

Wheatley Hill History Club

Volume 18 Issue 3

July 2014

HAPPY BIRTHDAY PETER LEE - 150 YEARS SINCE HIS BIRTH

17th CENTURY DIARY

The son of Nicholas Bee and Margaret Ussie, Jacob Bee was born in Durham, and baptised on 19 June 1636. He is recorded as being a skinner and glover, ie a tradesman who skinned dead cattle and goats, or who bought their skins from slaughtermen, cured them, and turned them into leather goods, particularly gloves. Aged 22, he married Elizabeth Rabbet.

It also seems Bee may have kept an ale-house for some part of his life; in any case he certainly did a little brewing, the 'grains' being sold by his wife after each brewing. He also possessed a stable and loft, but having not prospered in business, and aged 65, he became an out-pensioner of the hospital of Sherburn-house. He died early in 1711, and was buried on 11 January at St Margaret's, Durham.

Bee is probably only remembered today because he left behind a diary and here are a few typical entries for 1682:

27 March 1682

'John Maddison's child Margaret went out of Durham to Newcastle for London to be toutcht for the evill.'

April 1682

'Two great floods of watter upon Wednesday and Thursday, being the 26th and 27th of April.'

6 May 1682

'The first day that men and women servants presented themselves to be hired in Durham markt.'

31 May 1682

'Betwixt 11 and 12 at night, was a very fearfull thunder, with flashes of fire, very tirrible.'

28 July 1682

'Captain Thomas Featherston, of Stanhope hall, departed this life, being Friday, at night about 11 a clock.'

15 August 1682

'A blazing stare appeared.'

6 September 1682

'Mr William Witherington, one of the bead-men of Abby church [died].'

28 September 1682

'... Sofly, sone to Richard Sofly, was borne, being Thursday: and Elizabeth Dobinson was her midwife and the first that ever she [had] laid

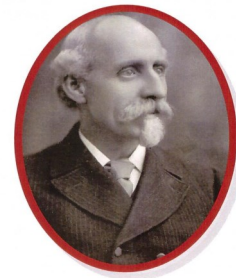
20 November 1682

'Being Munday this yeare and a great wind which blew one half of the west end of a window in Abby church.'
'William Ross, junior, departed this life.'

Final part to be continued in the October newsletter

Peter Lee

1864 – 1935



A Commemorative Booklet To Celebrate his birth

150 years ago

(with an introduction by Councillor Morris Nicholls)

Miners Leader, Peter Lee was born 150 years ago in July 2014. The Heritage Centre have produced a booklet celebrating his life and times.

The publication was supported by Wheatley Hill Parish Council and intended as a teaching/learning aid to local schools so that future generations can be informed of the importance of this man to the East Durham community in the early part of the 20th Century.



Thornley Primary School invited a representative from Wheatley Hill Parish Council and a Heritage Centre representative to donate the booklets and they were joined by Peter Lee's grand-daughter, Win Colman.

If you would like a copy of this souvenir guide, they are on sale in the Heritage Centre for 50p.

MEETINGS

For the first time in our almost 20-year history, there **will be a meeting in August** this year. There will also be meetings in September and October 2014 and our new year will begin with a meeting in March 2015.

The meetings through 2015 will run for 8 months from March to October (including August).

CONTACT DETAILS		DATES FOR YOUR DIARY	
CHAIR:	01429 820813	2 August	Local History Day & Village Commemoration
TREASURER:	01429 823198	27 August	The Collieries of Shincliffe, Houghall & Whitwell
E: history.club2@btinternet.com		24 Sept	The National Health Service—Roman Style
W: wheatley-hill.org.uk		29 Oct	The Story of my House Part 3
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The Martyrdom of the Mine

By Edward A Rymer

Edward (Neddy) Rymer was a coal miner who worked at pits in Durham, Yorkshire, North Wales, Nottingham and Lancashire. He was a union activist and blacklisted from many coal mines and coalfields as a result of this. The following extract is from the above publication and it should be remembered that it is the account of someone who was there at the time these things were happening. It is not a story, not made up, but an eye-witness account of life in the 1860's in Thornley:

"The clouds of the American Civil War were lowering and the wave of slave emancipation seemed to strike both Europe and America in 1860. Several of the leading spirits in the local union were refused further employment when the time for binding came round in April 1860 and my previous action made me a 'marked man' at Spennymoor. This opened up to me the red epoch of my future life and struggles. Being refused work at three places, I travelled six miles to Thornley Colliery and got bound, my brother William having gone there before me. The first sight of Thornley Colliery made me stare. An awfully black and dismal place it was, with 4000 people depending on its plant and workings. In one row I counted nine huge heaps of filth lying near and around the pit hovels. Alas! What I saw and heard at Thornley in four years is almost beyond belief.

