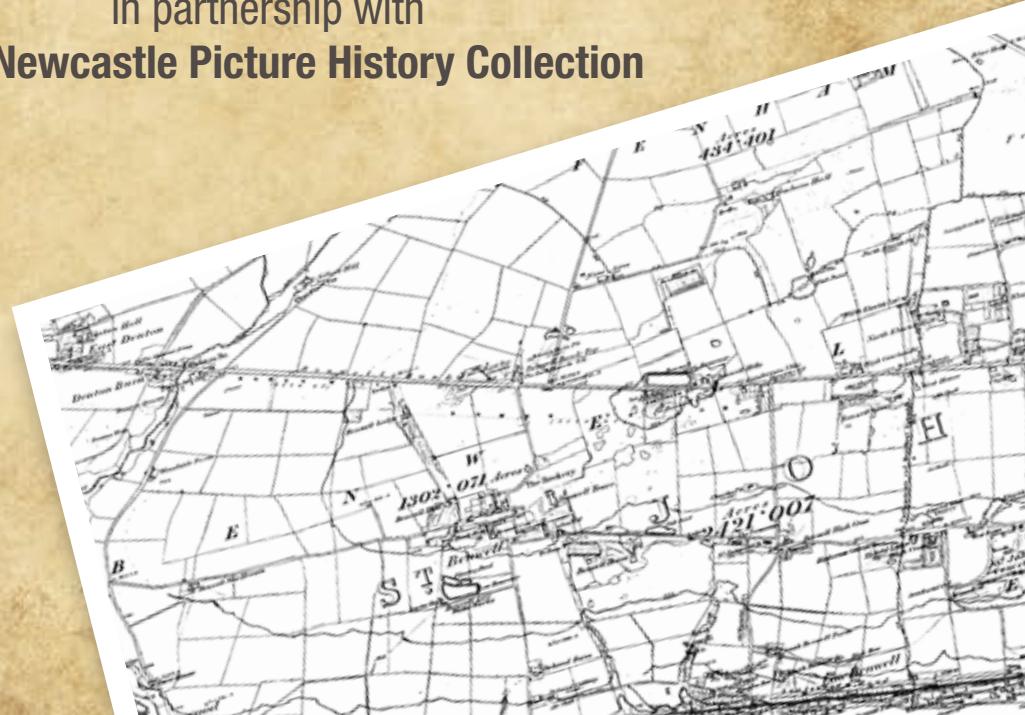


Benwell through the years

*In Maps
and Pictures*

St James' Heritage & Environment Group
in partnership with
West Newcastle Picture History Collection



This book is the result of a joint project between St James' Heritage & Environment Group and West Newcastle Picture History Collection. It is based on an exhibition of maps and photographs displayed at St James' Church and Heritage Centre in Benwell during 2015. All the photographs come from West Newcastle Picture History Collection's unique archive of over 19,000 photographs of West Newcastle from the 1880s to date. The Ordnance Survey maps are reproduced by kind permission of the copyright holders.

Acknowledgements

St James' Heritage & Environment Group and West Newcastle Picture History Collection are both wholly volunteer-run organisations. This book would not have been possible without the work of the many volunteers, past and present, who have collected photographs, carried out research on the history of this area, planned and curated exhibitions, and encouraged so many others to explore and enjoy the history of West Newcastle.

We are grateful for the support of Make Your Mark who funded the production of this book and the Imagine North East project managed by Durham University and funded by the Economic and Social Research Council through the Connected Communities programme whose financial and other support made the original exhibition possible.

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*West Newcastle
Picture History
Collection*



St James'
Heritage &
Environment
Group

A Brief History of Benwell

'Benwell' is one of the oldest placenames to have survived in the north east of England. It is thought to relate to the fact that Hadrian's Wall crosses the area.

The ancient manor of Benwell was created after the Norman Conquest, passing through the hands of a number of well known local families such as the Delavals and Shaftos. The estate covered a much wider area than present-day Benwell, including much of Fenham, Scotswood and Denton Burn. From the mid-1700s onwards however this estate was progressively broken up and portions of the land were sold off.

Today Benwell is a suburb of the City of Newcastle, but this happened relatively recently in its long history. Benwell did not become part of Newcastle until 1904. Before then it was a township in its own right, most recently controlled by Benwell and Fenham Urban District Council from offices on the corner of Atkinson Road and Armstrong Road, housed in

a building that still stands today. The UDC boundaries extended south to the River Tyne, north into Fenham, west to the Denton Burn, and east to a line running fairly straight down Fairholm Road and Beech Street to Adelaide Terrace and then southwards past Sutton's Dwellings to the river. This area closely approximates the boundaries of the old Benwell estate of Robert Shafto and others.

