



THE FRIENDS OF
KILLHOPE

NEWSLETTER NO. 22

NOVEMBER 1991

PRESIDENT - *Sir Kingsley Dunham F.R.S*

THE GREAT DRINK!



Project Officer, Ian Forbes and Chairman, Richard Turner with Secretary, Dorothy Chambers (alias Lady Beaumont) at Killhope after the presentation of a gold rivet to commemorate the raising of £45,000 towards the restoration of the Big Wheel. (Unfortunately, with the technology available we are unable to do justice to Harry Parker's photograph but we are indebted to Steve Eva for his efforts in preparing the print for copying.)

The main happenings for the Friends this summer have been those associated with the turning of the restored Big Wheel at Killhope. First came the Great Drink which was a truly memorable day early in September. Members came from far and wide to celebrate in period costume and other groups were also generous in their support. The Killhope staff as usual made herculean efforts to make the whole thing a magical "Killhope" occasion. Certainly everyone including the visitors went around wearing broad smiles and at the Ceilidh the fun continued into the small hours.

Later in September came the official turning of Killhope Wheel at which our cheque for £45,203.35 was handed over to Councillor Terrans, the Chairman of Durham County Council by our Secretary. Bryan Gould, M.P. the Shadow Environment Minister restarted the wheel and the event was covered by both local T.V. companies as well as the press. Friends of Killhope can be justly proud of their part in this important milestone in the restoration of our industrial heritage. Congratulations!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

A VIDEO EVENING

In the King's Arms, St. John's Chapel at 7.30 p.m. on **Wednesday November 13th**. We have members' videos - the Great Drink and the official wheel turning day as well as earlier events such as Eric's Wheel ceremony. If time permits we can also show film of the last days of the Bowes Incline railway at Springwell.

A MEMBERS' NIGHT

Bring your own slides on **Wednesday December 11th** to the same place at the same time. We have usually had a varied selection to provoke good humoured comment and discussion. The cosy venue and good company will ensure a congenial evening for both events and since it doesn't usually snow a lot until the turn of the year, attendance will be well worth the effort.

BOOK NEWS

North eastern Friends will have seen the enthusiastic reviews in the local press of Helen Cannam's latest novel, "The Last Ballad." Helen is a member of the Friends of Killhope and has done a huge amount of research into the Weardale of the early 19th century and has set her story around the events of 1818 when miners were in desperate poverty, poaching was widespread and the famous Battle of Stanhope - a fist-fight between poachers and gamekeepers - took place. From this event came Weardale's best known song "The Ballad of the Bonny Moor Hen."

Although the book is fiction many of the events in the story took place much as described. To add to the realism there is a list of characters in the story who actually existed while the narrative contains many Weardale place names and locations. "The Last Ballad" would make an excellent Christmas present for anyone who likes historical novels or for the lead mining enthusiast and is available from bookshops.

THE GREAT EXPECTATION - a gentleman's account of the Great Drink.

It was with great anticipation we awaited the moment and the day finally arrived. It was such an early day that it came soon, even for me, who was in a fever of expectation and half afraid that some great convulsion of nature might interpose to stop the exposition.

I approached the place and pausing on the road observed the whole adjacent prospect lying in a straight low line under the leaden sky. It was a most amazing spectacle. Modes of transportation swelled the appointed venue to such a huge extent that 25-30 vehicles stood dangerously along the Alston Rd. One such device was placed by its owner four square in the ford so keen was he not to forgo any part of the proceedings.

I joined the tumult paying meticulous regard to the characters and costumes of the grand gathering. Mr. Rumney (I. Forbes) himself attended with his wife strode about the estate, guardian of all he surveyed in his fetching cloth - too good for mourning but too drab for joy - giving secret cautions with his eyes. Mr. Sopwith (B. Grigg), grey headed and florid, did not condescend to address me but his benevolent lady spread warmth throughout the festivities. The Engineer Mr. Gwilliam and his voluptuous family lit the scene. He plod through the crowd, a spectacle with a pair of glasses - both frothy and fully charged. "Butterknowle" says he "and you, sir" says I. Somebody called "Alarm" and several riders (Beamish) came through the throng insinuating their bicycles among baskets and bustles and huxters goods, the hairsbreadth turns and twists drew upon them a variety of speeches from people standing both amazed and complimentary. The Teesdale Players sang to cosy flocks of assembled folk. The Musicians, secure behind their eccentric calling "The Pudding Poke Buskers", mingled and played and the Band struck up (Alston Junior Silver Band.)

