

Bishop Auckland Heritage Festival Saturday 23 September



The History Club were represented at the above event in Bishop Auckland Town Hall.

We displayed our Platinum Jubilee banner showing Wheatley Hill front street in 1953. The banner is 9ft long and the attention to detail is superb thanks to the accuracy of the plan-drawing by George Cook, helped by Barrie Dobson. It received some lovely comments from visitors and other exhibitors.

We added some of our blue badges that appear in shop windows in the front street showing what businesses traded there in 1953 and these too received some excellent feedback, with many congratulating us on such a unique project, but as we all know, that's what Wheatley Hill History Club is all about—being relevant, topical and different, if we can.

We also advertised the Peterlee '75 anniversary by offering their booklets for sale. The booklets are £5 and will be available at future History Club meetings.

All exhibitors received a thank you medal.

1937 Wheatley Hill Lodge Banner To the Memory of Peter Lee

As we know in Wheatley Hill, there was a colliery banner made to celebrate the life and times of miners leader Peter Lee when he died in 1935. This is a man who did so much for the mining communities of East Durham and he was held in the highest esteem by everyone who knew him. The banner was unfurled at Wheatley Hill by Jack Lawson MP who was also Peter Lee's biographer. The banner has a very good likeness of Peter Lee on the front and a picture of Christ with children at His feet on the back.

Tom Tunney has drawn our attention to this passage from the second volume of Hugh Dalton's autobiography, *The Fateful Years* (1957), in which Dalton describes his first sight of the banner in 1937:

"Saturday was the Durham Miners Gala. The parade of bands and banners was magnificent as usual. More than 200,000 people came in from all over the county. As I stood in the crowd at the top of the bank leading down to the racecourse, many bands and banners passed, including one with a portrait of the late Peter Lee. It was a striking likeness, giving very faithfully not only the white pointed beard and the fine aquiline nose but those wonderful, penetrating brown eyes. It was the first time the banner had been out. A man beside me in the crowd looked up at it and said, half awed: 'Why, there's old Peter. The old bugger's still here!' That is the kind of immortality to covet."

Arguably the best leader the Labour Party never had, Hugh Dalton was MP for Bishop Auckland from 1929 to 1959. He was a prominent member of Churchill's wartime coalition Cabinet and Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1945 Attlee Government. And, of course, he also has a street in Wheatley Hill named after him!



1937 Wheatley Hill Lodge Banner

Wheatley Hill Mothers Club
REMEMBRANCE BRASS BAND NIGHT

Wednesday
8 November 7.00pm
Peterlee GT Band Concert
with a buffet
Wheatley Hill Workingmens Club
ALL WELCOME
Tickets £5.00

Wheatley Hill Remembrance Day

Sunday 12 November 2023

Parade
Service of Remembrance in Church 10.45am
Service of Remembrance at Cenotaph 11.15am

Trimdon Brass Band in attendance

The History Club wreath will be laid by
George Cook

Local Labour Party Pioneers Number 1

Joe Carey
by Tom Tunney



Joe Carey in 1931

Thornley miner Joe Carey was part of the 'quiet revolution' which saw the Labour Party dominating Durham politics from 1919 onwards. The 1919 local elections which saw Peter Lee becoming the leader of Durham County Council also saw Carey and fellow miner Hubert Tunney being elected to the two Thornley seats on Easington Rural District Council. The results were:

Easington Rural Council, Thornley Parish seats: Elected Hubert Tunney, coal miner 493, Joseph Carey, coalminer, 370. Not elected: William Kirk, grocer, 311, G A Curry, mining engineer, 188; Joseph T Simpson, engineer, 122, John Adam Beatty, shoemaker and general dealer, 77.

As well as being elected to the DCC, Peter Lee also won out over local colliery officials for one of the two ERDC seats for Wheatley Hill. The other was gained by miner Frank Quin.

Elected: Peter Lee, checkweighman, 714; F Quin, miner, 625. Not elected M Barrass, colliery manager, 232; H J Thompson, boot dealer, 169. (SE 8/4/19 p 6.)

Carey's background would do justice to a Mark Twain novel. This article is from a 1936 edition of the *Sunderland Echo*:

"Workhouse boy to Poor Law Guardian, District Council Chairman, Justice of the Peace and Miners' Leader, is an epitome of the life story of Mr Joseph Carey, who for more than 30 years worked for the betterment of his fellow men.

Mr Carey did not definitely know in what year or in what place he was born, but the supposed year was 1872. As he said himself, whether it was in England, Ireland or America he could not say. His earliest recollections were of Dublin. When about five or six years old he was taken out of Dublin workhouse and brought to England. As a boy he earned his living as a shoe black outside St George's Hall, Liverpool and he afterwards spent three years at sea. During that period he was twice shipwrecked. After this he wandered into the Lancashire coalfield. His trade union interests began there, when with 11 others he formed a miners' lodge in secret.

