

Wheatley Hill History Club

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Wheatley Hill History & Heritage



2012 CALENDAR

ON SALE NOW - £3.00

LIMESTONE LANDSCAPE

The partners have been appointed who will be carrying out the Village Atlas in Wheatley Hill and Thornley and a drop-in session has been held in The Heritage Centre to so that they could meet the volunteers. If you're interested in digging a test-pit in your garden, let Margaret know at the History Club meeting.

PIGEONS, DOVES & MASONRY BEES

I think this is the first time in the history of our newsletters, that I have included an article about one of our speakers, but Adam Luke who came to our September meeting at short notice when our speaker cancelled, was outstanding.

This 16-year-old from Trimdon was an inspiration and certainly one to watch for the future. His maturity and passion for history was refreshing and I think we all learned a thing or two from him.

His book is already a best-seller and he has another on the way. We wish Adam all the best for his future.

LOCAL FAMILY HISTORY DAY 24 SEPTEMBER

The family history day was a first for the History Club. We usually focus on local history, but with all of our publishing up to date, we felt it would be a good idea to concentrate on family history. When planning for the event we felt we would be lucky to persuade half a dozen people to share their family history research! We couldn't have been more wrong!! 28 local families were represented and each of them put on splendid displays - unique in every case and very interesting.

The event was opened by County Councillor Brian Wilson from Thornley who started the proceedings by leading a one-minute silence for the Welsh miners recently lost in a pit tragedy, and for the miners lost over the years in our area. This was a very poignant and reflective beginning, and very appropriate for a family history day in what was the Durham Coalfield.

Once again the Workingmen's Club provided their facilities for the day and the event was busier than it had been in recent years. The new format proved popular both with locals and those who travelled from further afield.

The publicity provided by Chris Lloyd's article in The Northern Echo I am sure, spurred people on to make the trip to Wheatley Hill. This was supported by local advertising around the area and of course our web site.

The Victorian Yesteryear Society from Hartlepool were resplendent in their costumes and the old Queen and Mr Brown were very regal. Coachman Alan Kirby conveyed the Queen safely through the village before depositing her at the Club. Alan was very smart as a royal coachman.

The display of classic vehicles outside the Club proved popular once again with the additions of a horse box, tractor, an American Lincoln and a motorbike.

We will start the planning of next years event at our November committee meeting, so if you have any suggestions which you think would make improvement on the day, please let us know.



*Queen Victoria with Mr Brown
driven by Alan Kirby*



*Classic Horse Box and Tractor
from Bankdam Farm*



*Vic and Val Brown with
the Andrewarthur and Brown family trees*



*Councillor Brian Wilson with
our photographer, Pauline Carr*

CONTACT DETAILS

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Web Site: wheatley-hill.org.uk

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

We will be holding a Christmas Raffle once again at our November meeting. Thank you to those who have already donated prizes, and if anyone else would like to donate something, please bring it to the November meeting.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

30 November **Mary Ann Cotton**

25 January **The Golden Age of Amateur Soccer**
The speaker has asked us to put on a display of local football photos, memorabilia etc. If you have anything suitable, please let one of the committee know and bring along anyone who you know may be interested

29 February **The Pitman Painters**

REMEMBRANCE DAY

The usual remembrance day parade will take place on Sunday 13 November. The service will be in All Saints Church and the parade will travel to the Cemetery for the wreath laying.

As usual The Heritage Centre will be open for general viewing and serving refreshments.

The following is an article from our member, Arthur Dodds, who recently met up with long-lost relatives thanks to the History Club website.

FOUND – Thanks to the History Club Newsletter

When one of my aunts went off to Liverpool in 1911 for a new life in Australia she found the ship quarantined so she boarded a ship alongside and went to Canada instead. Her life was a hard one but after 15 years she had saved enough money to pay for her younger sister to join her, sailing in the SS Montrose (the ship in which Dr Crippen was arrested).

Fifty years later I began researching their histories. Amongst the interesting details I followed a young immigrant from Ireland to South Africa, Australia, Canada and France (WWI) together with sad and heart-warming facts about the two sisters.

Recently some ancestors in Toronto tried to get in touch with me but because I had moved house several times and changed my email address they got no reply so they searched for my name on the internet. The Wheatley Hill History Club Newsletter gave them a clue because it mentioned my name after a talk I had given on The History of Aerial Surveillance. We were united in Durham a few weeks ago; thanks to the Club.

Arthur Dodds

The following is what was happening in our area to celebrate the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria:

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE HOW WE CELEBRATED 60 YEARS AGO

Monday last week was the 60th anniversary of the above event and Tuesday was given up to national rejoicing and local celebrations. The Thornley parish council have earned the gratitude of the parishioners for their efforts in connection with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. Through their instrumentality a free tea was given to the aged and deserving poor of the parish, to the number of 200 in the institute, which proved very successful. The old folk were also given a parcel of tea and sugar. The school children in the district were entertained to tea and sports, the prizes of which the tradesmen and other friends had subscribed to, and each child was presented with a public medal.

