

NORTHUMBERLAND

The north-east is tile rather than terracotta country. The local clay did not have the specific properties required for terracotta production, and it never became a part of Newcastle's Victorian townscape in the manner of other northern cities. There is however, despite the lack of any significant local tile manufacturers, a wealth of late Victorian ceramic interiors in Newcastle, and some unusual tiles in the county as a whole, notably at Brinkburn Priory, Morpeth and Stamfordham. Of course, in this hard-drinking area, many turn-of-the-century ceramic pub facades have survived, but no interiors. The current revival of Newcastle's fortunes has led to the restoration of some important buildings - most recently the first class refreshment room at the railway station - while several present-day ceramicists have large installations in and around the city. And there is the unique underwater ceramic experience of the 1950s Tyne Tunnels! Suggested reading: apart from the Maling Pottery, the county's ceramic history has not been well-documented; it is difficult to recommend anything other than TACS Tour Notes *Newcastle upon Tyne* (1990, 1993, 2002). The *Gazetteer* entry for Northumberland covers the administrative areas of Newcastle upon Tyne City Council, North Tyneside Borough Council and Northumberland County Council.

BELSAY

Belsay village clings to a sharp bend in the main road between Newcastle and the Scottish Borders, its precise stone arcade proclaiming the existence of a noble neighbour. A winding lane swings away across the fields, soon revealing the awesome silhouette of **Belsay Hall** (EH), a crushingly severe Greek temple set amidst the Northumbrian countryside. It was designed and built by Sir Charles Monck in 1807-17, the inspiration coming from the architectural wonders viewed during his honeymoon tour of Europe in 1804-6. Its golden sandstone, pitted with flecks of iron ore, was dug from a site beside the house, now an idyllic quarry garden leading to the ruins of the original Belsay Castle. The Hall itself is entered between a pair of vast and chilling fluted columns, and the visitor is then deposited in the central hall, a cool and perfect space of naked stone. Beyond is a series of secondary rooms, some floorless due to rot; in the strange setting of one of these cavernous holes, a Dutch-tiled fireplace still adheres to the wall. The tiles of this pretty little piece came from the Tjallingii works in Harlingen between 1870 and 1910, the motifs being mainly maritime scenes. The fireplace was probably introduced by Sir Charles Monck's grandson, Sir Arthur Middleton; Monck himself built the model village.

BLTYH

The **Harbour Commissioners' Offices** on BRIDGE STREET is a reminder of this sad little town's industrial past, when shipbuilding and coalmining brought a sort of prosperity. Its architects were the well-known Newcastle firm of Cackett & Burns Dick, who were also responsible for the unusual concrete pleasure dome of

Whitley Bay's Spanish City. In 1913 they housed the Commissioners in a solid and substantial corner block, its circular entrance lobby leading to stairs giving access to the boardroom, which is decorated by panels of Dutch tiles (mostly showing landscapes) taken from the S.S. *Walmer Castle*, built in 1902 and broken up at Blyth in 1932. Blyth also sports a couple of typically north-eastern brown and yellow faience pub facades, probably by Burmantofts: the **Blyth & Tyne Hotel**, REGENT STREET, and the **Masons Arms**, PLESSEY ROAD. Both have decent lettering while the latter has a nice bay window.

BRINKBURN PRIORY

To reach **Brinkburn Priory** (EH) one must descend a craggy, winding path from the road; below, the Coquet slithers over its rocky bed whilst alongside tree roots like elephant trunks curl across the rocks, gripping tight to avoid plunging downward. At the bottom of the hill is the Priory, set in a tiny glade partly bordered by the river and hemmed in by verdant woodland. Erection of the church for its Augustinian community began just before the end of the twelfth century and took about thirty years, with additions in the fourteenth century. From the early seventeenth century decay set in, and it was not until the mid nineteenth century that restoration was contemplated; work began in 1858, with the structure completed in 1859, although furnishing took a further eight years. The architect was Thomas Austin of Newcastle, a pupil of John Dobson who practised on his own account from around 1855, and eventually took over Dobson's substantial practice in 1865.

The Priory is almost Norman in style, its arched windows having the merest of points; the squat tower hardly rises above the roof-ridges. Inside is a wonderful ethereal space, with a tiled floor as strange as the surroundings, though not unattractive. The pavement - which dates from 1858 and extends throughout the church - is a geometric mosaic of small, now-unglazed tiles, ranging in colour from black to a pale buff, with one or two royal blue examples near the altar. These latter, which have retained their glaze, form a star-shape. The tiles are laid in various geometric patterns, notably a chequerboard formation beneath the crossing. All the tiles were made specially for the restoration, and the designs are likely to have been based on those of the few remaining original medieval tiles, now reset beneath the high altar. Altogether it is a curiosity.

