

16. THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF HETTON

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Introduction

The industrial revolution transformed communities, and nowhere more significantly than in the village of Hetton-le-Hole. From an agricultural environment where workers and their families were servants of landowners and Prince Bishops, a new community was about to emerge.

The rural landscape, with open fields and gentle hills, succumbed to chimneys, machinery, and belching smoke.

This change occurred with the discovery and winning of coal beneath the magnesian limestone escarpment at the Lyons district of Hetton-le-Hole and the construction of the Stephenson railway. This could not have taken place without the formation of the Hetton Coal Company and its accompanying workforce.

The social structure of a community is shaped by its environment, housing, working conditions, religion, education and leisure pursuits. The mining community faced many challenges throughout history, particularly during the cholera outbreak and miners' strikes, but lessons learned along the way brought about better health and greater prosperity.

The Agricultural Settlement

Long, dusty country lanes, pleasant rural scenery on either side, dotted with an occasional farmstead, this was the landscape of Hetton-le-Hole before industrialisation. Around the old village, the area we know as Bog Row, was a cluster of cottages, and nearby the mansion house, Hetton Hall and the associated Hetton House.

In 1801 there were 253 residents: 129 males and 124 females in 53 houses (with five houses uninhabited) in the village of Hetton-le-Hole, whose lives revolved, principally, around their agricultural environment.

In this society the poor, industrious men and boys worked the land, toiling six days a week from dawn till dusk, while the women and girls were concerned, principally, with their domestic role, rearing children, cleaning the house, cooking and cleaning clothes, all without modern conveniences.

Pre-industrialisation the air was clean so, in general, the villagers were healthy, the children in particular, as they could enjoy some leisure pursuits outdoors, time permitting. With the town of Houghton-le-Spring a mere two miles away, Houghton Feast would be an attraction in October, an opportunity to meet neighbours and celebrate. In addition, the spiritual needs of the villagers were being met at the Parish Church of St. Michael, Houghton-le-Spring. However, it would appear the Wesleyan Methodists were establishing themselves in the area and a society was being formed.

These were days prior to formal education as we now know it today, when the common people were invariably illiterate. Unofficial schools, such as Sunday schools, or official ones, state schools, did not exist. Whatever knowledge was obtained would be gained during daily tasks. Boys would learn about the land and girls how to run a home.

Although they endured long, arduous days, at least the fields in which their cattle grazed were open. There would be little prospect of change for these poorly-housed, sparsely-clad, frugally-fed, inhabitants.

In the next decade, it was the landowner who brought about change to this environment with open fields being divided into holdings, and enclosed. The villagers were largely at the mercy of their landowning Masters. Wool was their livelihood but sheep could no longer graze on what was common land; neither could villagers gather firewood in Hetton Park wood.

Since the villagers had either lost, or were unable to read the indentures relating to their holdings, they found themselves at the mercy of the landowners. In consequence, many had no choice but to seek alternative employment or move elsewhere.

At this time there were three townships forming the south-east part of the ancient parish of Houghton-le-Spring, namely Hetton, Great Eppleton and Little Eppleton (until 1847 when Hetton was granted parochial status). Each township was dominated by one major landowner: the Honourable Maria Bowes-Barrington who succeeded John Lyons, owned 955 acres in Hetton, Francis Mascall 562 acres at Great Eppleton and G. T. Fox and Mary Croston 335 acres at Little Eppleton.

The common fields were, for the most part enclosed, and the arable land dominated by two grain crops, wheat and oats, with the cultivation of turnip and other root crops very small scale. Although frequent references were made to dairy cattle at Hetton, the evidence is slight.

By 1811 the local population had increased to 322 residents: 164 males and 158 females in 56 houses, none uninhabited. The villagers were still largely employed in agricultural and craft occupations.

Over the next twenty years in the three townships, agriculture continued, with the commonest rotation system, the three course system, wheat – oats – fallow, being practised. There was also, at Little Eppleton deciduous or mixed blocks of woodland which provided shelter for foxes or game-birds, the landowner retaining ownership of all the fox coverts and spinneys.

By 1821, however, a transformation was taking place with the formation of the Hetton Coal Company, but more specifically, with the sinking of the Hetton (Lyons) Colliery and the construction of the waggonway. A new harvest was waiting to be reaped, far from the soft green fields and the light of the warm sun. A new community was being 'built on coal'.

The Creation of the Colliery Settlement at Hetton-le-Hole

Although the existence of coal beneath the magnesian limestone plateau had been suspected for many years, it was in Hetton-le-Hole, at Hetton Lyons, that the first successful sinking through the limestone into the concealed coalfield occurred between 1820 and 1822.

Arthur Mowbray, former banker and colliery manager to the late Sir Henry Vane Tempest, was responsible for recruiting shareholders and the subsequent formation of the Hetton Coal Company in 1819. Through the combined efforts of the landowners and the Hetton Coal Company, a process of change was initiated turning Hetton into an industrial environment. The opening of the colliery, which was owned and worked by the Hetton Coal Company, was directly responsible for the rapid population growth in the 1820s.

Both Hetton (Lyons) Colliery, and later Eppleton Colliery, were sunk on land which had been added to the Lyon's estate. To achieve this was by no means straight forward due to stipulations made by the various landowners. The collieries themselves, the waggonway, the pit heaps and pitmen's houses were frequently positioned to minimise the visual impact of the industry on the mansions of the estate owners.

Where once there had been an agricultural settlement, a transformation was taking place to accommodate this new industry. A new community was being established and with an increasing workforce new housing, daily provisions and equipment had to be provided.

It is difficult to comprehend the amount of manpower and equipment involved in the sinking of the pit, the building of the waggonway and the creation of the colliery settlement. The recruitment of the workforce was probably supplied by an existing labour force: pitmen moving in from short distances. Pitmen were a highly mobile group and more likely to change their place of residence than their occupation.

Long distance migrants were the exception, and not the rule. Mining was an exclusive occupation, limited to those with the relevant skills. It is well known that sinkers, needed from the outset to sink mines, originated, principally, from Cornwall where they were employed in tin mines. However, a rather colourful character called John Gully, one-time prize-fighter and later colliery owner, who originated from Wick, Gloucestershire, is known to have been involved in the sinking of the Hetton collieries.

The Creation of the Colliery Settlement at Eppleton

The district parish of Eppleton or Hetton Downs Parish was formed from Hetton-le-Hole on July 24th 1883, and includes part of the township of Great Eppleton and that part of Hetton-le-Hole known as the Downs. It comprises an area of 512 acres, with a population of 5,000 in 1896.

The village of Hetton Downs, which is practically part of Hetton-le-Hole, is in the northern part of the township and there is evidence that the acquisitions of this land dates from the earliest years of the Company's mining operations. There is reference to the Hetton Coal Company's 28 acre estate at Hetton Downs in 1823, one year after the first coal was drawn, and by 1825 a 161 acre block of land at Hetton Downs. It was on this estate that the Company rapidly built rows and courts of pitmen's cottages; as early as 1827, 110 houses had been constructed.

The settlement pattern at Hetton Downs is in complete contrast to the influence of plot shape on settlement form. The houses were arranged in two squares, the High and Low Downs. Even by 1829 only about nine acres had been used for housing, gardens and roads; the remainder being divided into two fields of nine and ten acres. In this part of the township there had been no necessity to maximise use of the available space by cramming rows of houses together. The two squares each had a central open space, a communal bake oven was located in one of them.

By 1856 further housing developed, when the former rural track which linked Hetton village to the farms of the Hetton Downs estate was flanked by two rows of cottages on either side of Downs Lane, aligned precisely along its irregular course. Then Byer and Dene Streets appeared.

The houses were similar to those built elsewhere by the Hetton Coal Company.

Housing

The Hetton Coal Company not only owned and managed the Hetton (Lyons) Colliery, it also provided housing for the workforce, free of charge; the house came with the job.

Some of the earliest industrial housing in Hetton was built at Bog Row on the western side of the old village. These short rows of cottages were sited on an irregular sloping plot close to Hetton Burn, probably for workers attracted to the area by the first sinkings and construction of the railway.

Close to the new settlement was the manor house, Hetton Hall, described as 'standing low to the west of the village, surrounded by soft wooded grounds, and almost on the edge of a lake formed by the Hetton Burn'. Part of the park consisted of unspoilt woodland, with sylvan walks and paths.

Nowadays, the site of the former mansion is occupied by Eppleton Colliery Football field, and the town's park Barnard Park.

In the centre of Hetton, east from Front Street, five parallel terraces were built, following the alignment of the field shape. These streets we can identify as Richard Street, John Street, Pemberton Street, Union Street and Barnes Street.

In addition, 107 houses were built for 145 families near the Hetton (Lyons) Colliery. Private, more spacious houses, were occupied by colliery officials and key workmen at Lyons Cottages, in their own 'Quality Row', reflecting the status of those working above ground.

These houses were built from local limestone, quarried from the hills in nearby Eppleton or Moorsley. Although not the best quality material, being porous, it was both cheap and readily available.

By 1821 the population of Hetton-le-Hole had increased to 994 residents: 581 males and 413 females in 109 houses, none uninhabited.

Clearly, workers were attracted by the employment opportunities; a new area, a new venture. The higher number of males probably represented young single men seeking fresh opportunities in this developing community, but also married men preceding their families. It is not surprising that such a labour-intensive industry as mining needed housing to attract the workforce and so enhance the economic activity of the mine. However, free housing served to emphasise that freedom of choice was limited.

It may be that it was to the advantage of the Hetton Coal Company to provide these purpose-built cottages in uniform rows so as to regulate pitmen's lives. On a more practical level, it also facilitated the job of the 'knocker-up' who woke the workmen for their first shift. In addition, and not to the advantage of the miners, during the 1831 – 1832 strike when miners were in defiance of the annual bond, their yearly contract, the eviction from their homes by special constabulary organised by the Coal Company was made easier.

It would seem that the Hetton Coal Company thought they knew what was best for their workforce which, of course, also served their own economic and political needs.

There appears to have been a degree of residential segregation whereby long-distant immigrants clustered together, as in Easington Lane, where there was a colony of Irish who tended not to work underground. Those in craft occupations tended to live in houses either in the old village or along the main road from Hetton to Easington Lane where two rows of cottages lined the unmade road for half a mile. Hetton Downs was almost exclusively occupied by families headed by coal miners. Brewery employees clustered together at Barnes Street.

The magnitude and speed of change was truly amazing. The transition from a rural to a mining settlement from the 1820s was dramatic but the new environment created was not static. Now, instead of fields with grazing cattle, there were chimney stacks, 'puffing billies' clattering waggons, and a new pulse of life, enterprise and adventure marking the winning of coals from the deep limestone beds.

Miraculously, by November 18th 1822, the Hetton (Lyons) Colliery was operating, and the first shipment of coal had been transported to the Hetton Staithes on the River Wear by the new Stephenson railway. On the high street, shops were opening to cater for the growing community and with the growing housing settlement wives and families were arriving to join their men-folk.

Kelly's directory 1828 gave the following details of commercial dealers in Hetton and Hetton Moor:-

- Bakers and Flour Dealers: one at Hetton
- Butchers: five at Hetton
- Shopkeepers and General Dealers in Sundries: nine at Hetton
- Grocers and Drapers: five at Hetton (four at Hetton Moor)
- Druggists and Grocers: two at Hetton (one at Hetton Moor)
- Boot and Shoemakers: five at Hetton
- Milliners and Dressmakers: one at Hetton

Blacksmiths: two at Hetton (two at Hetton Moor)
Cartwrights and Joiners: two at Hetton (one at Hetton Moor)
Braziers and Tinsplate Workers: one at Hetton
Cabinet Makers and Joiners: one at Hetton
Joiners and Builders: one at Hetton
Brewers and Maltsters: one at Hetton

Inns, Taverns and Public Houses: 16 in Hetton (five at Hetton Moor)

The table above indicates there were, in total, 44 commercial dealers and 21 public houses. The Hetton traders were located mainly on Front Street and Richard Street. Easington Lane, Lyons and Hetton were not separate at that time and another source documented no fewer than 85 shops and 20 public houses in the whole parish in 1828.

By 1831 Hetton had a population of not less than 5,887 and was rapidly becoming the centre of the coal trade. The Hetton (Lyons) Colliery had been operating nine years and there was unrest in the mining community over binding, i.e the miner's bond, in April 1831. However, no one was aware that cholera morbus was to make its British appearance in Sunderland from Asia in late October. By the end of November its presence could no longer be denied and in early December Houghton-le-Spring, Hetton-le-Hole, North Shields and Lemington were all affected.

Colliery Houses

The houses which the Hetton Coal Company provided for their employees and families were by no means spacious. The initial two-roomed dwelling or cottage had to accommodate an average household of 8.66 persons, and sometimes more than one family, which obviously meant a lack of privacy. These two rooms varied in size, with a ladder leading to the loft. The front door led straight into the living room where adults in the household slept. The kitchen area, with a pantry, was located to the rear. Children slept in the loft; sometimes this was partitioned to accommodate aged grandparents. The loft was draughty and cold in winter and the pan-tiled roof retained heat in summer, making conditions within oppressive. Although a slight improvement on the previous agricultural dwellings, there was little comfort in these cottages since there was no running water, no facility for disposing of household rubbish, no toilet and no means of sewage disposal. Initially, water was drawn from a well, spring or stream, around the Bog Row area. Eventually, it was piped to stand-pipes and drawn from a communal tap in the street. In later years water was led into adjoining properties.

The 'midden', where household rubbish could be disposed of, was shared by several households. It was not uncommon for human waste to be tipped onto these, so contributing to diseases such as dysentery, typhus and other infections. The private coal house for storing coal and a 'privy' or 'netty' were located opposite each house or within an adjoining garden. Privy closets as toilet facilities were often shared.

There was, of course, no lighting or heating, coal being the only fuel. Cooking facilities were either absent or small. However, there were two communal bake ovens strategically placed at the Square near the old village and at the Downs. Although inconvenient, they provided a focal point for women to exchange gossip as they baked.

The 1841 Census for Hetton-le-Hole

Since the 1831 census was merely a 'head count' of the population, it was not until 1841 that the population structure became clearer.

By 1841 the population had dropped to 4,158 residents, a reduction of 1,729, and 228 houses were uninhabited. The Census enumerator accounted for this reduction, claiming it to be the result of colliery expansion nearby. He said it "arises from several new collieries having been opened in the surrounding townships, which has caused a large proportion of the mining population to move thither the coal-mines, newly opening in the townships of Easington, Haswell and Shotton, have increased the population in those townships."

It is possible some pitmen were attracted to new pits with the expiry of their annual bond, as fresh reserves elsewhere probably meant better prospects. However, on a more serious note, the most likely reason for this migration would not be colliery expansion but the explosion at the nearby Eppleton Colliery on January 28th 1836 when twenty men and boys lost their lives.

The total population of the township of Hetton-le-Hole, excluding the old village around Bog Row and Bleach Green, was 1,740 residents: 888 males and 852 females in 380 houses. However, these figures include what is now known as the (Hetton) Downs' area which began to expand during the 1830s when new houses were built in Downs Lane and High and Low Downs.

The breakdown of occupations and professions cannot be accurate since it is sometimes unclear if a worker is actually employed in the mines or elsewhere, e.g. as a blacksmith.

The following must, therefore, be classed as a guesstimate:-

It is documented that there were 228 males, more than 50% of the workforce, who may be employed in mining or in a mine-related industry, more than likely at the Hetton (Lyons) and Eppleton collieries (excluding apprentices). After slightly less than 20 years, there were now established jobs for the majority of men in the area.

From the list of occupations, the next largest groups were labourers (45) and agricultural labourers (33).

Most miners' wives, and often the oldest girls in the household, would be occupied full-time at home with household duties closely associated with the breadwinner(s) of the family. However, it is interesting to note that in this Census the ratio of males to females aged 10 – 19 years was 228 boys to 160 girls, indicating that some young women may have sought employment outside the home. This can also be identified in Easington Lane in 1841. There were 52 women identified as 'independent means', who were generally over 50 years of age (ages were rounded up or rounded down in the 1841 Census). These women may have been the head of the household with lodgers as boarders or, alternatively, they may have been living with a relative. Sadly, there were 18 paupers (those entitled to parish relief) living in the area.

From the list of occupations, 22 women were female servants, six were dripping makers and one a bast bender. Dripping makers were identified, indicating there was some facility in the area for making this product. The more unusual occupation, bast bender, appears to have a connection with the brewing industry. Bast is a condition of grain, similar to that found in brewing.

Out of a total of 500 women between the ages of 14 and 75, excluding paupers and those of Independent means, there were only 45 women in employment, which substantiates the belief that

most women were fully occupied at home. If any woman needed to augment the family income, by taking in laundry for example, this was unlikely to be disclosed.

