



ROTARY Walks round Durham

In 1973 members of the Rotary Club of Durham were celebrating the Club's Jubilee 1923-73 and after some negotiation with property owners and members of the Civic Trust it was decided to place a number of bronze plaques denoting historical locations in the City.

This year the Club celebrates its 90th Anniversary and tour of the City reflects upon those plaques in recognising major aspects of the history of Durham.

1. We begin this walk at the Durham Indoor Market in the Market Place.

By the start of the nineteenth century, overcrowding in the Market Place became a real problem with the various trades being widespread and disorganised throughout that part of the City. Traders banded together with local businessmen to petition for both the building of a purpose built Market Hall and for a more organised running of the Markets. In May 1851 The Durham Markets Company Act was passed for establishing new Markets and Market Places in the City of Durham, for abolishing the Corn Tolls and for regulating the Markets and Fairs within the said City and Suburbs thereof and for other Purposes. The area set aside for the new Market Hall was part of the site of New Place, the former palace and gardens built in the Middle Ages for the Nevilles of Raby and Brancepeth, the Earls of Westmoreland, who had forfeited the property to the Crown after their involvement in the ill-fated Rebellion of the North in 1569.

From the Market Place walk up Saddler Street, past the Magdalen Steps and onto Elvet Bridge

2. Elvet Bridge

Elvet across the River Wear to the east of the Durham peninsula is bounded by the river on its western, northern and eastern sides so that like the 'Dun Holm' it forms an 'island', although considerably flatter in appearance. Records of Elvet's existence actually predate the settlement of Dunholm in 995 A.D so it may have been a place of importance. Anciently Elvet was called Aelfete which in a very old tongue meant 'Swan Island' .

Durham's second oldest bridge was built by another prolific Bishop, Hugh Le Puiset, (also patron of the Galilee Chapel in the Cathedral, and parts of the Castle) sometime between 1170 and 1195. Historic accounts of Elvet Bridge tells us much about the social importance of bridges. In the early 13th century, indulgences (forgiveness for sins) were being given by the Archbishop of York for anybody who would work on this bridge's construction which was probably more likely to have been reconstruction after the usual threat to Durham's bridges: flooding).

Elvet Bridge had a chapel at each end - again this emphasised the importance of bridges, and the fact that that they were seen as landmarks, and important points of departure or arrival. One of the chapels, the one on inner river bank, was funded by a butcher. (The street at that end of the bridge was called Fleshergate.)

Elvet Bridge would also have had gates, forming part of the city's defences. These were added (or strengthened) in the fourteenth century, when Scottish attacks on Durham were becoming frequent, but were demolished at the end of the sixteenth century – when they were no longer useful. The buildings remaining on Elvet Bridge are just a few of the many that would have been there – it would have felt like a bustling medieval street, rather than the quiet pedestrian walkway it is today. The plaque was probably removed during renovation of the bridge in 1978. Under the arch at the City side lies the original Durham Gaol.

After crossing Elvet Bridge carry straight on past the Royal County Hotel where the great and the good would wave to the marching crowds at the annual Miner's Gala.

On the right you will see Old Shire Hall, the original Seat of the County's government, and past that are Durham Crown Courts and Durham Prison.

Follow the road round the prison to the right and up to what is now the Prison Officers' Club, but what once was

3. Elvet Hallgarth Tithe Barn

Hallgarth Street. It takes its name from the site of a hall belonging to the priors of Durham called Hallgarth. Associated with the hall was Hallgarth tithe barn, a medieval structure which can still be seen. It was used to house the portion [tithe or tenth] of the local harvest which the prior's tenants owed to the monastery of Durham.

From Hallgarth we walk down to Dunelm House the University's Student Union building and across the award winning Kingsgate Bridge to one of Durham's oldest Colleges - Hatfield. The modern building just past the college is :

4. Jevons' House.

This building, known as the Jevons Building, was constructed in 1967 to offer more student accommodation for Hatfield College. It received a Civic Trust Award in 1969, with the jury stating that "By replacing an inferior Georgian House in 1966... the environment of the North Bailey and the College has been improved". It would have been cutting-edge then, and a source of pride to the College. It is unlikely to be preferred to a Georgian house today, though.

Part of Hatfield College it was named after Dr. Frank Byron Jevons Principal and Master of Hatfield from 1897 -1922, Vice Chancellor 1910 to 1912.

