

# SECRET DURHAM

PHILIP NIXON & SOPHY NIXON

Few cities radiate the sense of timeless power that comes from first glimpsing the commanding prospect of Durham's Castle and Cathedral. Here is a city whose historic core has changed little over the past centuries, a city overlain with details from its splendid past.

With a photographer's acute eye for the unusual Philip Nixon here seeks out hidden and fascinating parts of the city of Durham. Over fifty different 'secret' sites are beautifully portrayed through the author's award-winning photographs accompanied by intriguing tales of each location; from little-known corners of Durham's magnificent Cathedral and Castle, to the mysterious story of St Cuthbert's Mist, and the tragic legend of Drummer Boy's Hole. Over 150 photographs are included while Sophy Nixon's illustrations add a delightful touch to each tale.

Millions visit Durham annually, drawn not only by its historic attractions but, due to the city's small compass, by the relative ease in which many of its finest features can be explored on foot. Secret Durham has been compiled not only as a source of information and a guide, but also as a tick list of must-see places. Most of the fifty sites included are accessible in a day and many are interlinked through their stories. This celebration of Durham's lesser-known pearls will prove captivating both to visitors and residents alike.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Philip Nixon** is a multi-award-winning professional photographer of vast experience who has had been commissioned by companies and organisations all over England. His work has been published worldwide in countless magazines, newspapers, calendars, brochures and books. He runs popular weekly photography classes in Durham on two evenings a week along with regular photographic workshops. His many professional awards include those for wedding, portrait, pictorial, and press and PR photography, and for his multi-media presentations. In his free time Philip is a Senior Steward in Durham Cathedral and his enthusiasm for photography sees him leading many photographic guided walks in Durham City and around the county. This is his 15th book. More of his work can be found at [www.philipnixon.com](http://www.philipnixon.com).

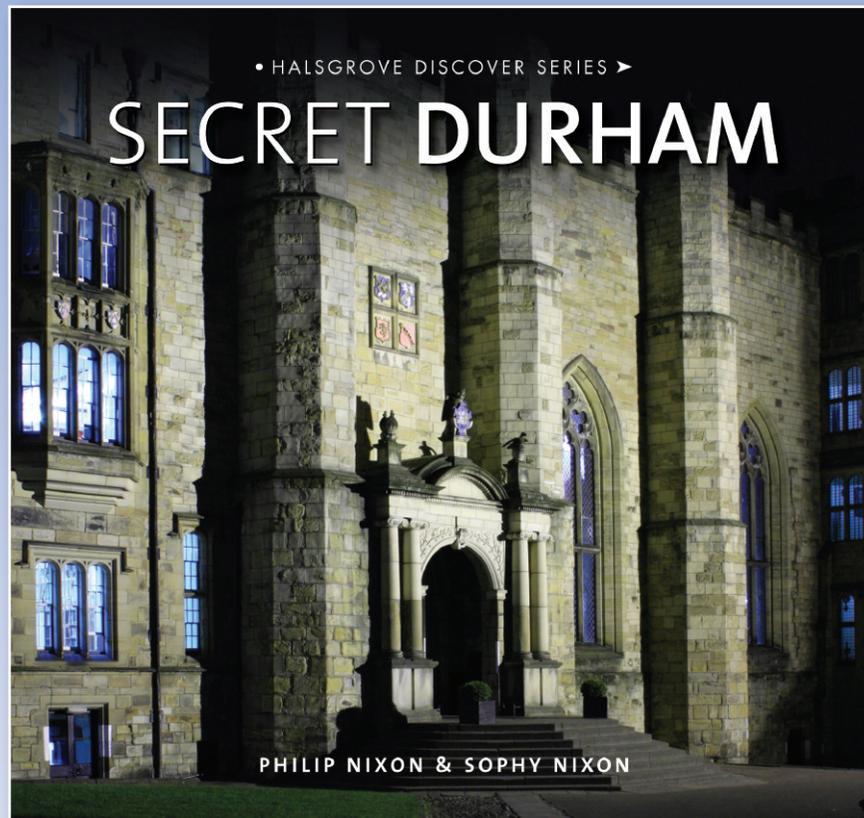


**Sophy Nixon** is an artist and illustrator who lives in Durham city with her Boston Terrier Claude. She enjoys long woodland walks with Claude, looking at birds, while Claude watches squirrels. She also enjoys drawing and painting. See more of her work at [sophynixon.com](http://sophynixon.com) and [sophynixon.tumblr.com](http://sophynixon.tumblr.com).

