



The Blue Plaque Walk



North Tyneside Council

The Blue Pla

Wherever we stand we are surrounded by history. Sometimes that history is highly visible. Other times it lies beneath the surface and requires a journey of exploration for the unique character of the area to be truly appreciated. An ideal way to start that journey is to follow the blue plaques that have been erected on buildings with some historical significance. These offer a taste of what went before and, when viewed as a group, begin to build up a picture of the past. A snapshot maybe, but what better way to uncover a little of the history of the coastal village of Tynemouth and its seafaring neighbour North Shields.





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- 1 At the seaward end of Front Street on the headland known as Pen Bal Crag stands Tynemouth Castle. Inside lie the ruins of the 7th century Priory, built by monks from Holy Island, sacked by the Danes in 800 and the burial place of three kings, Oswin King of Deira, Osred King of Northumbria and Malcolm III King of Scotland. A blue plaque (1) attached to the iron railings facing the Castle marks the start of this walk. Leaving the castle behind, walk along the left hand side of Front Street until you reach number 57, formerly the home of Harriet Martineau one of the most prominent and versatile women writers of the 19th century as well as one of the most controversial. Not a local by birth, she arrived in Tynemouth in 1840, in ill health, and fully expecting to die, to be with her brother-in-law doctor. Already a prolific writer on subjects such as religion, politics, economics and social reform she was far from idle whilst in Tynemouth. During her 5 year stay, when she made a surprising recovery, she published a novel, *The Hour and The Man*, a book of children's stories, *The Playfellow* and a collection of meditative essays, *Life in The Sick Room*. She eventually moved to Ambleside in the Lake District. There is no blue plaque attached to number 57, a restored Georgian town house built in about 1760, although there is a small black one (2) over the archway leading to the Grove, the adjoining alleyway.

7 Leaving the front of the building, continue straight ahead, past the smokehouses on your right and the fish processing units on your left, until you reach the river and the `Fish Quay sands`. This, with the adjacent car park, is a popular spot for people to sit, devouring huge portions of fish and chips, whilst watching the comings and goings of river life. Proceed along the promenade towards the river mouth and on nearing the end keep an eye open for the blue plaque (15) attached to the promenade railings. This refers to the notorious Black Middens rocks which have long been a hazard to shipping entering and leaving the Tyne. On the 24th November 1864 36 lives were lost when the steamship `Stanley` and the schooner `Friendship` were swept onto these treacherous rocks by severe gales. Behind you, at the top of the steep grassy bank, stands the enormous statue of Admiral Lord Collingwood, second in command to Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar. Born in Newcastle in 1748, Collingwood joined the navy at the age of thirteen. He was rewarded with a peerage for his `valour, judgement and skill` at Trafalgar and, when he died in 1810, he was given a state funeral and a monument in St.Paul`s Cathedral. A definite local hero. Follow the path as it climbs to the left, away from the river, and on reaching the top turn sharp left twice towards the white, yellow and blue wooden building (16). This is the Volunteer Life Brigade House, built in 1887 to house the country`s first volunteer life brigade which had been formed some 23 years earlier following several tragic shipwrecks. One of the principal tools of the brigade was the rocket line and breeches bouy which was used to great effect on the 20th October 1894 when the brigade rescued all 6 crew members from the stricken brigantine `Fame`. It is possible to look inside the building at certain times of the week. Retrace your steps back to the top of the short climb up from the river and then continue downhill to the small bridge. Finally its uphill, adjacent to the castle moat. On reaching the top you have come to the end of your walk hopefully with a whiff of what life may have been like in times now past.

