

Wheatley Hill History Club

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April 2017

Thomas Kenny VC—Beyond Praise

Work is well underway for the documentary film and some of our History Club members have had parts in the production. I won't tell you who, I'll let you see for yourself and be pleasantly surprised by the professionalism of our actors!!

The official launch of the film will be held in The Gala Theatre in Durham City on the afternoon of Wednesday 8 November 2017. This will be for invited guests only and of course History Club members will be given the opportunity to ticket allocation. Local viewings will be arranged in the village after the official launch and the film will also be available to view online free of charge.



Actors playing Thomas Kenny & Philip Brown

THE LAST SHIFT Update

The statue has been ordered and work will begin on producing it at the end of this year. The official unveiling date for this project is **Thursday 3 May 2018** and we are looking for men or women who were present at **The Last Shift** at Wheatley Hill pit in May 1968 (those who are still alive!!) so they can be invited to the unveiling ceremony. If you can provide any names, please contact us.

After lots and lots of hassle with planning due to restrictions/regulations/problems the statue will be sited in Wheatley Hill Cemetery, which is seen by many as a safe place and although this would not have been the first choice of location by the majority of people involved in this project, we have had to allow our heads to overrule our hearts on the final location.

At the moment we are £4000 short of the £22,000 cost of the artwork and have recently submitted two funding applications which we hope will provide the shortfall. We have been allocated funding from The County Durham Community Foundation (Wind Farms), the Sir James Knott Trust and we are part of the Co-operative Community Fund between April and October this year—all spending at the Wheatley Hill Branch on Co-op own brands earns us 1% so the more we spend the more our fund will benefit.

YESTERDAY BELONGS TO YOU 2017

Beamish Museum Saturday 15 July 2017

Wheatley Hill History Club will have a stand at the above event this year. We have had to adjust our displays in order to appeal to a more intergenerational audience and hope we have done this by providing a range of children's dressing up outfits so that younger visitors can wear the clothing of Edwardian working boys, Edwardian maids, World War 1 soldiers uniforms and World War 1 nurses uniforms.



On Saturdays with good weather, Beamish can attract up to 5000 visitors so we hope the weather will be glorious and that the visitors will be attracted to the show field where the History Club will be situated.

CONTACT DETAILS

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31 May

Stephen E McCaw A Casualty of WW1
Brenda Graham

28 June

Emily Wilding Davison
Sharon Vincent

26 July

The George Elmy Lifeboat
Alan Brooks

HISTORY CLUB MEETINGS

It would appear that meetings on a Wednesday morning will become a regular feature of the History Club from March 2018. We haven't had anyone complain about the proposed changes so speakers who can visit on a morning are being approached for talks next year.

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH WINDOWS

These four windows were installed in St Bartholomew's Church, Thornley in 1866 and 1868 respectively in memory of local landowners H J Spearman and George Wilkinson. When Thornley church was demolished several years ago, they came under the ownership of the demolition contractor responsible for pulling the church down. A member of Wheatley Hill Heritage Society felt strongly that the windows should be kept in this area, and with financial assistance provided by Thornley Parish Council, was able to buy them from the demolition contractor. The Heritage Society have tried for a number of years to find homes for the windows and when Barry Swinburn, a local glazing contractor showed us how successful the restoration of the round window was, Rev Jane Grieves of All Saints, Wheatley Hill, was eager to offer the Wilkinson window a temporary home in the Church. The three Spearman windows are in the Heritage Centre and all look splendid.

A special opening in both the Heritage Centre and All Saints Church took place on Saturday morning, 25 March for visitors to examine the windows and to see what an excellent job Barry Swinburn and his colleague Chris have made of this restoration. The Wilkinson window was also blessed by the vicar at the event.

The funding to carry out the work provided by the County Durham Community Foundation (Wind Farms Fund).



In their original home

LIFE IN A PIT VILLAGE

a fundraising event by Culture for Hetton for the Mining Heritage Statue
featuring songs and stories from the coal face

Murton Song Writer John Wrightson
Comedian & Story Teller Bertie Draycott
Writer of '*She's Fired*' Bob Lowery

Friday 9 June 2017 at 7.30pm
Easington Lane Welfare Hall, Brickgarth

Tickets £10/£8 Concessions
0191 5262804

THE MEMOIRS OF WILLIAM HERBERT SHEPHERD (1891-1972)

