

International Women's Month Celebrating our Local Inspirational Women

On Tuesday 17 March, at Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre, the History Club and Heritage Centre came together to host a special joint event. We invited five inspirational women with connections to Wheatley Hill and Thornley to share their stories and achievements. We're especially proud to say that four of the five speakers are members of the History Club, making it a truly local celebration of talent and achievement. It was a lovely, well attended event and we thank our inspirational women for taking part.

Inspirational Women Image

Back: Joan Brown, Jo Bailey, June Foster
Front: Dorothy Peacock, Charmian Welsh



Jo Bailey, is a retired Head of a Sixth Form Centre and, more recently, the author of *Mrs Maydwell's Coffee Palace* — the sometimes unbelievable and true story of a member of her own family that started off in County Durham but ended up at the other side of the world. Jo shared a little about her writing journey and also revealed that her family has connections to Wheatley Hill, which made her talk especially interesting for us all.

Joan Brown, spent many years teaching at Wheatley Hill Primary School, including time as head teacher. Joan spoke warmly about her love for the children she taught and her deep affection for the village of Wheatley Hill as a whole. She shared how much she enjoyed every stage of her teaching career and the strong sense of community that made her time at the school so special.

June Foster, born and brought up in Wheatley Hill. June shared her inspiring story of finding her way into teaching after a difficult start in education. She went on to become a highly successful head teacher in a deprived area of Newcastle, where achievement levels were low. After turning around one primary school, June was quickly asked to take on others — with the same impressive results. Her work in early years education was later recognised with a well deserved OBE.

Charmian Welsh, was an Olympic and Commonwealth Games diver from the 1950s, who travelled all the way from Peebles to spend the day with us. Charmian captivated everyone with her fascinating stories of competing at international sporting events and life as an elite athlete. We're also delighted that she has donated her entire collection of sporting memorabilia to the Heritage Centre, where it is on permanent display.

Dorothy Peacock from the Wheatley Hill Mothers Club. This year the club is celebrating an impressive 77 years, and Dorothy was justifiably proud to share its many achievements. Following in the footsteps of her mother, founding member Mrs Eva Powell, Dorothy spoke warmly about the club's activities and the important role it has played in the village of Wheatley Hill over the years. A photo exhibition celebrating the work of the Mothers Club can be seen in the Heritage Centre.

Together, our five speakers shared a remarkable range of experiences, from education and community work to sport and writing, all rooted in strong local connections. Their stories highlighted not only individual achievement, but also the importance of determination, service, and a deep sense of community. The event was a proud celebration of inspirational women past and present, and a reminder of the talent and dedication that has grown from Wheatley Hill and Thornley over the years. It was a day that informed, inspired, and left us all with plenty to reflect on.



WHEATLEY HILL HERITAGE CENTRE

NEW OPENING TIMES
11.00—3.00
Tuesdays &
Thursdays

FREE ENTRY

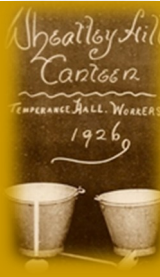


Group visits by arrangement
history.club2@btinternet.com

MAY EXHIBITION

**Remembering
The 1926 Miners Strike**

**Exhibitions
Throughout May**



Special 1926 Strike Event

**Thursday 14 May
11.00—1.00**

**Songs from the Coalfield
with
Bob and George**

Everyone Welcome



Wheatley Hill Goes to the Castle

Our History and Heritage was showcased on World Heritage Day, 18 April, when representatives from both groups took part in celebrations in The Great Hall at Durham Castle. It was a privilege to share the stories of our village with over 1000 visitors on the day, highlighting a community whose heritage, resilience and pride continue to defy expectations whilst showing that we are not only surviving but thriving.



