

Up!

MARCH 2024

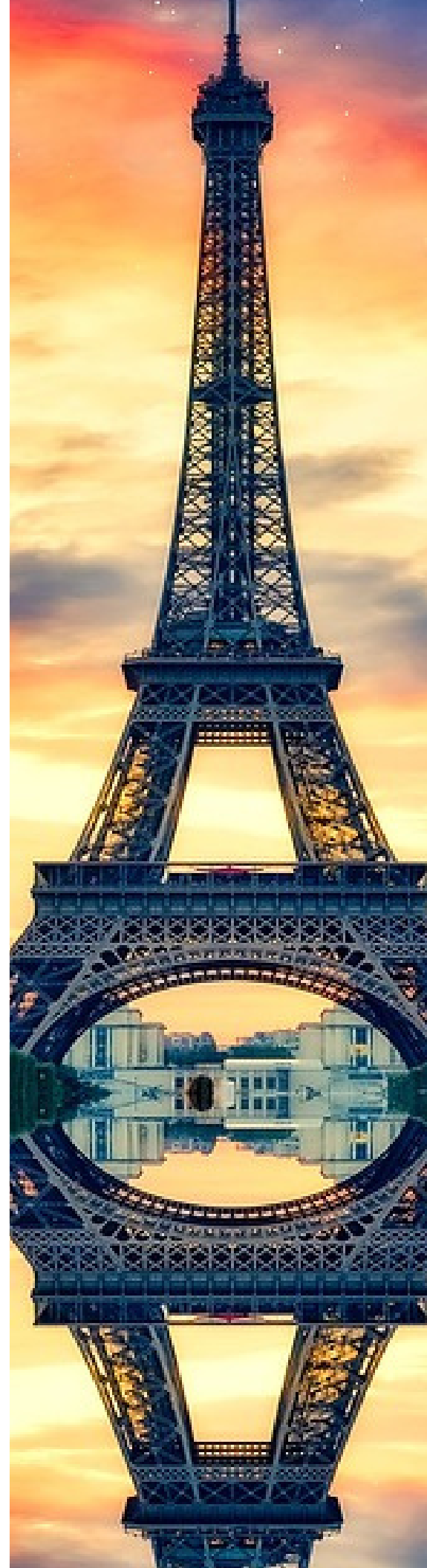
BUILDINGS



Making the world a better place
one page at a time

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Up Front! The Team | 1 |
| And in other news ... | |
| Build Up! Cullercoats Watch House | 2 |
| An old lady gets a helping hand | |
| Word Up! Poetry Corner | 5, 9, 13, 17 |
| Your poems on the theme of Buildings | 21 & 26 |
| Look Up! Stuart Barlow | 6 |
| Be a building detective | |
| Snap Up! Andrew Gray | 10 |
| Photography as you've never seen it before! | |
| Up Stream! Jennifer C Wilson | 14 |
| The Dam Builders | |
| Light Up! Old Low Light | 18 |
| Where past and present meet | |
| Up North! Steve Lowe | 22 |
| Conserve to preserve | |
| Read Up! Jenna Warren | 27 |
| Current favourites | |
| Coming Up! 'Til Next Month | 29 |
| The times they are a-changin' | |





Up Front!

Welcome to our Buildings issue.

We'll start with an apology. As the eagle-eyed among you will have spotted, we are about ten days late with this issue. As we increasingly find ourselves telling people, we have never been so busy! So, what's this leading up to? Well ... there are changes afoot here at Up! HQ.

Going forward, your favourite magazine will be published quarterly with seasonal issues appearing in March, June, September and December. This means we are freed up to concentrate all of our energies on the increasing amount of community work we are so passionate about, more of which you can learn about on the back page.

In the meantime, welcome to the 'reception hall' of this month's edition, sit yourself down on a chaise longue and enjoy another slice of Up!

Lots of love.

Bridget & Harry x

Front cover photograph by Alan, Cafe manager at the Old Low Light (see page 18)

Build Up!

CULLERCOATS WATCH HOUSE

The team behind a historic building's restoration write for Up!

Have you ever walked along (or seen photos of) the Cullercoats Bay sea front and wondered what the building with the big red roof is, and whether it's open? If we had a pound for everyone who's said they've walked past it for years, or decades, and never been in, we would have enough to renovate it instantly!

It's the Cullercoats Watch House, and it's a Grade II listed building that is now a community hub for the people of, and visitors to, Cullercoats.

The Watch House was originally built in 1879 as a lookout for the local community to keep watch for returning fishing fleets and any vessels in distress, especially during stormy weather. It was also shared by the members of the Cullercoats Volunteer Life Brigade - only the second such brigade to be formed in the world, shortly after the Tynemouth Brigade which was the first.



The building, and its role in providing a safe and warm environment to keep watch, added greatly to the ability of the community to maintain a



rescue capability during shipwrecks and bad weather.

As time moved on, with the inevitable progress in safety practices and technology that evolved, the need to keep a permanent safety watch diminished and the use of the building changed several times over the years until it became a community asset and charity, administered by a board of trustees.

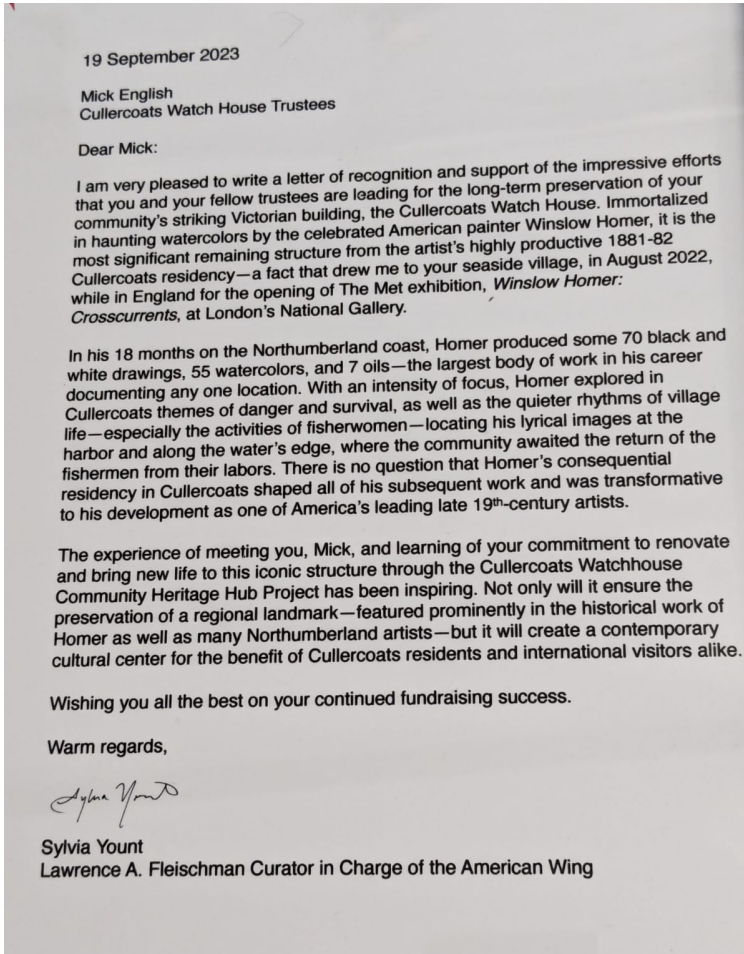
The building, and the heritage it represents, is of immense importance to both the local region and beyond as it is a lasting tribute to the historic fishing community that Cullercoats once was, and remains as one of the last standing original buildings from that period and was granted Grade II historical status in 2008.

The building's design and its location on a clifftop promontory is iconic and is arguably recognisable worldwide due to the exposure given by the works of Winslow Homer, the renowned American artist and illustrator, who spent almost two years in Cullercoats during 1881/82.