It is well known that Victorian families were large, with accompanying overcrowding. From the 1841 Census, however, there were only three families with ten persons per household, two families with nine per household, 16 households with eight persons, 32 households with seven, 51 households with six, and 55 households with five persons; 14 residents were living alone, most probably in one room.

Remarkably in 1841, when John Roby Leifchild visited the Hetton Collieries to report on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Collieries . . . he observed that “The whole of the district is much intersected with railroads. The country is in no way disfigured by the collieries. The tall columnar chimneys meet the eye and often throw out columns of smoke, and the steam engines send up clouds of white steam . . . the glittering roofs and neat walls of the colliery villages are always a pleasing sight. The fields are divided by hedgerows, and adorned with trees.”

Housing Development

As production increased at the collieries from the mid-1840s, there was once again an in-migration of miners, facilitated by the passenger rail system. George Hudson had built the Newcastle to Durham railway which was operating by 1845.

By 1851 the population had risen to 5,664 and an additional 208 houses were built to accommodate the growing need. The Hetton Coal Company depended on both a self-sustaining and the wider regional labour force for recruitment. Housing conditions did not improve until the 1850s when the cottages were enlarged by fitting dormer windows in the roof. The outer walls were rendered with cement to make them water-tight, as did the widespread sealing of the pantile roofs. Some cottages, such as Francis Street built in 1851, were more spacious, and had kitchen ranges for cooking, thus dispensing with the need for communal baking. Although these dwellings did have piped water, it was only one stand-pipe shared by every six houses.

Each property was provided with a back yard where a variety of small animals such as rabbits, pigeons and pigs were kept, along with the rain-water barrel which was placed against the wall to capture water for washing purposes. The coal owners sometimes also provided an adjoining garden or alternatively an allotment garden for the pitmen and their families to grow vegetables for domestic consumption.

Building went on continuously throughout the 1860s and followed the two up, two down, plan. Most streets were built in parallel rows and, although without character, they were adequate, serviceable and cheap. The population by 1861 had increased further to 6,419 and in 1871 to 7,935 residents. This significant increase in population, most probably resulting in overcrowding and poor hygiene, was a cause for concern.

The local Medical Officer of Health reported in 1876 that “most of the drains were made of ‘rubble’, and the sinks did not have stench-traps. Many colliery rows were drained with open channels in front of the doors. Moreover, as there was no piped water supply to most dwellings, water was supplied by a carrier from the old village. Having to be stored in stone jars in each house, it could easily become contaminated. At that time there was little technical knowledge on how to construct drainage or water supply but, more importantly, it was not recognised what adverse effects this would have on the health of the inhabitants.

By 1881 the population was 10,945, with residents originating from far and wide.

By 1890 more than a thousand men were employed at the Hetton (Lyons) Colliery and over 1,000 tons of coal was being mined daily. At the same time, improvements in housing were taking place since clay produced in the collieries encouraged the building of a brick works, and the bricks being used for colliery houses as well as other buildings, e.g. at the shaft head. The newer two-storey houses which were being built had an upstairs bedroom, and outside toilets replaced the communal spoil heaps.

This move towards a more private life gave reflected concerns over public and moral health. Health officers were beginning to recognise that outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid were transmitted by communal living. The Temperance Movement, which aimed to build up the home as the centre of life, was present in Hetton. And, possibly there were fears by the Coal Company that without better housing pitmen would move to collieries offering comparatively higher standards of living.

By 1891 the local population was 12,726.

Pitmen at work

The opening of the Hetton (Lyons) Colliery in 1822 initiated a new way of life for pitmen, a life spent underground, toiling to extract coal, the 'black gold', for their Masters, the Hetton Coal Company.

Pitmen were a unique breed, who could never be recruited from the adult population. Their stock could only be maintained by breeding. Skills were handed down from father to son. A true-bred pitman considered himself to be a man trained in his craft, a skilled man, whose practices were recognised as awesome and peculiar. His craft gave him status both underground and in the community, and he earned this status through the hardships he endured from working down the pit. If the name pitman is mentioned then 'hewer' is immediately brought to mind. This was his goal.

However, nothing or no one could have prepared him for his first day underground working as a trapper boy, some lads starting as young as five or six. He was to endure conditions which today would be classed as child abuse. This can be no better illustrated than by the following extract from the Commission's Report on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Collieries . . .

Thomas Smithson

'Aged 11 in June. Is a trapper, and gets 10d a day. Caller calls him at half past two o'clock a.m. He gets up at three, and starts work down the pit at four o'clock. Before he goes down he gets his breakfast of tea and bread, as much as he wants. Takes down a bait of bread, nought else, with him in a bag; eats it perhaps at 11 o'clock and at two o'clock. Gets no more to eat till he gets home at five o'clock, and there he gets meat and tatoes. Soon after, he washes himself, and goes to bed at six or seven o'clock.

The caller calls him again at half past two, and his mother comes to his bedside to wake him. He generally feels sore tired when he comes home. Feels sleepy down the pit, and often sick, sometimes so as to bring up his meat from his stomach; this may be whiles three times in a week, whiles about two o'clock in the day. Cannot eat any more food then. Never has the doctor, and is never laid off work. His back, legs, arms and head whiles work (ache). May be three or four times in a week; and he whiles feels weak in those parts. Cannot stand long when he comes up the pit. The putters and drivers sometimes rub (beat) him with their hands, and whiles with a stick or whip, whichever they may have. The drivers strike him most, they struck him four times last week, and

made some blood come from him two or three times by hitting him on the nose with their hands; but they mostly hit him about the back.



19th Century trapper boy

Always keeps the same door, and has worked always in Elemore Pit, about four years. He wanted to go to the pit at first to see what it was like; but he did not like it very long. Would now like to work better at bank in carrying picks, or anything like that. Can read the spelling book; cannot write; sometimes goes to night school when he comes up the pit; but feels very sleepy; and whiles falls asleep there; always goes to Sunday school. His father is dead. Has two brothers, one bigger than himself, who drives down the pit.'

These poor little mites would often be carried into the pit on their father's or older brother's shoulders, and sit in a chimney recess, in the dark, all alone. Their sole responsibility was to open the trapdoors for the waggons and then close them to maintain the ventilation in the pit. Keeping awake was very difficult with no one to talk to. They had to listen for the waggons, so to keep awake, they sometimes sang songs learned at Sunday school. They did not enjoy much fresh air day in, day out, neither did they experience the pleasures of school like children today. They would not appreciate the huge responsibility heaped upon their young shoulders, or the implications if they failed to do their job properly, because explosions occurred when trapdoors were left open. And all this for 10d a day!

The explosion which occurred at the Downs Pit on January 28th 1836, when 20 men and boys lost their lives, was 'caused by the negligence or inattention of a boy who had the charge of a trap door, and whose duty was to keep it shut as much as possible, in order that the part of the pit where the men were working might be purified by a current of air.'

Child labour was considered a normal feature of the mining industry and although small boys worked underground, girls and women were never employed underground in the Durham and Northumberland coalfields. So from a very early age pitmen had life-threatening jobs, and lessons which their employers should have learned they struggled to address.

The Putter

As the trapper grew he went on to work as a putter who pushed or dragged the coal from the workings. Coal was originally conveyed in corves, or baskets, to be replaced by waggons, or trams. A putter's average earnings was 20s. per week. A helper-up was sometimes required when loads were too heavy for one boy to handle alone.

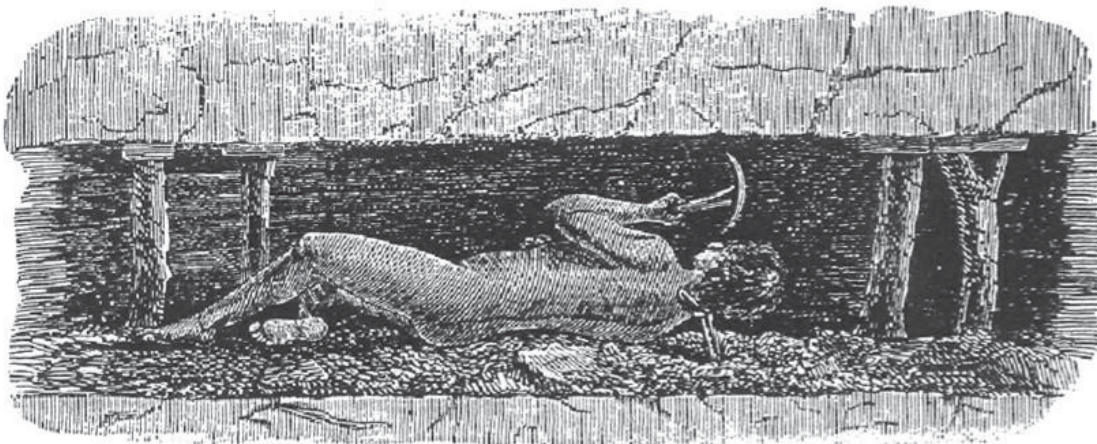
The Rolley-Driver

Two or three tubs of coal were usually loaded onto rolleys or waggons by the drivers, and taken along the road to the shaft. Rolleyways were sometimes two miles long and this is when drivers met with the trapper boy as they passed through from one area of the pit to another. If rolleyways or roads were of sufficient height ponies were used to transport coals. The driver then led the pony along the rolley way to the onsetter, who transferred the coals to the cage, and from there they were raised to bank. A rolley-driver's average earnings was 7s. per week.

The Hewer

This was the pitman's ultimate goal. In his prime, at the age of 21, he was ready for hewing, the most peculiar and difficult job. He was brought up to it through the successive grades of trapping, teaming and putting. It was the top most promotion. His was the first shift of the day, at two or three in the morning, working for about eight hours. He was paid for the amount of clear coals sent up. As long as the hewer was in the pit, the rest of the workforce would also be there.

The hewer's was the most demanding of jobs: 'a begrimed man, kneeling, sitting, stooping, sometimes lying and hammering at the black wall of coal before him, with a short, sharp heavy pick. The pick and the spade are here the hewer's only weapons; and the intensity of his toil is proportioned to the thickness of the coal and the shallowness of the seam. The best hewers are those who manage, by ingenious shifts of posture, and great endurance, to bring the coal rapidly and freely down . . . (Anon.)'



Picture above is taken from the Appendix to the First Report of The Royal Commission on Employment of Children in Mines and Manufactories 1842

His stature was described as 'diminutive, his figure disproportionate and misshapen, his chest protruding, his arms long and oddly suspended. His countenance not less striking than his figure, his cheeks being generally hollow, his brow overhanging, his cheekbones high, his forehead low and retreating; nor is his appearance healthful; his habit is tainted with scrofula (glandular swellings).' His physical appearance was, most likely, largely due to the years worked underground. His pit dress was made entirely of flannel, with a cloth cap, long stockings and strong boots. The intensity of the hewer's toil was great and his confined position made it worse; he was generally bathed in perspiration. Gunpowder was sometimes used to help hewing, by tearing down or loosening the coal. His equipment - picks, gunpowder and candles - he paid for himself. The blacksmith maintained these picks, at the hewer's expense. A hewer's average earnings were 23s. per week.

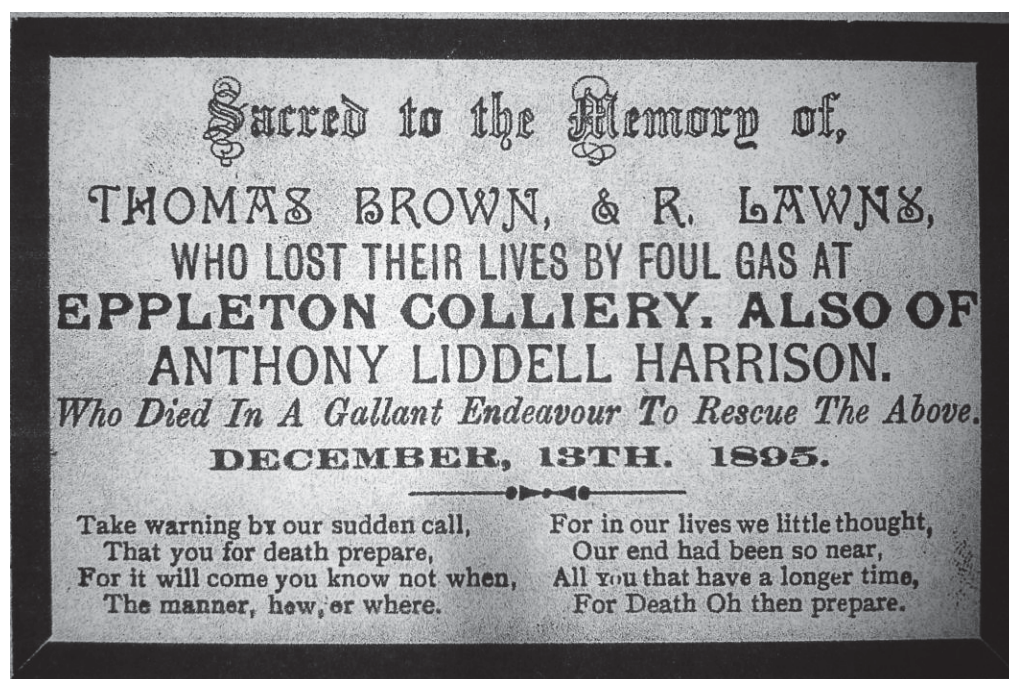
Pitmen were well aware of their employers, the Hetton Coal Company, as they signed an annual bond, binding them to the pit for a year. It was said that a prominent feature in a pitman's character was jealousy of his superiors, and deep-rooted suspicion of his employers. The Company decided the

conditions and hours of work, and the workers were paid according to the coal produced; pay-day was every other (Baff) Friday and initially took place in the pub.

Although pitmen worked without questioning their conditions of employment for many years, the first major disputes over pay and conditions took place in 1831 and 1832, with strikes ending in workers being evicted from their homes. The impact on the whole family unit was phenomenal. No roof over their heads, no money to feed their families.

This was when the community had to pull together to help each other, relying upon those who could support them not only during strikes but also when men were unable to work due to accident or illness. There was no sick pay or compensation for many years, until the Miner's Union was formed by Tommy Hepburn acting on the pitmen's behalf. Many lives were lost to the pit and, left without a breadwinner, a widow would also lose her home if she had no sons at the pit to support the family.

The hewer's job was not only the most strenuous, skilled job in the pit it was also one of the most dangerous as he worked close to the props which held up the coal seams. He had to consider not only his own safety but also that of his workmates, his 'marras'. They relied upon each other and they had a special bond both inside and outside the pit. Pitmen were sometimes known to endanger or sacrifice their own lives for their marras. This was the case on December 13th 1895 when Anthony Liddell Harrison, a hewer, was overcome by foul gas attempting to rescue his deputy and marra in the Caroline pit, Eppleton. It was an unfortunate incident in as much as these two men should not have been in the area where they died. Anthony was a married man with two small children.



Although obviously not to be compared with the friendship between pitmen, friendships between the pony drivers and their ponies were established over the many years they worked together. Ponies, usually Shetland ponies, once underground, remained there until their life's work ended. They shared their masters' bait (packed lunch) and, if well-treated, served their masters well.

Bait down the pit varied from bread alone, bread and dripping, bread and cheese, and in later years bread and jam or sugar and bread, washed down with a can of cold coffee or tea. Water was also available. Heavy meals were not suitable for the long hours and oppressive conditions.

Coal dust in the damp conditions gave many workers boils and carbuncles. The salaried surgeon for the collieries acknowledged that a pitman's growth was impeded by his work. The long hours in the pit and the impurities in the air created chest problems. The occupational hazards were numerous and accidents occurred frequently. Health and Safety eventually came to play a significant part when Inspectors were appointed to investigate the cause of accidents and, more importantly, how to prevent them. It also became compulsory for there to be two shafts in each pit, one for clean air and one for foul. Two shafts also meant two means of escape if an incident occurred.

At the end of each shift the workforce left the pit black as coal. There was no running water, let alone Pit-Head baths. The pit was never idle, so as one shift 'loused' the other went down.

Pitmen at Leisure

Life underground not only shaped pitmen's characters, it impacted on their leisure pursuits outside of the pit too. What pitmen did in their spare time was a reflection of their culture and contributed to their sense of community. These men were raised in family traditions where sons followed fathers into the pit, and daughters, even though many had left home to work in domestic service, returned home to marry a bonnie pit lad.

The Bonny Pit Laddie

*The bonny pit laddie, the canny pit laddie,
The bonny pit laddie for me, O!
He sits in his hole as black as a coal,
And brings the white siller to me, O!*

*The bonnie pit laddie, the cannie pit laddie,
The bonny pit laddie for me, O!
He sits on his cracket and hews in his jacket,
And brings the white siller to me, O!*

It was commented, somewhat romantically, that 'Pitmen love the ladies and regard the pits and their wives as the two main sources of comfort and well-being. So, after a strenuous shift in the pit, they came home, washed, and sat down to a substantial meal of vegetable soup, suet pudding or meat and potatoes. How they spent their time thereafter would depend, primarily, upon what needed immediate attention. A garden or allotment needed regular maintenance: growing vegetables, potatoes and leeks in particular, cultivating flowers, keeping hens, rabbits, pigeons and pigs. An allotment was also a meeting place for marras, sharing a common interest, enjoying 'the crack' (chat) but, at the same time, providing for the family. Leek, vegetable and flower shows were held in Working Men's Clubs where men competed for 'First Prize'. This involved serious nurturing over the years, with secret formulas 'top secret'. Pigeon fancying has continued through the generations, in spite of pit closures.

