

*People living in the North-East should take another look at its landmarks, says photographer Christopher Goulding.*

**T**HOSE of us who live in the North-East tend to take the architecture and landmarks of Tyneside for granted — seeing them every day has a tendency to render them unremarkable.

The Tyne Bridge, perhaps the most famous of all, is nothing more than a traffic bottleneck to thousands of motorists who cross it daily.

Yet as an instantly recognisable symbol of our region and its principal city, it is to Tyneside what the Eiffel Tower is to Paris.

My coming photographic exhibition, *Backstreet Wanderer*, sets out to show that by taking just a few steps off the beaten track, a very different light can be shed upon some of Tyneside's best-known sights.

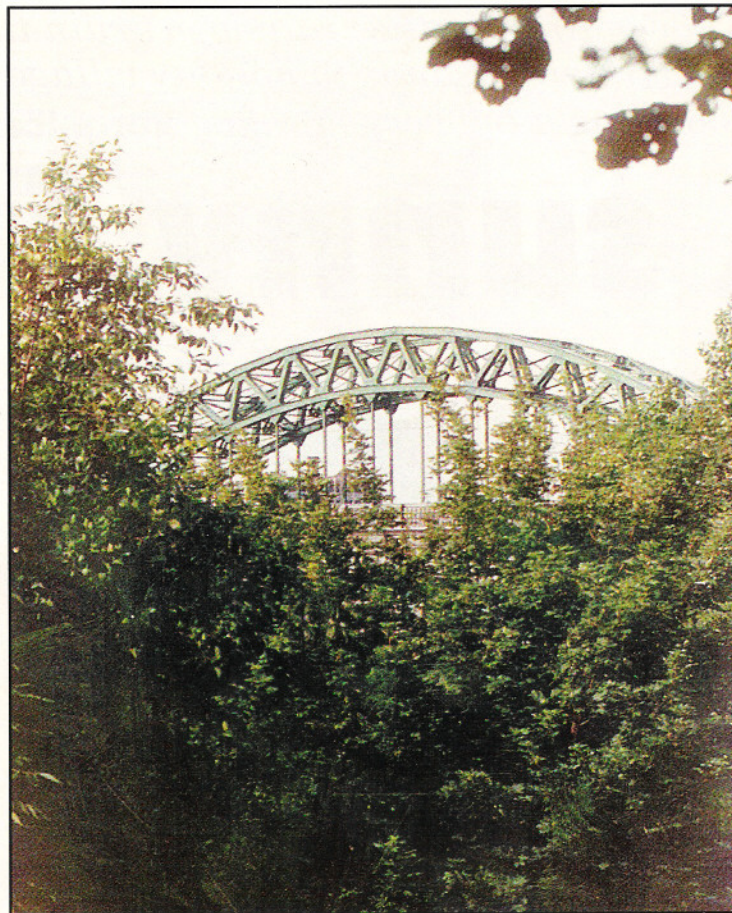
The exhibition has two themes. Firstly, an offbeat study of the architecture and streetscape of Newcastle and Gateshead with emphasis on unusual and unfamiliar points of view.

Secondly, there is a study of the struggle of urban plant life to survive in the city environment, and of the way it provides a (not always welcome) touch of "rus in urbe" against a metropolitan backdrop.

We are all familiar enough with Newcastle's "green lungs" in Jesmond Dene and the Town Moor. But next time you're near the river take a look at the woods that are bang in the centre of the city.

A stone's throw west of the High Level Bridge on the Gateshead side lies Rabbit Banks — a thickly wooded area that falls right down to the south bank of the river.

From the pathway along the top there is an excellent panoramic view of Newcastle, though in high summer only the top of the Tyne Bridge can be seen peeping over the tree canopy.



■ **Hidden from view:** The Tyne Bridge seen from Rabbit Banks, a thickly wooded area of Gateshead.

# Taking a closer look

A walk over the High Level to the Newcastle side, turn left then left again, and you are in "the Hanging Gardens of Hanover Street" which overlook the part of the Quayside called The Close — behind the Cooperage and the Copthorne Hotel.

Behind you is the huge Edwardian redbrick facade of Friar House — its looming folly towers give it more the air of some Ruritanian schloss rather than that of a warehouse, which it actually is.

Further afield, the towers of St George's Church, Jesmond and St Gabriel's of Heaton gaze at each other across the vale of Jesmond Dene.

The thick mature treescape, planted a century ago by Lord Armstrong, could not have been better planned for providing tantalising vistas such as that of St Gabriel's tower as seen through the trees when walking across Armstrong Bridge (yet traffic of the

coast road roars by only yards below).

Surely if Capability Brown had been a town planner Newcastle is what he would have come up with.

Perhaps less welcome, and noticed less often, are the weeds that sprout up

in the more neglected nooks and crannies in the city.

The faded splendour of the old Wengers building on Grainger Street provides a crumbling baroque habitat for many such fronds.

In 1636, Newcastle resident John Fenwick wrote a poem bemoaning the effects of the Plague.

*"... when there died in half a year  
seven thousand  
which made thee almost desolate  
thy streets grown green with grass  
thy treasury wasted, thy trading  
departed."*

The neglect today is for economic, rather than epidemic reasons. Though it is just as noticeable.

*Photo Exhibition sponsored by Bonsers at the Gulbenkian Gallery of the People's Theatre, Heaton November 3 to 7 (evenings). ●*