



## PETERLEE '75 1948—2023

**Photo Exhibition in  
Castle Dene Shopping Centre  
OPENS 30 JUNE 2023**

Amongst the first wave of “New Towns” designated in post-war Britain, Peterlee was envisioned as “a capital for the miners” of Easington Rural District, holding out the promise of decent quality housing, modern amenities, and new employment opportunities for all.

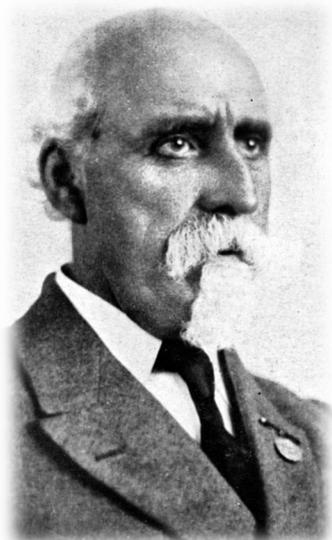
This is a story rooted in the fortunes of the coal industry and the communities that grew from it, as seen through the lens of the present: 75 years on from the birth of a ‘dream’.

Peterlee was one of the new towns that became the Government’s vision to provide self-contained communities with well-designed housing on open field sites and offering local employment opportunities, particularly for women, after the Second World War. The Government and County Council felt building a new town was preferable to building new housing in individual villages and in East Durham the government point of view was to move communities away from the pits *“with their waste heaps, dilapidated buildings, dilapidated land and poor quality housing where the smell, smoke and noise of the pits is always present”*.

Preparing his report, *Farewell Squalor*”, in support of the new town for the Easington District, Mr C W Clarke, wrote that the miners *“lacked cultural, recreational and shopping facilities alongside their inadequate living conditions”*, and that individual villages were unsuitable for expansion. This was Mr Clarke’s view, a view not shared by mining families.

The new town offered mining families a major change to their living conditions and lifestyle but it also provided them with a massive challenge to their long-standing, familiar routines where their villages were seen as close-knit communities, where community spirit, camaraderie, a sense of belonging and the support of your neighbours was valued and could be relied upon. They found it difficult to imagine a

situation which would involve leaving extended family behind by moving to the new town. Living in Wheatley Hill in poor quality, rent-free colliery owned accommodation, many felt was a small price to pay for some who felt the benefits of colliery village life outweighed the disadvantages of their living arrangements and there was great opposition to the new town from parish councils, the National Coal Board, local miners’ lodges, MP Manny Shinwell and many more but as we know, the new town got the go ahead.



It was named after Peter Lee, the man who did so much for the villages of Wheatley Hill and Thornley at the beginning of the 20th Century. C W Clarke, in his justification for naming the town after Peter Lee said: *“I have come to the conclusion that this new town should bear the name of some local man who, during his lifetime, went fearlessly and courageously forward for the good and uplift of the people in this district. A man who was a power both in bodily physique and mental ability, a man who had the courage of his convictions—and there are few of these”*. (this quote has been edited).

**CONTACT DETAILS**

**CHAIR:** 01429 820813  
**TREASURER:** 01429 823198



**E:** history.club2@btinternet.com  
**W:** wheatley-hill.org.uk  
<https://www.facebook.com/wheatley.hillhistory>

**MEETINGS IN WHEATLEY HOUSE**

*Start at 11.00am*

***Change of meeting details from calendar***

**30 Aug** History of Peterlee **C Robson**  
**27 Sept** A Necessary History **A Atkinson**  
The British Toilet

***Change of meeting details from calendar***

**25 Oct** Wheatley Hill Cemetery **History Club**

**May was Local History Month**

**Thank you for supporting our 31 images posted throughout May**



**Image that had the most likes & comments**



We posted an image a day on Facebook throughout May to celebrate Local History Month. The posts were noticed and acknowledged by 1249 people with 287 making comments about them. This image received the most attention.



**Supporting Families Through Miscarriage, Stillbirth & Child Loss**

Friends of our advertiser "Sahota's Nest Fisheries" have raised over £6000 for the above charity.

Nine of them did a sky dive from Shotton airfield on Saturday 8 April.

This was a fantastic achievement for a great charity. Well done to all.



**Jean Dobson 1938—2023**

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Jean on the morning of Monday 26 June. She was a great supporter of our History Club, being a member for almost 25 years. She was also a good supporter of the Heritage Centre where she made the tea every Saturday afternoon.

