

DURHAM

Like neighbouring Northumberland, County Durham is not known for its ceramic manufacturing, other than sanitary ware. The Gateshead Art Pottery produced hand-decorated tiles and earthenware around 1884-1900, but none of its tiles has yet been found in or on the county's buildings. However, unlike its northern neighbour, Durham does possess some impressive examples of decorative terracotta, for instance the facades of the Miners' Memorial Hall in Esh Winning and Sunderland's Elephant Tea Rooms. Tile and faience highlights include Pugin's work at Ushaw, Hartlepool's rare Doultonware fountain, the magnificent Burmantofts interior of Durham City's Old Shire Hall, and the Mountain Daisy in Sunderland, arguably the best ceramic pub interior in the country, let alone the county. Although listed grade II, it occupies a vulnerable site and needs greater statutory protection, which might already have been forthcoming if the Mountain Daisy had been located in Southwark rather than Sunderland. Finally, from the 1960s come the set of abstract tile panels at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, which provide a heartening story of successful conservation work. Suggested reading: TACS Tour Notes *County Durham* (1998). The *Gazetteer* entry for Durham covers the administrative areas of Darlington Borough Council, Durham County Council, Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Hartlepool Borough Council, South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Sunderland City Council.

DARLINGTON

On the southern edge of the town centre at 22 GRANGE ROAD, behind a mildly art nouveau stone facade, is a ceramic interior of national importance: **Sloan's Billiard Room**, built in 1907 and now the Drum art furniture showroom, is completely fitted out with Craven Dunnill wall tiling and pictorial panels. The tiles begin the moment one enters the small foyer, with a basic green and white tile scheme above a green-tiled dado; a tile-lined stair takes the visitor up to the billiard room itself on the first floor. What makes this building remarkable is the profusion of colourful pictorial wall panels, each measuring approximately 2 foot by 3 foot, showing landscapes and townscapes from home and abroad (in fact from nearby Brancepeth Castle to Venice). All the panels, which number at least twenty, are signed Craven Dunnill, and the scheme also includes faience frames for mirrors and windows. The room, original floorboards and all, is totally intact; it is easy to imagine it busy with Edwardian billiard players. The survival of the room in such good condition (some panels may have been overpainted in the past) is a tribute to its current owners.

Just north of the town centre on NORTHGATE is the old **Technical College**, now council offices, an imposing pile designed in 1893-6 by G. Gordon Hoskins, once clerk to Alfred Waterhouse. This handsome building displays an abundance of buff Burmantofts terracotta in vaguely perpendicular style, culminating in a

pair of inspiring apotropaic figures on its pediment; it was shown in the firm's 1902 catalogue. Inside is more terracotta, used as arcading and balusters in combination with brown glazed brick on the stairwell. Opposite the college is a real curiosity, a heavily overpainted faience facade, part of a terrace, displaying a plaque commemorating Edward Pease, backer of the Stockton & Darlington Railway; this facade, however, is in poor condition. Across the rather soulless town centre in PARKGATE is **Darlington Civic Theatre**, built as the Hippodrome (or Palace) in 1907 and also designed by Hoskins. Again there are lashings of buff terracotta, in just the same shade as that of the Technical College, thus the manufacturer is very probably Burmantofts; the theatre was renovated in 1990. Just east on the corner of HARGREAVE TERRACE is the **Black Swan**. This fine pub has a dark green glazed brick facade incorporating five superb (although somewhat battered) tube-lined panels, each bearing a black swan in one of three different designs (Fig 55). The maker is unknown, but given the northerly location, could well be Duncan's of Glasgow. East again beneath the railway bridge to NEASHAM ROAD, where **St John's Church** - the railwayman's church - stands at the junction with Yarm Road (close to Darlington railway station). St John the Evangelist, whose imposing square tower was never crowned with the spire it clearly deserves, was built in 1847-9 by local architect John Middleton. The chancel pavement, donated by Herbert Minton in 1849, includes vine leaves and symbols of St John on blue ground, in an arrangement unlike those seen in the Staffordshire churches to which Minton also gave tiles.

On the eastern outskirts of Darlington, at the Morrison's Shopping Complex, MORTON PALMS (near the junction of the A66 and A67) is the landmark sculpture **Train**, designed by the artist David Mach and built from around 185,000 bricks in 1997 (Fig 56). The brick train, which appears to be steaming out from a hillside, stands near the route of the original Stockton & Darlington Railway; at over 150 feet in length, it was the largest single sculpture in Britain. Its apparent solidity conceals a hollow interior, which bats may enter via specially-made bat bricks.