Blue Plaques

(1) Number in Walk Location (2) Pen Bal Crag and Tynemouth Castle
(3) Number 57 Front Street-Harriet Martineau (4) King`s School Huntington Place-Giuseppe Garibaldi
(5) The Drill Hall-Tyne Electrical Engineers (6)Number 10 Priors Terrace-Anne Maud Burnett
(7) First Tynemouth Station (8) Master Mariners Homes Tynemouth Road
(9) Governor`s Tree Tynemouth Road (9) Tynemouth Lodge Correction House Bank Tynemouth Road
(10) Maritime Chambers Howard Street (11) Dockway Square-Stan Laurel (12) Old High Light
(13) Clifford`s Fort (14) Old Low Light (15) Black Middens (16) Volunteer Life Brigade House



Victorian Post Box

Devised and Written: Geoff Holland and Jonathan Barrant - 2005

Photographs: Geoff and Ellie Holland

2 Continue along Front Street, over the pelican crossing at the top and into Huntington Place, which faces a small park and a monument of Queen Victoria. Unveiled in October 1902, this bronze sculpting by Alfred Turner shows the Queen in the twilight of her reign and cost £1,000 to construct. The eagle-eyed will note that the work now lacks the Queen's crown. As you head forwards watch out for the blue plaque (3) attached to the building with the large stone portico which is now occupied by the independent King's School. It was here that Giuseppe Garibaldi stayed in 1854 whilst visiting Tynemouth to brief local political and industrial leaders on his plans for a unified Italy. Garibaldi and his famous band of men known as the Red Shirts were instrumental in having Victor Emmanuel proclaimed as King of Italy in 1861. This building, which was formerly known as Tynemouth House, has been a school since the mid-1860's and when it was built in 1760 it stood alone in its own grounds. Pass in front of the school and bend left to Tynemouth Station. Peep inside and you will discover a fine example of Victorian railway architecture with vast glazed canopies following the gentle curve of the track. The large station, which opened in 1882 and accommodated the world's first provincial railway, catered for commuter traffic to Newcastle, seaside day trippers and fish transport from North Shields Fish Quay.

3 Back outside the station follow the road as it swings left towards Tynemouth Road and, immediately before the junction is reached, look out for the impressive door head to the Tyne Electrical Engineers Drill Hall and the neighbouring blue plaque (4). The Drill Hall, known as the new Clifford's Fort Drill Hall, has been used by the Engineers since 1928. On the move again, cross straight over Tynemouth Road and into Tynemouth Terrace. You are now entering a magnificent enclave of Victorian architecture and an area of tranquillity. As you turn right into Northumberland Terrace look straight ahead for the well preserved Victorian post box set into the stone wall surrounding a number of allotments. Continue to follow the road anti-clockwise along Collingwood Terrace with views to the River Tyne. Once into Priors Terrace stop outside number 10, once the home (5) of Anne Maud Burnett who in 1910 became the first woman member of Tynemouth Council and then in 1929 the Council's first woman Mayor. After a quick glance over your shoulder at the fine view of the Castle and the Priory it's time to continue anti-clockwise into Northumberland Terrace and then right into Tynemouth Terrace. At the junction turn left into Tynemouth Road and within 50 metres you reach the first Tynemouth Station (6). Opened in 1847 and designed for the Newcastle and Berwick Railway Company by architects John and Benjamin Green, who also designed the Theatre Royal in Grey Street, Newcastle, these well kept buildings now form part of the Mariners Point housing development. Take note of the four shields set into the building two of which contain three castles. The shield forms the centrepiece of the Borough of Tynemouth's Coat of Arms.

