

# Wheatley Hill History Club

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## WHEATLEY HILL FLUTINA FOUND IN AMERICA

When someone contacted me through our website to tell me he was renovating a flutina I must admit I didn't know what he meant. He went on to tell me that during the renovations he had taken this musical instrument to pieces and found the following inscription inside:

**William John Kennedy  
John Russell—Wheatley Hill Colliery 1876**



*Groups of men outside the Temperance Hall  
which was situated at the bottom of  
Patton Street overlooking the railway*



The flutina was an early piano accordion and played like a squeeze box. It is likely that John Russell is the brother of Thomas Russell who lived in Wheatley Hill during the 1870's/80's and who kept a journal of his time in the village, making a list of his goods and chattels that he sold to raise the money for his travel to the US. Thomas' journal came to light several years ago and I know that at the time he left England for the US, several members of his family left at the same time. Perhaps brother John was one of these.

The Russell family were originally from Scotland and Thomas was a supporter of the Temperance movement in Wheatley Hill, however I have never come across anything to suggest that the Temperance group had any sort of band, although they did have their own premises at the bottom of Patton Street, known to me as Race's Garage in the early 1960's. The instrument is more likely to be connected to the Primitive Methodist Church which did have musical instruments as early as 1876 and was close to the Temperance Hall.

My internet research on the flutina tells me that the instrument was very popular with photographers using them as studio props, and many were imported into the United States for that reason in the early days of photography — 1860's. The image on the right shows a young lady having her photograph taken, with a flutina adding a touch of culture to the image!



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**NO MEETINGS UNTIL MARCH 2017**

## 1830-1885



This was the first mining book we published in 2002. It was launched at our local history day in September of this year by Councillor Morris Nicholls.

Despite publishing another four books in this series, there is no doubt that this is the most successful and sought after. As a result, it has been out of print for some years now.

Copies do come up for sale regularly on both EBay and second hand book websites and copies are commanding prices of around £25.

You can imagine our delight therefore when an immaculate copy was handed back to the History Club. It has been signed by Councillor Nicholls and Owen Rowland, the main researcher for the book.

We intend to sell this book by offering it for sale on a 'sealed bid' basis. If you would like the opportunity of obtaining the book, let us have your written bid in a sealed envelope with your name and contact details. The bids can be handed in at The Heritage Centre or to any History Club member. The bids will be opened before Christmas and the highest bidder announced.

If you have the rest of this series, this is an ideal opportunity to complete the set.

## NOTES ON THE TROLLOPE FAMILY OF THORNLEY HALL FARM

In December 1636 John Trollope, eldest son of John, was involved in a quarrel during which he killed William Selby of Newcastle at a race meeting at Whytehall Dyke Nook. Duels were illegal at this time and Trollope fled and was outlawed at the ensuing Assizes.

At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1641 John the elder backed the Royal cause. He lost two sons in the services of Charles 1st and 2nd, his house and all his belongings were seized by the Parliament, and described as follows:

	£	s	d
Stuff in Parlour	0	18	0
Inner Parlour	0	13	0
Main Chamber	2	0	0
Second Chamber	1	0	0
Child's Chamber	0	10	0
Kitchen Stuff	0	5	0
Bull and four milke-kine cows	0	3	4

After the Civil War the Trollopes found themselves reduced to the family mansion and 1/3 of the original Estate. John Trollope died in 1668 leaving just one surviving son and one grandson, his grandson died during his father's lifetime and the property was sold to John Spearman for £1500. Mr Trollope retired to West Herrington where he died in 1682. His remains were interred in the Thornley Porch at St Helen's Church at Kelloe at the expense of John Spearman.

## THE MEMOIRS OF WILLIAM HERBERT SHEPHERD (1891-1972)

I was born in 1891 in Flimby on the west coast of Cumberland, where my father was employed as a coal hewer at one of the collieries that dotted the coastline, but before I was a year old we moved to Birtley in County Durham.

At that time there was a great demand for Durham steam coal, steam being the prime motive power for machinery of every kind. Railways, shipping, factories etc used large amounts annually, both at home and on the continent. The sinking of several new pits had brought miners from various parts of the country to County Durham.