It has been suggested that the tiles were a product of a local brickworks, whose inexperience resulted in the glaze flaking off most of the tiles; however, the restoration of Ponteland Church, a few miles north-west of Newcastle, in 1861-2 included the installation of 'an encaustic-tiled pavement from the tileworks at Brenckburn'. Perhaps tilemaking was a short-lived experiment at a brickworks near Brinkburn, an alternative to buying in tiles from afar for the new floor. Certainly Minton tiles had already been used locally for both new churches and restorations, for instance at Meldon, where Dobson (possibly with the assistance of his pupil Austin) restored the medieval church in 1849.¹ Austin's

restoration of the Priory was seen as sensitive and restrained; perhaps he simply disliked the bright, modern Minton tiles, and set up the Brinkburn tileworks to provide what he saw as a more appropriate alternative.

BYWELL

The seemingly remote churches of **St Andrew** and St Peter stand barely one hundred yards apart, between the grounds of Bywell Hall and the north bank of the Tyne. Their idyllic and unusual situation results from their erection either side of the boundary of a pre-Conquest division of lands, which eventually came to be adjoining Norman baronies. The mainly thirteenth century body of St Andrew's was altered in 1830, then in 1850 by John Dobson of Newcastle, and again in 1871; these latter works included stained glass by William Wailes of Newcastle, who is buried at St Peter Bywell. The glory of the church, apart from the fine Saxon tower and the many early grave covers, is the decorative scheme of its sanctuary, which is in the style favoured by the artist and designer Walter Crane (Fig 203).

Crane visited Bywell in 1871, during a sketching tour commissioned through Somerset Beaumont of Bywell Hall, but it was not until the early 1880s that the new scheme was begun.² As well as stained glass in the north transept and chancel, it included a wonderful reredos which combines mosaics (mainly in gold and shades of blue), attractive red and white glass tiles - quartered, with a floral design - and opus sectile depictions of Saints Andrew and Peter. The whole was designed, like the east window, by John W. Brown of the manufacturers James Powell & Sons, Whitefriars, London. St Andrew's was declared redundant in 1973; it is normally open to the public.

CRAMLINGTON

In the first floor café of the **Concordia Leisure Centre** in MANOR WALKS SHOPPING CENTRE is a large (about 5' by 4') and colourful tile panel, installed in 1995 to mark European Nature Conservation Year. It was designed and painted for CONE - the Cramlington Organisation for Nature and the Environment, a group comprising local business, wildlife and council interests - by the Gateshead-based ceramist Christine Constant. The intricate and detailed images, including Cramlington landmarks and an assortment of flora and fauna, were based on designs suggested by local schoolchildren; the mole in the bottom right-hand corner is especially jolly.

HOWDON

The northern entrance to the **Tyne Pedestrian and Cycle Tunnels**, an elegant circular structure known as the Howdon Rotunda, lies off BEWICKE STREET just west of the Tyne Vehicle Tunnel entrance. In 1937, just nine years after the opening of the Tyne Bridge, Durham and Northumberland Councils put forward a scheme for a road tunnel between Howdon and Jarrow; this was approved in 1943. The intention was to build a vehicle tunnel and two smaller tunnels, for pedestrians and cycles, but post-war restrictions on capital expenditure meant work went ahead only on the smaller tunnels, beginning in 1947. The tunnels

were completed in 1951 and were used by 18,000 people a day at their peak. The foot tunnel has a wooden-tread escalator with a vertical rise of 85' through a 200' long tunnel, one of the longest in the world at the time of construction; the tunnels were awarded grade II listed status in 2000.

Both the pedestrian tunnel (900' long, 10' 6" diameter) and the cycle tunnel (900' long, 12' diameter) are lined throughout with yellow and - mainly - pale green tiles produced by Carter's of Poole.³ There are tiled signs near the tunnel entrances for 'Pedestrians' and 'Cycles', and in the centre of the tunnel, about 40' below the River Tyne, are boundary plaques for the counties of 'Northumberland' and 'Durham'. A walk or cycle beneath the Tyne provides a unique ceramic experience.