The Chairman led the Lady Beaumont (D. Chambers) and other dignatories to the wheel. We gathered close to the distinguished group in a state of considerable expectation. The Chairman spoke to congratulate all involved with the gargantuan task and generally exerted his vernacular verbage so brilliantly as to make the thing pass off well that there was no pause in the celebration. In his natural geniality he praised the good effects of the works and the skill and diligence of the craftsmen. Lady Beaumont, dressed in exotic purple, and exuding the personality becoming her status astonished the dignatories and populace alike in announcing the princely donation in excess of £45,000. On behalf of all those present she expressed gratitude and congratulations on the community spirit which Friends contrived to achieve such a splendid sum. With unreserved humility she conducted the further proceedings in a most delicate and obliging description to the very point of the day's celebrations.

The water gate conceded to the impatience of the collected waters of the North Pennines which, once released, gave full vent to a single power and motioned the great wheel itself to grand revolution.

Pandemonium and exhilaration followed with cheers and applause from a wonderfully relieved conference, overjoyed at the success of the moment and everything appertaining to it. Prematurely abandoning myself to enjoyment, the heady moment was pulled abruptly short by an impudent fellow who struck up a height to expound nonsense. The astounded audience distracted by the intrusion had the collective good offices to put to the road this erratic and perverted "Reverend" gent who had the audacity and affrontery to call himself the Brother-in-law of Lady Beaumont. Walter Beaumont (K. Watson) that cadaverous faced scoundrel was subsequently dispatched with all haste by a gentleman of the law (B. Tapley.) In the not inconsiderable confusion, that attentive official unfortunately missed observing the shameless posturing of a "lady of the night" (Sue) flaunting herself and pushing her misdemeanour before her in a perambulator. All this before respectable families decked out in their flamboyant best (Jacksons and Grahams) for a day not to be marred by such inconsistencies.

I retreated towards the tea rooms passing the bustle of vendors lined along the track, my progression only deviated by the advances of a disreputable individual indiscriminately purveying elixirs (Tim) of all manner of odour and hue. I diverted to watch the smithy (D. Tyerman) and his assistant Bob endure their labours and entertain the curious as the wholesome toil of the smithy only can. The observers included a lady in a rash of colour (J. Watson) - of a gentleman in the medical profession I believe - and a group of tourists in recently renovated faces.

The cafe attained at last and service from the costumed ladies of the kitchen gained, I coveted my corner table. Through the shop door my single prospect of the neatly tailored assistants was as easy on the eye as the hot buttered scones were to my recently acquired moorland appetite.

As evening cloaked the mountain and those of distance destinations ventured forth to seek them out, I, being of similar disposition directed my transport eastwards. Observing as I went the coloured lights, the girating figures and listening to the music swell the still air, I reflected on the Nent Force Ballroom and the Newhouse Pays and wondered if ever an extravagance such as this one I witnessed ever enveloped the Dale with the excess of merriment and celebration that joyously danced on into the Pennines that late summer night.

The above modest account of the proceedings of the day I humbly submit to the Editor.

I am, Sir, Your Obedient Servant, Friend of Killhope and Architect to the Works, William A. Drea, Esq.

Editor's note: We are indeed most favoured by Mr. Drea's contribution to our humble publication! This contemporary account will be best appreciated by those lucky enough to be present but I can assure readers that it captures the occasion brilliantly.

THE TEESDALE WATER WHEELBryan Chambers

There wasn't space in the last newsletter to report on the recovery of the 6'6" overshot waterwheel from Howgill House in Teesdale so the following is rather overdue but hopefully still worth inclusion in the newsletter.

This little wheel was used until quite recently as many ex mining wheels were to generate electricity. It was perched in a wooden frame jutting out from the north bank of the Tees at its confluence with the Howgill Burn. Water was fed through a plastic lined wooden leat from just a few yards up the burn as it emerges from its culvert under the B.6277.

Freeing the wheel from its mounting was no problem, the tricky bit was to get the still complete but quite fragile structure up a steep wooded bank to a point on the road where it could be lifted onto a truck standing on the tarmac - there being no verge on the almost blind corner at this point. The aforementioned trees were both a benefit and a handicap. Some were in the way and others had branches from which we could hang our lifting gear. Of course, it is in the nature of things that none of the branches were in quite the right place so a straight lift was impossible. (One of our lady helpers suggested we cut our losses and roll the thing onto a raft on the river and then pick it up at Teesmouth!)

The actual solution was less theatrical. Two tirlfors (hand winches) were used in conjunction with a steadying rope held by the ladies. Once the wheel was clear of the framework one tirlfor "let" as the other gained until eventually the wheel was on terra ferma again in the bed of the stream but still at the foot of the steep wooded slope. Small as it is the wheel was far too heavy to lift or roll so a crude raft was made from scrap timber and inch by inch the whole was tirlfored up the slope. This was extremely heavy work necessitating the use of long extension levers on the tirlfors and a number of different "pulls."

