

Pensher Loft

AT PENSHER MONUMENT

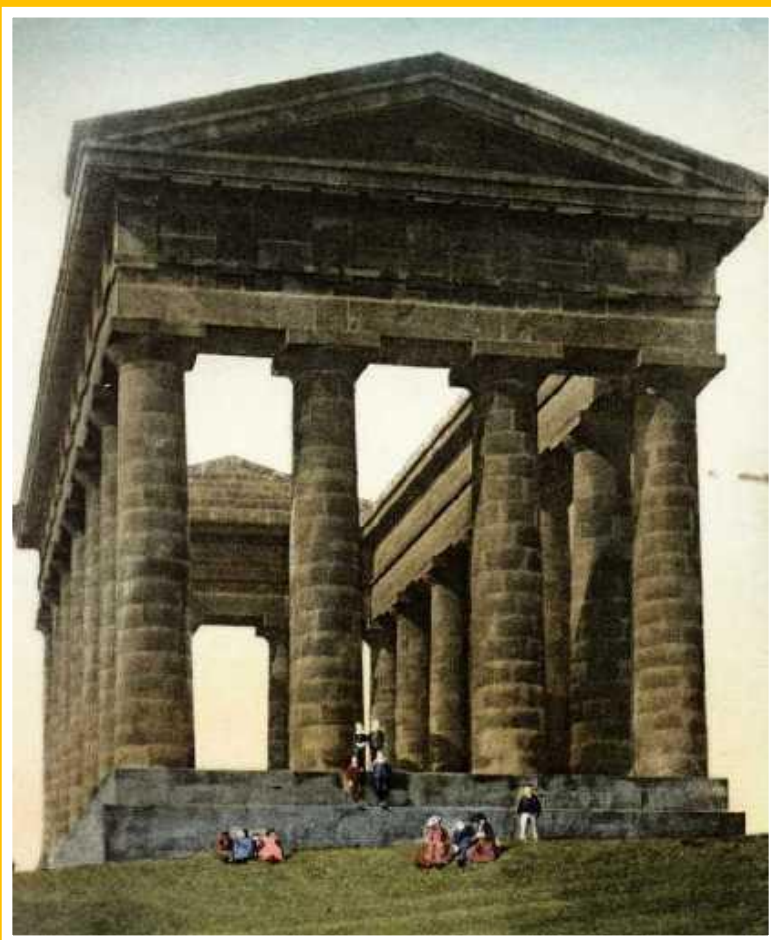


PENSHAW, HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING



The Earl of Durham Monument

PENSHER MONUMENT TO YOU & ME



NAME: The Earl of Durham Monument
KNOWN AS: Pensher Monument
LOCATION: Penshaw Hill, Houghton-le-Spring, DH4 7NJ

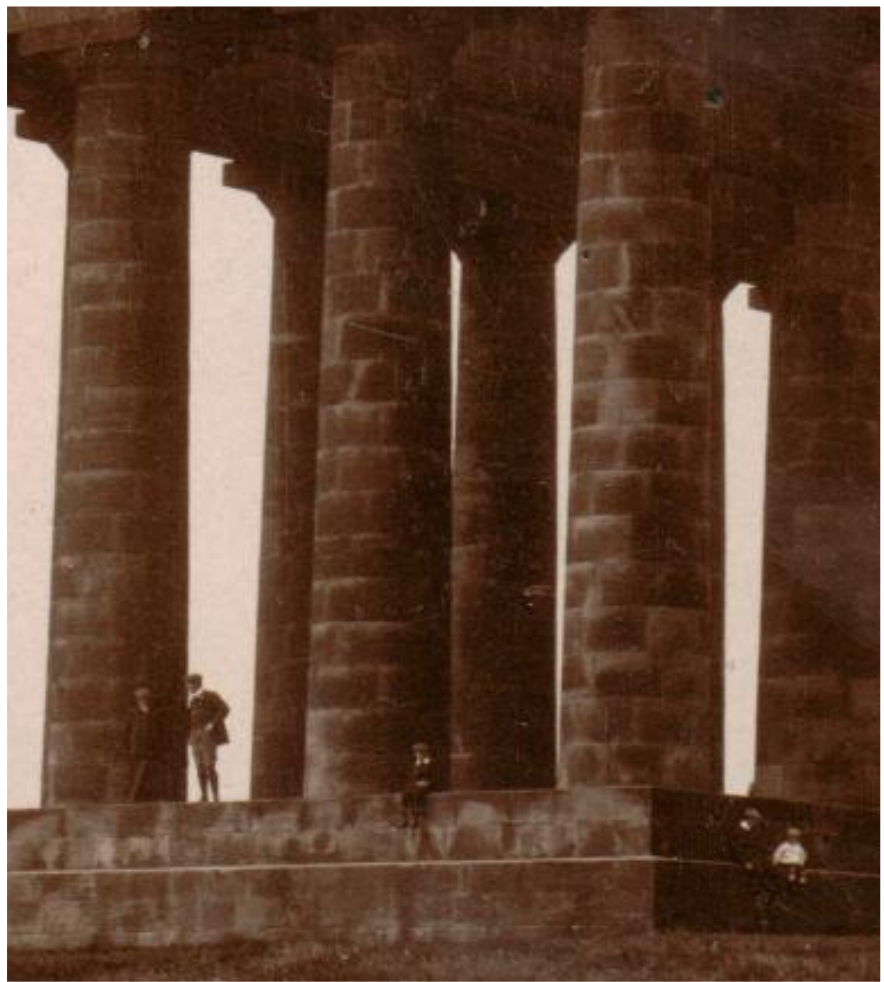
INSPIRED BY: Theseion, Temple of Hephaestus, Athens
(449 - 415 BC)

