

We Supported Armed Forces Day

Greenhills Centre
29 June



The weather was lovely on Saturday 29 June when we were setting up our displays in the Community Centre. We had our Thomas Kenny Exhibition and a supply of our Peace Babies to give away. Lonely Tower Film and Media were showing the second part of our HLF-funded project "Peace Perfect Peace" in the upstairs room. This is the follow-up to "We All Served" which was shown in the Cemetery on the afternoon of 11 November 2018. Both short films record the voices of local people giving their 21st century opinion about a 20th century atrocity—The First World War. The results are very moving as the music, voices, still image and moving image creates a fitting tribute from the people of Wheatley Hill which will stay in our memories for many years to come.

HELP NEEDED — TEA ROTA

We would like to set up a rota from our members, of people who would be willing to take responsibility for making the tea/washing up at our monthly meetings.

We only have 8 meetings per year and we usually have about 20 people at each meeting. We will ensure that one person from our committee is on the rota each month plus one or two willing volunteers.

I think it only fair to make clear that this is not a gender specific role and everyone is being encouraged to sign up to the rota to help the History Club. If enough people sign up each person would only be responsible for **one meeting per year!**

Volunteering would involve turning up early to make sure the tea is ready to serve. There is always extra help available to wash up to ensure everyone leaves as soon after 12 o'clock as possible.

If you think you could help out at future meetings, please sign up to the rota which is at today's meeting.



HISTORY CLUB IS 25 YEARS OLD IN 2020

We are planning a **FREE**
Gentlemen's Afternoon Tea Event
for members

To be held during March 2020

in order to mark the occasion

More Details to Follow

CONTACT DETAILS

CHAIR: 01429 820813
TREASURER: 01429 823198

E: history.club2@btinternet.com
W: wheatley-hill.org.uk



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ALL MEETINGS START AT 11.00AM

- 28 Aug** The Postcards of Donald McGill
(Stuart Miller)
- 29 Sept** The History of Mining in NE England
(Peter Sagar)
- 30 Oct** The Horse Keepers Daughter
(Jane Gulliford-Lowes)

£2.00 per meeting
includes tea/coffee/biscuits/raffle

INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL PEOPLE IN 1968 AT THE TIME OF THE PIT CLOSURE

(from a newspaper article)

CLOSURE BEWILDERS THE PITMEN OF WHEATLEY HILL

One of the many puzzled men at Wheatley Hill Colliery which closes down tonight, is Mr William Gibson of Burns Street, a chargehand fitter at the colliery and secretary of the Wheatley Hill Lodge of the Mechanics' Association. He said, "Look around the pit. You will not see one bit of coal stockpiled. However much coal comes up there is a demand for it, so it is difficult to understand why the pit should have to close. "I know that our output per man-shift could be higher, but I feel that this could have been remedied if more money had been spent on the pit and more coal producers brought in. There is another seam to open and if this had been done, together with the seam now being worked, I believe Wheatley Hill could have been kept going for another six to eight years".

UNWANTED REDUNDANCY

Mr Gibson is one of the men being kept on for salvage work but he asks, "What happens when this is finished? It may mean another job at another colliery but what guarantee is there that it will not close in the near future? We could go on like this until we are in our fifties. What will happen to us then if there are no more jobs in the coal industry? Who will employ us when we get to that age? Extra redundancy pay is all right but few men want to be redundant in their 50's".

Similar sentiments came from 49-year-old Mr Thomas Ayre of Burns Street, the colliery medical attendant. He has worked at Wheatley Hill Colliery since leaving school in 1933 and for most of his time there worked down the pit. He says "Why cant they get industries to take over these old pit buildings? I would give anything a try. It certainly cannot be any worse than working down there". Mr Ayre who is also on salvage work does not know what the future will hold after that. He comments, "we were born too soon".

The closure of the pit is a sad moment for the head horse keeper, Mr Alec Poole (60) of Luke Terrace, Wheatley Hill who has been looking after the ponies at the colliery for 12 years. There was a time when he had 72 ponies to care for, but after tomorrow there will be only 12 left at Wheatley Hill. Most of the ponies will go to a pony farm at Consett. Mr Poole, who has worked at Wheatley Hill for the past 46 years said, "It has been a pleasure to work with the ponies and I will be sorry to see them go". When the salvage work is finished it will also be the end of work for Mr Poole, who will become redundant.