Many leisure pursuits involved gambling: cards, pitch and toss, quoits; bowls in the high road, with an immense stone ball hurtling along at a mighty speed. Racing of all kinds: rabbit coursing, pigeon racing, greyhound and whippet racing (a clause was included in the annual bond forbidding the keeping of these animals), 'cuddy' (donkey) and horse racing. Other cruel pastimes were bull-baiting, dog fighting and cock fighting. A whole month's earnings could be staked on a cock, dog or favourite bowler.

Popular sports always included cricket and football right from the early days, and local teams produced many professional players. Cycling, with a local club, is a hobby also still enjoyed today.



The Leek Show at Eppleton All Saints Church Hall in the 1920s

What better way to unwind after a hard shift, and what better way to escape the cramped surroundings at home, than enjoying the warmth and comfort of a public house. Men would gather for a drink and a bit 'crack', recalling the events of the day and singing pit songs such as 'the Collier's Rant', a typical mining folk song. No doubt moments of bravery were elaborated upon on these occasions, which not only reinforced their image of manliness but also provided role models for the young pit lads.

As me and me marrow was gangin to wark,
We met with the Deel, it was i' the dark;
I up wi' my pick, it was i' the neet,
I knock'd for his horns, likewise his club feet.

Chorus:

Follow the horses, Johnny my laddy!
Follow them through, my cannie lad, O!
Follow the horses, Johnny my laddy!
O lad lye away, canny lad, O!

As me and my marrow was putten the tram,
The lowe it went out, and my marrow gat wrang;
How ye wad ha' laugh'd had ye seen the fine gam,
The deel got my marrow, but I gat the tram.

Oh! marrow, Oh! marrow, Oh! what dost thou think,
I've broken my bottle, and spilt all my drink;
I've lost all my shin splints amang the great stanes;
Draw me to the shaft, lad; it's time to gan hame.

Oh! marrow, Oh! marrow, where has te been?
Drivin the shaft fra' the law seam;
Driven the shaft fra' the law seam;
Had up the lowe, lad; deel stop up thy een.

There is my horse, and there is my tram;
Twee horns full o' grease, will mak her te gan;
There is my hoggars, likewise my half shoon,
And smash my pit sark, for my putten's a' done.

The text that was first published in the Northumbrian Garland of 1793. The text and tune together were published in the Bishopprick Garland, Editor J Ritson in 1834. Roy Palmer provides these translations of the dialect:

Marrow: Workmate

Deel: Devil

Putten the tram: Pushing the coal truck

Lowe: Light

Gam: Game

Law: Low

Had Up: Hold up

Hoggars: Stockings with the feet cut off, used as gaiters

Sark: Shirt

It is not surprising that ale houses were popular since pitmen's wages were paid there originally.

Alas, it is said that some selfish breadwinners would spend too much of their earnings in the pub before returning home. However, although pubs and working men's clubs have been closely associated with pitmen, as a general observation, pitmen were deemed temperate, drunkenness being the exception.

Frequenting ale houses was not approved of by the Hetton Coal Company or members of the local churches and chapels. However, in spite of many pitmen enjoying 'demoralising amusements', from early mining days there were always some seeking spiritual enlightenment. The Hetton pitmen must have sought spiritual improvement as they initiated both the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Chapels and came straight from the pit to help with their building. On Sundays pitmen were most respectably clad, 'in full suit of black, with perhaps, a white neckcloth, and having on the whole a semi-parsonic air' which was attributed to the spread of Methodism. However, this was not always the case since, what was termed the pitman's holiday costume was a very gay and remarkable one. 'The young pitman would wear his hair at the temples in curls, turning the hair round a piece of lead, enclosed in paper. These leads were only taken out at the end of the week, when the head was to be washed. Tails formed of the longest hair tied up with ribbons, and differing in length and thickness according to the fancy of the wearer, were at that period common to pitmen of all ages. The gay pitman would sport a very showy waistcoat, having striking flowery figures, and hence called his *posy vest*. This would be displayed conspicuously. His nether man was clothed in breeches, either of velveteen or plush, which were fastened at the knees with different-coloured ribbons, hanging down or fluttering about in the wind. Stockings with *clocks*, were the last thing towards the ground of peculiar appearance, and these were shod with stout shoes or laced boots. The gay man's head was covered with a round hat (like those odious things now in vogue), which, when the wearer was desirous of being very gaudy, also had its flowing ribbons. Thus arrayed, he would flaunt about, and boast himself of his physical powers, which he was ready to prove in reply to any kind of challenge; and on pay-day, which happened once a fortnight, he was seldom content unless he had befooled himself with beer, and battered his foes with fists.'

Perhaps it was this sort of pitman who was targeted by the Sunderland Temperance Society on June 4th 1838. The Society met with the Primitive Methodists of Hetton where they formed a parade, marching through the streets, carrying a banner. Their aim was to shame the older members of the community by parading 'untainted' young people in an attempt to persuade those who indulged in 'demoralising amusements' to turn away from the drink. They evidently had some success in spreading their message as fifty two miners and their families signed the pledge.

Mr. James Anderson, a Home Missionary residing in Easington Lane, stated in his written evidence for the Commission's report on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Collieries, "The pitmen are in general industrious, and though there has been a great change for the better, still much remains to be done; ignorance to a great extent prevails among them; this is no doubt to be traced to many of them not being taught to read.

Another evil is the number of beer-shops; these are kept open on the Sabbath; and so long as this is the case, I fear we can look for little improvement, for many spend the Sabbath in drinking; thus the money that should go to educate their children is spent in drink; nor is this all, it unfits them for their work."

The Hetton Coal Company already had the foresight to build a Reading Room for the workforce in the first half of the nineteenth century and some pitmen pursued intellectual improvement. It was suggested that many men were influenced by the exhortations of Tommy Hepburn, the founder of Hetton Miners' Union, who, in breaking the mould of the 'typical' miner in the early 1830s during a

period of collective activity, encouraged miners to learn to “read and think” and establish libraries “which might be done for about one shilling a man in the year.”

Although the Hetton Coal Company may have approved of spiritual enlightenment and moral education for the pitmen because it could be seen as a remedy for social disorder, the same did not apply to intellectual improvement. Pitmen were regarded as working class, and education only served to empower them to fight for their rights when the coal owners tried to enforce unreasonable working conditions. As educational facilities became more established, it would appear that the pitmen became more learned. Indeed, a few who became interested in mathematics would become viewers and realise large fortunes. This also resulted in improved behaviour, partly due to spiritual enlightenment and partly intellectual improvement. ‘Demoralising amusements’ were becoming a thing of the past. It was noted there were fewer violent outbursts during disturbances around the strikes.

Finding religion brought families closer together. Man and wife could participate with their children as a family unit, enabling personal aspirations and self-image to be fulfilled. The church or chapel provided a structure to their lives. For children, it meant access to education when they attended Sunday school. For adults, intellectual development was encouraged, along with public speaking. Many pitmen became lay preachers.

Pit Wives

Pitmen’s wives, while husbands and sons were working at the pit, were almost totally responsible for the arrangements and duties above ground. It was their job to get the men out to work. From time immemorial the daily routine revolved around the men's shift systems. If their days were not organised there would be chaos. They were well aware what their role required as they had watched their mothers toiling from morn till night looking after their families. There were expectations, on both sides, even before marriage. Early accounts of pit life stated that when couples married, they bought, paying by instalments, an eight-day clock, a good chest of drawers, and a bedstead.

Wives had to create order in the house, prepare bait for their men, and ensure a meal was ready and water heated for washing blackened bodies when they returned from their shift. They would often be aided by the oldest daughter in the family. One positive aspect of this was that a mother would be passing on the skills that would, in due course, make any daughter a prospective pitman’s wife.

Being mindful of the early housing in Hetton, when large families occupied just two rooms in a tiny cottage, this took some organisation. There was no lighting, no running water and no heating but the coal fire was always burning. It was rarely allowed to go out, and lack of coal was never an issue as this cost just three pence per ton. The hub of the household was the back room or kitchen where the family lived and entertained. Their pride and joy was the kitchen range, consisting of an open fire, boiler and oven, where water was heated for hot drinks and washing, and the cooking was done. This was black-leaded laboriously and tended lovingly, every week. That same day, the fender, fire surround, and hearth tools made from brass, were polished until they gleamed; fire-irons stood on the hearth. A hob was hooked on to the front of the fire grate to heat the kettle and pans. On the mantle shelf above the fire surround stood, in pride of place, treasured ornaments and family photographs. A turned-brass pole beneath the mantel was used for airing clothes.

Before any preparation could start water had to be carried in from the water barrel or from a nearby pump and the boiler filled, particularly if it was washing day. However, it was customary to have water indoors, in covered stone jars, for hot drinks and cooking vegetables.

Well before dawn, they were up to get their husband, and possibly sons, out to work with pit clothes ready the night before, and to get the men up, if they hadn't heard the caller. Breakfast of home-fed bacon or an egg with plenty of bread and butter or dripping and tea for the early shift and bait, bread and cheese or dripping and a can of cold tea, to take with them.

Although space was limited there would invariably be a traditional rocking chair and 'crackit' (small stool) especially for the bairns, at the fireside. The large kitchen table was used for ironing and preparation of food etc., being scrubbed meticulously after use and respectfully covered with a chenille cover. A solid horse-hair sofa, hardwearing but most uncomfortable, and other items of furniture. A hand-made 'hookey' mat from cloth clippings partly covered the floor. In the late 19th century an American organ became a status symbol.

The front room, which was the main bedroom for husband and wife, housed a large, wooden four-poster bed, later replaced by a brass frame; the feather-filled mattress was shaken daily for comfort. Since there was no indoor toilet, under the bed would be hidden the most essential item, the jerry pot, since no one wanted to venture down the yard during the night. Other items of furniture were a large wardrobe, usually set upon a roomy drawer, a wash-stand on which stood a large jug, soap dish and large earthenware basin in which many a baby has been bathed. To complete the ensemble, a matching toilet table, adorned with a cheval set and trinkets. At the window, a small round table upon which stood a cherished aspidistra.

Although it would be possible to get on with some chores while the men were out at work, once the children were up, mothers would be fully occupied, dressing and feeding them, getting them out to play or school. Families were usually large so some wives would be nursing mothers with toddlers as well. Having an older daughter at home to help out was a definite advantage.

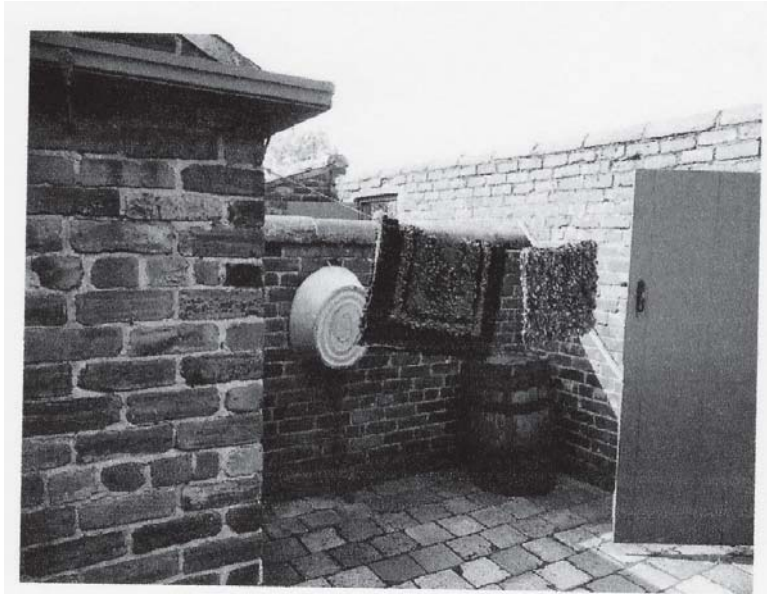
Pitmen's wives were planners, managers and organisers. However, with so many household tasks to tackle before the men were due home, they needed to prioritise. The number of children at home would dictate whether a specific day could be set aside for a particular task. However, in later years there would usually be a rota of duties for each day. Monday was wash day when the boiler was filled, the water heated and the clothes 'possed' in a zinc tub with a wooden poss-stick. This was usually done in the back yard. Dirty areas of clothes would be scrubbed with a brush and hard soap, cleaner clothes being washed before the pit clothes. After rinsing in cold water the clothes were 'rung out' by hand and pegged on the washing line in the street. Ironing was done on Tuesday, on the kitchen table, with a flat-iron heated on the open fire; often more than one iron was used.

Keeping the homestead neat, clean and tidy was of paramount importance. Comfort and household neatness which many pitmen's wives attained should certainly have induced their men to spend more time at home rather than in a public house or elsewhere. The jobs were endless. Hand-made 'hookey' mats covered floors instead of carpets which were taken outdoors and brushed or beaten with a carpet-beater; floors and steps were scrubbed daily. Coal fires created smoke and dust so all surfaces needed to be washed down. It must be remembered that there were no labour-saving devices or electrical appliances to aid domestic chores. Whenever there was a spare minute there was mending and darning to be done, clothes to be made for the children, knitting and the cutting of mat-strips.

Prior to the days of the kitchen range, the weekly bake of bread, girdle cakes and 'singing hinnies' (a type of scone) for the family was done in a communal oven located in one of the squares at High or Low Downs. This was possibly the main opportunity to chat with other pit women. Wives had to constantly clock-watch as meals were to be planned, particularly if husband and sons were in different shifts when more than one dinner was needed. Thankfully, there were usually fresh

vegetables from the garden or allotment. The larder was never short of potatoes, bacon, fresh meat, sugar, tea and coffee. Good wholesome food, such as suet (clouty) puddings and dumplings together with meat and vegetables, had to be served to hard-working men. Children also ate nourishing meals, a little meat and plenty of vegetables. There were of course no convenience foods, such as frozen vegetables or meals.

In those days there were no Pit-Head baths so hot water had to be heated ready for the daily bath in front of the fire; a tin bath hung on a nail in the back yard.



The tin bath hanging in the yard in one of the miner's cottages at Beamish Museum, rebuilt there from Francis Street Hetton.



Waiting his turn
Courtesy of the Bob Moody Collection

To say these women would be tired at the end of each day would be an under-statement. They would be exhausted, so once the men and bairns were settled it was time for them to have a little sleep before the next shift began. Thankfully, Sunday was a day of rest from the pit routine.

When times were hard during strikes these women struggled to feed their families. 'The family's rock' would best describe them. They didn't understand the politics of it all, they just had to get on and do their best. They had to support their men and the family had to be fed. Sometimes, if there was little or no help from the extended family during such hard times, to help make ends meet these stalwart women took in laundry or worked on the land.

Alternative employment would have been largely absent for the women of Hetton, apart from domestic service for girls before marriage. Such opportunities were more likely to be taken by second and subsequent daughters. One might imagine that 'working away' would be liberating but this was apparently not the case. In fact, women reinforced the norms of their culture by returning to marry pit men and bear their children, such was the strength of the family unit amongst the pit people of Hetton.

Some older women enjoyed the status of handywoman, a matriarchal figure known to the neighbourhood, who could be called upon at confinement or death. This practical woman, with no official qualifications, gained her skills by personal experience, the 'Florence Nightingale' of the day. These women gave both practical help and reassurance to anxious mothers, and comfort to the bereaved.

Leisure activities for women, especially married women with children, were restricted and offered few opportunities to express qualities of intellect or personality. Since they were responsible for the care, nurturing and disciplining of children as well as housework, there was little scope for any other activity.

As Hetton's houses became more private, and living conditions in general began to improve, wives had greater scope to show their worth as homemakers and they took even greater pride in their standards of cleanliness. Enclosed living conditions may have increased subordination to the male head of the household, but now wifely duties could be combined with leisure and there were opportunities for social discourse when visiting neighbours, or during shopping for the basic foodstuffs once the Colliery Tommy Shop ceased to provide these items. Tommy Shops were seen as an example of how the coal owners exerted their influence over their employees. Part, or all of a pitmen's wages was often paid in vouchers which could only be exchanged at these shops so there was no way of taking their custom elsewhere.

It was very important for the women to share their mutual anxieties because the pit claimed the lives of so many men and boys as a result of their daily toil. These anxieties could not be shared with family. In addition, if a woman lost her husband to the pit and she had no boys to take his place, then she would lose her home and her livelihood. Some had to resort to parish relief and ended up in the Houghton Poor Law Union (the Workhouse). Just as pitmen donned their Sunday best, Sunday was also an opportunity for pitmen's wives to display their colourful clothes and accompany their men and children to church to praise the Lord in joyful singing. Many had a lot to be thankful for.

