

Wheatley Hill History Club

Volume 21 Issue 1

January 2017

Thomas Kenny VC—Beyond Praise

In June of this year, the History Club took part in the Sunderland History Fair, mounting an exhibition of Thomas Kenny VC and the part he played in the First World War. The event was held in the Exchange Building in Sunderland and was very well attended.

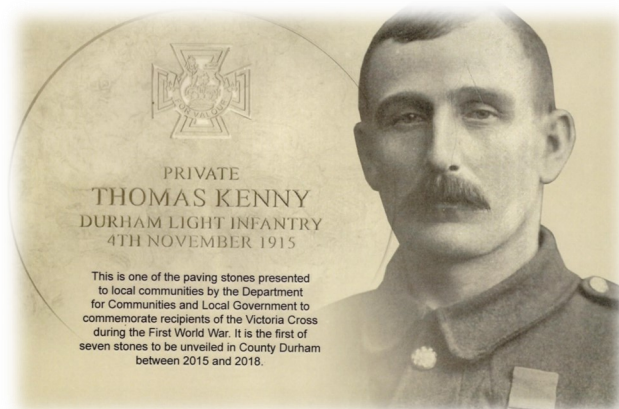
After the exhibition we were approached by a film company who had seen the display and were keen to make a documentary-film about the part Kenny played in the First World War in order to achieve his VC.

Of course we were interested, but it meant raising £10,000 which is the cost involved in making the film. With the help of the film company, we applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund who had money available for World War 1 topics and after an anxious eight week wait, we eventually heard that we had been successful and that work could begin on the docu-film.

The film maker—Lonely Tower, has already started interviewing people and hope to start filming in the New Year. Their aim is to have all interviewing and filming complete by the end of the Spring. They will spend the few months after that editing the work and hope to have the film ready for release in November 2017.

This is a very exciting project for our history club and one of the benefits of using an HLF grant is that the film cannot be sold—it is a requirement of the grant, that it needs to be made available FREE. This will be done by making it available on UTube and other computer-based programmes.

There will be more information in the next newsletter about the progress of our docu-film.



GREAT BRITISH WW1 BAKE OFF

If you were at the October history club meeting, you will have been able to sample some of our Trench Cake made by Margaret in preparation for the above competition which was held at County Hall on Saturday 26 November.

Margaret and Sheila took our Battle of the Somme Exhibition to the event and entered trench cake and ned cakes in to the baking competition and were delighted when we got First Prize for the trench cake. No one had heard of ned cakes!!



Wheatley Hill History Club
Winners of World War 1 Baking Competition
Trench Cake



WW1 RECIPE TRENCH CAKE

½ lb flour
4oz margarine
1tsp vinegar
¼ pt milk
3oz cleaned currants
2tsp cocoa
½ tsp baking soda
Nutmeg
Ginger
Grated lemon rind
3oz brown sugar

METHOD

Grease a cake tin
Rub margarine into the flour in a basin
Add the dry ingredients and mix well
Add the soda dissolved in vinegar and milk. Beat well
Turn into the tin
Bake in a moderate oven for about two hours

MEMBERSHIP 2017

Will be held at £6 again for 2017 and due at the March meeting or shortly before or after. This figure has remained the same for several years and there are no plans to increase it at the moment. If you would like to pay by cheque please make your cheque payable to **Wheatley Hill History Club**.

CONTACT DETAILS

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29 MARCH **What did you do in the War Mammy?**
Peter Welsh

26 APRIL **The Funeral of George Bowes of Gibside**
David Butler

31 MAY **Stephen Ellison McCaw—
A Casualty of the Great War**
Brenda Graham



On Friday 4 November 2016 Margaret attended the official opening of the new DLI collection at Seven Hills, Spennymoor with Fred Bromilow.

The building is quite difficult to find the first time you visit as it is badly sign-posted, but we eventually got there. The usual dignitaries that you would expect to find at such an event were in attendance but the speeches were brief and eventually we got to have a look around the facility.

The History Club are well known to the manager, Gillian Kirkbride, and Gillian and her staff showed groups around the building. It is a shame that the collection has been split up over three or four sites, but the facilities at Seven-Hills were impressive, particularly the store-room which is far better than the DLI Museum as they now have room to store items so that they can be easily found.

HISTORY CLUB MEETINGS

As you already know, we have struggled to maintain numbers at our monthly meetings and I have written about this in previous newsletters. As I have said before, there are many reasons for this and whilst we have made some changes to our meeting times, it hasn't improved things a great deal.

With speaker costs remaining high (and likely to get higher as the cost of fuel increases) and the venue-hire which still needs to be paid even if no-one turns up to our meetings, we need to try something more radical in order to try and increase numbers attending our meetings and therefore increase our revenue.

With this in mind therefore, the committee have decided, with effect from 2018, to hold history club meetings on a Wednesday morning, starting at 11.00am and finishing at about 12.

Other groups that hold daytime meetings, more notably U3A groups, seem to have no trouble in attracting large audiences, and it is one more thing that we can try in order to increase our audience.

I will be starting to book speakers for 2018 in February 2017, so if you have any comments to make about the proposed changes, please let me know as soon as possible please so that they can be taken into consideration.



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BOOK SALE BY SEALED BID

Generally not well supported BUT we did manage to get a couple of sealed bids and have sold the book for £25.00. The successful bidder wants to remain anonymous.



DEREK SWINBURNE 1926—2016

It was with sadness that we heard about Derek's death on 20 December. Derek and Marion had been members of the History Club since it started in 1995 and were very good supporters of our work even if getting to meetings had become rather difficult in recent years. Margaret represented History Club members at

Derek's funeral at Holy Trinity Church, Wingate on Friday 6 January 2017 where a very fitting eulogy was presented by the vicar. Our thoughts are with Marion and her family at this sad time.