It will be of interest especially to art lovers to learn that Sylvia Yount, one of the curators at the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The Met), visited Cullercoats and the Watch House in the autumn of 2002 whilst retracing Homer's

Build Up!

CULLERCOATS WATCH HOUSE



steps during his time in the village. We retain our links and friendship with The Met and Sylvia Yount and proudly display a letter of support and recognition of the influence that Cullercoats had on Homer's emerging style of reflecting hardship and toil within the coastal community.

It was inevitable that due to the building's age and exposed location that deterioration of the very fabric of the building would occur, despite many attempts over the years to keep this at bay. It became clear that a major plan of action to restore and renovate the building to ensure its lasting legacy would be needed, and the campaign to save the building began in earnest in mid 2022 which proved to be in the nick of time.

Photographs show that the roof's supporting pillars were in a such a poor condition that collapse was not far away and one major storm too many may have been too much for the structure to endure. One of our visitors commented that it was 'sawdust held together by paint' and that's no exaggeration!



The need to find funding for the then aspirational project became a priority as the amounts quoted following professional heritage surveys and estimations, were far in excess of our initial expectations and realistically we were starting from scratch.

A rude and sobering awakening, to say the least.

Very early in the project we carried out an initial online survey to solicit ideas and gauge opinions from the community at large for the potential and preferred future uses of the building. The results from over 150 responses,

Build Up!

CULLERCOATS WATCH HOUSE

provided a wide variety of options and ideas. Some appeared achievable, some unachievable and many were inspirational, but the overwhelming message was for a community hub embracing multiple uses for the space but always underpinned by the celebration and recognition of the local fishing heritage that the Watch House represented.

Volunteer and community support has grown at a breath-taking pace, and we now have growing trustee and volunteer teams, who give up their time and skills freely, to support our events, meet and greet our visitors, or produce handmade craft and home-made food items for sale at events. The enthusiasm, time and sheer commitment of our volunteers is crucial to the successful operation of the charity and we are so grateful and humbled by their efforts.

It was clear from an early stage that the major amount of capital that would be required to carry out the restoration work would be beyond what could ever be achieved by coffee mornings or occasional paid events, even though initially the success of this low-level fundraising provided the motivation to move forward.

It was decided that fundraising efforts should be overseen by a dedicated team of skilled volunteers supported by a nominated Trustee to seek the major funding required, which would run in parallel to our own popular fundraising activities. The amount of time and expertise spent by this team over the past two years cannot be underestimated and this has been

reflected in the several successful funding bids that have resulted in over £200,000 of donations from several charitable organisations and individuals in support of the project.

We are now in a healthy but as yet incomplete position in relation to the overall funding needs, but the funding team have a renewed confidence moving forward, spurred on by our recent and ongoing successes.

The Watch House team have learned (and are still learning) a lot during this journey to save the building and its heritage and the journey is far from over. The project started from a shared vision in 2022 to protect and restore our local jewel in the crown for the benefit of the wider community. The strong team which was subsequently assembled, including our fantastic volunteer base, enabled this to happen and we are now able to see the tangible results of the first phase.

It has been important to involve the broader local community from the beginning and it has been a pleasing and surprising feature, that support and interest comes from a much wider demographic than Cullercoats alone.



**You can keep up to date with events at
Cullercoats Watch House here:**

<https://www.facebook.com/CullercoatsWatchHouse>

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF BUILDINGS

The building that thinks it's a ship

You can tell it's built in the 1930s by the horizontal lines of the balconies (everyone gets a view) and more curves than right angles, with lifts designed to resemble funnels, and separate lifts for tradesmen and furniture. Doors have bakelite handles, citrus colors of orange or yellow or green; each flat has a very small kitchen since most people took their meals in the ground story restaurant now a spacious flat for the privileged and controversial head resident, captaining this ship. Our tour guide is critical of his regime, how the equality hard-claimed by tenants in the 1960s has been whittled down. She won't give up. We stand out on the internal balcony looking down at the neat divides of garden. The brochure calls it "Steamship Moderne" which we can see the moment she says so, and suddenly the air fills with the excitement of a voyage. Where is this ship taking us? Some of us open the door to the past, knowing what we're getting into. Some of us hold on firmly to the bakelite handle.

Janet Bowdan

Where Breathing Changes

I enter a space where breathing changes. An edifice of discomfort pulls me in. Rooms in this museum of memory of evil and its evidence aren't square or plumb, just off kilter enough to disorient, deceive in the solemnity of the contents. The sun rises on the wrong side, its adjacent stream runs the wrong way.

This is the DC Holocaust Museum where structure goes organically wrong, but not enough for the eccentricity of walls and ceiling to be obvious to everyone.

It unsettles me...breaks...my...rhythm...apart as I...ponder...the...message its contents share.

Evie Groch

A city at night

Windows aglow like stars shine in a sea of concrete dreams that rise with the moon.

In the embrace of the night, towers rise high like guardians. The sentinels of dreams.

Woven through the lamplit windows, a world of wonderful words unfold into unique stories.

Nivedita Karthik

Look Up!

STUART BARLOW

An architect's perspective on buildings as repositories for stories

Having trained and worked as an architect I am naturally fascinated by buildings, but not just in how they look or how they are constructed. I am equally interested in how buildings have been used and the stories of people who have lived or worked in them. David Olusoga's *A House Through Time* does this for a single house, but you can walk around streets to see what buildings tell you about a town's history. Let me show you what I mean by looking at some buildings on Howard Street in North Shields to see how their stories relate to the history of the town.



Standing at the river end of Howard Street if you look at the Registry Office you will see a red stag on the building. This was the emblem of the Stag shipping line which had their office here for nearly a hundred years until 1980, although the classical columns flanking the first windows and framing the entrance door suggest an earlier Georgian building, which it is. It was built for the Tynemouth Literary & Philosophical Society's in 1806 just

after the Quaker John Wright had purchased land from the 5th Earl of Carlisle to lay out the new centre of North Shields above the Low Town. The subscription library it contained would be used for sixty years before being amalgamated with the Mechanics Institute's library, on the corner of Saville Street, to create Tyneside's first free library. The building was originally built in 1870 and this change is commemorated by the words 'Free Library' being carved into the stone freeze over its Howard Street entrance. Mechanics Institutes provided educational opportunities for working people at the time.



Diagonally opposite is the Exchange 1856 cultural and workspace complex. You may think this is a single building, but look closer and you will see there are a number of buildings on the site. The oldest, occupied by an estate agent, was designed in 1837 by John and Benjamin Green for the Tynemouth Parish Board of Guardians, who administered workhouses and poor relief. This stone building is more medieval looking than the two library buildings we have just looked at, but if you look closely you will see the stonework is not as crisp as the next building along Saville Street. This building was Tynemouth Borough Council's Town Hall, which also contained a Court House and Police Station, was built a few years later in 1844/45. The elected Borough Council was incorporated in 1849 and took over from the unelected Four and Twenty group.

Look Up!

STUART BARLOW

Chirton born John Dobson designed the Town Hall in the medieval style that was becoming fashionable, with Tudor windows, battlemented eaves and oriel windows at the Norfolk Street end of the building. Dobson, who worked with Richard Granger changing the face of Newcastle, designed a number of buildings in and around Shields. Going around the corner onto Howard Street look up at the large gabled building, which now houses Exchange 1856's theatre space, and you will see a date stone confirming this building was built in 1856. It was originally a Wesleyan Chapel



designed in a stripped down classical style, typical of many Methodist chapels, by John Green nephew of the John Green who was the architect for the Guardians' building. Later it became part of the Town Hall as seen by

the council crest and the words Borough Treasurer's Office being incorporated into the stained glass over the doors. Ordnance survey maps of period show the building between the Chapel and the Guardian's building was constructed later, during the latter half of the century.