Father went to the colliery office just after 4.00pm to see the undermanager about 'starting' the next day. When he was away we helped mother to square up a bit, but of course father would see to the beds, lino and other necessary things when he returned. What a difference we saw when looking out of the windows. At the old place we looked over miles of fields and trees, and had our own little handkerchief sized garden at the front, now it was just another row of houses while at the back, over the top of the out-houses where we looked on to a wood, here was nothing but heaps of house coal (duff), middens, earth closets and another row of houses. Everywhere had a drab and dreary outlook, but as I soon found out, clean and shining inside most of those houses. If the womenfolk couldn't do much about the outside, they certainly made up for it inside. Spotlessly clean beds and bedding, tablecloths and all else down to clothing, shining brass on the mantel shelf and fenders like mirrors. However, more of that later. When father got back he said he had to go to work the next day on the back shift and report to a certain deputy overman, who would place him temporarily until the cavils went in at the end of the quarter (about three weeks time). In the meantime he should see about some 'marras' himself.

The cavilling system meant that all sets of hewers and putters balloted for places in the pit for another quarter. There was a lot of luck attached to this as some parts of the coalface was 'softer' than others, and when four men, two in the foreshift (4.00am—10.30am) and two in the backshift (9.30am—4.00pm) got a hard face, they could not produce the tonnage of the men at the softer faces, so there was a difference in pay. Putters may be drawn to a 'flat' that had just been moved up, so their journeys to and from the hewers was short. Others drawn where the flat was about ready to be moved had much further to push the tubs, both full and empty. Putters were also affected by whether conditions were wet or dry and by the level of the gateways. Putters were in two classes, hand and pony. Hand putters pushed tubs by sheer bodily strength, but where it was too heavy for handwork, the ponies or 'gallowas' as they were called, were used to pull the tubs. These were always used where the face was lower than the flat. Gallowa putters were also the younger lads who went on to hand work as they grew older and stronger. They rode on the 'limmers' or shafts that guided the tubs by pulling or pushing on the handles. Their jobs was to take the empty tubs 'emteuns' to the hewers at the face and bring the 'fulluns' to the flat. From there they were taken to the landing by larger horses but smaller boys known as drivers, from where, after being assembled into 'sets' of anything from 20 to 40 tubs, they were taken to the shaft bottom either by 'main and tail haulage' or by endless rope.

Anyway cavilling day, which was on a baff Friday, was looked upon by some as a time for omens, and so if a man who thought that way met a person with a cast in his eye on his way to work, he would go back home, as a 'cock-eyed' man meant bad luck. Others had different signs. A black cat running across his path was lucky. Wives also played their part in this, some being known to put the family cat in the oven (a warm oven of course!) until the draw was over. The results of the draw were posted at the colliery office and there was always a large crowd of men and lads to be seen scanning the boards for their partners and to see where they would be working for another quarter.

Saturday was shifting gear day. Picks, shovels, crackers etc were moved to the nearest place where they could be taken up on the Monday on the way in-bye to the new place. On father's first day he worked with another newcomer, both of them 'hanging their own up'. This meant they each put their own tokens on the tubs they filled, and were credited separately for them. This was kept up until the cavils went in, by which time he had been approached by Bert, a Lancashire man who had lost his marra through an accident, and who looked like being off work for quite a while and perhaps not able to hew again. The other two of the set were the injured marras sons. They were known to be very good workers who lost very little time of their own accord so dad was lucky in getting such men to work with. Although the days of 'big hewers' were coming to an end, good sets of hewers were still known and well respected within the coal industry.

Bert was known to us kids because when he had first called at our house to talk to father about joining them, he pulled out of his pocket a large slab of toffee, broke it and gave us each a generous portion. He called in 'claggum' as it was of a treacly nature. Bert was a jolly chap and came regularly to our house on a Friday night and we never forgot the claggum, and always looked forward to him coming to visit.



OPENING HOURS

Mon—Thurs

8.30am—8.45pm

Fri—8.30am-6.45pm

Available for functions outside of these hours—please ask for details

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SUNDAY Roast Dinner 12–4.00pm

TUESDAY Burgers (2 for £10)

WEDNESDAY Pizza (2 for £10)

THURSDAY Steak & all trimmings
£10 with a drink

FRIDAY Fish & Chips (2 for £10)

FOOD SERVED 12 noon–8.00pm



For lovers of good food & drink

FODCRO EVENT

Friends of Durham County Record Office

THE HISTORY CLUB

will have a WW1 stand at the above event at
Durham County Hall
along with other history groups in the area

WEDNESDAY 24 MAY

6.30pm–8.30pm

What did you do in the War Mammy?

Peter Welsh from the Washington U3A gave us
an excellent talk about the roles taken on by
women during the 1914-1918 war when the men
went off to fight.

For the first time women were involved in
industry, making ammunitions etc and also in
sport taking over the playing of local football
matches.



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