

Friends of Killhope

President: Sir Kingsley Dunham, F.R.S.

MAY 1989

NEWSLETTER No. 15

In the introduction to the last newsletter I reported the serious loss to Killhope represented by the demise of the Community Task Force. Now it is with great regret that I have to inform you of an even heavier blow. Friends will be shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Eric Ryan who most will know as Durham County Council's man behind the Killhope project. Ian Forbes makes his own tribute.

Four and a half years ago a man from Durham County Council came to speak to a gathering of 30 or so people in our house of his vision for a nearly derelict lead-mining site at Killhope.

That man was Eric Ryan, the occasion the first meeting which set up the Friends of Killhope.

On March 2nd I got a telephone call to say that Eric was dead, killed by a heart attack.

By now his dream is well on the way to being realised, for Killhope has become an attraction of national importance.

Progress from dream to reality can be monitored through back copies of the Friends newsletter where Eric's regular reports usually appeared under the by-line of "A County Council Spokesman."

I worked for Eric at Killhope for nearly five years. The Killhope project during those years was an adventure; Eric could be exhilarating, exasperating, frustrating, obsessive. He could never be dull.

His dream, his vision illuminated the project; a project which will, we hope, set in train developments elsewhere in the lead-mining area.

As our Chairman, Richard Turner, said on hearing the news of Eric's death; "this is a tremendous loss, not just for Killhope, but for the whole North Pennines."

Perhaps I could give two illustrations of his special qualities.

When we were discussing the proposed displays on the woodland walk I said it would be good to recreate a heather-thatched building. "Then a heather-thatched building we shall have" was Eric's reply, and so it turned out despite the enormous logistical problems of manhandling stone, sand, cement, timber and heather to the middle of the woods.

About a week before he died, Eric phoned Pam and asked if the Friends could lay on a buffet lunch for a party of top European archaeologists in the Jigger House at Killhope, lit by candles. The theatrical vision, the picture of the event, was clear in his mind; the problems - no heat, no electricity, draughts, a building full of timber and scrap - could be overcome.

And so they were - staff and Friends cleared the building, Friends hung 80 or so candles in jam jars round the walls, laid on heating and put on a superb buffet which appeared magical in such atmospheric surroundings. The event was a triumph - the highlight of the archaeologists' tour of England.

That audacious vision has gone out of our lives and will be enormously missed.

Eric's family wanted a "memorial" to his life to be part of the development of Killhope, something that works, not just a static display.

Di and the boys have agreed that a fitting tribute would be to reinstate the waterwheel which drove the buddles on the buddle house gable wall.

Friends wishing to contribute towards this project can send a cheque to the Treasurer, c/o Fieldfare, Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham, DL13 1BD or offer their practical skills towards the actual rebuilding to the Project Officer at the same address.

Annual General Meeting

Our fourth Annual General Meeting will be held in the Kings Arms Hotel, in St. John's Chapel on Wednesday 7th June at 7.30 p.m. Once more this will be followed by the ever popular Brains Trust with Sir Kingsley Dunham and Mr. J.R. Foster-Smith.

Friends are reminded that nominations for the position of all Officers and three Committee members should be forwarded to the Secretary (Mrs. D. Chambers, 18 Cheveley Walk, Belmont, Durham DH1 2AU) not less than fourteen days before the meeting. Do please try to attend.

Horses in Mines

Many Friends will know the evocative picture probably taken about 30 years ago of a horse drawing tubs out of the old level at West Blackdene in Weardale. Presumably these horses must have been amongst the last used in mining in the northern Pennines? Can anyone tell us about these particular animals and/or perhaps something of the history of the use of horses in lead-mining in our area?

(B. Chambers, Newsletter Editor, 18 Cheveley Walk, Belmont, Durham DH1 2AU)

In the last newsletter Ian Forbes pointed out the huge gaps in the published record of W.B. Lead who, of course, developed "our" mine and mill at Killhope. The following item by Alan Blackburn goes a little way towards filling those gaps.

A LONG LIFE AND A SAD END
ISAAC HUNTER, CHIEF MILL AGENT FOR THE W.B.CO

For the greater part of the 18C the smelting operations of the W.B.Co were controlled by Isaac Hunter, from his office at the largest and best equipped of their mills, Dukesfield on the Devil's Water near Slaley. He was appointed Chief Mill Agent in late 1727 or early 1728, and worked until 1798 or later.

As other authors have pointed out, this is a remarkable working lifespan, made all the more remarkable by the fact that Isaac Hunter died on the 5 Aug 1796 !

There was a very common practice in the 18C of giving the first son the same name as his father. When the son follows father and takes over from him, the name in the records remains the same, and historians get apoplexy!

The only clue in this case comes in a letter from the then Chief Agent, J.H.Richmond, to Sir Walter Blackett, to propose taking on Isaac Hunter Junior in his father's job, "as he has done most of it this past year." The salary was to be £80 per annum, and the letter was dated 8 July 1764.

So the post of Chief Mill Agent was held by Isaac Hunter Snr for 36 yrs, and by his son Isaac Hunter for about the same period. After Isaac Senior's death the fortunes of the family, especially those of his wife Mary, took a sharp downturn.

