

CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Spring 2026
Bulletin





CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

The Trust was founded in 1942. On 8 April 2021 it became a “Charitable Incorporated Organisation”, remaining registered as charity no. 502132

Founder:

The Very Rev'd Cyril A Alington
Dean of Durham 1933-51

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Roberta Blackman-Woods
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Bill Bryson
Chancellor of the University 2005-11

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SPRING TALKS: DURHAM WORLD HERITAGE SITE & THE CITY OF DURHAM TRUST

Saturday 2 May, 2 pm to 4 pm in Elvet Riverside ER140

Prof Colleen Batey:

Lived lives... telling the story of the highs, lows and daily struggles in the archaeological record

Dr Jane Lovell:

Magical heritage, new animism and conversations with nature

These two distinguished speakers will present different but complementary accounts of how to reach back and tell the story of our heritage. Colleen will be very much evidence-based, discussing what we can authentically reconstruct and conjecture from the archaeological record, whereas Jane will speak more about how visitors are enticed by the imagined stories of natural and cultural heritage.

Colleen Batey is our first Heritage 360 & World Heritage Site Honorary Professor. She is an expert on the Vikings in Scotland.

Jane Lovell is Reader at Canterbury Christ Church University and WHS lead on UNESCO'S UK National Commission project about storytelling.

Entry is free and all are welcome!

WORLD HERITAGE DAY 18 APRIL 2026

World Heritage Day this year is on Saturday 18 April. A range of events will take place in Durham Castle which will be open 11am - 4pm (last entry 3pm) with free entry on a free-flow, self-guided basis. Full details can be found here: <https://worldheritageuk.org/articles/england/durham-castle-and-cathedral/world-heritage-day-at-durham-whs/>

DURHAM'S GREEN CORRIDOR PROJECT

Readers may remember plans led by the National Trust and the County Council to establish a “Green Corridor” north of the City, embracing the area from Crook Hall Gardens to Finchale Priory, including valuable woods on the Kepier side of the river. In December 2022 Eric Wilton of the National Trust (NT) gave a talk on this project, still watchable on the CDT You Tube channel. If this now seems some time ago it is good to hear that things are certainly being urged forward by a small team split between the National Trust and Durham County Council. A National Trust website contains a map and will give any recent news on the scheme: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/north-east/crook-hall-gardens/durham-city-green-corridor>.

The Durham Corridor scheme is now part of “Green Corridors North East,” formed with comparable projects in Gateshead and South Tees and which was this year awarded research funding of £2.9m from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, with engagement from local universities, the NT, local authorities, and community organisations. The broad aims are: sustainable community access, enhancing biodiversity, and protecting cultural heritage.

The Green Corridor project is currently funding improvements to cycle paths and footpaths. Attractive wooden signposts have appeared in the area and significant repairs have been made to some paths and steps. We understand these small projects are being undertaken with a view to building confidence and readiness while broader plan-making continues, with 24 local bodies on hand as partners (“Changemakers”) committed to denoting significant time and resources. The role of our Trust is currently that of an engaged observer. Jenna Brooks, Project Manager of the Durham scheme, tells us: “We will be commissioning a Community Practitioner to work closely with local communities early next year, to inform the development of these plans, ensuring people are placed at the centre of this work.”

Why a “Green Corridor”? The National Trust manifesto highlights access to green space as a matter of social health and justice, especially for people without a motor vehicle. This work is part of the National Trust's strategy to address unequal access to nature, beauty and history. If the project can prosper, it will feel especially welcome to those remembering how this same area has been threatened by very destructive road-building schemes.

Photo: Access Improvements © National Trust Images/Ellie Nicklin



THEMATIC BULLETINS

We have decided to try to have a main theme for each of our bulletins, though they will all continue to include news of the Trust's activities. The theme for this issue is **Environment**. Future themes might be Town Centre Revival, Transport, and Accessibility. We would welcome suggestions from members for other themes.

The bulletins are produced by an editorial board consisting of Sue Childs, John Lowe and Francis Pritchard. If you have ideas or comments about the bulletins please contact us directly or via trust@durhamcity.org.