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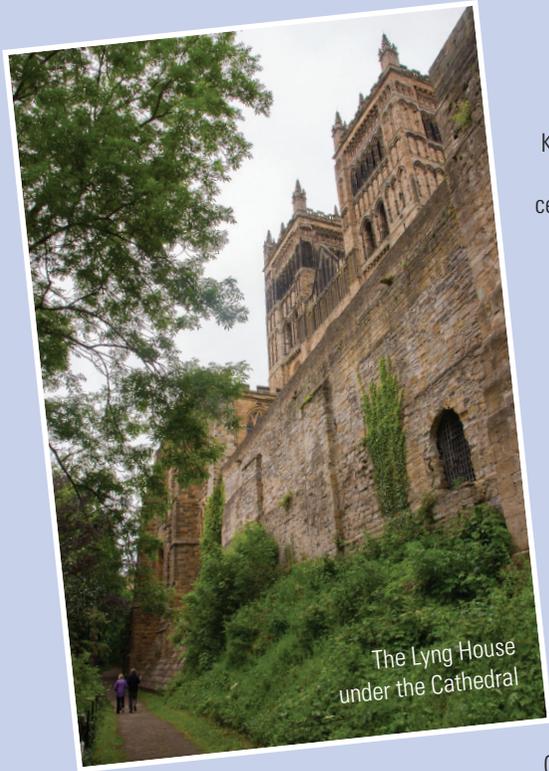
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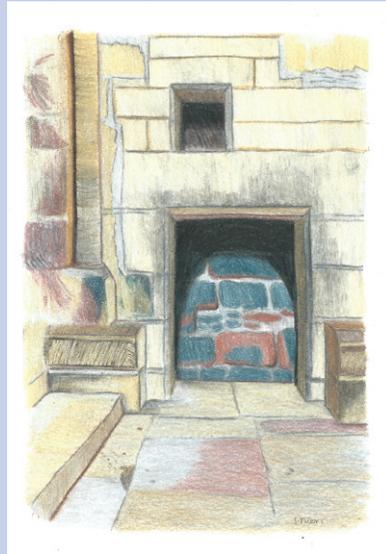
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# SECRET DURHAM



The Lyng House under the Cathedral

Stephen Kemble in his most celebrated role – Falstaff



Cathedral "Bread Oven"



John Meade Falkner's House, Durham

Maiden Castle Durham



Example of a double-page spread.

## Vane Tempest Hall, Gilesgate

THE VANE TEMPEST Hall in Gilesgate is the only surviving example of a militia barracks in County Durham. The Durham Militia was formed in 1759 and Lord Vane, Earl of Darlington, was ordered of the regiment. The officers were chosen from among the local gentry while the rank and file were selected by ballot. Britain has had a long history of reliance on part-time soldiers to supplement the standing regular full-time army. These forces were often assembled as needed for defence against invasion, or for maintaining domestic order. These men were not allowed to serve abroad, but there was good financial incentive if they joined the "regulards".

The Militia was the oldest of the auxiliary forces and was first recorded in 1556, but its origins can be traced right back to the 9th century. In 1853 the Durham Militia was divided into the North Durham Militia, based in Gatesgate, and the South Durham Militia, based in Barnard Castle. These two groups formed the 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Durham

Vane Tempest Militia Barracks, Gilesgate



Light Infantry and fought in the Boer War from 1899 until 1902.

Vane Tempest Hall itself is a hidden gem, just behind the buildings at the junction of Sherburn Road and Sunderland Road. Its imposing facade is best appreciated from the adjacent bowling green. The grand scale of the gothic-style windows with the imposing turret over the entrance is quite remarkable. As a Militia building, it was set in more extensive grounds and the remains of the surrounding walls give some idea of its original size. The former parade ground and other associated buildings that formed the typical courtyard perimeter have been lost over time to new development, but it remains an imposing site, high on the valley side, overlooking Palace Wood.

By 1884 the Militia vacated the barracks and it was pressed into service as a hospital for smallpox cases. However in 1903 the building was bought by the Marquess of Londonderry as headquarters for the 2nd Durham Artillery Volunteers. Today the hall serves as a busy community centre, although it is reputed to be haunted by the ghost of a soldier who was executed in the courtyard for mutiny.

Far right: Lookout tower North Durham Militia Barracks

Right: North Durham Militia shield plate

