

SOUTHWICK HERITAGE TRAIL

For over 1,000 years Southwick had been a quiet farming hamlet neatly laid out around a village green. However, by the end of the 18th century lime burning, glassmaking, potteries and shipbuilding were in production at Southwick's riverside. As the pace of the industrial revolution gained momentum in the 19th century Southwick's population rose dramatically. The Borough of Sunderland was ambitious to expand its borders to absorb the township, and in 1863 Southwick's industrialists, businessmen and landowners formed local government rather than see Sunderland forcibly take over the township's affairs. Consequently, it is appropriate to begin our Heritage Walk at SNYP, the former Southwick-on-Wear Urban District Council Offices in Southwick Road, formerly called The Terrace.

STOP No.1. The building was designed by the Southwick authority's surveyor John G. Reah, whose house and office were next door. Southwick Council occupied the premises until 1928 when they were absorbed by Sunderland Corporation. A foundation stone celebrating the opening of the building can be seen at the entrance. Another commemorative stone records the reopening of the building in 1994 following extensive renovations.



STOP No. 2. Walk a few yards west along Southwick Road until you come to No. 289 "All Occasions." The shop was Adie's the chemist's where the famous BBC's news correspondent and author Kate Adie worked at her adoptive father's shop as a young girl in the 1950s. Young Kate also got to know Southwick Green where she played with her school friends.



STOP No. 3. This imposing building at the corner of Southwick Road and South Terrace was purpose-built as The Coffee Tavern and opened on February 1st, 1883. It was one of several Coffee Taverns opened in the Sunderland area and they were intended as an alternative to public houses. Alcohol abuse was a problem in Victorian Southwick. The two storey Southwick Coffee Tavern provided recreation, social entertainment, and reading rooms as well as selling meals and snacks in an environment where the consumption of alcohol was strictly forbidden. However, by June 1894 The Coffee Tavern had closed and on June 13th, 1894 Robert Thompson Junior JP opened new premises for Southwick Liberal Club in the upper part of the building formerly occupied by the Coffee Tavern.



STOP No 4. Take a short walk down South Terrace to the junction with Back Southwick Road where you will see a sewer cover. Provoked by Sunderland's many attempts to absorb the Township into the Town's boundaries, Southwick Council added the suffix "on-Wear" to Southwick's name. The Council was to insist on the full name Southwick-on-Wear when dealing with their larger neighbour, and it also distinguished it from the other Southwick's in England.



STOP No. 5. Leaving the sewer cover at Stop No. 4 and from the safety of the nearby path, you can look west, and in front of you is the site of the original village. The land rises steeply from the river and levels to provide a natural settlement site, before rising again. Throughout the centuries this area has gone through repeated demolition and redevelopment so that its old-world charm and character have long since been lost.



