



Bawtry Heritage Group

Preserving our Past for the Future

Registered Charity No. 1188945

**BAWTRY HERITAGE THROUGH ART - A
SNAPSHOT OF WORK BY BRYAN HANCOCK
1934 - 2023**

**M P Maguire
April 2024**

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Preface

This piece is about capturing the legitimate status of art in the identification and preservation of heritage. It focuses upon the work of a late Bawtry resident Bryan Hancock, in particular his work in water colours and pencil/ink drawings.

Bryan's work is commemorated here as a positive contributor to the heritage archive of Bawtry town. It is not a piece about the artist himself or any aspect of his private life. The prompts for thought, suggested interpretations and opinions are owned by the author and should not be considered as replicating the view of the artist.

To ensure the piece is not disjointed the main narrative by and large is contained between pages 2 and 14. The artist's work is then presented as a series of snapshots,

Bawtry News Covers Pages 15 - 20

Bryan's Work in Paint pages 21 - 27

Bryan's Line Drawings pages 28 - 32.

Note, the work presented is only a small proportion of Bryan's output across many themes, hence "a snapshot".

Heritage Through Art

Art comes in many forms and within the parameters of what is defined as art it frequently provides a platform for spotlighting heritage. The National Lottery Heritage Fund website, in highlighting four artists, inspired by heritage provides testimony to this.¹ On a more grand scale one might turn to national celebrities such as Constable and Lowry. For this piece the medium of interest is drawing and painting and the heritage subject is Bawtry.

During September 2023 when visiting Bawtry's Community Library for a meeting about collaborating at a forthcoming district event; my attention was deflected by a range of cards depicting Bawtry scenes that were on sale. My eye was caught, in the first instance, by the places they displayed some of which I had forgotten existed. I was struck by the simplicity of the scenes painted in vibrant colours. Here was a record which to me seemed worthy of preserving; a record of Bawtry's recent past which, in what feels like a blink of an eye, might be lost. You might feel the need to challenge my assertion about the fate of some of the places depicted, given that most have been captured many times during the 19th and 20th century through the medium of photography and you would be right. However, these drawn and painted images have a uniqueness that is personalised in a way modern technical imagery rarely portrays. They reflect one individual's perception and interpretation of the subject captured with a quirkiness and imagination evident in the finished scenes and enhanced by the fresh ambience of the moment and at times an element of poetic licence. In short they are one offs, produced by the labours and enthusiasm of one person's endeavour; never to be repeated.

Bryan Hancock was the artist in question. I had not come across Bryan's name or artistic work before; I suspect an all too common fate experienced by many who contribute to our surroundings through their work, as they remain in the shadows or worse hidden from our view. As I admired the small images on the cards I was

¹ <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/stories/four-artists-how-heritage-has-inspired-them>

informed that Bryan had sadly passed away earlier in the year. The June/July edition of Bawtry News had paid tribute to him referencing his drawings and paintings of Bawtry which were numerous. The front cover of that summer's magazine had launched the tribute with one of his paintings of the Crown Hotel.

By the time I departed the library that September morning, my original business eventually sorted, I made a commitment to seek out Bryan's artistic legacy and preserve a snapshot of his work within the Bawtry Heritage Group annals; not just by referencing him as an important contributor to the town's heritage archive, but ensuring his work serves as a meaningful heritage reference for those researching our town. I was also inspired to explore whether our very own festival competition could be extended to include drawing and painting.²

A Nod and a Wink

Many with an artistic bent take their inspiration from others in the field. Bryan came to art, as defined by drawing and painting, late in life following on from a lifelong passion for photography³. Even a cursory view of his populated scenes reveals a leaning toward L S Lowry. His early 21st century image of Bawtry Market Place with that landscape populated by unmistakable Lowry figures, wearing early 20th century clothes in a somewhat darkened and sombre atmosphere, conveyed by the people as well as the surroundings, clearly betrays a conscious nod and a wink to that style. The picture painted in 2013 is even entitled "Lowry visits Bawtry". For me the folk in the scene hark back to the photograph of the youngsters seated around the market obelisk taken well over a century earlier; particularly when one examines what the children were wearing, including their unsmiling demeanour.⁴ Having never met Bryan I have not had the opportunity to explore his intent with this painting, and I guess it could be motivated by nothing more than the fun of blending styles and mixing up the ages. However, one might muse that it reflects and prompts more. As I view the picture today there

² June 2024 marks our inaugural attempt at a drawing and painting competition for young people.

³ Around 2012 when Bryan came to live in Bawtry he turned his hand to painting and drawing.

⁴ The Archive Photographs SERIES Bawtry, Tickhill and Wadworth. P Tuffery, Chalford 1996.

is a sense that the essence of Bawtry as a place full of folk high on fun, wealth and health might be fragile and not always reflective of the journey the town endures or that any high is a rock solid inevitability in the future. A reminder that the good and bad times often feel cyclical and never too far apart, prompting us to consider where in such a cycle Bawtry might currently be? The Lowry inspired piece depicts an ambience less breezy or fun filled than the modern winter scene of the Marketplace which presents the same view but conveys a completely different message. It is populated with locals who are full of the happy holiday spirit. There is a stark contrast between the two scenes reminding us that less carefree days are not necessarily confined to distant observations made by contemporary writers from the 16th and early 20th centuries, who recorded through their words a description of Bawtry in poor times.⁵ The line between rise and decline may be ever present for some and often closer at hand than is comfortable for many.

Lowry himself was known for revisiting a scene to reflect such change in ambience as well as the physical surroundings. The two versions of 'Coming from the Mill' painted in 1918 and 1930 respectively, being examples and led to Spalding observing that in the later work the "sombre mood of the earlier pastel had been dispelled"⁶

Of course this interpretation, in respect of our artist's conscious intentions could be far too over thought, running the risk of being categorised as contrived. It is, as I have already stated, as likely that Bryan had no such complexity of thought and was merely experimenting in his chosen medium for fun. That said, communication is often about interpretation and is as much about the eye of the beholder and the context in which the medium communicating is considered by the researcher, reader, or viewer.

In short, artists like Bryan who reflect a moment as they see it or, how their own inventiveness plays with it, results in messages open

⁵ Leland in the mid 16th Century and Charles Harper in 1901. See Bawtry in the Coaching Era via www.bawtryheritagegroup.co.uk or the heritage section of the community library.

⁶ Lowry, Julian Spalding, Phaidon 1979.