THOMAS KENNY EXHIBITION

The History Club have an exhibition about the above in Wingate Library until the end of January. Thomas Kenny was born at South Wingate (Hartbushes) and after the first world war lived, worked and died in Wheatley Hill. However the people of Wingate are still extremely proud of his links to their area. He attended St Mary's Roman Catholic School.

To support the exhibition, Margaret gave a talk at Holy Trinity Church on the life of Thomas Kenny on 4 January.

THE MEMOIRS OF WILLIAM HERBERT SHEPHERD

(1891-1972)

There were two main rooms, the back one being the kitchen, living room and general utility room. A large larder or pantry was an offshoot into the yard. Open stairs from this room led up to an attic. In the kitchen there was a huge fireplace with a flat surface at the back that would hold nearly half cwt of coal, while at one side was a round oven and a 'set pot' or boiler at the other, both heated by flues which went round them, the draught of these being controlled by dampers. Above it all was a broad mantleshelf. The kitchen window looked onto the back yard.

The front room looked onto the opposite street's front. On opening the door we found there was a concrete pathway almost a yard wide running down the whole length of the street. A smaller path ran down the street opposite and in between was nothing but clumps of grass, bricks and stones. The windows, both front and back, were fitted with outside shutters.

The attic ran the length and breadth of the house and had been divided crosswise to make two bedrooms, each having for light, a hinged skylight.

We young ones noticed that on the front door or on a piece of slate or wood fastened on the wall slate beside it, some of the houses carried chalked numbers. There were 3's or 5's and sometimes both, so we asked Cousin George the reason for them. "Oh", he said, "they're for the caller". He then explained that a man was employed to knock with a stick on those marked doors, at the time stated by the chalk marks.

At the back of the house and midway between these and the backs of those on the opposite side of the street, were rows of ash pits, earth closets and middens and between these again, there were conical heaps of coal duff (miners coal), coal so small that later we saw it blown about the streets in heavy winds. Some men had covered in the part of the yard between the end of the larder and outside wall and shovelled their coal in there. It was easier to get at and kept the rain and snow from it.

About four feet from the yard, a gutter ran the whole length of the street, which then ran down to a sink at the bottom of the street, and I suppose to a main sewer. **(The waste water was actually running in to the beck, Wheatley Hill didn't have a sewer until much later).** Dirty water and slops of all kinds were put in, though generally people would wash it away with a pailful of clean water taken from a barrel in the yard, where rainwater was stored. This water was used mostly for ablutions, clothes washing, in fact anything but drinking. The gutter, which was a glazed earthenware, was as a whole kept very clean by the various householders each doing their bit.

Father asked Cousin George where we would get drinking water. He said, "Go to the top of the street, cross the road, then the line (railway) and you will see a tap fastened to the wall of the end house of the street there. People generally carry two pails at once with a girth, some big handed ones can carry four pails that way". A girth was either a steel ring or a wooden square which kept the pails from the carriers sides. Well that was something else to try out when we got our pails from the van.

By now it was time for Cousin George to go home as he wanted a nap before going to work at 10.00pm. He was a Stoneman and worked eight hours ending at 6.00am the following morning. He wanted us all to go to his house for a meal but we had to be ready for the furniture van's arrival. The lady from next door then came to offer the loan of a couple of chairs so mam and dad could rest while we waited. Father thanked her and took them, then we found that during the commotion, the baby of the family had strayed away. We three went to look for him and found him playing in the water and dirt around the grating. He was in a sorry state but mother couldn't do much with him until our washing utensils arrived, by which time the water would be hot as father had got a fire going.

Soon after that we heard the noise of children in the street which was a sign that our van was coming, with about 20 children after it. They were making guesses as to what it contained as a furniture van was a bit of a rarity. "Aah knaa", said one, "it's the shows". "Din't be daft" said another. "There's nee room for shows doon here, they wad gan up beside the chapel like they alwas dee". They hadn't to wait long for enlightenment. The men slackened the harnesses and after asking the children where they could find water, saw to their horses nose bags, then began to unload. When the kids saw it was only a removal, then ran off as they had seen plenty of those.

Once some of our belongings had been moved into the house we children set off in search of water following Cousin George's directions.

The 1901 Wheatley Hill Census confirms that William H Shepherd and his family were living at No 16 Elizabeth Street. According to a map, the nearest tap was at the top of Anne Street.



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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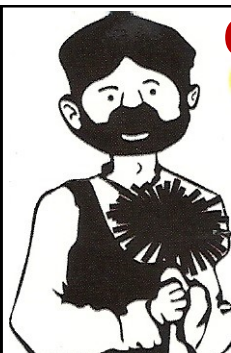
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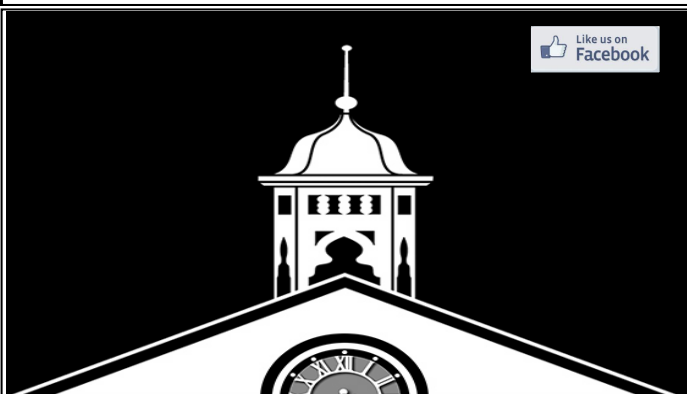
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