Finally after several hours the wheel was safely at the top where it would be lifted onto a truck for transport to Killhope. Members will have seen it behind the Visitor Centre awaiting installation on site. While we had hoped to have it running by now we can at least console ourselves that one more artefact has been saved.

Footnote: At about this time part of Harry Secombe's Sunday programme Highway was made here but unfortunately we were not on hand to provide some local colour. Had the programme planners known I'm sure they would have featured the ancient Killhope practice of waterwheel rescue. If you count our efforts with the big wheel, Friends have now four wheels to their credit!

Brief specification and history of the Teesdale Water Wheel.

6'6" diameter, 1'8" wide with 6 spokes on each side (1 of which seems to be cast iron) the hub flanges are probably cast iron; the 30 buckets are made up of thin mild steel with wooden bases; the shaft is 2" diameter. The whole construction is very similar to that of Eric's Wheel. There is some damage - small sections of rim missing, cracks, and the shaft is badly scored on the bearing surfaces. However, the wheel is virtually complete.

We know the wheel was last used for mining purposes at Lady's Rake mine in Harwood, Upper Teesdale. A local farmer, Mr. Lee, then used it to generate electricity on his farm nearby and eventually it was acquired for the same purpose by Mr. Alf Gordon at Howgill House below High Force. If anyone can add to this we would of course be delighted to hear from you.

REPORT FROM DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

David Miller

The great day has come and gone. For so long, restoring the wheel was a distant objective. Somehow it has been achieved and 26th September was devoted to celebrating that achievement.

It was a pleasant afternoon, much appreciated by the many guests. Derek Foster, M.P. and Hilary Armstrong M.P., Sir Kingley and Lady Dunham and other Friends, members and officers of Durham County Council and Wear Valley District Council were joined by representation from many other bodies who have supported the Killhope project over the years including the Countryside Commission, the Northumbria Tourist Board, other government agencies and local groups and organisations. The "star turn" was Bryan Gould, M.P. the Shadow Environment Minister who had been prevailed upon to formally turn the wheel.

Councillor "Mick" Terrans welcomed everyone and gave special vote of thanks to Lance Gwilliam and David Hodgson of Dorothea Engineering for their marvellous work in restoring the wheel. He also spoke of Dorothy Chambers fantastic efforts in raising £45,000 towards the total cost of £110,000 for the work. Dorothy told us how it was done and was particularly modest about the great time and effort involved in raising such a huge sum. She presented Councillor Terrans with a large unwieldy cheque and in return received a rather more modest bouquet of flowers. I would like to record in this newsletter how delighted our councillors have been and that they are very aware of the importance of her personal effort and the work of other Friends in bringing this project to completion.

Bryan Gould spoke of his enthusiasm for this project and how impressed he was with the co-operation between the County Council and its many friends and allies. He dedicated the wheel to the many lead mining families and their descendents whose heritage is now recorded at Killhope.

We all held our breath when he pulled the rope to guide the water to the head of the wheel. Only a few seconds later the wheel started to turn to the obvious delight of the many who had been looking forward for so long to seeing it.

Such a good day and many thanks to all concerned, the staff, Friends and other supporters for organising and taking part in a memorable occasion.

COLIN SHORT

Regular readers will be familiar with Colin's contributions to the newsletter which have covered such varied subjects as beam engines, mineral processing and of course his current series on Methodism. Colin's work as a Methodist minister has recently taken him out of the North East to Kidderminster - roughly half way back to his native Cornwall. I'm sure Friends would like to join me in wishing Colin and his family well in their new district and we hope he will still find time to write for our enjoyment and information in due course. In the meantime Colin leaves us with a typically scholarly item on the history of the flotation process of ore separation as well as a shorter item. Due to his move south the series on Methodism will be interrupted somewhat but will continue. (Flotation process item held over.)

Methodism - Colin Short

Would the members who asked for copies of earlier episodes, please contact the editor as I regret their names have been mislaid.

(Bryan Chambers, Newsletter Editor, 18 Cheveley Walk, Belmont, Durham DH1 2AU, telephone 091 38684191)

THE GREAT DRINK - another viewDorothy Chambers

My prior knowledge of this Friends day in September was more or less the same as everyone else - try to dress in traditional costume - there will be stalls and entertainment and of course the celebrated outdoor Ceilidh in the evening - midgies permitting.

When I contacted Judith Watson to discuss "traditional costume" I was presented with a rather posh dress and hat which seemed to me to be far too good for the rigours of Killhope - what on earth would happen if it rained?

However, as we now all know, the weather was magnificent and I had a wonderful time in the guise of Lady Beaumont - I have still to meet Lord Beaumont, by the way. Thomas Sopwith, alias Bill Grigg, did his best to escort me during the day.

I had the privilege of pulling a rope to start the big wheel. In the event the wheel started itself, mysteriously. I wonder if the Notre Dame type figure hovering on the leat had anything to do with it? It all added to the fun of the day.