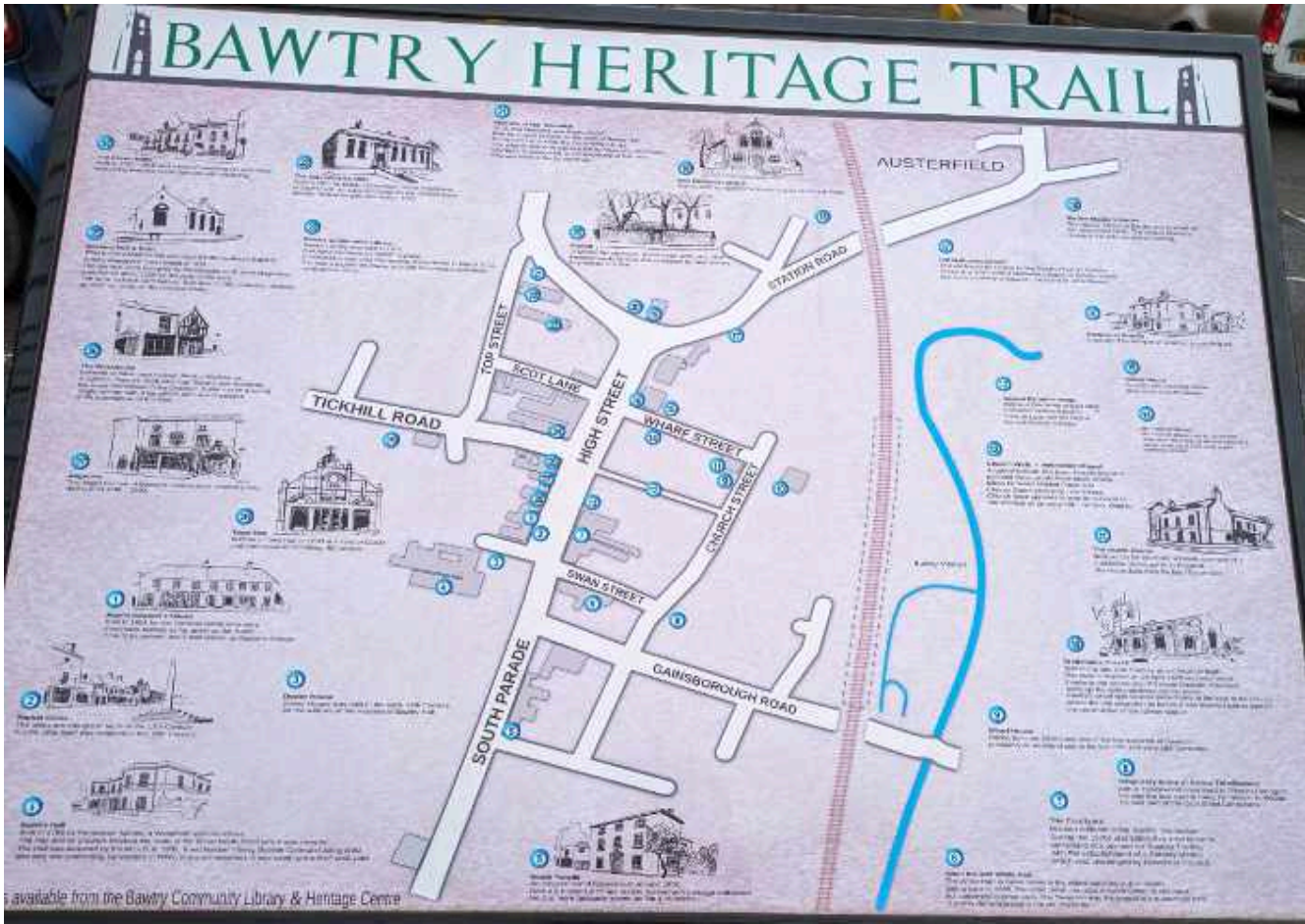
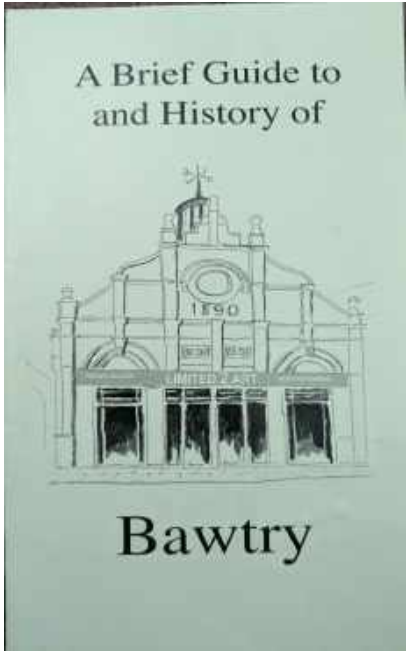
to interpretation; that may spark conversation or inspiration across a range of topics including local heritage.

Engaged with Heritage

Bryan Hancock was engaged with Bawtry Heritage activity from a very early stage after he had begun to turn his hand to painting and drawing. Following contact with David Littlewood, an associate of the community library, he applied his talents to the very first town history guide in 2013.⁷ The pamphlet which was circulated to the public contained 15 line sketches completed by Bryan of Bawtry town centre's most iconic buildings and structures. The presentation of the guide is, in my view, enhanced by the use of these handcrafted illustrations in a way that perhaps more modern methods of depiction, such as photography would fail to capture. Each drawing stands alone in its own grandeur and the subjects in their modern setting offer a sense of age and longevity; providing a sense that they have been around for a while, and as heritage preservation might seek to demand, should remain so into the future.

These images have lasted, retained in future designs of the pamphlet over the last decade and also found their way into the design of the Marketplace information board erected by the Bawtry Heritage group in 2020.

⁷ The pamphlet has had a number of revised additions but remains free to residents and visitors. It is freely accessible, in a revised edition with Bryans Line Drawings via the Community Library.



A Guide to Bawtry

(Starting and finishing at The Community Library)



1. The Schoolhouse
Built in 1823 by public subscription of the inhabitants of Bawtry with an adjacent house for the schoolmaster. A nearby school for girls was built in 1857.



21. Pub/old
Originally the pub/old where stray cattle and other livestock would be kept until captured by their owners in payment of a fee.



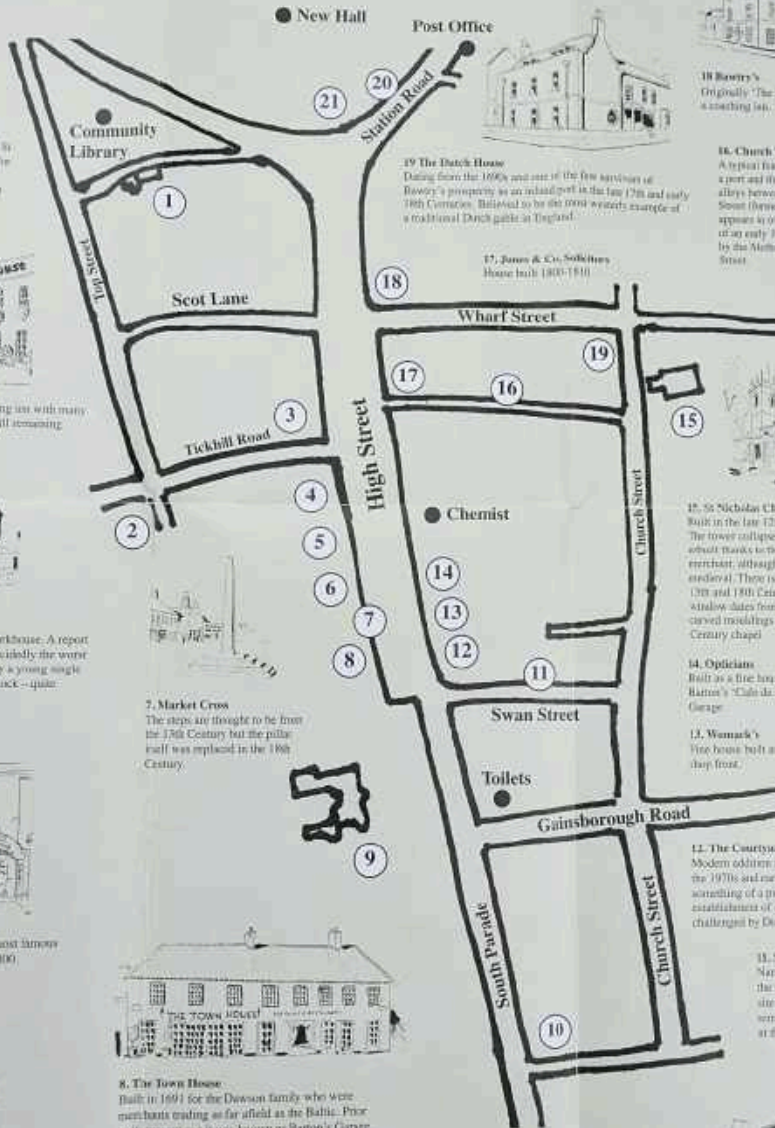
20. Methodist Church
Built in 1903 to replace the stone chapel of Church Walk.



