



Bawtry Heritage Group

Preserving our Past for the Future

Registered Charity No. 1188945

**BAWTRY HERITAGE GROUP
THE STORY SO FAR**

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Bawtry Heritage Group - The Story so far

In 2016 the Town Council agreed to the development of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Bawtry (NDP). The NDP gave the town direct power to develop a shared vision for its neighbourhood and to shape the development and growth of the local area. Once adopted the planning aspects were required to be taken into account by Doncaster City Council (DCC) in respect of all future planning decisions.

The Bawtry Heritage Group (BHG) story began in 2016 when the NDP process was underway. Extensive public consultation was fundamental and very early in the process it recognised the significance of Bawtry's history and heritage and set one of its Plan objectives as "To promote activities for the sharing of the town's history and heritage". It demonstrated that local people value and enjoy the historical character of Bawtry - but also that they didn't know how extensive and rich it actually is - encompassing all the major themes of British history from prehistoric times to the present day.

The NDP, which was adopted by the town in 2019, also stated that the town's historic environment and many built heritage assets were seen to be key to the town's future role. An action for the Town Council was to support the introduction of a Heritage Trail to provide information to residents and visitors about some of the town's key historic landmarks.

So, in late 2016, in response to the NDP initial findings, the BHG was formed by a group of local history enthusiasts with the local Ward Councillor, Rachael Blake, as the Chairperson. The group set out with the intent of changing the knowledge base of the community. At this stage the group had a healthy membership and held its meetings at the Community Library. It started from a 'nil' financial base so needed to explore potential funding opportunities.

The BHG developed its 5-year vision in a project called "Beautiful, Bygone, Bawtry" which had very ambitious and optimistic targets, but the group had little success with initial funding applications. However, the group did manage to develop the Heritage Trail leaflet and the Trail board on Market Hill with the assistance of some funding from DCC. An oral history project capturing elderly residents' memories of Bawtry was also started.



The Town Trail map lectern in the Market Place

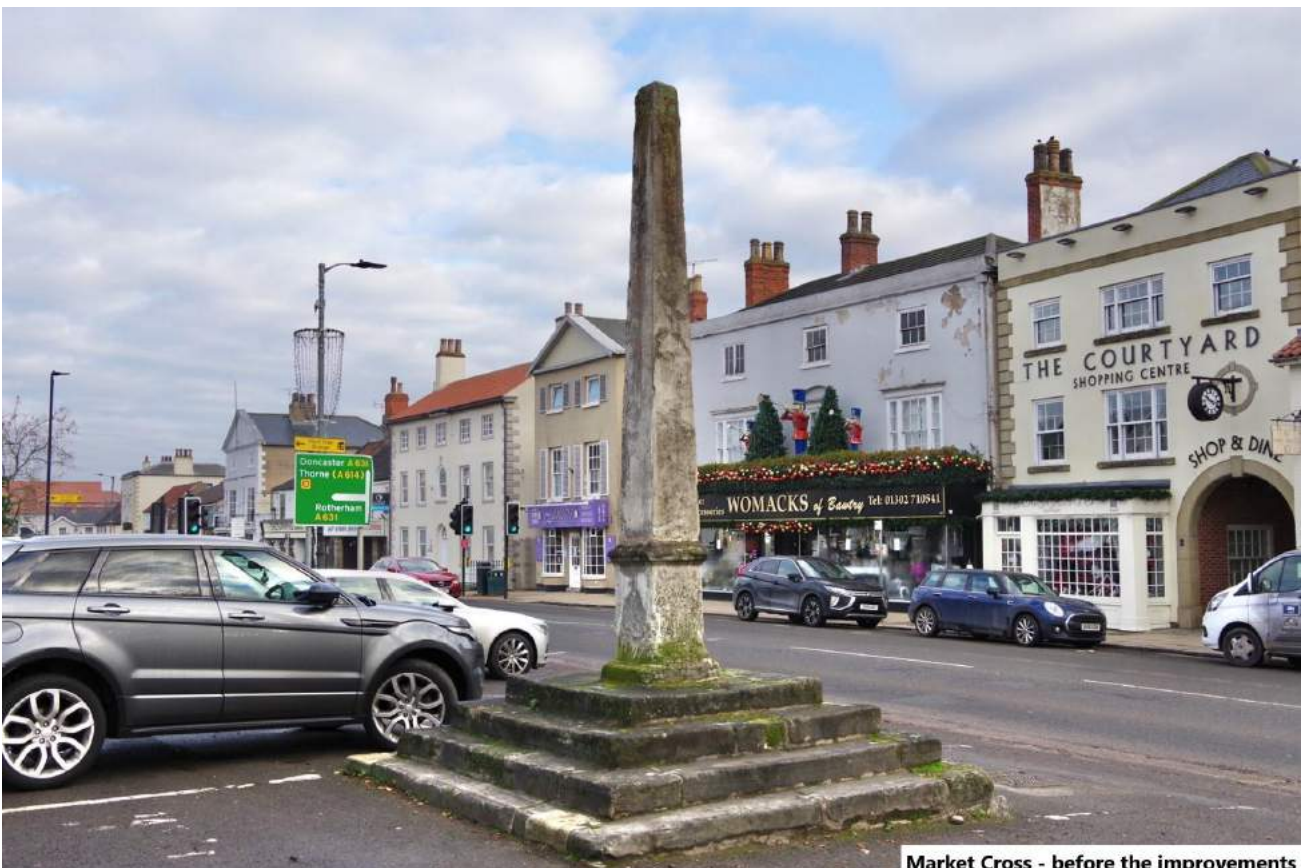
In 2019, again emanating from the NDP process, the group played a key role in a 'town' grant bid, "Bawtry 20:20 & Beyond", to Historic England under its High Street Heritage Action Zone initiative. This initiative recognised the significant role that heritage can play in improving the vibrancy of high streets. The bid incorporated many of the ideas from the BHG project including the need for a dedicated Heritage Centre and Heritage Trail development. Unfortunately, although very close to being funded with a score of 64%, this bid fell just short of the target score of 70% for funding. Historic England were very complimentary about the strength of the bid, and the extent of local support, and encouraged the town to continue with its excellent

