

Wheatley Hill History Club

Volume 19 Issue 3

July 2015

VILLAGE ARTWORK

The first meeting to discuss the above was held in Wheatley House on Monday 18 May. All organisations from the village were invited to attend and many sent representatives. The project will be called "The Last Shift—50 Years Without our Pit".

Those present at the meeting agreed that the artwork should be placed on the same site as the pit wheel in Patton Walk but were unhappy with the original drawing (that appeared in our April newsletter). Most preferred a standing miner.

A second meeting was held on 29 June and a fund raising sub committee set up who have since met. The design is still causing a few problems so Ray Lonsdale has agreed to come along to the July meeting. We are working with a History Club photo of Mary Walker's father going to the pit in 1963 and most feel that is representative of the time and a good place for Ray to start his new design.

The photo can be viewed on the History Club web site under "workers at the pit".

WHEATLEY HILL HISTORY CLUB LOCAL HISTORY DAY

SATURDAY 26 September 10.00am—1.00pm

**NEW
VENUE**

**Wheatley House
Woodlands Avenue
DH6 3JX**
(street parking available)

What Was Happening

After the 2nd World War

Displays by:



**Suzan's Vintage
Retro & Rockabilly
Gear**

**1950's
Afternoon Tea in
The Morning**

(crockery supplied by
Little Cup of Love)

**Local Displays of
1950's Wheatley Hill**

**Launch of a book of
poems inspired by life
in a colliery village—
Thornley**

WHEATLEY HILL HERITAGE CENTRE

**will be open 10.00am—4.00pm
on Local History Day
1950's Exhibition**

WHEATLEY HOUSE REFURB

If you've visited Wheatley House recently you'll notice that its undergoing a makeover and whilst not yet complete, the changes are visible and worthwhile.

The entrance door has been renewed and looks much more attractive, the ceiling has been lowered and fitted with new lighting in the main hall, some new windows have been fitted, there is a fantastic new kitchen and with the decorating a new carpet it is now a great venue for a range of uses.

Congratulations to the Wheatley House Moving Forward committee for their determination and patience in bringing about these changes which will benefit the users of this excellent venue.

The History Club offered to pay for the supply and installation of an overhead projector in the main hall for the purpose of our monthly presentations. We felt it was as well to do this whilst the new ceiling was being fitted and before any painting and decorating took place as there would be wiring etc to consider. The projector can be used by anyone to show Powerpoint presentations or a DVD and the Wheatley House committee could see the advantage to having such a facility if the venue was hired for meetings/training sessions etc.

We therefore spent almost £1000 on the equipment which you will see on the ceiling in the main hall of Wheatley House and the speakers on the end wall. We hope to recover this spending by our sponsored event on Boxing Day when member Bob Waite will be doing a sponsored dip in the North Sea to return this money to our funds.

CONTACT DETAILS

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W: wheatley-hill.org.uk



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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

26 August **Dirt, Death & Disease in Durham City**
David Butler

26 Sept **LOCAL HISTORY DAY—WHEATLEY HOUSE**

30 Sept **From Telegram Boy to Bomber Boy**
Lyn Defty

28 October **Sanctuary in the Cathedral**
Arthur Dodds



Thomas Kenny VC



Commemorative Paving Stone
to be laid in Wheatley Hill Cemetery



Lieutenant Philip Brown

THOMAS KENNY VC

The above named was the first DLI soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross as a result of his bravery in trying to save the life of his commanding officer, Lieutenant Philip Brown, during the First World War.

Kenny was from Hartbushes or South Wingate, a mining community of which there is now no trace, and was situated to the south of Wingate between Station Town and Sheraton. There appeared to be a lot of Roman Catholic families living there, probably due to its close proximity to St Peter's & Paul's RC Church, across the fields on the outskirts of Hutton Henry.

On 16 September 1914, Kenny was one of the new recruits for 13 DLI and served as 17424 Private Thomas Kenny, "B" Company, 13th (Service) Battalion The Durham Light Infantry. He won his honour on the night of 4 November 1915 at La Houssie, France. His patrol officer, Lieutenant Philip Brown was badly wounded and although exposed to heavy fire, Pte Kenny insisted on carrying the officer to safety. He did this by crawling through the mud with Lt Brown on his back for over an hour looking for safety. When utterly exhausted he laid his burden in a ditch after locating a listening post and was able to complete the rescue of his officer. Unfortunately Lieutenant Brown died shortly after the rescue.

In August 2013 the Government announced their intention to introduce a scheme whereby every VC winner will be awarded a commemorative paving stone to be laid on the 100th anniversary of when the VC was presented and in the case of Thomas Kenny this will be 4 November 2015.

There will be an event held in Wheatley Hill on that day starting at 11am in the cemetery. The event will be unique as not only will members of Thomas Kenny's family be present, but also members of the family of Philip Brown.

The proposed site for the paving stone, is on the grassed area opposite the war memorial in the cemetery. This location has been chosen as the memorial stone can then be part of the annual remembrance service.

