

Wheatley Hill History Club

Volume 15 Issue 4

October 2012

BYGONE COUNTY DURHAM

This website on Utube is well worth a visit - there are hundreds of old photographs of County Durham which have been cleverly set to music to resemble a magic lantern presentation.

VIC BROWN

History Club member Vic died at the end of July and his funeral was held on 8 August at St Andrew's Church, Aycliffe Village.

Vic was born in Wheatley Hill and taught at the Boys School during the 1950's and he will be remembered by many for the huge part he played in the Cycling Club, details of which have appeared in our newsletters in the past.

On your behalf I have passed on the condolences of History Club members to his wife, Val who has thanked us in a lovely letter.

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

The Heritage Centre was open as usual for the Heritage Open Days, an event organised by English Heritage which took place 6-10 September. The weather was glorious and the Heritage Centre benefited from a high number of visitors, mostly those from outside the local area.

As well as the permanent display that The Heritage Centre is well known for, visitors saw the Education in Wheatley Hill exhibition which opened in time for 12 September - 100 years after the primary school was opened for the first time by Peter Lee. The exhibition will run until the end of this year.

With effect from the January 2013 meeting, all history club meetings will start at 7.00pm

LOCAL FAMILY HISTORY DAY

Saturday 29 September 2012

What an excellent day we had! The exhibitors displaying their family histories were fantastic and well complimented by our visitors, the sandwiches from the Community Centre were delicious, the classic cars were great and well photographed, the opening speech by Chris Lloyd of the Northern Echo was well received, even though he didn't know what a pigeon cree was. Our two volunteers, John Riley and Ralph Craggs were really appreciated in moving tables and chairs, Pauline Carr was there to sell publications and take another batch of photographs, only this time she had a camera capable of capturing moving image!! Our own History Club committee showed the usual dedication and commitment and the result was an excellent day which received positive comments from all sectors of visitors, many who had travelled from out of the area to be there on the day.



A selection of photographs from the day itself. All photographs can be seen at the Heritage Centre.

Both the Church and The Heritage Centre reported good visitor numbers and I believe we have Chris Lloyd's article in the Northern Echo to thank for the interest shown in our event.

ACQUISITIONS

- A collection of Photographs from the Nursery Unit at Wheatley Hill Primary School from about 1992
- Photographs belonging to Miss Alderslade when she was Head Teacher of the Girls School
- A History of Wheatley Hill written by three pupils from The Senior Girls School in 1968 - Christine Mortimer, Pauline Nicholson and Margaret Carr!! (*came to light in the same package as Miss Alderslade's photos*)
- 2 Photographs of the Wheatley Hill Colliery Band
- Family information of Herbert Marks, Ludworth

CONTACT DETAILS

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Treasurer: 01429 823198

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YESTERDAY BELONGS TO YOU 2013

You will be delighted to learn that the above event is returning to County Hall for 2013 and will be held on Saturday 18 May 2013

The History Club have supported this event since it started in 1996 and are delighted that it is returning to the County Hall venue.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 31 Oct Re-awakening of a Sleeping Beauty -
Hardwick Park
- 28 Nov The Limestone Landscape
- 30 Jan The Border Rievers
- 27 Feb Auckland Castle - A History with Humour

THORNLEY MEETING

Our first meeting in Thornley was very successful. It was held on Wednesday 5 September at the Methodist Church in Dunelm Road. Our speaker was Michael Richardson who took us on a very nostalgic journey through Durham City from the 1960's.

Due to its success, we propose to hold another meeting in Thornley, probably in December of this year.

The following is an outline of the military career of Herbert Marks, born in Ludworth but eventually living in Shop Street, Wheatley Hill

The following is an account of my duties as part of the Unit which I commanded in Burma from Feb 42 until Nov 43. I must apologise for the use of the personal pronoun, but during these days Mule Companies were one man shows and one is apt to think of the unit as 'mine'.

Before transferring to the Corps I was a horse gunner, and so I have, through my military career at any rate, been accustomed to animals, and I am sure you will agree that the standard of Animal Management achieved by the Royal Regiment is hardly ever surpassed.