The presentation to me of a gold rivet was a magnificent gesture and one which I will always treasure.

I will never forget the sight of the wheel turning and more particularly the sound it made, something I had not previously appreciated.

My thanks to everyone who "surprised" me on the day; a day which I will always remember.

THE GREAT DRINK - HARRY PARKER'S PICTURES

Harry Parker took some splendid photographs of the "Great Drink" on September 8th. Very generously he has given the negatives to the Friends and suggested people who want copies should buy them from us.

Accordingly Harry's pictures will be displayed at Killhope on the last three Sundays in November for you to look at and choose from.

May I suggest that anyone else who has photos of that day brings them along for display as well. So come to Killhope on the 10th, 17th or 24th November - to refresh your memory if you were at the Great Drink or to see what you missed if you weren't!

ITS NOT ALL LEADMINING!

A while ago Bryan noted how much pleasure everyone at Killhope got from watching swallows fly in and out of the buddle house through a missing window pane.

Someone else obviously thought this was a good thing, for one day a sparrowhawk was spotted high up in the roof timbers of the buddle house. It must have chased a swallow in and then not been able to find a way out. It was awe-inspiring to see the agile way this beautiful bird flew around the roof trusses, but heart-rending to see the ever-increasing pathetic little heaps of swallow feathers on the floor. After a few days there were no swallows left inside and still the bird couldn't find a way out, even though we left the doors open.

The problem was that the bird had to fly down to get out of the door and its instinct was to escape upwards when disturbed. Eventually someone had the bright idea of hanging a piece of dead rabbit in the doorway as a lure. Whether or not our public thought this was some obscure piece of leadminers' superstition or folk lore it is not recorded, but it seemed to do the trick, for the sparrowhawk managed to get out.

It can't have got all the swallows, for as autumn approached I once again saw quite a few gathering round the buddle house. Let's hope they come back next year as usual.

Another visit to Killhope with an unusual purpose was the composer John Casken. He is writing a piece for next year's Proms which is setting to music of poems by Gael Turnbull, Jon Silkin and Rodney Pybus, to be sung by the baritone Thomas Allen.

John Silkin's poem is called "Killhope Wheel" and Mr. Casken was soaking up the atmosphere and sounds of Killhope prior to writing the score for the poem. So, on July 31st next year Killhope will be featured in the Royal Albert Hall - reaching parts that other lead mining sites can't!

A small selection of Michael Crompton's commemorative china especially produced for the "Great Drink" is still available from Killhope. These souvenir plates and mugs will of course never be repeated.

THE GRAHAM LETTERS

Ian Forbes

In January 1861 it was nearly nine years since Joseph Graham had left his native Killhope for the United States. Who knows what his thoughts, feelings and memories of Weardale were after all that time? Did he wonder often about the baby daughter left behind, or about his brothers on the family farm? How did the death of his mother the previous October affect him? Joseph must have been told of this unhappy event, but he didn't respond to the news. The next letter to him from Killhope starts rather sharply, complaining that no word had come from him for a very long time.

Mrs. Cripps, by whose permission we reproduce the Graham letters, notes of this letter: "If Jonathan still thought about emigrating to America, nothing is said in the surviving portion of his letter. However he may well have written of his interest in either the lower part of the first or last pages, both of which are missing. The signature is missing as well, but the content indicates it is from Jonathan."

Killhope January 30th 1861.

Dear brother I again find it my duty to write a few more lines unto you. we have been looking for a letter from you for more than two years but it hath all been in vain but sir I must remind you that you have a great many friends still in Weardale which have not forgotton you though it appears that you have Almost forgot them. but I hope sir that these lines well find you and yours in good health as it leaves me at present. the whole of our Famely Circle I expect is in good health and slowly increasing in numbers and Christopher and Jacob and I are still liven at the same place all togher. Jacob came home the last may and commenced bissness for himself and is doing pretty fair. he hath his shop at Copt hill and hath plenty of work. (1) Christopher and I are still working at the mines along with other six men but we have made very little money for the last three year. Little more then 10s a week and things look dull at the present in this Country. we got a change master in our County since you left.....(2)

A section of the letter is missing here

..... pure atmosphere as god hath made it but sir I have told you the worst of my story. we are well off. we have our little farm well stocked. we have 4 head of beas (ts) 2 horses near 60 sheep (3) and my brother Thomas is still liven at Burnt hills. he hath a small farm and he hath 5 sons and 1 daughter. Thomas Dalton still lives at high allers and he hath 4 sons and two daughters. Nicolas Padon lives Grain and he hath 3 daughters. Josua Stobbs still leves at greanfieald. he hath 6 daughters and 1 son. John widow lives at Burnt hills. she hath 3 girls and Thomas Millburn still live at the old place. He hath 4 son and 4 girls by my sister Mary. the other I have no bisness with (4) and I dare say they all have made more money at the mines than what I have done this last three years or so and we are all in prepty fair circumstances as regards this world and cousin John Peart is still at burnbottom. he hath a girl keepin his house and he is in good health and much the same man as he was when you see him last. and liven is tolerable fair in this Country considering the present state of things. (5)

