

# CUPOLA

TYNE & WEAR Building Preservation Trust **NEWSLETTER** Issue 2 AUTUMN 2017

## Through the fireplace... \*



**Hello and a very warm welcome to members, old and new, to this second issue of our newsletter, Cupola.** As 2017 draws to a close, you find us at the end of our year long Transition Project, where we have taken time to look at ourselves in the mirror, as it were, and think about how we expand the Trust into new areas and larger projects. One of the key strands to achieving this is increasing our membership, and I'm delighted to say, we've welcomed record numbers of you to the Trust this year. The biggest number in 20 years! We need you, we value you and we want more of you, so do please tell your friends! Alongside Transition, we've been grappling with lead dust, saving retail heritage,

and finding out how a roof truss can unlock a mystery. Meanwhile, Staiths Friends have discovered that dog shows, light installations and heritage all go rather well together. You can read all about that and more in this issue. Enjoy the newsletter, thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you at a members' event soon.

Yours, **Kari Vickers**, Deputy Manager.

## Back to the Wall Volunteer's Viewpoint

**This month's "wallists" are Virginia and Roger, two active members of the admirable Dunston Staiths Friends group, who are working closely with the Trust to sustain this iconic visitor attraction.**

We moved to the Staiths South Bank about four years ago, drawn by the river location and the stunning backdrop of the historic structure of the coal Staiths.

When the Trust started restoration of the Staiths in 2014, we were curious and keen to see what we could do to help. So, one evening we went along to a meeting at the Dunston Community Centre to find out a bit more about the project, and Staiths Friends group has developed from there!

An early priority was to open the Staiths up to the public, three days a week during the spring and summer. (currently Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays as well as Bank Holidays).

A few of us volunteered to be key holders and share a rota to make sure this happens. We've just completed our 3rd opening season. This is proving more and more popular every year and draws visitors from all over the North East. It's really satisfying to see people on Staiths again

after they were closed for so long. To encourage visitors, we've been running events alongside normal open access days, including the regular food market, open gardens, and this year our first dog show! This was lots of fun and enthusiastically attended; and is definitely on the cards for next year. Roger has also been able to use his professional knowledge and stretch his team's imagination with the Staiths. "I run Projected Image - a company specialising in making gobos for light projections. We often manufacture images to project onto buildings – but we had never made anything for a Victorian coal staiths before - and after some egging on from our neighbours, we had a go. The first attempt was for the opening of the

season and then we developed the design for the Late Shows in May. We weren't entirely sure how it would go but most importantly people seemed to really enjoy it! "

The Staiths provide a fantastic draw and focal point for people. It is great to see it has become such a popular 'destination'-it has become an important part of our lives.