No. 54 Mule Company was comprised of PM (Punjabi Moslems) 100% and it will be difficult to find better men to command. These PM's were my sole companions for many months on many long, hard marches in lonely places, I always found great pleasure in being chosen to command these men. They were always willing, cheerful and with always 'one more yard' left no matter how hard the going.

Their generosity to the many thousands of civilian refugees met on the lonely bridle tracks, had to be seen to be believed. They shared their own food, put the children and infirm on the animals whenever they could, and I have seen them with children on their shoulders.

In early February 1942 I was an instructor at the School where I had been for some years. I was ordered to report to HQ Delhi, and did so being finally shown into Brig Ellison and the DST. I had no inkling as to why I had been called, but the DST showed me a large map and told me of my job. This was to take the very first Mule Co from INDIA into BURMA by Road. I was told that the road as far as 'here' (indicated on the map by the DST) was 'alright' and that I should have no difficulty, but after 'here' I would have to decide on my course after I arrived. There were no maps available, but the place for which I was heading was called IMPHAL in MANIPUR STATE. After reaching Imphal I was to contact the Civil, and I was to get my carts over the mountain range 'somehow'. Coolies and Elephants were mentioned as possible means of transporting them -and the carts would have to be dismantled. The DST then asked me what I wanted to do the job! I asked which unit was to go and was told that 54 Coy was ready. I made a mental appreciation and asked for:

- 1) A certain Risaldar Major
- 2) 4 certain Jemadars
- 3) a full blacksmiths team for EACH TROOP. ALL WITH COMPLETE TOOL KITS
- 4) 4 Carpenters
- 5) 4 Field Forges
- 6) 2 Spare Wheels per Troop
- 7) 10 Spare Cart Poles
- 8) ordinary Repair Material at my discretion
- 9) 25 day's Reserve Supplies at full fs scales - less fodder for mules, but inc hay for Horses.
- 10) an 'Open Sesame' chit from the Director to be produced if required.



This will be continued in the next edition of the newsletter

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

"I once saw on a crowded Burns brickyard pond, frozen in the winter of course, Benny Jones go through the ice and grabbed by the hair by his brother, Ernie and luckily saved. How ironic and sad that about ten years later the youngest Jones lad was drowned here in an effort to save his Alsatian dog. He dived in after his dog and we all thought that the dog in his panic drowned him. Of course there was a tremendous splodgy clay base. You see the brickyard pond was about exhausted, to counteract that the brickyard, which obviously belonged to the colliery, laid railway from the pit to Burns brickyard and ballasted the main road with ramble or shale. There was a special kind of seggar came from the pit which as we know is really fossilised clay, that was blended with what clay was available and there were some splendid bricks made in that little busy Burn's brickyard. It was mainly worked by girls except the very arduous work, and the girls wheeled the barrows as well, however any digging of the clay was done by men and the girls made the bricks. This would be about 1915. Burn's brickyard went on till the thirties. It was maintained by importing clay and commodities like that.

Adjacent to the brickyard itself was Mr Burns, the Manager's house. Miss Burns, his daughter was a schoolteacher, she married Danny Wynard, a well-known name, they had Wynards shop in Cemetery Road. I remember they had a couple of cows as brickyard manager's must not have been so highly paid as we assumed, he kept these cows and I used to go up with a basin or a jug, for the dairy milk. It was just only up from our street you know. One thing comes back even now which can be recorded here, the gable end of the Club buildings was a beautiful echo, I've had many a beautiful argument with my echo. It was due I think by the sound conditions, or the acoustics being caused by the wall and the pit heap - it was like being in the alps when your own voice bounced back off the wall - it was great!

There were many drowning's in Burn's pond but the slag heap and the pond have been well landscaped. Only the Burn's old house survives, where as I explained I went for the can of milk sold there from their two cows. From this pond I watched from the slag tip, the body of the lad, Eilbeck, retrieved by life savers Sam Davis and Sam Routledge. The body was embedded on the clay floor and the two men used a colliery built raft and grappling irons a long time, in vain. Only when they used colliery explosives and battery did they grab the dead boy as he bobbed up. It was dreadful. Only fairly recently Bobby Burnip the survivor of a drowning which cost Dick Robson his life, died at Wheatley Hill. One of the Rothery boys fished Burnip out but Robson died. I believe the Durham Chronicle gave Rothery a pocket watch as testimony to his bravery.