This book looks at the historical area of Benwell from the Denton Burn in the west to Elswick in the east and extending north well into Fenham. Four maps give a bird's-eye view of the changes the area has experienced over the 130 years between 1864 and 1993. This covers the period of greatest change when Benwell was transformed from a mainly rural area to a densely populated urban segment of Newcastle.

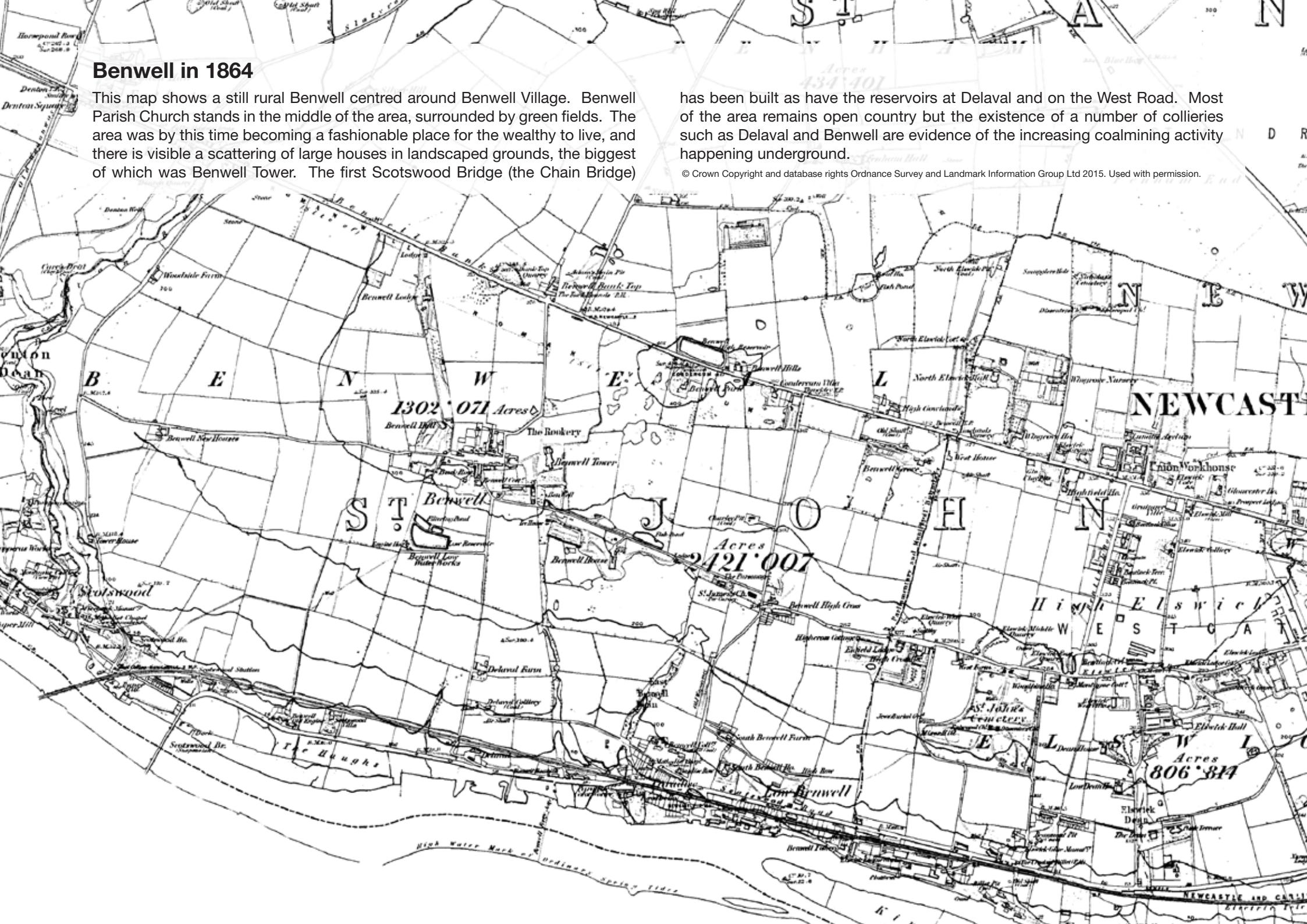
The book is in four sections, each starting with a map showing Benwell at different stages of development. Each map is followed by a selection of photographs illustrating features of the area at that period. The locations of these are shown on the inside back cover of the book.