At 10 o'clock a large bonfire was lighted on the American Hill by the wife of the colliery manager and the National Anthem was sung. The village was prettily decorated for the occasion.

A FESTIVAL AND GALA

At Shadforth the above was promoted by the Council of the above parish and was held on Jubilee Day in a field kindly granted for the occasion by Mr R Crosby, Shadforth. The treat was a free tea to all the children in the parish who were not at work, and to all adults receiving out-door relief. The Rev W Hooper, rector of the parish, opened the afternoon's proceedings with a few appropriate remarks benefiting the occasion. After all had partaken of the good things provided, foot racing etc were indulged in with satisfactory results. The sports were able attended to by Messrs Callender, Scott, Wight and White, members of the committee. After paying all liabilities a surplus of £1.12s was paid out to the aged poor and was gratefully received.

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE AT WHEATLEY HILL

Mr J Wick presided at a public meeting held in The Temperance Hall when it was decided to provide tea for the scholars of the village and arrange an open air demonstration. Music was provided by local bands.

PAST UNCOVERED

Family History

Research and Presentation

margaret@pastuncovered.co.uk



The following is the transcription of an interview carried out with Mr Roger Richardson of Peterlee in 1979 as part of the "People Past and Present" initiative:

"I was born in Wheatley Hill on 8 October 1909, in the long-gone Emily Street, one of 7 parallel rows below the railway line. There was never any of these streets made up or metalled, simply colliery ballasted occasionally, churned up into clarty messes after the frosts. Water had only recently been laid on but previous to this had to be carried from the boilers behind Church Street. These boilers were water storage tanks with gravity feeding of the taps and they were at the very top of Wheatley Hill.

There was no electric lights in the houses until 1930 and the sanitation was middle of the street earth closets with middens, re-named by the very trendy word "nettles". These streets terminated at the Gore Beck which is a parochial boundary. It was more than that, being an open sewer for the dozen or so streets on the hillside - Shop Street, Institute Street, Louisa Street, Arne Street, Gothay Street, Patton Street, Hirst Street, Robson Street, Webb Street and Quarry Street to name some of them, the effluent matter from these and other streets ended up in Gore Beck and flowed away through at least four lovely denes to the sea at Blackhall. As children we knew what was in the beck but it never stopped us from fishing, paddling or playing in it. In summer you could see the leeches floundering away past us, yet this did not deter us at all. The only time I remember the beck being cleaned out was by German POW's during the Second World War and by unemployed miners in the depression of the 1920's.

On week-days these streets were busy with street vendors in vans and flat carts, all horse drawn. First there was the Co-ops who had their vans delivering their massive orders of potatoes, flour etc to our homes. The order man came with a very long book with everything listed from A-Z and then the carts delivered later in the week. The Vincents delivered around the village and they carried all kinds of goods, fancy and plain in their enclosed van. Isaac Francis brought all kinds of tinware from Easington Lane and John Day the chemist brought products such as Friars Balm, Dales Plasters, Fullers Earth - very important commodities. There was a parade of fruit and veg sellers with their flat carts not to forget the many rag and bone men who actually carried open boxes of sweets and mint rock alongside festering bones giving off a putrid stench until legislation stopped the practice and balloons or windmills took the place of sweets. Beggars too came through the village at intervals, knocking discreetly on doors in case of the police. Street singers were also a popular sight in the colliery village - walking through serenading us in hopes of a halfpenny.

Most of our games were played dodging in and out between the rows of nettles, by both girls and boys. There was a rigid pattern to our games, where singing and chanting featured strongly, so that we slowly learned the rhymes as we grew up. In fact I was married before I knew that "Ring-a-ring-a-roses" was really a plague song from Liverpool where many people had died of the bubonic plague.

I started at the infants school where I remember the Heads, Miss Coburn and Miss Berry, you don't stay in infant school long if you are intelligent and so I went onto the junior school next door where we had dear Mr Wooley, our Jewish Headmaster. Here too, I had a spell under my father's cousin, Miss Gertie Laidler, who was a teacher in the Junior School. All who attended this school in the days before 1920 will remember with affection Miss Annie and Miss Alice Hutchinson, two sisters, with their great dedication to educating children. I can remember the decimation of our classes as the 1917 flu epidemic took away our school mates in a matter of hours. Two of my mates, at 8 years old were John Cook of Pyman Street and John Redshaw who had just come over from Canada with his parents. His father was a soldier, and I always thought, they brought John back so he could die of the flu.

I can remember the closing of our shutters at dusk and the many probing beams of our searchlights as they scanned the darkness for Zeppelins during the First World War. I can remember being hauled out of bed by my grandparents to see streets full of people watching a Zeppelin being ruthlessly shot down by anti-aircraft gunners at Hartlepool. I can still see the air-crew in my imagination, dropping like fireflies as the Zeppelin broke in two and fell out of the beams. Our window shutters served a double-purpose of course as they were used as security against the IRA which was very active indeed in 1916. The police had to continually watch the powder magazines, quarries where explosives might be obtained.

to be continued . . .

ADVERTISING

Wheatley Hill Community Association T: 01429 820214

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