Isaac Hunter Snr had three children, Isaac, Robert and Catherine. He held a position of considerable responsibility, and was able to build up quite an estate during his life, which is recorded in his will as being the lands, tenements etc of; Steel Hall, Wester Byers and Red Lead Mill, all in Slaley parish. Upon his death, by the terms of his will, all were sold to Mr Beaumont for £9718-15-10 by lease and release dated 11 & 12 Jan 1805 respectively. After paying off mortgages of £2181-17-9 the estate was left with £7536-18-1, an extremely healthy figure, which was paid to the executor, his brother-in-law, Robert Surtees. This sum was to be divided in half, with one half divided equally between his children, and the other half was to be "invested upon good security to pay interest yearly.....to be paid to my dear wife Mary for life".

There was a codicil to the will dated in the year of his death (1796), adding a further bequeath of £50 per annum to be paid to his wife "out of my share of Alston Brewery dividend". His son Robert died at Port-au Prince, St Domingo on 28 Sept 1797, and his daughter Catherine "about 1807". This left Isaac Jnr to inherit their half of the estate.

As the conditions of the will are perfectly clear it would be assumed that Mary Hunter had ample income to take care of her for the rest of her life. However, a sequence of letters from after her death, show a very different story.

On May 11 1832 a Mr John James Scott wrote to inform John Bell of Hexham, assistant Bailiff and witness to the original will, that his sister had died. By the various wills he now inherited the estate of his late aunt, Mary Hunter, and he was of the opinion that she had never received all that was due to her from her husband's will. He asks if John Bell will help by getting

answers to various questions, especially from Isaac Hunter (Jnr) "who is now upon the parish". This means he has no money, income, or land, and is effectively a pauper, relying on the parish for food and living, a very surprising situation for a man who held the post of Chief Mill Agent for so many years.

The passing of 36 years from the death of Isaac Hunter Snr gave John Bell many problems, for instance Robert Surtees died in 1811, leaving Anthony Surtees as his executor; Mr Morrison, who sold the £50 annuity for the share in Alston Brewery is also dead; and worst of all, Isaac Hunter Jnr has been struck with palsy (a heart attack), and has great difficulty in speaking and remembering.

The claim was that Mary Hunter had never received any income from the half of the estate that was due, just the £50 from the annuity; and that Isaac Hunter Jnr did not receive his share of the estate. John Bell found getting information from Isaac was very difficult, and he finally proved that he had received his share via the Beaumont Estate records.

Anthony Surtees claimed that Mary had agreed to receive the £50 only, and refused to provide an account of the executor. This meant the only way forward was to go to law. The opinion of counsel was sought, in which Mr John Peart stated "I have no doubt that Robert Surtees acted a fraudulent part towards Mrs Hunter, but I fear that length of time and want of proper evidence will be productive of much difficulty in establishing it".

In his notes John Bell records that "Mrs Hunter was not kin to Isaac Hunters [Snr] children. She was their stepmother, their real mother was Robert Surtees sister". There could well be an element of family dislike of the second wife - it would not be uncommon. However it is probably best to leave this sorry tale with two extracts from John Bell's letters.

Aug 1832 ".....How it had been concealed from Mrs Hunter that all she took from the will and codicil was but £50 a year and the use of a small portion of the furniture (which was all she enjoyed for her life), I am at a loss to find out....."

May 1833 ".....It really seem to me that Mr A. Surtees has had more to do with the late Mr I Hunter's affairs than his late father Mr Robt Surtees the trustee for whom he seems principally to have acted, and ought to give some account of them."

-----ROBERT & ANTHONY SURTEES NEVER REPAID THE £3308 THEY RECEIVED AS EXECUTORS ON BEHALF OF MARY HUNTER-----

[Northumberland Record Office, Allendale MSS NRO672/2/48 Chief Agents Letter Book 1764-76, and NRO672/2/76 Bundle of Wills including Isaac Hunter.] Alan Blackburn 10/4/89

PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORTIan Forbes

I noted in my last report that the Community Task Force have left Killhope. This has changed the feel of the site radically and inevitably slowed down the pace of development. It is gratifying then to see groups of Friends appearing on site to do work. A major achievement has been the complete clearing out of the jigger house - largely by staff, but with help from Friends.

The impetus behind this was the buffet lunch given to a party of European archaeologists by the Friends which is mentioned in my piece on Eric Ryan - my grateful thanks, and those of the County Council, go to all who worked hard to make that a memorable occasion.

The jigger house is now open to the public and Friends are working on a temporary display entitled "The North Pennines - Underground" to be put in it later this summer. Another group has stripped down the jig bought recently by the County Council - it is a cast iron 3 compartment jig made by Davisons of Hexham - prior to installing it in the jigger house.

Friends have renovated the bolts and replaced the bearing caps over the axle of the big wheel, having cleaned the shaft, rotated it and packed it with grease.

The Brunton buddle group is making steady progress with rebuilding the buddles.

Do come and join in one of our projects if you can - there's plenty of work to be done! You can ring me on 0388 537470.

I promised in the last newsletter to write a more detailed report on the detective work behind the Brunton buddle reconstruction - this will have to wait till the next newsletter. Over the last few months I have had far less time to commit to the Friends than I would have liked - we have been understaffed at Killhope and Eric's death has left a tremendous gap in the whole Killhope structure.

Apologies, then, from me for delays on many things, including this year's programme.

One final note. Many Friends have asked what has happened to the mine dig in Park Level. Unfortunately this is one of the items affected by the loss of Eric and has had to stop temporarily until the administration is sorted out at County Hall.