Returning to the surface, just to the east is the **Tyne Vehicle Tunnel**, opened in 1967; its pedestrian walkways (no public entry), running above and beside the road, are partly faced with Italian marble mosaic in pale pastel colours. The later tollbooths, which replaced the original and inefficient conical models, have white vitreous tiling (now overpainted) on the underside of their curved flying canopies. Escape from traffic noise at the **Duke of Wellington**, close to the tunnel entrance in NORTHUMBERLAND DOCK ROAD. Its facade is a typical example of the local style in early twentieth century pub fronts: severely classical yellow and brown faience enlivened with elegant lettering.

LONGHIRST

St John's Church is a perfect, barely changed example of a church given to a village by local landowners, in this case the Lawsons of Longhirst Hall, which is hidden in the trees to the west of the church. St John's was built in 1876 by Sir Arthur Blomfield and embellished in the early twentieth century by the Joicey family, then resident in the Hall; memorials to various Joiceys who met untimely ends are scattered around the nave. The church is small but attractive, with interesting stained glass and an intricate wooden rood screen, an Edwardian addition carved by the Reverend Proctor and his villagers, who produced it as an evening class exercise. The fussily patterned sanctuary tiling is very probably by Maw & Co.

MINSTERACRES

The approach to Minsteracres, once the home of the Silvertop family but now a retreat, is unforgettable: an avenue of monstrous Californian Redwoods leads toward the house, their trunks appearing to swirl as one progresses between them - shades of Pinocchio and the magic broomsticks. Escaping into daylight at the end of this weird lane, one sees the house, built in 1758 but much modified during the following century, to which the family's private chapel is attached. This is now the **R. C. Church of St Elizabeth of Hungary**, put up in 1854 by Joseph Hansom, founder of *The Builder*. The little church has an unusual openwork clock tower, while the interior sports a highly (and lovingly!) polished floor of red, yellow and black geometric tiles, set in a striking hexagonal pattern which repeats throughout the church.

MORPETH

St James the Great, NEWGATE STREET, is a neo-Norman church built in 1844-6 by the architect Benjamin Ferrey for the Reverend Francis Richard Grey (the sixth son of Earl Grey of Reform Bill fame). Reverend Grey, who had spent his honeymoon in Italy during 1840, wanted his new church to be similar in style to the cathedral at Monreale near Palermo, Sicily. Ferrey obliged, designing a thoroughly Norman building which could seat 1,030 people. The elaborate tiled pavement in the chancel and sanctuary was donated by Herbert Minton in 1845; Italian craftsmen were brought to Morpeth to lay the tiles (Fig 204). A letter dated 2nd June 1844, from Minton to the Building Committee of St James, tells how he felt it to be 'a privilege in helping forward the good and holy work in which you are engaged'.⁴

The Reverend's sister-in-law was Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland, an early patron of Herbert Minton; Minton tiles were used extensively at her home Trentham Park, Staffordshire, built during 1833-42. The brother of the Duchess was George Howard, the seventh earl of Carlisle; as Viscount Morpeth, he was MP for the town during 1826-30 and his father, the Earl of Carlisle, donated part of the site for the new church. The web of personal connections between Herbert Minton and this particular church appears to have encouraged him to give a donation of the highest design quality. The motif of the choir pavement is a large Latin cross comprising blue and cream foliage pattern tiles, within a red and black geometric pavement. Tiled risers lead up to a further pavement, where a Greek cross bearing lines of biblical text divides roundels of the evangelists. The sanctuary pavement, which includes a variety of repeat patterns, is reached via more lettered risers. A series of painted murals in the apse, executed by artists from the London firm of Clayton & Bell in 1875, completes the decorative scheme of this extraordinary church.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

This description of Newcastle begins with the railway station, sited high on the north bank of the Tyne at the critical junction between the river gorge, with its unique collection of bridges, and the clean-cut stone-built lay-out of Graingertown, Richard Grainger's redevelopment of the 1820s and 1830s. The medieval city's centre was the quayside, but by the eighteenth century new squares and streets were being built well above the river, and now the centre of activity is the 135' high Grey's Monument (1838), near the southern end of Northumberland Street, Newcastle's peerless gift to northern shoppers. Most routes from quayside to Monument offer wonderful views due to the steepness of the river bank, the sheer number of bridges, the constant changes of level and the survival of many narrow passageways and stairs. Late twentieth-century reconstruction of the quayside has opened up the river promenade, but added little in the way of good building.