Also the site of the house of John Gully MP 1783-1863, Prize fighter, racehorse and colliery owner. One associates the great Durham coal owners of the last century with the landed gentry and aristocracy, Lord Londonderry, Lord Lambton, Lord Hawden, Sir William Chaytor etc.; the names trip off the tongue like a page from Debrett. Yet one of the most rich and venturesome, certainly the most colourful, was plain Mr John Gully, son of a humble butcher and one-time champion prize-fighter of England.

Gully made a second fortune from sinking pits in the county at Hetton, Thornley, Trimdon and Wingate. His first fortune came from his manifold sporting activities. It can truly be said that no man in the history of English sport had a more remarkable career.

Gully was born to be a butcher, was by natural tastes a prize-fighter, successfully a publican, professional gambler, a Member of Parliament and finally a great Durham colliery owner. Such was the varied course of this energetic and successful career of John Gully.

After a few years as a tavern keeper where he earned the greatest respect, Gully went in for turf speculation. He proved to be such a good judge that in a short time he became quite rich. He bought Hare Park, one of the stateliest homes in Yorkshire, and here some of the greatest in the land were entertained on equal terms by John Gully Esquire.

Gully became famous as a spirited breeder and owner. He was appointed Official Betting Agent to H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, later George IV, and he made a great deal of money for betting on commissions for various noblemen and gentlemen connected with Newmarket.

In 1832 Mr. John Gully was elected to the first Reformed Parliament being returned as Liberal M.P. for Pontefract. He also represented the same borough in the next election.

Despite his great sporting triumphs, however, Gully is best remembered in County Durham as an enterprising colliery owner and venturesome sinker of new pits. He also withdrew from all direct gambling and invested a large proportion of his considerable fortune in the coal development of County Durham. His famous lilac jacket was seen less and less on the turf. The Hetton Company was formed to work coal in the famous Durham Royalty.

Gully bought a large number of shares at a comparatively low price. The original speculation was considered a hazardous, even foolhardy one, as before that time geologists believed that the quantity of coal under the Permian strata was so poor as to hardly worth working.

In With a Chance

Gully's partners in the venture were Capt. Archibald Cochrane, of Eppleton Hall, a younger brother of the celebrated Lord Cochrane, afterwards Earl of Dundonald, whose daughter Lord Cochrane married, Mr Baker of Elemore Hall and subsequently Mr. Nicholas Wood. The latter went to Hetton to manage the colliery in 1844. Robert Stephenson was chief engineer of the company. His father George Stephenson was also employed. Thus the partners were in with a chance.

“ We will show ‘em whether we cannot make Wallsend coal” said Gully. The partners did so. They obtained a higher price on the London market than the original Wallsends did.

The Hetton venture succeeded beyond the partner's wildest hopes. Gully held on to his shares until they showed a huge profit then he sold out. In 1835 he joined another ambitious speculation, the sinking of the Thornley pits. His chief allies were Sir William Chaytor, who had married his sister in law, Mr Thomas Wood and Mr John Burrell.

There was no difficulty in winning the colliery, but labour relations were difficult from the start. Gully was a frequent visitor to the colliery and must have enjoyed the tussles with the colliers and the newly-formed Miners' Union. He maintained his interest in Thornley until it was sold to a liability company. Again he made a huge profit.

Gully also entered partnership with Wood and Burrell in the sinking of Trimdon Colliery - the old pit and also in the sinking of Trimdon Grange. On January 3rd 1861 he paid The Right Hon. John Hobart, Baron Howden, £20,000 for the Wingate Estate and Colliery and remained the sole owner until the day of his death

Gully moved to lovely Cocken Hall on the banks of the River Wear immediately below Finchale Abbey. In his old age a biographer tells us he was still full of spirit. At 78 he was still as erect as ever and his mind was as clear and good as it had ever been.

Only in the last few months of his life did Gully's great strength fail him and it was then that he moved into 7, North Bailey, Durham City. He died there at the age of 79 on March 3rd 1863. He was buried with great honour at Ackworth Park, Pontefract. The mute bell tolled. The Mayor and Corporation from Durham went to the funeral and the carriages of half of Yorkshire and Durham drove in the procession to pay their tribute to John Gully Esquire, champion of England. Gully was married twice and had 24 children, 12 to each wife, - a truly **remarkable man**.

