

Wheatley Hill History Club HERITAGE LOTTERY GRANT AWARD

“THE MAN THEY NAMED A TOWN AFTER”

As you know from previous newsletter articles, Peterlee is celebrating 75 years since it became a new town in east Durham. Exhibitions and other events are planned to mark the event, but the History Club felt that the man himself, Peter Lee, had been overlooked.

With this in mind, and working alongside Colin Robson, the Arts & Culture Development Officer for Durham County Council, we felt it would be a fitting tribute to introduce children to the man who gave the town its name, as so many people STILL don't know that the town took its name from a man.

Colin had previously worked with The Mad Alice Theatre Company who specialise in getting difficult messages over to children in an educational, informative and entertaining way through the medium of music and drama and they agreed to work with us and in order to work with the schools in Wheatley Hill and surrounding areas, including Peterlee, we felt we needed to engage the services of a script writer who could prepare resources for schools and the final presentation to which all children, their parents and carers will be invited, by which time everyone involved would know that Peterlee was named after a man!!

The History Club applied for a Heritage Lottery Grant and also smaller grants from other funders in order to meet the high costs of the project, and we were delighted, when at the beginning of November we learned that our lottery application had been successful. We now have all funds in place to start the project.

Work with the schools will begin in the coming weeks and it is expected that the final presentation will be held at the Lubetkin Theatre, Peterlee College before the end of the summer term. I will post regular updates in this news-letter.

The History Club celebrates its own anniversary in 2025 when we will have been in operation for 30 years and this project seems to be a great way to celebrate that anniversary too.



HISTORY CLUB MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUE ON OR BEFORE THE MARCH MEETING

We would ask members and advertisers to try and renew memberships and fees no later than the March meeting please as the end of March is the end of our financial year and late payments complicate our accounting system.

THANK YOU!

We are very grateful to everyone who continues to support the **History Club** by paying an annual membership fee.

This is our only source of regular income and will remain at
only £6.00 per household.

We are the only group that we know of who offer the 'per household' option.

PAYMENTS

BACS PAYMENTS

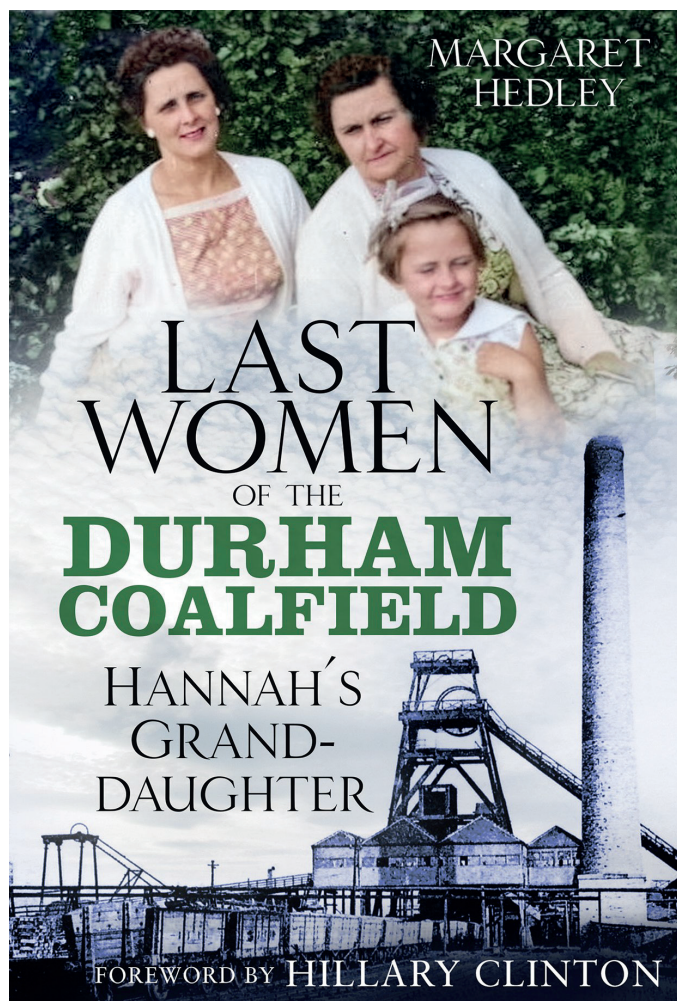
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CHEQUES PAYABLE TO:

Wheatley Hill History Club
by post to:
The Treasurer
16 Gable Terrace, WHEATLEY HILL, DH6 3JT

Last Women of the Durham Coalfield

by Margaret Hedley



When Hannah's Story was published in 2019, I had never planned for a follow-up book and was surprised when readers were telling me that they wanted to know what happened to Hannah's family after her death.

This led to the publication of Hannah's Daughter in 2021. This book continued the story of the life of a typical coal mining family in County Durham from the beginning of a new century until the outbreak of the Second World War. It was set mainly in Ludworth and Thornley.

Probably the same readers were now asking for a third book and it seemed logical to follow the fortunes of the family through to the pit closures of the 1960's and so The Last Women of the Durham Coalfield will be published in March. It is set in Wheatley Hill and starts in 1941 until the closure of the pit in 1968, and yes that's me on the front cover with my mam and grandma, because we were all there when Wheatley Hill pit closed in 1968.

You will see that Hillary Clinton has written the foreword of my latest book. Her family left the Durham Coalfield in 1882, as did so many coal mining families, to find their fortune in Pennsylvania, USA, many returned but hers didn't and she's very proud of her connection to the Durham Coalfield.

Publication due in March but available for pre-order now on Amazon.

The Life and Times of HANNAH HAUXWELL



Hannah first came to public attention when her life was highlighted in an ITV documentaty, **"Too Long a Winter"** in 1979. It followed her solitary existence as a farmer living alone in a remote farmhouse in Baldersdale, without electricity or running water.

**Bowburn Community Centre
Saturday 16 March 10.30—3.00**

£2.00 admission includes tea/coffee/biscuits

This is a rare opportunity to view this unique collection of Hannah's personal effects including letters and photos that span generations of the Hauxwell family

Event organised by the County Durham History & Heritage Forum

**Join us at Wheatley Hill History Club
for a special screening of this new
and important documentary film
about the people of the
Durham Coalfield**



**With an Introduction by the film makers
Lonely Tower Film & Media**

**Wheatley House
Wednesday 21 February 10.30am**

The film will last for 1½ hours
Normal entry rates apply—£3.00

**Space is limited so please let us know if
you would like to reserve a place**

Local Labour Party Pioneers Number 2

William Snaith Part 1

by Tom Tunney

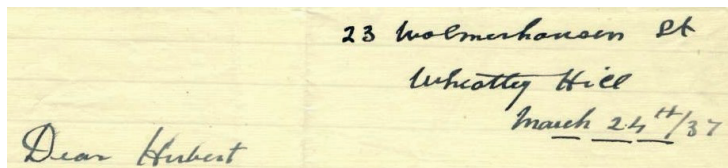
'In August 1914, Peter Lee was in Edinburgh on one of his cycling tours with his friend William Snaith. They, like the rest of the working masses had left work far behind and put it out of mind....'.

Thus begins Chapter 12 of Jack Lawson's 1936 biography *Peter Lee*.

Born in Shincliffe in 1869, William Snaith shared Peter Lee's Methodist faith and Socialist ideals, though whether, like both Lee and Durham Miners' leader John Wilson before him, he had a sudden moment of revelation in his local pub and forever after abandoned drunken dissipation is now lost to history. In those far off times, when most working class children invariably left school at 10 or under, education and self-improvement were Herculean tasks.