Turning around and looking across Howard Street you see the Salvation Army Citadel which was originally the Scottish Presbyterian Church built in

1811. It was designed by John Dobson in the then very fashionable Greek Revival Style as a flattened representation of a Greek Temple, at the top of a flight of steps, with Grecian fluted doric pilasters (flattened columns) supporting a Grecian frieze of triglyphs (blocks of vertical grooves) and metopes (spaces between). It was built for a congregation whose history extended back to 1662 when the preacher John Lomax came to Shields after losing his post as Wooler's vicar because he had refused to conduct services in the manner ordered by the King. It was known as the Scotch Church because the congregation's affiliated to the Church of Scotland before merging with St Columba's Church congregation on Northumberland Square. While walking up St Columba's you will pass Dobson's Baptist Church, where the African American anti-slavery campaigner Frederick Douglas spoke, and houses where the escaped enslaved Mary Ann Macham lived.

St Columba's congregation had been founded by North & South Shields' Scottish Presbyterian families in 1779. It is another church designed by Dobson with a rusticated stone ground floor and Tuscan columns on the Piano Nobile (or principal level) in a neo-Renaissance style based on the



Look Up!

STUART BARLOW

proportions of Italian renaissance palaces. The church is often open to the public and if you go inside you will see its elegant interior, first floor gallery and two lovely stained glass windows, from the 1950s, by Leonard Charles Evetts. Evetts was the head of the Design School at Kings College, now Newcastle University, until the early 1970s and you can see other examples of his work in Christ Church (the east window and windows in the Sailors Chapel) and at St George's church in Cullercoats.

Walking across Northumberland Square, through the recently restored gardens, you will see a fine Georgian facade built around 1810, but these are not the first houses built here. A large mansion house, and garden, had been previously built here by Quakers George and Ann Wakefield during the last years of the eighteenth century. After



Wakefield lost his fortune, and his death in 1806, the house lay empty until it was bought by two North Shields business men, Alexander Crighton and Benjamin Tyzack. They demolished Wakefield's mansion and used its sandstone to build their new row of houses, with Crighton being one of the first occupants. The grand terrace and gardens became the focus of North Shields' New Town. It is one of the few Georgian squares left in Tyneside today and pre-dates Newcastle's Grainger Town by over a quarter of a century.

Next time you go out, walk around the streets looking at buildings, but remember to look up above any drab ground floors for special details or dates stones. Different design styles can sometimes help you to date buildings and looking at old maps can tell you when buildings were built.

A good source of old maps is the National Library of Scotland web site, which includes side-by-side historic maps with modern satellite images¹. Then go to the local history section your local library to find out about the people who lived and worked there, and who built your home town!

Have fun, become a building detective and enjoy the journey.



**You can find the
National Library of Scotland, Side-by-Side maps here:**

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/side-by-side/#zoom=16.0&lat=55.02800&lon=-1.43690&layers=168&right=BingHyb>

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF BUILDINGS

Spring Cleaning for the Martins

Those summer visitors I most admired,
who cleaned, extended, skimmed,
re-stuccoed to the eaves, retired

to pass the winter in a warmer home.
Such style they brought to hereabouts.
I missed each handsome artisan.

A noisy, cheerful, squatter clan
took over the accommodation,
partied, littered, and moved on.

The build is sound, will stand
untenanted till spring, but seems
uncherished in the new year sun.

Retaining neither key nor fee,
I climb a ladder, scrub a sill,
wash tired graffiti clean away.

Empty of sparrow chitterings,
the nest and I anticipate sharp callers,
keep a watch for sleeker, darker wings.

Linda Goulden

The Natural History Museum, Kensington

A cathedral to Science—
Brickwork of woven geology,
Liquid-honey terracotta tiles.
Even the cupolas are colourful—
Mathematical, geometric, with doll-sized windows

You enter through an ornate arch,
With mottled bricks, large as dinosaur teeth.
Inside, a room so huge it leaves you breathless.
The roof above feels high as a flight path
And the grand staircase leads heavenwards.

And hoisted under the glass-panelled roof,
Suspended in space, the skeleton of a blue whale.
Above it the roof ribs rise—
Tessellated triangles of cast iron
Held up by sandstone columns, tall as redwoods.

Buzzing children gather in this
Palace of Palaeontology
The message is clear.
This is your space, everyone is welcome here.

Noreen Rees



Snap Up!

ANDREW GRAY

Up! meets an abstract/impressionist landscape photographer

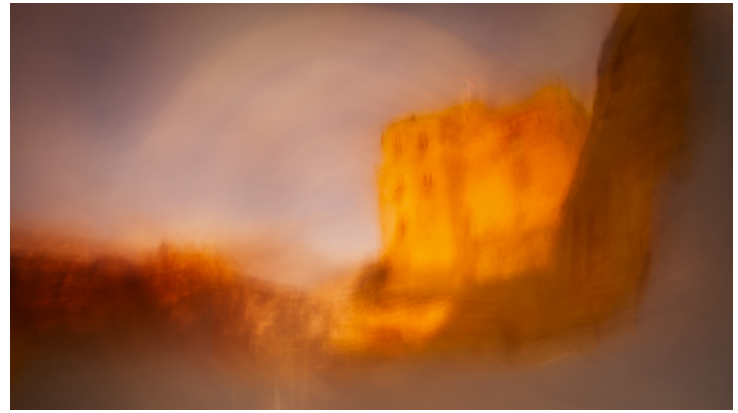
Thanks for chatting to us, Andy. How did you first get interested in Photography?

I've always been someone who was more adept at visuals, than anything academic or language/written ... which may tell as you read through the following text! So I've always resonated towards art from an early age. My skills with crayons were more refined than the average 3 year old and that continued through my youth.

Having natural skills with sketching meant I pursued art through school. Through this time I also always seemed to have had access to a camera - back in those days the cheap 35mm compacts we all used to use and had developed, 24 pictures at a time at Boots. But it was the back end of the 1990s when digital photography became more accessible that photography became more important to me, with the manipulation of digital files opening up hours and hours of fun and creativity, even back in those early days.



The Tyne Bridge



Warkworth Castle

What particularly attracts you to buildings and landscapes as subject matter, rather than portraits, for example?

Coming from Northumberland with my family's farming background and surrounded by its picturesque rural landscapes, nature and its historic architecture all my life, I think I was built to appreciate the beauty of the area and its built heritage.

Originally I wanted to go into architecture, however my lack of academic nous meant I didn't go fully down that road. I did a diploma at university in the industry, though this focused mainly on modern buildings and modern construction technology. My interests and passions were more in line with historic buildings, whether that be a grand stately home, or a semi-ruined Georgian farm steading. To me, both are beautiful in their own way.

Even with the disappointment of being forced into modern construction I did end up working for a firm that ran rural estates in which my favourite tasks were designing schemes to save and convert old farm steadings and renovate estate cottages. So these reasons lead me to focusing on landscapes and buildings of a certain vintage, especially with my own photography's tendencies to look like paintings from the 19th century, rather than dealing with people and portraiture.

