

# NEWSLETTER 19

## November 2019



### St James' Heritage & Environment Group

## INSIDE

Big Local History Event – News & Events – Spring programme

### *Winter Celebration Event*

#### **A festival of seasonal crafts and history**

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2pm- 4pm**  
**St James' Church, Benwell**



#### **Potted history**

have a go at making pottery figures celebrating local history

#### **Crafty Christmas**

get creative with natural materials

#### **Local history**

quiz and films

*Mince pies and mulled wine and a festive film*

Free to members of St James' Heritage & Environment Group - £2 for visitors  
Booking advised for pottery – otherwise no booking required

**Contact us:** Email: [stjamesbenwell@gmail.com](mailto:stjamesbenwell@gmail.com)

Website: [www.stjamesheritage.com](http://www.stjamesheritage.com)

Write: c/o Sunnybank Centre, 12 Sunnybank Ave, NE15 6SD

Visit: Tuesday afternoons 1-4pm, St James' Church, Benwell Lane

## Recording baptisms and marriages at St James' Church

We often get asked whether particular people were buried, married or baptised at St James' Church. If your family used to live in the west end, this is quite likely to be the case, since for many years this was the parish church for a large area stretching from the edge of the city to the town moor in the north and beyond Scotswood to the west. Answering queries about burials is easy as we have created a data-base of everyone buried there. We would like to develop a similar information resource for baptisms and marriages. We are looking for volunteers willing to spend some time in the archives at the Discovery Museum, transcribing records. If you could help, please email us at [stjamesbenwell@gmail.com](mailto:stjamesbenwell@gmail.com).

## Memories of St Joseph's

It was a shock to many in the local community when St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church on Armstrong Road closed suddenly in 2013. This fine church, designed by the architects Steinlet and Maxwell, was built in a Byzantine style with a high dome that can still be seen clearly from across the river. This photograph shows the foundation stone being laid in 1930. Over the next 80 years this church was the centre of religious and social life for many people.



St James's Heritage & Environment Group decided that the history of St Joseph's deserved to be remembered and celebrated. With help from many former members of the congregation, we created an exhibition showing the story of the church and the adjacent school, and in September we held an open event, organised jointly with the school, at which more than 70 people came to see the exhibition and add their own memories.

We would like to produce a book telling the story of St Joseph's Church and school – but we need help. Do you have any photographs or stories you could share with us? If so, please contact us through St Joseph's School, Armstrong Road or email us at [stjamesbenwell@gmail.com](mailto:stjamesbenwell@gmail.com).

## TREE AND FLOWER TRAIL

This year we have been busy creating a new tree and flower trail in the graveyard, thanks to a grant from the Community Foundation's Leaf fund. Pictured here are some of the people who helped to plant dozens of Spring bulbs this October, including members of Patchwork Youth Project, Lord Mayor David Cook, and Bobby the dog.



In the Winter we will be planting several new trees around the edge of the graveyard. These include trees such as crab-apples that have flowers, berries or fruit. These help to make this a good environment for birds, butterflies and other wildlife.



## Volunteers Needed

We meet every Tuesday throughout the year to maintain and improve the graveyard. There is always work to do, whatever the season. We welcome helpers, whether they come regularly or just drop in from time to time. No skills needed. All equipment provided. Tea and biscuits supplied.

# THE BIG LOCAL HISTORY EVENT

## Bringing the West End's History to Life

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September more than 150 people visited the Big Local History Event at the West End Library. This was a whole day of talks, tours, activities and exhibitions organised by the Heritage and Environment Group in partnership with West Newcastle Picture History Collection and the library service. It was part of the Heritage Open Days programme, and it was designed to showcase the fascinating history of the west end of Newcastle.

This was also an occasion to celebrate two important milestones: the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of West Newcastle Picture History Collection and the 10<sup>th</sup> birthday of St James' Heritage & Environment Group. Both organisations run regular events and activities in the West End Library, making this a real local history hub for the west end.



Local councillor Rob Higgins launching our new book at the Big Local History Event

Florrie the Geordie Lass (aka Yvonne Young) with a display of objects and pictures reminding us of life in the 1940s and 1950s.

West Newcastle Picture History Collection, Search and the Pendower Good Neighbour Project also ran activities in the library



## The Big Local History Event

### A Local Treasure: West Newcastle Picture History Collection



West Newcastle Picture History Collection was the subject of one of the talks at the event. The creation of local history enthusiasts in 1984, it has developed into the biggest volunteer-run dedicated local history photographic archive in the country with over 21,000 images of the west end.

Among its achievements was recognising the value of the work of local photographer Jimmy Forsyth (pictured here in 1993 in the group's former base at Benwell Library).

The collection is now based at the West

End Library, where visitors can view the photographs on Mondays between 10am-4pm. A new website is being developed which will allow people to search the collection online. WNPHC also gives illustrated talks in different venues on request.