Pit Children

Since boys went down the pit instead of starting school, life was very different to the present day. 'All bed and work' would certainly describe the servile life they endured. These poor little mites were prepared by their fathers for pit life from an early age. Initially there may have been some sense of

excitement on that first day underground but, alas, this would not have lasted. They had never previously been separated from their mothers or brothers and sisters, they had never been left on their own, but here they now were, working for a living, huddled in a chimney recess. Initially, their dads gave them candles, which did not burn for long, so thereafter they had to sit in the dark.

It is hard to imagine how they felt sitting all alone in that chimney recess: sleepy, lonely, frightened and abandoned. They had no training but were expected to open and close the trapdoor for the waggons when they arrived. There were no friends to talk to and the waggon drivers were cruel. They didn't given a second thought to hitting out if the door wasn't opened quickly enough. There was no one to reassure those trapper boys that someone would return for them at the end of the shift. That first day must have seemed like a life-time and, of course, tomorrow would be the same as they would have to return underground.

Some boys at Eppleton pit, in particular, complained of bad air which made them nauseous, and some were sick. Many were injured, having toppled from their place of work when they'd fallen asleep. At the end of each day, once fed and washed, they were off to bed to be ready for the next morning's shift. Opportunities for playing outdoors were short-lived owing to their early work commitments, and even if time permitted they were unlikely to have any energy. On Sundays, however, there was an opportunity to play with friends and most activities were outdoors because of the cramped conditions at home. Indoors, younger brothers and sisters would be running about while mams and dads were trying to get on with their jobs. Pitmen had shoes to cobble and some were adept at furniture-making. Wives, of course, always had catching-up jobs to do as well as the daily cooking and cleaning.

Young children have always enjoyed playing outdoors, enjoying simple pleasures – playing in fields, in the mud and water – especially with friends. Games were also simple: running around, kicking a ball about, tiggy, blind man's buff, and one enjoyed by all, placing pennies on the line before a locomotive came through the village, so they would be flattened out. Other games included marbles, duckstones, etc. The older boys were prone to lounging in the lanes or fields, taking turns at pitch and toss and other less innocent games.

Sunday was also for attending church or chapel, either with the family, or more often with friends at Sunday school. The Scriptures were taught but, more especially, children learned basic skills such as reading from the bible, and writing. This was the only education most children received, boys in particular. Sunday school was where they learned discipline and to be good citizens. There was little time for this at home. If children attended school, parents were charged 1½d for instruction and 1/2d for books. The Hetton Coal Company paid the other necessary expenses. However, parents did not particularly care about education. Boys were earners and girls were more useful in the house. But as the community developed and education became compulsory, life improved generally. At school the emphasis was on reading, writing and discipline with occasional treats for the children.

In early October, schools had one week's holiday, which coincided with the annual celebration of Houghton Feast. Houghton Feast has connections with Rector Bernard Gilpin, known as 'Apostle of the North' and 'Father of the Poor' who served the parish from 1558 – 1583. Shops in the nearby villages closed and families from all around the area went to enjoy market stalls, fairgrounds and various kinds of entertainment. This tradition still continues to this day.

The travelling circus came to pit villages quite regularly and then the children had either a half day or full day's holiday. Sanger's circus visited in 1914 when the children from Hetton Lyons and Eppleton schools were given the opportunity to go. It must have been quite a spectacle for children. The circus was held in high esteem, but quite costly at 2d entrance fee.

Sanger's Circus

Lord George Sanger (1825 – 1911) was the most successful circus entrepreneur of the 19th century. He was instantly recognisable by his shiny top hat and diamond tie pins. At the height of his success, when George and his family travelled with the circus, they brought not only the animals, staff and tents, but also food for the animals. The troop consisted of 236 horses and ponies, 12 wagons containing wild animals, four magnificent elephants, three camels and other zoological attractions as well as 54 ornamental cars and wagons. There were also 200 men and women attached to the circus, including performers. Nellie, George's wife was known as Mlle Pauline de Vere, the Lion Queen. Prior to their marriage she had performed at the famous Wombwell's Menagerie. When Nellie joined her husband's circus she performed serpent dances in the lion's cage.

Royal Command Performances by 'Lord' George Sanger

By 1898 'Lord' George was presenting Royal Command Performances for Queen Victoria at Sandringham and Balmoral Castle. She was a great fan of the circus. In 1892 she was presented with a pony by the Sanger family.

In 1953, a souvenir programme linked the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II with 70 years of Sanger's Circus, in which the proprietors managed to connect themselves to not one, but two queens.

Sanger's Coronation Programme, 1953



Sanger's Circus Carriage



Both pictures Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum

The Sanger's unexpected visit to Houghton-le-Spring

In early November 1852, George's mother arranged to meet George, Nellie and her new grandson in Newcastle. Mrs. Sanger, senior, travelled up from her London home and met George and family who had come in their horse-drawn wagon from a fair in Scotland. The family was going first to the North Shields fair with their 'Penny Peepshow', and then on to the mid-November fair at Darlington.

As the party were travelling into Houghton, George's mother suddenly became ill. The people of Houghton took her in and called a doctor but Mrs. Sanger died in a miner's cottage close by Houghton Cut. George, in his memoir, wrote "I shall never forget in that time of misery the kindness we received at the hands of the good people of Houghton-le-Spring. The colliers and their wives showed us a tender sympathy that could have not been greater had we been relatives and close

friends instead of travelling strangers.” On the day George’s mother was buried in the churchyard of the parish church, the people of Houghton attended, most of them bringing bunches of evergreens to strew on the grave as a tribute of their respect. Thereafter, when George and his brother travelled this way with their two circuses, they visited and tended their mother’s grave.

The Hetton Smithy at Bleach Green also had connections with the circus when it visited the area.

Blacksmith, Elizabeth Hannah (née Finch) Emmett and the Circus

George Stephenson, whose father was a cousin of George Stephenson, ‘Father of the Railways’ came to Hetton from West Auckland in the 1870s when his father, George, converted the pub at Bleach Green into a smithy. When George’s son-in-law, James Finch, was killed on the railway line, his daughter, Hannah, and her two sons and daughter were left penniless. George offered them a home at the Bleach Green Smithy and a few years later his granddaughter, Elizabeth, became his apprentice. His grandsons, George and Jim, also worked at the smithy. They shod horses for the local Co-operative Societies, tradesmen and farmers, and when circuses visited the area they worked around the clock. When Elizabeth’s brothers served in WW1, Elizabeth worked alongside her grandfather. She gained a detailed knowledge of horses, using her own cures on them and, because of her ability to calm horses, became known as a ‘horse-whisperer’.



Elizabeth Emmett working as a farrier at Hetton Smithy

Elizabeth worked as a blacksmith for about six years, giving up work when she married Frank Emmett, a former miner and Army boxing champion. There is every possibility Elizabeth was the first female blacksmith in the country.

Although school days were happier days they were not without incidence because schools often closed when diseases such as influenza, measles etc. reached epidemic proportions. Winters were severe, when heavy snowfalls not only made walking treacherous but also affected heating and plumbing, causing school closures. During World War One school closures did occur but less frequently than one might have imagined.

Commercial Dealers and Merchants

From the beginning of the colliery settlement, shops and traders were supplying the provisions the local community needed. As the community grew, competition became fiercer, traders vying with each other for custom. The closer these facilities were to the pitmen’s families, the greater the opportunity to be successful; in consequence most shops were near the town centre. Over the decades shops developed as family-run businesses, where sons worked alongside fathers and pride

was taken in the goods and service provided. Like an apprenticeship, skills and knowledge would be gained by sons, knowing one day their father's business would be theirs.

There was always a predominance of general dealers, drapers and grocers and, since pitmen needed a meat diet, butchers were always plentiful. Not surprisingly, since pit people, and young pitmen in particular, were fond of their dress, tailors, milliners and boot and shoemakers were also in good supply. In competition with all these traders was the Co-operative Society or the 'People's Store', which served communities well over the years, and is still doing so today in some areas. In times past everything was supplied by the Co-op, from day-to-day needs to furnishing a home.

History of the North Eastern Co-op

The acknowledged birthplace of the world-wide Co-operative movement, the site of its first successful venture, was Rochdale in Lancashire in 1844, where a group of 28 men joined together to form the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society. The Co-operative Pioneers' inspiration is said to be due to the teachings of Robert Owen, a successful business man in the cotton industry. In the first shop in Toad Lane they sold wholesome food at reasonable prices. At the time there was widespread profiteering by private traders, and with no adequate consumer protection it was not uncommon for food to be tampered with to increase its weight. The Rochdale Society put control of their shop in the hands of the Society's members who each had one vote, regardless of their share-holder status. The Society's profit, or 'surplus', was shared back among members, in proportion to the amount of money spent in the shop, the famous 'Co-op Dividend'. The Society also had a commitment to improve the education and welfare of its employees and members.

A Co-operative Corn Association was established at Middleton in Teesdale in 1842 but it was not until 1858 when the first retail Co-operative Society opened in the North, the Blaydon District Industrial and Provident Society. By the end of the 19th Century there were over 1,400 Co-operative Societies throughout the country.

Hetton Downs Amicable & Industrial Society

The Hetton Downs Society was established near the 'Long Pull' public house at Easington Lane in 1863 by Teesdale Soulsby, John Lonsdale, and others, and was known as the Easington Lane Amicable Society. The business commenced with the purchase of a chest of tea which was measured out to members with a 'small tin vessel', but shortly thereafter it supplied flour, sugar and butter.



Hetton Downs Co-op

The shop was, apparently, only open one day every fortnight, the goods being served by the Committee and, to ensure they were not seen, the windows were shaded. Several stories are told as to how they ran their business. One is that: *'a young woman, daughter of a member, called at the shop to purchase a pound of sugar; the attendant unable to wrap the sugar in paper, turned to the young woman and said, "Here, hinnie, h'ad thi pinnie", and the sugar was poured into the pinnie with the remark, "Tell thi mother Jackie Howe served tha', and it will be all reet."*

In the course of its history the shop moved premises three times: Shop 2, a little further down the lane; Shop 3, close to the Lodging House in Lyons Lane; and Shop 3, near the church. A pony and trap was purchased to deliver goods. The pony, 'Co-operative Dick', was also hired out. He was a great favourite, but he would only go a certain distance, had to have a certain amount of corn, and a specified time to eat it.

On March 17th 1866, when the members held their fifth half-yearly meeting in Mrs. Bewick's school room, with Mr. John Howe, President of Easington Lane Amicable Industrial Society, in the chair, the balance sheet was read by Nicholas Lee and showed a very encouraging increase of business. The sales amounted to £895, being £225 in excess of the previous half-year. The committee had been able to pay members a dividend of eight pence in the pound on purchases.

Soon after this the business had increased so much they had to seek larger premises, and hoped to purchase a site to build their own business premises at Easington Lane. Sir Lindsay Wood of the Hetton Coal Company was interested in their cause and became a member and made a substantial deposit of sufficient capital to meet the committee's requirements. It was he who recommended that the business operations be transferred to Hetton Downs as it was intended to build hundreds of houses there. There were, at that time, houses on the north side, namely Downs Lane, High Downs Square, Quarry Row, Kenton Row, Downs Square and Byre Street.

Sir Lindsay allocated two shops, rent-free at first, where the grocery and greengrocery could be located. Relations between Coal Company and Society were, therefore, cordial. The Society was now known as Hetton Downs Amicable Industrial Society Limited. Although the Society lost members because of its relocation in 1874, approximately two years later, with the new housing development, membership was fully restored.

The report of June 12th 1876 states that 'The sales for the quarter amount to £5,959 14s. 4d, being an increase over the corresponding quarter of last year of £1,656 19s. 7d. Share capital now amounts to £2,777 12s. 8d, increase £608 16s. Increase in members for the year, 145.'

On November 21st 1876, the Society purchased a building, comprising two shops, dwelling houses and land, for the sum of £615 from the Hetton Coal Company. At a committee meeting, prior to the purchase, Mr. William Gardiner was appointed as the first permanent secretary; one penny per £1 would be charged on groceries being carted out from the place.

By 1883, as business increased, additional accommodation was required; flour shop, cellar, warehouse and stables, followed by four houses known as Co-operative Terrace. The manager's house was converted into business premises: the tailoring department. Output in the Boot and Shoe Department, sales and repairs, were increasing.

Land at the top of Regent Street was purchased for £33 in 1884.

In November 1886, a butcher's property was purchased for Furniture and Hardware premises.

SHOPS IN HETTON-LE-HOLE



Shop of J. Coxon & Co, General Merchants, Market Street, Hetton, 1905.



Shop of Hunter & Co, Confectioners, Tobacconists and Hairdressers, 53 Market Street, 1935.



Gordon's Clothes Shop, Hetton, 1955.



F. Westwick Butcher's Shop, Lower High Street, 1930.



Walter Wilson's Ltd, 2 Market Street, Hetton Downs, 1930.



Hetton Down's Amicable Industrial Society, Butcher's Department, Regent Street, 1913.

Hetton-le-Hole and Hetton Downs Butchers' Society

This branch, located in South Market Street, was purchased by the Hetton Downs Society in 1895, at a cost of £520, the feeling being that butchering as a co-operative concern would make good progress. By 1898 a Butchers Department and Slaughter House had been built near Princess Street, followed soon after by the Greengrocery Department. The Drapery Department was built in 1902 on land purchased in 1893 from the Hetton Coal Company at the time of the housing development. Further income generation at that time included a refrigerator for the butchering department and the sale of paraffin oil.

In 1909 electric lighting was installed, and electric motors to drive machinery; a contingency fund was set up for emergencies in the butchering department. With increasing trade and congestion further land was purchased in 1912 near Lady Street, at a cost of £421, for stables and a cart shed.

During 1892, 1910 and 1912, the Society greatly assisted the needy; the more thrifty members realised the advantage of being true co-operators.

It is evident that, following Easington Lane Amicable Industrial Society's decision to seek larger premises and Sir Linday Wood's involvement, a relationship was established to the mutual benefit of the members and the Hetton Coal Company.

Hetton Branch of Pittington Amicable Industrial Society Limited

In 1903, the third branch of the Society opened at the corner of Front Street and Park View, at a cost of £1,022 6s. 0d.

The committee of the Pittington Branch had met with officials of the Hetton Downs Society but reached no amicable understanding. Therefore, the Pittington Society proceeded alone. The premises had previously been occupied by an ironmonger.

In addition to commercial dealers, Hetton had several important local merchants.

Willis, Timber Merchants

The Willis family had farmed lands in the Hetton area for hundreds of years. However, much of Hetton's prosperity was derived both directly and indirectly from the saw mills operated by the Willis family. The original saw mill was relocated by James, eldest son of Nicholas in 1890, on a site near the present Conservative Club (previously identified as close to the Imperial Cinema), an ideal position because of its close proximity to the railway station.

The family had a considerable fall of timber in Scotland so James went up there to make arrangements to bring it back to the Hetton sawmill. James's family accompanied him to assist the team, which included horses, in the felling and leading of the timber. While this was under way, houses were being rebuilt in Park View and were being occupied by family members. The Willis family, apparently, also carried on work at Park View and Hetton Wood.

For many years the Hetton Sawmills had supplied timber to the surrounding collieries (timber used in the sinking and workings) as well as for coach-building, furniture and hardware trades.

James died in 1896, and his three sons continued to operate the business. Son Nicholas died, followed by a fire at the Hemmels' storage, and even though James, junior, carried on with the business, the saw mill closed in 1913. At this time horse traction was being replaced by mechanical means, the local collieries had their own sawmill, and cheap timber was being imported from abroad.



Willis the timber merchants. The building on the right still exists as a garage

Bleach Green

Bleach Green is situated near the centre of Hetton and, it might be supposed, in view of its elevated open aspect that, at some time, there would have been a laundry or some facility where linen was bleached or hung out to dry. However, according to an article by historian, C. A. Smith, there was in fact an outlet for making linen garments at Bleach Green.

From old documents he obtained the following information relating to Kirklea in the old Market Place, Houghton-le-Spring where, because of the new law of enclosed land, poverty among the menfolk was rife. So wives and daughters came to the rescue by keeping and selling small livestock, and planting, gathering, bleaching and selling bundles of lyne or flax. Some of the tithes paid to Rector Frankelyn, by several Dames, were bundles of lyne at 1s 6d per bundle. C. A. Smith then goes on to say that lyne was grown, gathered, woven and bleached at Bleach Green, Hetton. Mrs. E. V. Willis, residing at Houghton, told the historian that she owned a linen shirt which was made at Bleach Green by an ancestor of her late husband. On the shirt sleeve was a pearl button.



Bleach Green first a brewery then a smithy, but now demolished.

