



Talking Tennyson

As well as a major exhibition and conference planned for the year-long 200th birthday celebrations of Alfred Tennyson there are also many more local events and attractions to celebrate the great poet's Lincolnshire roots.





All across East and West Lindsey a new set of interpretation boards can be found, with a trail following all the main places in the county associated with Tennyson – his home village of Somersby, Bag Enderby where his father was rector, his school in Louth, his growing social life at Harrington Hall, inspirational spots like Stockwith Mill and the wide skies north of Mablethorpe at Gibraltar Point.

Elsewhere in the county, newly commissioned art works inspired by Tennyson's poetry can be found on the Water Rail Way between Lincoln and Boston, joining an already-impressive line-up of sculptures along this popular route. New work includes 'Lady of Shalott', a 4.5m high staggered arch of sheaves of barley and rye with a bright silver finish which will soften, or even 'ripen', subtly and attractively over time, produced by Anwick Forge.

Chainsaw sculptor Mick Burns has created two sculpted seats sited along the route. 'Love and Lost' features the parting of two clasped hands, a perfect place to contemplate some of Tennyson's most famous words "Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all". The second, 'Dark Leaves', is inspired by the poem 'The Gardener's Daughter'.

Several works are themed around the poem 'The Brook', including a sculpture made from Silverbed Limestone, that includes two lines from the poem, and has been produced by Louth-based Monumental Masons Griffin Memorials. Two works by Nigel Sardeson also take inspiration from the well-known verse. 'Pike' is a giant fish carved from an oak log, big enough for

children to climb into and onto, and has also been engraved with a line from the poem: "I slip I slide, I glance I gloom". River Pillar (pictured) represents the curves of a river, stands 5m tall surrounded by flat fenland, and includes the line "For men may come and men may go, but I go on forever".

To begin the 2009 celebrations, the Jew's Court in Lincoln saw the first listed event in the calendar on 11th January, when the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology hosted a talk by Grace Timmins, Collections Officer at the Tennyson Research Centre. The talk covered Tennyson's childhood in Lincolnshire, and information on the Tennyson Research Centre, and was followed by selected readings of Tennyson's poetry by Joan Smith, a member of the Tennyson Society.

The Tennyson Research Centre is based at Lincoln Central Library and is a hidden gem of an archive where students can carry out research, and certainly one of a kind in the world, holding a surprising number of more personal Tennyson objects: locks of his hair, pipes he has smoked, hats he has worn.

January also saw Pimento Music Listening Group with Convivium Music discussing settings of Tennyson's poems to music. The popularity of Tennyson's poems meant that they were set very often to music of varying quality, but there are some interesting novelties and Britten's masterpiece song cycle Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings, raises the standard. The Pimento Listening Group meets once a month at Pimento Tea Rooms on Steep Hill in Lincoln. 'Voice and Verse 2009' in April will be featuring aspects of Tennyson's life and poetry, some of which has been set to music.

On Tuesday 3rd February, 'Emblems of Infinity, Tennyson's Landscapes', an exhibition of photographs by Richard Whittern opens at Alford Manor House. These photographs were inspired by Tennyson's poetry and a similar theme will be taken up by Lincoln Camera Club in their exhibition at Lincoln Central Library in the last two weeks of June.

Tennyson's poetry was immensely popular in the nineteenth century with people from all walks of life and all points of the compass. Many of the

events and attractions this year show how this can still be the case. Interpretations in sculpture, music and photography demonstrate how his poetry still inspires and speaks meaningfully in the twenty-first century. In this bumper year of anniversaries, Lincolnshire should be especially proud of this one.

Leaflets listing the year's events are available from libraries and heritage sites across the county and are also updated online at www.tennyson2009.co.uk Information on the Water Rail Way is available from Tourist Information Centres and libraries, by contacting 01522 782332, or from www.visitlincolnshire.com

Up and coming events

Tuesday 3rd February –
Sunday 5th April

*Tennyson's Landscapes by Richard Whittern
Alford Manor House
01507 463073

Thursday 23rd –
Saturday 25th April

Voice and Verse: Celebrating Tennyson with song
Visit www.convivium-music.org
01522 537261

Tuesday 5th May –
Friday 30th October

'Tennyson Today' - Exhibition of the Life of Tennyson
Alford Manor House
01507 463073

Friday 8th May (Lincoln Book Festival Event)

Tennyson in Words and Music - Kate Witney and John Davies
Lincoln Cathedral, Wren Library
01522 561618

Monday 11th – Friday 15th May (Lincoln Book Festival Event)

Lindsey Scribes - Tennyson Quotes

Tuesday 26th May - Saturday 13th June.

Walking Festival East Lindsey
Including walks with Tennyson themes

01507 601111

www.worldswalkingfestival.co.uk