WOMANS VIEW

Mrs Valerie Miller, wife of the young chairman of the Wheatley Hill Miners Lodge, 24-year-old Mr Brian Miller, expressed her view of the closure. Born and brought up in Wheatley Hill where her father also worked at the pit, she said, "it is difficult to realise that the pit will not be working any more. It has been part of my life as long as I can remember". Mr Miller, who has been on power-loading at the colliery is to transfer to Blackhall Colliery with others.



The Colliery, Wheatley Hill. 1954



THE MEMOIRS OF

Thomas Russell 1847-1928

(during the short time he lived in Wheatley Hill)

4 November 1879 Wheatley Hill Colliery

Board School will be re-opened on Monday the first under new mastership:

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R Foster—School Board

8 December 1879 Wheatley Hill Colliery

Munday thay Fell Away

About 11 o'clock at night Oliver Thompson and Thomas Watson were working in the number 2 pit and it is the up cast shaft and they were taking the brades out and they had the half cradle in the shaft at the time and the poor fellows fell to the bottom of the pit a distance of 75 fadems. And how thay fell off the cradle we do not know. Thay had the torch in the time it happened and Thompson was lying on his back rather out of the pit and Watson was lying in the pit and Thompson was not as much mangled as Watson.

I went in at ten that night and George Smith the back overman came in and John Patterson and G Bradley, William Short and myself and we ware 5 in number that went and brought them out and got them home.

13 March 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

On this date Ellion and myself we went to Thornley to by our Nickleson a shout of close (*suit of clothes*) but when we got to the store thay had not many in at his sise. We had to put it off to another time.

28 March 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

Easter Sunday was the day that we briched our son Nickleson (*dressed him in britches*). His mother bought the cloth and made him one suit and she made another out of my pilot shute (*suit*). He is just turned 4 years old but he is a man and a lovely boy.

2 April 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

Station Town on this date and at this place Mary Ann gave birth to a daughter.

(*Mary Ann Heseltine nee Hartley was Thomas' sister-in-law—sister of his wife Ellen. She called the baby Jenny Heseltine*).

9 April 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

On this date I bought a little pig from a man belogen to Shotton and it was 8 weeks old and I gave him 23 shillings for it.

22 May 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

Thomas Armstrong the landlord of Nimmos Hotel died on this date and he was 48 years of age.

27 May 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

On this date I got my back money that I wright for in 1877.

3 November 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

On this date my father died. He died about 4 in the morning and I got to know about 9 o'clock.

16 November 1880 Wheatley Hill Colliery

On this date I am working depety work and I am folling four men at the old shaft. And on this date I had to go to my work about one o'clock that day on account of gas at the poldey stapple and about nine o'clock I had to lous my men out. Robert Bell lost life by a fall of stone. Mr Heckles was Manager.

Thomas and his family appear to re-locate to Monk Hesleden at around this time and he works at Castle Eden Colliery

9 December 1880 Castle Eden Colliery

Tonight I am rather low in spirites wat with one thing and another this life it full of truble and every day bringes its own greef to one or another and I am like the rest. I have got mine. I am working depety work on this colliery and I am stopping one shift and a half just now and I have got a marrow the name of John Taylor and thay are just opening Wilkenson Roilety and we have 3 men to follow at Castle Eden.

11 December 1880 Castle Eden Colliery

Tonight I am sitting thinking about my father and I wish I had him to go and see but I have not. He has paid his dets now and I hope he is better off now than he was when he was with us.

14 December 1880 Castle Eden Colliery

On this date I killed the pit that I brote from Wheatley Hill and I sold the other one for £2.16s.6d to master Mason and I am goen to work in the morning and I will not be out to 4 in the afternoon so I will not see it killed but I hope all will go on right at home. I am working depety work just now in Castle Eden Way and John Taylor is my marrow.

25 January 1881 Castle Eden Colliery

Was the day that Mary Ann came to let me know that hir mother was verry bad and I am in the twelve o'clock shift so I did not go that day. I went to see hir and the day is verry cold it is a white frost. I don't think she will get better again. Ellion is there since Saturday and they are stopping at Murton Colliery.



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Fri—8.30am—7.45pm

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