Corn Mills

There were two corn mills serving the area, one near Hetton Houses Wood and the other at Rainton Bridge, both owned by the Scott family; the mill at Rainton Bridge was associated with the Brewery. These mills ground grain for local farmers.

It is possible that the mill at Hetton Houses Wood was built as early as the 17th century, and enlarged in the 18th century, whilst the Rainton Gate Mill was built in the mid to late 19th century, both being on the site of earlier, medieval mills. Even though the mills themselves have closed, there is evidence in the landscape of the numerous mill races and millponds which served them. These mills relied upon the Hetton beck which drained water from the high ground in the east towards Murton and to the south around Hetton-on-the Hill. Further flows from the magnesian limestone escarpment in the vicinity of Hetton area also help to maintain a continuous flow of water.

Water was led from a stream in the area of the present bogs via a mill race or leat into a mill pond, which still exists today. This mill pond was held back by an earth dam fitted with sluices which released the water so that it continued to flow in a westerly direction towards Rainton Bridge. Some of this water may have been used to work the first mill built close to the earth dam. Water from the pond was led away from the earth dam via another race, which flowed close to another mill pond served by the beck once it was released from the mill workings. The mill pond was held within an earth bank and probably formed a secondary water supply for the mill at Rainton Bridge.



The Old Mill on Hetton Beck c1950

The leat continued flowing west until it met the road at Rainton Bridge where it flowed in a stone-lined leat into a mill pond. The mill at Rainton Bridge closed shortly after World War One due to lack of business and imports of cheaper grain from America; the mill at Hetton Houses Wood was closed by Hetton Urban District Council in the 1950s as it was uninhabited and unsafe.

Ralph Barton, Salt Factory

Barton, drysalters, is mentioned as being established in 1815, even though no details are available.

From coal-mining in Northumberland and County Durham, Robert Barton (born Sheffield c.1828), his wife and seven children, were living at Pemberton Street, Hetton-le-Hole in the 1871 Census. Robert was a Salt Merchant and sons, George (born Broom Hill c.1855) and Ralph (born Ashington c. 1857) were Carters, possibly delivering salt for their father. Ten years later Ralph was a Licensed Hawker.

On the 1901 Census, Ralph is now a Salt Merchant (employer) and his son, John (born Hetton c.1886) is working in his father's business. The family lived at Pemberton Street for approximately twenty years and then moved to John Street. By the 1911 Census, Ralph and his wife, Sarah Ann, had nine children and were still living in John Street. Ralph was still a Salt Merchant (employer) and son, Robert, (born Hetton c.1893) was working as a Cartman (Salt Merchant).

There are later references in Kelly's Trade Directory 1929 of Albert Barton, Drysalter, in John Street and Carter, the Avenue; in 1938, Ralph Barton and Sons, Drysalters, Dealers of Chemistry, Manufacturers of Washeezey Powders and Barto Works, Station Road and the Avenue.

Barton's apparently imported salt which they packaged and sold as 'Barto' salt from premises in The Avenue as well as from a wooden hut in Bog Row.

Although many folk in Hetton may remember Ralph Barton, Salt Dealer, others will associate him more with Barton's Picture House. He was also responsible for building and opening the Pavillion Theatre in 1909. It later showed silent and sound films. The first manager was Mr. W. Linden Travers, father of the film star Bill Travers. Ralph Barton was also an accomplished musician.



The former Pavillion Theatre, now a timber merchants

Sparrows, Builders

William Sparrow is identified as builder, contractor, undertaker and cart and wagon builder at 2 – 3 Station Road in a Trade Directory but there is no further information. However, it is well known that William Sparrow was contracted to build the new parish church of St. Nicholas, Hetton-le-Hole, which was consecrated on April 29th 1901.

Religion

The spiritual needs of a community need to be catered for, and nowhere was this more obvious than in the mining community of Hetton. Over the years since John Wesley separated from the Church of England, many Methodist movements have formed, disbanded and sometimes re-formed. They were to have a huge influence on the mining community.

There have been dramatic, and at the same time, confusing, changes in the Methodist movement over the centuries, but the following table should serve to clarify them.

Methodism

From its origins in the 1730s until the death of John Wesley in 1791 Methodism was closely connected with the Church of England. Many Methodists also attended the parish church (until their gradual exclusion) and hence were usually baptised, married, and buried by the Church of England clergy; entries, therefore, appear in the parish registers, sometimes under a separate section for 'dissenters'.

After the death of Wesley, Methodism soon became a separate denomination. It was governed by a Conference and organised nationally as a 'Connexion' divided into Districts, each made up of Circuits consisting of a number of individual churches or 'societies'. During this period there were several divisions in Methodism, all of which produced their own registers. The most important were:

Wesleyan Methodists:	the original and largest group
Methodist New Connexion:	formed in 1797*
Primitive Methodists:	originated in Staffordshire in 1807-1808 and spread rapidly, especially in northern England
Bible Christians:	formed in Devon in 1815 and centred mainly in the south west, but there was a group of chapels in Northumberland, later taken over by the Primitive Methodists
Wesleyan Methodist	most of these groups joined in 1857 to form the United Association
Methodist Free Churches	

*also known as the Kilhamite Methodists

Hetton Front Street Methodist (Wesleyan) Church

As was frequently the case in Durham colliery villages, the non-conformists were first to erect their place of worship. Early records show that in 1808 the Society was taken into the Methodist 'plan' to be supplied with local preachers from time to time.

Although the great John Wesley visited the area, preaching at Penshaw and Biddick, he never visited Hetton. However, his work made such an impact on Hetton folk that by 1821 there was a class of 21 members with Methodist pioneer, Andrew Hogg, as leader, who moulded his church in what was termed an evangelical revolution.

The Primitive Methodist preacher, Thomas Nelson, undertook a mission in 1823 when his labours were recorded as exhilarating. The following August, at Hetton Houses, many were in tears; while at Hetton Downs there was much crying and praying, one 'at liberty'; and two miles from Houghton there was the largest open-air congregation he ever saw. However, it was not until 1824 that a church was built in Front Street which was obviously central to the new housing development around Bog Row and Front Street.

The church was erected on land which was conveyed to Charles Allen of Shiney Row by Mr. John Lyon of Hetton House. It was described as a good stone building, containing 350 sittings, 150 of which were free.



The Wesleyan Front Street Chapel with the school on the left

As the church building grew, so did the number of members. In 1839, when the famous preacher Peter McKenzie visited Hetton, the attendance was so great that the congregation went into a nearby field as the church could not accommodate half the number who came. In 1859 a Sunday school was built alongside the chapel and housed 400 scholars. It was not only a school but also a library and reading room, containing 380 volumes.

The chapel was enlarged in 1888 to hold 500 persons and, an organ installed, at a total cost of £875. The interior was furnished in pitched pine. The chapel became part of the Houghton William Street Circuit until 1944 when the Wesleyan Chapels in the Hetton area merged with Hetton (ex-Primitive) Circuit to form the Hetton Methodist Circuit. Sadly, when costs became too high and members too few, the chapel closed in 1965. Since then the premises have been used as offices, a nursing home, and now a private residence. When the school closed it was used as a Service Centre for electrical appliances. However, it is now vacant.

By 1840 there was no dominant church in Hetton, the average attendances being Anglican about 350, Wesleyans about 400, and Primitives about 370.

Hetton Primitive Methodist Connexion

John Banfoot, the 'No. 1 Preacher' of the South Shields Station, was the first travelling preacher to visit Hetton, followed by brothers John and Thomas Nelson. By 1823 the first Primitive Methodist Society was established in Hetton by J. Cook, T. Dakers, G. Prudhoe and others. These keen, successful evangelists preached in the open air.

Nathaniel West, an Irishman and ex-soldier, who also preached at Hetton, commented that the poor colliers, "for want of time to wash themselves, they are constrained to come 'black' to the preaching, or else miss the sermon," and goes on to describe how "large and silent tears rolling down their black cheeks, and leaving black streaks behind, conspicuously portrayed what their hearts felt" when they were touched by the message of Salvation.

Services and Class Meetings were held in members' homes, chiefly around the Bleach Green and Bog Row areas, until the first Primitive Methodist Chapel was built. The chapel, the third building from the railway in Barnes Street (close to the site of the present 'Big Chapel'), opened on October 24th 1824, at a cost of £326, with a seating capacity of 300.

A dreadful tragedy occurred on February 26th 1831 when John Branfoot and John Hewson, who were coming to Hetton to conduct services, were struck by a set of waggons on the Stephenson waggonway. John Branfoot was killed outright; John Hewson died later.

The following year, during the miners' strike and the cholera outbreak, John Petty and William Lister travelled from the Sunderland Circuit to Hetton, one of the places Mr. Petty stated that he had had a 'gracious season'.

Primitive Methodism was instructive from the outset, with reading and writing being taught in the Sunday schools and for adults at week-night meetings. Local preaching gave men training in public speaking and control of an audience, many assuming prominent positions in the Miners' Association and, in turn, influencing the growth of Trade Unionism and the formation of Friendly and Temperance Societies. There was, apparently, a strong desire for self-improvement through education. The preaching power of some miners at Hetton was described as 'extraordinary'. A small library at the Sunday School included books on grammar, theology, the Old and New Testament and Primitive Methodism history.

In spite of industrial unrest, and the Chartist agitation between 1840 – 1848 when many workers transferred their allegiance from churches to political reform, the Primitive Methodists greatly increased their membership. In 1849, the Sunderland Circuit added over 500 members to its Society, 'not a few' of these in the colliery villages, which included Hetton.

At Hetton Sunday School Anniversary in 1850, Superintendent George Lowdon reported an increase from 150 to 240 scholars in two years, and 25 teachers who were chapel members. The Hetton Coal Company, who contributed £3 annually to support the school, praised their endeavours in promoting the welfare of the rising generation.

Superintendent Lowdon, after visiting Hartlepool's newly erected chapel and anticipating that Hetton would one day become the centre of a large mining community, fostered the desire for a new chapel in Hetton. The Trustees conferred with Mr. Wales, Colliery Viewer, and work started on the 'BIG CHAPEL'.

Union Street Methodist Church The 'Big Chapel'

The story of the building of the 'Big Chapel' was a testimony of the faith and determination of the early members of the Society.

The work on the chapel and school buildings commenced in 1856, the preparation of the area being carried out by men unconnected with the society as well as pitmen straight from their shifts, and the women folk providing meals. Building materials and equipment were provided by Nicholas Wood of the Hetton Coal Company, including quarried limestone and stone sleepers from the railway which were transported by railway waggons, and a horse and cart, at weekends.

The architect was Mr. Greener of Sunderland and the builders were Messrs. John and Robert Taylor. The interior was polished woodwork. The term hard wood is an apt description as anyone who has attended a service or concert will tell you. How many people have taken along a cushion or similar item in preparation for an uncomfortable session? The chapel seated in excess of 800 persons and the schoolroom on the ground floor, 600 children. The total cost of the building was estimated at £1,040.



Union Street Chapel (The 'Big Chapel')

The opening of the Chapel on Saturday, May 22nd 1858, was a most auspicious occasion when a crowd of 1,100 people enjoyed tea. It was located near, the colliery railway line and trains would rattle past the road end, so the preacher could scarcely be heard. In 1865, to resolve this problem, the gallery was added, increasing the seating capacity to 1,000 persons.

In 1872, an infants' school, now used as a Sunday school and multifunctional room, was built on land purchased from Mr. T. Lamb for £30.

In 1874 the north side of the chapel was extended, providing a kitchen on the ground floor, the preacher's vestry on the middle floor, and a place for the orchestra on the top floor.

Music was always a major feature in the chapel's life. In the early days Mr. Robert Taylor, the choirmaster, played the violin as the choir learned new hymns and anthems. The choir sat beneath the pulpit, described as 'the black hole' or 'the tunnel', as it resembled a six foot seam. A harmonium was added in 1862. However, on February 13th 1878 the pipe organ, considered 'one of the best of its day', was installed.

A tragedy occurred in 1903 when the Reverend W. R. de Winton was killed in his bed when a chimney stack fell through the roof during a severe gale.

In 1927, property at Nos. 10 and 12 Railway Street was converted into an 'Institute', known as the Youth Centre because it was used as a centre for young people. However, because of its poor condition, the building was demolished in 1955.

The Hetton Circuit supported three ministers but the successful functioning of the Circuit also depended on the services of lay preachers.

The 'Big Chapel' has celebrated both its centenary and 150th birthday, rejoicing that it still serves the community today. The following poem is a tribute to the Big Chapel by Councillor Doris Turner, Mayor of Hetton.

HETTON BIG CHAPEL

Union Street Methodist Church is 150 years old
If its stones could talk many stories would be told
Of miners arriving, faces covered in coal dust
Quarrying stones to build a church that was a must.

Hetton Coal Company lent a horse and cart
For use at weekends, so they played a part
In encouraging miners by supplying sand, stone and lime
To create a church that would withstand the test of time

The earliest choirmaster played the violin
Whilst choristers learned new anthems and hymns
Until 1862 when a harmonium was bought
Lasting till 1878 when a pipe organ was installed.

For over a century Good Friday concerts have been winners
Local choirs participating along with guest singers
Performing oratorios with pride
Enthralling audiences from villages far and wide.

Many services of marriages, deaths and christenings have taken place
With many local families joining the faith
Some continuing God's work as local preachers
Others becoming Sunday school teachers.

Doris Turner

Some Memorable Events

Camp Meetings

Open air preaching led to the break-away of the first Primitive Methodist leaders from the Wesleyan Church. Evangelical camp meetings, where the whole circuit gave preaching services and people brought provisions and camped out (Winter's field, between Hetton and Houghton is mentioned), became regular events.

Later, regular camp meetings were held with the Hetton Downs Society until the outbreak of World War One. The last one recorded was in 1924 when Union Street, Hetton Downs and Moorsley Societies held a United Camp Meeting. Open air services replaced camp meetings and the spirit of the camp meeting continued with the Durham Methodist Big Meeting, the annual event which began in 1947, when pitmen and their families congregated to share spiritual enlightenment.

Chapels are closely associated with mining traditions and the first miners' service was held in 1957. In 1982 the visiting speaker was the Rt. Hon. George Thomas, Speaker of the House of Commons, when the chapel was full to capacity. Shortly after the local mines closed the services came to an end. Apparently, when miners' services were held pitmen would sit downstairs, believing they knew their place. Elemore Colliery banner is still displayed inside the chapel.

The Good Friday Concert

The Good Friday Concert was an example of the strong music tradition of the chapel. Although the first concert took place in 1868, only excerpts from oratorios were performed until 1870 when the choir sang a full oratorio. What could be more splendid than Handel's 'Messiah' as the initial oratorio? The story is told that "When the choir performed Handel's 'Messiah', because the trumpeter, especially engaged for 'The Trumpet Shall Sound' in the second half, had little to do until then, he nipped across to the Commercial pub to wet his whistle at the interval, and promptly fell prey to temptation." Ironically, the local brewer, objecting to the building of the chapel initially, erected his pub directly opposite the new chapel. These concerts continued annually, in spite of the First and Second World Wars. There were two celebrity concerts in 1943 with performances by famous singers Miss Isabel Baillie, Heddie Nash, Kathleen Ferrier and pianists Ernest Lush, Walter Susskind and Margot Wright, as well as the principals of the Carl Ross Opera Company.

Over the years the choral society numbers have dwindled but, for a time, were augmented by Durham Choral Society and the A. K. Chorale.

Handel's 'Messiah' was not repeated until the 138th concert in 2008 when we know, the trumpeter did not leave the chapel in the interval! Sadly, the last Good Friday Concert took place in 2011.

Union Street Groups

Mums' and Toddlers' group established in 1968 has 24 children on Tuesday, and 20 on Thursday.

The Tuesday Friendship Group, approximate age is 14 years, is still flourishing.

Community groups, new church groups and the 7.30 group have regular meetings.

The Boys' Brigade, Christian Endeavour, Youth Group and Men's Bible Class, formed 1958, have disbanded.

Hetton Downs Circuit

In about the year 1860, the Downs section of the Hetton Society was formed and the first chapel built in 1865. It was enlarged in 1877 when it housed a schoolroom.

Salvation Army, Christ's Army, Christian Lay Church

William Booth became a preacher in the Methodist Church when he realised he had to do something about the terrible poverty so many people were living in. He discovered that people were being turned away from churches because they weren't clean and respectable. He left the Methodist Church and began preaching on the streets. He was invited to preach at a large meeting in a tent in the East End of London, following which he went home to tell his wife, Catherine, that he had found his destiny. In 1865 he founded 'the East London Christian Mission'. In 1878 the Christian Mission became the Salvation Army and from then on the organisation grew. General Booth, as he was now known, opened food stores and shelters for people to stay in, and the Salvation Army became known for its care of the poor and needy.

By the early 1880s William Booth had ventured north, and a corps was started in Hetton. However, differences arose between members of this corps, resulting in the formation of a splinter group, which became known as 'Christ's Army'.