- (1) Jacob never was a miner, but learnt the trade of shoemaker. Christopher and Jonathan were miners; probably all three brothers did the farmwork in their spare time.
- (2) I'm not certain who the change of master is. I imagine Jonathan is referring to a new agent at the mines.
- (3) The "little farm" at Hill top, Killhope had 15 acres of meadow and pasture and 12 stints on the fell. Two horses is a sure sign of prosperity at a time when many small farms could not even afford a single horse; clearly the brothers felt they had built up a good little farm.
- (4) Mary Milburn had died in 1855 and her widower married again - the new wife was obviously not someone the Graham brothers had anything to do with.
- (5) Although hard and poor lives of the leadminers of the 19th Century, Jonathan's perceptions in this letter that things weren't really too bad for the family at the time of writing are a useful antidote to temptations to be melodramatic about people's lives.

BEAM ENGINES IN THE NORTHERN PENNINE OREFIELD (2)

Colin C Short

Article (1) appeared in Newsletter No.11 in March 1988. It listed eight beam engines then known to have worked on Northern Pennine mines. Since that date only one more has come to light (although, truth to tell, I had seen a photograph of it years before, and had forgotten !). Completeness dictates that this engine should be credited, although little is known about it.

Engine 9

Healeyfield Mine

OS Ref NZ 069486

A photograph of the engine house of this mine (also known as Dean Howle) is in the Beamish collection (Negative number 3116). My estimate of the engine from the photograph is of a 30"-40" cylinder. No details have yet been discovered.

PROJECT OFFICER'S REPORT

Ian Forbes

The major "Friends" event over the last few months has been the "Great Drink" - a wonderful day which I know lingers in many memories and which is reported on elsewhere at greater length. All I want to do here is thank those very many people who contributed such a lot to it. You know who you are, and there are too many names to mention everybody, but my sincerest thanks to all of you. Perhaps I should give special thanks to Judith Watson who made sure all the staff and a number of "Friends" were suitably decked out in Victorian costume. The clogs were hell on my ankles.

Our Annual General Meeting this year was a slight departure from the previous well-established "Brains Trusts." Mr. Foster-Smith was indisposed and while we greatly missed his gentle wisdom his place at Sir Kingsley Dunham's side was superbly filled by Sir Kingsley's son - Ansell Dunham. As ever I'm sure I speak for the whole audience when I say once again that I felt privileged to be there. The debate was witty, erudite, civilised and of course enormously informative.

The high standards of "Friends" evenings was maintained by Alan Blackburn, whose talk in September examined a little known era - the growth of William Blackett's lead-mining empire during and after the Civil War. Alan is digging out some fascinating and important new information and we look forward to further reports from him in the future.

The Annual Quoits Championship was again organised by Peter Nattrass, who was unlucky to lose a tight final. Neville Bainbridge carried the winner's shield back to Teesdale again.

We have had several donations over the summer - from Ted Thompson a good supply of splendidly greasy-looking candles for the mineshop (originally from the DHSS offices at Longbenton!), from Harry James - a truly magnificent framed copy of an indenture and information on the foundation of Allenheads primitive methodist chapel, and from Tim Pettigrew an article on Sopwith's smaller geological models.

Pete and Jane Buchanan (with Danny and Releah) spent a considerable amount of time transplanting some lead tolerant flora to the car park area to try to establish suitable vegetation on the fresh soil of the car park landscaping, and Roy Curry spent a number of days on site talking to the public and working the smithy. Doug Tyerman and Bob also enjoyed themselves working in the smithy, as did Jem Cooper, Jem also spent several hard days helping Angus Oliver with drainage work round the mine excavation.

It is very refreshing at Killhope that Friends feel able to mingle and muck in with paid staff - long may this continue. When Friends turn up just as visitors but end up chatting and explaining to other visitors they help make Killhope the special place it is and the special place that many visitors clearly feel it to be.

Finally I know there are a number of Friends who are keen to help with the actual reconstruction at Killhope and I am very conscious that opportunities this year have been limited.

All I can do is apologise and ask you to bear with us - I'll try to find time to be more organised with this side of the work next season.

NOW THEN

During August a film crew from an independent TV production company called Third Eye spent a week filming at and around Killhope for a children's television programme called "Now Then."