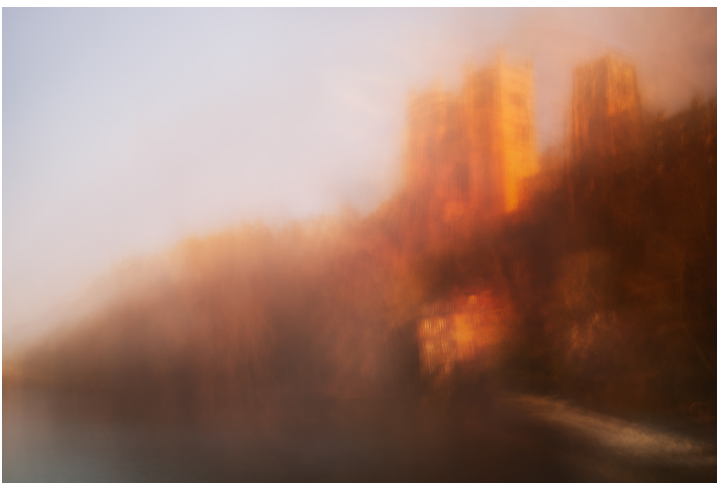
Snap Up!

ANDREW GRAY

Talk us through what's involved in producing your beautiful photography.

The technique I use to capture the images I later create is intentional camera movement, known by its abbreviation ICM photography. Basically, in the time it takes to press the shutter to take the photo, and before the image completes, I move the camera in a way to capture shapes and light from the shapes in the landscape/subject before me. To allow more time to do movements in this time I use a neutral density filter on the front of the lens to dull the light coming in. This allows me to adjust the length of exposure, enabling me to make my movements. Then later using Photoshop, and other tools, I layer a number of these individual exposures together to make my final finished image.

This is the simplest explanation. If you wish to judge it a different way, I can take hundreds of frames of the same scene to get what I need to build the image, and sometimes spend many hours constructing and editing the image together. For a more visual guide on what I do, especially when it comes to the digital editing, check out my YouTube channel - www.youtube.com/@andrewsgray



Durham Cathedral

Who are your favourite photographers/artists?

When it comes to artists that have inspired me, and continue to do so, it has to be JMW Turner. No other influence on my work comes close to the reverence I have for the man. Even his early watercolours when he was young in the late 1700's on his northern tours give me inspiration and appreciation of colour schemes and location ideas, right through to his later more abstract work, such as *Norham Castle, Sunrise* (1845) from deep into his last years, which I love the most.



When it comes to photographers, it has to be people who inspired me to change my styles as I progressed in the medium. Joel Tjintelaar a fantastic architectural photographer from the Netherlands. David Baker, now based in Scotland, made me want to photograph the sea differently (after seeing his *Sea Fever* series of images) and from there I began playing with simple camera movement. But my main favourite has to be Valda Bailey, based in

Snap Up!

ANDREW GRAY

Sussex, who I “blame” for what I now do. Seeing her work over 10 years ago blew me away and made me experiment with more movement and image blending - redefining my whole career and enabled me to create a viable earning opportunity working as a photographic artist.



The Glasshouse, Newcastle Quayside

What 3 buildings (anywhere in the world) would you love to capture on film, and why?

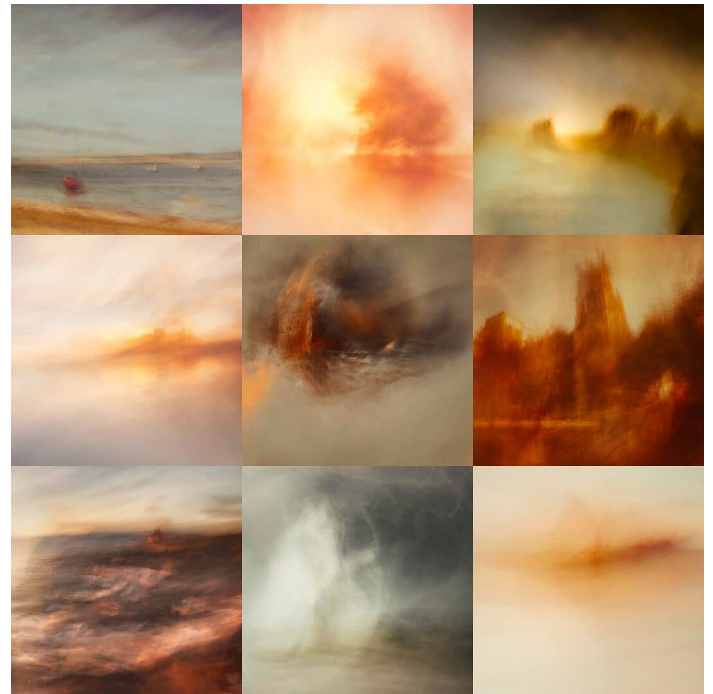
For some I can't narrow it down to a single building, it's more of a viewpoint of the scene that I'd like to photograph including the buildings, so my answers are thus...

- **Venice, Italy** - Specifically looking east on the Grand Canal taking in the buildings around Piazza San Marco (St. Mark's Square). Mainly inspired by Turner's work and sketches, Venice as a whole is high on the bucket list.
- **Windsor Castle** - Having spent almost my whole time photographing castles in the North East, I'd love to dabble with the behemoth of the South, Windsor. Preferably with all access, not just from the publicly available viewpoints areas.

- Another collective, the **Ciutat de les Arts i les Ciències** (City of Arts and Sciences) in Valencia, Spain. The place looks to be a photographer's dream! Plus the challenge of it as it is so far out of my comfort zone - that dreaded modern architecture, and not a block of sandstone in sight!



Bamburgh Castle



You can discover more of Andrew's stunning work here:

<https://andrewsgray.photography>
www.youtube.com/@andrewsgray
www.instagram.com/andrewsgray
<https://linktr.ee/andrewsgray>

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF BUILDINGS

MARKING TERRITORY: FEDERAL BUILDING, WESTWOOD

Sprouting out of the ground,
this modern monolith with tinted windows
lets the State look out but prevents
citizens from peering in:
always the ruling classes' preference.

Yea, though I walk through the valley
of high rises, I avoid the anthropophagy
of my age, for the erosion of time
destroys and smooths while people carve
family crests into wooden doors

like businesses with the impudence
to place their logo in the lintel
or set their name in mosaic tiles
at a building's entrance as if they
will forever remain in this place

when eternity rests in men surrounding
tables in the shade. They pass their days
moving dominoes, each one the same
in his tendency to being worthy of life
by not clinging to illusions of eternity.

Bill Cushing

The Concrete Truth

The world's turned upside down.
A concrete sky blocks out the light.
Bodies are falling, this surely can't be right?
We flipped our thoughts back in the zone.
Defied the laws, of gravity, muscles toned.
Truth balanced on the edge of fright.
We judged the gap, kept reality in our sight.
Lies leapt the void of all once known.
Of reasons given as crimes unfold.
Our minds seek clarity, an honesty to grasp.
But politicians know truth's so easily sold.
False reasons for inactions, whatever the task.
Adept at U turns, contortions, control.
Skin's our only comfort when concrete rasps.

Marion Oxley

Buildings

Bricks and glass touch the sky,
capturing the city's beating hearts
with their untold stories.

Towers gently graze clouds
The pinnacle of human craftsmanship.
The skyline is a symbol of ambitions fulfilled
and echoes of progress.

Nivedita Karthik

Up Stream!

JENNIFER C WILSON

Up!'s resident marine biologist on building castles in the ... sea?!

I was excited to see 'building' as the theme for this month's Up! since there's a lot of interesting building that happens in the aquatic environment. Frustratingly, one of the most interesting is probably coral, which I've written about before in relation to collaboration and working together, but that's alright - there are other stories to tell, and some this time even include humans...

One of the most famous builders in the aquatic world would be the beaver, and their amazing dam construction. So ingrained into their psyche is the need to build their riverine homes, that even beavers which have been raised entirely in captivity, never being near other beavers (or even trees for that matter), have been filmed building 'dams' across corridors using toys, blankets, and other household materials. An interesting data-point in the "nature vs. nurture" debate, don't you think?