BUILT: 1844
MATERIAL: Gritstone (a sandstone)
BASE DIMENSIONS: 100ft x 53ft
PILLAR DIAMETER: 6ft 6inches
HEIGHT: 62ft (west) and 70ft (east)
COLUMNS: 18 Doric columns

STEPS ON THE HILL: Approx 114
STAIRS IN THE PILLAR: 76

Time Line of Events

FOR PENSHER MONUMENT 1844 - 2011



1840 - John George Lambton, 1st Earl of Durham, known as Lord Durham, passed away on July 28th 1840. It was suggested that a monument be built on Penshaw Hill to commemorate him. Around £6,000 had been raised, with £3,000 from public subscription. The Hill was on land owned by Charles Vane, 3rd Marquess of Londonderry.

c1843 - Designs were drawn up by Messrs John and Benjamin Green, architects, Newcastle upon Tyne, who created a folly of the Temple of Hephaestus in Greece. Their earlier work included Grey's Monument and the Theatre Royal.

1844 – The foundation stone was laid by Thomas Dundas, 2nd Earl of Zetland, a prominent Freemason, on August 28th 1844. Around 400 Freemasons and 10,000 spectators attended the ceremony. The Monument was then constructed by stonemason Thomas Pratt of Sunderland. Sadly the inscription on the stone has eroded.

1926 – On Easter Monday, April 5th 1926, Temperley Arthur Scott, a sixteen year old boy from Fatfield, was killed when he fell from the top of Pensher Monument. While the staircase doorway remained open (perhaps as a result of vandalism), public access to the loft ceased – the exit at the top was sealed.

Time Line of Events

FOR PENSHER MONUMENT 1844 - 2011



1939 – John Lambton, 5th Earl of Durham, donated the Monument to the National Trust.

1978 – The Monument was underpinned to counter-act subsidence caused by mining works and the deterioration of metal pins holding the gritstone blocks together.

1979 – The western end of Pensher Monument was restored. Large sections were dismantled and rebuilt. New blocks of gritstone were used to replace the badly eroded areas. Work was completed in 1981. In 1982, the Trust acquired the surrounding woodland.

1988 – Sunderland Borough Council installed floodlighting at the top of Penshaw Hill for a reported cost of £50,000. The illuminated Monument could be seen for miles around.

2011 – August 29th – Almost 167 years since the foundation stone was laid, and 85 years since access to the loft ceased, the National Trust opened up Pensher Monument and gave special access to the loft. Hundreds climbed to the top of Penshaw Hill for the special occasion, however access was limited to around 75 people owing to time restrictions (each group of 5 visitors took 20 minutes).