We did not stay long at Birtley but moved a bit further north in the County to Springwell. Here I spent my childhood days. We lived in a rented cottage about 3/4 mile from the pit. A rise in the ground with colliery houses atop, hid the pit from us. I think the rent was about 3/6 weekly, part of which was paid by the colliery Company in lieu of a house, that being a union agreement.

I had attended school for about two years when father thought of moving again. As there was now four children (my brother Sydney having arrived about the time I started in the 'infants') we were getting a bit crowded in our cottage, and also he thought prospects may be better at Wheatley Hill in the south east of the County. Mother had a cousin who worked at one of the newer pits in that district, so it was decided that they should write to him and ask what the prospects were of getting 'set on'. When he replied, he said he had seen the under-manager about it, so could father go there some day to see that gentleman himself, as it seemed that was all he had to do to get a job. The next week father took a day off and went, saw the under-manager and got 'set on', with a colliery house into the bargain. So now it was 14 days notice of termination of employment with his present employers, then off again to pastures new.

The big day for moving came. We were up early, had breakfast and waited for the van to arrive. When it came, the men slackened the horses harness, gave them a drink, then began packing their van. As all the small stuff had been put in boxes by our parents, they had very little inside packing to do. When all was safely stowed, mother tidied up a bit with the loan of a brush etc from our next door neighbour, Mrs Buckley.

Father locked up and took the key to the landlord, then off we went to the railway station. Mother took a bassinette containing a little bit of this and that and father carried the baby of the family, whilst we other three carried various parcels, one of which was food, because we would be at our new house a while before the van arrived, we could have a 'put off' meal.

Eventually after about 3/4 hour we arrived at Thornley station, our destination as far as our railway journey was concerned. When we got to the station we found there was no road, only a footpath running alongside a branch line to the colliery, which we followed until we came to a signal cabin, a level crossing and a railway junction, where a second line went on to another colliery. Here the road widened, but still it was only a cart track as it went past a farm to the village.

Here we met cousin George, my mother's cousin who had seen about the business of getting father a job. He had come to meet us so that he could take us to our new house, of which he had the key. It was our first meeting with him so he greeted us all and helped with the little luggage we had.

Looking past the farm I got my first view of the colliery. The high sets of headgear showing two shafts were working, being surmounted by the bit whirring pulley wheels which were to dominate my life for a few years. Now we passed some buildings which we were told were the Offices, after which came a terrace of fairly decent sized houses, where some of the officials lived. We were quite close to the pit now, with their sidings, smoke, steam and dust. We walked on towards the streets of miners houses and saw that the village was divided into two unequal parts by a branch line running through it. This went on to another pit in the same group. We walked along, passed the first row and turned into the second. Halfway down cousin George pushed open a crude gate leading into a yard and said, "this is it and here's the key". Dad opened the door and mam followed him in followed by cousin George and we children. The place was, I suppose, like miners houses anywhere in the country, so I will give a brief description of it.

***Although Mr Shepherd doesn't say which street the family moved into, from the description he has given, it is likely to be Elizabeth Street. His story will continue in the next newsletter.***





**OPENING HOURS**

**Mon—Thurs**

**8.30am—8.45pm**

**Fri—8.30am-6.45pm**

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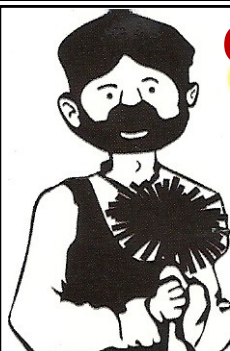
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**SEPTEMBER MEETING**

**Nostalgic View of the North (Part 1) by John Moreels**

When John, the then owner of Wards Graphics in Dunston, took over the Philipson Photographic business some years ago, he had no idea that hidden away in the attics of the new premises were thousands and thousands of glass-plate photographs dating back to the early days of photography and representing all parts of the North and all types of northern life. John's talk therefore introduced us to the mammoth task that he has taken on in cataloguing, printing and identifying these images whilst at the same time making them available to the general public in book form, cd and on his website. This was a fascinating talk and we hope to get John back at a later date to give us an up-date on his progress. The talk featured two, previously unseen images of the inside of the Patton Street Chapel.