partnership working. This resulted in the creation of the Town Board.

Then, in early 2020, Covid somewhat halted progress and also resulted in a loss of some membership.

The BHG has remained ambitious and became a registered, and Incorporated, Charity in late 2020. It has five trustees, with David Kirkham being the current Chairperson, and now holds regular Business meetings (around ten per year) and, at least, four Open meetings each year at which a presentation is usually made on a related subject. The group now usually meets in the Phoenix Theatre or the New Hall.

The group lead the initiative to provide a protection scheme for the market cross. The project was developed in 2020/21 and Scheduled Monument Consent obtained from Historic England in late 2021. The scheme was funded by the Town Council with grants from Doncaster Civic Trust & Doncaster/Sheffield Airport.



Market Cross - before the improvements



Market Cross - after the improvements

The group also started an empty shop window dressing project (providing historical information about Bawtry) during 2020.

In late 2020 an opportunity arose to obtain premises for a Heritage Centre. DCC advertised their Gainsborough Road toilet blocks for lease. Although extremely optimistic it seemed too good an opportunity to ignore. So, in conjunction with the Retailers Association (BRA), the BHG went through the process to lease the two buildings, with the largest to be converted into a Heritage Centre and the smaller one to be converted into a Changing Place for people with profound disabilities.

Planning permission was obtained (with the generous support of local architect Anthony Snowden) and a bid submitted to the FCC Communities Foundation for a capital grant for the conversion works. The bid required the BHG to raise a considerable 'upfront' third party sum to enable the grant application to be submitted. 'Crowdfunding' was used to raise these monies which far exceeded the financial target. Once again, however, the main capital fund bid failed - albeit also once again being very close to being successful. The BHG was offered a smaller supplementary grant from the Garfield Weston Foundation which was dependent on the FCC bid being successful.



The Heritage Centre & Changing Place project

During this process the group started a Facebook page which still continues.

Although disappointing FCC's decision had a positive 'flip side' as the group wouldn't have made the progress it has made to date without the negative funding decision. Instead, members would have been wholly consumed in the physical project work and being left without the funds to develop more 'tangible' assets for the community. Project donors were offered refunds but, in the main, allowed the BHG to keep the monies for a modified project which still maintains the group's aims and objectives, and 'tangible' deliverables of the project, albeit without any dedicated premises.