### Snapshots of the Times: the Grantham photographic album

This photograph of children queuing outside the Grand Cinema in Benwell in 1924 is from a collection held by Tyne and Wear Archives. This album of photographs of local life in the 1920s and 1930s was the subject of a talk by Rosie Serdiville. John Grantham was a local councillor, and this album records all the events attended by himself and his wife Violet. Well worth a visit to the Discovery Museum where the album can be viewed free of charge.



## The Big Local History Event

### Stories about the Past

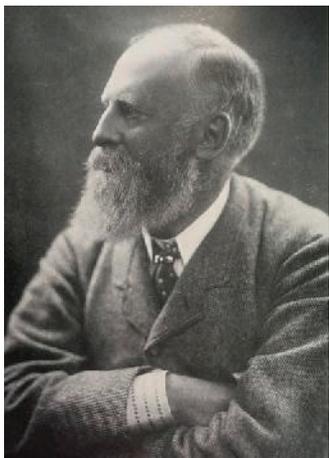
An introduction to historical fiction by former Benwell librarian Christine Wood and local author Yvonne Young looked at five authors who share an ability to tell a good story with a basis in historical fact.

Yvonne was keen to rescue Catherine Cookson from the accusation that she just wrote sentimental tales. Cookson based her books on her own experiences of poverty and prejudice, and was adept at conveying the realities of life in working class communities and in the coalmines, shipyards and workhouses. Christine spoke about Hilary Mantel, author of prize-winning novel *Wolf Hall* whose protagonist Thomas Cromwell is pictured here. Her books are not history lessons but imaginative stories to transport the reader to the life and times of characters from the past.



### Barnard Castle to Benwell: John Pease of Pendower

Pendower Hall on the West Road is one of only a few of the former grand mansions of Benwell to survive today. The hall was built in the 1860s for the Pease family – John, his wife Helen, their four children, and a household staff of 16 including a butler, footman and two grooms.

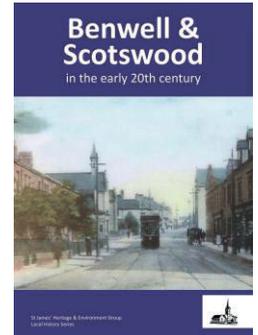


Richard Bliss's talk about John Pease traced his career, starting as an engineer then moving into banking. Pease (pictured here) was a founding partner in the banking firm of Hodgkin, Barnett, Pease and Spence which expanded rapidly with branches across the north east.

Pease was active in acquiring and developing land in Benwell which at that time was becoming a fashionable place for the wealthy to live. He was also active in local politics and a patron of the arts, championing the work of Thomas Bewick.

## Benwell & Scotswood in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century

*Benwell & Scotswood in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century* was officially launched at the Big Local History Event. It looks at the period between 1900-1939, including the impact of the Great War. These years saw the completion of the transformation of the area from a place of green fields, country lanes and mansions in landscaped grounds into densely populated suburbs of Newcastle. Full of photographs, maps and local detail, the book is available at our events and from local libraries, and can be viewed on our website (<http://stjamesheritage.com>).



## POTTED HISTORY

Among the different exhibitions on show at the Big Event was a display of pottery models from our Potted History project. Over 200 people of all ages have been involved in this so far, making clay models depicting people and places from the history of the area. Some of the models are still on display at the Library.



Meet Bishop Lloyd – a former resident of Benwell Towers – brought to life here by one of the older participants at a pottery session at Pendower Good Neighbour Project.

These models of mourners at the funeral of the victims of the Montagu Pit disaster were made by students from Excelsior Academy. Two other schools – Bridgewater and St Joseph's - also took part in the project.

# Winter/Spring 2020 Local History Programme

## *At St James' Church*

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January at 2pm**

### ***North East Life in the 1970s and 1980s***

Illustrated talk by Andrew Clark recalling the days of flared trousers, decimalisation and power cuts – with 1970s afternoon tea to follow.

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> February at 2pm**

### ***Shops and Shopping in Newcastle***

Illustrated talk by Olive Taylor about changes in shopping in Newcastle from medieval times to the present day.

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March at 2pm**

### ***St James' Church – keeping memories alive***

Guided tour of the church focusing on the various memorials to be seen.

## *At West End Library*

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January at 1pm**    ***Secret Newcastle***

In this illustrated talk, Ken Hutchinson will reveal the hidden stories behind the vampire rabbit and other artworks, plaques and memorials around town

**Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February at 1pm**

### ***Tyne View***

Playwright, screenwriter and author Michael Chaplin will talk about his walk along the tidal Tyne in search of the river's history, people, culture and soul.

**Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March at 1pm**

### ***Exploring the Homes for Heroes: a seated walking tour around Pendower***

Join Richard Bliss for a virtual tour around one of our first council estates, built to provide homes fit for heroes, exploring its history and people.

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> April at 1pm**

### ***The Other Casualties of War: the fates of disabled soldiers***

Illustrated talk by Lynne Dixon about the treatment of soldiers disabled during the First World War, with stories of individuals and organisations.