The **Central Station**, NEVILLE STREET, with its stunning curved trainshed, was built in 1845-50 by Newcastle architect John Dobson, although the grand

porte cochère was a later addition. As part of an 1892-3 scheme by North Eastern Railway architect William Bell, which included extensions to the neighbouring Station Hotel, Dobson's original waiting room was clad in faience and became the First Class Refreshment Room, now the Centurion Bar (Fig 205). A ceramic interior was chosen partly to cut the costs of cleaning the smoke-filled rooms of the time.⁵ It is decorated with Burmantofts faience in baroque style from floor to ceiling, and top-lit by a faience-clad lantern. The main colours are browns, yellows and greens, with columns of circular and square cross section at either end of the room. A semi-circular faience-fronted bar, originally sited at the western end of the room, was removed many years ago (and replaced by a concrete police cell, itself now demolished), but a wooden replacement was introduced during restoration in 2000. This work included stripping overpainted tiles, revealing the lantern and repairing damaged areas of faience with fibrous plaster; if not a full restoration, at least this amazing room - one of the best-remaining railway interiors in the country - is now in use once again.

Almost opposite the front of the station is **St Mary's R. C. Cathedral**, CLAYTON STREET WEST. The church was designed by A. W. N. Pugin and built in 1842-4; it became the cathedral in 1850. The spire was added in 1872 by local architects Dunn & Hansom. The floor has many plain tiles interspersed with patterned encaustic designs, probably dating from the original period of construction, although some retiling took place in 1901. Around the font is a small square dais tiled with repeats of a gothic 'M' design in buff and red. The most interesting and unusual tiles - the frieze which runs at window-sill level around the body of the cathedral - were added in 1901-2, when the baptistery (now the entrance porch) was built (Fig 206). The frieze, mainly in mauve and yellow, carries names of Northumbrian saints (south) and English martyrs (north) on scrolls and within canopies. Most of the martyrs were priests and many have now been canonised. The frieze also includes the names of relatives of the benefactors who paid for this idiosyncratic tiling, which was made by the local stained glass and church decorating firm Atkinson Brothers; the name Atkinson features amongst the benefactors. There is also wall tiling in the north (Blessed Sacrament) chapel and in the confessionals to the south of the altar.

Just north is **Newcastle Arts Centre**, WESTGATE ROAD, where what has been described as the largest handmade tile project of the twentieth century took place during 1982-8. Changing teams of community programme workers, funded by the Manpower Services Commission and known as the Newcastle Arts Centre Tile Workshop, designed and made the geometric terracotta floor tiles and brilliantly colourful wall mosaics which line the floor and walls of the rambling Art Centre; some tiles were even made from clay dug on site. The mosaics in the ladies' loo are especially good! Further west is **Newcastle Discovery Museum**, BLANDFORD SQUARE. This grandiose structure was built as a warehouse and offices for the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1897-9 by Oliver, Leeson and Wood. Apart from great views over the city, the top floor Great Hall (originally

the Co-op staff restaurant) has a ceramic frieze in a highly glazed, rich deep blue and white relief pattern involving urns and foliage with repeats of a grotesque face; it was probably made by Burmantofts (Fig 207). Alterations to the building in the 1920s included two stylish Art Deco tiled toilets: the larger, for the board of directors, has blue tiles and fittings throughout, while the smaller - for the chairman - has a yellow theme.

East of the station in DEAN STREET, **Milburn House** is the massive corner office block built in 1902-5 on a sloping site by Oliver, Leeson and Wood. Its six entrances, on all sides and varying levels, lead into a baffling maze of corridors tiled art nouveau-style in mainly green and yellow (Fig 208). The Dean Street entrance lobby is especially impressive, with its painted leather panels and high-level tiled frieze; this combines primrose yellow and deep green in a swirling floral design. Also visible from the lobby are exquisite stair risers with a heart motif. The tiles were manufactured by H. & R. Johnson of Stoke-on-Trent, who were also responsible for their restoration in 1991, when the firm found that variations in size and colour of the originals made for some difficulties with production of replacements.

A little way up Dean Street is another tall office block, **Cathedral Buildings** (1901), with a turquoise-pattern tiled dado winding throughout its stairwell. On the corner of Dean Street and MOSLEY STREET is the former **Prudential Assurance Building**, now a café. Built in 1891-7 by Alfred Waterhouse, the ground floor interior has a sparkling Burmantofts faience scheme, including open arches; the colours are mainly pale green and yellow.⁶ Heading north into CLOTH MARKET, the **Bee Hive** appears at the junction with High Bridge (Fig 209). The pub was rebuilt by Newcastle Breweries in 1902, using their regular local architects Joseph Oswald & Son. Its ground floor facade is decorated with green and yellow faience in a floral pattern with bees and beehives hidden in the leaves; it is likely to be by Burmantofts, as the Oswalds often used this firm.