But why do beavers build dams? This was a question I was asked when I was chatting through



my ideas for this article. They do it to create ponds upstream of the dam, within which they create their 'lodges' or homes. Contrary to widespread belief, they do not live within the actual dam itself. The ponds not only provide a location for their lodge (comprising sticks, rocks and twigs, held together with mud), but also protection from predators. For the UK's newly introduced beaver population, there are no longer risks such as wolves or bears (or at least I flipping hope there aren't!!), but the instinct is still very much there.

The dams are not just important for the beavers either... The ponds they create can become important wetland habitat, and their physical presence can reduce flooding and soil erosion. Therefore, although their reintroduction to the UK was controversial, there is the potential that they can be a benefit in the long-term, if they're allowed to thrive and function as they should do, getting those dams built. Given how many times introductions have gone wrong in the natural world, it's nice that this one could have a happy ending.

Now, to enter a lodge, the beavers must dive under the water, and enter from below. When I was a child, one of my favourite series of books was an adventure series, and in one of their adventures, a group had built a community of

Up Stream!

JENNIFER C WILSON



homes underwater using that same theory, i.e. diving down, and entering their homes via a 'moon pool' sort of set-up. Logically, it would work, but the house would need to be kept tightly in place at all times, with no chance of angles etc. changing, the outcome of which could be catastrophic.

However challenging the environment, humans have been obsessed for centuries (probably millennia) with the subsea environment, whether that's merely visiting it, or looking at something longer-term. And that includes permanent habitation!

For those who might like to dip a toe (he he!), then instead of buying a home underwater, why not 'try before you buy' and visit a hotel instead? Unsurprisingly, these hotels are centred around the tropics, with the crystal-clear waters of places like the Maldives more popular than the temperate waters of Europe. But even as a major fan of our British waters, I'd have to admit waking up to the view of coral seas and tropical fish is more inspiring than murky green waters, and the possible sighting of a sand eel. Having said that, if

one opens off the Scottish west coast, I'll be there like a shot!

A few nights would certainly be an interesting experience, but could you live under the sea full-time?

There are many ambitious schemes, including whole floating cities, but the option which appeals most to me is where most of your home is traditional in nature, above water (but right on the coast), and just a single room reaches out and down into the water. Imagine a conservatory, but rather than looking up at the stars, you look down at the starfish! That would definitely suit the marine ecologist in me.

Something quite so desirable would, I imagine, be snapped up as soon as it came on the market - you'd have to be super-snappy to get your claws on such a property... (Can you see where I'm going with this?)

Anyone who caught *Spy In The Ocean* on BBC recently might have seen the delightful footage of the hermit crab property ladder. Things could have ended in disaster and heartache, but since this was a series narrated by David TENNANT and not ATTENBOROUGH, I was confident going in that everything would be fine in the end! (David Attenborough has covered the story in the past, but again, happily, as one of his more 'light-hearted' segments)



Up Stream!

JENNIFER C WILSON

The one thing you probably know about hermit crabs is that they need to find suitably-sized shells to form their homes, and that as they grow, they need to find larger and larger shells. What you might not know is that if there are several hermit crabs in the same area, of assorted sizes, some shell-trading can take place. The largest crab will find themselves a new shell, and whilst they are getting ready to switch from their current to new home, other hermits might start to line up behind them.

The really clever thing here is that newcomers manage to get themselves in perfect size-order, with the largest immediately behind the first crab, all the way down to the smallest. And then, once the lead crab is ready, the Great Shell Switch can begin, with each crab getting their upgrade, and a single shell (the smallest) remaining unclaimed at the end.

As somebody currently starting to house-hunt,

this actually sounds like a far more civilised process than we humans employ!

The other thing that this crab story brings me, is a wonderful way to end this article. Because 'building' isn't just about bricks and mortar (or twigs and mud, for the beavers out there!) – it can be about community too. There are plenty of examples in the aquatic environment about creatures working together, for their mutual benefit, and the hermit crabs are a lovely one to talk about. This is a learned behaviour, that this species has established, to make sure that all individuals in an area remain protected (hermit crabs don't have a strong shell of their own, remember), and each is able to grow into their new home.

Just what communities should be doing...

*As well as being a full-time marine biologist,
Jennifer also writes historical fiction.*

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Attention Up-pers, home and abroad! We've been asked to facilitate a poetry exhibition at the upcoming Cullercoats Festival. The chosen theme is 'Home'... and this is where you all come in!

We know we have many readers all over the world and we want to read your poems about your home. Send us your work (20 lines max per poem), along with a photo of your town or village. All the best ones not only go on display for the festival, but will also appear in a one-off special edition of our magazine.

So, wherever you are in the world, send up to 3 poems with photos now to admin@positivelyup.co.uk.

Mark your entry 'Home'. Deadline 10th May.

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF BUILDINGS

Wurster Hall

The architecture building on the UC Berkeley Campus
shown to me proudly by my architect husband to be,
did not meet my approval at the time.

It was in this building he spent his evenings,
preparing to go on Charette.*
Exposed pipes, right angle construction, hard surfaces,
the sight of T squares, drafting tables, 3-D models,
students asleep in their chairs, all encased in a multistory
unpainted, cement structure.

When I came up from LA to visit him and his favorite
building, I traveled with southern California tastes.
When asked what I thought, I replied, When are they
going to finish it?

Somehow he forgave me, and when we traveled to
Switzerland years later and visited Le Turet by Corbusier,
raw cement had a sensual effect on me, a religious one,
and I thanked him for the foundation he had laid for me.

** the intense final effort made by architectural students to complete their solutions to a given architectural problem in an allotted time or the period in which such an effort is made*

Evie Groch

Light Up!

OLD LOW LIGHT

Centre Director, Guy Moody, guides us along the river to a safe haven for heritage

North Shields is famous for its two sets of dual lights, the High Lights and the Low Lights. For the uninitiated among our readers, can you explain how they worked and why there are two sets?

The Tyne is a dangerous place for vessels, and the mouth of the river is no exception. Under the water there are all sorts of hazards, not least of which the famous 'black middens' rocks, which are responsible for the wrecking of countless vessels. Sailors coming into the river need to avoid these underwater obstacles, and they can do it by navigating in the deepest part of the river mouth. These days we have the piers, navigation buoys and satellite navigation to help vessels in. There are also pilot boats, and Tyne pilots – people trained to navigate the river and bring ships safely to dock.

But in 1536 most of these aids were hundreds of years in the future. So King Henry VIII gave a charter to Trinity House in Newcastle and instructed them to construct 'leading lights' that would provide sailors with a safe navigation aid so they could enter the river.

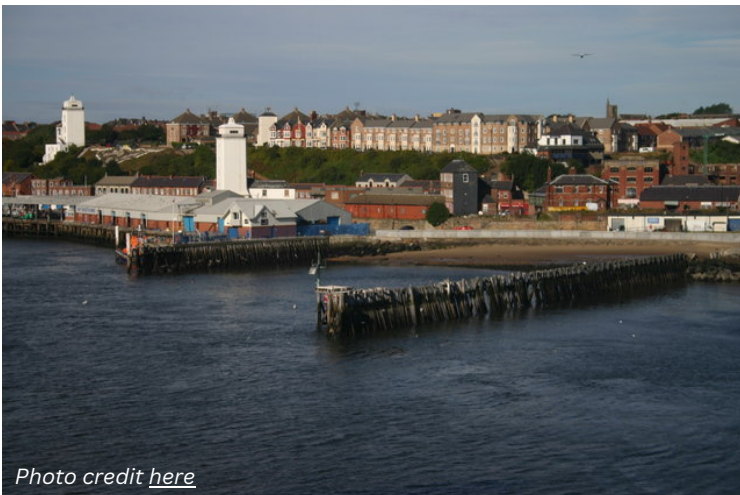


Photo credit [here](#)



So how do they work?

