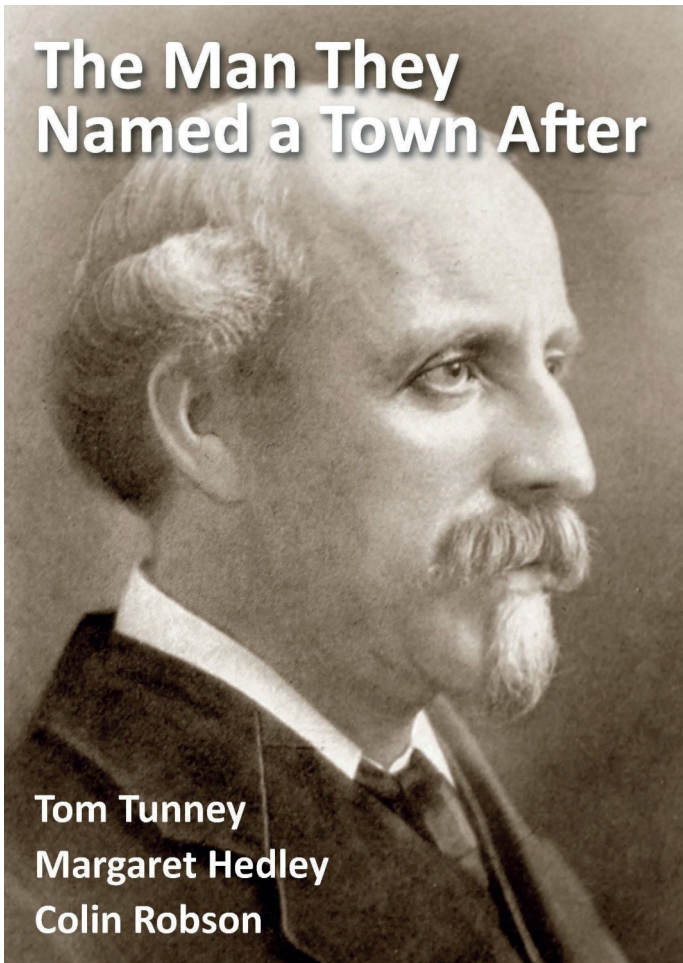


## The Man They Named a Town After



Tom Tunney  
Margaret Hedley  
Colin Robson



*The Authors*

As part of our project, "The Man They Named a Town After" was launched on Friday 6 September at an event held in Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre.

It replaced a previous publication written a few years ago and gives a much clearer, all-round picture of the life and times of miners leader, local politician and social reformer, Peter Lee.

One of the co-writers, Tom Tunney, was anxious that Mr Lee's politics were addressed in context in this edition, and that he was not portrayed as "St Peter of Wheatley Hill" as his biographer, Jack Lawson and others relying heavily on Lawson's work, were guilty of.

The booklet complemented the exhibition in the Heritage Centre, and contains images not previously seen.

Members of his family, including grand-daughter, Win Colman (above), Durham County Council, Peterlee Town Council and Press were at the launch. Margaret was interviewed on Radio Tees on Tuesday 10 September by Gary Philipson on his morning show.

*The book is on sale at £5.00 from the Heritage Centre or History Club.*



### BISHOP AUCKLAND HERITAGE FESTIVAL

The History and Heritage Peter Lee exhibition drew a lot of interest at the above event on Saturday 28 September. Margaret and Gillian from the Heritage Centre were busy all day telling the tale of the man they named a town after, that so many didn't know!

The festival featured 20 local history and heritage groups from the historic county networking on the day and showing off their varied research in the town hall.

It was an impressive display from the local history community covering a wide range of research topics.

## CONTACT DETAILS

CHAIR: 01429 820813  
TREASURER: 01429 823198



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

## MEETINGS IN WHEATLEY HOUSE

Start at 11.00am

27 Nov *The Suffragettes* S. Vincent

**No further meetings until March 2025**

## Andrew Williamson 1894—1916

Durham Light Infantry  
D Company 1st/5th Bn

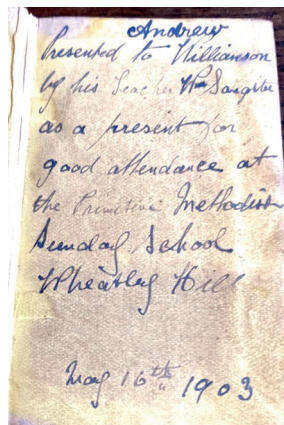
Andrew was living at Weardale Street, Wheatley Hill when he joined the DLI at the time of the First World War.

He was killed in action in France on 17 September 1916 and appears on the Wheatley Hill War Memorial.

His death penny and a prayer book belonging to him were handed into the Heritage Centre by his grandson. The prayer book was given to him as a result of his good attendance at the Primitive Methodist Chapel in 1903.



After the First World War the families of every British serviceman or women killed in the war received a bronze memorial plaque often referred to as a 'Death Penny'.



## BANKING ARRANGEMENTS

As you know we have changed our bankers from Barclays to Lloyds over recent weeks.

This was done for many reasons one of the main ones being the difficulty in banking cash locally. When memberships become due at the end of March, we are asking if members would consider paying by cheque or making a BACS payment, and although we will never refuse your cash!! Alternative methods of payment are more suitable at this time as we continue to operate without a treasurer.

## HISTORY CLUB 30th BIRTHDAY 2025

The History Club has been operating since January 1995 and I don't need to go into our achievements over that time. In order to mark the occasion, we are holding a knife & fork buffet lunch for our members in Wheatley House on:

**Wednesday 26 March starting at 12.00**

After the lunch we will be entertained by husband and wife musical partnership, **FOOLS GOLD**.

