

A new look for St James'

Building work has almost finished in the hall of St James' Church. There is a new floor and entrance area, lighting and a curved ceiling which follows the lines of the arches.



A few years ago the hall was in a sad state, with a damaged ceiling, a scruffy old floor, poor heating and insulation, and damp and mouldy walls – as this picture shows. Now it has been transformed into a clean, attractive and warm space.



A temporary floor was created during the building works, offering a unique opportunity to see the stained glass windows up close. Here architect Ged McCormack explains the plans to an intrepid group of visitors.



End of March – almost finished. All we need now are people to fill this beautiful space. It will be a much better venue for our exhibitions and events, as well as for activities run by the church and other organisations.

NEWS-

LETTER 14



April 2017

St James' Heritage & Environment Group



SUMMER CELEBRATION EVENT

Tuesday 9TH May 2- 4pm
St James' Church, Benwell

Join us at our Summer Event

find out about what has been happening over the past year

explore local heritage with indoor and outdoor activities

enjoy a strawberry cream tea



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And much more

Contact us: c/o Search, 74 Adelaide Terrace, NE4 9JN
Visit us at St James' Church, Benwell Lane, Tuesdays 12-4pm
Email: stjamesbenwell@gmail.com

HELP FROM THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

Last year we were kept busy with our project *St James' Graveyard: telling the story of Benwell and Scotswood*. This grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund enabled us to bring in a specialist stonemason/conservator to work with us to repair and restore some of the gravestones.



This work has made a big difference – restoring some of the most significant memorials such as that of mining engineer John Buddle, and making the area safer for visitors by lifting fallen gravestones and removing trip hazards. Here conservator Alun Walker and volunteers are reinstating the top of a damaged monument.

With this grant, we have also created a new interpretation board for the graveyard, two new heritage trails, and a set of 'digital stories' – short films about people buried at St James'.

At the beginning of 2017 we heard that we had been successful in our application for another grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a new project focusing on this area in the early part of the 20th century. We will be making a film about the industry along the West Newcastle riverside and developing a new heritage trail highlighting the experience of life here during the First World War.

We will also be running workshops with local schools to show children what life was like during this period.



A YEAR TO CELEBRATE

Much of our work during 2017 will involve sharing the results of our graveyard project – running tours, talks, film showings and celebration events. We will also be starting some new projects – and of course continuing with the core work of looking after the graveyard.



If you have a few hours to spare to help with weeding, litter-picking and planting, we always welcome helpers.

This is a good time to visit the graveyard, as the Spring flowers are blooming. The tulips are particularly impressive this year.

Visitors and volunteers are always welcome on Tuesday afternoons

between 1-4pm.

Butterflies in Benwell

Another new project for 2017, funded by a grant from the Community Foundation's LEAF fund, focuses on nature. We will be creating four butterfly gardens around the area to attract butterflies and other insects that are vital for our environment. There will also be a nature trail in the graveyard which children from local schools will help to design.



Elswick, Benwell and Scotswood through the Years

In March we published a new book *Elswick through the Years*, jointly with West Newcastle Picture History Collection. Using maps and photos, this shows the development of the Elswick area over more than two centuries. We are to re-print the popular *Benwell through the years* book later this year, and are already planning a similar book on Scotswood for 2018.