This half-hour programme, to be transmitted on BBC1 at 4.30 on November 5th, stars four children from Wolsingham Comprehensive School. It was a very interesting project to be involved in, and I was most impressed with the patience and professionalism of all the crew. The kids themselves - Louisa - Jayne Tempest and Scott Wilson as "Time Kids" and Kathryn Eskeris and Stuart Noble as "Now Kids" - were absolutely super and great fun.

JACKIE AND THE LAST BUCKETS

As the restoration of Killhope wheel neared completion I thought it would be rather fun to finish the project off with a flourish, and bring the last few buckets to Killhope in style.

As the railhead when Park level Mill at Killhope was first built was at Stanhope and as WB Lead possessed a traction engine at that time I felt it legitimate to bend history just a little bit and carry the buckets from Stanhope to Killhope by traction engine.

This we did on 9th July, with Bob Arthur and his 7 h.p. Garrett engine ("Jackie") leaving Stanhope Dales Centre around 9.30 a.m. and trundling into Killhope at about 3 in the afternoon.

It was a magnificent journey (particularly on the hills), exciting a lot of interest on the way and a good deal of media coverage.

My thanks to all involved, especially the police who cheerfully controlled the traffic all day and to Bob and his gang who seemed to enjoy every minute of it.

FROSTERLEY WATERB. Chambers

The Auckland Chronicle for Friday 7th May 1869 reported that "an ancient watercourse at Frosterley had been interfered with by some mining operations." Old maps show that the mill race came down from the north (Wiserley) side of the village and not from the Wear as might be expected. There was also a water mill at Broadwood (Harehope area) so perhaps this would qualify as Frosterley? On the other hand the watercourse may not have been connected with a water mill at all.

Would any of our readers care to speculate where these mining operations might have been?

Why "The Great Drink?"Ian Forbes

On the 11th April 1850 Wentworth Blackett Beaumont, Esq. of Bywell Hall, Northumberland and Bretton Hall, Yorkshire reached the age of 21.

His three thousand employees at the WB Mines celebrated in the way we would have expected of the sober and hard-working lead-mining communities.

A contemporary report noted:-

It is only just to say of the entire body of miners, throughout the whole of the proceedings, that they appreciated the high character and generous disposition of the excellent young gentleman, whose majority they were met to celebrate and to whom no greater compliment could have been paid, than by the good order, respectable appearance, and highly creditable proceedings of this large number of workmen."

Nearly 40 years before this event, however, the celebration of the majority of WB Beaumont's father had been a rather different affair.

William Morley Egglestone, the Weardale historian, wrote up this occasion some sixty years after it took place but when it was still clearly vivid in the folk memory as the "Great Drink."

Egglestone's account is printed below, without further comment, except to say that when we came to choose a title for the "Friends" celebration of the return of the Killhope Wheel the words "The Great Drink" came inevitably to mind.

"Our oldest inhabitants earliest and probably most memorable event connected with the Weardale Lead Mines was the celebration of the majority of Thomas Wentworth Beaumont Esq., of Bywell Hall, Northumberland and of Bretton Hall, Yorkshire, which took place on the 5th November 1813, and was done in a style never before or since witnessed amongst these lead pregnant mountains of Weardale. The whole of the workmen had holiday and the women took advantage of the joyful times and repaired with their husbands to the Newhouse where the chief agent resided and the offices are situated, and the miners enjoyed themselves to their hearts content with ale which was dished out to them in abundance in the Intack, a field where the rejoicing took place.

A large number of half gallon and pint pots inscribed with "Thos. W. Beaumont, of age, 5th November 1813" were distributed amongst the miners to drink out of and were kept as souvenirs of the coming of age of their master, and out of these valued were long life and happiness were drunk with great enthusiasm to their young employer. A few of these pots are yet treasured up in Weardale.

Barrels of ale, on this occasion, were tapped which, it was said, had been brewed when the person whose majority they celebrated was born. Whether or not this was the case the ale was strong and the miners got merry on this memorable day, which was afterwards and is yet called the "Great Drink." Several anecdotes of this 5th of November are still related. One miner, after satisfying himself with ale, cast a longing eye towards the barrel in to which he quickly mounted astride and waving his arm in the air, he cried out "lass I'll never leave thee" (Another

workman who preferred a more palatable liquid than ale, drank brandy and wine until he was sick of it, and then he bawled out and enquired of the attendant servants if there was "nought better.") It was said that several barrels of ale were rolled away and hid in the fields to be drunk at a more convenient season, whilst women carried ale home in pots until they filled all the empty vessels in the house - kettles, churns, poss-tubs, etc. One woman was so frugal and precocious to lay up for a rainy day that she filled the frying pan, whilst another filling the chamber pot, which, in her hurry she forgot to wash out.

Another good wife who thought herself shrewd strapped several pots by their handles onto her apron strings and after filling them proceeded home, but on entering the garden gate, and on giving a merry chuckle the aprong strings broke, so the pots fell abd broke to pieces on the pavment, spilling the ale to the great vexation of the good wife.