Benwell in 1864

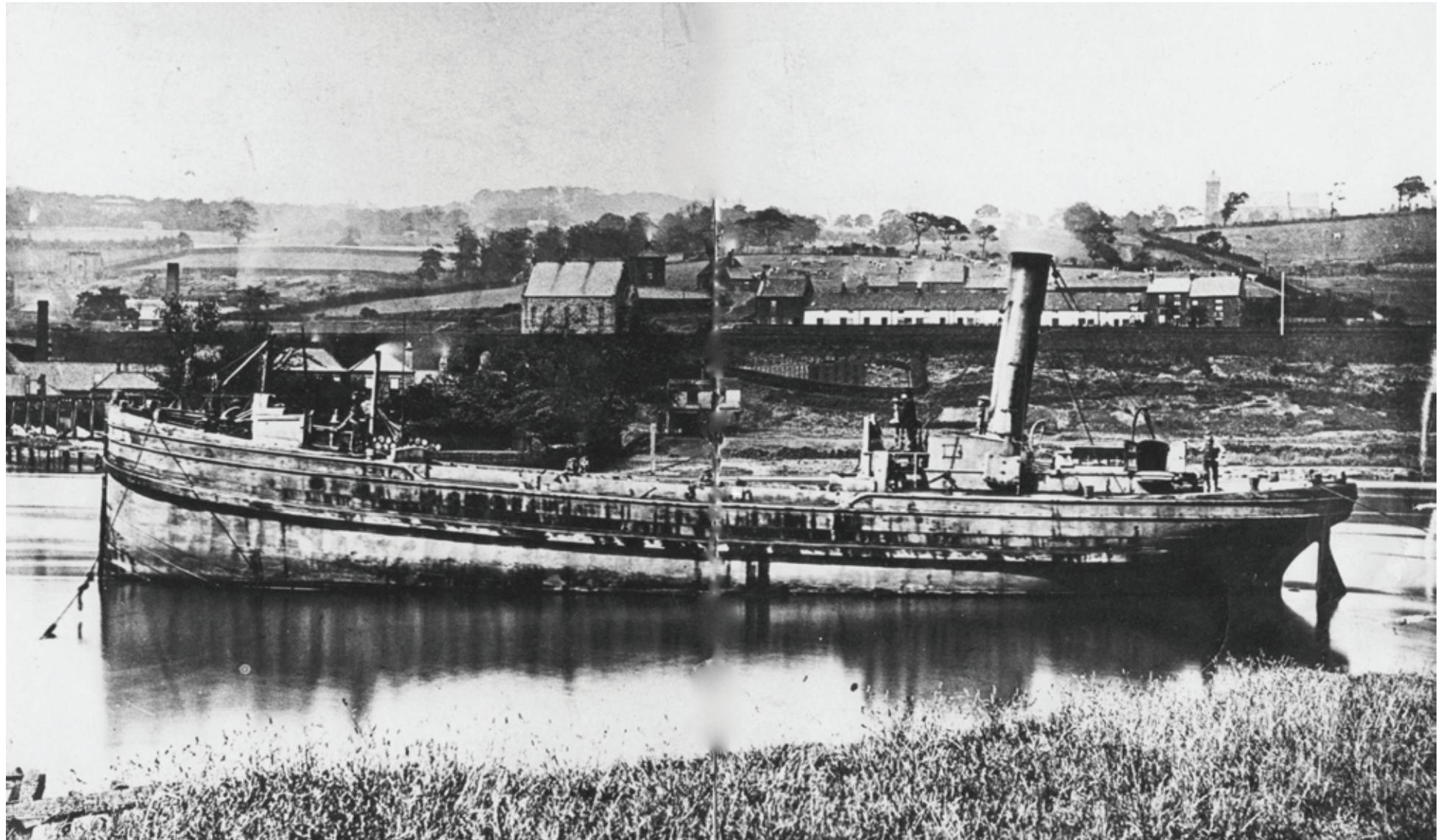
This map shows a still rural Benwell centred around Benwell Village. Benwell Parish Church stands in the middle of the area, surrounded by green fields. The area was by this time becoming a fashionable place for the wealthy to live, and there is visible a scattering of large houses in landscaped grounds, the biggest of which was Benwell Tower. The first Scotswood Bridge (the Chain Bridge)

has been built as have the reservoirs at Delaval and on the West Road. Most of the area remains open country but the existence of a number of collieries such as Delaval and Benwell are evidence of the increasing coalmining activity happening underground.

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1. Paradise, c1890



Paradise is immortalised in 'The Blaydon Races' – "Noo when we gat te Paradise thor was bonny games begun". There was a riverside hamlet known as Paradise on this site since at least the late 1700s, although the origins of the

name are not known. As well as the cottages of the village itself, there was a large mansion called Paradise House with gardens running down to the river.