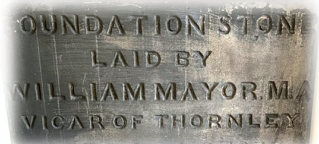
This event will be free to our members, but I do need accurate numbers for catering from The Golden Dog, Coxhoe, who will be doing the catering.

There will be an opportunity to RSVP in January

## 151 YEARS OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH

The History Club held an exhibition at the above event on Saturday 6 October.

The foundation stone for the church was laid in 1873 by Rev Mayor of Thornley, but it wasn't until 1915 that All Saints became a church in its own right with Rev Casey becoming its first vicar.



## Robert William Ferry 1884—1910

article submitted by grandson, Robert Ferry

Robert was the son of coal miner and local preacher, Edward and Mary Elizabeth Ferry. He trained as a joiner and in 1909 married Hannah Hutchinson. He was also a devout Methodist and local preacher. The following is his obituary from the Christian Messenger:

*THORNLEY Circuit and Wheatley Hill Society have lost a promising young worker in Robert W Ferry, who was accidentally killed by the overturning of a crane at Thornley Colliery on 17 May. Our late brother was born at Quarrington Hill on 24 July 1884, and was a member of our church about fourteen years. For seven years he was a local preacher and an active worker in the Sunday-school and Christian Endeavour. Of a quiet, unassuming disposition, he was clearly loved by all.*

*The funeral service, conducted by the Rev Gelley and T Dale, was the largest ever seen in Wheatley Hill. Mr. Ferry had been married only ten months, and leaves a widow and a baby boy. His father, Edward Ferry is well known as a local preacher throughout the district.*



MR. R. W. FERRY.

# 1917: The Foundation of the Easington (nee Seaham) Division Labour Party

by Tom Tunney version 29/6/24

## Part 2

Peter Lee, already something of a legendary figure, representing the Thornley seat on Durham County Council since 1909, was the obvious candidate to lead the new party in East Durham. The new Secretary, G W Bloomfield, would prove to be one of the most enduring figures in the local Labour movement, acting as Ramsay MacDonald's agent in the 1929 General Election and also standing for election as a prospective Parliamentary candidate several times himself and serving on the DCC, latterly as an Alderman, into the 1950s. Hubert Tunney was already a member of the ILP, the Independent Labour Party, at this point, but as he makes clear here, it was not at all plain sailing for the new Constituency Party as it prepared for the November 1918 General Election---the first in which all working class men and women over 30 had the vote.

Nationalisation of the mines was then regarded as a dangerously revolutionary idea, even among miners themselves. However, some of the younger miners' leaders were out for change, even if they were considered revolutionary. We were idealists and, in talks to our mining colleagues, we pointed out the happier lot miners could have if the mines were nationalised. But in the main miners were not impressed, not even interested, in our advocacy of public control and the elimination of the profit motive, the policy of the Independent Labour Party, of which we were members. They knew quite well that the coal owners were taking enormous profits out of the industry. But in their innate conservatism and support of Liberalism in politics, the miners considered this to be a case for the trade union leaders and not for politicians, at least, not **Labour** politicians.

Some of the miners were opposed to nationalisation on principle; others were completely indifferent; many were cynical about the possibility of anyone other than coal owners running the pits. Those were the days when miners, who had the vote, gave allegiance to the Liberal Party.

In pre-war days, the political activity of the Association was confined to 'Liberal Labour'. The Association had two representatives in Parliament, mainly to promote or watch over legislation on mining subjects. John Wilson, General Secretary of the Association, was also a Member of Parliament for Durham and Sam Galbraith, DMA Miners' Agent, was also an MP for Spennymoor. They were neither wholly Liberal or wholly Labour, but known as 'Liberal Labour.' As experts on mining questions, they could be for or against the Government. Many of the older officials of Miners' Lodges had personal dealings with, and were firm supporters of these two great leaders of the Liberal-Labour school and refused to support the Labour Party in the General Election of 1918. Indeed, the leaders at one Miners' Lodge were, so steeped in Liberalism that they would not allow the Labour Party the use of the Miners' Hall for meetings during that Election!

This was apparently the case at Wingate.

The 'Labour Man', Jack Lawson, a checkweighman and local Miners' Leader, made an ideal candidate for this predominately mining area, but, there was a reluctance on the part of many of the miners to desert the political party which they and their fathers before them had consistently supported. In any case, 'Hanging the Kaiser' seemed to be more urgent than the nationalisation of the mines, even to the miners, and the Party failed in its first attempt to win the seat.

The Liberal candidate, Major Evan Hayward, thus had a comfortable victory, with 12,754 votes to Lawson's 8,988, in a two horse race--there was no Conservative candidate. Nationally, Labour gained 57 seats compared to the 46 of the 1910 General Election. Lloyd George remained Prime Minister of the Coalition Government, but the real winners were the Tories, with 379 seats compared to the Coalition Liberals 127. Meanwhile, the next big test for the new Seaham Division Labour Party would be the momentous General Election of 1922.

*(1) This and all following Hubert Tunney quotes are edited and extracted from an unpublished manuscript in possession of the History Club.*

# 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

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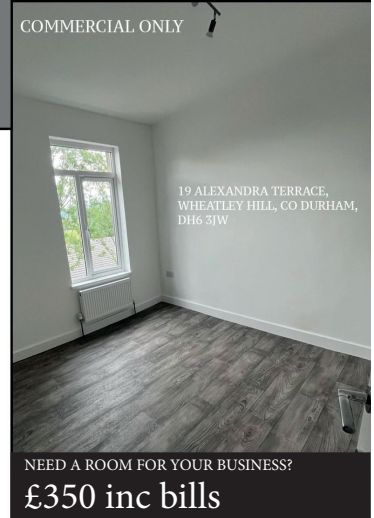
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