Tragedy at the Loft

YOUNG BOY KILLED ON EASTER MONDAY 1926



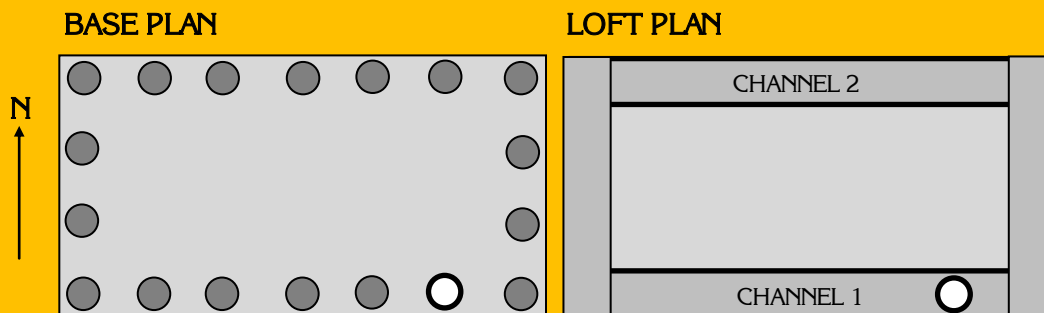
There is a popular myth that the Monument was built without walls or a roof as the funding ran out; this is incorrect. The Monument does, however, have a loft – two channels set into the roof, which are accessed via a spiral staircase inside one of the columns. The second loft can only be accessed by climbing over the exposed peaks of the pediments at each end of the Monument.

In the Victorian and Edwardian eras, it was common for the tower to be opened up on public holidays. Photographs exist showing brave visitors, not only in the channels of the loft, but stood on the peaks of the pediments. Sadly a teenage boy was tragically killed when he fell from the Monument. Temperley A. Scott, of Castle Street, Fatfield, fell 70 feet to the ground below while trying to cross one of the pediments:

“Hind, and a boy named Mitchell, were sitting down watching Scott and another boy following. Scott, while walking, appeared to stumble forward, witness and Mitchell, who were then sitting in the middle of the peak, thought he had caught his foot on the masonry. Scott was hurrying to reach his companions, when he stumbled and fell, he rolled over once and then disappeared over the edge of the monument.’ It was quite an ordinary thing for people to go to the top at holiday times. There was nothing to prevent a person slipping off the peak and rolling off the end of the monument, and from the worn appearance of the stonework on the top of the peak quite a number of people had crossed from one side to the other. Although not called as a witness, Mr J. Colpitts, who has the charge of the keys of the monument, informed the Deputy-Coroner that the monument had been erected 82 years and it was the first fatal accident that had occurred.

In returning a verdict of Accidental Death, Deputy Coroner Boulton said that it was a terrible accident to have occurred and they must have the greatest sympathy with the parents of the boy. He suggested that iron railings with spikes should be put up at the sides to prevent people getting round and if that could not be done then he could only suggest that the place be locked up and the public not admitted.”

Sunderland Echo, Thursday April 8th 1926



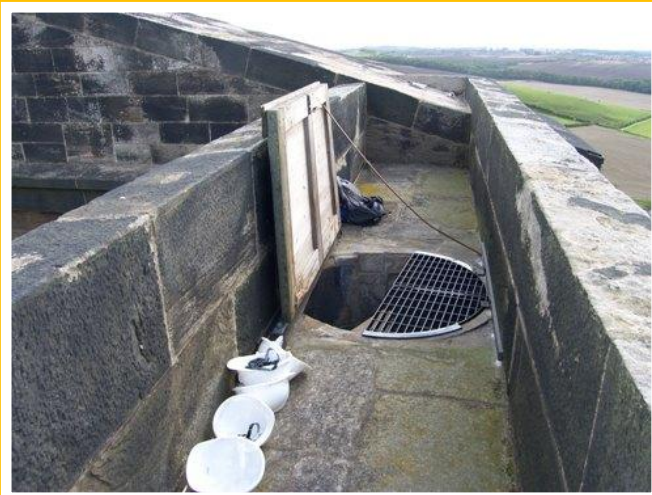
Pensher Loft 2011

REOPENED: TOURS TO THE TOP



On Bank Holiday Monday, August 29th 2011, the National Trust reopened access to the loft of Pensher Monument. Special measures were put in place to ensure the safety of visitors, including: hard hats with torches and groups of five visitors at a time. Access was limited to channel number 1.

The reopening of the loft proved to be very popular and hundreds turned up, however admission was limited to around 75 people, as each visit was taking 20 minutes (10 minutes up and down the stairs in the column, and 10 minutes on top). Those at the front of the queue had been there from half past six that morning!