If you're out at sea and aiming for the safe channel into the river Tyne, you need something to guide you. Lining up the high and the low light together, and then navigating into the river with both lights aligned, puts you in the middle of that safe channel.

Why are there two sets?

Over hundreds of years, the location of the safe channel changed. In the early 19th century the second set of lights needed to be built, to align correctly with the new course of the channel.

Give us a potted history of how such an old building ended up as such a well-loved and well-used Heritage Centre.

The original Old Low Light, along with the Old High Light, was established in the first half of the 16th century by Trinity House, Newcastle, to ensure safe navigation through the treacherous mouth of the River Tyne. Today's building, believed to have been rebuilt around 1727, ceased to function as a lighthouse in 1810.

The first graphic representation of the Low Light lighthouse appears on Ralph Gardner's 1655 perspective map of the River Tyne. It is depicted

Light Up!

OLD LOW LIGHT

as a tall square tower, very likely two storeys and similar to the High Light on the same map.

In 1672 Clifford's Fort was built as a coastal defence against the Dutch. Its structure enclosed the Low Light which was provided with a separate entrance (a postern), the remains of which survive in the sunken 'garden' west of the existing building. Only ten years later, Trinity House was seeking funds, via increased shipping tolls, to repair both the High and Low Lights.

In the early 1700's, Clifford's Fort was remodelled. Trinity House records include legal bills relating to the Fort and access to their land enclosed by it – the first signs of an uneasy relationship between themselves and the Governor of the Fort. The Low Light was rebuilt or remodelled in 1727, very likely to raise the height of the lantern because the Governor's House, built in 1726, was obstructing the light!



Photo credit here

By 1805 the Old Low Light was redundant, as it could no longer be used for alignment with the Old High Light to ensure safe entry to the river. New Low and High Lights – the distinctive white

towers standing on the quayside and high on the riverbank today – were built in 1808-10. In 1830 the Old Low Light was remodelled as Trinity Alms Houses.

A late 19th century drawing by RJS Bertram shows the eastern end of the south façade much as it is today, though the large heraldic plaque and two ornate carved figures do not survive. The Maritime Service Volunteers left the building in 2011. The whole of Clifford's Fort, including the Old Low Light, lie within the Fish Quay Conservation Area designated in 2003.



Following major renovation, it is once again shining a light but this time on the town's great history and heritage. Its opening in 2015 was driven by local people who wanted to bring stories of the area's past to life and inspire others to find out more about North Shields.

Early plans involved two former teachers who set up a group called the Netties. They planned to fill a box with items to help tell the town's story in local schools.

Since 2015 (up to December 2023), it has welcomed over 218,177 visitors, organised more than 150 community events and hosted 20 exhibitions with strong local themes covering art, heritage, maritime and fishing traditions.

It is promoting healthy living with regular guided

Light Up!

OLD LOW LIGHT

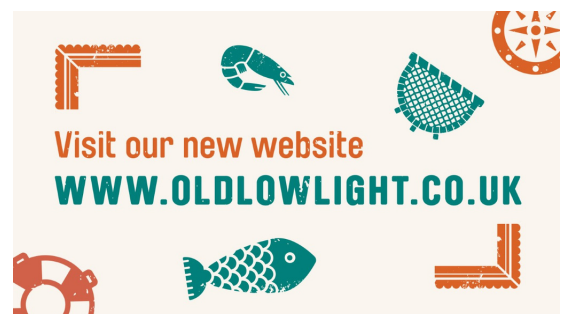
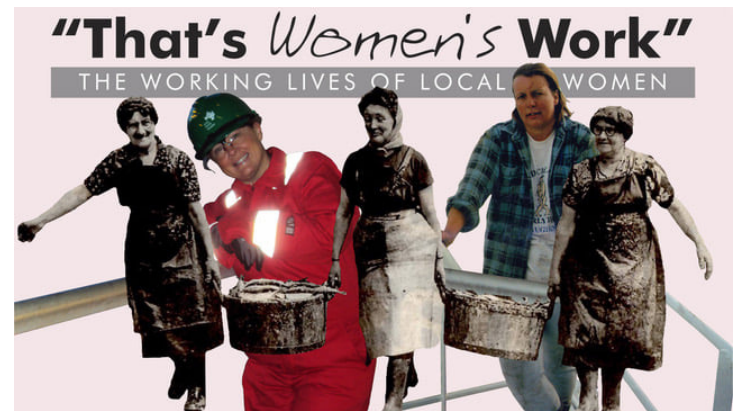


walks for people to enjoy wildlife, the coastal area and its history. It also holds regular exercise classes. Our popular music events vary from live café and terrace performances to evenings of chamber music. Local people have brought their ideas to us, some of which have been developed into fascinating displays for everyone to enjoy.



Heritage centres can unfortunately sometimes be dreary places. This is definitely not the case with the Old Low Lights! How do you ensure you have a something for everyone?

Old Low Light is colourful and has something for everyone, and that's because it's full of colourful characters who want to include as many people as possible in what they do. All of our activities come from our volunteers, local people and other fantastic community groups. A small team of staff supports our large team of volunteers to organise and deliver exhibitions, events, an exercise programme and education workshops for schools.



Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF BUILDINGS

Don't Close Larry's

Larry's Payday Loans out on the avenue
don't ask if I even have a payday
which I do most of the time
there're times when I don't
once or twice been occasion
even with a payday I had to hit Larry's
not enough hours or missed a day
don't get paid when Cecilia's sick
be different if she had a momma home
to be there with her while I work

Larry's may charge something extra
I'm good for it I got my pride
don't need but a bit to get me by
don't have to sit and wait no interview
explain why and what for
no embarrassment having to ask
humiliation by being turned down
don't want my daughter's daddy on welfare
any day now I'll break out of this loop
hand to mouth payday to payday

I don't go by Larry's Loans every week
seen folks that do vicious cycle
getting deeper desperate destitute
seen rich do most the same thing
credit cards boats clothes fancy cars
some roadside loan outfits are predators
so are store cards zero down no interest
no fees for a year everyone qualifies
Larry's is just Larry's good for folks like me
let him be he needs to make a living too

Carl Papa Palmer

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

They work as a team.
Some shovel dirt, clearing the way;
others follow
leveling earth, grading the new path
with blades,
laying down a road that becomes
an artery.

Buildings go up—
the tall ones for offices, hotels, apartments—
a few houses.
Intent, the workers continue,
stopping only
when mothers mount
front stoops, to call
“Suppertime!”

Bill Cushing



Up North!

STEVE LOWE

Up!'s resident Outdoors Man builds the case for conservation

For most wildlife, buildings remove valuable habitat, displacing the natural inhabitants into increasingly smaller zones. Another patch goes and plants and animals lose links, gradually shrinking and creating what are effectively sterile zones. Every time we build something, another patch of ground that could have been a home to wildlife disappears.

But it doesn't need to be this way.

For instance, every building could have a green (living) roof, bee or swift bricks, and built-in hibernating areas for hedgehogs, making the built environment more inviting to our native species.



Green roofing is a great example. Structures such as sheds, bus shelters, garages, and even offices could be topped by carpeting these usually flat roofs with soil, mosses, plants (and even ponds). A stonecrop sward, for instance, can absorb water, provide nesting material, flowering for insects. Or gravelled surfaces can act as nesting sites for some of our wading birds, such as oystercatchers.

Such ideas are not just fanciful dreams. In fact, many studies show that green roofs can provide habitats for various species, reduce heavy run-off

of storm water from buildings and even help to cool interiors. They have often been hailed as one solution to the world's rapid loss of nature.