DURHAM

Durham's major ceramic attraction, a monumental red-domed edifice, stands on OLD ELVET, to the east of the Cathedral peninsula: it is the **Old Shire Hall**, part of the University of Durham since 1963 and currently the University Office (Fig 57). The red brick and terracotta pile was built in 1896-8, the architects being Barnes & Coates of Sunderland; a blander (but still polychromatic) east wing was added in 1905. The sturdy, bright red terracotta balustrade and brick-lined stairway give an inkling of the stunning Burmantofts scheme within, where faience is all around, on walls and even ceilings. The staircase hall and most ground floor rooms are completely faced in hugely ornate faience, its colours ranging from cream through yellows and blue-greens to brown, the latter with superb colour variations. Even the staircase balusters are faience, with a brown faience 'handrail' almost a foot wide. This amazing scheme shows Burmantofts' unique

ability to manufacture faience panels up to two feet in length but little more than an inch thick.¹ The lavish interior also includes wrought ironwork and colourful stained glass, while wall tiling in the 1905 extension is pinky-brown with a linenfold-style pattern; there is some doubt about the manufacturer.

Old Elvet leads westward to the junction with NEW ELVET and the **Half Moon** public house, whose facade displays five tiled pilasters. The tiles, showing almost three-dimensional flowers on a strong pinky-red ground, are probably by Sherwin & Cotton, and date from an 1894 rebuilding by the Newcastle upon Tyne architects Oswald & Son.

ESH WINNING

The derelict **Esh Winning Miners' Memorial Hall**, a miniature French chateâu in red brick and yellow terracotta, stands forlorn and apparently unloved in BRANDON ROAD (Fig 58). Built in 1923 and designed by John Arthur Robson of nearby Langley Moor, it was one of several such halls put up in coalfield communities after the First World War. Inside, miners could enjoy a fine range of facilities, including cinema, concert hall, swimming bath, billiard room, games room and library. The £10,024 cost, including copious Edwardian baroque terracotta of unknown attribution, was met by contributions from local miners and the colliery company Pease & Partners, 543 of whose employees had died in the war.²

GATESHEAD

Central Gateshead is something of a ceramic desert, especially when compared with the riches available across the Tyne, but down on the quayside larger-than-life black glazed ceramic lettering on the exterior of the **Baltic** Centre for Contemporary Art, SOUTH SHORE ROAD, reveals its origins as a 1950s flour mill. Then to an unexpected gem: just west of central Gateshead in Bensham is Bensham Grove, now **Bensham Grove Community Centre**, BENSHAM ROAD. The house was the home of Robert Spence Watson (1837-1911), a political, social and educational reformer who was one of the founders of Newcastle University, a member of the Alpine Club and president of the National Liberal Federation 1890-1902. At Bensham Grove, which he extended between the mid-1850s and the 1870s, he entertained Rossetti and William Morris. Indeed, the library has stained glass, tiles and fittings designed by Morris & Co, and there are similar stained glass and fireplace tiles elsewhere in the house; the tiles date from the early 1870s. The library tiles are the *Seasons* pattern on five-inch tiles interspersed with the *Longden* pattern attributed to Philip Webb.³ The house has been rather institutionalised, but surviving portraits of Spence Watson and his wife remind the observer of its original use. In the entrance is a colourful tile panel, its design based around a tree, produced at Bensham Grove by local ceramics course members soon after 1990; many of the images refer to local events, such as the 1990 Gateshead Garden Festival.

An unusual and highly successful collaboration during 1994-6 between ceramicists in the north-east and Japan resulted in two spectacularly colourful

installations at **Gateshead Leisure Centre** and **Gateshead Central Library**, PRINCE CONSORT ROAD. The town's artistic connections with Japan stretch back to the early 1990s; Komatsu is twinned with Gateshead and an artists exchange had long been discussed.⁴ The potters Christine Constant and Jane Hufton of Gateshead visited Komatsu in 1994, with Junko Tokuda and Shuhei Koshita making the return trip the following year. Design ideas for the collaborative ceramic mural were collected from local people, who also helped with making and glazing the tiles. The design was drawn on to white biscuit tiles using a blend of wax resist and white oxide, giving a black line; coloured earthenware glazes were then painted between the lines and fired to 1040°C. The mural *Bridges of Friendship* was sited in the Leisure Centre in November 1996, and the smaller *Across Two Cultures* was later installed in the Central Library.⁵ Both show wonderful use of highly coloured glazes; the Leisure Centre panel, around 3' high by 25' long, depicts images from the two countries and cultures, including the Tyne Bridge, athletes, origami designs and the tea ceremony (Fig 59). The English ceramicists were particularly inspired by the Japanese custom of wrapping and presenting everything in an ordered manner.