In mid-2022 the BHG set out its Strategic Business Plan for the 5-year period to 2027, its adopted Vision being to develop the original plan to Preserve, Expand and Share "Beautiful, Bygone, Bawtry". Its modified 2-year project, to acknowledge some realism, was:

- Create a BHG website
- Augment the Town Trail with 'way marking' at some significant sites
- Education - to plan and deliver Talks/Events, and
- Organise displays around the town and engender community involvement

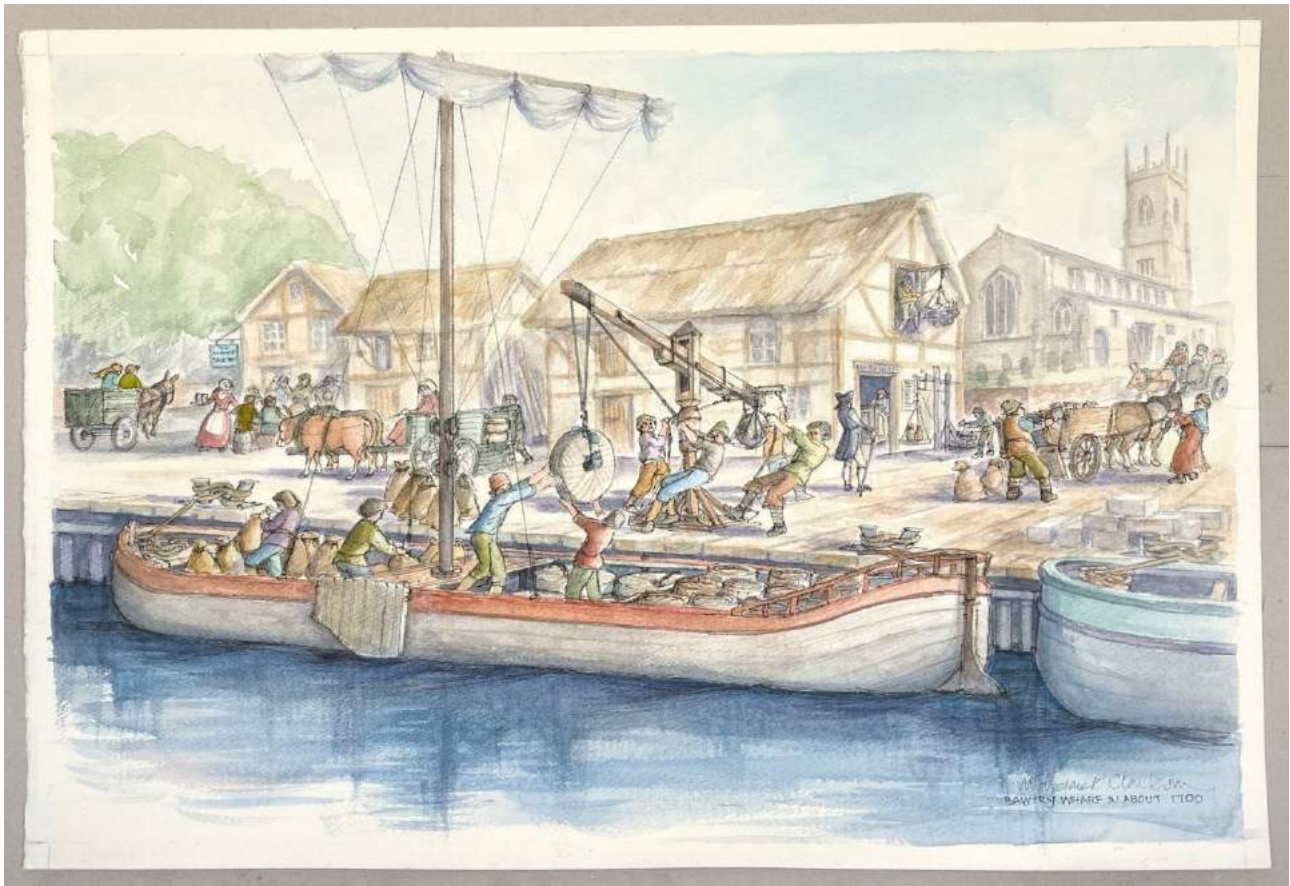
The website is now 'up and running' and can be found at www.bawtryheritagegroup.co.uk. It is 'a work in progress' but already contains a wealth of material, including original papers about Bawtry's history, a substantial gazetteer of historic sites and buildings, Bawtry census returns, and other material. The history papers include two on Roman Bawtry and two on Bawtry wharf, plus one each on the Pilgrim Fathers, the Battle of the River Idle, Bawtry and the 'coaching era', Ida's view, the Norman Planted Town, the Phoenix Theatre, and Bawtry Scouts 1967-1977. There is also a paper on Tall Tales/Horrid Histories.