Green roofs, also known as living roofs, can be scattered with decaying wood, where insects thrive, and constructed with an undulating topography containing all sorts of nooks and crannies, gravels or even or sandy mounds that suit burrowing species such as solitary bees.

One recent example of this is the Northumberland



Wildlife Trust building at Hauxley. Not only does it have a green roof, but the entire building is constructed using straw bales, packed earth floors or stone gabions, all of which provide these niches for nature.

Another, which many will not notice, is the living wall on the M&S building in Newcastle's Eldon Square, a hanging garden of plants which provide shade, manage water (and are probably also a nectar source for the bees on the nearby Fenwick roof).

In my own home, noting the annual arrival of swifts, I erected a series of swift nesting boxes. They've been extensively populated although not by swifts as yet as my 1920s house has eaves they seem to prefer. Modern housing is so well sealed, without nooks and crannies, these birds and others like them often find it harder to make their nests beneath the eaves. Here the inclusion of swift bricks into the walls would improve choices for swifts and would be a very small cost in the overall build costs of a new home.

There are many similar interventions that could

Up North!

STEVE LOWE

welcome wildlife into the fabric of buildings. Bee bricks are full of little holes allowing solitary bees to nest in them. Bat boxes or other spaces can also be included in the build and accommodate another species without any impact upon the fabric.

At my workplace, Cresswell Pele Tower, we have a bat loft – a whole room just for the bats. It's very different from The Bat Cave mind you! No Bat Computer or other gadgets either, just a hatch with a "Keep Out" sign.



Of course, we also need wild spaces or landscaping otherwise these homes will not provide anything other than shelter, so it's vital that the planning system is geared to ensure these are complimentary.

Most people are unaware that local councils have to produce "Local Plans" which set many of these things into a strategy. And even fewer engage with that process, which can be quite lengthy but worthwhile.

In England, new developments are meant to show a "net gain" for wildlife under the terms of The Environment Act. You may also hear about

Local Nature Recovery Strategies, which make it mandatory that these plans and others take this approach. So, a development that might threaten the loss of habitats or species must avoid damage or compensate for it in a meaningful and measurable way.

These strategies are in preparation right now. In fact, I was at a workshop with species groups today. Hosted by ERIC (Environmental Records Information Centre) Northeast, this brought together local experts and enthusiasts, to draw on local knowledge and influence these plans. If the workshop did ONE thing, it was to show how important records of sightings or surveys are in assisting conservation measures and enhancing wildlife. So, get to know ERIC and tell them what you see!



Having mentioned Cresswell Pele Tower, it seems appropriate to mention positive conservation in terms of heritage rather than wildlife. Our built heritage is the responsibility of Historic England, who

advise government on these matters. They produce the Heritage at Risk (HAR) programme, which helps us understand the overall state of England's historic sites.

The programme identifies those sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. This information is collated annually in the Heritage at Risk Register. The end result is a dynamic picture

Up North!

STEVE LOWE

of the sites most at risk and most in need of safeguarding for the future. This includes all listed buildings across England including:

- Buildings and structures
- Places of worship
- Archaeology entries
- Registered parks and gardens
- Registered battlefields
- Protected wreck sites
- Conservation areas

Anyone can find out what's at risk by searching the Heritage at Risk Register online.

2023 marked the 25th anniversary of the first publication of the Risk Register in 1998 (then known as the Buildings at Risk Register) highlighting the most important historic buildings and structures in England in need of help and care. It was therefore timely and fitting that Cresswell Pele Tower was removed from the list in 2023!

This was largely down to the sheer determination and dedication of local people and community



who felt passionately that the Pele is a local asset and who went through months of toil to get the resources, permissions and funding to ensure this occurred. The Pele is now acting as a local hub for volunteers, attracting visitors (it's free by the way), filming units, historic groups and schools, amongst others.

If you haven't been along, 2024 would be a great time to do so as this same determination has seen the fruition of a second restoration, this time of a walled garden, dating back to the 18th century. Hidden behind thick, tall walls, the former kitchen gardens had fallen into decline and were almost impenetrable.



Once again, hard graft, sweat and toil and a touch of vision has seen this space transformed, providing a public space which, although "new", is already a great haven for people and wildlife. It's alive with colour and life, with lots to see and will be officially opened this summer. The garden will also be part of the National Open Garden Scheme (NGS), generating charitable resources to top up the other elements such as beekeeping, a medieval orchard, vegetable plots and a wildlife pond.

All of this is managed by volunteers, as is the Pele Tower. Here is a perfect chance to showcase what can be achieved by volunteers, which could (and perhaps should) include all of us. It's the not the

Up North!

STEVE LOWE

only example of this type of initiative by any stretch and I am amazed by the breadth of projects within the local area, something for everybody, and also something without which society would be all the poorer.

It's widely acknowledged that volunteering and gardening are associated with better physical, social and mental health. It is also medically proven that people who do regular physical activity, such as gardening, have up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke,

and also a significant reduction in depression and anxiety.

If you have never volunteered, give it a go. And if you haven't seen Cresswell Pele Tower and Garden, you will be very welcome (shy bairns get nowt!).



An experienced wildlife professional, Steve currently works freelance with Northumberland Rivers Trust as well as undertaking work with volunteers on local heritage and archaeology projects.

His hope is to leave the world a better place.

Cresswell Walled Garden

July 2019

Existing Garden

Traditional high brick walls typical of Victorian walled gardens

Derelict brick store room that could be restored to a functional building

Pedestrian gateway providing access into the garden from the Pele tower

Batons on walls provide evidence of previous structures

Pele Tower

Restoration of the Victorian garden will be sensitively carried out, retaining and enhancing original features and re-introducing horticultural practices that will reflect the original purpose of the garden. The proposals above have been developed to provide a complimentary space to the Pele Tower, offering activities for families, day visitors, as well as a project for a locally based friends group. With such a large area it will be important to design the garden along low maintenance principles.

Mown grassland, fruit trees set into wildflower meadows and well mulched soft fruit beds will reduce maintenance requirements. Additional value will be provided by restoring the derelict store room into a bothy/exhibition space, interpreting the history of Victorian walled gardens and traditional horticultural practices. A open sided shelter or even a greenhouse would further extend the range of potential activities within the garden.

GROUNDWORK
CHANGING PLACES
CHANGING LIVES

Word Up!

YOUR POEMS ON THE THEME OF BUILDINGS

Visiting The Knap of Howar, Papa Westray

You'll need to catch three ferries
or two aeroplanes to visit here,
to see this house that people built
five thousand years ago.

It's two houses, really, perhaps the first
semi-detached des res ever built.
The local ranger will show you round;
If you are lucky, you'll see Puffins, too.

There's a central hearth, two large bed boxes
on the longer walls, a large stone dresser
at one end. Only stone remains today. You'll need
to furnish it with your imagination.

I see heather in the bed boxes, deep and springy.
Cow and sheep hides on top, people snuggled down
warmed by the central heating of that hearth.
Walls painted red, orange, black, white,

homes full of colour and light. Outside,
the wind blows hard across those northern isles.
Beef stew is cooking on the fire. There is singing,
storytelling, love, sex and laughing children.

Tonnie Richmond

Vernacular

The Taj Mahal ignores your gaze,
preferring to reflect upon
her wary image.

The Sydney Opera House avoids all
capture, raising her
beetle's wings, ready to take flight.

The Colosseum's broken crown
with sightless eyes beneath,
looks inwards, back to distant days,
remembering past splendours.

The Tower of Pisa, drunk again,
still listing in her cups,
will pay no heed to sober folk
who marvel at her tilt.

Save your praise for
the sturdy ranks of
low-born houses here.
The butt and bens, two-up two-downs,
the back to backs, the schemes.
Unsung glories and rousing stories
echo in these walls.

