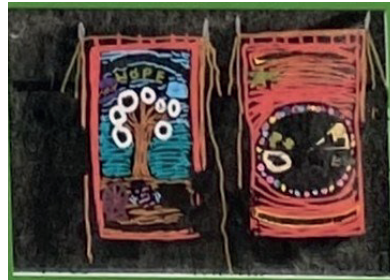
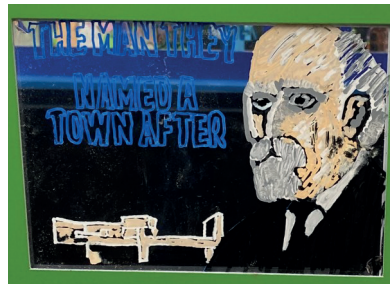


Travelling Tales — The Giant Glass Book

The History Club worked alongside artist Hannah Kelly at a workshop in January. Hannah asked us to think about the place where we live then draw, directly onto Perspex tiles, a picture that portrayed that place. These tiles were brought together with others to form a book of visual stories of County Durham, it's people and places.



This is the Wheatley Hill page of the giant glass book



We Celebrated our 30th Birthday

On 26 March on what would have been our first meeting of 2025, The History Club celebrated 30 years of researching and sharing local history. We met in Wheatley House and were served an outstanding knife-and-fork buffet by The Ginger Dog, Coxhoe that I believe it was enjoyed by everyone.



After an emotional speech in which I paid tribute to the seven people who were there on the first night of the History Club in 1995, pointing out that six of the seven — George and Betty Bean, Joan Brown, Ian Craggs, Joan Scott and myself are still involved and the seventh, Jenny Taylor, passed away a few years ago, but her daughter Joan continues to be a member.

My speech included the dedicated research carried out on our nine pit books by the late Owen Rowland who turned research into a full time job, and as a history group and a village, we continue to owe him a huge debt of gratitude. Together with Fred Bromilow and Tom Tunney, Owen also contributed massively to the two World War books that we published which saw him and Fred travelling all over Europe photographing the headstones of men from Thornley, Ludworth and Wheatley Hill who fell in the two world wars.



We were later entertained by husband and wife duo **Fools Gold** who took us down memory lane with songs from their set "Old King Coal" which culminated in a range of North East songs that we were all able to join in with. We proved ourselves to be very enthusiastic singers! I'm not sure anyone else noticed, but Fools Gold included a few photographs from our History Club website in their slide-show.

A further success of the day was that unexpectedly an advertising space became available on our newsletter a few days before the event, and The Ginger Dog agreed they would advertise with us!

Local Pioneers of the Labour Party: Frank Quin, 1869-1949, Part 1 by Tom Tunney

"Labour propoganda in those early days were very satisfying. Meetings were crowded. The speakers in most cases were local miners' leaders who had mastered the art of public speaking, either as local preachers or through the trade unions and the Labour Party. There was a regular exchange of speakers between the colliery villages and popular speakers did more than one meeting in one village in one night. Although it could be claimed that the speakers were unlearned in the classics, nevertheless they were of the common people and were painfully aware of the people's needs. These men, drawn from the ranks of the workers, made a lasting impression by their enthusiasm and sincerity in putting over the message of things to come. Crowds flocked to hear them and there was a spirit of revivalism among the people in the colliery villages. The speakers had a confident message of the good things to come under Socialism...In any case, it was no longer necessary for the speakers to stress that there was something radically wrong with the system. With unemployment, under-employment, and low wages, everybody knew it."

– *Hubert Tunney (1890-1974) unpublished manuscript.*

One of these unsung foot soldiers of the Seaham Division Labour Party in the heady days between the end of the First World War and the election of the first Labour MP for our area, in 1922, was Frank Quin. The November 1922 newspaper advertisement illustrated on the next page (SE 2/11/22) is a graphic example of that powerful Socialist spirit in full flow.

Quin was one of many local miners' leaders speaking in favour of Seaham Division Labour candidate Sidney Webb, in a hectic General Election campaign schedule which even included a speaking engagement for George Bernard Shaw! Notice how the meeting times are arranged to coincide with the shift changes at the various collieries. Durham Miners' Association agents Peter Lee and W P Richardson and Seaham Labour men Jack McCutcheon and J H Blackwell need no introduction to those familiar with the local politics of the period. But what of Wheatley Hill's Frank Quin? The man who, quite bizarrely, in 1937 and at the ripe old age of 68, was cajoled into standing for Peter Lee's old seat on Durham County Council. He has been almost completely forgotten. Until now.

Francis Quin was born in Evenwood, County Durham in 1869, the son of Catholic Irish migrants, Bernard and Mary Quin (confusingly, his surname is also sometimes rendered in records as 'Quinn'). He started work, aged 11, at the Black Boy Colliery, near Shildon in circa 1880 (SE 16/6/42). He was still working as a hewer in the Shildon area at the time of the 1901 census. However, by 1911, he was living in Wheatley Hill, at 11 York Street, with his wife Rachel, whom he had married in 1908. Rachel was the widow of James Thomas Hird of Staindrop, with whom she had 10 children. She had three more with Francis and five of the 13 were still living with them in 1911. One, Frederick Hird, was killed in 1917 and is commemorated on the Wheatley Hill War Memorial.