Pensher Loft 2011

PHOTOS FROM THE DAY



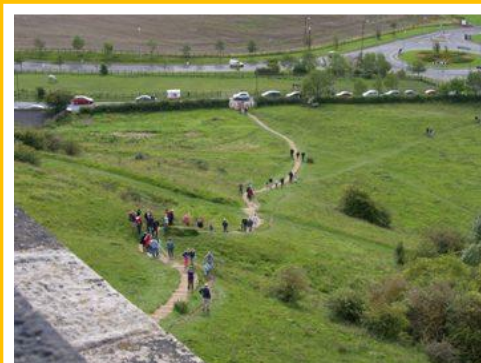
ROW 1 (L TO R):

1. Early visitors climb Penshaw Hill;
2. The queue begins;
3. The back of the queue.



ROW 2 (L TO R):

1. The secret doorway is opened;
2. A 'sold out' sign is erected;
3. Visitors ascend the spiral stairs.



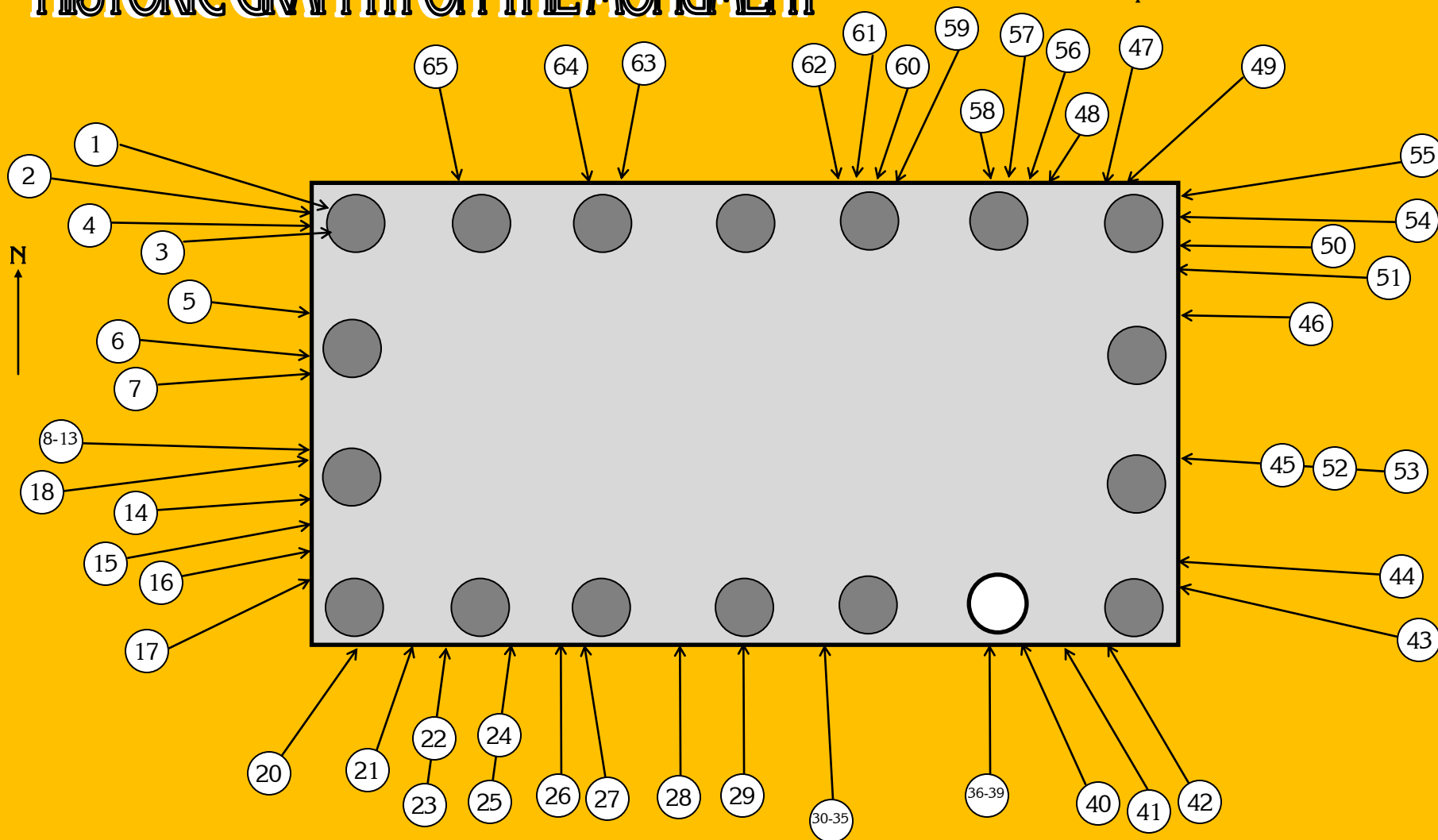
ROW 3 (L TO R):

1. The Monument's viewing platform;
2. More visitors arrive;
3. Time up and time to descend!

Lord Durham Woz Ere

HISTORIC GRAFFITI ON THE MONUMENT

This historic graffiti was transcribed by Paul Lanagan on September 10th 2003. It is not a definitive record as much of the graffiti was badly eroded and difficult to decipher.

