

Wheatley Hill History Club

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COAL UNDER THE LIMESTONE

After taking part in the Limestone Landscape project, the village was presented with what is called *A Village Atlas*, which is the history of the area since before the Romans to the 1970's.

It is a remarkable document that contains research, photographs, maps, oral histories as well as geological and environmental reports about the area. The document is a reference book and will be made available for public scrutiny once the copyright has been sorted out with the County Council.

However, as the Village Atlas is so big and not many people would be interested in reading it all, The History Club have commissioned a series of roll-up banners - 12 in all, that communicates the history of the village in a visual way.

These banners will be available for public display on **Saturday 28 September** - our local history day, but as members of the History Club you are invited to the press launch that will introduce the project, which is being held in Wheatley House on **Thursday 12 September** between 10am and 1pm. This is also the start of the Heritage Open Days.

As well as the press, we have invited people who have been directly involved in the Limestone Landscape project.

We have called the exhibition *Coal Under the Limestone*, because before the 1820's, old miners were adamant that there wasn't any coal under the limestone that our area is built on and it was only when engineering and geological improvements made exploration possible that coal was discovered under the limestone landscape.

YESTERDAY BELONGS TO YOU 2013 COUNTY HALL, DURHAM CITY

The above event returned to County Hall for 2013 and the History Club were present for the occasion.

This event was originally started by Durham County Council staff in 1996 and that's probably why it was held at County Hall - they could use their own facilities without attracting a hire charge. Eventually however, in 2011, the member of staff carrying out the organisation of this event lost her job due to financial restraints and it appeared that no one in the local authority wanted to take it over.

However, the Durham County History & Heritage Forum, a voluntary group set up as an umbrella for all local and family history groups within the old County of Durham, decided they would take over the organisation of Yesterday Belongs to You 2013 in an attempt to keep, what had become an excellent history event, going.

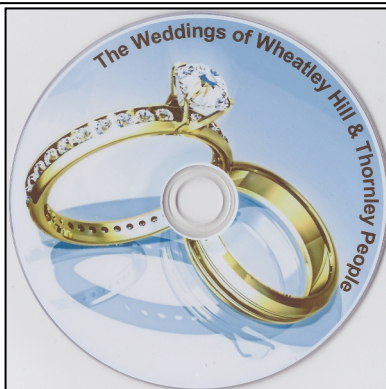
They decided to hold it in County Hall where everyone was familiar with the lay-out etc but of course had to hire the exhibition space, which cost £1500 and this was only one of the associated costs of staging such an event. AA signage, St John's Ambulance presence, insurance - the list was never-ending and amounted to £3000. Against these costs however was income generated by hiring table space to groups such as ours.

As far as Wheatley Hill was concerned, the day was very successful - we sold lots of books and DVD's and this despite excessive rainfall!! Our congratulations go to the History and Heritage Forum for their efforts.

WEDDING DVD

This dvd has been produced by the Heritage Centre and is available for sale at £5. It is an excellent reminder of the people of Wheatley Hill and Thornley and how they celebrated a wedding.

Another disc is being planned, so if you have wedding photographs of anyone from Wheatley Hill or Thornley please let the Heritage Centre have copies so that their wedding can be documented for posterity.



MONTHLY HISTORY CLUB MEETINGS

Those who attend our monthly meetings regularly, may have noticed that since January this year we have seen a significant drop in the number of people coming to the history club. This could be for many reasons but it is becoming increasingly obvious that we cannot continue to hold public meetings given the present attendance levels.

Speakers are charging between £30-£50 and for most of this year the History Club has had to subsidise this charge due to low door takings. At the moment, we don't pay a specified room rental for Wheatley House but the committee agreed recently that we should make a financial contribution for the room and the hire of the cupboard they allow us to use as the management committee of Wheatley House will no doubt have overheads to cover.

The committee are looking at a number of ways in which to overcome our present difficulties, so watch this space. If you have any suggestions, then please let one of us know.



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CONTACT DETAILS

Chair: 01429 820813

Treasurer: 01429 823198

E: history.club2@btinternet.com

Web Site: wheatley-hill.org.uk

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

31 July	The Story of the Graf Spee
25 Sept	North East Witchcraft
28 Sept	LOCAL HISTORY DAY
30 Oct	The Gunpowder Plot
27 Nov	Orange, Green and in Between - the story of the Irish in North East England

We continue the memories of Herbert Marks, originally from Ludworth

This particular 'flat' was taken over with one of the unit's trucks mixed, and then after a long wait it was ascertained that the ferry had broken down. A further search revealed that the Station Master 'had gone for his tea' and it was now after 16.00 hours! I felt sure that the delay was intentional, and commandeered his phone, contacted Railway HQ at PARABATIPAHAR and explained. An official arrived by special tender at about 1930 hrs, and things began to move.