Such was the "Great Drink" when the majority of T.W. Beaumont was celebrated. Barrels taken away of this drink are still in existence in Weardale and are used for domestic purposes."

Overleaf is a copy of one of the Lead Mining scenes of the North Pennines (1805-20) reviewed by Peter Lanham in Newsletter No. 12, which depicts the Great Drink. Friends who missed our version of that day should know that we managed to avoid the worst excesses shown here. We are again indebted to the Trustees of the Science Museum for their permission to reproduce this illustration.

The Killhope Staff

Visitors to the site this season will have noticed new faces on the staff team. They belong to Kath Brown, Shelagh Fawcett, Janet Melia, Tim Reed, and Ted Rowell. Welcome to you all!



Illustration by [illegible]

Something for someone to follow up.

An often neglected aspect of mining social history has been the employment of metal miners as strike breakers in the coalfields. The few items that have been published deal with west country miners imported to the northern coalfields. However it is known that Weardale lead miners were recruited for the Durham pits to break strikes, but nothing has been published about it, and it is not known if they succeeded or failed.

In the course of some research totally unconnected with lead mining I have unearthed some references to contemporary newspaper reports on the importation of lead miners during the unsuccessful 1831 north eastern colliers' strike against the yearly bond. At this period the importation would have been to the west Durham coalfield. One place to which reference is made is Waldrige near Chester-le-Street, where threats of military intervention had to be resorted to in order to disperse a mob of strikers and others who were wrecking the pithead while the lead miners were underground. There may be an interesting story here, but I'm unable to pursue it as I leave County Durham in August 1991, and my other research has to be completed !

Would anyone care to pursue the references ?

They are in

The Durham Chronicle

.... microfilm copies of which I understand are in the Durham Record Office, at County Hall, Durham. The dates quoted in 1831 are

28 May, 4 June, 11 June.

A second set of references has appeared, in the same newspaper to the following year (1832), thus

21 Jan, 10 March, 16 March, 25 May.

(This second set may need careful searching out, as I believe the newspaper was a weekly publication, but these dates are all on different days of the week !)

Is there anyone interested enough to search out these references ?

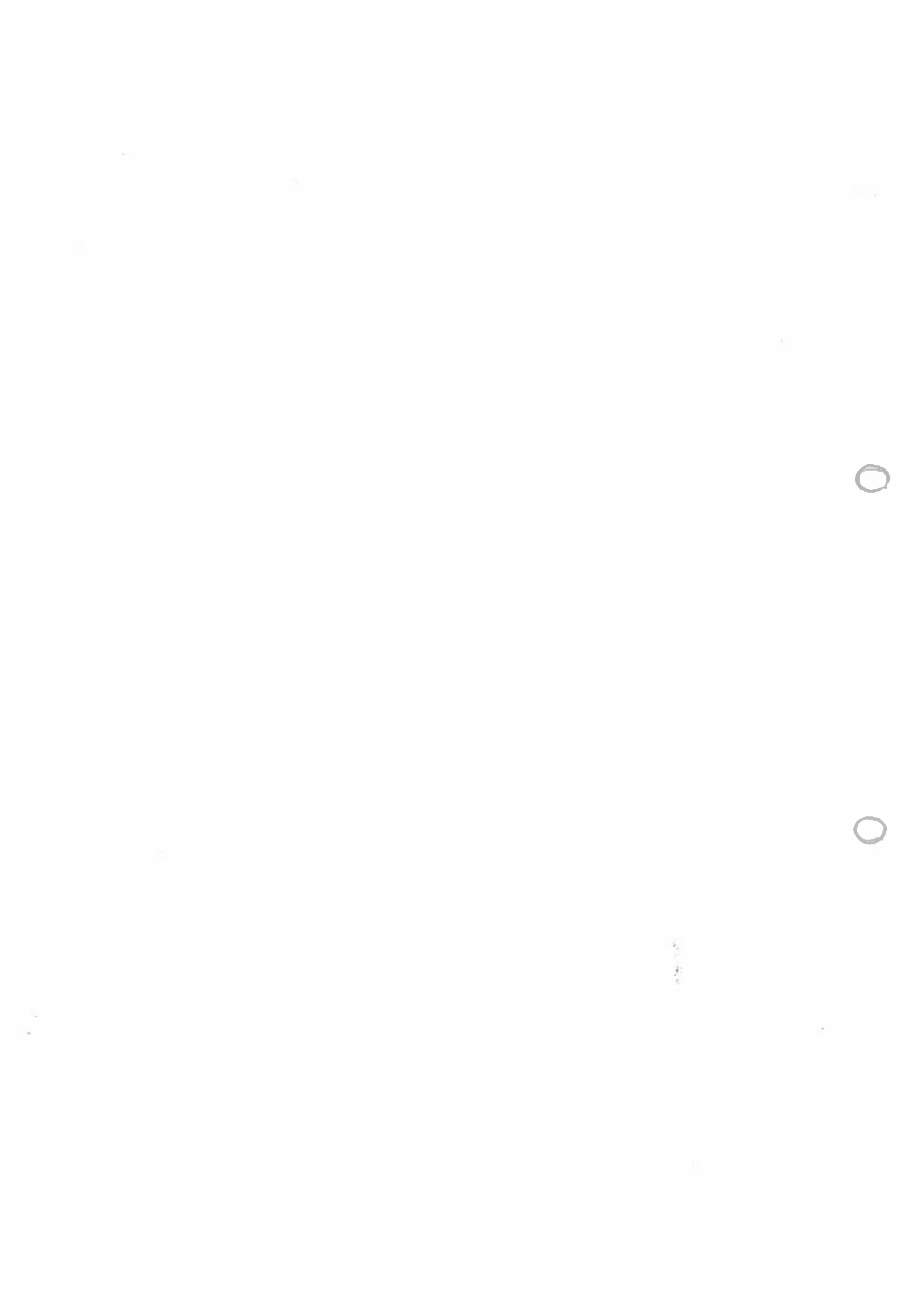
C C Short.