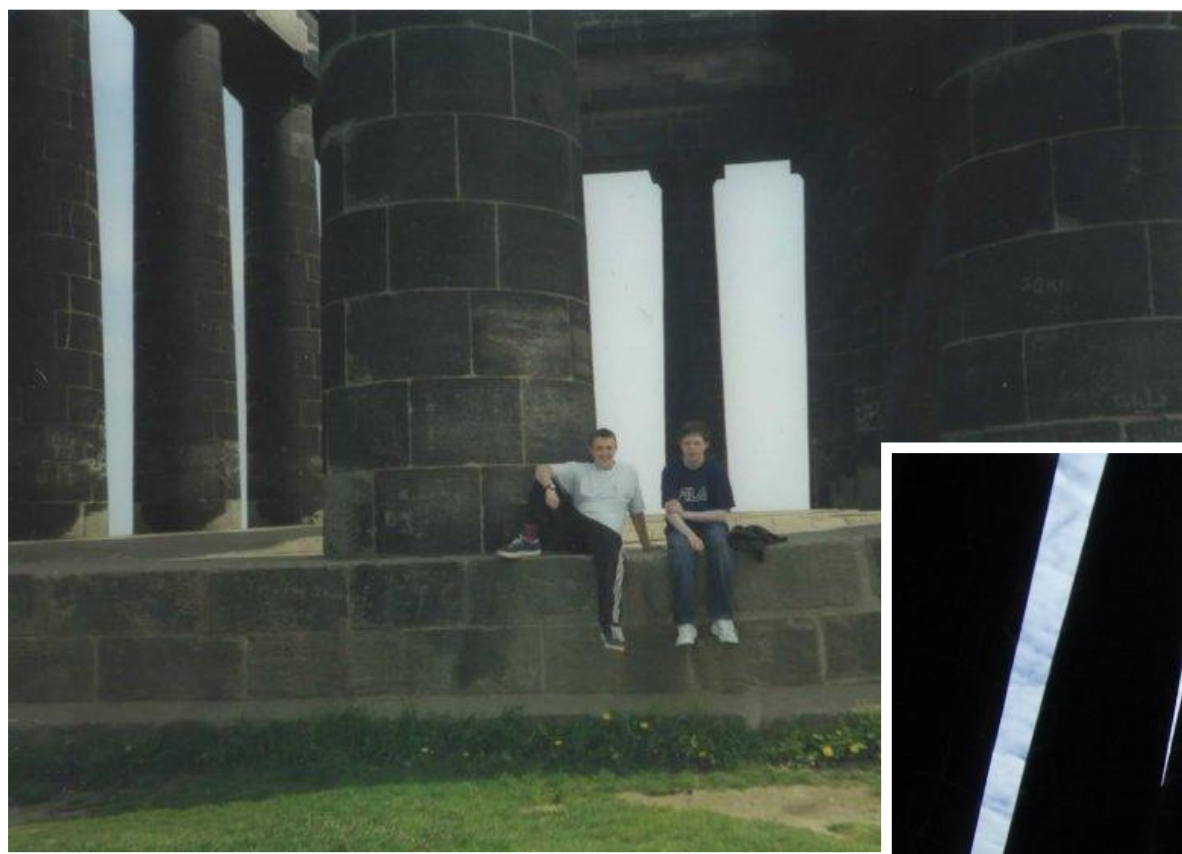




LOCATION IS APPROXIMATE

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. TB + MW 21.2.85 | 34. J.M |
| 2. CHJA | 35. LB |
| 3. E. LEWENS | 36. CHRIS B |
| 4. I. LISHMAN 1955 | 37. EDDIE 1985 |
| 5. CHRIS + MARK | 38. PAC |
| 6. I. MCGEORGE | 39. AC |
| 7. EJ | 40. D.H. C.W |
| 8. R. SOUWERBY 1971 | 41. M 1988 |
| 9. AJR | 42. LANY |
| 10. RP + TA | 43. T. CRANMER 88 |
| 11. ANOTHONY JOHN LAWSON 1978 | 44. A. LISHMAN |
| 12. GAV 4 ALY | 45. HOCKY NOGAN |
| 13. COOTIE OV WARDLEY | 46. R.M |
| 14. JT 1988 | 47. A.KENT |
| 15. WL | 48. STEVE TESH |
| 16. CRAIG | 49. G.G. |
| 17. PH 6.1.90 | 50. FB |
| 18. CD | 51. I.W |
| 19. ANDY TNR CRAIG HOODY | 52. HAJ |
| 20. SW? 93 | 53. JANET GEORGE |
| 21. EP | 54. FROSTY |
| 22. 1981 | 55. NZZ with the N inside a circle |
| 23. ?/1925 | 56. LB |
| 24. W.? R.KEEGAN SWEENEY | 57. RTF |
| 25. ? SCOTT 1946 | 58. NC inside a square |
| 26. DAVID | 59. W. LISHMAN HAL???AY |
| 27. Engraved crucifix symbol | 60. J.MARGETSON K.MARGETSON |
| 28. LYDIA PACKER MARY HOWARD | 61. ? 1998 |
| 29. A.G. | 62. JSC 1945 |
| 30. T.A | 63. BON |
| 31. R.DON | 64. JOHN D 1982 |
| 32. W.D | 65. GREG |
| 33. ID ST MB. WR inside a love heart symbol | |





Acknowledgements

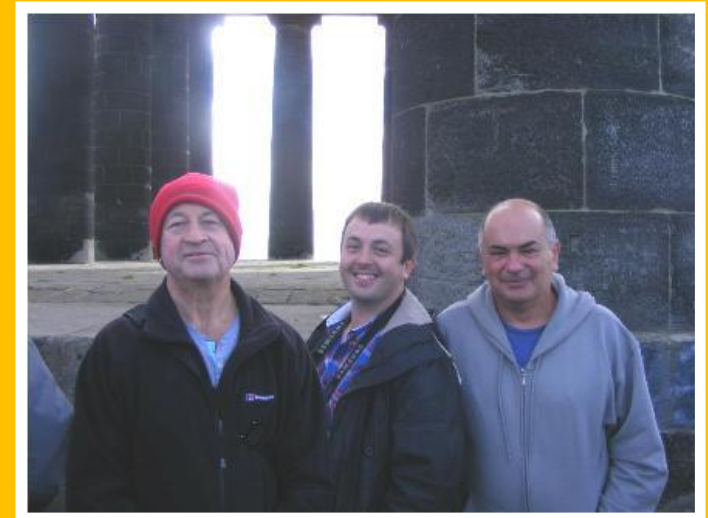
WITH GRATEFUL THANKS TO:

- :: Miss Lambton for assistance in getting to Penshaw Hill at such an ungodly hour;
