

Wheatley Hill History Club

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WORLD WAR 1 COMMEMORATION

WHEATLEY HILL REMEMBERED

The pebble display in the cemetery provided a magnificent back-drop to the commemoration events. It was widely reported in the local press and on our social media sites and is a credit to the cemetery superintendent. A member of the Heritage Society committee hand-made 189 individual crosses which represented the men from Wheatley Hill who died during the conflict.

The commemoration started with our History Club meeting on Wednesday 29 July and an excellent talk by Durham University on "*World War 1 Recruitment*". The meeting had benefitted from the extra advertising that had appeared locally and around the region, and was well attended.

The next night, Thursday 30 July saw the opening of the Commemoration Flower Festival in All Saints Parish Church with our MP, Phil Wilson. This event was intended for sponsors to look at the displays and meet the flower arrangers. The arrangements were superb and were the result of many hours of planning and discussion that had been going on for some time. The Church looked lovely and was visited over the next few days by about 200 people. The weather let us down on the Friday morning when strawberry cream teas were planned in glorious sunshine, but instead they were held inside whilst outside the heavens opened.

On Saturday 2 August it was the History Club's annual Local History Day in the Workingmens Club with many high quality exhibitions from County Durham Record Office, The DLI Museum, a private collector of militaria, Time Bandits and The North East War Memorials inside. Outside, Beamish Museum entertained our visitors with their early bicycles and provided demonstrations of how to get on (and off) a penny farthing.

This year, we provided a beautiful sunflower wreath for the Club's war memorial. The sunflowers were significant as they depicted young, vibrant men who went to war and who did not return.

The Heritage Centre exhibition also opened on Saturday 2 August and was well attended by

to the village doing the 'grand tour' - workingmens club, church and heritage centre. At 2.30pm the Constitutional Club illuminated scroll was unveiled and a copy presented to David and Elaine from the Club. The unveiling was done by Alan Bridges, who has recently retired from the Army. During this event, a contingent from the DLI Association presented a certificate to the Heritage Centre and then led a group to the grave of Thomas Kenny VC. It was a very moving afternoon.

On Sunday morning the church service was taken by Rev A Miller from Hawthorne and he blessed the brass tablet and the individual crosses to be placed in the cemetery display. The British Legion standard was present and a representative from Trimdon brass band played the Last Post at the end of the service.

As we all assembled in the cemetery for a remembrance service, the brass band provided a drum altar and the British Legion representative read out all 189 names of those who died. A poppy wreath on behalf of the BL was laid by their President and a Heritage Centre sunflower wreath was laid by a visitor from Abbots Court Nursing Home.

The events culminated on Monday evening at 10.30pm with a candlelit vigil in the cemetery which was attended by over 100 people. A Scottish piper started and ended the vigil and ten volunteers read war poetry.

Our events were a fitting tribute to everyone involved in the First World War—we will not forget.

HISTORY CLUB WEBSITE

The official launch of the above website took place on Saturday 13 September during Heritage Open Days in the Heritage Centre. The web designer was there and visitors took the opportunity of speaking to him about the village's World War 1 records that are now available to the rest of the world.

The advantage of having them on the website over a book or dvd is that the information can be added to in the future providing a full picture of what was going on in Wheatley Hill between 1914-1919.

The site has proved popular with the press and articles have appeared in The Northern Echo, Hartlepool Mail and Peterlee Star.

CONTACT DETAILS

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THERE WILL BE NO MEETINGS

November, December 2014

or

January, February 2015

These are the months of our lowest attendances

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. This is the concluding part:

William Crawford called a conference at Spennymoor at which I attended from Thornley, but no one could give me credentials, there being no lodge established. Still I represented Thornley, for I knew the union must and would be established if help could be found. I was allowed to sit in the conference and speak on questions before the delegates. The result was I had to return and report to everybody what had taken place and to do my best to form a branch of the miners union in Thornley.

Robert Archer, Isaiah Ginks, Frank Lucas, Tom O'Neal, John and Robert Winter, my brother William and others agreed to meet and form a branch, and obtaining a corn-crake, I went round the colliery rows announcing the first meeting. On the Saturday following, we enrolled hundreds of members and began the campaign. Joseph Sheldon of Blyth was sent to our first open-air meeting, at which I was elected Chairman. Sheldon made a stirring speech and infused the spirit of unionism amongst us, urging the Thornley men to send missionaries to other collieries to organise branches. Lucas was elected Chairman, Archer secretary, Ginks delegate and my brother and myself missionaries. We set to work at nights, and travelled to Wingate, Trimdon, Shotton, Haswell, Castle Eden, Cassop, Merrington Hill, Kelloe, Coxhoe and Shincliffe. Never did men toil and suffer more than we did during our first three months of missionary labour for the Durham Miners' Union. With my corn-crake I had to tramp through dirty lanes and streets, and run the gauntlet of howling mobs of children and bear the scoffs of officials and flunkeys' and it was often with great difficulty that I could procure refreshment or even get a chairman to preside over the gatherings. In some colliery villages we would get no meeting room and had to stand on an old wall or ashpit. Sometimes but not often, someone would venture to take the chair, or say a few words respecting mining matters.