Hollywood star
Stan Laurel by Robert Olley



5 Head forwards along Tynemouth Road for half a mile until you reach the first set of traffic lights. Turn left into Upper Norfolk Street and on reaching Northumberland Square cut diagonally across the central park area towards the large 1960's Central Library building. Once at the corner of the building you will be standing next to the Wooden Dolly statue which faces down Howard Street towards the River Tyne. This 1958 life size sculpting of a fisherwoman carrying a basket and wearing traditional shawl and full skirts is carved from wood and is painted brown. It stands as a tribute to the part women played in the economic life of the area. Within the square itself there are some fine Georgian houses, now all converted to offices. Follow Howard Street until you reach the small square in front of the beautiful Maritime Chambers (10) with superb views over the River Tyne. Completed in 1807, this building originally housed the Tynemouth Literary and Philosophical Society's library before becoming the headquarters of the family run Stag Line shipping company. The company's stag emblem adorns the gable wall of the building, overlooking the river, and when erected replaced the town's official clock. Within the square there is a fine memorial, made from an old ship's anchor, to all those lost at sea. With your back to Maritime Chambers walk along the pavement adjacent to the top of the grass bank which falls away steeply to your right. Before long you will reach the modern buildings of Dockway Square set around a laid out park area in the centre of which sits Robert Olley's wonderful sculpting of Stan Laurel, one of North Shields' famous sons. Born Arthur Stanley Jefferson in Ulverston in 1890, Stan moved to North Shields in 1897 when his father came to manage the Theatre Royal in Prudhoe Street. He continued to live in 8 Dockway Square until 1901 when he moved to Bishop Auckland and later, in 1906, to Glasgow. The original house has long since been demolished and the blue plaque (11) is affixed between the current numbers 6 and 7 Dockway Square.

Master Mariners Homes



4 Cross over to the right hand side of Tynemouth Road, passing the new Kinder Castle Nursery before reaching Mariners Lane running off to your right. Ignoring this road continue straight ahead for 50 metres to the front façade of the Tudor style Master Mariners Homes (7). Built on land donated by the 3rd Duke of Northumberland and completed in 1840 the homes were intended for retired or incapacitated seamen. The statue of the Duke at the front of the building acknowledges his donation and was created by sculptor Christopher Tate. However, Tate died before finishing the work and it fell to fellow sculptor Richard George Davies to complete it. Continue along Tynemouth Road, dropping almost immediately downhill, first to the Governor's Tree (8) and then, in quick succession, to the Tynemouth Lodge (9). It was at the Governor's Tree that important visitors to Tynemouth were met as they disembarked in Pow Burn. In 1539 King Henry VIII's commissioners arrived here on their way to dispossess the Monks of Tynemouth Priory followed in 1633 by King Charles I. The Tynemouth Lodge has been trading as a public house since 1799. Next door stood the former Correction House and Justices Room which was a prison for minor offenders, such as prostitutes, whilst more serious offenders were sent to the County Goal at Morpeth, where hangings were also carried out. Circuit Judges regularly stayed in the Tynemouth Lodge whilst engaged in their duties in the Justices Room. The Correction House was built in 1789 on land formerly known as Powebank near Lowlight Farm. For the majority of the 20th century the building was used as a laundry. The Tynemouth Lodge is now a free house specialising in traditional ales.

The 'old' High Light



6 Outside the square on the opposite side of the street stands the 'new' High Light which was built in 1807. When aligned with the 'new' Low Light, nestling at the bottom of the bank on the seaward side of the Fish Quay, this marked out a completely new channel for ships to take when navigating the mouth of the River Tyne. The previous channel was marked out by the 'old' High and Low Lights, both of which are still standing. The 'old' High Light (12) is situated 50 metres further along the street, at the beginning of the elegant Trinity Buildings, and was constructed in 1727 by Trinity House of Newcastle. This light succeeded several other similar lights which had been maintained in North Shields since 1536. Continue alongside Trinity Buildings until you reach the Wooden Doll public house. Note the head and shoulders 'wooden dolly' which stands outside the pub, a 1980's version of the one in Northumberland Square, before descending the adjacent stairs. On reaching the bottom, turn left and within about 50 metres, before reaching the New Dolphin pub, turn right towards the gable end of the three-storey building, the 'old' Low Light. On your right, in the wall immediately next to the building, is a blue plaque (13) noting the existence, in this area of the Fish Quay, of Clifford's Fort. Completed in 1672, the Fort was commanded by the Governor of Tynemouth Castle until 1839 and was the headquarters of the Tyne Division of the Royal Engineers (Volunteers) from 1889 until 1928, when the Engineers moved to the new Clifford's Fort Drill Hall, in Tynemouth, visited earlier in the walk. Continue around to the front of the 'old' Low Light and to the blue plaque (14) affixed to the wall of this important building, which was saved from terminal decay, in the late 1980's, by the Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust with assistance from North Tyneside Council.