2. Benwell High Cross, c1880s



High Cross got its name because it was the site of a market cross erected to mark the boundary of a quarantine zone around Newcastle at a time when it was suffering an outbreak of plague. The cross marked the location where local farmers could safely leave their produce. This photograph was taken before

Adelaide Terrace was built. In the background can be seen the tower of St James' Church, capped by a short spire. Soon afterwards, a tall spire, together with a clock and bells, was added to the tower.

3. Benwell Tower, c1900



This mansion was built in the 1830s to a John Dobson design. It was the fourth big house to occupy this site over a period of some 900 years, being home to several notable Tyneside families. In 1881 it became the official residence of the Anglican Bishops of Newcastle. During the Second World War it became

a centre for the National Fire Service, and was afterwards taken over by the National Coal Board's Fire and Rescue Brigade as a training centre for mine rescue work. Since the 1970s it has served in turn as a night club, a pub, a television recording studio, and an Academy.

4. Benwell House, 1969



Benwell House was built in the 1820s by coal owner John Walker who is buried in St James' graveyard. It was the focus of an estate of 75 acres, which stretched down to the river. In 1901 the house was sold to Joseph Lamb Ltd,

brewers, for use as a public house. It was known locally as 'Lamby's' until its closure in 1969. The building was demolished four years later and the site is now occupied by a Chapel of Rest.

5. Scotswood Bridge, c1900



This suspension bridge was known as the Chain Bridge because it hung on chains from two stone towers. It was opened in 1831, and until 1907 was owned by a private company which charged traffic to use it. The bridge was

demolished in 1967 and replaced by a new bridge of box girder construction which could accommodate more traffic.

6. Scotswood House, 1912



Scotswood House was built in the later 1700s near the south end of Denton Road. It was originally owned by the Ord family who had acquired considerable tracts of land from the former Benwell estate during this period, including much of Scotswood. Among its notable residents was the paper manufacturer

Nathaniel Grace who is buried in St James' graveyard, Benwell. The house became a children's nursery in the first half of the 20th century, and was later demolished.

7. Benwell Old House, 1920s



Benwell Old House, with its extensive gardens and orchard, was situated on Benwell Lane immediately to the west of Benwell Tower. Records suggest that

it may have been built as early as the late 17th century. During the Second World War it became a children's nursery. It was demolished in the 1950s.

Benwell in 1899

By 1899 the residential development of New Benwell and South Benwell is clearly visible, as is the spread of industry along the banks of the Tyne. However Benwell remains largely rural north of the West Road and west of Condercum Road and Atkinson Road. Working farms still surround the villages of Benwell,

Delaval and Scotswood. The appearance of several new large detached houses show that Benwell still retains its status as a favoured area for Newcastle's more affluent families.

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8. Condercum Cottages, 1900



These were two rows of four stone cottages, each standing at right angles to the other, at the top of Condercum Road. This road was formerly called

Charlotte Pit Lane and the cottages were probably home to pitmen employed at Benwell Colliery. Thorne House now stands on the site.

9. Benwell Park, c1920



Benwell Park stood on 5 acres of land immediately south of the West Road where Denhill Park now stands. One of its earliest residents was the Mulcaster family, a dynasty of leading Tyneside solicitors and businessmen, who are buried

at St James' Church. The house was built around 1850 and was demolished in the 1930s to make way for the new housing estate.

10. Pendower Hall, c1900



Pendower Hall was built in 1867 for the wealthy Pease family. They lived there until the First World War when the house was used as a convalescent hospital for wounded soldiers. In 1919 the Pease Trustees sold the extensive grounds

to Newcastle Council to build housing. The Hall itself became Pendower Hall Open Air School for 'delicate' children until 1971 when the school moved to its present site slightly further east.

11. Adelaide Terrace, c1900



Prior to the 1880s Adelaide Terrace was a winding country lane between fields. The north side of Adelaide Terrace was developed first, with the south being

built up in 1890s. The Adelaide shopping centre now occupies this site

12. South Benwell School, 1960



Situated near the bottom of Atkinson Road, this imposing three-storey school was opened in January 1893. It catered for children from the age of five through to 12. Within a couple of years of opening the school had over 1,000 pupils.

Class sizes at times exceeded 60 pupils. The first headmaster was Mr Cox and the school was known for years afterwards as 'Coxie's'. The school closed in 1980 and the building was demolished in 1994.

13. Benwell Boathouse, 1960



A ferry crossed the Tyne here for about 200 years from c1750 until probably the 1940s. The Boat House Inn served people travelling along Scotswood Road

as well as those using the ferry. The inn and accompanying terraced houses were demolished to allow the widening of Scotswood Road in 1984.