Hetton Independent Methodist Church

What was known as Christ's Army became associated with the Christian Lay Church Movement (which originated in Sunderland in 1877) and eventually joined the Sunderland Circuit of the Christian Lay Churches as a member Church, from which time it became known as Hetton-le-Hole Christian Lay Church, then more recently the Independent Methodist Lay Church. The Christian Lay Church initially used the Miners' Hall in which to worship, then acquired land on the Avenue directly opposite the Miners' Hall. Building started at the lower end of the street with a school room, two cottages and, finally, the main chapel.

It is said that the male members, who were miners by profession, would come from their shift at the pit and start on the building work. Their wives would bring their food to the building site.

The service of dedication took place at 3 00 p.m. on Saturday, August 31st 1889.

Over the years the Church has been involved in many outreach events in the community. In 1968 choirmaster, George Kirkbride, led the Northern Counties Confederation Choir at Newcastle City Hall where Cliff Richard was holding a gospel concert. Many choir members were involved in this event which was televised by Tyne Tees Television. On April 27th 1969 the T.V. cameras filmed 'Joybells' in the church.

The Independent Methodist Church is still committed to reaching the people of Hetton today with the message of Salvation.

The Church of England has been represented in Hetton, by the parish church of St. Nicholas, All Saints, Eppleton and St Michaels, Easington Lane.

The Parish Church of St. Nicholas

There is documentation of an early chapel of ease having been consecrated on or about November 15th 1825 but, with an increasing population, the temporary chapel was replaced in 1832 by an Episcopal Chapel, at a cost of £1,460. It was consecrated in November of that year by Dr. Gray, late Bishop of Bristol, acting on behalf of the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Van Mildart, who was ill. A new parish was created, separate from Houghton-le-Spring in 1847, when the Reverend John Nichol became surrogate of the diocese and the county magistrate.

With an enlarging and developing community, to cater for the spiritual needs, a larger, quite modern church, St. Nicholas, was built on the same site between 1898 - 1901, at a cost of £5,400, and was consecrated on April 29th 1901 by the Bishop of Durham. The church, designed by Stanley Piper, a famous architect in the late Victorian era, had several notable architectural features, namely an extremely handsome west front, gabled buttresses and bellcote, a Baptistry with three parallel gables, and above it, five lancet windows grouped under a single gable and tall columns with high arches. William Sparrow was the builder.

In 1907 the Vincent three-manual organ, one of the largest in the country, was built at a cost of approximately £800, to the specification of the brother of the rector at the time, the Reverend F. Smith.

Sadly, the church, was declared redundant in 2000 and was subject to significant fire damage on November 5th 2006, and it has subsequently been demolished. Worship continues at St Michael's in Easington Lane.



St Nicholas Church, Front Street, Hetton (now demolished)

George Stephenson is best known to us for his connection with the Hetton waggonways, and known affectionately as 'the Father of the Railways'. Another prominent engineer was Nicholas Wood, a friend and associate of Stephenson, who was noted for his mechanical and mining skills and is strongly associated with the development of Hetton.

Nicholas Wood, Esq., Mining Engineer and Coal Owner (1795 – 1865)

Nicholas Wood became managing partner of the Hetton Coal Company in 1844 and resided at Hetton Hall, at that time owned by Mrs. M. Bowes Barrington, until his death.

Nicholas Wood attempted to improve the social conditions of the mining community in Hetton. He emphasised the importance of education and promoted the building of schools for children and pitmen.

He promoted safety in mines and was instrumental in the establishment of the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers (N.E.I.M.M.E.), in Westgate Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and became the Institute's first president. In his memory the Neville Hall was renamed Wood Memorial Hall where a monumental statue sits in pride of place.



Nicholas Wood died in London on December 19th 1865 and was buried in St. Nicholas' Churchyard, Hetton, four days later, where his tomb still stands.

His youngest son, Lindsay Wood, (later Sir Lindsay Wood) replaced him as managing partner of the Hetton Coal Company and like his father was keen to promote the social welfare of the community.

The Pitmatic Dialect of Hetton-le-Hole

Wherever we are born, there is a dialect specific to the area. In the mining villages of East Durham this language is known locally as 'pitmatic'.

With the establishment of the Children's Employment Commission, investigators were appointed to report on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Collieries . . . When John Roby Leifchild, investigator for the Northumberland and North of Durham Collieries, arrived in Newcastle for this undertaking in January 1841, he must have felt he had arrived in a foreign country because he commented on "the peculiar intonations and accents . . . an interpreter being inadmissible . . . to devote myself to the study of these peculiarities ere I could translate and write the evidence."

He is to be admired that he did take time to learn the local language because the evidence he gathered about the mining community when he visited the Hetton (Lyons), Eppleton, Elemore and the North Hetton collieries is quite remarkable.

Fifty years later the Reverend Palgrave experienced similar difficulties when he arrived in Hetton for his first post as curate at the parish church of St. Nicholas. However, he certainly had more time to study the pitmatic language as his appointment lasted three years.

The Reverend F. M. T. Palgrave, Hetton Curate, 1890 – 1893

Francis Milnes Temple Palgrave, known as Frank, entered holy orders at Trinity College, Oxford, following in the footsteps of his Uncle William. In May 1890, aged 25 years, he arrived at the County Durham mining village of Hetton-le-Hole for his first pastoral posting as curate of the Anglican parish. Having a 'fondness for dialect' he set about compiling a record of the dialect of the day in the Hetton-le-Hole district. His publication, recently republished as *Hetton-le-Hole Pitmatic Talk 100 Years Ago (A Dialect Dictionary of 1896)*, is 'a list of words and phrases in everyday use by the natives of Hetton-le-Hole in the County of Durham, being words not ordinarily accepted, or but seldom found in the English standard of the day.'

During the course of his work he discovered pitmen were seriously superstitious.

'Many miners considered it unlucky to sleep above the ground floor, or to meet a woman during the early hours of the morning, while going to their work down the mine. Some men will turn back for no other reason.'

How many lives have been saved by pitmen adhering to their beliefs?

In his foreword to this book, David Ridley states "it is clear that his (the Reverend Palgrave's) writings provide a unique and otherwise irretrievable record of an aspect of our disappearing past for which the historical record of Hetton-le-Hole is much the richer."

With the closure of the pits this unique language, 'pitmatic', has largely disappeared but it will always remain part of our mining heritage.

St. Nicholas Parish Church is no more and along with the building several commemorations have been lost.

The Darlington Railway Disaster was commemorated inside the church with the names of those who were lost locally, inscribed on a screen. The destruction of the church claimed the screen and no visible reminder now exists, except in the hearts of families and churchgoers.



Memorial in St Nicholas Church



Telescoped coaches at the Darlington crash scene



Funeral cortège in Hetton for some of the victims of the crash

The Darlington Railway Disaster, June 27th 1928

A day out in Scarborough by members of the Mothers' Union and friends ended in tragedy on their return journey when the excursion train on which they were travelling, after passing the platform at Darlington station, collided head-on with a stationary engine and some vehicles belonging to a parcels' train which was engaged in shunting.

A total of 25 lives were lost, including 14 mothers and Mr. William Henry Gough, a solicitor, from the local community. At the enquiry there was no doubt that the relatively-inexperienced driver of the parcels' train, Mr. Bell, and the shunter, Mr. Morland, who was in charge of the operation that night, were to blame for the accident.

The tragedy shocked and saddened the communities where these victims once lived, and nowhere was the loss felt more greatly than in the mining community of Hetton.

Many remember, with fondness, the parish church of St. Nicholas where family members were baptised, married or brought to rest when life had ended. The details of the first entries in the registers from the Episcopal Chapel are given below.



*Chapel of Ease from Houghton le Spring Church
built at Hetton in 1832.*

The Chapelry of Hetton-le-Hole in the Parish of Houghton-le-Spring

The first baptism on November 13th 1832 was Elizabeth Sittington Bateman, daughter of William, Pitman, and Mary, abode Hetton-le-Hole, by J. S. Nichol, Curate.

The first wedding on December 15th 1832 was between John Carlton and Sarah Cope, both from the Chapelry of Hetton-le-Hole.

The first burial on January 28th 1832 was Isabella Johnson, abode Downs, age 45 years by Robert Shepherd, Officiating Minister.

Hetton has connections with the royal family through the marriage of Prince William to Kate Middleton who is now the Duchess of Cambridge. Kate's maternal grandmother, Dorothy Harrison, was baptised in the parish church of St. Nicholas.

Dorothy Harrison (1935-2006)

Dorothy's great-great-great-great grandfather, James Harrison, a widower, came to Moorsley from Byker, on the outskirts of Newcastle, in the mid-1840s with his two sons and two daughters, after his wife, Jane, died from tuberculosis.

After living there for several years the family moved to Sherburn Hill where son, John, married Jane Liddell, and where father, James, died. John and Jane moved to Hetton where they raised a family of seven girls and three boys. Parents John and Jane were both dead when son, John, married Jane Hill; they raised seven boys and two girls.

Their son, Thomas (Tommy), was the next family member in the direct line. He was the only son not to start his working life down the pit. He became a joiner and carpenter. Tommy married Elizabeth Mary (Lily) Temple from Spennymoor, where they married, and then the couple came to live in Hetton. Their daughter, Dorothy, was born on June 26th 1935 in a nursing home at Sunderland and was subsequently baptised in St. Nicholas church on July 10th 1935.

BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of <u>Hetton-le-Hole</u> in the County of <u>Durham</u> in the Year One thousand nine hundred and <u>thirty-five</u>						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents Names. Christian. * Surname.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
1935 July 10 th	Dorothy	Thomas F. Elizabeth Mary	Harrison	6. Station Road	Joiner	F. Smith
No. 1139						Born June 26 th 1935

It is thought that the family moved to the Southall area of London after the Second World War where they remained and Dorothy married.

With the establishment of Eppleton as a separate district the local parishioners needed their own place of worship so funds had to be raised to build the Parish Church of All Saints.

All Saints, the Parish Church of Eppleton

Eppleton was constituted as a separate district in the Parish of Hetton-le-Hole on July 19th 1883 and W. Illingworth nominated as first vicar of the district. Thomas Lishman, chief agent for Hetton Coal Company, was elected vicar's warden and Joseph Thom, Master at Eppleton School, people's warden.

There is no mention of the premises it used, but there is reference that a "flourishing Sunday School, consisting of 300 children and 15 teachers, met twice – morning and afternoon – on Good Friday, April 11th 1884." The following December, Eppleton Musical Society was formed, under the direction of Thomas Lishman.

A note of humour. In April 1885 a shaving from a pitch-pipe (used to ensure the right note on which to start an accompanied hymn) stuck in the vicar's throat, so that he was unable to intone the litany.

Mr. R. Hindle, succeeded Mr. Illingworth as vicar, in time to see the cutting of the first sod on the site of Eppleton's new church by Miss Lishman of Eppleton Hall, on July 3rd 1886. Although the foundation stone was laid the following November by Mrs. Lindsay Wood, wife of the owner of the Hetton collieries, it was not until December 20th 1887 that the completed church was consecrated and dedicated to All Saints by the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Lightfoot.

Over a period of years, a Hiller organ was purchased for £6, to be replaced by a pipe-organ, at a cost of £400; an electric organ-blower was added later. In 1902, a chancel screen of carved oak, was erected, one of the church's outstanding features.

In 1915, the Reverend David Cowling came as third vicar from a chaplaincy in Munich, where he and his family were detained when war broke out. He became chaplain to the Hetton Freemasons, the Bernard Gilpin Lodge of Freemasons. During the 1929 miners' strike, two Eppleton Colliery workmen constructed and carved a litany desk. Many years later a pair of processional candlesticks were made out of broom shanks and copper piping in the Joiner's shop, Eppleton Colliery.



In 1930, the Reverend Gibson Salisbury became the fourth vicar. The following year the Hetton Coal Company made a gift of premises to replace the old church hall erected in George Street in 1898. The new premises (no location identified) needed renovating; the floor was levelled and two cloakrooms and lavatories were installed. In 1933, the old church hall was sold and subsequently demolished. A new chancel and sanctuary, panelled in oak, and the pulpit canopy, were dedicated in 1932 by Bishop Hensley Henson of Durham. Framed pictures, oil paintings, a chasuble and altar cloth were added to improve the drab interior.

In 1952, Vincent Davies became the fifth vicar of the parish in seventy years. Maintenance was needed for both the church and church hall, so in 1953, the coronation year, the church was rewired, helped by a gift of £100 from Queen Elizabeth.

The Bishop of Durham, Bishop Ramsey, celebrated evensong at the church's 70th anniversary on November 3rd 1957. Eighty-four rose trees planted in memory of deceased relatives, were stolen.

In 1958, a new Mothers' Union banner was dedicated. In 1963, Joseph Nicholson, the sixth vicar, arrived and the church vicarage was modernised and redecorated, and the vicarage drive resurfaced, at a cost of £3,806.

J. W. S. (Bill) Wilson, the seventh vicar was appointed in 1971. A Girls' Friendly Society and Church Lads' Brigade were formed the following year, but they both disbanded within the year.

A side altar was dedicated for Wednesday morning worship. Twenty four children were, at that time, attending Sunday school, reduced to two by 1981.

In 1979, John Stephenson became the eighth vicar. He believed Holy Communion to be the focal point of Christian worship and within two years 35 people were confirmed. A choir of 15 junior members became part of the church's worship, as did candlelight services. In late 1981, for the first time, two female altar servers were appointed. The following year saw the dedication, in church, of the new Eppleton Miners' Lodge banner, with Hetton Silver band in attendance, followed by the blessing of the banner in Durham Cathedral on July 10th at the 99th Durham Miners' Gala.

From March 1984, the year-long Miners' Strike was a very difficult time for the whole community.

Sadly, the Parish Church of All Saints was demolished in 2012.

There are many groups which were established for the youth of the community, associated with the Church of England. Some have survived, others have not.

The Brigade Movement

In the second half of the 19th century many people, particularly influential Christians, were worried about the poor spiritual and physical development of young people.

The majority of youngsters were leaving school at 13 years, and usually went straight into work. Only those who attended private school received religious and 'manly' military training as part of the curriculum. Social reformers tried to copy this worthy programme and from about 1860 isolated 'Brigades' were formed all over the United Kingdom, but the first to develop into a truly national organisation was 'The Boys' Brigade', followed by the 'Gordon Boys' Brigade' and 'The Church Lads' Brigade'. The many different Brigades for boys and girls became known collectively as the 'Brigade Movement'. The Brigade Movement was popular with churches because it prevented a massive loss of Sunday school members when they reached 13 years and started work. The Government, at a time of international insecurity, saw it as a source of military cadets who could be called upon when required. Most importantly, young people liked it because it gave them an interesting, purposeful and recreational social life, many years before clubs, discos, sports centres, T.V. or computers.

In 1883 William A. Smith, volunteer officer and Sunday school teacher, formed 'the Boys' Brigade' (The 'BB') in Glasgow. Their 'Equipment' – 'pill-box' cap, belt and white haversack worn over normal clothing, instead of full uniform.

In 1885 Mr. Goldstraw started 'The Gordon Boys' Brigade' (named after General Gordon, the Khartoum hero) in Liverpool. This was modelled on the 'BB' but was strictly Anglican.

In 1891 Walter Gee, secretary of the Junior branch of the Church of England Temperance Society and a 'Volunteer Army Officer' formed 'The St. Andrew's Lads' Brigade', Fulham.

Following discussions in London the Gordon Boys' Brigade and The Church Lads' Brigade amalgamated and in 1892 the decision was made to call the London brigade 'The London Diocesan Church Lads' Brigade' and for it to adopt a full blue uniform.

By 1893 there were 16 C.L.B. companies in existence worldwide.

Although it is likely St. Nicholas church had both a Church Lads' Brigade and a Girls' Friendly Society, these societies have only been highlighted for All Saints church.

Eppleton Church Lads' Brigade

The Church Lads' Brigade had already been established as they were winners of the Shield Competition from 1905 to 1907. Sadly owing to the ill health of Stanley Buckingham, the Brigade leader, the group disbanded in 1958, along with the Youth Fellowship

The Girls' Friendly Society

The Girls' Friendly Society was a pioneer youth organisation, founded in 1875, to protect young working girls. The founder, Mary Elizabeth Townsend, an Irish clergyman's daughter, was concerned about the fate of many working-class country girls who left home to take up urban employment. Without support of family and friends, Mrs. Townsend's idea was for 'lady' Associates to befriend and guide these girls, who would form the Society's members. Girls could join from the age of twelve, but from 1882 those from the age of eight could become Candidates, preparing for membership. It provided numerous facilities; most important were lodges offering cheap, good-quality accommodation to young women working in domestic service etc.

By 1900, the society had over 150,000 Members and nearly 33,000 Associated in 1,361 Branches. Over the years it expanded its activities in many directions: War effort, schemes to promote fellowship throughout the world, etc. Today the Branches still encourage friendship and understanding between females of different generations and cultural ethnicities. The importance of Christian values has been maintained and through community projects, the G.F.S. continues to support the most vulnerable young women.

