



# HERITAGE STATEMENT

## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

NORTH MARINE PARK, LAWE ROAD, SOUTH SHIELDS.

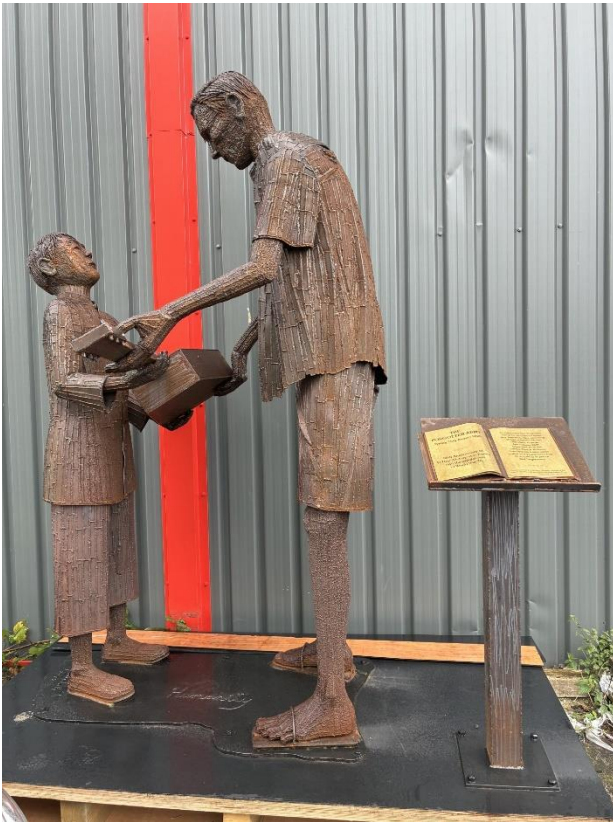
September 2025

North Marine Park is one of a chain of 3 municipal seaside parks (the others being South Marine Park and Bents Park) at the mouth of the Tyne.

Opening in 1890, it is a historically significant and early example of industrial land reclamation. The site had been used by a variety of industries and was reclaimed from waste from a local glass factory and sand and stone ballast dumped from ships arriving in the Tyne before being loaded with coal and other cargoes.

Registered as a Historic Park with English Heritage, North Marine Park has been recently refurbished. It has its own character and is considered the more tranquil park. It has several pieces of public art including World Beacon, a landmark artwork, which stands 6m high and made from weathered Corten steel, 2 mock Roman style Imperial standards, stone grotto, a grand staircase, Roman themed play area, together with a community garden, Victorian style planting, furniture and lighting.

South Tyneside Veteran Walkway has been created within North Marine Park by the council as a permanent reminder and is a featured walkway made up of over 40 personalised stone slabs bearing the names, regiments and years of service of both serving and former members of the armed services.



Brian Bernie, founder of Daft as a Brush Cancer Patient Care charity, has commissioned Ron Lonsdale to create a distinctive and thought provoking piece of art to commemorate Len Gibson BEM, a local war hero, when he was liberated in 1945 from the Burma 'Death' Railway, handing his home made banjo to a young local boy as a symbol of peace and forgiveness, as he was released from far east captivity to come home.

Ron Lonsdale is a celebrated local artist well known for his striking weathered steel installations, which capture moments of history, resilience and community. The statue was on display in front of South Tyneside Town Hall on August 15<sup>th</sup> to mark VJ Day and was universally well received.

The finished artwork conveys sensitivity and emotion and shows Mr. Gibson in the clothes he would have worn as a Japanese PoW. He is handing the banjo he made in the prison camp to a small local boy after being liberated.

This application is to permanently display the artwork on a high point in North Marine Park, near Lowe Top, where the landscape features a steep north facing incline down to the mouth of the Tyne. The 2.7m high statue is to be located close to the important junction of 2 footpaths. It will face inland, towards Lawe Road, a residential road of terraced properties and marine villas. It is intended to enhance the park emotionally as many of the soldiers from this area never returned from the Bridge over the River Kwai, Death Railway in Burma. It is also intended to serve as a lasting tribute to Len Gibson, a local war hero and for all 'The Forgotten Army' who fought in Burma.

The statue is to be fixed to a rough hewn sandstone base. A provision for future external low level lighting will be made. The base will be placed at above ground level and the rough finish to the base is intended to represent the harsh environment endured by prisons of war and also to discourage close contact with the statue. A separate stone base will take the interpretation board which is similar in design to those located elsewhere in the park.



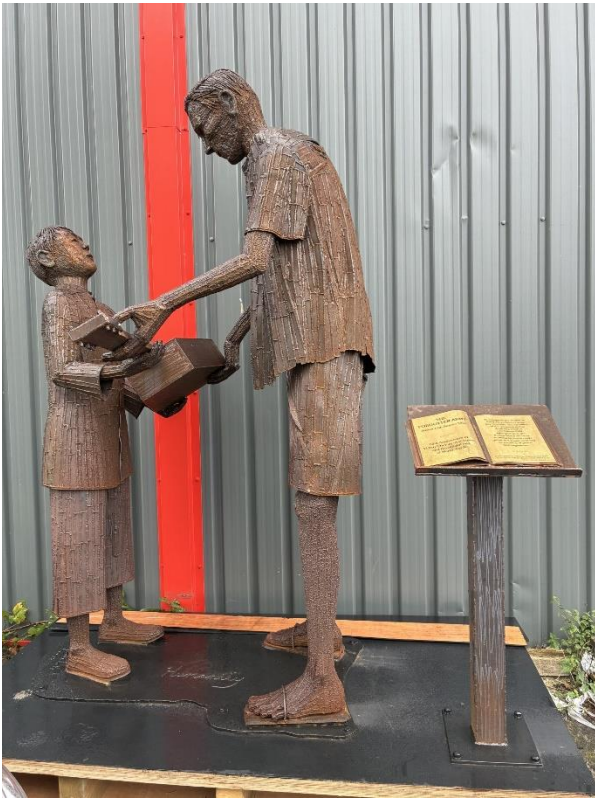
The oversized statue is 2.7m high



Base detail



Statue and interpretation board are made from Corten steel and will have a rusty red patina



Statue, interpretation board base details