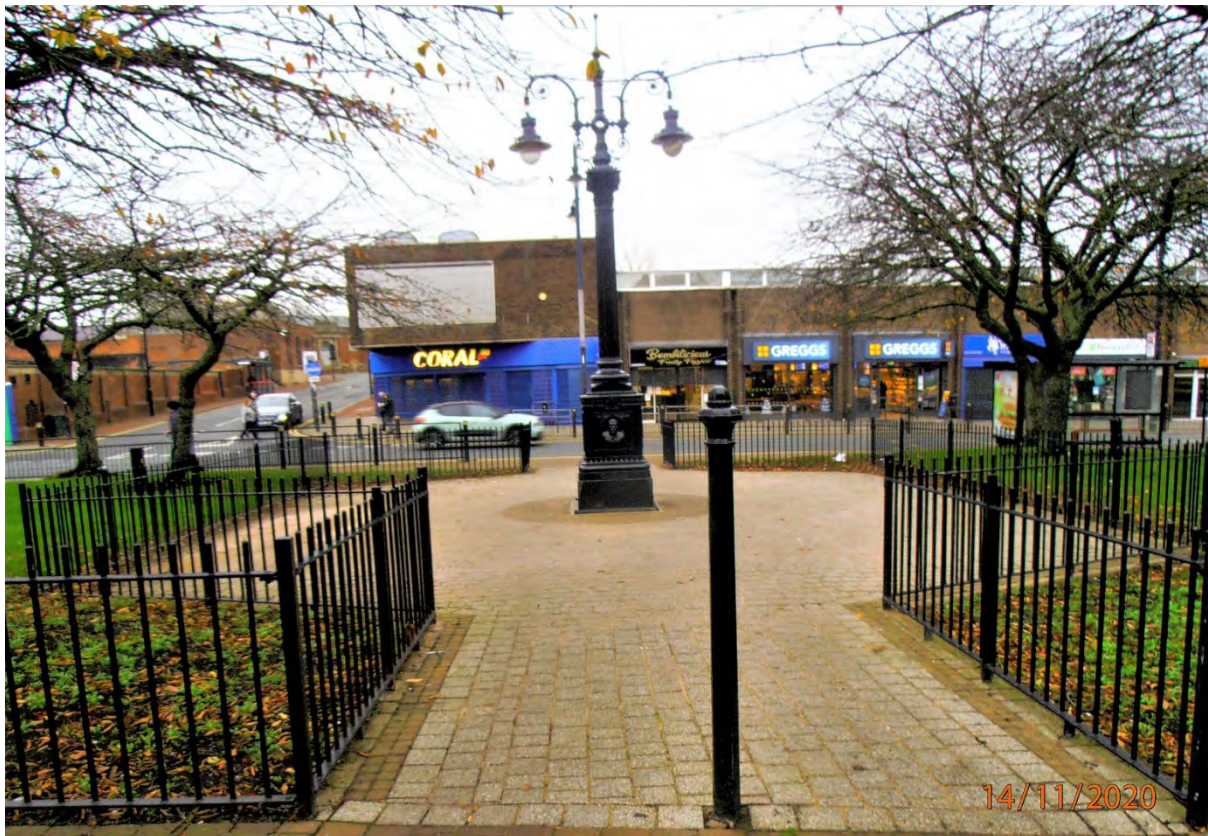
STOP No. 6. Cross the road with care to view the Southwick War Memorial. An everlasting tribute to the men of Southwick who died in World Wars. The Cenotaph was unveiled in 1928 and handed over to Sunderland Corporation for safekeeping because Southwick joined Sunderland that year. The monument was designed by Southwick-on-Wear Council's architect and surveyor Walter Thomas and it is a listed building. At least 367 men from the township of Southwick-on-Wear lost their lives in the First World War. The Southwick sculptor J Byram constructed the memorial. He had lost his son in the war. On the north-facing side, the years 1939 and 1945 were added in 1988 and paid for by Southwick Social Club. At least 149 Southwick servicemen lost their lives in the Second World War.



STOP No. 7. Look south from the Cenotaph to see Scot's Bank. The ancient roadway provided access from the riverside ferry landing and ford. Folklore has it that Scot's Bank took its name from the Scottish Army that came this way and marched through Southwick Village to confront the Royalists that had come out of Newcastle to do battle during the Civil War in 1644.



STOP No. 8. The Robert Thompson Memorial in the centre of what was known as The Park where there were seats on either side of the memorial. However, recent generations have named it The Bullring and The Wishing Well. The north side plaque on the memorial records that this public-spirited man had served as Chairman of the local council for 26 years. Robert Thompson Junior had served the Southwick authority for a total of 35 years. The east side illustrates the Thompson family crest - an armoured arm holding a reversed broken lance and bearing the motto "Dum Spiro Spero" (While I breathe, I hope). On the south side of the memorial is the image of the great man. Unveiled in 1912 the Robert Thompson Memorial is a listed building.



STOP No. 9. Attached to Heron Foods at the south side of The Green is a Heritage Blue Plaque erected by Southwick Village Green Preservation Society.



STOP No. 10. Cross the road and walk further along The Green. A granite plaque is set into the ground near the pathway before the toilet block. Unveiled in April 2000 by the Mayor of Sunderland Councillor Ross Wares, the small memorial is to commemorate the huge contribution generations of Southwick's miners and shipyard workers have made to Wearside's economy. The plaque includes images of a miner's lamp and Austin and Pickersgill's world beating SD14 dry cargo ship which was built in the 1960s and 1970s.



STOP No. 11. At the west end and on the south side of Southwick Green is the Tram Car Inn. In 1906 the pub was extended from an older early 19th-century building. Designed by eminent Sunderland architect Hugh Hedley, the Tram Car Inn is a Grade II listed building.