Their first attempt to meet the colliery owners at St Helens ended in their being turned out unheard. Eventually he left Lancashire and tramped to Thornley. In 1901 he was converted in Wheatley Hill Primitive Methodist Church and became a church member. He was fond of publicly stating that all he had ever accomplished in public life he owed to the Primitive Methodist Church.

At the age of 30, the church taught him the alphabet and, after mastering it with much difficulty and gradually acquiring knowledge, he was eventually appointed a lay preacher and later developed into an evangelist with a powerful appeal. He conducted hundreds of missions up and down the country and as a result of these services it is estimated that 17,000 people were influenced towards a religious life.

A Socialist and trade unionist, Mr Carey was actively engaged in work for the miners of Thornley for more than 30 years. He was elected to Easington Rural District Council and Board of Guardians in 1919, and was appointed Vice Chairman just before the Board ceased to exist. He was also Vice-Chairman of Thornley Parish Council." (SE 20/6/36 p 3.)

Joe Carey died in 1936.

For more on Hubert Tunney and Joe Carey see this site: <http://oldthornley2.awardspace.co.uk/>

CONTACT DETAILS

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MEETINGS IN WHEATLEY HOUSE

Start at 11.00am

NO MEETINGS UNTIL MARCH 2024

Private Albert W Dove, 17766 Yorkshire Hussars

Ian Lofthouse contacted the History Club to see if we could help him trace the family of a medal found in his mother's possessions. Ian is a descendant of Atkinsons the Butchers in Wheatley Hill Front Street (1930's – 1960's), his mother Elizabeth was Atkinson before her marriage.

His mother is still alive and whilst he and his brother were helping her with some downsizing, they came across a British War Medal belonging to a Private Dove. Ian did a bit of research and found out that it belonged to Albert Dove of Thornley, employed as a putter at Thornley pit but living at Pyman Street, Wheatley Hill at the time of his enlistment.

Albert married Ada Graham at the Anglican church of St Bartholomew, Thornley on 30 May 1914 and they had one child, Elsie born 1915 at Wheatley Hill.

He enlisted into the First World War at Sunderland under Soldier Number 17766, a private in the Yorkshire Hussars (Alexandra, Princess of Wales' Own) and he was killed at the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

Margaret has carried out some family history research on both families to see if there is a blood link between the Atkinsons and the Doves, without success. So, it appears that Albert's medal had gone to a family with which he was not related by birth or marriage, and it is therefore likely that Albert knew someone from the Atkinson family that he respected, and that's how the medal ended up with them. The only light Ian can shed on this is that his grandfather worked at Thornley pit during WW1 being exempt from military duty as a result of an injury – this could be the link. Albert knowing that Atkinson couldn't take part in the war, may have told his wife Ada, that in the event of his death, the medal should be passed to the Atkinson family (*this is very much speculation at the moment and may change if further information comes to light*).

After the death of Albert, Ada married his brother Fred in 1921. Fred was five years younger than Albert and it was his first marriage. Ada and Fred went on to have five children and in 1939 they were living at No 32 Shinwell Crescent, Thornley except son David who was staying with his married half-sister Elsie (daughter of Albert W Dove), her husband and daughter at No 181 Thornley North.

It is Ian's intention to return the medal to the Dove family at Thornley. It doesn't have any medal ribbons at the moment but Ian is trying to source some before he returns it and with the help of Fred Bromilow a member of the Dove family has been identified who would like to have the medal as part of his collection and we are hoping that the hand-over will be at Wheatley Hill in the not to distant future.



British War Medal
Albert W Dove



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

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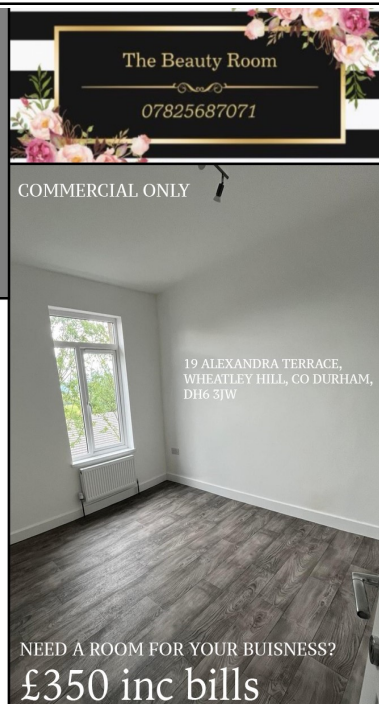
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