MEETINGS IN WHEATLEY HOUSE

Start at 11.00am

27 May	Paton & Baldwins	C Lloyd Northern Echo
24 June	Murder at South Hetton	D Potter
29 July	The Story of Crimdon Dene	F Wilson (history club member)

CONTACT DETAILS

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facebook®

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The Way We Were A Story of Growing up in Wheatley Hill, County Durham

By Edith Foster (nee Poulson) written when she was 92

Part 4 (final part)



Edith and the Aycliffe Angels

I worked at Moore's until I was requested by His Majesty to go to work in the munitions factory at Aycliffe. I worked there for three years and still correspond with two girls I worked with. I worked in shifts: 6.00am – 2.00pm, 2.00pm – 10.00pm and 10.00pm – 6.00am. I did various jobs all without any training – talk about jumping in at the deep-end. I was a chief inspector of ammunition which meant I used to inspect all types of fuses which were put into bombs. I was once sent to inspect something in the powder block and my hair went yellow and also the whites of my eyes. I also pulled trolleys with bombs on them to the munitions dump house. We always had to carry a warning flag. I then

applied for work in an office and used to ride a bicycle around all the other different blocks of the factory to deliver parcels and letters and it was a very big place.

We had many scares, bombs exploding and many people were injured and killed. Hitler used to say that he was going to bomb the little angels of Aycliffe. He might have tried but thankfully he never succeeded.

1939-1945 were terrible years – shortages of food, no street lights, no buses and coupons for clothing and household things. My mother used to make me blouses from the linings of coats. Our legs were painted to resemble the colour of stockings and someone painted seams up the back of our legs which were fashionable then.

Well, eventually the war ended at last. We started to get back very slowly to normality and there were great shouts of joy when nylon stockings became available.

In 1946 I was married to Thomas Foster (Tom) and another chapter of my life started. My husband Tom was a joiner at Thornley Colliery and in 1948 the first of our three children were born, Marjorie Edith followed by Richard Thomas and then June. Tom built a bungalow for us and he also started a woodwork business and built a workshop. He supplied many stores with garden sheds, greenhouses and garages. He also did lots of fencing for the Peterlee Development Corporation and sold his timber.

I was involved in the business and did the paperwork – wages, VAT, delivery notes, you name it, I did it. Our family were growing up and our son Richard started working in the timber business and our daughters used to help in various ways too.



Marriage of
Tom Foster & Edith Poulson
1946

I hope you've enjoyed reading Edith's story. This is the concluding part and thanks to her family for making it available.

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

Training/Meetings
Overhead projector/black out blinds
Tea/coffee making facilities

Reasonable Rates
Well equipped kitchen
For use by outside caterers

including supply of
crocery & cutlery

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

Past Uncovered

All types of family history research

Are you curious about your family tree?
Pre-1837 records difficult to find?
Have you come to a dead-end?
Do you have missing ancestors?
Would you like your research organising?

Margaret Hedley, MA, B.Ed(hons)

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Bar & Restaurant
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BAR & RESTAURANT

AFTERNOON TEAS

our take-out afternoon teas are now available to purchase online for collection in store

PRIVATE FUNCTIONS

CATERING

GIFT VOUCHERS

**we use locally sourced ingredients
for our dishes**



Contact me:

Email: hazeltreesoundsandholistics@gmail.com
Facebook: [hazeltreesoundsandholistics](https://www.facebook.com/hazeltreesoundsandholistics)
Instagram: [hazeltreesoundsandholistics](https://www.instagram.com/hazeltreesoundsandholistics)
Tiktok: [tiktok.com/@hazel.tree.sounds1](https://www.tiktok.com/@hazel.tree.sounds1)



Sound Therapy * Reiki * Crystals * Indian Head Massage



HOLISTIC SERVICES INCLUDE:

- 1 to 1 Sound Therapy
- Group Sessions for Family/Friends
- Reiki
- Indian head mssage

Sound Bath Sessions held every other Wednesday at
Wheatley House, Wheatley Hill | 6pm - 7:15pm |
£15 Investment



We use locally sourced ingredients to create our deli

OPEN

**Lunch Times
&
Evenings**

**Every day
except Sundays**

Fish & Chips Delivered to your Door



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