Visitor Centre

Work on the visitor centre should have started by the time you read this newsletter - the contractors are due in on May 15th, with completion in a year's time. This totally new building will be a tremendous asset at Killhope. Active Friends may like to note it even includes a workshop; for the less active there will be a tea-room!

Following Julie Goodhart's item on leadminer/poet Richard Watson in the last newsletter, Harold Beadle adds further interesting detail to the story including a Watson poem which he believes has never been published. He also questions some earlier writings

RICHARD WATSON

Harold L. Beadle

"Poetry Dick", as he was called locally, was without doubt greatly gifted and was often requested to compose a poem for some event or special occasion and recite it at the appropriate time. The poem entitled "Address" and delivered by him at a dinner held in connection with The Rifle Competition is a typical example of his ability to fulfil this role. He was also honoured locally after his death by having his poems recited, or set to music and sung at concerts, during those years when the inhabitants of Upper Teesdale had to provide their own entertainment, before the days of "Wireless" in the early 1920's and "Television" in the late 1940's. The popularity of such entertainment continued until the late 1930's after which it seemed to decline. Fairy Dell was one of the more popular songs and the humorous poems such as Betty and the Three Legged Stool, and Will Toward and the Bailiff, were always greeted with great applause when recited by those who were "word perfect" and who also had the ability to give the necessary emphasis to the amusing lines.(1)

A good deal has appeared in print over the years which is amusing but not always correct. One writer, after stating that most of his poems were composed in the mineshop situated on the moor between Middleton and Stanhope at night after the toils of the day, continues, "To work an 18-hour day and still find the mental capabilities to compose verse of the highest order was a remarkable achievement."(2) The London Lead Company normally worked a five day week of eight hours per day. Whether or not more recently published information about him can be supported by documentary evidence I know not, but I could not imagine Watson successfully fulfilling the position of the manager of a washing floor, such as was in use at that time. The "Washing Master" (to use the correct title) held a very important position and was responsible to the Mine Agent for producing lead concentrates of the highest possible grade which were bagged, weighed and stored in the Bingstead ready for despatch to the Smelt Mill. Neither do I think he would need to be inspired by Jerry Force to compose Fairy Dell where, it seems, that he may have courted Nancy in his younger days.(3)

Many of his poems are difficult to date unless one can link them to some reliable documentary evidence such as a newspaper report of the event for which they were composed. With others one is often left in doubt as to where he was when he was inspired to compose. However, two of his poems, My Journey to Work and Gib's Auld Mear, indicate that at the time they were written he was in fact working at California Mine, at the head of Little Egglehope. Both, in my opinion, have in them more references to mines and smelt mills than any of the others which have been published. In the latter he makes it quite clear that it was early morning when he sat down beside the plantation to put his thoughts into writing. (4) The length of the poem might lead one to wonder at what hour he would arrive at his place of work and the comment of an aged lead miner with whom I worked as a lad may well have some relevance. "Poetry Dick sometimes never got to work."

Lead mining, in common with many other occupations, was not without its accidents, some of which were fatal. One such accident occurred Wednesday 18th February 1880, when a young man of 17 years of age was killed by a fall of stone whilst working in a heading at Coldberry Mine. The injuries to his head were so severe that death was almost instantaneous. One of the other workers in the heading narrowly escaped injury at the same time. (5) Whether he was requested, or it was on his own initiative is unknown, but it appears that Watson immediately composed a poem in connection with the tragedy. The poem, which to the best of my knowledge has never been published, was very appropriately used as a black bordered card in memory of the deceased which it may be assumed was freely distributed to his many relatives and friends. The card, which is 7" x 4½" has for the purposes of this article, been enlarged in order that it may be more readable. (6) (see overleaf)

- (1) Poems and Songs of Teesdale by Richard Watson (1930 Edition)
- (2) Newspaper Article dated 18th December 1976. "Bard of the Dales" by Noel Turnbull.
- (3) Fairy Dell is a small pretty ravine which winds its way down through the outcropping Great Whin Sill in Holwick (NY 913 263)
- (4) The Plantation the remains of which can still be seen, reached down to the Middlend to Stanhope road (NY 992 289)
- (5) Report of accident in The Teesdale Mercury dated Wednesday February 25th 1880.
- (6) Memorial Card in private possession.

A further Watson poem which was to accompany Julie Goodhart's item in the last newsletter has been held over to our next edition.

In Memory of
GEORGE READSHAW,
 OF MIDDLETON-IN-TEESDALE.
 AGED 17 YEARS & 5 MONTHS.
Who was Killed Accidentally at Coldberry Mine,
 ON FEBRUARY 18TH, 1880.

How frail the thread of life is, and how soon,
 Man in his strength and beauty is cut down,
 Dangers stand thick to steal away the breath,
 Thin the partition is, 'twixt life and death.

Blithe as the lark, warbling its cheerful lay,
 High in the clouds, to hail the op'ning day,
 Was George our son; and his bright face express'd
 The gen'rous heart, that beat within his breast.

One morning he arose ere break of day,
 And to the mine, light-hearted, took his way:
 We little thought when he had clos'd the door,
 His living form we would behold no more.

Deep 'neath the ground, while toiling for his bread: ---
 A ponderous piece of rock above his head,
 Fell down; and ere he'd time to think or pray,
 His soul had quit it's tenement of clay.