2. Bawtry Masonic Hall
Built in 1829 as a place of Anglican worship. The site was once occupied by the Hospital of St Mary Magdalen, founded in the Middle Ages for the poor of the area. In July 2010, Sheffield University carried out an archaeological dig on the cemetery attached to the Hospital.



18 Bawtry's
Originally 'The Marquis of Grafton' - a coaching inn.



11. The Crown Hotel
Built 1780-1809 and a former coaching inn with many interesting features of this past era still remaining.



4. Off Licence
Believed to have once housed Bawtry Workhouse. A report in January 1826 said that "Bawtry was decidedly the worst workhouse in the Division". It was run by a young single woman with 3 daughters born out of wedlock - quite scandalous at the time!



7. Market Cross
The steps are thought to be from the 15th Century but the pillar itself was replaced in the 18th Century.



5. China Kitchen
Once the Angel Inn, one of Bawtry's most famous coaching inns and dating from 1780-1800.



8. The Town House
Built in 1691 for the Dawson family who were merchants trading as far afield as the Baltic. Prior to its present use it was known as Barton's Garage.



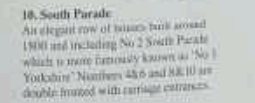
6. Limited 2 Art
Built as a Town Hall in 1880 at a cost of £1100 and then capable of holding 450 people.



9. Bawtry Hall
Built in 1785 by Pemberton Moss, a Wakefield wool merchant. The Hall and its grounds blocked the route of the Great North Road which was diverted. The Hall was acquired by the Ministry of Defense in 1939 and used by the RAF until 1984.



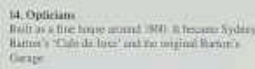
11. Swan Street
Named after the oldest and largest of the coaching inns which occupied the site of the present day Co-Op. The only remaining part of the inn is the doorway at the rear of Swan Street.



10. South Parade
An elegant row of houses built around 1800 and including No 2 South Parade which is more famously known as 'No 1 Yorkshire'. Numbers 48,5 and 88,10 are double-fronted with carriage entrances.



15. St Nicholas Church
Built in the late 12th Century as a chapel of Blyth. The tower collapsed on 28 April 1870 and was rebuilt thanks to the generosity of Samuel Dawson, merchant, although the bell window was original. There is a blocked Norman doorway and 18th and 19th Century windows in the nave. The east window dates from the 13th Century and has rare carved tracery on the outside. There is a 15th Century chapel.



14. Opticians
Built as a fine large ground floor in 1801 by Thomas Sydnay Barton's 'Cabin de l'oeil' and the original Barton's Garage.



13. Wemack's
Fine house built around 1800-1820 with modern shop front.



12. The Courtyard
Modern addition to the Bawtry town square. During the 1970s and early 1980s this area became something of a protest for Sunday trading with the establishment of a Sunday market which was challenged by Diocesan Council.

Further to this Bryan's small but poignant contribution to a Bawtry News edition commemorating those who gave their lives in World War I is another example of his work being utilised within the capture and preservation of the town's heritage.



Bryan's depiction of the War Memorial accompanied the following piece in honour of the Peake family and their son Raymond who was killed in action in 1916 published in the magazine's August edition 2014.

Bawtry's War Memorial in the shape of a stone cross on a plinth stands next to the Great North Rd on the south side of Bawtry on the edge of the Bawtry Hall grounds. It was provided by the Peake family who lived in Bawtry Hall at the time and whose son Raymond was killed in 1916. The land and memorial were gifted to Bawtry Town Council by the Peake family. Repairs were carried out in 2002 and a rededication ceremony took place in 2003. Access is gained from either side but due to its position on a busy road Remembrance Services in November are usually conducted in Bawtry Hall grounds.

The same image was used again in the October/November edition of 2017.⁸

Preserving the Lost or Forgotten

It was a painting of Bon Bons that initially caught my eye when I first came across Bryan's work in the library. Bon Bons was, as the name suggests, a confectionary shop on Station Road, the space it occupied at that time was once part of the space adjacent to what was once Lodge's newsagents.

More poignantly for me is the depiction of an active Timber Joint, that "Aladdin's Cave" for all our DIY and household needs. Today the

⁸ Note, the image of the War Memorial reflects when it was standing at its old location on the southeastern boundary of Bawtry Hall alongside the Great North Road.

building remains with its well established frontage, signage and emblems intact for now, if increasingly tattered and worn. I wonder what sentiments long term residents of Bawtry would espouse about this once mainstay of the High Street now eclipsed by the insatiable popularity and convenience of the internet marketplace. For me it was the place that usually had whatever you needed in a moment of domestic crisis. I bet I am not the only one who was saved by the convenient access to its wares. I ponder what great project the figure on the right in Bryan's painting is undertaking having secured his length of timber? No doubt cut with precision in the back of the premises; and what will we do for snow shovels and brooms now that the convenient receptacle containing such stock at the front door is not readily at hand? Bryan's depiction preserves its heyday for those who remember and may have thought its future was forever. The Timber Joint painting also serves as an image upon which to reflect. As I write I am reminded of the 19th line drawing of the Old Swan Inn utilised by the BHG in its presentation of Bawtry in the coaching era. This was also a mainstay of the main road taking travellers north or south via stagecoach between the late 17th and late 18th century.⁹ Like Timber Joint it disappeared from active duty around the turn of the 19th century. Rather depressingly its vacant hulk remained an empty and derelict reminder for almost 100 years according to Thomas Bradley writing in 1896¹⁰. Presently, Timber Joint has been empty for not nearly so long and one might hope its legacy is not a period of lengthy decay mirroring the span of time experienced by the Old Swan and that any rebirth of the premises in a new guise heralds a new and worthwhile move forward. Until then Bryan's uplifting picture serves as a pleasant reminder of its living presence in our retail environment.

More closely allied to a central element of Bawtry history is the Post Office. Bryan's depiction when it was part of the townscape and situated on Station Road is testimony to what, I guess, many in recent generations will remember. The generations that follow are

⁹ See Bawtry in the Coaching Era via www.bawtryheritagegroup.co.uk or the heritage section of the community library.

¹⁰ See Bawtry in the Coaching Era via www.bawtryheritagegroup.co.uk or the heritage section of the community library.

likely to connect postal activity via this delivery service, there are so many other methods now, with a visit to a room in the library; a bespoke post office in Bawtry is long gone. Bryan's winter scene presents hints of what this busy service hub meant when it stood loud and proud in our shopping zone. There is, if you look closely, the hint of a queue behind the entrance doors, it was always busy when I attended. Most commonly I was in pursuit of a new tax disc for the car - remember them? At other times it was to renew my passport, or purchase a birthday card; and at least once a year to change my hard earned pounds into Euros, as advertised above the entrance. I imagine there was a queue on the day Bryan captured this scene and I am left to ponder whether the man reading his paper is just loitering or whether he is waiting for a friend or partner to re-emerge having conducted business? In any event he looks to have progressed somewhat through his engagement with the daily news.