On many a night we reached our homes in Thornley at a time when we should have been in bed, and it must be remembered that, in addition to this kind of work, we had to labour in the mines every day. We received 1s.6d per meeting for missionary work. Hewing coal at Thornley Colliery was very unremunerated labour. The seam in which I worked was low in price and had a bad roof. The only light we had was that given by the dreary old Davy, the top part of which we had to clean ourselves at home—a practice which I always condemned. No matter how hard I worked, I could not keep out of debt or live comfortably. It is a fact that hundreds of miners' wives in those days dreaded Pay Friday shopping more than all the other troubles in life.

I took up a fighting attitude in the press under the signature of "A man knocking about" and attacked every type of tyranny and plunder under which the pitmen of Durham suffered. I also found it necessary to denounce the unsanitary state of Thornley with its wretched and filthy supply of water.

In performing my corn-crake service for the union, I laid the foundation of my own troubles for years afterwards. I was consequently driven from Thornley when the bond was read in 1864. Mr Wilson the manager had left and Mr Thomas Bell, the new manager did not approve of the union or its supporters and refused to bind me at Thornley and ordered me to leave the village.

17th CENTURY DIARY

Continuation of the Diary of Jacob Bee:

25 January 1683

'A sad cruel murder committed by a boy about eighteen or nineteen years of age, nere Ferryhill, nere Durham, being Thursday, at night. The maner is, by report: When the parents were out of dores a young man, being sone to the house, and two daughters was kil'd by this boy with an axe, having knockt them in the head, afterwards cut ther throts: one of them being asleep in the bed, about ten or eleven yeares of age: the other daughter was to be married at Candlemas. After he had kil'd the sone and the eldest daughter, being above twenty yeares of age, a little lass, her sister, about the age of eleven yeares being in bed alone, he drag'd her out in bed and killed her alsoe. (The same Andrew Millns alias Miles, was hang'd in irons upon a gybett nere Ferryhill upon the 15th day of August, being Wednesday, this year 1683.)'

4 November 1684

'A foot race was runn betwixt Fairebearnes, a butcher, and a countrey-man called John Upton, and runn upon Elvittmoore, the hardest run that ever any did see. The countrey-man wone upon hard tearmes, being runn soo nerely that scarce any could judge, when they had but one hundred yards to runn, whether should have it.'

17 January 1685

'John Borrow departed this life, and 'twas reported, that he see a coach drawn by six swine, all black, and a black man satt upon the cotch box. He fell sick upon't and dyed, and of his death severall apparations appeared after.'

20 December 1689

'A figure of a comet appeared about three-quarters of an hour after four at night, the first appearance was in the form of a half-moon, very firie, and afterwards did change itselfe to a firye sword and run westward.'

23 April 1699

'Upon St George's day there fell haile in and about Durham that was estimated to be, by report, five inches about, some reports seven, and some four, but I am sure they were three inches and more.'

The entries from Jacob Bee's diaries form part of the collection of Bertram Surtees Raine who lived at Barnard Castle and was a member of the family of Robert Surtees of Mainsforth (1779-1834) an eminent Durham historian. The volume containing Jacob's diary probably lay in the Ferryhill library for many years before someone realised how important it was to local historical events in the 17th Century. It is now in the Special Collections section of the University Library at Palace Green.

SPEAKERS ALWAYS WANTED

If you would like to give a talk at one of our history club meetings, or would like to recommend someone who you feel might be suitable, please get in touch with our speaker booker—Arthur. His contact details are:

T: 01207 592301

E: adodds9@talk.talk.net

FROM THE WHEATLEY HILL CHURCH MAGAZINE FEBRUARY 1950

There are very few parishes where the tradition of Sunday funerals still holds good, but it lingers on here. Sunday is primarily a day of worship and rest. It is already for the clergy, packed with duties, and were there frequent demands for Sunday funerals, it would seriously interfere with the teaching work of the Church. For these reasons I must discontinue the practice and it will be understood that to a rule of this kind there can be no exceptions.

25 YEARS

The History Club will be celebrating its 20th birthday in January, but as we will not be meeting then, our celebration will be held at the March 2015 meeting at 6.00pm—9.00pm.

We intend to hold a pie and pea supper and have booked a man and wife duo who perform stories and songs of the area—they call themselves "What Fettle".

If you would like to come to the event, please let us know beforehand (numbers are needed for catering) either at the October meeting or by phoning one of the committee.

Annual subscriptions will be due at this meeting also.

HIS WATCH WAS LUCKY! 1959

Losing his watch while inspecting an 18-inch seam, Wheatley Hill official, Robert Burnip reported his loss to checkweighman, Chris Hackworth, when he reached the surface.

Less than an hour later the watch, still ticking merrily and dead on time, was spotted travelling along the cleaning belt by three workmen who had been detailed to keep a special look out.

The watch, lost during inspection of an 18-inch seam, had been automatically picked up by an iron sledge full of coal and dumped into a hopper which had then been tipped onto a conveyor belt and carried along a few hundred yards.

It was next emptied with the coal into a tub and transported a mile to the shaft bottom, where it was pushed into a cage and hauled up. At the surface the tub was automatically pushed into a 'tippler'.

This turned the tub completely over, emptying it onto a 'shaker' 12 feet below and the contents were transferred to a rubber belt for cleaning and sorting. At this point the watch was seen.

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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This is a page from website that the History Club launched
containing our World War 1 information

The advantage of having the information on a web site is
that it can be updated regularly and as people come forward
with photos and other information about their Wheatley Hill
World War 1 relatives, this can easily be added it to the site