14. Scotswood Tower, 1962



This stone-built property stood on seven acres of land alongside Denton Road. It was built between 1841 and 1858, and was demolished in 1981.

The name referred to the square tower at the rear of the building.

Benwell in 1938

By 1938 Benwell is fully a suburb of Newcastle. A combination of private and council housing has spread west to the Denton Burn and north as far as Cowgate. Many of the mansions and big houses have been demolished,

including Benwell Grove, Benwell Park and Condercum House. The banks of the Tyne are packed with heavy industry, with a second Armstrong's factory now occupying a site at the Scotswood end.

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15. Benwell Colliery, 1890s



Situated in lower Condercum Road (formerly Charlotte Pit Lane) the Charlotte Pit operated from the mid-1700s to 1939. In its heyday it employed 400 men and boys. A waggonway used to run from the pit down to the river, passing across the land where St James' Church and graveyard are now. This land was

later given to the Church of England in the 1830s as the site for the new church by John Buddle, one of the owners of Benwell Colliery. Buddle was buried there in 1843 in a vault reputedly cut into a coal seam.

16. New Benwell, 1920s



In 1904 Benwell became part of Newcastle upon Tyne. However for many years most people in Benwell did not consider themselves fully part of Newcastle. Benwell felt like a separate town, with two cinemas and a theatre as well as a variety of shops, pubs and churches. As late as the 1920s, the land north of

the West Road and west of Condercum Road and Atkinson Road was still open fields, as was the area immediately to the east between Elswick Road and the West Road. This photograph is taken looking east from the tram terminus at the junction of Adelaide Terrace with Condercum Road.

17. Scotswood Road, 1956



The name 'Scotswood Road' first appears in legal documentation in the 1830s. Until 1907 it was a toll road belonging to the Scotswood Bridge Company. Scotswood Road was a busy street of shops, pubs and homes before the large-scale clearances of the 1960s and 1970s turned it into a through route for

vehicles instead of a living artery of community life. This photograph shows the north side of the road at the junction with Clara Street – one of the long terraces that ran all the way down the steep hillside from Adelaide Terrace.

18. Chapel Terrace, 1900



Until the 20th century the population of Scotswood was concentrated near to the river, while most of the area we know today as Scotswood was open fields. Little evidence now remains of the older houses. Chapel Terrace ran from

Denton Road down to Scotswood Road. This photograph looks eastwards with the Methodist Chapel and the Rose and Crown pub on the left and the Alma pub on the right.

19. Benwell Village, 1930s



This is the oldest continually inhabited part of Benwell. This photograph shows the north side of the main street in the 1930s with (in order from left to right) the mission church of St John's, two houses, Pendower and District Constitutional

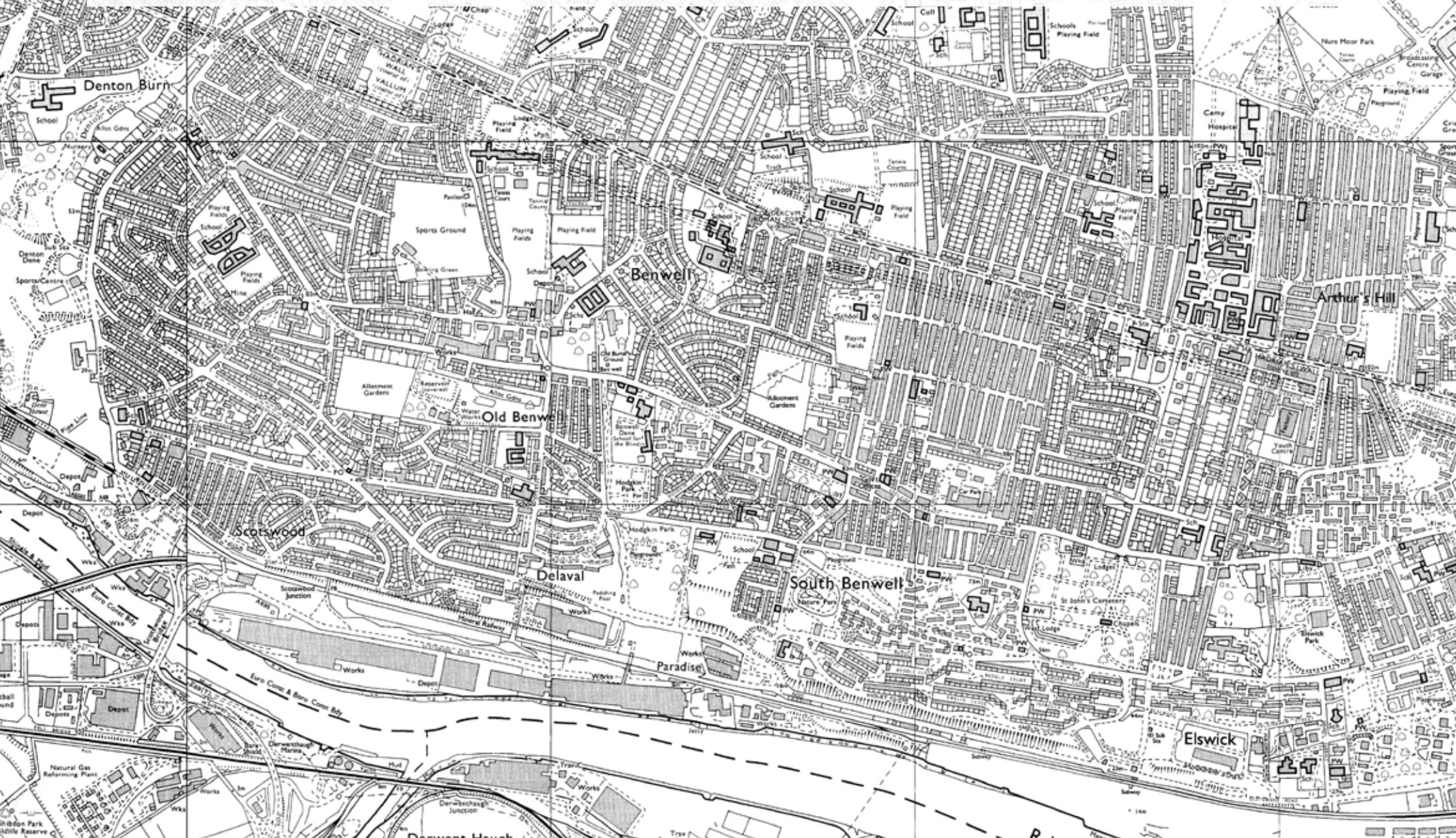
Club, a shop, the Green Tree Inn, the Hawthorn Inn and a farmhouse. None of these buildings now remain.