On the way up to Palace Green and a number of plaques, firstly we come to

5. Music School, Palace Green

The oldest part of the range of buildings that form Durham University's Music Department is the current performance hall. This was founded as a grammar school in 1541, during Henry VIII's Reformation, and rebuilt in 1661 during the Bishopric of John Cosin, a prolific builder, and patron of several other buildings on Palace Green. The 16th century school itself was a replacement of the Almoner's School, located beside the Cathedral College, and probably established in the 14th century to prepare students for entry into the Durham Monastery. Henry VIII provided several King's Scholarships, allowing students to be educated for free. Students were expected to speak only Latin while at school, although they also studied Greek. The school day was from 7-5, with a two hour lunch-break! The building remained a school until 1844, at which point new premises on the west bank of the river were constructed – today Durham School. The building's history as an educational institution for generations of schoolboys is reflected in the extensive graffiti scratched into its wooden panelling.

Not forgetting

6. Windy Gap Entrance to the Music School - the home of John Meade Falkner.

Falkner was born in Manningford Bruce, Wiltshire and spent much of his childhood in Dorchester and Weymouth. He was educated at Marlborough College and Hertford College, Oxford, graduating with a degree in history in 1882. After Oxford, he was a master at Derby School, then went to Newcastle as tutor to the family of Sir Andrew Noble, who ran Armstrong Whitworth Co., one of the largest arms manufacturers in the world. Falkner eventually followed him as chairman in 1915. In his business travels round the world, Falkner brought back antiquarian treasures of all kinds.

After his retirement as chairman in 1921 he became Honorary Reader in palaeography at the University of Durham, as well as Honorary Librarian to the Dean and Chapter Library of Durham Cathedral. Falkner fell in love with Durham and, although he spent his later years travelling frequently, he called Durham his home, living in the Divinity House (now the University Music School) on Palace Green in front of the cathedral from 1902 until his death. There is a commemorative plaque there, while his monument is in the south cloister of the cathedral. In addition to his three novels and his poetry, he also wrote three topographical guides (Oxfordshire, Bath and Berkshire) and a History of Oxfordshire.

On the same side of the Green we come to

7. Bishop Cosin's Almshouses.

Bishop Cosin's Almshouses were constructed in 1666 by the Bishop of Durham, John Cosin. They were constructed on the site of an earlier building, the song and grammar school of a previous Bishop of Durham, Langley, built in 1414.

The original foundation charter for the Almshouses indicates that the building contained 8 rooms to provide accommodation for 4 men and 4 women who had to be unmarried and 'honourable' citizens. Three of the men and three of the women had to be natives of the city of Durham, or to have lived in it for at least 20 years. The fourth man and woman had to be from the nearby parish of Brancepeth, where the John Cosin had previously been rector. Finances: The sum of 70 pounds per year was endowed for the support of the occupants and the upkeep of the building. Each of the 8 occupants received an annual stipend of 6 pounds, 13 shillings and 4 pence, paid in quarterly instalments. They received an additional 15 shillings on St Bartholomew's day for buying fuel and repairing the windows. One pound per year was allocated to general building repairs and 5 pounds per year were to be spent on buying gowns for the occupants every third year. In addition, 4 pounds a year was to be paid in quarterly instalments to "some honest woman to be nominated by the bishop and his successors" to take care of the residents if they were sick. Broken windows: then as now, provision had to be made for damage to vulnerable elements of the building. Rules: The occupants of the almshouses were expected to live as upright members of the community. They were to attend morning and evening services at the cathedral, walking together in pairs, wearing their gowns, and processing as soon as the bells started to toll to ensure that they would not arrive late. Moreover, they were to say their prayers first thing in the morning and last at night – the prayers were prescribed and written in each of their chambers. They were to live peacefully, quietly and humbly, refrain from playing cards or gambling, avoid taverns and Alehouses, and lodge in the Almshouses at all times. If any of the occupants broke the rules, following two or three warnings the Bishop could decide to evict them, and find a more suitable occupant.