As I find myself writing about the Bawtry Post Office prompted by Bryan's painting it is strange to have to acknowledge the current circumstances engulfing this 350 year old national institution, with Royal connections; at least up until an Act of Parliament changed all that in 2012.¹¹ The twists, turns and revelations of what has become a 21st century real life drama is not perhaps for this piece other than to make the point that, for almost the entire lifetime of this institution with its Royal moniker Bawtry was a prominent player. Equally, Bawtry's postal history is not immune to the peaks and troughs in development of postal services as is so topical today, or for that matter, without its very own criminal drama which, for the perpetrator back in 1797 came with consequences most dire!¹²

Worthy of mention is Bryan's depiction of another Bawtry mainstay Etc. A loyal and adaptable presence in our retail landscape for as long as I can recall. This painting, less colourful, is rather more striking than the others; the building appears to be the subject more than any of the players or activity in and around it. This work

¹¹ The Postal Services Act 2011 led to the Post Office Ltd becoming independent of the Royal Mail Group as of 1 April 2012.

¹² Visit Bawtry in the Coaching Age via bawtryheritagegroup.com/bawtryhistory and read about Robert Dyson.

depicts Etc when it stood on the corner of Wharf Street and the High Street, taking up part of the old Marquis of Granby footprint. Etc has had a number of locations in my memory in and around Bawtry and today can be found on the High Street next to Bawtry Motors. Bryan's capture of Etc makes my mind wander to newspaper man once again, who is he? Perhaps he is a few pages on from when he was standing outside the post office and once again finds himself waiting whilst another stage of the day's shopping expedition is completed?

Poetic Licence

According to my sources the dog and the cat have no names, or for that matter any owner. They are strays, but not real ones. The dog and the cat are continuity features in many of Bryan's Bawtry painted scenes, figments of his imagination. The dog, always portrayed as alert, watchful, with ears and tail pricked skyward consciously watching everything; an alert observer of the passing scenes. The cat, with its more hostile demeanour, acts, perhaps, as a reminder, to his canine pal of his duty to be alert, to record and remember, or else! This paper itself is seeking, through alert observation, to draw attention to how our history and heritage are fleeting, finite and constantly changing. Over time memories or moments of sentimentality, as well as important historic records can be lost or forgotten. For me the world will always need the prompts that remind us of the heritage value and call to action the guardians willing to make the effort to act as preservers. Again I might be overthinking Bryan's imagery.

The Line Drawings

The line drawings I have mentioned previously when presenting Bryan's contribution to what was once called "A Brief Guide to and History of Bawtry".

It is difficult to tell, but I suspect the line sketches came first, providing the foundation for Bryan's expansion and experimentation with the addition of colour and the opportunity to present an active

everyday domestic story through more vibrant scenes. On a personal level this fits with how I have applied my thoughts as a novice observer. The painted scenes invited me into observations regarding the action surrounding the core image, as well as entering into a process of sentimental reminiscence; a product of my own memories and sense of personal relevance, when applicable, to each scene. The line drawings present something more stark, stripped back. You are left to ponder the image in its own right with no nods, winks or playful poetic licence to distract. I suspect from a purely artistic perspective this presents work for which the skilled critical eye operates differently than when considering the painted images. However, personally my eye is drawn to the lasting heritage value presented in these images; providing, as I mentioned earlier, a handcrafted grandeur that displays what we might consider to be the iconic status of the subject in the story of our town's heritage.



Bawtry's Methodist Chapel 120 years old in 2023.

Of all the line sketches the one above at the time of writing has, for me, the most potency. Since 2021 the Bawtry Heritage Group have been highlighting the iconic status of the towns Methodist Chapel sitting stately at the northern end of the High Street as it bends left towards Doncaster. This heritage interest has primarily been prompted by the emergence of the South Yorkshire Heritage List (SYHL) and the sad fact that, now in its 121st year, the Chapel is experiencing a very much reduced congregation. Should the building become redundant as a place of worship it would present a

magnified risk that the town might suffer a significant loss from its landscape; especially if the striking image of the chapel's frontage was lost to some modern development without due consideration. Recently the Bawtry Heritage Group has been alerted to the fact that its application for the chapel's inclusion on the SYHL has been accepted; we are now awaiting the formality of being listed on the Doncaster section of the site.¹³ The image above has been copied and expanded into this piece from the Bawtry History Guide referred to earlier resulting in it being somewhat blurred.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the challenges with the image I believed it was important to capture this Hancock line drawing with a little more prominence than that afforded by being lost within the array of miniatures displayed on the pamphlet map. Although there are many photographic images of this building I am not aware of any other line drawings.¹⁵ Bryan's image used back in 2013 as part of the town guide indicates that the importance of this structure was recognised back then by those compiling it, amongst the array of other sites many of which are nationally listed.¹⁶ Long may it remain on the town's northern horizon and visitors be prompted to admire it.

Bryan's line drawing of St Nicholas' Church viewing it from its south eastern corner has an impressive atmosphere, inviting, dare I suggest, the viewer to consider the grandeur of this building as it was when the town first emerged in records during the 12th century.¹⁷ One has to remember that the original structure was smaller than the one depicted so it can never be a totally true reflection. That aside the starkness of a line drawing capturing the impressive vision of the building without any additional clutter, modern or otherwise does, with a little imagination, allow one to

¹³ The SYHL is an additional layer of heritage/historic recognition and protection. It does not carry the same status as any National Listing, but it was the view of the BHG and thankfully the SYHL selection committee that local recognition beyond being on the edge of the conservation area should be afforded to this building.

¹⁴ Search for a full scale drawing has been unsuccessful to date.

¹⁵ With a thriving Bawtry Art Group there may well be, who knows?

¹⁶ Given the standard national architectural design for Methodist Chapels nationally it would be rare for one to be listed.

¹⁷ There are strong suggestions that a town earlier than this and that this was centred around a church at the same location. See Bawtry-A Norman Planted Town by D Kirkham. In the history section of the BHG website www.bawtryheritagegroup.co.uk

reflect more clearly on the focal point such a building would have been back in the day.

The following pages invite you into a snapshot of Bryan's artistic world. Take your time to look and ponder on whatever memories or feelings about Bawtry are personally triggered for you.

Enjoy!