Benwell in 1993

This map shows the impact of the major housing clearances of the 1960s and 1970s which transformed South Benwell, although even as late as 1993 most of the housing in Scotswood and West Benwell still remains. The Vickers factory in Elswick has closed, as has the Newcastle to Carlisle railway line, and

Scotswood Road is changing into the dual carriageway we know today. More of the big houses have disappeared, including Benwell Grange and Benwell Hall which have been replaced by new housing developments.

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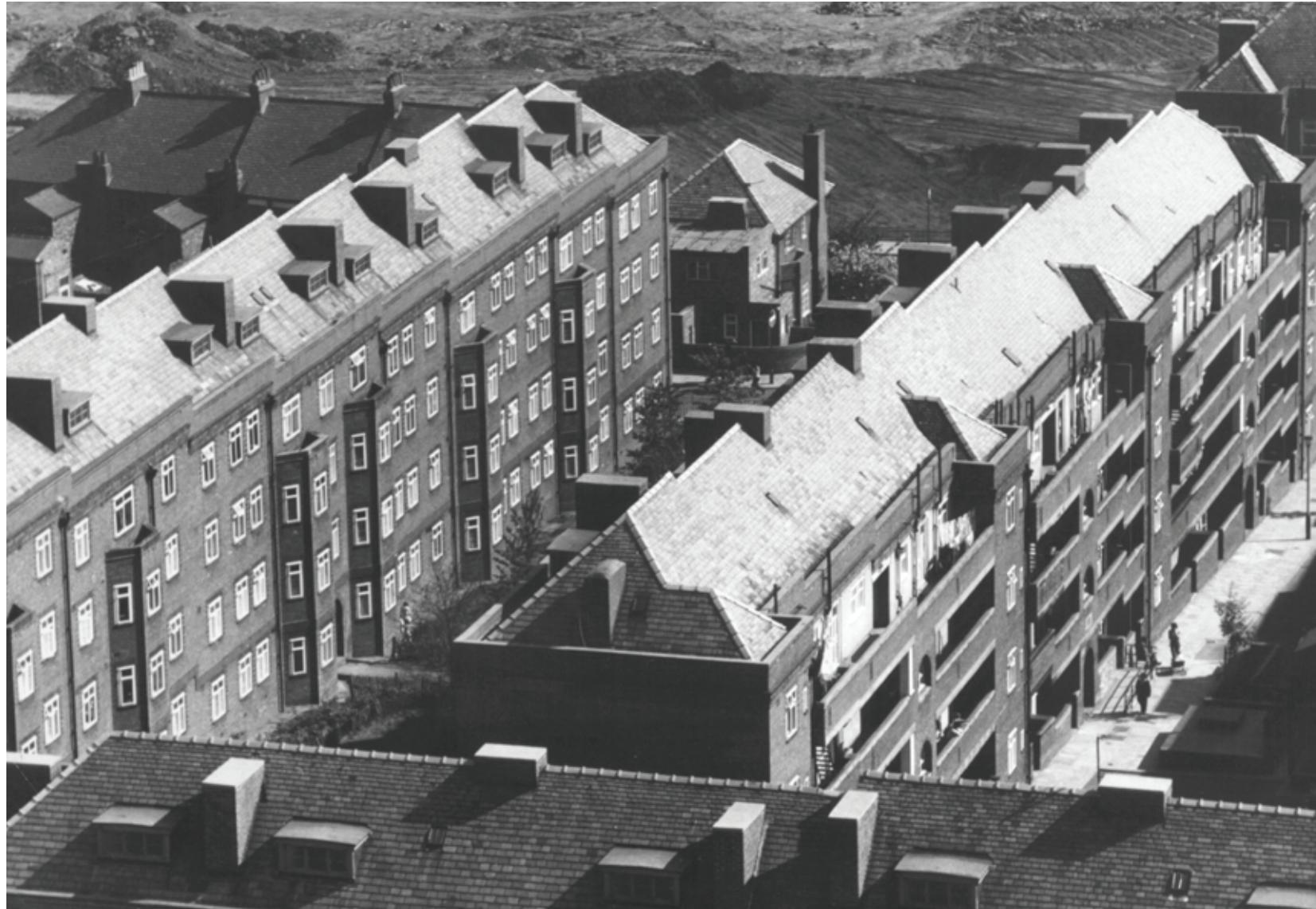
20. Canning Street School, 1987



