

St Peter's Sculpture Trail

Revisited



River Wear



From an idea conceived by Lucy Milton of Artists' Agency, and hosted by Tyne and Wear Development Corporation in 1989, work on the original trail began in 1991. Colin Wilbourn was employed as "sculptor in residence" and was joined by other artists as the work progressed.

One of the aims of the project was to "give public access areas of St Peter's Riverside a visual cohesion and distinct identity that is contemporary and forward looking, but which also belongs to the area, drawing on its social and industrial history, memories of residents, as well as the surrounding land, sea and riverscape".

By December 1995, there were eleven sculptures making up the trail. Since then, changes have been made. For instance, "Playground Gate" has moved from the riverside to the nearby Dame Dorothy Primary School, whilst others such as "Shadows in Another Light", have been added to the original trail.

This booklet has drawn on primary sources to bring up to date the remarkable sculpture trail right on our doorstep. The information should enable individuals to plan a walk based on their capabilities, avoiding steps where necessary. Each description is numbered to enable identification on the map.

The distance from "Shadows in Another Light" to "High Tide" is 1.2 miles. Leaving the riverside and walking through the National Glass Centre to see "Always Open Gates" would add a few hundred yards onto your journey, but there are several points of interest along the way so there is no need to complete the trail in one visit.

This booklet is dedicated to all those who worked and/or lived in the area.

1. Shadows in Another Light

Colin Wilbourn, Karl Fisher and Craig Knowles worked together to create this sculpture. An octagonal concrete drum acts as a pedestal for the large forged steel sculpture of a tree. There are 16 roundels of cast concrete (made by a group of visually impaired adults) set into the base depicting scenes such as a lighthouse, a sailing ship and the Lambton Worm. Each scene has a direct link to the River Wear.



Look for the QR code and use it to access the webcam, or search for "Sunderland Riverside Webcam" to see live images.

There's a silhouette of a hammerhead crane on the path. It's made up dark segments sandblasted onto the lighter paving. The silhouette is actually a maze. Can you find your way through to the sculpture? Along the path there are over-sized replicas of nuts, bolts and rivets all used extensively in shipbuilding.

2 Pathways of Knowledge

A huge pile of stone books featuring an inlaid mosaic of coloured glass is based on the theme of education and learning, linking the past with the present. On the site of the University, the sculpture is within a stone's throw of St Peter's Church. The church was founded in the 7th Century by Benedict Biscop who also introduced stone masons and glass makers to the area.



Many books were brought from Rome by Biscop before he founded the scriptorium where the famous Codex Amiatinus was produced. Biscop's successor, Ceolfrith (sometimes spelt Ceolfrid) took a copy of the bible to Rome as a gift to the Pope.

Sadly, Ceolfrith died on the way and the bible was missing for over a thousand years. Now in the Laurentian Library in Florence, Italy, it is the oldest surviving single-volume bible in the world.

"Pathways of Knowledge" was created by Colin Wilbourn assisted by Karl Fisher.

3 The Red House

On the riverside walkway at North Sands stands "The Red House", carved from red sandstone reclaimed from the old Queen Alexandra Bridge. The apparently ruined, life size house refers back to an earlier period when this part of the "Barbary Coast" was a flourishing community, living in densely packed housing. Within the ruin can be found various pieces of furniture, clothing and personal effects, all carved from stone; even the floorboards, carpet and door have been reproduced.

A letter reads, "Dear Peter, The house is so empty without you. Only the fish are glad. Life is no use, now you're gone; nothing goes right, nothing works. And you, how must it be for you? This is bad for me; it must be worse for you, so far away. I go down to the water every day just to touch it, to hope that you might be touching it too, that we can touch each other through the sea".

The Red House was carved on site by Colin Wilbourn and Karl Fisher. Chaz Brenchley added the text, leaving us to wonder who lived in the house, what happened, and why did they leave?

Scattered along the path are various pieces of the ruined house.



4 Watching and Waiting

Behind the petrol station on Dame Dorothy Street, overlooking the river's mouth is Look Out Hill. The origin of the name is obvious as from here people would watch between the piers for incoming boats. The history of the site and the memories of local residents inspired the subject of the sculpture.

A stone blanket lies on the ground, a picnic basket and other objects - including a steel telescope by artist blacksmith Craig Knowles, and an open book with text written by crime writer Chaz Brenchley - all stand overlooking the river.

There are steps here leading to the riverside.



5 Flight

Created by Craig Knowles, a forged steel weathervane set on a painted steel pole rises from a concrete base within a circular wooden bench.

Two cormorants in a polished silver finish are shown flying through stylised clouds and the vane rotates above a north-south pointer.

Cormorants are regularly seen flying low over the river.



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|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Shadows in Another Light | 4. Watching and Waiting | 7. Passing Through | 10. Taking Flight | 13. Always Open Gates |
| 2. Pathways of Knowledge | 5. Flight | 8. Paddle Gate | 11. Stone Stair Carpet | |
| 3. The Red House | 6. Sea to Seats | 9. Windows and Walls | 12. High Tide | |



6 Sea to Seats

Karl Fisher made two seats out of reclaimed materials from our shipbuilding past. The work was completed in 1997. There is a plaque on the old retaining wall showing that Sunderland Canoe Club was based here from 1961 until 1994.