Further south, in the main entrance to the **Queen Elizabeth Hospital**, on its hilly site in QUEEN ELIZABETH AVENUE, is a ceramic mural created in 1994 by Paul Scott and funded by Northern Arts (Fig 60). The basically abstract design begins outside the foyer and continues for about 15' inside, its white ground laden with tiny but colourful depictions of local sites, all beautifully detailed.⁶ In shape, the mural is a large-scale wave form, and the hand-made glazed porcelain tiles are anything but square. North of the hospital in Felling, the **Victorian Baker's Shop**, CARLISLE STREET, was created by Neil Talbot in 1986. It is a complete shopfront in ochre tiling, and includes a window display of carefully sculpted cakes and pies. Its shock effect has diminished of late as it has become rather grubby.

HARTLEPOOL

Ceramic interest in Hartlepool centres on the new town of West Hartlepool, begun with the construction of new docks in 1847, rather than old Hartlepool itself, away on the distant headland. The **Railway Station** - whose sole remaining platform houses a Craven Dunnill North Eastern Railway map, dating from the early 1900s - stands just off CHURCH STREET, where a truly bizarre faience facade is to be found at the **Shades Hotel** (Fig 63). Barley-sugar style columns define the fenestration, while above runs a frieze of womanly (and rather bored) bacchantes, their arms outstretched and holding fast to urns, themselves supported by keystones in the shape of female heads. The facade was put up around 1900 and is made all the stranger by the almost non-ceramic appearance of the faience, perhaps a result of overpainting. The Shades is on the corner of LYNN STREET, wherein stands another ceramic pub, the **Market Hotel** (now a restaurant). Here the facade, which dates from the same period, is a more

restrained but still decorative composition in green, buff and brown, with a nicely rounded bay window.

At the west end of Church Street, one of the town's earliest streets, is CHURCH SQUARE and the striking pinky-red brick and terracotta of the old **Municipal Buildings**, which dates mostly from 1886-9. The architect in this period of building was Richard Knill Freeman of Manchester, who won the commission in competition. There is much ceramic decoration, and perhaps this abundance of ornamentation is only to be expected from an architect who became something of a specialist in the design of pleasure pier pavilions. Just north of the square, in the grounds of the Gray Art Gallery and Museum, CLARENCE ROAD, is the **Henry Withy Memorial Fountain**, a tall, triangular faience structure in olive green, grey-blue and chestnut brown, topped by a royal blue ball finial; it dates from 1902 and was presented to the town by Withy, a local Justice of the Peace. It is one of the few remaining such faience memorials, most of which date from the Edwardian period and have often been damaged by weather and vandals; it has survived in remarkably good condition, possibly because of its present slightly out-of-the-way site. The Richard Eve fountain (Kidderminster, 1900) and the Hulm tomb (Burslem, 1905) are better-known and rather more ornate examples of these colourful but now rare objects. The Withy fountain is almost certainly Doultonware, and was probably one of the series - including the Eve fountain, with which it shares the same colour palette - designed in conjunction with Doulton's by the architects Meredith & Pritchard of Kidderminster.⁷

West of the central area at 125-7 PARK ROAD is a splendidly preserved butcher's shop interior dating from 1898. **Leighton's** was originally just one in a row of similarly tiled shops, but is now the sole working survivor. It was designed by the local architect James Garry, and its interior features meat rails and massive metal hooks as well as decorative (but not pictorial) wall tiling, mainly in blue and white and possibly by Minton Hollins.

HEBBURN

The heavily baroque brown and gold faience facade (very probably Burmantofts) of the **Albert**, ALBERT STREET, Hebburn was designed by South Shields architect Joseph W. Wardle for Gateshead brewer John Rowell & Son in 1908 (Fig 61). The pub would have catered for customers from the tightly packed terraced housing near the shipyards; much of this environment, including the music hall across the road, has now gone. Half a mile east along WAGONWAY ROAD is **Hebburn Business Park**, its location signalled by a large roadside ceramic panel designed by Christine Constant around 1996 (Fig 62). Bright colours and large images appeal to viewers in passing cars, but when examined closely there is also a wealth of detail and a variety of beautiful glaze effects.

