

A Brief History of Birtley

The main industries and trades of Birtley included salt production; coal mining, which started as early as 1351, iron working which commenced about 1800, using local coal and Whitby Ironstone; chemical works and brickworks.

All were brought together in fairly small geographical area leading to a population explosion including large numbers of Irish immigrants. A small population of 1,026 in 1801 doubled in 60 years and kept on increasing until 1911 when population was 8,409

Birtley was the home of Royal Ordnance Factory, (ROF) and Komatsu Heavy Engineering Company operates from the site of Birtley Iron Works. At one time there were 25 brick makers in Birtley. There were 10 pits in the area surrounding Birtley employing 3,736 below ground and 960 people above ground.

During the 15th century a deer park owned by the Bishop of Durham existed on what is now a golf course. The site of Birtley Old Hall, lies in the middle of the village and may have formed the centre of the medieval settlement.

In 1897 the principal land owners were the Earl of Durham, Earl of Ravensworth and Birtley Iron Company.

People of note in the area were Augustus Henry Hunt, co-owner of the Iron Works with Edward Mosely Perkins; Philip Kirkup, DSO; MM, a WW1 veteran; Thomas Blythe of Blythe brickworks; J.F Swinburne owner of brickworks; Bertram Bolam, builder, Councillor and Magistrate and Lancelot Moses, Councillor and entrepreneur.

Antony Gormley's famous Angel of the North, completed in February 1998 is situated on high ground on the site of the baths of the old 'Betty Ann Pit' to the North of Birtley and overlooks the area.

Getting to Birtley

There are regular buses from Newcastle Eldon Square Bus Station to Cenotaph in Birtley. Buses from Durham are from North Road Bus Station to Station Lane bus stop, Birtley.

If travelling by car take A167 through Birtley.

Front cover photos: Perkins Monument, Talbot Cottages, Blackfell Road. Photos inside leaflet: Birtley Old Co-op, Birtley Hall. Perkins Monument photo copyright of Valerie Greaves. All other photos courtesy of George Nairn.

Information in this leaflet is correct at time of going to print 2015.

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More information on the history of Birtley can be found in Birtley library and Gateshead Central library.

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Blackfell Road



Talbot Cottages



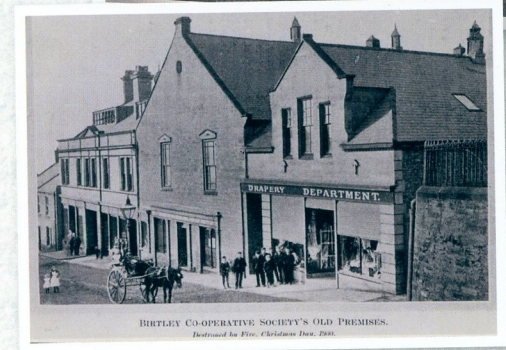
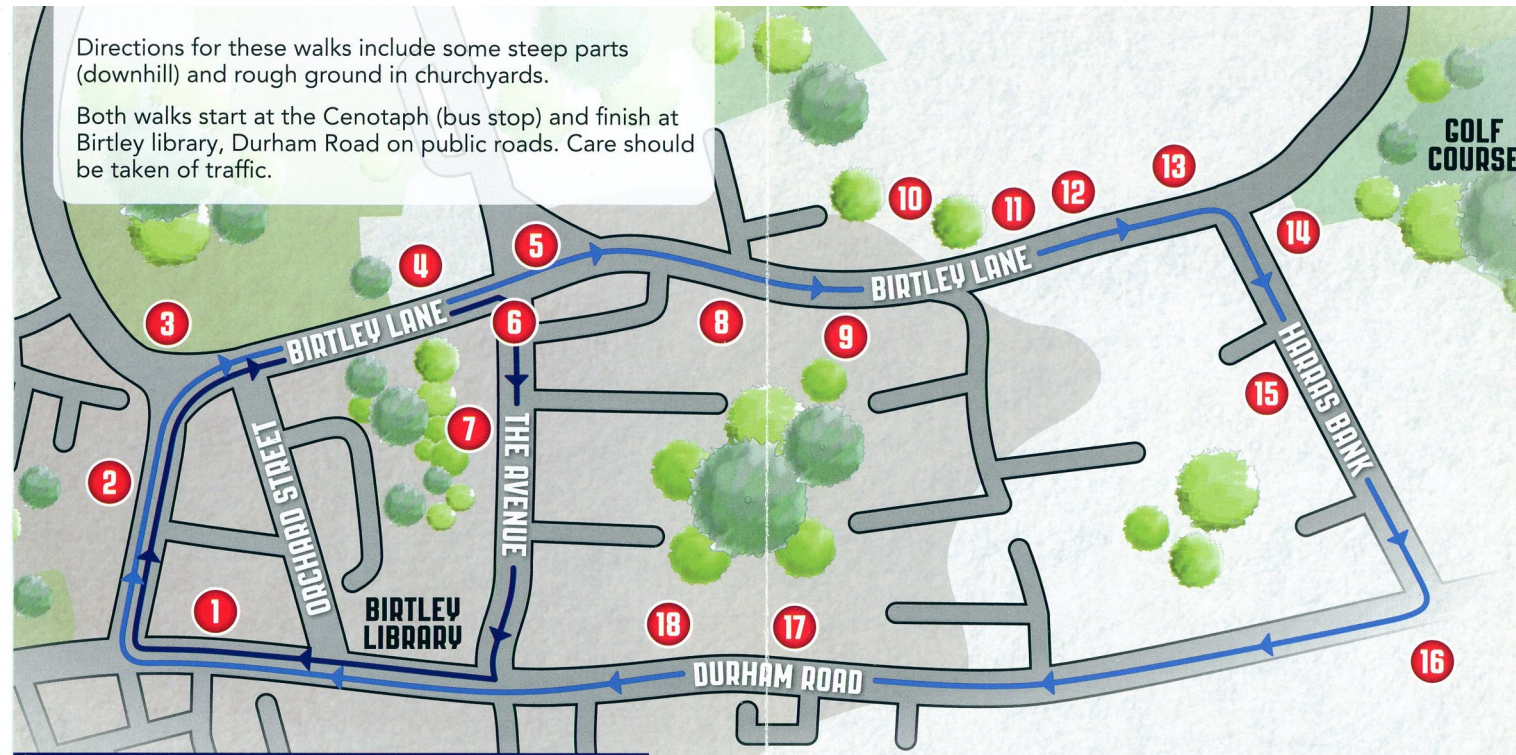
Perkins Monument