At the top of GREY STREET is the **Central Arcade**, created when the interior of Exchange Buildings was burnt out around 1904. Its replacement, designed by Joseph and Harold Oswald and completed in 1906, was the glorious Central Arcade, its two storeys of shops faced entirely in brown and yellow Burmantofts faience (Fig 210). This contract appears to be the last substantial interior completed in Burmantofts faience.⁷ The brightly unpleasant floor, which replaced the worn original 'vitreous imitation marble mosaic' in 1990, is of American Olean mosaics; the excuse was that no English supplier could be found. Just west of the Monument on BLACKETT STREET is **Parsons Polygon**, a rugged hexagonal rocket cone sculpted in brick and tile cladding by David Hamilton in 1985. Its subject is Sir Charles Parsons, creator of the turbine-powered *Turbinia*, and the structure is actually a ventilator shaft for the Metro station beneath. The designs of the tiles were taken from Parsons' engineering drawings.⁸

Further west of the centre on GALLOWGATE is **Magnet House**, built for the General Electric Company around 1938. Its facade includes thirteen 3' square art deco low relief terracotta panels (in four different designs) showing human figures symbolic of power generation. Similar motifs were used on the interior of Battersea Power Station in the first stage of its construction in 1929-35.⁹ North on HAYMARKET, the former **Newcastle Breweries Offices** were erected by Oswald & Son in 1896-1901 (Fig 211). The entrance hall, the arcaded clerks' and accountants' room, and an upper corridor were all faced in faience - almost certainly Burmantofts - mainly in turquoise, buff and pale yellow; the Newcastle Breweries logo panels are particularly fine. This type of interior tile scheme, often included in late nineteenth-century bank, insurance company and utilities offices, is a rarity in a brewery context.

Nearby is the **Royal Victoria Infirmary**, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD. The RVI, designed by W. L. Newcombe and Percy Adams, was built during 1900-6 and features much plain tiling by Maw's in its opulent entrance hall and corridors; the beautiful little chapel also has gold and blue mosaics.¹⁰ The Building Committee was convinced that bright, colourful decoration was necessary for the children's wards, and sample tile panels were obtained from Doulton and W. B. Simpson; Doulton's designs were selected in 1904. The scheme, comprising 61 nursery rhyme and fairy tale panels, is almost completely intact, with only a handful of panels now hidden from view. This is probably the most complete set of such panels still in existence; they were made at the Lambeth works and signed by the artists William Rowe, John McLennan and Margaret Thompson.¹¹ Welcome additions to the hospital's artworks in 1998 were the three ceramic panels by Paul Scott sited in the Ophthalmology reception area (Fig 212).¹² The large, vibrant installations burst with colourful local images, while a snake-like motorway winds through the largest panel. The designs resulted from consultation with hospital users, who wanted to include city landmarks, particularly the football ground, thus ex-England centre forward and local hero Alan Shearer features prominently on this ceramic St James's Park.

East of the Monument at the **Laing Gallery**, JOHN DOBSON STREET is the Blue Carpet, an outdoor public square floored with 22,500 purpose-made tiles made from white resin and recycled glass shards; it was created by the artist Thomas Heatherwick and installed during 2001-2. The Blue Carpet looks stunning at night, when the neon lighting beneath the seats - chunks of turned-up carpet - is seen to best effect. Further east on NEW BRIDGE STREET is the **Gibson Street Centre**, a complex of baths and wash-houses designed by the city architect F. H. Holford and opened in 1907 (Fig 213). They were considered to be the latest thing in bath design, and included a glazed brick entrance hall with five Carter's pictorial tile panels, each around 4' high by 2' wide. Four show aquatic scenes - jolly water-polo players, nubile mermaids - while a less inspiring fifth lists the members of the Baths and Wash-houses Committee.¹³

In NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, just north of the Monument, is the heavily classical facade of **Fenwick's** department store, one of the last surviving historic shopfronts in this famous shopping street. The monster white faience facade, designed by shop-fitting specialist Cyril Lyon, was added to Fenwick's 1885 building in 1913. When restored and extended in 1996 by Shaws of Darwen, it was the largest-ever British faience contract. Further north in NORTHUMBERLAND ROAD is a real joy, a collection of grotesque bright red terracotta gargoyles peering down from the equally bright red terracotta parapet of the **Sutherland Building**, University of Northumbria. As the lettering 'DUMS' announces, this was once the Durham University Medical School, erected in 1887 by Dunn, Hansom & Dunn. Were the weird animals meant to inspire the Victorian tyro medics? The terracotta was probably manufactured by Doulton's, as this architectural practice used the firm for their slightly earlier St Bede's College, Manchester (which also has strange, high relief detailing).¹⁴ North again to the University of Newcastle's campus and the **Robinson Library**, off JESMOND ROAD. The lengthy issue desk carries seventeen tile panels installed in 1997 and designed by local tilemaker Charles Allen of Newcastle Delft. The design - a John Ruskin quotation in black Gothic lettering with illuminated letters in blue, red, black and gold - was inspired by a typeface from the fifteenth century *Sarum Missal*, one of the earliest books in the library's collection. Seen from a distance, and preferably minus student queues, the effect is intriguing, but on closer inspection it is disappointing to find the quotation simply repeated several times over (although this was at the express wish of the client).

Byker

Thomas Miller auctioneers in Algernon Road has an excellent cream faience facade dating from 1926; the building was formerly occupied by the tea supplier's Rington's, their logo being displayed in coloured faience above the doorway.

Gosforth

Unique in Britain is the Doulton-tiled proscenium arch in the Jubilee Theatre at the old **St Nicholas Hospital**, JUBILEE ROAD, which was built around 1896 (Fig 214). The stage is 16' high and 21' wide, and the arch is outlined in white faience slabs with coloured insets. The full-height tube-lined tile surround was designed by W. J. Neatby, whose signature it bears, along with the date 1896. The flowing motifs include birds, flowers, elegantly curving trees and two languid female figures; the whole is very highly glazed in lustrous shades including a memorable iridescent purple. This awesome art nouveau scheme, with its kaleidoscopic colours, is the only one of its kind in any hospital. Doulton's also supplied the sanitary fittings for what was then the city asylum.

One of the largest tile installations in Newcastle (a veritable city of grand gestures) is the mural 'Metro Morning' which spans the front of the **Regent Centre Metro Station**, GREAT NORTH ROAD. About three yards high by thirty yards long, it was installed in 1988 and depicts travellers on Metro trains (Fig

215). The artist was Anthony Lowe, who photographed his subjects during morning rush hours, then incorporated their life-size portraits into the final work using photographic silk-screening. The mural is one of several 'Art on the Metro' commissions to be found throughout the network, and includes much intricate and colourful detail of trains and track as well as the easily recognisable passengers; it was made at Ceramic Prints of Brighouse, near Huddersfield. Almost opposite the Metro station is **Asda**, where the Gosforth Community Mural, a high-relief interior ceramic panel showing local scenes, was installed in 1990.

Jesmond

A tall campanile signals the presence of a very unusual church in leafy Jesmond: **St George's Church**, OSBORNE ROAD was built in 1887-90 to the design of the architect Thomas R. Spence for the industrialist Charles Mitchell (1829-95), partner of Lord Armstrong. Mitchell had moved to Jesmond from the shipbuilding area of Walker, and it soon became clear to him that a new church was required for the expanding suburb. First he purchased a temporary iron church, then in 1886 offered to finance the construction of a new church, providing he was allowed a free hand in its design. He then engaged as his architect Spence, who specialised in lavish interiors and had previously enlarged Mitchell's house, Jesmond Towers; his son, the artist Charles William Mitchell (1854-1903), was deeply involved with the decoration of the church. The resulting interior, an essay in arts and crafts bordering on art nouveau, was expensive and stylish, and included a breathtaking chancel lined with tiles and mosaics which focused on a stunning white marble altar (Fig 216).