During the first ten years of the 20th century, house-building was completed in High Cross and North Benwell. This area was then called New Benwell, distinguishing it from Old Benwell and South Benwell. Canning Street School

opened as the New Benwell Board School in April 1903, surrounded by terraced streets. The building was demolished in 1990 after a replacement school had been built nearby.

21. Sutton's Dwellings, undated



The Sutton Model Dwellings Trust was a charity which built homes for the poor. In 1935 it bought the former gardens of High Cross House as the site for a new estate in Benwell. This estate occupied a site between Adelaide Terrace and Armstrong Road. The flats were demolished in 1996 and replaced by a block

of sheltered housing accommodation and new low-rise homes. The area of vacant land visible at the rear of this photograph indicates that it was probably taken in the 1970s when all the terraced housing south of Armstrong Road had been cleared to make way for new social housing.

22. Delaval Road, 1957



Delaval Road originally stretched from Benwell Lane southwards to Scotswood Road. This photograph shows a lower section of the road (looking north) above the railway line and below Delaval Gardens. The stone building on the right

is the former farmhouse of Delaval Farm which was later used as a children's nursery. The farmhouse and the terraced housing were probably demolished in the 1960s.

23. Vickers Armstrong Scotswood works, 1956



This engineering factory in Scotswood was opened in 1899 under the name of Armstrong Whitworth. The merger with Vickers came later in 1927. The factory produced armaments, especially in wartime, but also manufactured motor cars, railway engines and other engineering products. The factory closed in

1979 and part of the site was re-developed for warehousing. When the Vickers Elswick works closed in 1982, tank production was transferred to a purpose-built factory on the old Scotswood site.