While waiting the animals had been watered and fed, and they were quite unconcerned when they were shunted onto the 'flats'. By 2030 all were across and marshalled, ready to continue the journey.

The wagons containing the baggage were all very clearly marked with chalk so that they could be easily identified when the unloading started. The coaching stock allotted for the men was very good - great improvement on the lot just left, and so we moved off at 0415 on the last lap. It was NG line and the whole way ran through thick jungle country. There were no steep gradients, though there are innumerable bridges of every kind.

After leaving PANDU the train passed through GAUHATI (about 15 mins later) and we learned that it is at GAUHATI that one changes if en route to SHILLONG. A number of trains passed us, and all seemed full of people, but none of us suspected that they were refugees from Burma just then.

After Gauhati, the next stop of any size is LUMDING, a local HQ for railway people, and on the 2nd night after leaving Pandu the train arrived at our railhead MANIPUR ROAD. It was dark when the train pulled in so that no idea of the size of the place could be gained. A quick recce convinced me that it was of no use trying to unload. There was no lighting, and worse still - no room. so it was decided to spend the night on the train. At about 2330 a rep of M arrived and we had to detrain! While we were discussing this his boss arrived and said we could stay! A little judicious prodding got these two somewhat involved and they disappeared into the darkness, and all was quiet.

An hour later the first one came back, and said that the train must be ready to be shunted at 0600 hrs. Along came his pal and he agreed that it was to be 0600hrs by my time but that would be 0700hours by their time as there was (or is) an hours difference. From the little that I had seen of these two, it was obvious they would not be around at 0600, 0700, or at any time before mid-day. Again they disappeared, and then they agreed that we should detrain there and then!!! So back they came. By now the situation had been appreciated, and they were dealt with, and no more was seen of them. At dawn a quick recce was made and the plan for detraining fixed. Animals off first, and away for a drink at the river about 700 yards away, then for exercise one man to five animals - the remainder unloading.

Previous moves to WAZIRISTAN were remembered, and having such a LARGE NUMBER of Blacksmiths, Hammermen and Bellowsboys, the work went very smoothly. Carts had been loaded so that each truck held Body, Raves, Wheels (in each dust cap, screwed back on the wheel were the Collar Adjusting, the Pin Linch, and Pins Split Keep) a supply of grease, a wooden ladle with which to fill the Pipe Boxes, and the raves and poles. The wheels came off first, then the body, and the wheels slipped on, and the cart trundled away to behind the station where the service squads fixed wheels, poles and raves. The empty cart was run well back, leaving plenty of working space, and ensuring that when the last cart was off they would be ready for loading and facing in the direction we were to march. This took less than four hours by which time the animals had been on exercise, been fed and watered, and had a glorious roll in the sandy river bed. The men had food and an hours rest, whilst I fared very well at the hands of the local member of the TDLA or Tea Dealers Labour Association.

By now it was about 1130 hrs, and then off came the saddlery and harness. It had been loaded by troops, each double set in it's own cart wp and each set was placed on it's cart. It must be made known that the road was not more than 10 -12 feet wide. I had decided to march that night, and hoped to get at least 2 tps of draught on the way by (at the latest) 1700 hrs, as that is the hardest job of any - to get started.

On starting to harness up, it was obvious that a large number of the animals had never been in harness before. As stated a large majority of the animals were put on the train for us, and we hadn't seen them before commencing the journey. So they were picketed down for the night under a large iron bridge about half a mile from the station.

The supplies were unloaded and stacked on the cart, which we manhandled loading six mounds (480lbs) on each cart. By the time unloading was done, the first cart was near where the animals were picketed. The Order of March was decided, the pack troop first, followed by 'A' 'B' 'C' - sp to be MS1 1600 hrs the next day.