Running round the sanctuary is a frieze of astonishing highly-glazed tiles: roundels of the evangelists are set in a surround of almost abstract luxuriant, curving foliage in bronze-yellow, gold and green. Christian symbols, including those of the Passion Cycle, are interwoven with huge blooms and fleshy leaves. Spence was responsible for this anarchic foliage, while the roundels were designed by George Woolliscroft Rhead (1854-1920), an artist and designer in many media who occasionally worked for Doulton's and Wedgwood; Spence, the younger Mitchell and Rhead were all early members of the Artworkers Guild. These superbly designed and executed tiles are underglaze painted on thin dust-pressed buff bodies; their manufacturer may be Craven Dunnill, for whom Spence is known to have designed faience around the turn of the century.¹⁵

Above the frieze are mosaics executed by Jesse Rust & Co depicting saints and apostles; these tall, colourful figures are said to have been the work of C. W. Mitchell, while the adjoining foliate ornament is by Spence, who also designed - and apparently executed - the mosaic dado below the tile frieze, installed in 1894 to replace the original marble dado. Rust & Co were responsible for the main wall mosaics and the mosaic floors throughout St George's, while most of the windows came from the innovative Gateshead Stained Glass Company, one of

whose founders, in 1879, was Spence.¹⁶ Altogether the church fulfils the aims of the Artworkers Guild, in that its spectacular arts and crafts decoration encompasses many art forms, as well as being an indication of the radical thinking of Charles Mitchell, one of a group of north-eastern patrons who saw the arts and crafts as a modern art movement rather than a return to craft-based utopianism.¹⁷

Also in Jesmond, the interior of **Acorn Fisheries** (a former Maypole Dairy), Acorn Road has two pictorial panels of eighteen six-inch tiles showing arcadian scenes which probably date from the 1920s and are signed 'JE'.

Walker

The **County Hotel**, Walker Road (on the eastern edge of Newcastle), rebuilt 1906, has a very colourful and ornate classical faience facade (Fig 217).

NORTH SHIELDS

North Shields was a major fishing port by the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, with 76 steam trawlers based there in 1909 and more than 600 herring boats appearing for the summer harvest in the years before the First World War. The quayside area in particular was packed with pubs, and although many have disappeared, enough remain to give an impression of turn-of-the-century Shields.¹⁸ The typical pre-1914 pub was small, built on a corner site and faced with highly glazed faience in shades of brown and yellow; the best remaining example is the **Berwick Arms**, TRINITY STREET. It was rebuilt by local architects Oswald & Son in 1891, although the faience facade dates from around 1913; its motifs include yellow dragon heads worked into the floral decoration of the green spandrels.

On display in the engine shed of the **Stephenson Railway Museum**, MIDDLE ENGINE LANE, is a Doulton tile panel, measuring 98" by 44", showing George Stephenson and Edward Pease with Stephenson's *Rocket* in the background. This panel, and three others (showing Thomas Bewick, the building of Hadrian's Wall, and Henry III conferring a licence to dig coals at Wallsend), were exhibited in Newcastle in 1887 by Doulton's at the Royal Mining, Engineering and Industrial Exhibition on the Town Moor. They then appeared (although possibly minus the Wallsend panel) in 1895 at the new premises of Townsend & Co, glass and china merchants, in Northumberland Street. All the panels were designed by John Eyre and painted by W. J. Nunn.¹⁹

ROTHBURY

All Saints Church, rebuilt 1850, has a chancel pavement of red, buff and black dust-pressed Godwin tiles; many of the designs are shown in the firm's catalogue issued around 1860, including a nine-tile group of 'pattern 483'. However, the main ceramic interest of this busy little town lies in the hills just to the north-east, at **Cragside** (NT), Lord Armstrong's country seat. As originally built by Armstrong in 1864, Cragside was a relatively unremarkable villa, but the transformation wrought by Richard Norman Shaw during the 1870s and 1880s produced a breathtaking vision of Englishness - all half-timbering, bulging bay

windows and piled-up gables - which protrudes through the tall pines on the hillside above Debdon Burn. Lord Armstrong (who was buried at All Saints Church) first visited Rothbury as a small child, and decided to make Cragside his main home in 1869. The first tranche of work on the house took place in 1870-2 and included innovative bathing and heating arrangements, with hot and cold running water, central heating, water closets, a shower cabinet and luxurious bathing arrangements. The plunge bath, first used in 1870, is lined with blue and white Delftware tiles in a floral pattern, with a top border row of tiles featuring a variety of horsemen (Fig 218). A mahogany-framed set of these contemporary Dutch tiles, probably made in Utrecht, also forms a splashback behind the bath.