The Scout Movement

Scouting or the Scout Movement aims to support young people in their physical, mental and spiritual development so that they may play constructive roles in society, with a strong focus on the outdoors and survival skills.

There were initially three major age groups for boys, Cub Scout (Wolf Cub): 8 – 10 years; Boy Scout: 11 – 17 years; Rover Scout: 18 upwards.

Robert Baden Powell, a military officer, stationed in British India and Africa in the 1880s and '90s, who had been fond of woodcraft and scouting since his youth, had shown his men how to survive in the wilderness, as part of their training. Then, following his experiences in the Boer War he wrote about military scouting in an instruction book, *Aids to Scouting*, which was subsequently used by teachers and youth organisations. Thereafter Baden-Powell wrote further publications and magazines, resulting in the publication of *Scouting for Boys* in 1908 which had such an impact that boys spontaneously formed Scout patrols and flooded Baden Powell with requests for assistance. He encouraged them and the Scouting Movement developed and soon spread throughout the British Empire.

The programme initially focused on boys aged 11 to 18, but, as the movement grew, the need for programmes for younger boys and older boys and girls became apparent, which were subsequently introduced.

Scouting is taught using the Scout method, which incorporates an informal educational system emphasising practical activities out of doors, camping and 'jamborees' in particular. The principles of Scouting describe a code of behaviour for all members and the system is designed to achieve these goals. The emphasis is on 'learning by doing'. The Scout uniform is a widely recognised characteristic

of Scouting and is both smart and practical, and is designed to ‘hide all differences of social standing . . . and make for equality.’

Scouting for both boys and girls has been popular in Hetton since its establishment and 1st Eppleton still survives today in our local area.

The Guide Movement

Agnes Baden-Powell (Baden-Powell’s sister) introduced the Girl Guides in 1910 and became their first president. By 1914 she started Rosebuds, later renamed Brownies (for younger girls). In 1920 Baden-Powell’s wife, Olave, took over the president’s role.

The major groups for girls were Brownie Guide: 8 – 10 years; Girl Guide or Girl Scout: 11 – 17 years; Ranger Guide: 18 upwards.

Hetton Brownies still survives at Hetton and Eppleton Community Hall.

Sunday Schools

Although Sunday Schools still exist, they do not have the same impact on young people’s lives as in the past. Church attendance was once a way of life for children on Sunday, either accompanied by parents or attending with brothers and sisters. For poor children Sunday school was not only where they learned about the Bible but it provided the opportunity to learn to read and write. In mining communities Sunday school was, for many, the only education they received since boys were already working underground and older girls were helping their mothers at home.

The Origin of Sunday Schools

The Sunday School Movement was founded by English Anglican evangelist Robert Raikes (1725 – 1811) of Gloucester and was a huge success from the start. Robert, owner and printer of the *Gloucester Journal*, had visited the prisons of Gloucester and saw how easy it was for children to slip into crime. Since the children of the poor worked in factories all week they could not go to school and therefore had no education.

In 1774 he decided to establish schools for these children to attend on Sundays, initially hiring four women in the neighbourhood to teach them to read. The greatest emphasis was, naturally enough, on religious education, so the children learned to read from the Bible. Eventually, with the help of his friend, the Reverend Thomas Stock, he was able to enrol one hundred children, from six years old to twelve/fourteen, in these Sunday schools. The children had their reading lesson from 10 00 a.m. – 2 00 p.m. followed by a one hour break for lunch, after which they attended church for instruction in the catechism until 5.30 p.m. Many Sunday schools also held weekday evenings when they taught other subjects such as writing and arithmetic. Amazingly, the children’s behaviour improved and the crime rate dropped sharply in Raikes’s city and county after the establishment of these schools.

Within decades, the movement became extremely popular. By the mid 19th century, Sunday school attendance was almost a universal aspect of childhood. Even non-churchgoing parents generally insisted that their children attend Sunday school. Working-class families were grateful for this opportunity to receive an education. They also looked forward to annual highlights such as prize days, parades and picnics.

The movement grew rapidly and by Victorian times the majority of working-class children attended. There was strong attendance across the social spectrum but the biggest impact was experienced by the less well-off. The support for literacy continued to be crucial and these Sunday schools paved the way for the wide-sweeping move towards public education in the 19th century.

Not surprisingly, however, it was the social and leisure activities which lifted the hopes and aspirations of so many young people, especially in industrial areas. Sports were also central, training for the body as well as the soul. A number of Premiership football clubs, and a remarkable percentage of those who set up the Football League in the 1880s, grew out of Sunday schools.

Although the Sunday School Movement operated in both the Church of England and other denominations, in the mining community it has always been traditionally associated with Methodism.

Hetton Sunday Schools

Most children attended Sunday school and Sunday school pupils often graduated to become Sunday school teachers, thereby gaining an experience of leadership not to be found elsewhere in their lives.

When the Royal Commission was established in 1840 and investigators were appointed to report on the Employment of Children and Young Person in the Collieries, John Roby Leifchild provided the evidence on the Hetton collieries. The boys interviewed told him they attended Sunday school where they were learning to read, and some could write their names. Mr. James Anderson, a Home Missionary, provided written evidence and stated, "I have seen a great improvement among the people; they are more anxious to have their children instructed. This is evident by the number of Bibles and Testaments we have sold; this year above 80 Bibles and 40 Testaments. The children under my care evince a good knowledge of God's holy word. Our Sabbath-school is attended by about 60 or 70 children; of these about 20 are boys from eight to fourteen; some of them are pit boys. They can all read well; many lads have passed through our school; we always find when they go to the pit they are worse to deal with.'

About this same time a committee was appointed to monitor attendance at the Hetton Sunday schools and reported:

"In connection with the Church (of England), 150 was given to me, and 700 was mentioned as the number attending the Sunday schools attached to the Dissenting meeting houses in Hetton, in the following proportions:-

Wesleyan Methodists 250
Primitive Methodists 350
Methodist New Connexion 30
Independents 70

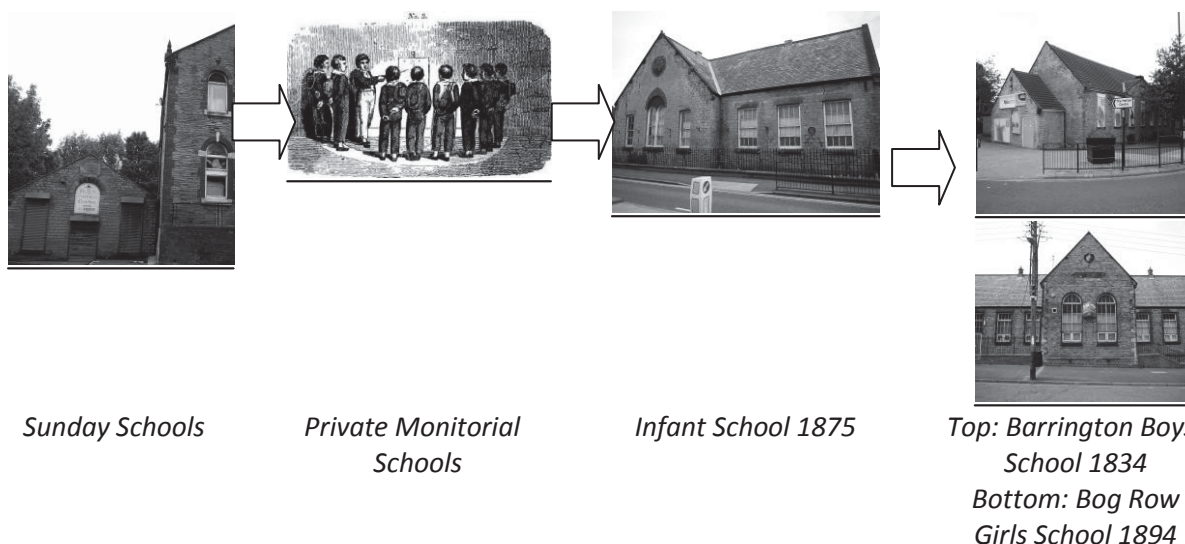
The Hetton Coal Company divide about £12 annually among these Sunday schools".

The Sunday schools in the Circuit were inspected regularly, and reports were made on attendance, education and behaviour. From these figures, it would appear all the children in the mining community attended.

Before the 19th century, education of the poor was seen by many as unnecessary but, by the end of that century, it had become the right of every child to receive an elementary education and the duty of the state to provide it. Children of the better-off usually received some formal education, boys more often than girls, which normally took place at home, although some were sent away to school.

With the advent of the churches and chapels, when families began to attend regularly, children had the opportunity to read and write at Sunday school, as well as being instructed in the Scriptures.

Education



Educating the poor was said to be pointless, as many thought they could not be improved by education. It was also widely believed that, 'a little learning is a dangerous thing' and some feared that the poor might become dissatisfied with their situation and, in consequence, give heed to radical agitators. Philanthropists, however, believed that limited education of the poor, if taught through religion, could bring benefits, enabling them to accept their humble station in life as part of the natural order. In addition, it was anticipated the poor would be less uncouth and more industrious workers.

Apart from Sunday schools, various other types of school were available to the poor before the 19th century developments. Some parishes had church and charity schools, though the teaching in these schools sometimes left a lot to be desired. Rather more numerous were so-called 'dame' schools which catered for young children from about the age of three until about seven to eight years old. The fees were a few pence per week. Unfortunately, these schools appear to have been little more than child-minders; there were no inspections and the teachers required no qualifications.

The first steps towards a national system of schools came in 1811 and 1814 with the foundation of the National Society and the British Society, respectively. The National Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, whose name left no doubts about its aims, had its roots firmly in the Church of England. The number of pupils attending these schools could be very large, as many as 1,000, with only one master to keep order. To overcome this a system of monitors was used. Older pupils, aged ten and eleven years, were given cards with lessons written out on them. Using these cards, the monitors 'taught' groups of ten to twenty of the younger children, usually by getting them to repeat the lesson and learn it by heart.

Aspects of this 'monitor' system still exist in schools today, although the tasks are more to do with teaching young people about responsibility; for example, collecting the class register from the school office.

The curriculum consisted mainly of Scripture and the three Rs, much of it being learned by rote and, therefore, not well understood. The first steps in writing took place at a 'sand desk' where children could practice marking letters and numerals in the sand, smoothing out the sand afterwards. Pupils then progressed to chalk and slates; paper and ink, being expensive, were kept for the more able pupils.

Even in school, reading was still largely based on the Bible; as school numbers increased so did books published specifically for education. Reading usually started with lists of two-letter words, progressing to words of more letters and syllables; the 'phonic' method, using simple words which sounded alike, was also popular. Other subjects were not universally taught. History and geography were given as dry facts - kings and queens and the countries of the globe - instead of teaching children about their own locality. Physical training was part of the curriculum and took the form of movements performed to instructions. Singing was also a daily event, with hymns and patriotic songs. The sterility of the curriculum was attributed to the system of 'payment by results'. Schools were able to apply for a government grant based upon attendance.

Corporal punishment was used by teachers to maintain order and the names of 'naughty' children were recorded in the Punishment Book. A blackboard rubber might be thrown at a child who was not paying attention, teachers cuffed children behind the ear with the flat of the hand or fist; a yard stick, strap, birch rod or cane was used across bare hands and legs, and bottoms.

School holidays were usually taken as follows: one week at Easter and at Whitsun, four weeks in the summer and ten days at Christmas.

The standard of teaching was poor; school monitors were expected to become schoolteachers with little formal training. In 1839 an unsuccessful attempt was made to introduce state-aided teacher training colleges. The Church of England then opened its own institutions and by 1845 had 22 colleges with places for 540 students. However, funding was a problem. The government, therefore, stepped in and introduced the pupil-teacher system in 1846. Older, more able pupils, under the guidance of an experienced teacher, would teach part or entire lessons and continued their studies with a teacher in the evenings. In country schools the pupil teacher was also expected to carry out personal duties for children, such as toileting and hair inspections for lice.

The pupil teacher's work and progress was examined annually by H.M.I., and a government grant of £10 awarded at the end of the first year if successful, and on until year five when the amount rose to £20. After five years and passing the Queen's Scholarship examination at a high standard, the pupil teacher gained a place at teacher training college to study for a teaching certificate, if they could afford the fees. A Certificate of Merit was awarded to those who were competent but did not attain the required standard. This allowed pupils to teach with an annual grant towards their salary. In the 1880s qualified teachers in towns and cities were earning between £60 and £100 per annum, whereas country teachers would be lucky to get £30.

In 1861 the Royal Commission recommended the creation of local boards of education with the power to collect a school rate and build schools.

By 1870 the National and British Societies had progressed as far towards a national system of education as voluntary organisations could be expected to go. William Foster introduced the Elementary Education Act in 1870 when grants were made available for the erection of schools.

These new schools were administered by locally elected School Boards made up of leading local citizens, representatives of the local church and gentry. Many such schools were known for generations as 'Board Schools'. The boards had the power to frame by-laws for the compulsory attendance of children from the ages of five to thirteen.

The 1876 Elementary Education Act placed a duty upon parents to ensure children receive elementary instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic and appointed a School Attendance Committee.

However, in certain areas the principle of compulsory education conflicted with the existing legislation regarding child employment, which allowed eight to thirteen year olds to work half a day and attend school half a day. This was, of course, the situation in mining communities. Attendance Officers were soon appointed to liaise with families if children did not attend school and to catch truants.

By 1880 schooling was made compulsory until at least the age of ten, and children could not enter full-time employment until the school-leaving age of fourteen. As a child's contribution made a significant difference to a family's income, parents who previously saw little purpose in education, now became concerned about them reaching the standard required for paid employment. By 1893 the school leaving age was raised to age eleven years.

In 1895 the Royal Commission on Secondary Education laid the foundation for the future administration structure of secondary education.

The 1899 Board of Education and Elementary Education Acts raised the school leaving age to twelve years and made provision for special schools.

In 1902 a new Local Education Authorities were formed to provide secondary education.

By 1909 the school leaving age was raised to fifteen years.

The Hetton Coal Company made provision for children's education in Hetton in spite of some lads starting to work underground at an early age.

In an abstract of Education Returns it is recorded that 'in 1831, with a population of 5,887 inhabitants, there were 14 day schools, one of which commenced in 1826, contains 107 males and 25 females, of which number 30 are instructed free of expense. The remainder in this school, and all the children in the other 12, at the expense of their parents; of these 12, one contains 40 males and 50 females; another (commenced 1822), 70 males and 30 females; another, commenced 1828, contains 15 males and 41 females; another, commenced 1829, seven males and 59 females; three others, commenced 1831, contain 55 males and 53 females.'

So between 1822 – 1831, there were already fourteen day schools: in 1822, 100 pupils attended; in 1826, 132 pupils; in 1828, 56 pupils; in 1829, 66 pupils, and by 1831, with three additional schools, 324 pupils (total) attended with another (unidentified) 90 pupils. The opening dates of these schools and the attendances for these years have only been identified for eight schools. However, it seems there were 444 girls and 514 boys at school. It is interesting to note that most parents were paying for their children to attend. It would have been helpful if these schools had been named.

The Committee of the Council on Education visited schools to monitor attendance and, with the population falling significantly (in 1841 the population was approximately 4,153), obviously school rolls decreased. The number of schools visited in the chapelry (exclusive of the national school

where boys and girls were separately educated under the same roof) was nine. Of these three were dame schools and of the masters, two were Primitive Methodists, one was a Wesleyan, and one a Baptist. Some schools, which were originally established so poor children could receive a very elementary education, were called 'Dame' schools since they were usually taught by elderly ladies. The number of children under education in the schools visited was about 64 at the dame schools, and 116 at the day schools.

Although the national school (the Barrington School) was not visited at that time, 128 was mentioned as the average number of boys attending. Apparently, the harvest season was exerting its influence in reducing the attendance. Almost all the day schools were opened in the evening for the instruction of older persons.

Charges for children's education seemed to vary. John Robson, the Hetton (Lyons) Colliery Viewer, mentioned that children each paid 1½d per week for instruction, and ½d for books. The owners paid the other necessary expenses, adding in some cases private subscriptions. There is a significant discrepancy in these charges because the information provided by the Education Authority stated that the most expensive school ranged from 7s 6d to £1 1s per quarter, the latter including drawing and mensuration. The charges at the rest varied from 3d to 8d and, in one case, 10d and 1s per week.

The National and Barrington School

The National School Room was built by subscription in 1834, at a cost of about £350. The Honourable Maria Jane Bowes Barrington intended that it was 'for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the established church'. The school accommodated 200 boys originally but was then enlarged to house 120 girls too. The school, in the centre of Hetton, on Front Street (the present mini-market), was built of stone. There was only one room divided into two: the area for the boys was 44 feet by 30 feet, and that for the girls, 30 feet by 22 feet. The rooms were open to the roof. The walls, approximately 14 feet high, were hung with several maps. There were six classes, each with a monitor. The books read in school were small Histories of England and Rome, Sellon's Abridgment, Pinnock's Catechisms of Geography and Grammar, with the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures were read daily and instruction given in the catechism and services of the church. The children were assembled and dismissed with prayers and singing.