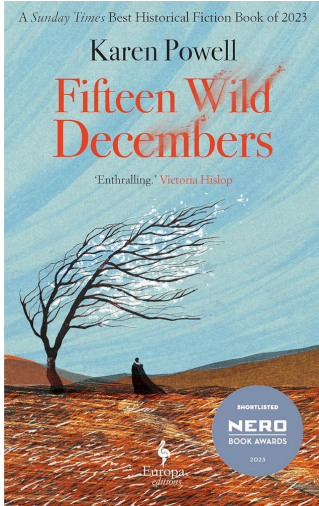
Gerda Pickin



Read Up!

JENNA WARREN

Our resident book reviewer gives us a few of her current favourites



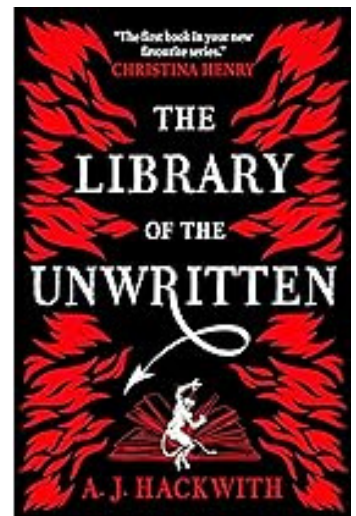
Fifteen Wild Decembers by Karen Powell (Europa Editions) is a beautiful, lyrical novel about the life of Emily Brontë and her siblings. It starts with Emily's early life at a boarding school before a family tragedy brings her home to Yorkshire. We're given glimpses into her family life in Haworth, her affinity with the local landscape, and the way writing provides both an escape and a mode of self-expression.

I particularly enjoyed the dynamics between Emily and her older sister Charlotte Brontë, and the account of their journey to Belgium to research establishing their own school at Haworth. It was also interesting to read about the sisters' journeys to publication: their experiences of feeling cut off from the literary world in London will probably resonate with many authors writing today. We learn about the limited opportunities afforded to women at the time, even those who were comparatively privileged.

In many ways, this is a sad story. But it is also a wonderful book about family, home and creativity. You don't need to be especially familiar with the Brontë sisters' novels to appreciate it, although it was interesting to see what some of their inspirations may have been. I would highly recommend this book to lovers of historical fiction, and anyone interested in the lives of authors in the past.

The Library of the Unwritten by A. J. Hackwith (Titan Books) is also a book about literature, but in the very different genre of fantasy. It was suggested to me when I asked for recommendations on Twitter for uplifting, quirky novels. I would never have discovered it otherwise, so I'm very grateful for the recommendation, as I thoroughly enjoyed it.

It follows the adventures of Claire, head librarian of the Unwritten Wing, part of a neutral library in Hell where unwritten and unfinished books are stored. Occasionally, a 'book', often personified by its main character, will escape from the library and go in search of its author. This leads to all sorts of trouble. In the first of a trilogy, Claire teams up with Leto (a demon) and Brevity (a muse) to track down a Hero who has escaped his book. But all is not as it seems.



I loved the world-building in this novel. It reminded me of *The Starless Sea* by Erin Morgenstern combined with the TV series of *Good Omens*. It's funny, quirky and imaginative. I loved the very

Read Up!

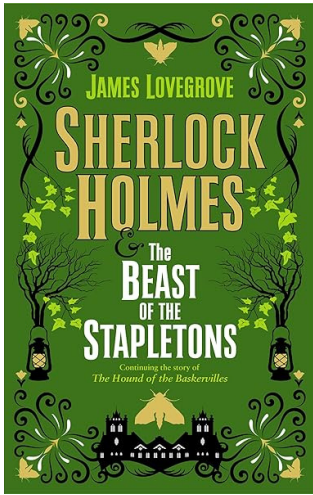
Jenna Warren is a bookseller and writer from Teesside.

She runs Book Corner, an independent bookshop in Saltburn-by-the-Sea.

Her debut novel, *The Moon and Stars*, was published in 2022 by Fairlight Books.

JENNA WARREN

different characters, especially the prickly but good-hearted Claire, and Ramiel the rather long-suffering angel. It's a book that explores the nature of stories, why people tell them and the possibilities they hold. I have the second in the series ready to read, and really looking forward to it.

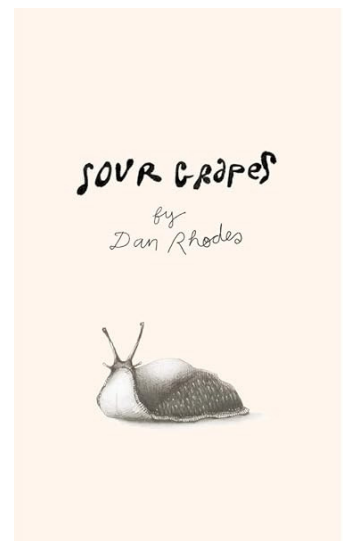


Sherlock Holmes and the Beast of the Stapletons (Titan Books) is part of a series of new Holmes novels by James Lovegrove. These novels are tremendous fun: Lovegrove imitates the voice of Arthur Conan Doyle and really captures the feel of Victorian Gothic and mystery novels. *The Beast of the Stapletons* is his sequel to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and the Baskerville family is once again being tormented by apparently supernatural forces. Is it possible that an old adversary has returned from the dead?

This is a page-turning mystery, steeped in the Gothic atmosphere of Dartmoor and its lonely houses and settlements. I particularly enjoyed the way Lovegrove captures the relationship between Holmes and Watson, with the latter always being kept slightly in the dark until it's time for a big reveal.

At the time of writing, I've almost finished an excellent comic novel called *Sour Grapes* by Dan Rhodes (Eye Books). Green Bottom, a sleepy English village, decides to host its first literary festival. It forms a committee, gains sponsorship from an energy company, and starts to invite guest authors. One of its most prestigious guests is Wilberforce Selfram, a self-professed intellectual and expert on psychogeography, whose favourite catchphrase is 'indicative of a broad cultural malaise'. This isn't the sort of festival appearance Selfram is used to: he's given accommodation at the village parsonage and signed up to lead a creative writing class with a group of primary school children (which goes surprisingly well).

The portrayal of literary festival events is particularly funny. My favourite chapter concerns the manager of a local garden centre who is called upon to chair an event with a famous literary author. However, she has never attended an author event before and has no idea how they are supposed to work, so she reads the author's entire Wikipedia entry instead (complete with slideshow) while he sits in silence, awaiting an interview that never starts. Rhodes mercilessly lampoons the publishing industry, intellectual snobbery and tabloid journalism in a novel which is madcap in its humour, but clever and a lot of fun. I'm enjoying it immensely, and I'm looking forward to finding out how our hero copes with his headline author event.



Happy reading!

Jenna

Coming Up!

So here we are at the end of our final monthly issue! We hope you enjoyed it.

So what's next for Up!? Well ... you may have spotted that we're involved in a major project right here on our doorstep. We've been asked to facilitate a poetry exhibition at the upcoming Cullercoats Festival on 15th June. The chosen theme is 'Home'... and this is where you all come in!

Over the years, you've read plenty about our home village, and now we want to know about your homes, wherever you are in the world, from Albania to Zambia. Send us your poems about where you live (20 lines max per poem), along with a photo of your town, village or city. All the best ones will not only go on display at the festival, but will also appear in a one-off special edition of Up! in July. We can't wait to hear from you.

In the meantime, we'll be carrying on trying to make a difference (as we know so many of you all do) and Up! magazine will be back in June for the first of our new seasonal issues.

Until then, take care of yourselves and each other.

Much love

Bridget and Harry xx



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