Thus in a moment, from this world of care,
 From many a glittering, tempting snare,
 He pass'd away, with ransom'd ones to dwell
 In that bright land of peace, where all is well.

Although our hearts were fill'd with grief and woe,
 When we his lifeless, mangled, body saw;
 Against God's ways we could make no complaint,
 He only took away that which he had lent.

We'll praise his name, and labour to fulfil
 Our duties here, according to his will;
 Relying still upon his pardoning love,
 Prepare to meet our darling boy above.

Ye thoughtless souls, on sin and folly bent,
 Think how uncertain life is, and repent;
 So that you may, when death approaches near,
 Behold his joy face, without a fear.

RICHARD WATSON, HOLWICK.

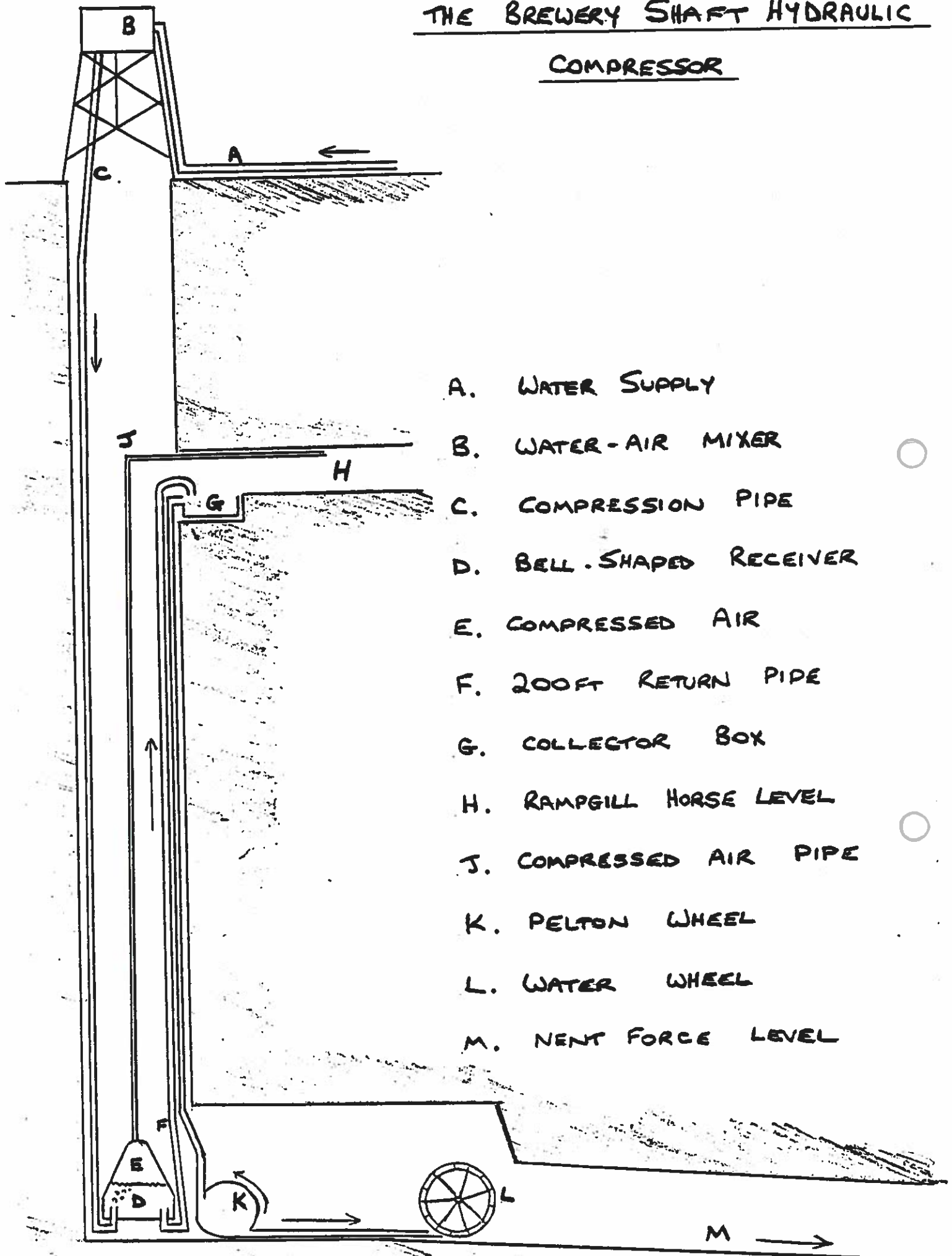
THE BREWERY SHAFT.BRIAN SHORT.

The Rampgill vein system at Nenthead was discovered in 1690. The Alston Estates, together with mineral rights, were handed over to the Greenwich Hospital Trust in 1735, when it was realised that the next rightful heir to the owner (The Earl of Derwentwater) was under sentence of death in a foreign country. Rampgill Level was started by them in 1736 but after unsuccessful trials the Lease was taken up by Colonel Liddell in 1739. He failed to make a profit and in 1745 the London Lead Company took over all his mining leases. In 1775 it was proposed by the Commissioners to drive a water level (Nent Force Level) from Alston to Nenthead to drain the mines in the Upper Nent Valley and work commenced in 1776. By 1842 the Level had reached Wellgill Shaft, a distance of 4.25 miles. Sometime between 1842 and 1856 the Level was extended and connected to the Brewery Shaft bringing the total length to 4.94 miles. At this point the shaft was used as a water-blast, presumably to ventilate the Nent Force Level and any small workings along its length.