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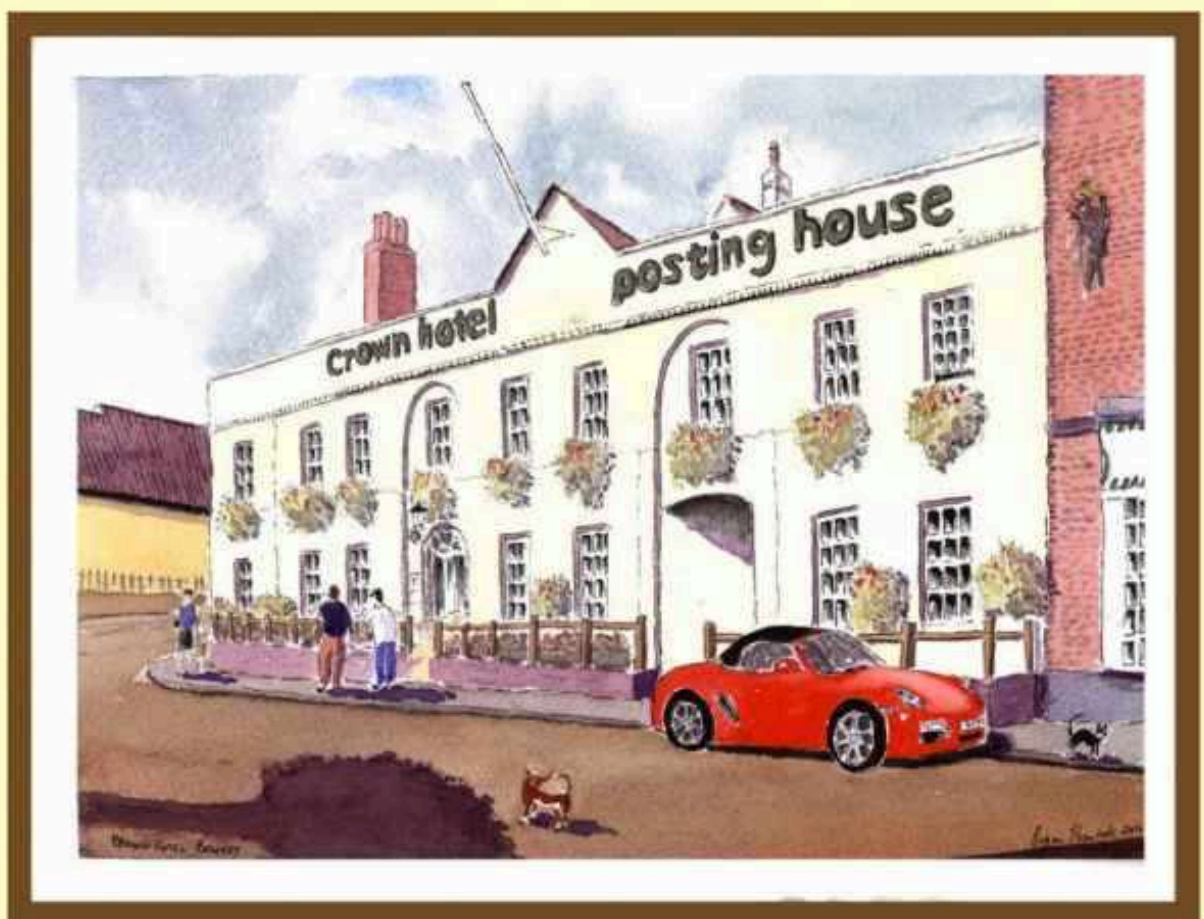
**BAWTRY NEWS FRONT COVERS PRESENTING BRYAN
HANCOCK'S WORK 2014-2023**

Bryan's work was recognised and presented on a number of occasions on the front cover of Bawtry News between 2014 and 2023; perhaps most poignantly in the June/July 2023 edition which marked his passing.

His contributions were not always scenes confined to the Bawtry environment, Bryan turned his attention to other gems in the locality, his work depicting images from Austerfield and Scrooby were also utilised on the magazine's front cover.

This section represents some of Bryan's Bawtry paintings capturing the town's architectural heritage that featured on the front cover for almost a decade.

The Crown Hotel by Bryan Hancock (1934 - 2023)



The magazine for June/July 2023 was accompanied by the following tribute inside.

Thank you

The Bawtry News Committee are always keen to promote local talent, and were delighted when 10 years ago, Bryan allowed them to use any of his paintings and drawings of Bawtry and the local area for the cover picture and for illustrations inside the magazine.

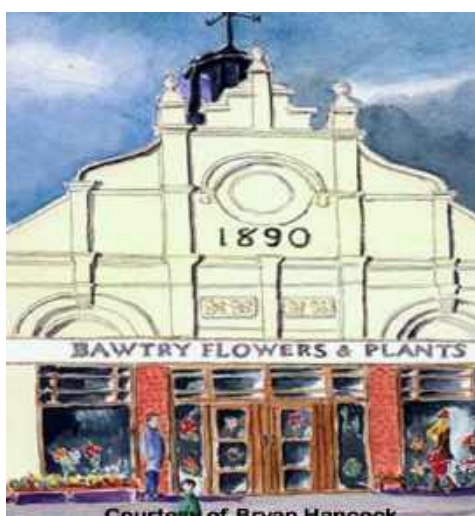
Growing up in South Yorkshire, Bryan was a lad when World War II broke out. School, keeping bantams and playing cricket and football kept him busy. Playing led to becoming a lifetime supporter of Sheffield United.

At the tender age of 15, Bryan started work at the National Provincial Bank, signing a 43 year contract, which took him to retirement aged 58.

Bryan was a keen photographer and was rarely seen without his camera. He was the Phoenix Theatre's official photographer for many years, priding himself in taking black and white photos in-keeping with true theatrical tradition. Latterly he conceded to taking them in colour.

Bryan's eye for a picture proved valuable when he took up painting. Being entirely self taught and after taking on-line lessons to improve his technique, Bryan painted and drew many hundreds of pictures over the years and these have become his legacy to Bawtry.

Below are a number of other iconic Bawtry scenes that found their way onto the front cover of Bawtry News.

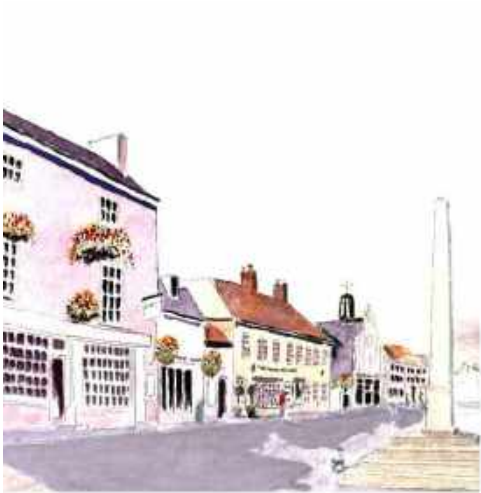


FEBRUARY/MARCH 2014.



The Old Schoolroom, Bawtry Courtesy of Bryan Hancock

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2016.



Picture courtesy of Bryan Hancock

APRIL/MAY 2017.¹⁸

¹⁸ This image was used again in August/September 2021.



Picture courtesy of Bryan Hancock

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2017.¹⁹



Bawtry High Street

Courtesy of Bryan Hancock

JUNE/JULY 2018.

¹⁹ This painting of two ladies passing the churchyard was used again for the December 2018, January 2019 edition.



South side of Bawtry High St.

Courtesy of Bryan Hancock

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2018²⁰

²⁰ Technically the east side of the High Street, towards the southern end.