Frank served on the Easington Rural District Council as a colleague of Peter Lee. He played his part in the landmark 1919 local elections, partnering Peter Lee in their defeat of Colliery Official M Barrass for the two ERDC seats. Who indeed would have been embarrassed by the result:

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)

The fact that he was a Catholic must have been useful to the Labour cause: between them, the Methodist Lee and the Catholic Quin thus had most voters' religious prejudices covered. (Interestingly 1930s' Wheatley Hill Colliery Manager and sometimes election candidate J A 'Big Joe' Simpson was also a Catholic).

Quin was a very long-serving Wheatley Hill Miners' Lodge official. He served as Compensation Secretary, often standing unopposed, and was Secretary to the Miners' Welfare Committee for many years until 1942. He also served at four times on the Durham Miners' Executive Committee between 1915 and 1929.

He was still working at Wheatley Hill Colliery, as a stoneman, in 1939 and the previous year was of one of the select group of Wheatley Hill miners to receive certificates for their 50 years membership of the DMA. He and his family were then living at 17 Shop Street.

However, in 1931, it seemed that Quin was reaching the end of his public life. In that year's EDRC elections, the Moderate candidate, Colliery Manager J A Simpson, topped the poll, and two younger Labour men (both to subsequently have council house streets named after them) took the other seats:

Wheatley Hill: **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.)

And it got worse. Quin stood as a Wheatley Hill checkweighman candidate in 1932. In retrospect this can be seen as an early example of the Labour Party machine cynically parachuting in their preferred external candidates who, then as now, only stayed long enough to further their own careers before moving on. In this case, the footloose chancer in question was Will Lawther, the newly defeated ex-MP for Barnard Castle and the future DMA luminary and first President, from 1945, of the NUM.

To begin with, there were 12 candidates for the two available positions:

Joseph Bering, Horace Bradshaw, Teddy Cain, Peter Cairns, George Farrar, Henry Frost, John Harper, T Henderson, Ralph Jackson, Will Lawther, Frank Quin and Thomas Welsh (HM 5/12/32)

In the ballot, **Cain** gained 290 votes, **Lawther** received 175 and **Quin** 95 (HM 15/12/32), Quin then lost in a second run-off ballot (277 votes to 117, HM 27/12/32) to Lawther – who subsequently lasted only a year at Wheatley Hill before upping sticks for his newly elected DMA agent's position at Redhill.

And with that, Quin's political career seemed to be over. Until the bizarre events of 1937 brought him back into the full glare of local Labour politics...

SEAHAM PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, 1922

Meetings in Support of

MR SIDNEY WEBB, LLB., The Labour Candidate

Will be held as Under:

TUESDAY Nov 7 — Wheatley Hill 10.30am; Thornley 2pm; Horden 3.00pm

Haswell 7.00pm; Easington Colliery 7.00pm, Trimdon 7.00pm

WEDNESDAY Nov 8 — South Hetton, 11am, Murton 3pm, Horden 3pm, Blackhall 7pm

Monkhesleden 7.30pm

To be addressed by Couns. Jas. Hoy, JP, Hedley Mason, JP, Geo. W. Bloomfield, Aaron Brown, Francis Quin and John E McCutcheon: Messrs Jas. Robson, JP, W P Richardson and Peter Lee (Durham Miners' Agents), John Hill (Boilermakers Society), Rev, J R Herron and Messrs E Gulliver, Jas. H. Blackwell, G Dowsey, T Nelson, J Wetherburn, Jos. Carey, J Dickenson and others.

TUESDAY, NOV 14 EMPIRE THEATRE SEAHAM HARBOUR at 7pm

ADDRESS BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

A few Reserved Tickets 1/- each. Apply Central Committee Rooms, 29 Church Street, Seaham

As the original article was too difficult to read we have provided a transcription and placed it over the original

CONTACT DETAILS

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facebook

www.facebook.com/wheatley.hillhistory

E: history.club2@btinternet.com

W: wheatley-hill.org.uk

MEETINGS IN WHEATLEY HOUSE

Start at 11.00am

- | | | |
|---------|--|--------------|
| 30 Apr | Letters to George Bowes | D Butler |
| 28 May | Remembering the North
East's Department Stores | G Sout |
| 25 June | A Splendid Rogue
The Life & Times of Harry
Benson, Master Criminal | T Nicholson |
| 30 July | Mary Ann Cotton | T Hutchinson |

ACTIVE MINDS STILL LEARNING

The History Club has agreed to support the above initiative that looks at how older people continue learning in later life by being members of groups, such as our History Club.

Whilst many of our History Club members will say that they don't learn anything from attending our meetings, after a little prompting, they may admit there is lots of learning going on—and most of it unplanned for.

With the above in mind, I am looking for a small group of volunteers to meet informally with Lucy, one of the researchers, for a chat about being a member of the History Club. She is looking for your opinions and experiences as adults committing to groups such as the History Club

Research shows that life-long learning is important for older adults. Learning benefits physical and cognitive health, emotional well-being, social engagement personal fulfilment. It is crucial to promote, and life-long learning opportunities for older adults to lead enriched, healthy and connected lives

The meeting will be in the Heritage Centre on Thursday 22 May, 10am - 12 Noon.

Please let Margaret know if you would like to take part.

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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for up to 70 people
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