JARROW

In the middle of what remains of Jarrow's town centre is the tall spire of **Christ Church** (1868) on CLAYTON STREET. The chancel's east wall and parts of its north

and south walls were clad around 1891 with moulded terracotta in a pattern formed by repeats of a six-petalled flower within a concave-sided hexagon, surrounded by smaller convex-sided triangles. Similar terracotta, although dating from the late 1840s to 1851, may be found at Trent Church, Somerset and Church Leigh, Staffordshire; the manufacturer was Minton's and its design was inspired by St Dunstan's shrine at Canterbury Cathedral. As the Christ Church terracotta is of a later date, it is impossible to confirm its maker. The church suffered a fire during 2003, following which the intention was to restore the terracotta, which had been overpainted, to its original appearance.

Just east of Christ Church is the **Town Hall**, on GRANGE ROAD. It was built in 1902 and designed by South Shields architect Fred Rennoldson. The initial impression is red and spectacular, but it is clear that repetition of a number of basic decorative terracotta elements is responsible for this effect. Although there are numerous florid cartouches and a heavily overhanging porch there is little flair, no 'specials'; the most attractive part is the little octagonal openwork terracotta tower. The building was mentioned in the 1903 catalogue issued by terracotta manufacturers J. C. Edwards of Ruabon. The town hall's interior is much more memorable, however, with lavish mosaic, marble and stained glass, and a large Powell's opus sectile panel dating from 1904 in the council chamber. The design, a copy of a 1922 picture of a local shipbuilding yard, is carried out in vibrant colours, particularly the blues and greens of the rippling water.⁸

Opposite the Town Hall is the the VIKING CENTRE, a 1960s shopping experience, which is linked to the bus and metro stations by a **pedestrian underpass**; a second subway is nearby. The entrances of both are much enhanced by recent tile installations; the vivid images, including the Venerable Bede and the Jarrow Crusade, were based on the drawings of local schoolchildren and painted by Christine Constant. Beyond the Town Hall to the north on ORMONDE STREET and the (alas no longer) Market Square is a good **ex-Burton's**, complete with name, its inter-war white white faience facade stretching around the corner site. Off TYNE STREET, in Jarrow Riverside Park, is the southern entrance to the **Tyne Pedestrian and Cycle Tunnels**; for description, see Howdon, Northumberland.

SUNDERLAND

Elephants and other peculiar beasts peer down from the facade of the wonderfully wacky indo-gothic **Elephant Tea Rooms** (now Royal Bank of Scotland), which stands at the important High Street and FAWCETT STREET corner (Fig 65). Since 1879, when the elegant Wear Bridge opened to provide a direct rail connection with Newcastle, this has been the crossing point of the two main axes of this new city. Behind Fawcett Street is the railway station, while High Street West provides a link with Sunderland's original centre near the dockside. The Tea Rooms was designed by the idiosyncratic and imaginative local architect Frank Caws in 1873-7; the elephants and the rest of the eccentric, almost white terracotta dressings are by Doulton (whose name is high up on the corner turret).

The replacement ground floor facade is dreadful, but above it the elephants and other beasties are well preserved.

Opposite is **Walkers Buildings** (1926), a decent enough off-white faience facade with much classical ornamentation, but rather overwhelmed in comparison with the elephants. Just west, hiding round the corner in narrow Pann Lane, are the forlorn remains of the Three Crowns pub: part of its good faience facade, now incorporated into later rebuilding. At **21-22 Fawcett Street** is another Caws extravaganza, this time in bright red brick and pinky-red terracotta from J. C. Edwards of Ruabon.⁹ Above the cross of the modern facade are three layers of bow windows with oodles of frilly terracotta dressings, the whole topped by elongated shaped gables and finished off with a turret. This Moorish-inspired pair, built for Corder's the drapers, date from 1889-90. Caws loved colour and decoration, and planned to build a Tea Rooms-style bazaar down the east side of Fawcett Street; it would have been a great improvement on its current appearance.¹⁰

At the southern end of Fawcett Street is BOROUGH ROAD and the **Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens**, refurbished and much expanded during 2000-1. On the rear elevation, near the exotic new circular winter garden and overlooking Mowbray Park, is a striking group of three abstract tile panels designed in 1963 by Walter Hudspith, Senior Lecturer at Sunderland College of Art (Fig 66). These unusual and attractive panels, each comprising 400 tiles, were the first examples of public art to be commissioned in Sunderland, and were made for the 1962-4 extension to the building (which then included a library). The designs, which relate to the functions of the building, represent Music, Art and Literature, and all feature a brightly coloured abstract formation on a black background. The panels were restored by Lesley Durbin at the Jackfield Conservation Studio in 2000-1, and replaced close to their previous position; they are now completely demountable. Looking southward into the park, a series of terracotta lions - manufactured by Shaws of Darwen to match the originals - lie upon a balustrade demarcating terrace and gardens.