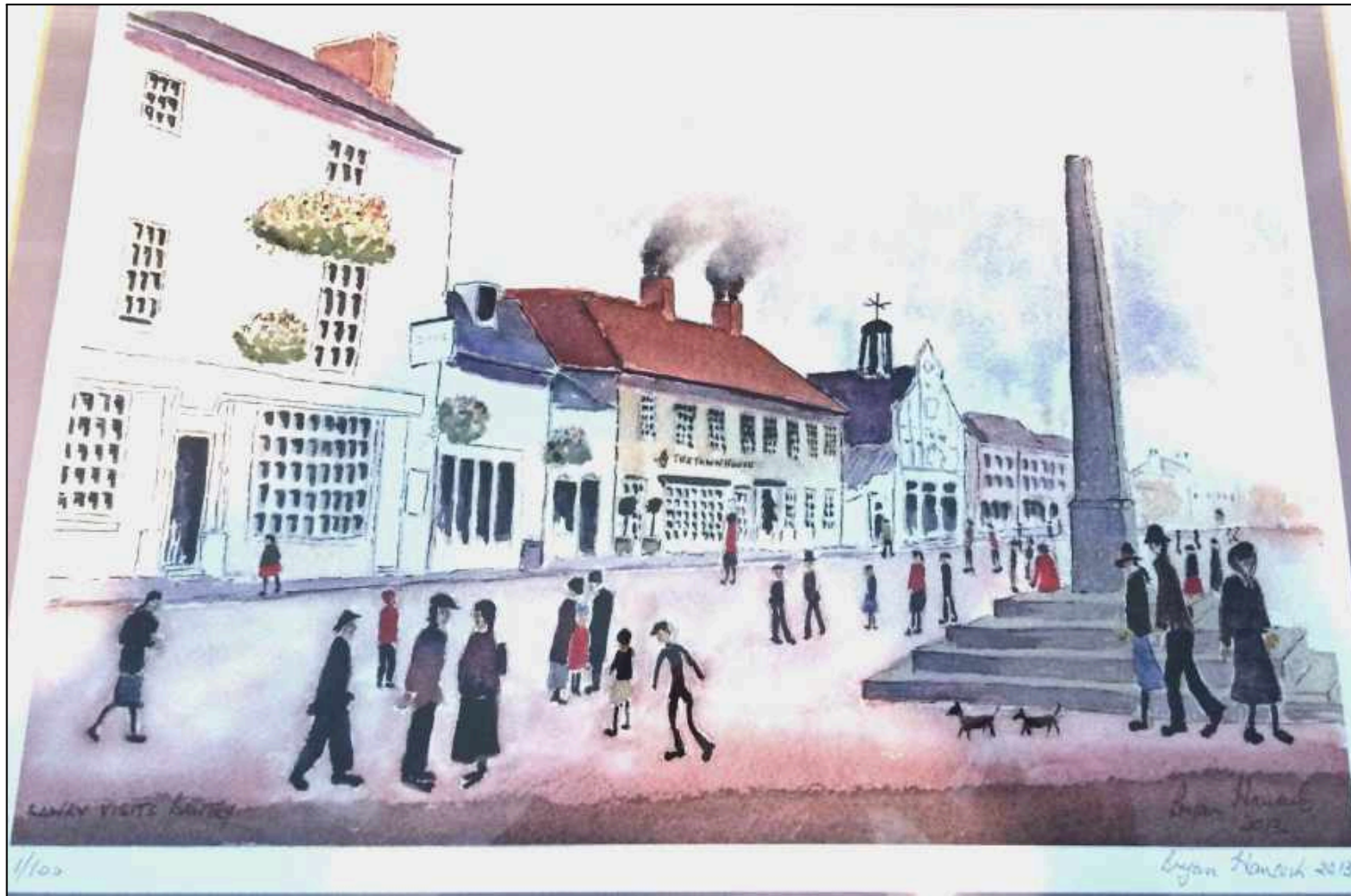


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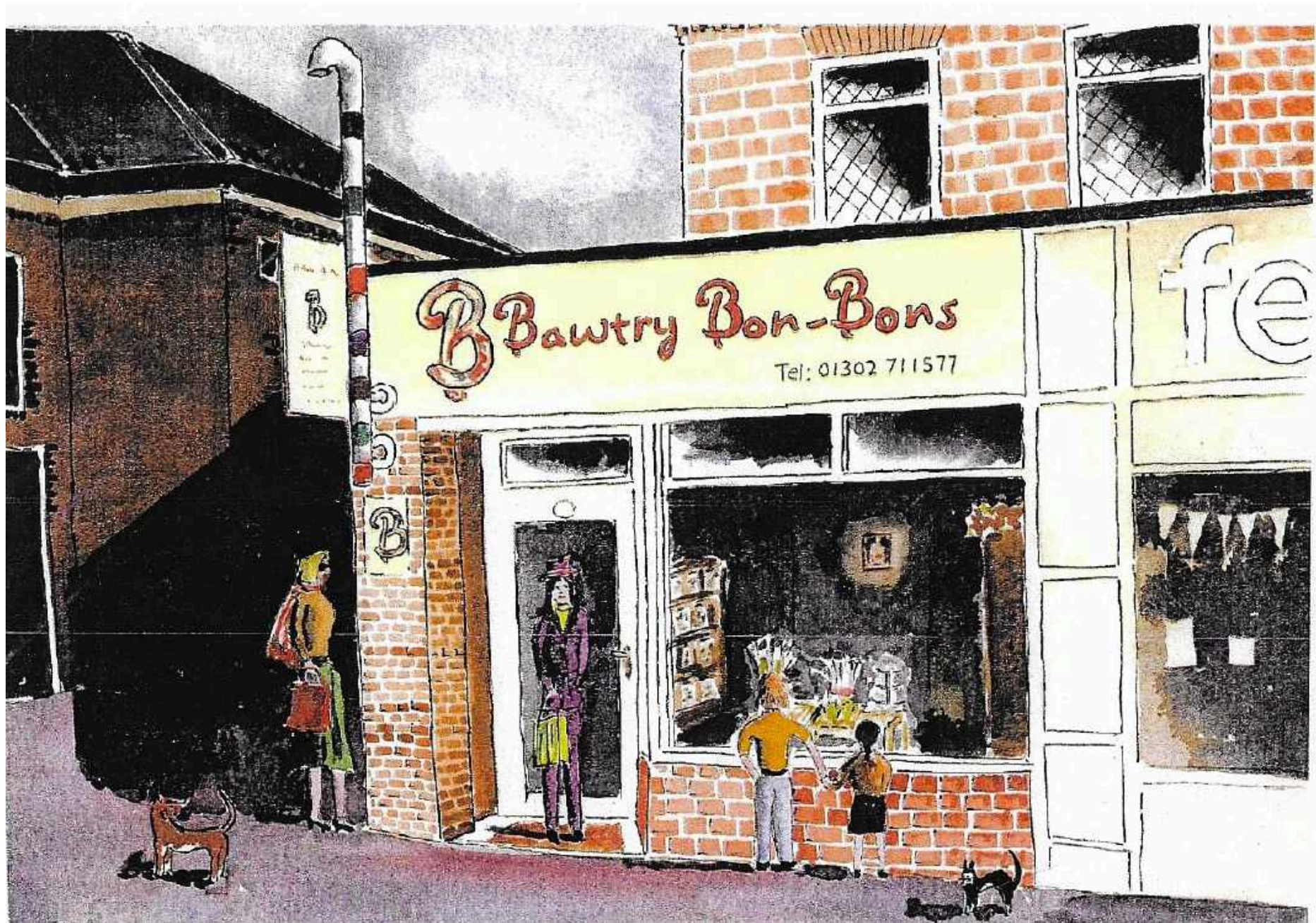
A SNAPSHOT OF BRYAN'S WORK IN PAINT 2013-2023