- :: My good friend and inspiration Lena Cooper;
- :: John Mawston;
- :: Kate Horne;
- :: The National Trust;
- :: The Sunderland Echo, April 1926;
- :: Houghton-le-Spring: A History, Frank H Rushford, 1950*;
- :: Penshaw, Shiney Row, Philadelphia & Newbottle, Lena Cooper, 2000;
- :: Vintage photographs from Houghton Heritage Society.

* Although containing an interesting piece on Penshaw Monument, it has been discovered that this article, like many others inside the book, contains several factual errors – namely the death date of the Earl of Durham.

Pensher is an old variation of the word Penshaw, and is the way the word is pronounced in the pitmatic dialect around Houghton-le-Spring.

Engraving your name etc on the Monument would be classed as an act of criminal damage. Please respect the Monument when you visit.



Pensher Loft

AT PENSHER MONUMENT

THE NATIONAL TRUST NOW OPENS THE LOFT OF PENSHAW MONUMENT REGULARLY BETWEEN GOOD FRIDAY AND SEPTEMBER FOLLOWING THE UNPRECEDENTED INTEREST IN AUGUST 2011 WHEN THE LOFT WAS FIRST OPENED TO THE PUBLIC SINCE A TRAGIC ACCIDENT IN 1926. HERE, PAUL LANAGAN, CHAIRMAN OF HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING HERITAGE SOCIETY, TAKES A LOOK AT THE FAMOUS MONUMENT WHICH HAS GRACED PENSHAW HILL SINCE 1844.



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