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Property, 1943, oil on canvas (12)

L S Lowry (1887-1976) visited the town of Berwick many times from the mid-1930s until the summer before he died. The Berwick Lowry Trail identifies the sites of many of his finest paintings and drawings of the town and allows you to follow in his footsteps.

Altogether Lowry produced a fascinating group of more than thirty drawings and paintings of the Berwick area.

These successfully convey variations in the mood of Britain's most popular artist and range from familiar, busy, enclosed street and yard scenes **8** & **12** to composite panoramic dreamscapes **13**; from stern symmetrical architectural compositions **9** to joyous beach scenes **5** & **16**; from slight, smudged, pencil sketches of milling crowds **7** to boldly outlined, careful drawings of derelict industrial buildings **1**.

Berwick-upon-Tweed, in short, inspired some of L S Lowry's finest and most interesting works **10**.

LS LOWRY

in Berwick

LS Lowry
Self Portrait, 1925

Follow in his footsteps on The Lowry Trail



LS LOWRY in Berwick



LS Lowry (1887-1976) was especially fond of Berwick-upon-Tweed

His first oil painting of Berwick is dated 1935 ⁸. In that year he also made at least four drawings and two, possibly three, paintings of the town which were included in his first one-man exhibition in London in 1939 that established his reputation ⁹ & ¹⁰ (Manchester and Salford were the only other two towns to be identified by name in the catalogue).

Afterwards Lowry continued to visit the town area until the year before he died, doubtless finding that the town's crisp, clean air served as an antidote to the polluted atmosphere of the industrial city where he lived and worked.

The artist once said "My recreation seems to have developed into drifting amongst all the back streets.....I can come across." He was intrigued by such characterful, cobbled closes as Dewar's Lane and Sally Port ¹ & ¹¹ whilst Strother's Yard ⁹ fascinated him so much that he made no fewer than two drawings and two paintings of the scene.

Lowry was also interested in the way the Elizabethan Walls encircle the town. These act to keep people apart, just as in the foreground of many of his paintings there is often a low wall or fence, or some other form of barrier. But he also painted many figures framed by arches and in Berwick's ancient walls there are several archways such as Cowport and Scotsgate.

Above all, Lowry was captivated by the way the 150 foot steeple of the Georgian Town Hall dominates Berwick's skyline. Many of his paintings are highly symmetrical, built around a central perpendicular feature which held autobiographical significance for the artist. A single lamppost can be taken to symbolize his wary loneliness; so, too, can a ruined house standing alone in a derelict wasteland. Berwick's Town Hall, somehow so isolated in the midst of the busy, fortified town, is a further symbol of his peculiar solitary state ⁸.

During his visits he would stay in the Castle Hotel. Some people who worked there remember his visits but in 1947 he said that he thought seriously about buying a house in the town known as The Lions ⁶. "A derelict house gets me", he confessed, but as with so many of his tales this one should be taken with a pinch of salt. To his dismay an architect friend found it was "rampant with damp" and Lowry did not proceed with the purchase. He especially claimed to admire what he called the two "pot lions" on the entrance columns but one wonders what the lonely bachelor would have done with the many rooms.

More importantly he was still in full time employment as a rent collector and chief cashier with a property letting company in Manchester.

The real reason he may have wished to buy The Lions was to enjoy the breathtaking view from the windows. He was attracted to the sea throughout his life and the house looks out over the North Sea, in the direction of the rising sun, and down the coast to Lindisfarne and Bamburgh where he also sketched.



¹ **Dewar's Lane** (Off Bridge Street)

² **Palace Street**

³ **The Pier** (Pier Road)

⁴ **The Sea**

⁵ **On the Sands** (Car Park by Pier)

⁶ **The Lions** (The Walls)

⁷ **Football Match** (The Walls)

⁸ **The Town Hall** (Scotsgate overlooking Marygate)

⁹ **Old Berwick - Strother's Yard**
(by the Town Hall, Marygate)

¹⁰ **Bridge End**

¹¹ **Sally Port** (Off Bridge Street)

¹² **Old Property** (Main Street)

¹³ **Berwick Harbour**

¹⁴ **Portraits of LS Lowry**
(By the Lifeboat Station)

¹⁵ **Boats** (Sandstell Road Car Park)

¹⁶ **Spittal Sands** (Spittal Promenade)

¹⁷ **Spittal Promenade**

¹⁸ **Beach Scene**

¹⁹ **Back Streets** (Howick Terrace)

Following in Lowry's footsteps...

For more information on what to see and do in Berwick-upon-Tweed please contact:
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