The Nent Force Level failed in its other purpose of finding any major new veins but it served as a spillway at a later date when the Vielle Montagne Zinc Company installed hydraulic compressors in the Brewery Shaft, which was so named because in 1753 the London Lead Company bought the Cherry Tree Estate from the Alston Brewery Company and the original shaft was sunk in one of the fields belonging to the Estate.

The shaft, which is approximately 12 feet in diameter and concrete lined, is situated 100 yards into the Rampgill Horse Level. Various sources of information give different figures for the depth of the shaft, but the average seems to be about 325 feet.

When the Vielle Montagne Zinc Company took over the mining leases in 1896, the old smelt mill was redesigned as a steam powered compressor plant, but for economic reasons it was replaced, between 1903 and 1915, by a system of hydraulic compressors, and one of these was installed in the Brewery Shaft. Water was conveyed from Smallcleugh Dam in a 12 inch steel pipe to the top of a 90 feet tower erected above the Brewery Shaft. This tower contained the necessary equipment to mix air with the falling water which was piped down the shaft. Air bubbles will be carried down a water pipe as long as the water descends at a rate of not less than 8 feet per second. After falling approximately 400 feet the water/air mixture entered a bell shaped receiver in which the air separated out from the water. The water minus the air bubbles left the receiver and was pushed up a pipe and discharged into an open collector box 200 feet above on the Horse Level. When applying the rule that a column of water $27\frac{1}{2}$ inches high exerts a pressure of 1 lb. per square inch, then it can be seen that the pressure exerted by the water in the 200 feet rising pipe is equal to 87.2 lb. per square inch. The resistance against the flow in the rising pipe brings the air pressure in the receiver at the bottom of the shaft up to 90 lb. per square inch. This

THE BREWERY SHAFT HYDRAULICCOMPRESSOR

- A. WATER SUPPLY
- B. WATER-AIR MIXER
- C. COMPRESSION PIPE
- D. BELL-SHAPED RECEIVER
- E. COMPRESSED AIR
- F. 200FT RETURN PIPE
- G. COLLECTOR BOX
- H. RAMPGILL HORSE LEVEL
- J. COMPRESSED AIR PIPE
- K. PELTON WHEEL
- L. WATER WHEEL
- M. NEXT FORCE LEVEL

compressed air was piped not only into Rampgill Mine but also across the moors to Higgs Mine via Wellhope Shaft. A similar system installed in the Bogg Shaft supplied air for the other mines in the Upper Nent Valley. As well as drilling and winding, the compressed air was used as ventilation and for pumping water. Pumping was done by the 'Mammoth' system whereby air is introduced into the bottom of a vertical pipe immersed in the water. The ascending air bubbles carry with them a column of water.

The large amount of moisture in compressed air has always been a problem, sometimes a costly one to correct and the advantage of compressing air in this way is that because of the comparatively long compression period while the air bubbles travel down the compression pipe and the low temperature of the surrounding water in the pipe, then all the moisture in the air being compressed is deposited on the walls of the air bubble, resulting in very dry compressed air in the receiver. Considering the amount of water about, that statement may be hard to accept as being true, but it has been proved to be the case.

After being discharged into the collector box the water was again piped down the shaft to drive two Pelton Wheels, generating electricity for the Company's use. The escaping water then turned a water wheel, for reasons unknown to me, before being discharged into the Nent Force Level.

Unfortunately, in 1910 this area was the scene of a fatal accident, when a certain Mr. Archer, a maintenance man, was killed when a Pelton wheel disintegrated, the probable cause being a foreign body being carried down the feed pipe and fouling the vanes in the Pelton wheel.

Apparently compressed air was produced in this way for almost half a century. Today the pipework remains and a recent descent by members of a mines exploration group revealed that most of the machinery is still in situ, and it is my ambition to see this for myself, if at all possible.

WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT LEAD MINING?Kathy Grylls

You will, I'm sure, have often heard it said that when dealing with children, one needs a lot of patience. This is very true, as any family person or teacher will confirm. What you may not realise however, is that a large amount of that self same virtue, is also needed by Killhope Information Assistants.

"It's cold up here!" wail the punters as they totter across the site in high heels and shirt sleeves.

"The toilets are disgusting!" they cry as they emerge from their tussle with a lid that WILL NOT STAY OPEN.

"Don't you serve coffee?" they demand accusingly as we guiltily sip our hard-earned cup of tea.

Patiently we apologise.

Patiently we try of explain.

"This is the North Pennines, Sir" "You are in the middle of the countryside" "There is a cafe just up the road!" "Try holding up the lid with one hand whilst manoeuvring with the other, Madam".

Perhaps one day our problems will be solved. Perhaps next year (Sometime? Never?) the Visitor Centre will be open, with its promised cafe and flush loos. How wonderful that would be!

What will the customers find to complain about then? The price increase perhaps? Time will tell.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday June 7th, 7.30 p.m. Kings Arms Hotel, St. Johns Chapel.
Annual General Meeting and Brains Trust.

Sunday June 11th, 1.30 p.m. Killhope Open Quoits Championship at Killhope.