STOP No. 12. At the extreme west end of Southwick Green and at the top of Stoney Lane is an imposing building constructed in 1897 on the design of architects W. and T.R. Milburn for the Cooperative Equitable Industrial Society Ltd. In May 1917 the building was the scene of a tragedy when a large crowd had assembled at the east end of The Green to attend a food economy meeting organised by the local War Savings Committee. Lieutenant Philip Thompson, aged 19, of the Royal Flying Corps had been testing a newly fitted gun on his biplane when he swooped down to The Green to see what was happening. The aeroplane hit the flagstaff at the centre of The Green and smashed into the Coop building before falling onto a portion of the crowd. Five people were killed and eight injured. The pilot emerged from the wreckage uninjured. Ten months later, in March 1918, Captain Phillip Thompson was killed in action when flying over the Western Front.



STOP NO. 13. Like the old Coop building, all that remains of Southwick's busiest thoroughfare is pictured here. It is difficult to imagine that in 1925 Stoney Lane consisted of forty-four shops, two public houses, a railway goods station, a Sunday school, and a Salvation Army Hall. By the 1950s buildings in Stoney Lane were being demolished and Southwick Green and Southwick Road took over as Southwick's centre for business and commerce.



STOP No. 14. Taking care to cross to the north side of The Green we head towards Beaumont Street and pass the derelict site of The Savoy where there was a picture hall from 1912 until 1959. A little way up Beaumont Street you come to the junction with The King's Road. At the northeast corner is St. Hilda's Presbytery. Observe the year of construction above the doorway and the carving of an ammonite which is associated with St. Hilda of Whitby, after whom the church is named. St. Hilda (614-680 AD) was a Saxon from the Northumbrian Royal Family. St. Hilda was Abbess of Whitby and she was an important character in the development of Christianity in Britain. Before people understood fossils there were folktales about them. An abundance of ammonites could, and still can be found on the cliffs and beaches at Whitby. It was said St. Hilda wanted to build an abbey or chapel, but the site was infested with snakes. St. Hilda prayed to get rid of the snakes and they coiled up and turned to stone. She took a whip and cut off their heads and they fell over the cliffs. It became a legend that the ammonites found at Whitby were the snakes that St. Hilda had destroyed, and they became known as snakestones.



STOP NO. 15. Further on up Beaumont Street is St Hilda's Church. Designed by the architect Theodor Korner it opened in 1909 to serve the fast-growing Roman Catholic community.



STOP No. 16. From St. Hilda's Church return to the Beaumont Street/The King's Road junction. At the southwest corner is Carnival House which was completely renovated and opened during the summer of 2020. Carnival House offers courses for all age groups and they have a popular coffee shop. The owners are keen to recreate Southwick Carnival, which was folded almost forty years ago. The building was purpose-built in 1935 as an Employment Exchange and became St Hilda's Parish Centre during the 1980s and 1990s until it closed in 2000.



STOP No. 17. On the northwest corner at the junction is the former Southwick Branch Library. When Southwick Township joined Sunderland in 1928 the Borough promised to build a library for the people of Southwick as one of the conditions of the "marriage". The promise was fulfilled in 1931. Carnival House has taken over the building.



STOP No. 18. Leaving the former Branch Library, a walk westward along The King's Road takes you in the direction of the former North Star public house. The thoroughfare was called Back Lane until the name changed at the Coronation of King Edward VII in 1902. The North Star was built in 1923 and closed its doors as a pub late in 2019. In January 2020 all the ground floor was taken over by the North Star Boxing Club.



STOP No. 19. Carefully cross the road from the North Star building to view the Heritage Blue Plaque attached to the boundary wall of the former Holy Trinity Church Rectory which is now a private residence. The plaque was fixed in May 2005.



STOP No. 20. Holy Trinity Parish Church was built in 1842/43 in a field at the west end of the ancient village. Its Victorian Gothic design blended in pleasantly with the countryside of semi-rural Southwick. The interior contains several memorials to the prosperous 19th-century industrialists who worshipped here. The stained-glass window on the east side of the church is dedicated to the Scott family who owned the pottery at the riverside. The graveyard too is interesting. Most of the gravestones were moved to the south wall when Northern Way was cut through the graveyard in the early 1960s. A few remain in positions, like at the burial place of Robert Thompson Junior and William Pickersgill. Holy Trinity Church is a listed building. Included in the listing are the walls and railings to the north, south, and east of the church; as well as the boiler house walls and piers to the southeast of the church.