WEAR RIVERS TRUST

Trustees continue to be engaged with the Wear Rivers Trust, especially its bold long-term project to clear the catchment area of the River Wear of three ecologically damaging and invasive non-native plant species. These are Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. Japanese Knotweed is infamous for causing deep structural damage (a threat to Durham's riverside mills for example); Giant Hogweed has viciously toxic stems; Himalayan Balsam suffocates other plants then leaves the ground bare and prone to erosion in the winter. Detailed accounts of the WRT project have appeared in our autumn bulletins for 2021 and 2023. The image here gives an example of the extent of the problem in places, showing a large stand of Giant Hogweed over a carpet of the Balsam near the riverbanks opposite Kepier.

The Wear Rivers Trust works with local bodies and communities, mapping and studying the outbreaks, securing permissions with landowners, organising volunteers for hands-on clearance work, and staging events to publicise the issues.

In 2025 the WRT was pleased to report success in clearing much of Old Durham Beck of Giant Hogweed, traced as the original source of local infestations. Claire Dodds, a project officer, gave us a summary of other activity and initiatives in 2025 as follows.



“Wear Rivers Trust attended several Community Engagement Events in 2025. At Durham Regatta we engaged with the Rowing Community to promote the Check, Clean, Dry Campaign, encouraging rowers to check equipment and clothing to prevent the spread of invasive plants and animals. A walk around Flass Vale was arranged and led by Val Standen. The tour explained how the area has been naturalised, almost eradicating the Himalayan Balsam.”

In January 2026 Claire reported that after years of being rather obstructive, Durham County Council are finally allowing access to local

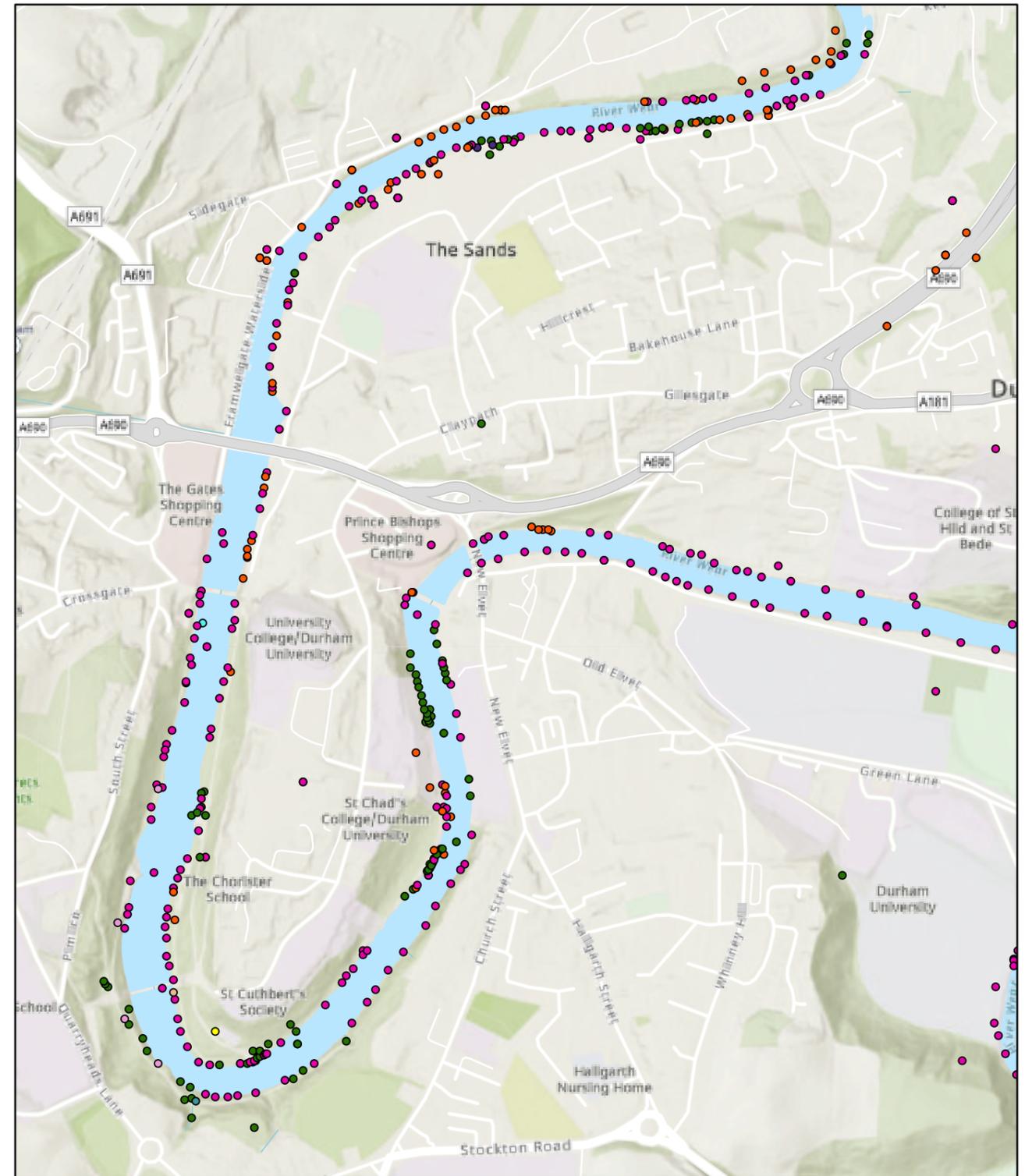
woodland and riverside areas for the purposes of clearing invasive plants. Low Burnhall and Saltmarsh Gill are highlighted this year as specific target areas for measures to improve local biodiversity. WRT will continue working with local scout and cub groups to eradicate Himalayan Balsam from the Church Yard at St Giles and to fight the infestation in Pelaw Woods. A publicity event is to be held at the Botanical Garden Fun Day on bank holiday Monday May 25, and WRT will attend both days this year of the Durham Regatta (June 13-14).