These basement baths are reached via stairs from the inner hall passage, which is lined with cuenca tiles - which have coloured glazes separated by moulded ridges - patterned in green, blue, white and orange, to dado level; cuenca tiles of a slightly different design, but also on plastic clay bodies, line the walls of the first floor landing. The hall tiles were probably installed during the first building campaign, which added a library and dining room (both with tiled fireplaces) at the far end of the inner hall, although they may have been part of the subsequent set of alterations conducted during 1872-7, which included a new entrance hall.²⁰ The landing tiles appear to have been added in 1877, when Shaw remodelled the staircase; all these colourful dado tiles were made by Frederick Garrard of Millwall, London, a manufacturer favoured by Norman Shaw.

STAMFORDHAM

The **Church of St Mary the Virgin** stands at the far end of Stamfordham's village green. A walk through the churchyard reveals the site to be on the edge of a broad ridge, as an unexpected westward panorama greets the visitor on the way to the south porch. Benjamin Ferrey partly took down and rebuilt the medieval church in 1848 (not long after his work at Morpeth), apparently cleaning and replacing the stonework exactly as he found it. Inside are several unusual wall paintings and a colourful organ painted Burges-style, but the trio of lancets attracts the eye to the chancel and thence the particularly striking sanctuary tiles (Fig 219). The pavement, by Chamberlains of Worcester, whose 1844 catalogue shows many of the designs, is formed of highly glazed brown and buff tiles, with motifs including the evangelists - a startling grimacing lion for St Mark - and at least two cases of reversed colourways in one of a four-tile group; these reversed designs do not appear in the catalogue. The overall arrangement is forceful and very lively, and made all the more interesting by the fact that these tiles must have been some of the last produced by the firm before being sold to J. H. Maw in 1850; indeed, they may even have been supplied by Maws from old factory stock.

TYNEMOUTH

It is easy to be distracted from the sad remains of the medieval floor tiles in the warming house at **Tynemouth Priory** (EH) by the vastly expansive views over river and sea; open to the weather on the tip of a blustery promontory, it is no

wonder these tiles - a roughly ten foot square area, probably dating from the fourteenth century - have not survived intact. Nor, for that matter, have many of the sandstone headstones in the atmospheric graveyard just east of the priory, beyond the fifteenth century Percy Chantry, where John Dobson's restoration of 1852 included a pavement of Minton tiles; Dobson normally used Minton's for his restoration work. The tiles, themselves needing restoration after water damage, are geometrics in the nave with a tiny sanctuary pavement of red, blue and cream patterned encaustics; overhead is an intricate scheme of sculptured roof bosses.

Tynemouth itself is reached through the Castle gatehouse, a reminder of the importance of the site as both barracks and defensive position, although latterly the town's major role has been as a resort. To gauge the one-time importance of this traffic, pass the stern late 1930s white faience facade of the **Turks Head Hotel** on FRONT STREET to reach **Tynemouth Station**, whose acres of glass canopies have been beautifully restored; they once sheltered huge numbers of Newcastle day trippers. The station, with its ornate ironwork, was built by the North Eastern Railway's architect William Bell in 1882; it is now part of the local Metro network. The NER attached such importance to the station that the company put up one of its ceramic map panels on the eastern platform (Fig 220). These large, framed panels were manufactured by Craven Dunnill, and show the entire NER network at the turn of the century; the first (of fourteen) was installed at York Station in 1900.²¹ The Tynemouth map was restored by Maw's in 1973 and is one of the best preserved of the nine remaining examples.

Northumberland Roundup

The walls of the Tower Room at **Ford Castle** are lined with unusual blue and white patterned tiles, which may be nineteenth century Portuguese in origin; perhaps they were part of the alterations made by Louisa, Marchioness of Waterford, when she was in residence during 1861-5. St John's Church, West Lane, **Killingworth** (north-eastern edge of Newcastle), built in 1869, has a decorative tiled chancel pavement, but the church is normally closed. The delightful and interesting Church of St John at **Meldon** stands on a hill in beautiful surroundings near Meldon Park, home of the Cooksons, who are much commemorated here (excellent modern glass in the east window); the sanctuary pavement by Minton, probably installed during the 1849 restoration by Dobson, includes roundels of St John the Evangelist. Inside the Anglers Arms at **Weldon Bridge**, near Longframlington, are some unusual hand-painted wall tiles. The New Coliseum, Whitley Road, **Whitley Bay** (now a shop) has a cream interwar Hatherware facade. **Whittingham** village fountain (near the church) is a Gothic creation of 1874, commemorating the virtues of the vicar's wife. On its four sides it carries very battered but unusual incised tiles depicting ladies' heads and birds; the colour is brown with line drawing in red, but the maker is unidentified.

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