Just west of the centre in GREEN TERRACE is the old **Technical College** (1900-1), whose Hathernware dressings include two fine figurative panels, while north of the Wear in Southwick the **Tram Car Inn** on THE GREEN has a decorative yellow and green faience facade dating from 1906 (Fig 67).¹¹

Finally, and well west of the city centre, one of the best pub interiors in the country hides behind a stern red-brick facade in HYLTON ROAD (close to Millfield Metro station). The **Mountain Daisy** was rebuilt by local architects William & T. R. Milburn - best known for their theatres - in 1900-2 (Fig 68). Even before its reconstruction the pub had been large, but the new version was even bulkier, its main bar, two sitting rooms and news room all needed to cope with demand in still-booming Sunderland, where recession was not to arrive for another five years. Much of the pub has been altered but the west sitting room remains completely as built, a miniature Edwardian drinking palace lined with Craven

Dunnill ceramics. The floor-to-ceiling wall tiling features seven different hand-painted 3' by 4' 6" panels showing Northumbrian scenes including Craggside, Bamburgh Castle and Durham Cathedral.¹² A ceramic-fronted quarter-circle bar counter fits snugly across the corner of the room, while contemporary stained glass completes the picture. The toilets and upper rooms of the pub also retain the original decorative scheme, with ornate fittings and much colourful pictorial stained glass.

USHAW

St Cuthbert's College, a Roman Catholic seminary in a beautiful moorland setting, began life as the Northern District College; its first buildings were erected in 1804-8. The original plan was a Gothic quadrangle, but the college grew to three times its initial size between 1837 and 1934 (Fig 69). A. W. N. Pugin produced an initial design for a chapel in 1840 (the drawings survive), but this was found to be too small; his second and larger attempt was built in 1844-8. This in turn was replaced by the present chapel, built in 1882-4 by Dunn & Hansom. In fact the College interior is an overwhelmingly Puginian experience, almost a small-scale Palace of Westminster, including an astonishing hammerbeam roof above a small concert hall and rooms equipped with original Pugin furniture.

The main college chapel, which has a Minton nave pavement, retained many of Pugin's decorative features. An antechapel lies at its west end, and off its south-east side is the Lady Chapel, redecorated in 1899 by Bentley. Here are the altar, stained glass and fleur-de-lys floor tiles from Pugin's original chapel. The altar has been raised on a partly-tiled dias; there is a small area of yellow and brown tiles with a strong geometric design, and a few larger tiles on a second step. Although these dias tiles are said to date from Pugin's 1848 chapel, it may be that they were additions from the 1884 rebuilding; the Pugin fleur-de-lys tiles cover the centre part of the Lady Chapel. Floor tiles can also be found in St Michael's Chapel, a memorial chapel built in 1858-9 by E. W. Pugin.

Durham Round-Up

The butcher's shop almost opposite the castle in **Barnard Castle** has a delightful but small exterior tiled panel showing the castle (Fig 70). The Railway Hotel, Durham Road, **Birtley** sports an excellent brown faience facade in classical style with ionic columns; a steam train puffs its way around the curving window. There is a Minton encaustic tile pavement, probably dating from the 1864 restoration, at St Mary's Church, Low Green, **Gainford**; the church is beautifully sited above the Tees. St James, **Hamsterley**, in Weardale, has an unusual neo-Gothic pulpit probably dating from the church's restoration in 1884; it has panels of Minton Hollins tiles, signed by John Moyr Smith, showing biblical scenes and the Pilgrim's Progress. A pair of tile panels, probably inter-war, depicting healthy pink porkers is set in green glazed brick below the windows of an old butcher's shop in Church Street, **Seaham**. Stranded on the northern fringe of **Sedgefield** at the old Winterton Hospital site - once the Durham County Lunatic

Asylum, now housing - is **St Luke's Church** (built 1884), designed by the architect William Crozier junior, son and chief assistant to the Engineer and Architect of County Durham; this impressive brick church has Doulton of Lambeth terracotta in the nave arcade, while the encaustic tile chancel pavement is by Maw's.¹³ The Cyprus pub (built 1901) in Chichester Road, **South Shields**, has an excellent faience facade, probably Burmantofts, incorporating good large-scale lettering (Fig 64). Debenhams (also 1901), High Street, **Stockton-on-Tees**, is remarkable for its very early steel-framing; the steel columns were protected by polygonal red terracotta blocks, later overpainted.¹⁴

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