Organised religion, almost always Methodism, and the Durham Miners' Association were the main ladders upwards. Snaith was never prominent in the DMA, but he was a major figure in the Methodist Church and the Temperance movement: he was the Superintendent of the Patton Street Methodist Church in Wheatley Hill for 53 years. He was a Justice of the Peace from 1926. He was also active in the Cooperative Movement, served on the Easington Board of Guardians which administered poor relief and, for several years, was Chairman of the Easington Education Committee.

A colliery blacksmith by trade, the 1891 census saw him living in Louisa Street, Wheatley Hill, in what was then the Parish of Wingate. Ten years later, at the time of the 1901 Census he and his wife Francis and their four children were living at 23 Wolmerhausen Street -- a house he was still living in 36 years later!



Letter from Mr Snaith to Hubert Tunney, 1937

A contemporary of Peter Lee on the first Wingate Parish Council, he served on it and its successor, Wheatley Hill Parish Council, for 22 years, including the pivotal election year of 1919, and on the Easington Rural District Council, on and off, for 15 years into the early 1930s.

In the 1919 local elections, Peter Lee and Frank Quin took the Wheatley Hill seats for the Easington Rural District Council (Lee, of course, also winning the Durham County Council seat and assuming the leadership of the DCC), while Snaith topped the poll for the Parish Council. These were the results:

Elected: W Snaith 382, R Moore 322, Jos Luke 236, R Hird 230, C Hicks, 230, J Henderson 226. Not elected: R Trueman 224, T Miller 209, J Dickinson 190, A Turner 179, T W Morton, 174, J White 172, J Simpson 130, H Liddle 97, W Terry 83, W Young 73. (SE 8/4/19 p 6)

The 1920s were the great years of social progress in east Durham, with huge strides made in council house building, sanitation and child welfare, much of them pushed through under the auspices of the ERDC.

In the 1928 ERDC elections Snaith topped the poll at Wheatley Hill with 1,012 votes, besting his Labour Party colleagues Edward 'Teddy' Cain (967) and Frank Quin (749) into second and third place respectively for the three available seats. (HM 3/4/28 p 4)

However, in the 1931 ERDC elections the 'Moderate' Colliery Manager J A Simpson received the most overall votes and Snaith failed to be elected. These were the results:

J A Simpson (Mod) 959, J Henderson 836, W Luke 790, not elected W Snaith 779, F Quin 765. (HM 12/3/31 p 10.)

Politics was obviously very divisive in Wheatley Hill at this time, with much discontent being stirred up over the high rates burden imposed by the Socialist administration. The Conservative Party was a toxic brand locally, so those of a Conservative leaning often rebranded themselves as 'Moderates.'

Simpson didn't stand in the 1934 ERDC elections and failed in his bid that year to win Peter Lee's old seat on the DCC. (Do you know the name of the winner, the man who replaced Lee after the latter's retirement? The answer is at the bottom of this article.)

By 1934, now in his mid-60s, Snaith was no longer in the frame for the ERDC. The three successful Labour candidates were: Teddy Cain (the long-serving Secretary of the Miners' Lodge, and, by now, also Vice Chairman of the Seaham Division Labour Party), W Luke (Chairman of the Lodge) and J Henderson (also an official at Thornley Miners' Lodge). Interestingly, the Communist Horace Bradshaw, was one of the failed nominees put forward by Wheatley Hill Miners' Lodge, as was Frank Quin. (HM 8/1/34 p 6.)

Once elected, the three councillors then promptly named three new streets of council houses after themselves!

**** Louis Martin, the landlord of the Railway Tavern, Wingate, an ex-miner from Pelton Fell, was elected to Peter Lee's old seat on the DCC in 1934. The seat then included Wingate as well as Thornley and Wheatley Hill.***

CONTACT DETAILS

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TREASURER: 01429 823198

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<https://www.facebook.com/wheatley.hillhistory/>

MEETINGS IN WHEATLEY HOUSE

Start at 11.00am

21 Feb	Hallowed Ground	History Club
	<i>The People of the Durham Coalfield</i>	
27 March	The History of Fishburn	M. Peagam
24 April	Hitler's Women	R&J Crouch

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
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