Unfortunately, after a bad fall at home a few years ago, it became impossible for Jean to live on her own any longer and she moved into the Ashwood Park Residential & Nursing Home at Easington Colliery.

We are thinking of Jean's family at this very sad time.



# Brass Band Night at the Mothers' Club

Wednesday 5 July 2023



As usual, on the Wednesday before the Durham Miners Gala, the Peterlee GT band performed a concert at the Mothers' Club held in Wheatley Hill Workingmens Club.

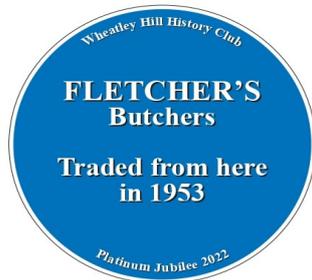
Once again, it was a very well attended night and the band were fantastic, performing a new repertoire, including some numbers that required audience participation—and we did them proud!!

Members of the Mothers' Club put on an excellent buffet and organised a raffle and the proceeds raised are shared between the Mothers' Club and the Wheatley Hill Banner Society.

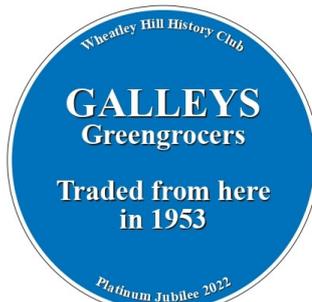
The Peterlee band accompany the Wheatley Hill banner into the Miners Gala every year, this year marching through part of the village before playing at Abbott's Court, from where their bus picked them up and took them into Durham.

## PLATINUM JUBILEE PROJECT

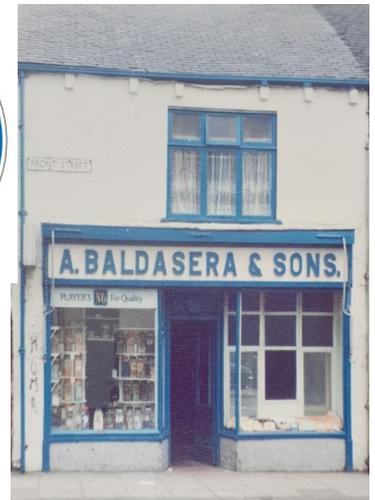
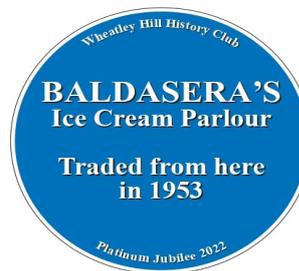
Our blue stickers scheme got underway in June when all trading premises in Wheatley Hill front street was allocated a sticker that indicated what the premises were used for in 1953. The traders have all been supportive and most have put their stickers in their street-facing windows.



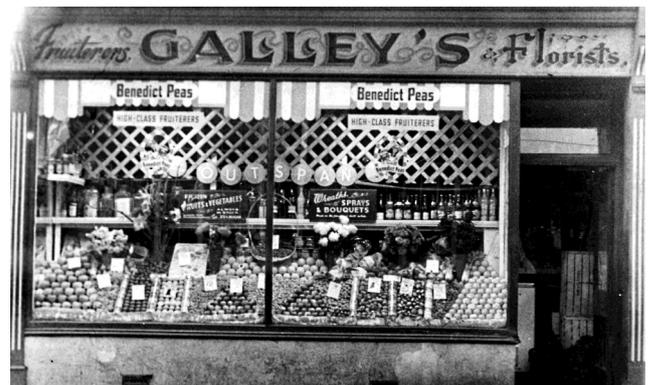
The Hot on the Spot food outlet, are now trading in the old Fletcher's Butchers Shop and when they were preparing their shop for opening, they uncovered the original butcher's floor-



**Have a walk along the front street to see the blue stickers in shop windows**



This shop is now a private house and the householder was delighted to be involved in our project.



This shop is now *Fast Fry* and you will see their blue sticker in the window.

# Wheatley House

## Moving Forward

Wheatley House was formerly the men's hostel within the aged miners homes complex, opened in 1924. It is now a community hall managed by a committee to provide a gathering place for the people of Wheatley Hill and surrounding area to hold a range of functions

**All types of functions**  
for up to 70 people

Parties  
Christenings  
Funeral Gatherings

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**For more details:**  
**Eileen: 07450344806**  
**Elbriddeileen@aol.co.uk**

# Past Uncovered

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