The WRT also monitors the general health of local rivers. “Riverfly testing” records 8 invertebrates that live in the river, scoring for the numbers counted - the higher the score the healthier the river. 2025 saw a very healthy river test along the River Wear at Kepier and at Cocken Bridge, despite low river levels.

The WRT always needs volunteers to help with this and other projects and is offering training sessions from this Spring (<https://wear-rivers-trust.org.uk/volunteer>). There is a national map of “invasive nonnative species” (INNS) available at <https://innsmapper.org>. This includes a facility for members of the public to report new outbreaks.

Readers alert to the issue may have noticed reports in the national press over the past year about efforts to find successful biological controls for invasive nonnative plants. Claire reported that trials are currently underway in Sunderland with a rust fungus that could significantly restrain Himalayan Balsam.

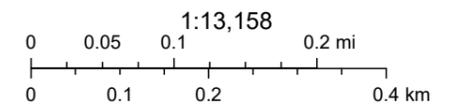
Invasive Non-Native Species in Durham City



22/09/2025

INNS Records

- Lesser Periwinkle
- Red Osier Dogwood
- Rhododendron
- Terrapin
- Butterfly Bush
- Giant Hogweed
- Giant Japanese Knotweed
- Himalayan Balsam
- Japanese Knotweed



Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

DR FENWICK LAWSON

With great sorrow, we note that Dr Fenwick Lawson, our local and internationally-renowned sculptor, died on January 23, aged 93. The funeral took place in Durham Cathedral on February 25, with the Dean, The Very Revd. Dr Philip Plyming, taking the service. Fenwick Lawson was born into a coal-mining family in Stanley, trained at Sunderland College of Art (as well as the Royal College of Art in London), and lived, worked, and created his art, in the North East. A blue plaque was awarded in 2024 to Bow Cottage, his former home and studio in Bow Lane, where he lived from 1977 to 2015. His sculptures can be seen in many locations in the area (as well as elsewhere in the UK and abroad): the Journey in Millennium Place; the Pieta in Durham Cathedral, the Wheel Cross in St Aidan's College grounds, to name a few in Durham City. Further afield his sculpture 'Cuthbert of Farne' on Holy Island is particularly relevant to the story of Saint Cuthbert. The Trust recognised Fenwick Lawson's importance to Durham City by making him an honorary member. His sculptures will continue to give us all pleasure and images for contemplation.