Wednesday July 12th, 7.30 p.m. Allenheads Inn "A Walk Around Alston"
A slide presentation of old photographs of Alston given by Mr. Richard Turner.

The rest of the programme to be announced. It will include a visit to Force Crag Mine near Keswick and a visit to Cookson's Hayhole Works in Newcastle.

In spite of the importance of Methodism in the lives of many Pennine leadminers and their families the religious aspect of our subject has been seriously neglected in our newsletters so I particularly welcome the following introductory article by Colin Short.

METHODISM IN THE NORTHERN PENNINES
Part 1 - FOUNDATIONS

In the northern Pennines the Methodist Church, or The Chapel as it was more popularly known, occupied a major place in society, perhaps up to the 1939-45 war. Recent years have seen a considerable erosion of that place, along with many other social changes, yet Methodism has an important role in the social history of the lead mining dales. 1988 marked the 250th anniversary of the conversion of the Wesley brothers, while 1989 is the anniversary of the start of their open air preaching, so it seems appropriate to begin an occasional series on Methodism. This article will deal with early Methodist history and context and provide a general framework onto which the subsequent articles will build.

The English church in the early eighteenth century was in a period of religious dullness. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 had ushered in some religious tolerance although several restrictions did still remain. Yet the Church of England, with some honourable exceptions, was in decline. Many incumbents were non-resident and often held the livings of several parishes and, in some instances, cathedral appointments as well. Where local services were provided in the name of non-resident incumbents, 'poor curates' performed the duties. As they were often 'poor' in all senses of the word, many parishes saw little effective worship or preaching. Indeed, the characteristic preaching of the era, when it occurred, was moralistic or arising from a dry impersonal deism, rather than a living faith in a living God. Evangelism was virtually unknown, while services were short, with wooden reading of the Prayer Book and without hymns.

Coupled with a poverty of content was often a poverty of provision. Many rural parishes were impractically large, while the parish structure was effectively not there in many of the growing industrial areas, both in the emerging manufacturing towns and in the mining communities. Moreover, one big weakness of the Church of England was its insistence on focusing everything 'in church' so that even where a rare enthusiastic incumbent was anxious to make the church work, the inability of people to attend from a vast parish was often an impasse. Add to this the vested interest of the local squirarchy - and an incumbent would be likely to come from that class - in the parish system and there was a strong resistance to opening up the parish church to the labouring classes.

For the non Anglican communities the picture can soon be sketched, for numbers were small and after years of religious and legal discrimination they were weak. The Roman church was weakest and not yet entirely free from persecution. There were yet only few Independents (forerunners of the Congregationalists) a scattering of Presbyterians (who with the Congregationalists became the United Reformed Church in the twentieth century) and only pockets of Baptists and Quakers. Few of these other traditions touched the ordinary people.

God though was at work in a very powerful way in the 1730s. Other Anglican clergymen across the country were being renewed by God's sovereign grace - the Wesleys weren't the first or the last - and a renewal and revival was at hand. It needed an organiser and co-ordinator and mastermind. John Wesley was to be that man - and Charles was to be its hymnwriter, giving the ordinary people the vehicle to express their faith and their experience.

Open air preaching had begun a few years earlier in South Wales. It was anathema to most Anglican clergy, and not over enjoyed by John Wesley; he admitted it, but knew too that it was the only way to reach the unchurched. To be sure it had its effect in the dales. It began for brother John in Bristol in 1739. George Whitefield, another renewed Anglican clergyman, had begun a mass open air movement among the colliers of north east Bristol. Anxious though to return to work in the American colonies, George invited his old Oxford friend John Wesley down to help - and John found himself 'field preaching' :

I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.

