

Wheatley Hill History Club

Volume 19 Issue 2

April 2015

BIRTHDAY PARTY

Our usual method of celebration went down really well at our 20th birthday party at the end of March. Pies, peas and cream cakes provided by Craggs Bakers of Peterlee are always well received and this was no exception.

The event was attended by 36 people who thoroughly enjoyed the entertainment – What Fettle, a very amusing husband and wife act who told stories and sang songs representing North East life, and judging by the amount of laughing and singing, I think it is fair to say we thoroughly enjoyed them.

The Chair of our Parish Council, Morris Nicholls and Parish Councillor Brian Maddison were our invited guests and Morris made a speech setting out the achievements of the History Club and the importance of our contribution to future generations and especially our co-operative working with the Heritage Society.

Thank you to everyone who supported this anniversary in any way at all and to everyone who helped out on the night—we are very grateful that you all came.

VILLAGE ARTWORK

2018—50 years without a pit

The Mothers' Club are raising funds for the above project to commemorate the 50th year of the closure of our main industry in Wheatley Hill.

Letters of invitation have been sent to all voluntary groups within the village asking for support in fund-raising and also representatives for a working group. Their aim is to raise £10,000 of local money before approaching funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund for the balance which is likely to be in the region of £35-£40,000.

Dorothy from the Mothers' Club has met with Ray Lonsdale, the sculptor responsible for "Tommy" the Seaham soldier, and he has agreed to carry out the work. He has provided initial drawings for discussion, but nothing has been decided yet.

A likely site for the placing of the artwork is the existing pit wheel site in Patton Walk.

If you would like to be involved in the working group, please let Margaret know and your name will be passed on to the Mothers' Club.



This is a proposal
only—nothing has
been decided

NEW VENUE

LOCAL HISTORY DAY 2015

Saturday 26 September 2015 10.00am—1.00pm

This year sees the above event moving to a new venue in our village. As an organisation with an 'elderly' membership, we are no longer capable of setting up and making good the concert room in the working-mens club as we have for the past 15 years, so we are holding our event in Wheatley House. We are very grateful to the Club committee for allowing us to use their facilities but its time for a change.

This year we will be advertising the event as "After World War Two—1950's Vintage themed Fair" including afternoon tea in the morning!! More details in the July newsletter.

CONTACT DETAILS

CHAIR: 01429 820813
TREASURER: 01429 823198

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W: wheatley-hill.org.uk



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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 29 April Washington Men in the Great War
9 May **YESTERDAY BELONGS 2U2015**
New College Durham 10.00am-4.00pm
27 May Great War Archaeology
24 June Dad's Army Napoleonic Style

PLANNING

During a recent trip to the Durham County Records Office, looking for plans of the 1950's council housing built in Wheatley Hill, I came across some interesting information concerning our village:

- 1910's Several planning applications the from Mr Welford who was building lots of houses/shops in the Granville Terrace/Ashmore Terrace areas
- 1922 An application for a fish and chip shop in Quarry Street by Mr N Cadman
- 1924 An application for 75 houses for the Weardale Steel, Coal & Coke Company in — I believe these to be the 'town' streets
- 1947 plans for 94 houses in Wingate Lane— presume these to be the 'Ponderosa'? Although not built until much later
- 1948—Application by De-Lancey Lands Ltd to change the use of their premises in Church Street from a woodwork and French polishing establishment to a second hand furniture shop
- 1950—plans for two police houses at the top of Cemetery Road

No sign of the plans I was actually looking for though!!

BINCHESTER FORT

Binchester was once the largest Roman fort in County Durham. A small part has been excavated and is open to view and to visit. However, most of the fort and the remains of the nearby civilian settlement still lie buried in the surrounding fields.

Thanks to Gordon Henderson, the Roman Soldier who told us about the Roman national health service, Wheatley Hill History Club have an opportunity to explore the impressive remains of a Roman bath house with its amazing 1,700 year-old under floor heating system. Find out why taking a bath in Roman times was about more than just getting clean! Walk in the footsteps of the soldiers around the remains of the Commander's House.

As the site is about to close down, we felt our members might like to take advantage of this opportunity.

The site has been specially laid out with level access for people in wheelchairs and those with prams. An accessible toilet and parking bays are provided. The site has a shop, toilet and limited refreshment facilities.