Moving across the Green to

8. Bishop Cosin's Library

Dating from the mid-fifteenth century, this is the only of the Prince-Bishops administrative buildings to have survived from medieval times. Its function was to administer the bishops' legal and financial transactions – a key function for a bishopric as wealthy as Durham. The building contained a court, and a small dungeon as well. Today, it houses several collections of antique books, including those of Bamburgh Castle, and Martin Routh, president of Magdalene College, Oxford. The Exchequer Building was constructed during the Bishopric of Robert Neville, whose crest can be seen on the main façade. Neville came from one of the region's most prominent families, who were the first lay-people to be given permission to be buried inside the cathedral. They were also behind the gifting of the famous Neville Screen to that building.

John Cosin's Library It was the seventeenth-century Bishop, John Cosin, who was ultimately to have the longest lasting impact on the buildings on the west side of Palace Green – by building a library, that has remained, and continued to expand until today. John Cosin became Bishop of Durham immediately after the English Civil War, and thus inherited a Bishopric whose buildings were in a run-down state. (The fact that the Scots supported the monarchy, led to battles between them and Oliver Cromwell, who conveniently used Durham as a base.) As an old ally of the pre-Civil War king, Charles I, Cosin was held in high esteem by his son Charles II. (Cosin had been the master of ceremonies at Charles I's coronation, for example). Cosin's privileged position, and the poor state of Durham's buildings, gave him the opportunity to undertake a large amount of construction and restoration work.

On from the Library we come to

9. Former Exchequer and Chancery of the Palatinate Now the University Library

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In 1858, a purpose-built library building was designed by the renowned architect Anthony Salvin, adjacent to Cosin's own building.

One of the most interesting details about Salvin's library building are the gargoyles with faces of top university staff members!

Leaving the Palace Green we proceed down to Saddler Street again to

10. Site of the North Gate between Bailey and City

Rebuilt in 1420, it was removed in 1820 - former County Gaol. It's on the right below the sign for Drury Lane above the Ginnel.

We go to the bottom of the street where we see the Magdalen Steps then take a sharp left up

11. Moatside Lane - Mediaeval Pilgrim's route to the Cathedral.

The north was the only vulnerable side of the peninsula (its neck). It was also the side that any potential invaders were likely to approach the Castle. Therefore the moat, which lines the northern perimeter of the Castle, was a crucial line of defence.

While it is difficult to appreciate the dry moat today, the line it followed has been preserved in the form of Moatside Lane, whose tunnel-like nature is due to its original function.

A tight squeeze at the end of the lane brings us to Silver Street and to the top where we find

12. Sir John Duck's House

John Duck's birth and parentage are unknown, but he became one of the wealthiest citizens of Durham. Much of his early life is a mystery but it is known that he arrived in Durham in 1655 where he was eventually apprenticed as a butcher to John Heslop, despite warnings from the Butcher's Guild not to take him on. Initially no one would employ him because he could not give any details of his place of birth. Legend has it that as Duck wandered dejectedly through the streets of Durham a raven dropped a coin at his feet which became the foundation of his fortune. It is not

clear how he made his fortune, and evidence suggests that he was not always law abiding in his accumulation of wealth. However, Duck went on to become one of the wealthiest men in Durham, owning both land and collieries in the area, building a great mansion in Silver Street and endowing a hospital for the poor at Great Lumley in 1686. He married either the sister or daughter of Heslop and the estate of Haswell became his some time before 1680. In 1680 he became the Mayor of Durham and ultimately progressed to the rank of a baronet when he became Sir John Duck of Haswell on the Hill. He died without issue and was buried at St Margaret's, 31st August 1691. The estate of Haswell was sold by Lady Duck in 1695 after her husband's death.

Another one! Plaque found at Kepier Farm

The hospital was founded at Gilesgate, Durham, by Bishop Flambard as an almshouse "for the keeping of the poor who enter the same hospital". It was dedicated to God and St Giles, the patron saint of beggars and cripples. The first hospital chapel (now St Giles Church, Gilesgate) was dedicated in June 1112. The hospital buildings (with the exception of the church) were destroyed along with Caldecotes by the men of William Cumin, Chancellor of King David I of Scotland, who claimed to be the rightfully elected Bishop of Durham, to prevent succour to the advancing army of his opponent, William of St. Barbara.

The hospital was refounded beside the River Wear at Kepier, c.1180, by Bishop Hugh le Puiset with an establishment of thirteen brethren, serving around thirteen (male) inmates as well as travellers and pilgrims.