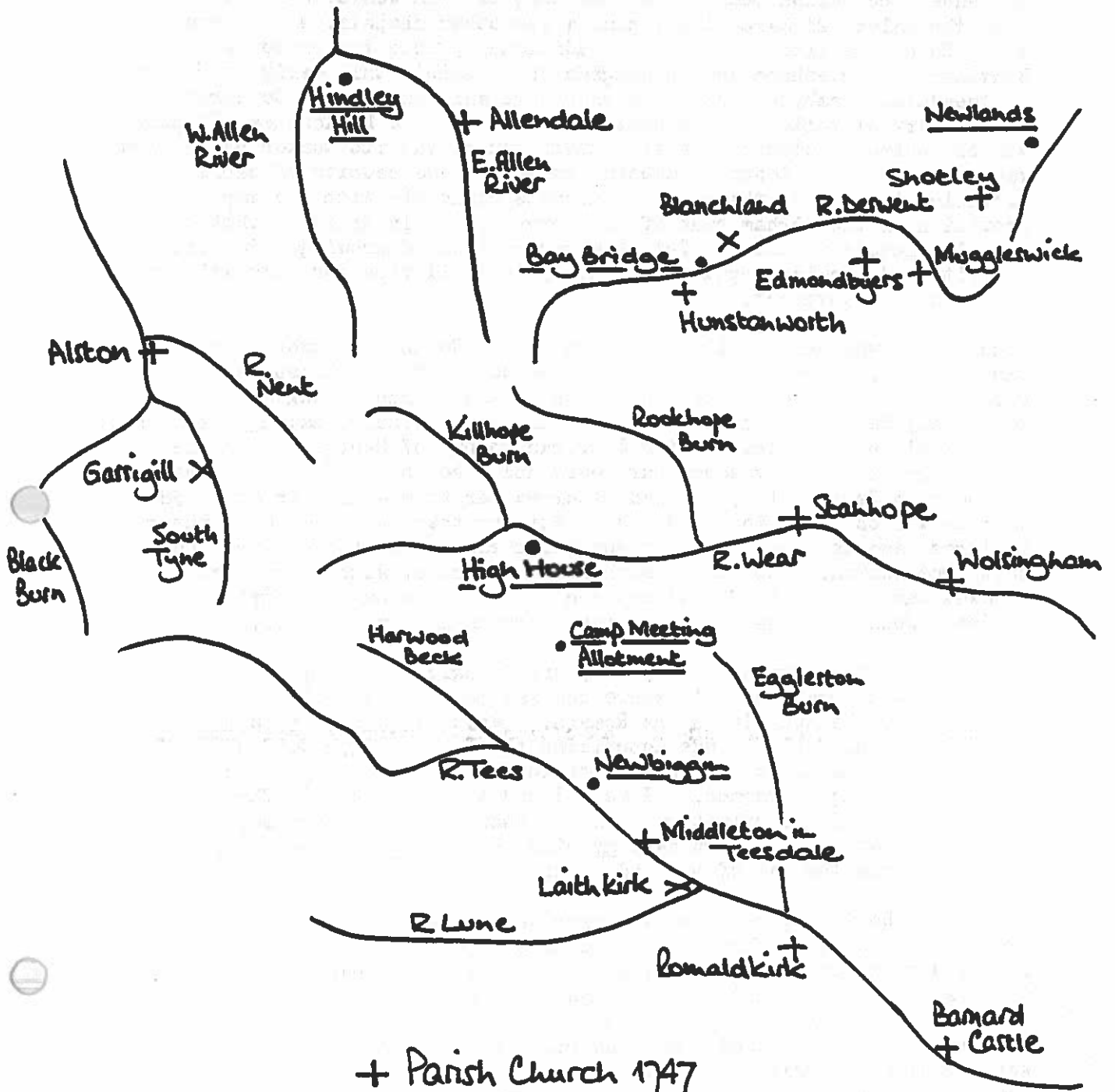
From there it grew. London saw open air meetings soon after. A great work began, based on Bristol and London. It was still a renewal movement in the Church of England. The brothers were Anglican clergymen and were anxious to enrich that church with their new converts. There was resistance from the first. Yet the converts did not need the parish church, for the organising genius of John put laymen into leadership roles, organised support meetings (the 'classes') and worshipping groups (the 'societies') - and Methodism was established.

Although different people quote different dates, to my mind by 1742 Methodism was a separate work from the Church of England; John Wesley himself refused to credit the separation to his death in 1791. It was in 1742 though that John came north east on his first visit. Very quickly he established a base in Newcastle, expressing - and revealing - a great love for the north eastern colliers. With the three bases in place - Bristol, London, Newcastle - the basic pattern of the travelling ministry was established. For the next forty eight years, to 1790, John Wesley travelled the country, preaching goodnews of his Lord Jesus, caring for his societies, leading, guiding. He visited the north east forty eight times in this work and died on 2 March 1791, aged 87.

Charles played his part in the early travelling and had an important role in the north east. No mean preacher himself, it was none the less Charles' gift to contribute the hymnody of the mission. He retired from the travelling ministry in the 1750s and died in 1788 after a settled ministry in London and Bristol.

The story of Methodism in the northern Pennine dales begins in 1747 - and to that we must turn next time.

Eighteenth Century Ecclesiastical Map



+ Parish Church 1747
 x Chapelry.
 Particular Methodist sites
 underlined.

In the northern dales the parish provision was curiously mixed. The map shows the parish churches at the time of John Wesley's first entry into the dales, 24 March 1747, plus a few other chapelries and several early Methodist sites. We might additionally note the presence of Baptists at Egglesthorpe and Wolsingham and possibly this early in Forest in Teesdale, Presbyterians at Ireshopeburn and Quakers at Cotherstone, in the Derwent valley and possibly elsewhere. The London Lead Company was of course founded by Quaker entrepreneurs, but its Quaker expression was not much in evidence in meeting houses. The paucity of parish provision in most of the region contrasts curiously with the ample provision on the Durham bank of the Derwent, but in spite of that the overall picture is thin. Yet here was an area of growing industrial activity and growing population - truly 'a field ripe for harvest' for the Methodist movement.

John Wesley was born in 1703, the son of the Rector of Epworth in Lincolnshire, although the grandchild on both sides of Dissenters. Passing through Oxford into ordination in the Church of England, he could only be described in 1738 as a failed missionary, having experienced very little but problems in the American colony of Georgia. Charles, his younger brother by some four years and also an Anglican clergyman, had been in Georgia too, but had returned far from well : in May 1738 Charles was on the point of death. Both brothers were aware of their failures, and were searching for something extra, but had not yet found that true awakening to God. Both were in contact with a group of renewed but quietistic Christians who ran a 'religious society' in London. John's Journal takes up the story on 24 May 1738.....

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

It was the beginning of a renewal process that was to create an evangelist who was to bring the good news of God's love and saving power in Jesus to thousands who had real need of it. On searching out brother Charles, John found that not only had Charles known the same heart warming and renewing experience a few days previously, but that he had also been wonderfully healed by God - and had risen from his death bed and was writing hymns of praise to God. Immediately both brothers began preaching their new found faith - that it was by trust in God and not working to earn it, that it was a personal experience known in your heart, that it was free and for all who would believe.