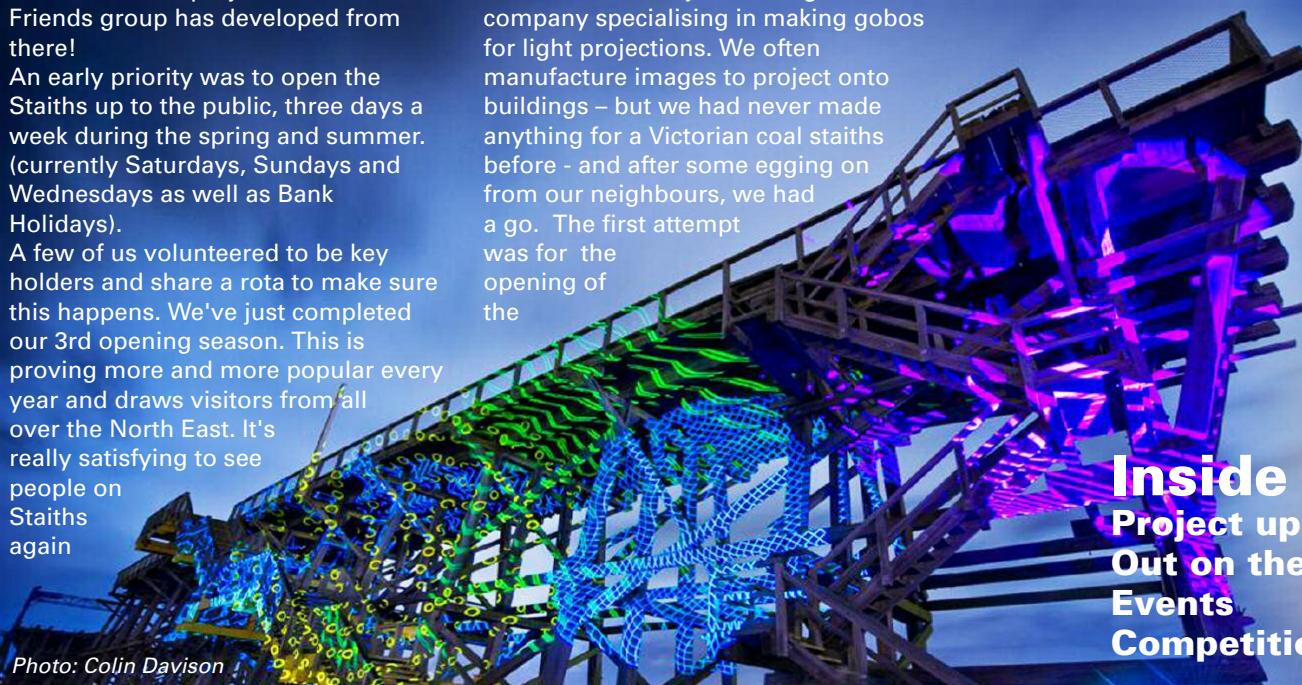


Photo: Colin Davison

**Inside  
Project updates  
Out on the Tiles  
Events  
Competition**

\*Random though it seems, this title is very apt. Our home, Alderman Fenwick's House, is in fact two houses joined together. You pass from one to the other at various levels through short passageways cut through some of the original chimney flues. And so telling colleagues you're popping "through the fireplace," means you are popping next door.

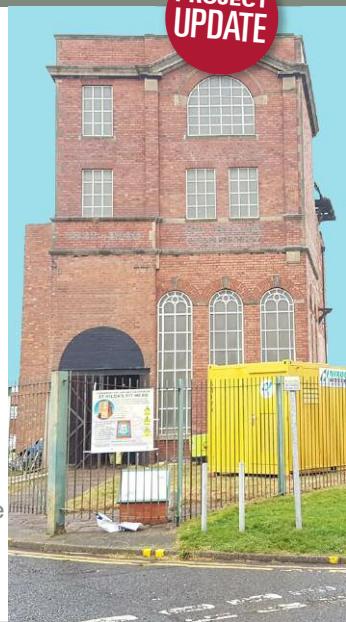
## St Hilda's Pit Head, South Shields

Our last report left us in the exciting position of being all set to press on with restoration. You may recall, funding was in place and architects and a building contractor had been appointed. We were looking forward to a swift and relatively straightforward project which would see the building back in use as early as Spring next year.

Old buildings do like to throw the unexpected at you however and in this case it came in the form of lead dust discovered layering the concrete cap over the mine shaft. How it got there isn't completely clear but an educated guess by the team puts the dust down to remnants of paint which had been cleaned off steel beams within the building at some point in the past. Whatever the cause, we had lead to deal with, which of course is highly toxic. Health and safety legislation deemed the building unsafe and we had to figure out how to remove it. This is not at all as simple as it sounds. It is specialist work and very few companies can do it. Happily we have found an excellent firm locally - Harpers and their work is progressing well and to schedule.

This does delay completion slightly- we think by around three months - but this is accommodated in our contingency plan, as is the cost, so we're still broadly on track.

Now to the good news. Two bits in fact. First we have appointed a Project Officer to deliver the exciting activity programme within the community which we mentioned last time, so that will be underway soon. And we're having very positive discussions with an exciting potential occupier. More on both next time.