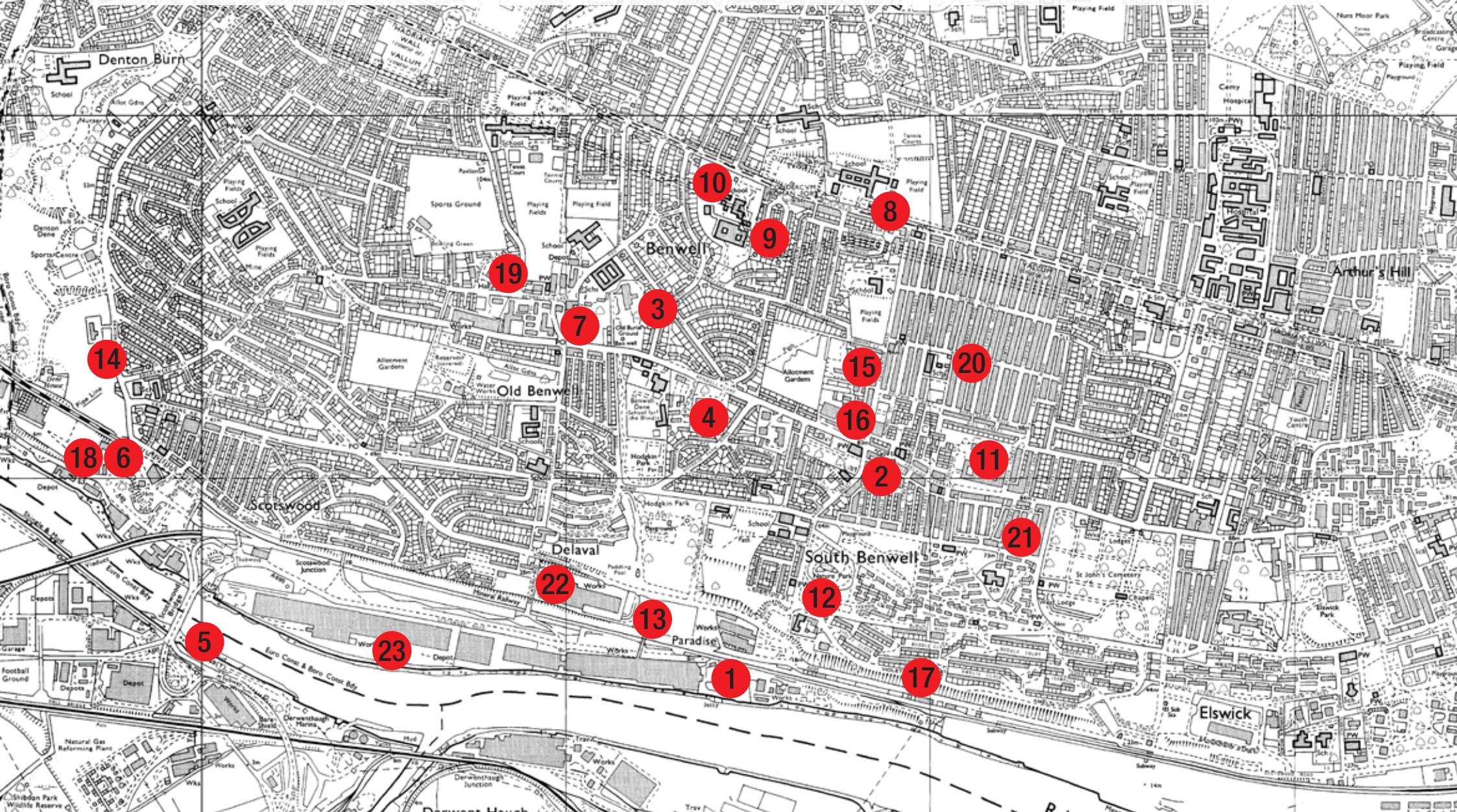
1. Paradise
2. Benwell High Cross
3. Benwell Tower
4. Benwell House
5. Scotswood Bridge
6. Scotswood House

7. Benwell Old House
8. Condercum Cottages
9. Benwell Park
10. Pendower Hall
11. Adelaide Terrace
12. South Benwell School

13. Benwell Boathouse
14. Scotswood Tower
15. Benwell Colliery
16. New Benwell
17. Scotswood Road
18. Chapel Terrace

19. Benwell Village
20. Canning Street School
21. Sutton's Dwellings
22. Delaval Road
23. Vickers Armstrong Scotswood works

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Benwell through the years

In Maps and Pictures

This book uses maps and photographs to trace the development of Benwell from 1864 to 1993. During this 130 year period it was transformed from a distinct rural area of green fields and big houses in landscaped grounds to become a densely populated and industrialised suburb of the city of Newcastle which, within a century, had begun to experience population loss and economic decline.

Benwell through the years is a joint project between two community organisations: St James' Heritage & Environment Group and West Newcastle Picture History Collection.



Ord Arms & Bridge Crescent, 1950s



Benwell Police Station, c1920



Benwell Grange, 1930s

St James' Heritage & Environment Group

St James' Heritage and Environment Group is an independent voluntary organisation that provides activities and resources for people of all ages to explore and celebrate the history of the west end of Newcastle, including maintaining and improving the historic graveyard of St James' in Benwell. This book is one of a series of local history publications by the Heritage and Environment Group.

Visit: Tuesdays between 1-4pm at St James' Church, Benwell Lane, NE15 6RR

Write: St James' Heritage & Environment Group, c/o Search,
74 Adelaide Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9JN

Email stjamesbenwell@gmail.com

<http://stjamesnewcastle.wordpress.com>

West Newcastle Picture History Collection

West Newcastle Picture History Collection holds a treasure trove of over 19,000 photographs of West Newcastle from the 1880s to the present day. The group continues to expand its collection through gifts and loans from the public and by actively documenting changes as they happen.

Visit: Mondays 9am to 4pm and Thursdays 2pm-4pm
at West End Library, Condercum Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9JH

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