MEMORIES OF MR T W THOMPSON

Mr Thompson was a resident of Wheatley Hill who passionately believed in progress and science. He started to jot things down that were of interest to himself, in 1900. Reproduced here are his Wheatley Hill jottings:

3 May 1933	The washaway closet and urinal situated in the colliery yard, for the use of all workmen at the Wheatley Hill Colliery opened for general use
28 May 1933	No 2 Pit at Wheatley Hill Colliery replaced with new guides in the shaft and finished
August 1933	One of the finest summers on record, the temperature often 90 degrees and seven heatwaves and haytime and harvest were finished by the end of August, being a month earlier than usual. People lived a good deal out of doors and farm wells and ponds were all dried up. Many fires in timber yards and moors in the county with the ground being so dry.
1 October 1933	Drought ended
10 Nov 1933	Mr M Barrass, the manager at Wheatley Hill Colliery for many years, and afterwards agent to the above collieries, died suddenly after only a few days illness at Thornley House, Thornley Colliery, aged 71 years
1934	Bread and all kinds of cakes and 1d bundles of firewood, the first bundles of firewood to be sold in a colliery village to a large extent
20 Jan 1934	The Haswell Co-operative Society Ltd, established in the year 1865, became one of the leading stores in the North. The above store had holiday excursions to London, Edinburgh, Blackpool etc and was very popular until the miners strike in 1926, when the above store began to fall off with sales and the store became bankrupt and failed, Sherburn Hill store taking the whole of the business
17 April 1934	The new electric coal cutter and conveyor, the first electric machinery to be used in the mine at Wheatley Hill colliery, except for handling engines, pumps etc, commenced work in the Busty Seam, No 1 pit
6 July 1934	Wheatley Hill carnival and sports assisted by the colliery company, held in the recreation ground and the fields adjoining for the first time and the weather was very warm and fine. Was a great success
28 July 1934	The alteration in the buzzer blowing for the pit to be idle at Wheatley Hill colliery. The buzzer blowing on the Saturday for the pit to be idle on the Monday, the buzzer blew the first time on the Saturday at 6.00pm
1 Sept 1934	Two new motor trolleys commenced to work at Wheatley Hill colliery, one to lead the workmen's firecoal and the other one for general use and to lead coal to private buyers of 1cwt. The first household coal to be sold at Wheatley Hill colliery in 1cwt bags commenced
March 1935	Poultry farming with the provision of poultry and poultry houses to help the unemployed was commenced on the land in Cemetery Road in Wheatley Hill
1 April 1935	The first cargo of petrol produced from coal was shipped at Billingham on the River Tees into the steamer 'Ottoman', 3,000,000 gallons
9 April 1935	The worst coal depression in the coal trade at Wheatley Hill and Thornley collieries when 450 men and boys at Wheatley Hill and 300 men and boys at Thornley received 14 days notice to cease work owing to no demand for the coal
9 July 1935	Thornley Colliery celebrated their Centenary of coal drawing, when the first coal drawn from Thornley Colliery was shipped at Hartlepool docks, which was newly opened on 9 July 1835. The colliery company in former years had bad times and the company went bankrupt and failed and could not pay the miners wages due to them and there was a Putt Pay, no wages in the year 1884 and after the colliery being idle over a short while, was opened by The Weardale Steel, Coal and Coke Company which had worked the Thornley, Ludworth and Wheatley Hill collieries for many years and with the present new coal cutters, conveyers and all the modern machinery making 100 years of coal drawing and Made the district a very popular centre
10 Oct 1935	Record scores of coal at the No 2 pit, Wheatley Hill colliery for an ordinary days drawings. Scores on board 15310
20 June 1935	The largest funeral ever seen at Wheatley Hill when Mr P Lee, late checkweighman at the Colliery was buried at Wheatley Hill Cemetery. Mr Lee being so well known, and connected with many positions in the Unions and Council's work, was represented at his funeral by coal owners, Members of Parliament, Colliery Managers and all classes of labour. The cortege being a mile long

ADVERTISING

Wheatley Hill Community Association T: 01429 820214

Wheatley Hill Community
Greenhills Centre
For the Community

CAFE

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

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MEETINGS IN THORNLEY

(subsidised by Thornley Parish Council)

Our next meeting will be held in Thornley on Monday 2 September 2013 at Youll House.

The speaker will be Win Colman who will share the story of her grandfather, Peter Lee.

The meeting will start at 7.00pm and everyone is welcome to attend.

As usual, Sheila will ask the Northern Echo to publish details of the meeting in the paper a few days beforehand.

ENGLISH HERITAGE

OPEN DAYS

Will be held this year on 12 -14 September and The Heritage Centre will be open from 10 - 4 on each of these days.

The booklet *The Stories Behind the Headstones* will be launched at this event - it gives an account of the social history available in our cemetery. It is a free publication which has been produced by The Heritage Society.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The History Club and Heritage Centre are now part of Facebook and Twitter in an attempt to reach the younger members of our community. If you subscribe to either of these social networks, please add **Wheatley HillHistory** as a friend. We have been amazed at the amount of interest there has been from young people in Wheatley Hill with regard to the information we have provided to Facebook in particular. It seems that younger people are interested and prefer this medium of communicating information and memories.