The History of the Trustees Savings Bank

This present building was erected in 1901, and last served as the Trustees Savings Bank. Before that it was the Middleton-in-Teesdale Branch of the Newcastle upon Tyne Savings Bank, a savings bank originally set up in Newcastle in 1818 which held the small savings of many individual depositors. Before 1921 the bank was run by the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt, and it was during their time that the plot of ground was bought from the Parish of Forest and Frith for £50. The builder was paid £135 14s 3d, the ironmonger £2 16s 0d; furniture cost £8 19s 0d, legal expenses were £7 8s 8d, and the architect's bill was £2 2s 0d. How this plot of ground came to be owned by the parish of Forest will be explained in a minute.

Before 1901 the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt rented a room in Middleton for the use of the bank, which appears to have been in the building then known as the Town Hall, now the Mechanics Institute. It cost them £3 5s 0d per year. In 1893 there were 457 individual depositors, as well as three friendly societies, and the Penny Savings Bank all of whom received interest on their accounts. The Penny Bank was earlier situated in the Reading Room in Masterman Place where newspapers and periodicals were also provided by the London Lead Mining Company at a charge. It was not however the Library of 4600 volumes which was situated in the schoolroom, built in 1861 on Alston Road. The Ready Money Shop, another financial help to the miners seems to have been run by the Lead Company and situated at their headquarters at Middleton House. Another library was in the Mechanics Institute, built and owned by the Duke of Cleveland. It held 1500 volumes.

It has recently been claimed that the Governor and Company's Teesdale Workman's Corn Association used the present 1901 building. This Corn Association was the forerunner of the Teesdale Workman's Industrial and Provident Society or Middleton Cooperative Stores as they were known until taken over by the North Eastern Co-op. In the centenary of Middleton Stores in 1942 a booklet was produced which included the Regulations of the Corn Association originally



Association originally founded in 1842, apparently earlier than the Rochdale Pioneers. There is a drawing purporting to be the original building. It is clear that this is not the present Co-op, nor that destroyed by fire in 1929 of which old photographs are available. It is also clear that this can not be the 1901 building which has been used as a bank for its entire existence. However it may be that the Corn Association was one of friendly societies that invested in the Savings Bank

Between 1838 and 1891 the bank was run by Barclay and Co. The Governor and Company along with various local landowners and important men gave money to administer its running expenses at its inception. The family of Barclay were originally eighteenth century bankers, who were also Quakers, like the owners of the Lead Company, and it is possible that this gave them some advantage over their competitors when it came to establishing a bank in Middleton. Barclays pulled out of this bank, though today the only bank in the town has their name.

However we have not traced the history of the plot of ground on which the 1901 building stands. In 1840 on this site there stood a school, apparently taking up the same space now containing the Trustee's Savings Bank. It was owned by the parish of Forest and leased by the Reverend John Henry Brown, rector of Middleton and may have been replaced by the school in the church hall, a little later. It was probably a National School of the Church of England. It is unlikely to have served the community of Forest, but rather that of Middleton. A little later it seems likely that the same building described as of two storeys was known as Forest Hearse House. The Victorians had elaborate black horse drawn vehicles which served to surround death with as much ceremony as possible. However from about 1850 Forest had its own church and burial ground in Forest itself, so that it seems highly unlikely that the hearse house was used by that parish, but by the inhabitants of Middleton. The upper storey of the building served as a dwelling.

We are still no nearer deriving how the land came to be owned by

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