An amusing little tale of the type of social times in which we lived, there were still liberal qualities to be squeezed out of life. There was a bacon pig belonging to Mr Jos Burdon used to walk the streets like a sacred Indian cow, nobody used to bother it, people used to throw scraps out for it, but it used to get loose occasionally, more often than not, round various streets in our neighbourhood, until this particular pig wandered onto the railway track of Burn's brickyard in front of seggar and shale trucks and was cut up. Naturally Jos couldn't claim but he ate the compensation! What used to make us feel awful at times the dying cries of a pig as it was slaughtered, they used to do it in the street, a local man with deputies axe or a wagon-wayman's 'Tomahawk'. There were no humane killings that we knew of. All manner of life that was allowed to be kept was reasonably cared for in the street. I remember quite a lot of lads having good rabbits in converted 'dess' beds. Hens and Bantam hens penned up. They used to keep them just across the street from their house adjacent to the water closets. I remember this 'so-called' sport when I spied a rabbit sweep at High Crows House Farm, where Bob Lindsay was tenant farmer there. From a hawthorn hedge I saw rabbit after rabbit released to be savaged to death, very few got away that I saw, by whippets, now it was called '*first kill eleven*' that was the first cry then. The first whippet, I assume, that killed 11 rabbits earned the first prize. Thank goodness for today's artificial rabbit.

My first sight of a motor car was a beautiful "Genevieve" type motor belonging to Mr Barrass, as it stood outside his house, he was the Manager of Wheatley Hill Pit. Our health was in the hands of Dr Russell and Dr Ryan, both living up the Farm or Front Street. My uncle, Roger Maughan and my mother, Emma Maughan, as teenagers used to collect in the village, the coppers for Dr Russell's panel patients. In the surgery the doctor used to plunge all the pennies into a big dish and drop in a kind of de-oxidising tablet in order to kill the germs and remove all verdigris. I cannot visualise the doctor of today doing that! Dr Ryan living at the end house, The Knoll, used to go on his rounds on a bicycle and wore knicker-bockers when cycling. He had a son killed on his horse in a small plantation just off Cemetery Road end.

The first of the Aged Miner's Homes were opened in 1923 by the daughter of our Parliamentary candidate, Ramsay McDonald, later our Prime Minister. The names of the first twelve occupants were: Mr Piercy, Mr Tully, Mr Rowbotham, Mr Humes, Mr Forster, Mr Wood, Mr Maughan, Mr Armstrong, Mr Harrison, Mr Heslop, Mr Hicks and Mr Carr.

My grandfather died on 18 March 1926 just prior to the General Strike and the day he was buried he had a pay packet of 5 shillings delivered, as he was watchman to the new recreation ground being built behind the Aged Miners Homes. He was 76 years old.

ADVERTISING

Wheatley Hill Community Association: 01429 820214



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 Fri 8.30am-7.45pm
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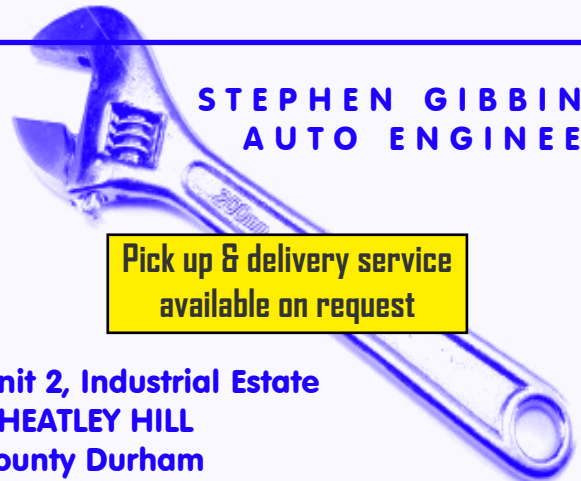
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REMINDERS

CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

Tickets will be on sale at the
 October & November Meetings

MEMBERSHIP

Annual subscriptions are due at the
 January Meeting
 £6.00 for all - no concessions



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