The Wheel Cross from 2013 at St Aidan's College commemorates the twenty-one year contribution made by Durham City Arts to the cultural life of Durham



The original wooden sculpture of St. Cuthbert currently in the garden of St Mary le Bow. The statue on Lindisfarne - Cuthbert of Farne - is a bronze casting of this sculpture installed in 1999

BOOK REVIEW

Gary Bankhead, *Pilgrim Souvenirs, Devotional and other Objects of Faith: Late Medieval to Modern Finds from the River Wear, Durham.*

Hardback; 225 pages; numerous photographs and line illustrations. ISBN 978-1-7391074-2-0. Durham: Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland Report 9 (in Association with the Museum of Archaeology, Durham University), 2025.

Signed hardback versions are available online via <https://www.diveintodurham.uk/publications.htm> (£40 plus P&P), or unsigned from Durham University's Museum of Archaeology gift shop (£35). Also, paperback and Kindle editions are available from Amazon (£29.99 and £7.99 respectively).

In recent years Gary Bankhead has developed a national and international profile as a riverine archaeologist, appearing frequently in the pages of the press and making multiple television appearances. A graduate of Durham University, where he is Honorary Fellow in the Department of Archaeology, Gary's work beneath the waters of the River Wear has transformed our understanding of the river's connection to local communities, industries and trade from the Roman period onwards.¹

Like his previous monograph, *Textile Manufacture, Taxation and Trade in Late- and Post-Medieval Durham City* (Durham, 2022), this new work aims to engage with both specialist and non-specialist audiences. The book is arranged into five chapters. The first of these serve an introductory function, providing the reader with an overview of the Durham River Wear Assemblage, comprising over 14,500 objects recovered by the author from the bed of the Wear between 2007 and 2013 and generously deposited with Durham University's Museum of Archaeology. The chapter also discusses the cult of St Cuthbert—which drew large numbers of medieval pilgrims to the city—and the broader practice of pilgrimage. The final section of the introductory chapter comprises a discussion by Dr Richard Kelleher (Fitzwilliam Museum) of 27 identifiable silver coins, ranging in date from the reigns of Edward I to George III, recovered from the bed of the Wear at Elvet. This essay, which also touches upon the early modern tokens and jetons, draws upon Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS)² data, examining the coins (which include pieces from Ireland, Denmark and Venice) within the context of both regional and national recovery patterns, and raising the possibility that some, at least, of the coins were ritually deposited.



The second chapter is very much object-focused and concentrates upon late-medieval pilgrim souvenirs. These include three ampullae, two of which may be associated with Walsingham Priory, and a range of pilgrim badges, and crucifixes. Individual objects are discussed in depth, with particular attention being given to a late-medieval pewter pectoral cross, discovered by the author in 2011. This find very closely resembles in form the famed St Cuthbert's cross, even incorporating a representation of exquisite Anglo-Saxon cloisonné cells. The author seeks to address the challenge raised by the late Dame Rosemary Camp, who questioned how a late-medieval badge maker "could have known of the appearance of Saint Cuthbert's golden pectoral cross, given that the object was only discovered during Canon James Raine's investigation of Cuthbert's tomb in 1827".³ Possible connections with Scotland are explored, as is the likelihood that "at some point during the late medieval period Cuthbert's golden cross was probably displayed near his shrine in Durham Cathedral".⁴ Further faith-related objects are covered in the third chapter, which is entitled "Devotional and other religious objects". The material covered is wide ranging in scope and date, including crucifixes; post-medieval devotional medals; bells; spoon knops, mounts and pendants.