The home page of BHG's website

The Heritage Trail 'way-marker' boards project is developing and a revised smaller grant has been obtained from the Garfield Weston Foundation for this purpose. The starting site is the 12th century

port for which a local artist (Margaret Clarkson) was commissioned to produce a painting depicting what Bawtry wharf might have looked like - based on a brief given to her by the group. Permission is currently awaited from Saint Nicholas Church to erect a display lectern within their grounds near to the site.



Margaret Clarkson's painting of Bawtry wharf

The group has taken part in the Bawtry Arts Festival since its inception in 2022. A children's quiz heritage trail was developed, and members have presented talks and guided walks of the Heritage Trail. A 'children's and young peoples' essay competition has also been organised. The local Mayflower School was invited to enter as were other schools and youth organisations. In the inaugural year over 30 entries were received - see the website or community library display for more information. 2024's competition will be launched shortly and will also include a painting/drawing competition this time.

Although funded and managed by the Town Council, the original impetus and suggestion for moving the war memorial to its new site, outside the library, came from the BHG. Located on the very busy main road, in a small enclave in the wall of Bawtry Hall, the monument was difficult – and dangerous – to access. Its new location outside the Library is much more suitable.



The War Memorial - before its renovation & relocation



The War Memorial after its renovation & relocation

BHG also had a presence at the Local History Fair at Doncaster at Doncaster Museum in September 2023, which was organised by the Doncaster District Heritage Association. This January the group also made its first presentation outside of the town. This was at the invitation of Misson & Springs WI.



Bawtry Methodist Chapel - BHG's nomination to the South Yorks Heritage List

The group has nominated various sites for inclusion in the South Yorkshire Heritage List, which relates to the protection of sites or buildings not within the town's Conservation Area. Ida's View, the Idle Battle site, Market Hill, the Planted Town and the Wharf were all unsuccessful. The Methodist Chapel was successful and is awaiting ratification from DCC. The Roman Shrine site is under review in the next round.

So, "Where next?" you might ask. The group could certainly benefit from a few more active members. Papers will continue to be produced as well as the website being maintained and kept up to date. The aim is to develop the Trail 'way-marking' over the next year with a further four or five display boards or lecterns, with options being Coaching/Inns, Battle of the Idle, Pilgrim Fathers, Phoenix Chapel/Theatre, RAF Bawtry, and the Masonic Lodge, which used to be the Chapel of St Mary Magdalene. A presence will be maintained at the Arts Festival (now just known as Bawtry Festival due to some people's understanding of what the "arts" actually includes) as well as other appropriate events. The group would like to continue with the oral history project and develop relationships with the Mayflower School to assist with children's history learning opportunities, including the development of local history teaching material relevant to National Curriculum Key Stages 2/3.

The group has recently agreed to undertake a new project "Hunting for Bawtry's Roman Past" which we envisage being launched at this year's Bawtry Festival, to run for 12 months from June 2024 to June 2025. It will look to involve the whole community to find Roman Bawtry beyond what we already know and attempt to establish the exact route of the Roman road through the town. The project will also explore the extent of the Roman settlement in the Bawtry area, and aim to show how significant that settlement was. Advance publicity and communication with the community will be undertaken during the coming months. Initial discussions have already generated considerable interest and it is hoped that the project will be the catalyst that the group needs to generate increased membership.