## Dunston Staiths - Phase 2

In the last issue, we reported on the completion of the first phase of restoration which saw the West End of the structure successfully re-opened to the public. We are now working on Phase 2, to find a means of improving survey and maintenance access along the whole length of the structure, currently difficult and costly due to inaccessibility and deterioration of some areas.

Earlier this year, specialist aerial structural surveyors assessed the current condition of the East End and Riverside. This enabled our structural engineer to put together a package of work valued at £700,000, and the next step is to raise £150,000 required to pay for the most urgent work to be done. This includes

making safe some burnt timbers around the gap created by the 2003 fire, and testing a new surface paint for the decking to make it non-slip and protect from further rot - which will reduce the need for costly jet-washing every year. We are applying to two strategic funders to support this - fingers crossed!

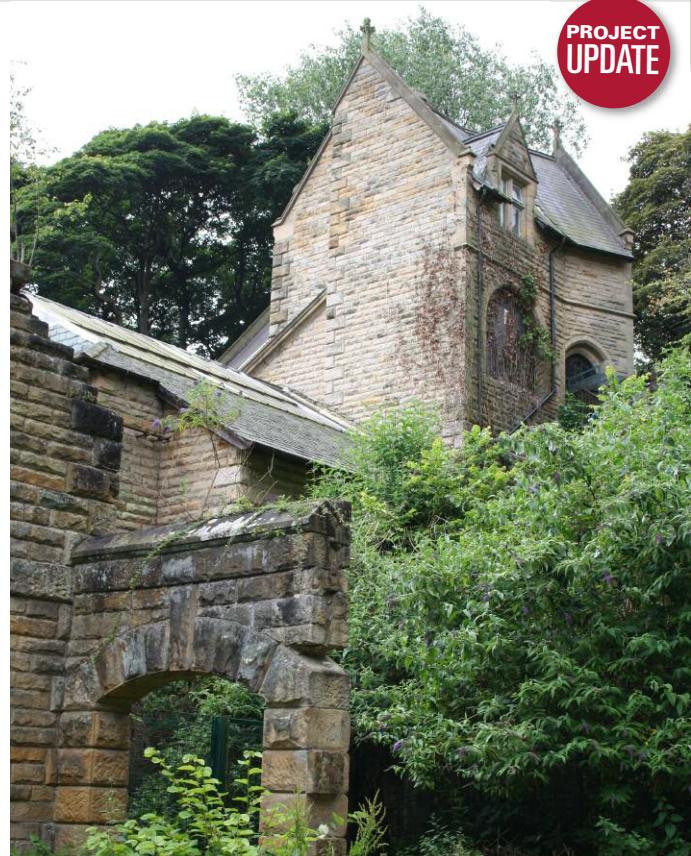
The Staiths is now closed for Winter to allow the mud feeding birds a safe roost. It will re-open in Spring in time for Easter. This year, the Staiths provided a venue for a lively summer of events, involving an open gardens day and a dog show alongside the regular monthly food markets. All organised by the Staiths Friends. Recently constituted, this group of very hands on volunteers provides invaluable support to the project acting as event organisers, keyholders and custodians. They are a great example of how volunteering can drive heritage rescue forward. And they're always on the look-out for new members, so if you or anybody you know might be interested in getting involved please get in touch and visit [dunstonstaiths.org.uk](http://dunstonstaiths.org.uk)

## Jesmond Dene Banqueting Hall and Lodge

Commissioned by famous industrialist Lord William Armstrong, the John Dobson designed Banqueting Hall was completed in 1862 and, along with adjoining buildings by Norman Shaw, formed the final piece in Armstrong's spectacular Jesmond Dene river and parkland oasis. Gifted to the City by Lord Armstrong in 1883, the Banqueting Hall in particular has latterly fallen into serious disrepair finding its way onto Newcastle City Council's At Risk Register. The Trust was commissioned to research the building and devise a long term strategy for its restoration. Our work focussed in particular on the need for greater transparency in future use and ownership and in fact our recommendation has led to Newcastle City inviting interested groups to take on the building under the Community Asset Transfer Scheme.