A date of Sunday 6 September 2015 at 11.00am has been suggested and until we have some idea of interest, we cannot provide a cost for the outing.

If you would like to take part in this trip, please let the History Club know as soon as possible.

HISTORY CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of members

will be held in
Wheatley House at 6.00pm
on
Wednesday 24 June 2015
our normal monthly meeting will follow

WHEATLEY HILL COLLIERY

TIMES OF

	DESCENT	&	ASCENT
1st Shift	3.00am-3.15am		10.30am-10.45am
Back Shift	9.35am-9.50am		5.05pm—5.20pm
Night Shift	4.10pm-4.25pm		11.40pm-11.55pm
Tubloading	10.00pm—10.10pm		5.25am-5.35am

**EVERYONE MUST BE AT THEIR PLACE OF DESCENT OR
ASCENT WHEN THE BUZZER BLOWS**

COAL MINING IN EAST DURHAM (part 1)

(from Geordies, Yankees & Canucks by William Wonders)

The second half of the 17th Century saw rising land values as a result of which yeomen farmers increasingly prospered in the East Durham area. By the 18th Century wealthy businessmen and professionals from the cities began to purchase land for investment purposes, though the agricultural quality of plateau land (*land on the magnesian limestone escarpment*) was limited by inferior soil—variable thickness of loam over the limestone bedrock in the west and heavy clay over glacial drift in the east.

Most villages in East Durham remained small, though Easington had been a major centre since Saxon times. The 12th Century church of St Mary's was built on the hilltop site of a Saxon predecessor. In contrast, Thornley was located in Kelloe parish and did not have its own Anglican church until 1843. In 1828 Easington's pre-eminence as a major village in the district was demonstrated statistically in a local trade directory as having 30 farmers while Thornley only had 3 farmers.

It was the discovery of major coal stocks below the limestone of East Durham and the availability of new equipment to cope with its extraction difficulties and of efficient overland transportation by way of the newly developed railways, that transformed the once agricultural region into an industrial area.

"In the 1820's and 30's a scramble to open up the coalfield took place as ruthless as many a gold rush, even though its participants were not rough diggers but titled lords good-living Londoners or local men of humble background. In these two decades the County was criss-crossed with a maze of railway lines and new collieries were opened up with an influx of capital, some from the London area, the rest often within the County itself. At the same time more powerful pumping machines and the safety lamp gave new life at greater depths to many of the existing collieries".

Following the successful raising of coal at Hetton in 1832 and Haswell in 1835 Thornley was the third colliery to be sunk in the East Durham coalfield. The first boring operations from the surface had been carried out on the Estate by T Rawlings as early as 1765 but nothing came of them. In the 19th Century the partners in the Thornley Colliery Company consisted of Sir William Chaytor of Witton Castle and three others—Messrs Thomas Wood, former viewer of the Hetton Company, John Burrell, a gentleman from Durham City and the brother-in-law of William Chaytor and John Gully, a former bareknuckle boxer, London pub and racehorse owner and MP.

Sinking for coal began on 9 January 1834 at a depth of 216 feet and the first seam of coal was reached on 29 January 1834. Six coal seams were found at Thornley, varying in thickness from 2'2" to 4' at depths down to 990'. Production began at Thornley in 1835. The company built a private railway eastwards to connect with the Hartlepool Railway which had been constructed in the 1830's to transport coal from the East Durham pits to the port at Hartlepool. Thornley coal was the first to be shipped from the Hartlepool Docks and Harbour when they opened in 1835.

Wheatley Hill Community Association T: 01429 820214



OPENING HOURS
Mon-Thurs 8.30am-8.45pm
Fri 8.30am-7.45pm
Sat 9.30am-11.30am
Sun (Church only) 9am-12

OUR FACILITIES INCLUDE:

Café/Training/IT Suite/
Function rooms to
accommodate 2-120 people
Free Wi-Fi
Office Space for Hire
Office & Admin Services

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Parties & Events**
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YESTERDAY BELONGS TO YOU 2015

will be held at

NEW COLLEGE, DURHAM

on Saturday 9 May 2015 10.00am - 4.00pm

Displays by local history groups (inc Wheatley Hill)
Outside Attractions
Café Facilities