The fourth chapter is perhaps the most intriguing in the volume and focuses upon a collection of items relating to Arthur Ramsey, who served successively as Bishop of Durham, Archbishop of York and Archbishop of Canterbury between 1940 and 1974. Recovered by Gary Bankhead beneath from the river beneath Prebends Bridge, the cache included ceremonial souvenirs (engraved silver trowel and key); commemorative and award medals struck in gold, silver and bronze; crucifixes; a Corpus Christi figure by the sculptor Jean Lambert-Rucki; and a Christening spoon. At the time of their discovery (2007-09) the finds generated much speculation in the popular press as to why these items had ended up in the River Wear. The author effectively dismisses claims that the items were dropped into the river in the wake of a burglary at the retired Archbishop's Durham home. Instead, he makes an extremely convincing argument that the material was deliberately deposited in the Wear as a means of discretely and sensitively disposing of items - primarily gifts - that had been greatly valued by the increasingly frail Archbishop Ramsey and could not otherwise be offloaded without generating unwelcome attention and embarrassment.



The fifth and final chapter explores "other reasons for the disposal of objects in watery contexts". A range of individual items are highlighted, including rings, brooches, and a miner's check from Browney Colliery. Also

discussed are two medals of First World War vintage awarded to William Alexander (Alick) Cochrane Newton, who served as a junior officer in the Royal Horse Artillery. Alick Cochrane and his new bride emigrated to Alberta at the end of the Great War, where he acted as the Duke of Windsor's adviser on his Canadian interests. Cochrane never returned to the UK and the question of how his hard-earned medals came to be at the bottom of the River Wear in central Durham represents a mystery that will perhaps never be solved.

Pilgrim Souvenirs, Devotional and other Objects of Faith is lavishly illustrated throughout, with colour photographs, line drawings, and Selene Photometric Stereo Scanner (SPSS)⁵ shaded renders. It is augmented by three appendices which present X-ray Fluorescence Spectrometry (XRF)⁶ analyses of Durham pit tokens; a catalogue of the 27 silver coins recovered from the Wear at Elvet; and XRF analyses of a range of pilgrim souvenirs and devotional objects. A comprehensive bibliography concludes the work.

This volume, the publication of which was supported by The City of Durham Trust, makes an important contribution to our understanding of the archaeology of Durham and the role played by pilgrimage in the city's development. It successfully traverses the tricky middle-ground between academic and popular audiences and will make a valuable addition to the bookshelves of anyone with an interest in the history of the County or the role of Christianity in the North East.

Dr Craig Barclay, Head of Museums, Galleries and Exhibitions, Durham University

Footnotes

1. See: https://www.diveintodurham.uk/gary_bankhead.htm (Accessed 15/02/2026).
2. The Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) record archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. Established in 1997, it is jointly managed by the British Museum and Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales. See <https://finds.org.uk/> (Accessed 16/02/2026).
3. Gary Bankhead, G. (2025), Pilgrim Souvenirs, Devotional and other Objects of Faith: Late Medieval to Modern Finds from the River Wear, Durham. (Durham; Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland Report 9), p.100.
4. Bankhead (2025), p.101.
5. SPSS is an imaging technique used to extract extremely detailed visual information relating to the surface of an object.
6. XRF is a non-destructive analytical technique used to determine the composition of materials.

UNESCO GLOBAL NETWORK OF LEARNING CITIES

Durham was admitted to this network in December 2025. There are 12 such cities in the UK and they are part of UNESCO's efforts to promote lifelong learning throughout the world. The network complements the city's status as a World Heritage Site and the bid to join was led by the WHS Senior Manager, Dr Anne Allen, and the Strategic Partnership Board on which the Trust is represented by our Chair who played a significant part in preparing the bid. It was formally endorsed by the Mayor of Durham.

Partners in the Durham team include Alington House Community Association, City of Durham Parish Council, City of Durham Trust, County Durham Cultural Education Partnership, Durham Cathedral, Durham Cathedral Schools Foundation, Durham City of Sanctuary, Durham County Council, Durham Fringe Festival, Durham Sixth Form Centre, Durham Learning Alliance and Durham University, National Trust, NCFE, Cultura Trust and Trades4care CIC, New College Durham, Redhills, Seven Stories (Two Tales), St John's College, St Leonard's School, *The Story* at Mount Oswald, and WEA.

Partners are currently learning from each other about what they can contribute to this venture. We are identifying the key challenges that we face and the support we would like to receive. We are just at the beginning of an exciting but challenging journey to widen access to learning for all our citizens.