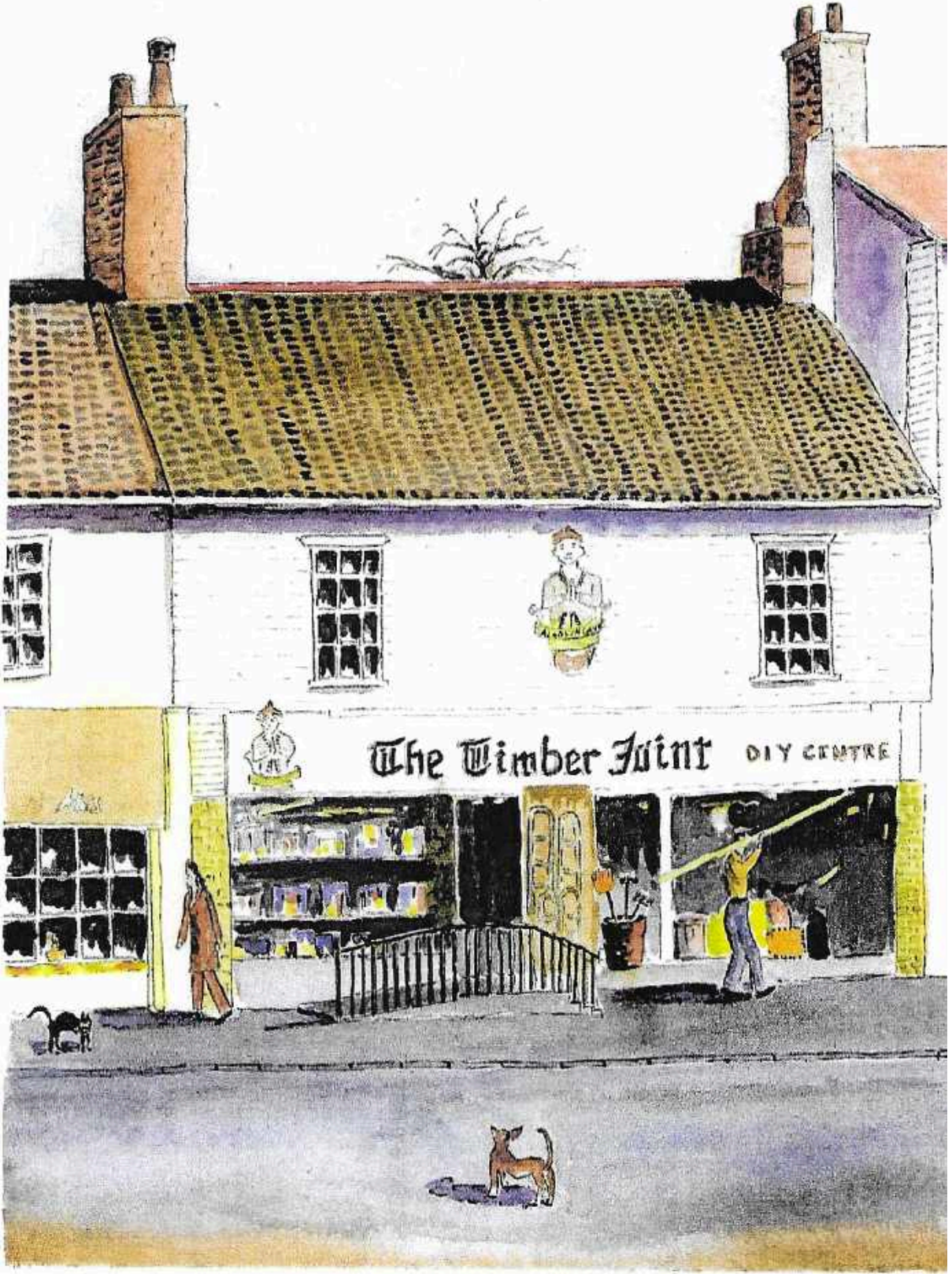


"Lowry Visits Bawtry" 2013

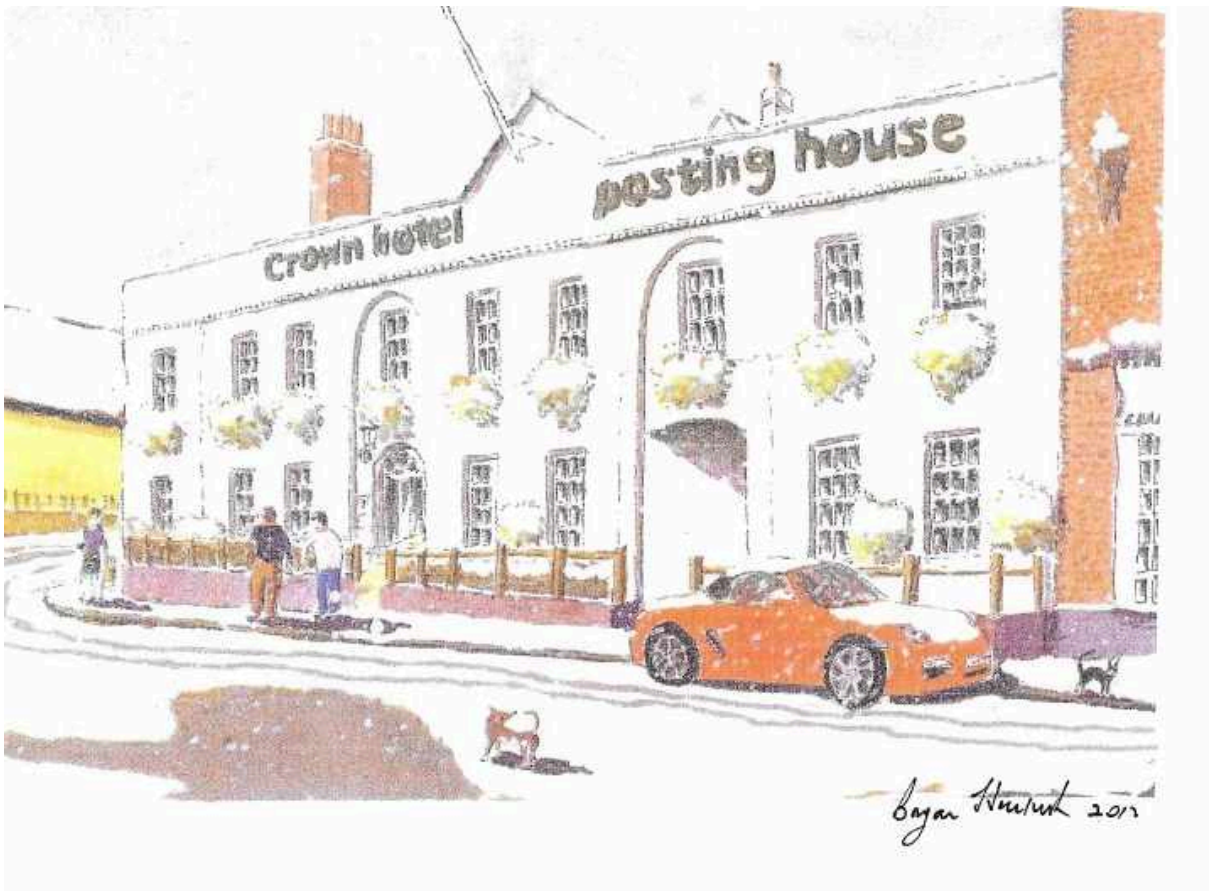


"Christmas in Bawtry" (undated)