Birtley Heritage Walking Map

Birtley Heritage Group 2015

Directions for these walks include some steep parts (downhill) and rough ground in churchyards.

Both walks start at the Cenotaph (bus stop) and finish at Birtley library, Durham Road on public roads. Care should be taken of traffic.



Walk 1 (approx ¾ miles)

- 1** Start at Cenotaph, erected by public subscription in 1923. Walk up to traffic lights onto Birtley Lane and cross road.
- 2** St. Joseph's RC Church, designed by John Dobson and built 1843. War graves in churchyard.
- 3** The Grove, built circa 1870. Recreation ground given to people of Birtley to commemorate Coronation of George V & Queen Mary, 1911
- 4** Talbot Cottages and gatehouse opposite, one of the lodges to Birtley House, built by the Hunt family, part owners of Birtley Iron Works. Both carry logo of Talbot Dog, a hunting dog.
- 5** Perkins Monument built on Stock Hill is statue of Edward Moseley Perkins, partner in Iron Works – erected 1874. Turn right onto The Avenue
- 6** Large house on right, Rockville, is listed as a house of historical interest, built circa 1900 by Bertram Bolam, local builder, Councillor and Magistrate.
- 7** The Avenue is a street of prestigious houses built between 1900–1910. It once had gates top and bottom.

Continue down the Avenue; turn right at the bottom and on to Birtley Library where you can see Exhibition of Birtley and the Great War (during library opening hours).

Walk 2 (approx 1 ¼ miles)

- Continue along Birtley Lane
- 8** Birtley House, home of the Hunt family, stood where the Masonic Lodge is now. See the arch on the wall which was entrance to stables.
 - 9** Granary built circa 1896, originally used as a grain store for the Co-operative. Now a private house so please show respect.
 - 10** Schoolhouse, now a private house, was a school from 1871 onwards. Teachers included the Deary sisters!
 - 11** St John's Parish Church built 1848. There are several War Graves at the rear of the churchyard. Walk with care as ground uneven.
 - 12** Birtley Old Hall stood on this site between church and Moulders Arms. Built circa 1692, destroyed by fire and demolished 1961

- 13** Moulders Arms built pre 1841 – so called because of Iron Works at bottom of Harras Bank. Turn right at T Junction onto Harras Bank
- 14** One of Birtley Hall lodges is at the top of Harras Bank on the left, next to brick built house which is a listed building. Birtley Hall, designed by John Dobson, built 1815, demolished 1916, stood where golf course is now.
- 15** On the right stands Glover house built on site of Co-operative Store destroyed by fire in 1900. Stone wall part of boundary.
- 16** At bottom of Harras Bank across road on site of Komatsu stood Iron Works. High Level Bridge in Newcastle made from iron from these works. Turn right at A'La Turka Restaurant (formerly known as William IV pub), along Durham road.
- 17** Co-operative Building built 1903. Can you spot the date on front of building? This was the Metro Centre of its day with a cinema at the very top.
- 18** Bimbi's Fish Shop was the second lodge to Birtley House. Straight ahead to Birtley Library to view WW1 Exhibition during library opening hours.