Front (L-R): Dr Anne Allen, Durham World Heritage Site Manager; Durham Sixth Form College student Millie Winch; Professor Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor and Warden, Durham University; Durham City Mayor Councillor Gary Hutchinson; Professor Simon Oliver, Durham Cathedral Institute; Durham Sixth Form College student Amber Walshaw; and Ellen Beveridge, Principal, Durham Sixth Form College.

Back (L-R) John Lowe, Chair City of Durham Trust and Alington House; Karl Fairley Deputy CEO, New College Durham; Andrew Broadbent, CEO, New College Durham; and Mark Stamper, Head of Inclusive Growth and Partnerships, Durham County Council.

CONSULTATIONS

The Trust responds to relevant consultations issued by local, regional and national organisations, particularly those by Durham County Council and the Government. Recent consultations we have responded to include:

The County Durham Local Nature Recovery Strategy
The County Durham Open Space Needs Assessment (OSNA)
The National Planning Policy Framework
Biodiversity Net Gain (a national consultation)
Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance Consultation

We are currently developing our response to the 'Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan', which includes 'Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Setting Guidance'.

Our responses can be seen on our website at:

<https://durhamcity.org/our-work/consultations/>

<https://durhamcity.org/our-work/consultations/2025-consultations/>

WE MUST RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS!

Our membership numbers are slowly declining as age takes its inevitable toll. Please try to recruit at least one new member and that would double our numbers. The Trust is in a sustainable financial position and there is no need for immediate concern, but we need to take steps now to ensure our long-term viability.

We are also taking action now to ensure that our members pay the correct subscription. It is £10 for an individual and £12 for a couple. Life membership is £200. Please check that you are paying the correct annual amount.

The simplest way to pay is via direct debit. Just use this link: <https://pay.gocardless.com/BRT0003Q7YVGC3>. You may also pay by Standing Order to sort code 08-90-70 account no. 50410022 adding your name as the reference.

Or, of course, you may still pay by cheque, payable to The City of Durham Trust. Please post it to the Treasurer, Francis Pritchard, at 5 Hawthorne Close, Langley Park, Durham, DH7 9FD.

ARCHITECTURAL AWARD 2025

Trustees have unanimously decided to give its Architectural Award for a building completed in 2025 to the Miners' Hall, Redhills. The original Pitman's Parliament has been magnificently refurbished and a modern extension discretely added to improve the functionality of the building. A full appreciation of the building will be published in our next bulletin. The Award will be presented on September 12th 2026 at the Trust's AGM which will be held at Redhills.

The Trust has donated £500 to Redhills and it will contribute to the cost of restoring the memorial garden at the front of the building. The garden commemorates the Easington Colliery disaster of 29 May 1951 when 83 men were killed in an explosion.



The Miners' Hall during reconstruction in July 2024

OBSERVATORY HILL AND ST MARGARET'S ALLOTMENTS & GRAVEYARD

Both these areas, on the west of the City, are designated as Local Green Spaces in the Durham City Neighbourhood Plan. They are important for the wildlife and heritage of the City, as well as for the pleasure and usefulness they provide to residents and visitors. Local community volunteers are working collaboratively to protect and enhance these areas, particularly for biodiversity and the maintenance of a green corridor. The Observatory Hill Research Group is a small group of volunteer researchers watching and reporting on Observatory Hill. Their next briefing report will soon be published. The Natural History and Ecology Group (for the St Margaret's Allotments and Churchyard) is actively researching the local wildlife there, and developing partnerships with other local groups. If you are interested in these activities the Trust can put you in touch: email trust@durhamcity.org



SEEKING NEW TRUSTEES

We are fortunate to have a team of hard working and expert Trustees, but like any successful team we are always looking to strengthen that team. If you would like to contribute more directly to the work of the Trust, please contact chair@durhamcity.org or on 0191 386 2595 to discuss the opportunity. You will be made very welcome and enjoy growing into the role.

Similarly, Francis Pritchard is currently doing a great job of combining the roles of Secretary and Treasurer, but it would be reassuring to have someone in the wings to support him as an Assistant Secretary or Treasurer. Please get in touch if you are interested in contributing more directly to the work of the Trust.