7 Passing Through

At the bottom of Sand Point Road, by the old retaining wall beside the North Dock, there is a series of stone carvings incorporating stained glass panels. This sculpture, created by Colin Wilbourn and Karl Fisher, refers not only to the past when many domestic dwellings had stained glass windows, and the dock was full of sailing ships but also to the present and future of this area.

A stone door set in the wall has a stained glass panel. When lit, the window resembles a sunrise representing a new day, a new beginning.

A trail leads to a second, freestanding door through which you can pass. This door has a panel showing the dock as it is now. The trail continues past a huge carved pattern on the wall to a seat by a broken door. Look through the key hole and you will realise the door on the wall is an optical illusion.

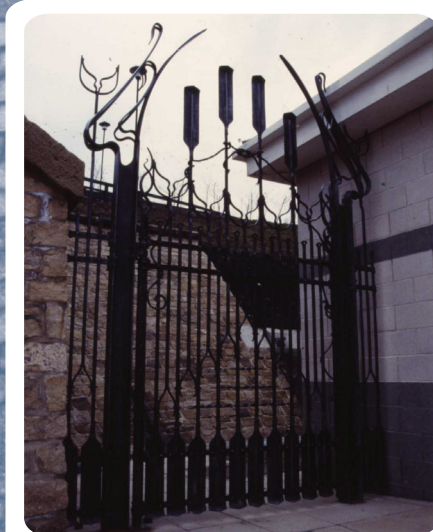
Of the three doors, past, present and future, you can pass through only one.



8 Paddle Gate

Between the retaining wall on the North Dock and the Marine Activities Centre stands a large gate designed and made by Craig Knowles. The work encapsulates various elements associated with the dock and its uses.

Shapes of oars, ships' hulls and ropes can be seen. Using industrial steel sections, traditional blacksmithing skills have been employed to forge them into softer, more flowing shapes, mirroring the dock's industrial past and its transformation to an area for leisure, learning and living.



9 Windows and Walls

On the opposite side of the North Dock to the Marine Activities Centre, a brick wall runs the length of the promenade. Set into this wall are a number of carved brick panels like windows with views. Colin Wilbourn and Karl Fisher ran design-and-make workshops with pupils from four local primary schools (Fulwell, Dame Dorothy, St Benet's and Redby). With guidance, each school group carved four "windows" into unfired bricks to illustrate a story that they had created around St Peter's Riverside.

Members of the Monkwearmouth Local History Group also made four panels depicting the changing history of the area. The artists made a further four windows to complete the series. Once the bricks were numbered and fired, they were built into the wall.





10 Taking Flight

At the end of the promenade, along the edge of the North Dock, a finger jetty protrudes into the river. Craig Knowles designed a series of upright steel beams running along its length, each varying from the last. The steel has been beaten and forged to create sinuous forms which gradually merge to form the cormorant's flight.

11 Stone Stair Carpet

The steps, made from reclaimed sandstone, were carved by Colin Wilbourn to represent a patterned stair carpet which gradually changes as it nears the seawater into images of seaweed and chains.

Originally, there were wellingtons near the bottom of the steps and a pair of shoes at the top.



12 High Tide

Designed and made by Karl Fisher (assisted by Colin Wilbourn and Craig Knowles),

"High Tide" was the last sculpture produced for the trail. Seven hemispheres, representing phases of the moon, sit on the rocks in the harbour. Around the rim of each piece, poignant words were added by Chaz Brenchley.



13 Always Open Gates

Adjacent to the gates is a road sign for Liberty Way, carved in stone. The outline of a ship can be seen, referring to the famous Empire Liberty ship, designed and built at North Sands.

Look for the plaque giving details of ships which were built in the USA during World War II. The ships were based on a design taken there in 1940 by the Managing Director of J. L. Thompson's.

On the corner of Dame Dorothy Street and Liberty Way, this set of gates at the entrance of the North Sands Business Centre was the first work completed by Colin Wilbourn and Karl Fisher at St Peter's Riverside.

A pair of bicycles, apparently left by their owners, stand on either side of gates that appear to be open even though they are closed.

On closer inspection, the gates seem to lead to a dockside where a boat is sailing out to sea.



St Peter's Riverside is an easy walk from Sunderland City Centre. The Fans' Museum, the National Glass Centre, St Peter's Church, the Marine Activities Centre, and Roker Pier and Lighthouse are all linked by the sculpture trail.

From the riverside walkway, outside the National Glass Centre, you can see a tall, green, metal post marking the end of the slipway of J. L. Thompson's. Ships were launched from here.

The beaches of Roker and Seaburn attract visitors all year round, as do the many cafes and restaurants in the area. There's a large car park between the piers which is shown on the map. The area is served by a good bus service and the Metro stops at St Peter's Station.



St Peter's Riverside is an easy walk from Sunderland City Centre. Car parking is available near Roker beach - shown on the map.

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