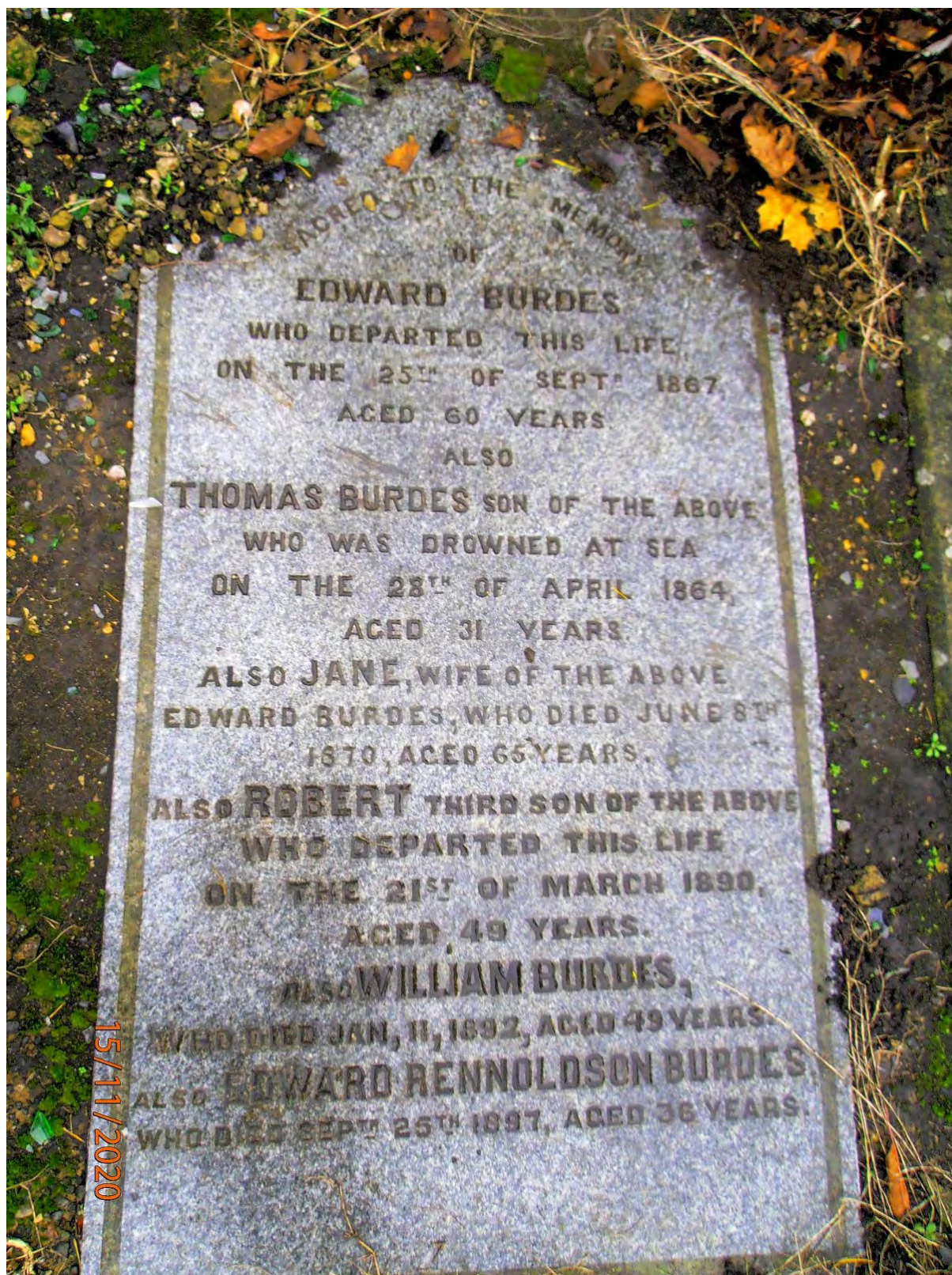
STOP No. 21. The burial place of the great man Robert Thompson Junior (1819-1910). Master shipbuilder, leader of Southwick's Council, and philanthropist. He is buried with his first wife Sarah and five of their children - the eldest being only five years old. There was no escape for successful and prosperous families from the high infant mortality of the 19th century.



STOP No. 22. The burial place of the shipbuilder William Pickersgill of Camden Street who was killed in his shipyard when a shore fell and crushed him while he was inspecting a job on a ship under construction on September 10th, 1880.



STOP No. 23. Gravestone of Edward Burdes the lime burner



15/11/2020

STOP No. 24. The gravestone of Anthony Scott who owned the pottery and lived in Southwick House near Southwick Green. SOUTHWICK HERITAGE TRAIL ENDS.