It is an exciting project from a number of perspectives. Firstly, it is architecturally interesting. A blend of Dobson and Shaw. Secondly, its position in Jesmond Dene makes it a prominent and important building. Thirdly, the many possibilities it offers for future use. It is a tough project though. We realistically estimate it will cost between £3 and £4 million to bring back into use.

None the less we have decided to apply to take on the building ourselves. At time of writing we have just submitted our application. We'll keep you updated.



## 170-175 High St West, Sunderland

This row of derelict 18th century Grade II listed buildings in Sunderland's High St West is one of the Trust's most important ongoing projects. Not least because one of them, no 173, laid the foundation for the Binns shopping Empire, housing George Binns' original haberdashery store in 1811. While the Binns retail empire has long been subsumed by House of Fraser, this important monument survives.

The whole row is in a terrible state. We have been working closely with Sunderland City Council, a potential end user and a key funder to agree how consolidation might get underway quickly - condition dictates a sense of urgency here - and the planning issues surrounding listed buildings can be dealt with.

Happily, we've a strong, long standing relationship with Sunderland City and the funder involved so hope to be in position to start very soon, to save a this key piece of North East retail history. Once the urgent works have been completed we can then turn our attention to fundraising for the full restoration job.

PROJECT  
UPDATE

## All Saints, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle

Completed in 1796, All Saints is a Grade 1 listed former church at the foot of Pilgrim Street in central Newcastle. It is a magnificent building - arguably one of the best in the city. It was designed by renowned local architect David Stephenson and takes the form of a stunning oval, very much in the style of the Pantheon in Rome. It is topped by impressive steeple and tower - a prominent and much admired feature of the Newcastle skyline.

It ceased use as a church in 1961 since when it has had a varied career as offices, an education centre and a music venue. Latterly though it has fallen on hard times and disuse and disrepair have seen it added to Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.

Owner Newcastle City Council is anxious to see its fortunes reversed and the Trust is providing consultancy to them to rescue the building. Our key concerns at this stage are understanding exactly what condition the building is in, having ideas for future uses, and from there identifying potential tenants.

We're now well through an extensive condition survey and the good news is the building is in far better condition than we expected. Which is lucky because the challenge to find a sustainable use is a very steep one and a lengthy - not to mention costly - restoration would prove lethal to the project. And so the quest for an end user starts. And with quite an intriguing lead too. We'll keep you up to date

*Photo: Neil Atkinson*

## Out on the tiles...

**In this issue, Steve Miller reveals how some clever detective work has lifted the lid on the mystery of Jesmond Dene Banqueting Hall's long lost roof.**

Built as William Armstrong's grand Banqueting Hall and Reception Rooms this complex of buildings is of high cultural and architectural significance. Originally developed in two phases designed by John Dobson and Richard Norman Shaw respectively, the grade II listed buildings traverse the steeply sloping valley side of Jesmond Dene.

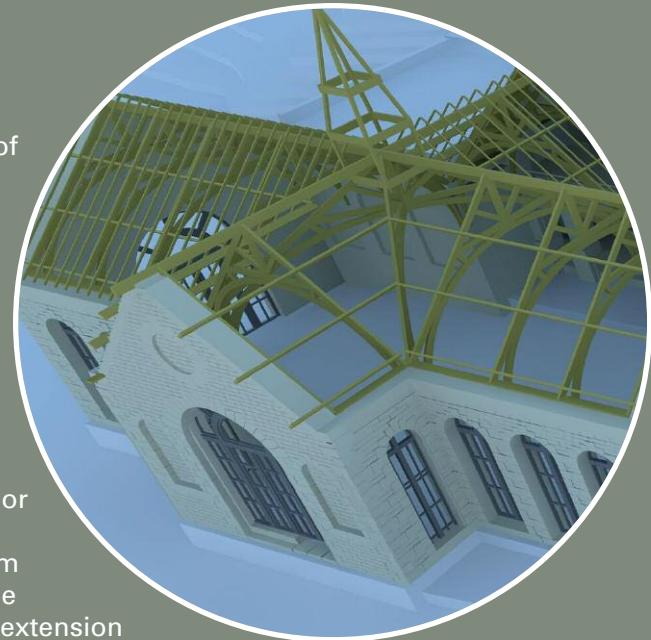
Whilst maintenance of the building has been ongoing, underlying issues of water ingress are causing deterioration of the building fabric and potentially contributing to structural instability. In particular, the integrity of the roofless hall is in significant peril.