This was the gospel they preached to rich and poor, to Earl and washer boy, albeit mainly to washer boy and his like! It was a radical gospel for the eighteenth century, although the Biblical one! And it was to capture the ordinary people to whom it was brought. Its immediate result in 1738 though was the gradual closing of Church of England pulpits to the two brother clergymen. Where were they to preach this goodnews?

THE GRAHAM LETTERS - Part 7Ian Forbes

Topics covered in the Graham letters have ranged far and wide: from family news to emigration, to the American Civil War and the Crimean war. But in this, the latest in our series of letters written from Weardale to Joseph Graham in America, John Graham talks of a subject which must have been close to the heart of both brothers - the health of their own family. And the news is distressing.

Burnt Hills May 19 1855

Dear Brother,

I now give you an Answer to your letter which I recived on the 13th of May which was a very welcome one for I had looked for one ever since Christmas and expected one every day, For the letter which I recived from you the last September told me not to write Again till I recived another from you, For Dear Brother I should to have writen to you three months ago to infrom you of my Sisters death the Wife of Thomas Millburn. For it makes me very sorrey to have to write such sorrowful news as I will this time have to write to you, For that Great God that made all things did not make mens life to be long in this World for we must all humbely submit ourselves to this Allwise Judgement and Provedance. who is our Duty to always be ready to meet him at His Will. For after given birth to her tenth Child which is a fine litel girl and is in very good hielth and all of them is in very good hileth at present and is dowing very well but it is the greatest misfortune that ever came to Thomas Millburn And the greatest loss that ever came to his Famiely. Tow of the Childern you know died long before you left home and Eight is livn yet. She gave birth to the Child on the 9th of of January and she got very good maens untill the 23th. we all thought she was getin the best means she had don(e) for a long time But she has been subject to swollen legs when baring child and her leg never got beter this time as it ought to have don(e) and the Black Erysipelus took place and the Doctor never could stop it progress which soon ended in Mortefication and death. she died on the 30 of January after eight day secever sickness. (1) Or ells (else) you might have been boath Thomas Millburn me and our Famielys and perhaps sum more of your Brothers in America this summer but Thomas thinks he will have to stay a bit longer now till his Famiely get a bit older before he can thak such a step. And my Brother William has been very poorley this Winter he never got stranth enough nor clear of pains in his back as he ought to have don which has ended in an Abcess that is a great rot on the small of his back. it begoun to rise about the last of December Which soon lade him of work and he has work no more since for it keep grawing gradually larger till it got Almost as big as a mans Head and then the Doctor tought it time to lancet it and on the day a quart full was taken from it and more or less has been taken from it ever since but it runs very little now and is nearly mended but I think that if it had all been Kept it would have fild four quarts but he is a bit Better now And I hope before I have to write again he will be mended for the Doctor says it was fine Heilty matter and he is not dangerous. But you may depend upont he is a very thein man, but he has Always been abel to walk about he has never been bedfast. (2)

Well Dear Brother I was up at my Mothers this week when he see your letter and she says she would like to see you again and she sends her greatest wishes and respects to you. and your Daughter Jane Anne says she would like to see her Father but she says she would not come to America to see him. you may come to see her. she is very well in heilth and as for all the rest of the Famiely is in very good heilth—Well Brother you are wanten to know how Christopher geten along with farming well I think he is dowing very well with farming. he has a good stock of sheep he has more now than when you left home. I think he will have between 50 and 50 sheep and he has a good Horse and he only has one Cow now. he has had to sell one cow this spring for want of hay but he is going to bay another in her place. he has a stirk and a calf And he has a good crop of Lambs and he has the land in very good trim. in fact he is doing very well with Farming. Well Brother a man in this Country has to be very skillful about Farming for you have nearly Duple as much rent to pay every year as you can make of them. (3) And you may depend upont that we have very hard times. stock is as high as it was in the last letter I sent you and flour has risen to 3s. per stone. mutton is 7d per lb Beef about the same. Potates is 8d per stone. Bacon is about 10d per lb and in fact it is the hardest times that I ever so(saw) in my lifetime. But thair was the best pays in this Country the last year that has been for a long time which was a great Blessen to all the Country

- (1) Mrs. Cripps, by whose permission we reprint these letters, notes that death was probably caused on a streptococcus infection. Mary Milburn was 38 when she died.
- (2) It has been suggested to me that William's illness, so graphically described, may well have been spinal tuberculosis.
- (3) We met Christopher Graham in the first letter in Newsletter 9. He lived at Hilltop in Killhope where he had a 15 acre farm and 12 stints on the fell. He was of course a miner as well as a farmer. To keep his land "in very good trim" must always have been a hard struggle on an exposed hillside at nearly 1800ft. above sea level.

Footnote

In the last Graham letter John wrote "John still thirtens to go to America....." I suggested "thirtens" might mean thirsts. Several Friends have corrected me. Lawrence Barker, for one, wrote from Swaledale "Sheila and I think that "thirtens" will mean "threatens." It is common in our dialect to miss the "r" out of a word preceded by "th." It is still possible to hear something like "thuppince" for three pence in the upper dale where TV has not completely taken over