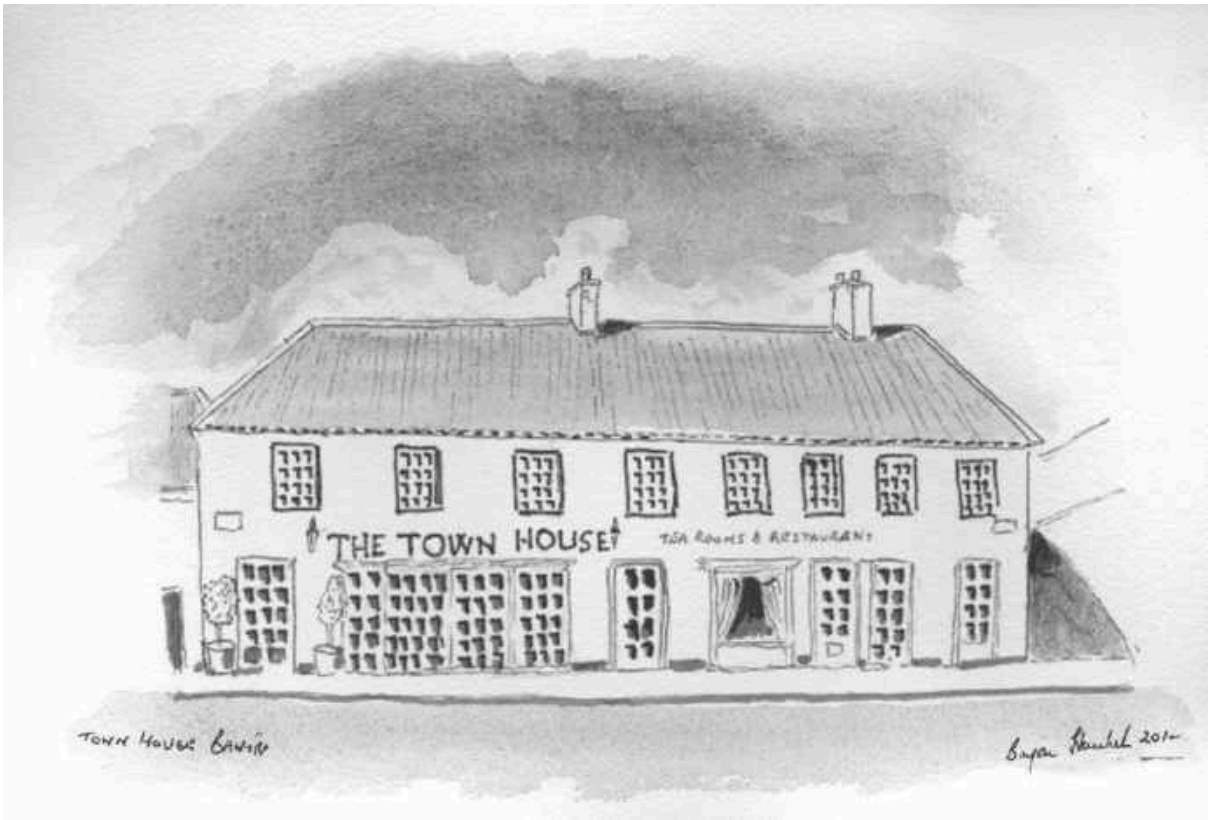
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A COLLECTION OF BRYAN'S LINE DRAWINGS









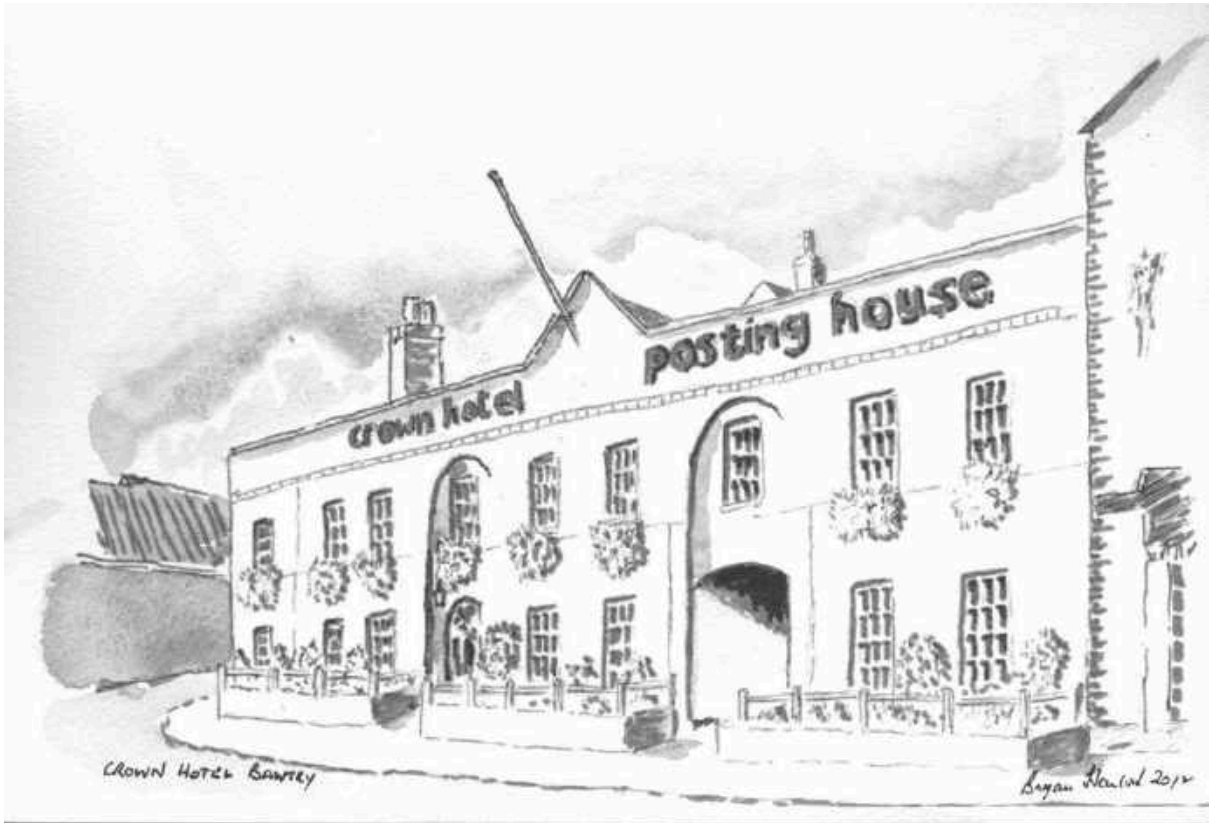
TOWN HOUSE BATH

Byron Howard 2014



Baverly Hall

Byron Howard
2014



Sources and Acknowledgements.

Books

Lowry - Julian Spalding, Phaidon 1979.

The Archive Photographs SERIES. Bawtry, Tickhill and Wadworth, Compiled by Peter Tuffrey, Chalford, 1996.

Online

www.heritagefund.org.uk/stories/four-artists-how-heritage-has-inspired-them

bawtryheritagegroup.co.uk

Periodicals

Various Bawtry News publications between 2014 and 2023.

Acknowledgements

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