Of the many complex issues to address at Jesmond Dene Banqueting Hall, one element has galvanised the enthusiasm of all

involved. The lost roof-scape and spire were a defining characteristic of John Dobson's original architectural composition.

Although tantalising glimpses are offered in archive photographs and original drawings, no definitive details of the roof structure remained. All was lost, or so it was thought.

In studying footage from some of the inaccessible spaces within the 1977 extension to the roofless Hall's west wing, there appears in the background one remaining original roof truss. With the information this one truss offers, together with photographs and Norman Shaw's drawings (of John Dobson's then completed Hall), we were able to re-construct a digital model of the lost roof structure and its central spire. Whilst more research into the



material construction of the roof is required, the reconstruction so far gives an indication of how the presence of the Armstrong's Banqueting Hall as an integral element of the Jesmond Dene park will be re-established

**Steve Miller is a director of architects Miller Partnership**

# Events

## 29 NOVEMBER - MEMBERS' COFFEE MORNING

with talk and tour of Alderman Fenwick's House: 10.30-12pm

## 23 JANUARY- MEMBERS' COFFEE MORNING

with projects update at Alderman Fenwick's House and tour of All Saint's Church: 10.30-12 pm

## 15 MARCH - HARD HAT TOUR OF ST HILDA'S PIT HEAD IN SOUTH SHIELDS. Starts at 11am.

To book your place at any of these please email [kari@twbpt.org.uk](mailto:kari@twbpt.org.uk)

## Competition Time

With each newsletter we're giving you the opportunity to win a prize! To enter, all you need to do is answer this question:

**In what year was All Saint's Church completed?**

First correct answer emailed to [kari@twbpt.org.uk](mailto:kari@twbpt.org.uk) wins.

Remember, the answer is somewhere in the issue!

## Sector News

Heritage Trust Network has posted footage of its recent annual conference on its website [www.heritagetrustnetwork.org](http://www.heritagetrustnetwork.org). Along with photos of the whole event you can watch and download the speakers' presentations. There are some very thought provoking projects among them - and some innovative approaches too.

Closer to home, Kenny Brunskill, whose deft brickwork has made such a stunning job of our Bottle Kilns in Corbridge, has been nominated for a prestigious Historic England Angel Award for his work on the project. We'll keep our fingers crossed for him.



## Membership Form

You can support us by becoming a member of the Trust. The future of the Trust depends on a strong membership base to ensure our work is integrated within the community where we operate. Membership of the Trust will help to strengthen our charitable credentials and will provide you with the knowledge that you are helping to make a difference to heritage in Tyne & Wear.

Please complete and return to the Trust office with a cheque for your annual subscription of £24.00 payable to 'Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust Ltd'. Otherwise a Standing Order or Bank transfer can be arranged to our bank account number 00161309, sort code 309355.

You can also join on-line at [www.twbpt.org.uk](http://www.twbpt.org.uk)

Title	Name
Address	
Post Code	
Telephone Number	Email address

Payment form (please circle): Cash / Cheque / Standing Order / Bank Transfer

### **Gift Aid Declaration (UK Taxpayers Only)**

I would like the Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust to reclaim the tax on any qualifying donations made by me until further notice. I confirm that I have paid an amount of UK income or capital gains tax equal to any tax reclaimed. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.

Signature

Date