Each stone will weigh 46kg and be manufactured from York Stone Scoutmoor. It will measure 600mm x 66mm x 50mm deep. One of the criteria of siting the stone is that it should be outside the house where the VC winner lived at the time of his award, however there are no houses left in the Hartbushes area of South Wingate and even the house in which Kenny lived when he was in Wheatley Hill—Darlington Street, is no longer there, so a decision was made to place the stone in Wheatley Hill Cemetery which also holds the VC winners grave.



COAL MINING IN EAST DURHAM (part 2)

(from Geordies, Yankees & Canucks by William Wonders)

At Thornley, as at other new mines in East Durham, the landowner, Henry John Spearman was not directly involved in developing or operating the colliery. Instead, he leased the mining rights to the partners of the Thornley Coal Company. As Lords of the Manor of the Thornley Estate, the family had abandoned Thornley Hall in the 1700's and were living in their other seat—Newton Hall. These leases by the colliery companies required "the payment of a certain rent", a fixed annual sum to be paid for an agreed upon number of years, whether coal was mined or not. In addition, a royalty or 'tentale' rent was paid for each 'ten' of coal mined. The leasees were also granted the right to erect essential mining facilities on the surface—houses, brickworks, ponds, waste sites and rights of way for the railway. By leasing their lands to the colliery companies, landowners received much more money for allowing the land to be used than the miners did for working 18 hours a day in dangerous conditions to bring the coal to the surface.

Once Thornley became established as a pit village the workers at the pit were drawn from other areas of County Durham mostly but many came from Northumberland, valued for their expertise in mining and attracted by favourable wages in the early stages. The pit and the village at Thornley developed simultaneously and very quickly. The first housing was along the length of a railway line and immediately to the east on the south side of the railway were the coke ovens. At the west end of the main street was the market place and the post office and many colliery rows of housing. A brickworks near the village provided the necessary building materials needed for its growth.

The Church of St Bartholomew was erected in 1843 on land donated by H J Spearman and Gore Hall became the vicarage. The Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists also had places of worship in the village and a Roman Catholic chapel opened in a former dissenting chapel in 1850. A National School opened in 1837 which was supported by the colliery owners.

A reading room was established in 1843 which was supported by both the colliery owners and H J Spearman and despite its presence and that of the churches, particularly the Primitive Methodists with their teetotal policies, drinking remained a characteristic feature of everyday life for the miners in Thornley. In 1855 there were 15 public houses in Thornley. However it was well known throughout the area that the pitmen at Thornley worked longer hours than agricultural labourers up to the age of 70 years of age, an 'old' man of this age earning between 2s and 2/8d per day. It was also widely known that the Thornley workforce included troublemakers. A possible reason for this may be that when the pit opened and needed a large number of workers quickly, men who had been blacklisted for union activity at other pits in Durham and Northumberland may have made their way to Thornley under different names in order to obtain work at the new pit. In 1846 one of the agents at the pit, painted a less than flattering picture of the workers:

"None of our pitmen at Thornley save money. I don't think there are four men in the colliery who have put by a penny. They do not like gardening as they do at other pits. Mr Wood, one of the proprietors, offered last year a 10 acre site for garden ground but not one-sixth part of it was used and even that was badly attended to. The steadier men here earn £50 per year, clear wages, besides what their boys earn which is from 10d to 3s a day, which the parents receive until the boy begins to 'hew' for himself."

In 1844 the Durham and Northumberland miners came out on strike in protest at the harshness of their Bond conditions. The owners had made the yearly Bond a monthly one, then if union agitators were identified, the owners could get rid of them quickly instead of having to wait until the end of the year. 68 Thornley miners were arrested at the beginning of the strike and sentenced to six weeks imprisonment but were later acquitted on a technicality. They returned home as heroes but the Bond remained in place.

The strike continued and those miners who were willing to work were harassed, intimidated and in some cases severely beaten until they too ceased work and joined the Union. Police were called to Thornley to stop the women from stealing coal from the heap. The coal owners brought labour in from Wales, Cumberland, Ireland and Cornwall to carry out the work of coal production and this just led to more trouble in the village. The cavalry and a company of infantry were despatched from Durham to camp at Thornley Hall in the event that the trouble got out of hand. The soldiers were there to protect the villages of Thornley, Cassop, Coxhoe, Kelloe, Wingate and Castle Eden at the first sign of riot.

The owners used their ultimate weapon against the men—evicting them from their homes and eventually after 20 weeks the strike collapsed largely owing to the owners dirty tricks.

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

**IDEAL LOCATION FOR
Parties & Events**
Licenced Bar

Tots Soft Play
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The following is a list of items bought from Mr Tonks' hardware shop, Wingate by the postmaster
at Wheatley Hill, Ernest Knight in 1894:



Chest of drawers	£8.0s.0d	2 Pails	£0.1s.10d
Futon bed etc	£7.10s.0d	Bath	£0.2s.0d
Square Table	£1.5s.0d	14 yds floorcloth	£1.6s.3d
Fender	£1.10s.0d	Rough mat	£0.2s.6d
4 kit chairs	£1.15s.0d	Scuttle	£0.2s.0d

How much did Mr Knight's items cost in 1894?