There were no visible signs of union at Thornley when I shifted into Quarry Row. The house had one room on the floor, with a loft above, reached by a ladder. The tiles were bare and daylight, rain, wind, sleet or snow came in through the crevices. The room was about 14 feet square and had to serve the purposes of bedroom, kitchen, cook-house, wash-house and coal-house. A large hole broken through the wall in one corner served to cool the place in hot weather. It was with difficulty that the ordinary decencies of life could be observed. There were three seams working in the mine, and a great amount of 'back by work' had to be done at the weekends. Not unfrequently (*sic*) 20 score or more of muck tubs were drawn on a Sunday. Joiners, Blacksmiths etc had to toil on Sundays. A huge fiery heap ran nearly the length of the village and it is safe to say that half a million tons of coal, broken wood, shale etc were burning at one time. The smoke and stench from the fiery mountain were often unbearable. In consequence of this state of things socially, drinking, gambling, fighting and reckless pastimes were universal and went unchecked.

At the office on pay Friday there used to be many hundreds of men who rushed, yelled and forced their way like savages to receive their wages. It was seldom that someone did not come away from the mob cut or bruised, leaving a cap or coat lap behind him. On the binding day the scenes were awful. As a bribe, a sovereign would be offered for the first man bound, ten shillings for the second, five shillings for the third, the rest receiving 2/6d each. I made the acquaintance of many of the best people at Thornley, including Bill Norman, one of the leaders in the strike of 1844 and William Beaney, the noted school-master and Primitive Methodist local preacher. From both of these men I received many valuable lessons and much advice. Norman put me in the way of writing the first letter I ever sent to the Press and recommended me to a few good books which I needed in my after struggle.

"The Miners Advocate" published by W Whitehorn, London, appeared about this time and caused thousands of miners to read and think for the first time. The trenchant articles by John Towers opened men's eyes to see the grave error of non-unionism. A flood of correspondence set in from all the mining districts and soon the spirit of combination was manifested. I put my whole soul into the struggle. The awakening brought all the best men at Thornley to the front eager to form a union of miners, but none seemed willing to take the lead and steer the ship."



**Children from
Deaf Hill
Primary
School**

DEAF HILL SCHOOL VISIT HERITAGE CENTRE

On Thursday 19 July Deaf Hill School visited the Heritage Centre to find out about Thomas Kenny VC who they were studying at school.

Heritage Centre volunteers showed them around the Centre and a suitcase that had been packed for a soldier going away to War. The children were able to see what sort of things Thomas Kenny and his family had in their colliery house in South Wingate, at the time he went to war.

Outside, the children were shown his grave and a replica of his VC. Fred Bromilow brought a Durham Light Infantry tunic for the children to try on and demonstrated a rifle with a bayonet fitted.

Before they left, all 32 of the children laid a poppy at Thomas Kenny's grave. It was a lovely morning for all generations.

THE SEAHAM SOLDIER

If you haven't already seen him, a visit to Seaham is really worthwhile to see this excellent art tribute to the World War 1 Commemoration. The plaque on the back states that it is a soldier in 1918 contemplating the end of the War.

He is only on loan and I believe that Seaham people are trying to raise the money to keep him and we wish them lots of luck and hope they manage it.

The artwork has been created by Ray Lonsdale of South Hetton who has had two offers to buy it outright but he would like to see the work stay in Seaham and has turned them down.



STAGEYBANK FAIR

I was delighted to see an article on the above in the *Memories* section of The Northern Echo recently. My granny used this term regularly, and I had never heard another person say it. If there were lots of people about she would say, "It's like Stageybank Fair" or if there was a mess to be cleared up she would use the phrase for that too.

Well according to The Northern Echo article, it's a saying from the south of the County and originally referred to an annual gathering on Stagshaw Bank on the A68 near Corbridge. The bank was referred to locally as *Stagy Bank* and the gathering was banned in the 1920's due to riotous, drunken behaviour and because the countryside was left in an appalling state after the gathering was over!

I think we should all start to use the phrase to keep it alive!!

MR W GALLOWAY

Members of the History Club are probably aware of the death of the above in June, aged 100 years old.

Mr and Mrs Galloway were long-time members of the History Club but as a result of poor health, unable to attend our meetings in recent years.

A keen artist, Mr Galloway painted a copy of the Heritage Centre in about 2003 and we had it made into cards. The original painting is still in The Heritage Centre.

The History Club have sent our condolences to Mrs Galloway.

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

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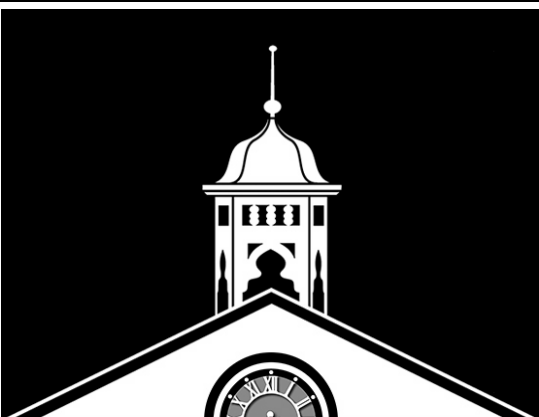
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STAINED GLASS WINDOWS FIND A HOME

The four stained glass windows that were in St Bartholomew's Church, Thornley have found a home in Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre.

Three of the windows were presented to the Church in 1866 by the Spearman family and the other one was from local landowners, the Wilkinson family in 1868.

The Spearman windows were made by London firm Messrs Clayton & Bell and the Wilkinson window by Messrs Cox & Co also of London, both highly respected stained glass window manufacturers.