There was sufficient accommodation for the children in the church, and their behaviour there was attended to. Rewards of small books were given. Punishments took the form of confinement to the school house and strapping on the hand.

Some of the children were admitted at four years old; the girls left school at twelve; the boys were commonly removed at nine. The payments were 2d per week. The Master was trained at the Barrington School, Bishop Auckland, the Mistress at the Westoe National School, South Shields. The Master's salary was £26, with three fourths of a penny per child, that of the Mistress £20, with the same addition. The Hetton Coal Company subscribed £21 annually to the National School fund; about as much was contributed from other sources.

Roger John Lawson (1842 – 1908) states in his autobiography that he was taught at the Barrington School by his godfather, the Reverend John Nichol, who became the Rector of the parish church.



Barrington School of 1834 now a mini-market.

In 1893 a new school was built at Bog Row to accommodate the girls so the Barrington School became a 'boys only' school. By 1896 the school could house 400 pupils and the Hetton Coal Company contributed funds to maintain it.

Another Hetton resident recalls starting at the Barrington school in 1935 when Mr. H. B. Brittan was Headmaster and Mr. Robson, class teacher. There were four classes, with approximately 120 boys in total. A daily morning assembly with prayers and hymns, accompanied on the piano by Mr. Wood, the music teacher, was followed by a lesson on writing in pen and ink by the Headmaster. This lesson continued weekly until the scholars could read and write. Although slate boards were in evidence in the Headmaster's room, exercise books were supplied by County Durham Education Department. Free milk was also provided.

The school transferred to the Education Authority in March 1940, for a period of twenty-one years, and was known as the Hetton Church of England Boys' School.

The school closed in the summer of 1954. Various mini-markets have operated in the building since then.

Bog Row School for Girls

In 1893 a separate school for girls was built at Bog Row at a cost of £1,200. It was to accommodate 371 girls initially, but had an average attendance of 380; in 1902, there were 370 pupils. The Mistress was Miss Mary Townson.



Bog Row Girls School

Hetton Infants' School

The infants' school, situated at the junction of Front Street and Caroline Street, was erected in 1875 to accommodate 320 children, with an average attendance of 250. It was built originally with

limestone from the local quarry; a brick extension was added in the 1920s. The windows were intentionally located high up on the walls so that the children would not be distracted from their studies.



Hetton Infants School 1875

The school closed in the 1950s. In 1961, after alterations, the building re-opened as a library. After the library closed the premises were used for a time as a Boxing Club, but now (2014) it awaits re-development.

Hetton Lyons Council School

With the increasing population of school-age children in Hetton, a new school was built on farmland adjacent to the 'New Inn' (the oldest public house in the area) at the Four Lane Ends. There were three separate departments to accommodate infants aged five to eight years and boys and girls aged eight to fourteen years, in separate departments. Each department could house 250 pupils.

Although the school was opened on June 12th 1912, the first scholars, 230 boys, were not admitted until August of that year.

The staff consisted of:-

Mr. James Heslop, headteacher
three certified assistants
one pupil teacher, aged sixteen years
Mr. Meyers joined the staff later.

The Curriculum

The teaching of Literacy and Mathematics was a priority. Young children would copy shapes of letters from the blackboard by using chalk on a slate. Once mastered, the pupil used a wooden pen, with nib attached, and ink from an inkwell located on each desk. Primers were used when learning to read and phonetics were encouraged. In mathematics, the emphasis was on arithmetic; reciting multiplication tables by rote was required. In spite of the school being lit by gas it was often too cold, particularly in winter, when the log book of 1926 recorded 'normal' lessons being suspended in favour of music or recitation.

With the reorganisation of the school into Senior Mixed, Junior Mixed and Infant Schools in 1929, the junior school purchased 'Bell's Ladder of History', 'Gems of English', 'Songs Old and New', 'Columbus Regional Geography', 'Britain beyond the Seas' and 'Tales from Dickens'. Electric lighting had been installed by this time but, by modern standards, was considered poor. Heating the building was an additional problem; outdoor clothing was often worn indoors. In addition to English, Maths, Geography and History, the Christian religion was taught using the Scriptures. Younger children learned arts and crafts, the girls were instructed in sewing and cookery; older boys were instructed in woodwork and gardening. The school had its own garden for growing vegetables. Physical education took the form of 'drill' as there was a playground but no playing field.



Practical woodwork lesson 1920s



The old Hetton Lyons School

School Visits and Holidays

The children were given a half-day holiday as a reward for good behaviour and, except when there were outbreaks of infectious diseases, attendance appears to have been consistently good throughout the generations.

Royal events were celebrated, with a half-day holiday when King George V visited Lambton Park in November 1913 and a whole day for the wedding of H.R.H. the Princess Mary in 1922, and that of the Duke of York the following year. We must remember that newsreels of weddings were not readily available in local cinemas, radio ownership not widespread, and television many years ahead. Circus visits to the area were extremely popular. The school closed for a whole day in 1914 to visit Sanger's Circus at Houghton-le-Spring and again in 1921 when the circus came to Hetton. In 1917 a half-day holiday was given to visit a 'Wild Beast' show.

The school seems to be remarkably unaffected by the first world war with the exception of members of staff in the boys' department who entered military service. Sadly, one member of staff in the senior school lost his life. During the war male teachers were replaced by female staff. The school closed for the armistice signing on the day the war ended, on November 18th 1918. The following year there was a two-day holiday for 'peace celebrations' and an additional week's holiday added to the usual four weeks' summer holiday.

Unpreventable School Closures

As we well know many illnesses were contracted in school and Hetton Lyons was no exception. Outbreaks of influenza and whooping cough occurred in 1914, resulting in low attendance.

There were several outbreaks of influenza which closed the school in the summer of 1915 (for two weeks); November 1918 and February 1919 (four weeks) and again in January 1922. Health seemed to be restored until 1927 when influenza returned, this time with smallpox. During this time, children's attendance was monitored and parents interviewed by the Superintendent Attendance Officer.

Hardships due to Miners' Working Conditions

During the miners' strike of 1926, when the workforce felt that the coal owners were attempting to reduce their wages, although the general strike was short-lived, the miners themselves continued their struggle, causing hardship for their children. During this period, the Wesleyan school room provided free breakfasts and dinners for the children, except on Sundays. Hardship necessitated

provision for 'necessitous children'. In 1929 a meeting was held in the Council Offices to discuss the provision and distribution of boots by the Mansion House Fund to those with inadequate or no footwear. Vouchers were donated to provide 26 pairs of boots for needy children. At the same time, the Hetton collieries provided coats for them.

In spite of physical hardships, most children were well-behaved within the school system. Some pupils left at fourteen years of age but more able pupils could take an examination, in two parts and, if successful, move on to higher school to study for the school certificate.

The War Years 1939 – 1945

At the start of the Second World War pupils were taught in small groups with a restricted time-table, and the school day ended half an hour earlier. However, at the beginning of 1940 full time teaching resumed. Life within continued as normal with a visit from the school nurse for head inspections and by the school dentist. Training was carried out in the newly-constructed air-raid shelters. Lessons, thereafter, were frequently interrupted by air-raids, when activities to occupy the children took place in the shelters.

On February 21st 1941 a severe snowstorm caused havoc, and in spite of some pupils battling to school in blizzards, the school closed for two days. Despite the upheaval in school, on April 25th, 62 junior children were taken to a performance of 'The Merchant of Venice' by the Old Vic players in the Miners' Welfare Hall. Thankfully, the last occasion air-raid sirens disrupted the school was on October 26th 1942. A welcome addition to the school on July 6th 1943 was a dining centre in the school hall which could cater for 140 children. Forty-six children received free school meals and seventy-two paid 6d per meal.

Although details are scanty, it is recorded that 'in October 1944, an escaped prisoner broke into the school and stole gumboots and overalls.' At the end of the war in Europe, a Thanksgiving Service was held in school on May 8th 1945. The school then closed for one and a half days. On June 11th a sports' day, as an additional celebration, was cancelled because of inclement weather. However, the tea party to follow still took place.

The Post-War Years

At the start of the new school year in September 1946 there were 232 pupils on the roll and overcrowding continued to be a problem over the years.

The winter of 1946 – 1947 was one of the worst Britain had experienced, with snowstorms and blizzards which disrupted travel, milk deliveries, and caused numerous problems with burst pipes. Thankfully, school meals continued.

Highlights of 1946 – 1948 were a visit to the Grand Theatre, Houghton-le-Spring, when forty children were transported by S.D.O. bus to see a performance by the Scottish Children's theatre. The school closed for a day's holiday for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh and again for a half day to celebrate the silver wedding of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

The advent of BBC broadcasting programmes for school required a radio which was housed in a large wooden box and attached to an external aerial. 'Singing Together' (a pilot programme when children joined in the singing) began regular broadcasts.

Outside visits in the early years of the school were rare. However after the War day trips to Northumberland, South Tyneside and Yorkshire (mainly to historical places of interest) became frequent. In addition, Christmas parties seem to have featured annually. There were regular visits from the police to demonstrate principles of road safety.

A school inspection by H.M.I. inspectors in 1955 highlighted many inadequacies in the building which the local authority seemed to be in no great haste to rectify.

Headmaster Mr. Harry Robson retired in 1960 after twenty-one years' service and was replaced by Mr. Jack Steel.

Inadequate facilities in the school were again raised, including there being no school playing field. Permission was granted to use Hetton Lyons' Colliery football field. The introduction of a school football team was quickly followed by a school sports' day. Rounders and netball teams were also introduced. A pitch for the cricket team was always a problem but, by 1965, the team had won the Houghton and District Cricket League.

The school was by now enjoying annual day trips which were restricted to the senior pupils and some residential trips were organised. Visits to the circus, theatre and cinema also continued. The school began participating in inter-school sports' meetings at Hetton Urban District Council grounds. A Bell and Howell film projector, costing £215, was purchased from school funds, and was used for both educational purposes and film shows.

The Junior School had instituted a house system, the houses named after previous staff. A school uniform was also introduced.

At the start of the school year, September 1966, there were 230 pupils on the school roll. Swimming lessons for class 3 were introduced at Lambton Swimming baths to which pupils were transported by private coach. There were also cycle proficiency instruction and tests held in the school playground. The 1960s saw the end of the eleven plus examination, the two-part examination used to determine secondary school education. Thereafter, pupils were allocated a school according to ability, based upon teacher assessment. The comprehensive school system, of course, ended this selection process in the 1970s.

Hetton School

The earlier history of Hetton Lyons Council Modern School was not included in the 'Life at the Lyons' School' since the school log book has been retained in the present Hetton School.

Hetton School reopened as Hetton Senior Mixed School on January 8th 1929, and became Hetton Modern School after the Second World War. However, in 1967, the Four Lane Ends complex was abandoned for new premises in North Road. The new school opened with 232 pupils on the roll. These included senior pupils from East Rainton County School.

The official opening did not take place until March 3rd 1970, because further changes were expected. In 1975, Hetton became a mixed comprehensive, Hetton Secondary School, for 11 to 16 year olds, incorporating pupils from Easington Lane and Eppleton.

When Eppleton district was established, it was necessary to provide a school in the area.

Eppleton Colliery School

The colliery school was built in 1871 in Downs Lane by the Hetton Coal Company to accommodate 340 boys and 340 girls, with an average attendance of 340 each. There was also accommodation for 350 infants, with an average attendance of 290. When the school was enlarged in 1892, its capacity increased to accommodate 996 children. At that time the Master was Walter Hodgson, the Mistress, Miss Alice Fairs, and Miss Sarah Ogle, Infants' mistress.

The following is an extract from the Girls' Log Book (commenced January 5th 1891).

The staff were as follows:-

Headteacher: Miss I. S. H. Hodgson
Assistants: Miss I. G. Howe, Miss L. J. Thom, Miss H. Richley, Miss H. Taylor
Pupil Teacher: Ella Thom
Candidates: Harriet Strong, Agnes Ford

The school was visited by T. Lishman, Esq. and Rev. R. Hindle at the beginning of each month.

School attendance was monitored and reasons for absenteeism noted.

The girls were examined each month. When Standard III girls were examined:-

Words in reading known, but no expression used.
Long division grasped by the majority, but tables are at fault.
Writing and grammar on the whole very fair.

Subjects identified were arithmetic, tables, spelling, reading, writing, grammar and history.

Lessons identified were:-

Standard V: Special lesson in Bills of Parcel
Fractions

Standard VII: Present Worth and Discount
Stocks

New Song, 'A Lullaby' taught to Standards III, IV, V, VI, VII together.

Corporal punishment was administered for disobedience and inattention but no details were given.

This small extract from the daily log book suggests that the school curriculum was not at all inspiring, the Headmistress was a very hard task mistress, and both the Vicar and Mr. Lishman kept a close eye on the school.

Hetton Reading Rooms

Reading Room facilities were principally to encourage miners to become literate. A reading room opened in 1849 next to the Barrington School, which contained about 300 volumes, and was well-supplied with the leading papers and periodicals. It was managed by notable staff: the Rev. J. S. Nichol was president, Mr. John Bustin, treasurer, Robert Errington, secretary, and John Swallow and Robert Lawson, librarians.

There was also a reading room and lecture hall etc. in the Miners' Hall which was built in 1883 and another next to the Brewers Arms in Front Street.

Apparently some reading rooms were located in clubs and institutes where perhaps the pitmen would feel more at home. A reading room upstairs in the Colliery Inn has been mentioned.

The Colliery (Literary) Institute

The Institute was erected in 1892 on Downs Lane by the Hetton Coal Company for adult education, which included a library, containing upwards of 1,000 volumes, reading and billiard rooms. It was well supplied with weekly papers, periodicals, etc. and supported by subscriptions from the workmen. There was also an institute connected with the church.

The Church Institute

In 1900, the Church Institute was built from iron in George Street. This also contained a reading room and billiard room.

Outdoor Leisure

Pitmen enjoyed each others company, inside and outside of working hours, an opportunity to talk about the pit, have a bit 'crack' and, more than likely, a bet or two, and some ale.

Whether indoors or out, card-playing has been passed down through the ages and, even though associated more with men in previous times, it has developed as family entertainment over the years.

Playing-Card Disaster

In 1875, a group of pitmen were playing cards in a wooden hut belonging to the quarryman at Hetton when a terrific explosion wrecked the building and seriously injured the players. Cards were nicknamed the 'Devil's Buns' after that occasion.

Perhaps after this card-playing escapade a safer venue would be sort, on pub premises.

Gambling, Quoits, Pitch and Toss, Pot-Share Bowling

By 1870, the Franco-Prussian war brought about an increased demand for coal which resulted in pay increases for the Durham miners. Hewers were earning between 20 and 30 shillings. The miners were said to have money to burn but little money was saved for a rainy day and a perpetual gambling haze appeared to hang over the villages.

Pitmen frequented pubs, and every inn had its own quoit pitch. In the 1870s, public houses were open from six in the morning until eleven at night, which would certainly facilitate this leisure pursuit.

Beckwith's fields were a well-known venue for pitch and toss as was the field alongside the Barrington School in the centre of Hetton.

The chief media for betting for the big-money gamblers were the pot-share bowling matches staged at the Commercial Ball Alley at Hetton. Champions regularly appeared and hundreds of pounds changed hands when a big match took place.

Pigeons, Poultry, Rabbits, Pigs

Pitmen were used to keeping pigs, hens and rabbits in their back yards and those who had allotments had scope for pigeons and pigeon crees too. Many an hour would be spent down the allotment, waiting for the pigeons to come home and, in the meantime, spending time with their marras. Pigeon racing is a sport which is still popular today in the clubs which have survived the closure of the mines.

Hetton and District Poultry, Pigeon and Rabbit Society

For some time there had been a desire in the Hetton District to establish a poultry, pigeon and rabbit society amongst the fanciers. One Saturday night, in early January 1887, at Mr. R. Allan's hotel, Hetton-le-Hole, about 30 members paid their subscriptions, and appointed a secretary and an assistant.

The society was to be called the Hetton and District Poultry, Pigeon and Rabbit Society and would be open to anyone within six miles of Hetton.

Horse Racing, Whippet and Greyhound Racing

Houghton Feast is an annual event which is held on the Sunday after New Michaelmass Day and has been enjoyed throughout the generations. Most people associate Houghton Feast with Bernard Gilpin (1517 – 1583), the most distinguished Rector of St. Michael's parish church from 1558 – 1583, known as the 'Apostle of the North' and 'Father of the Poor' because he devoted his life to the care of the parishioners in his large parish. However, the original feast was, in fact, an Order Feast when the boys of the Kepier Grammar School which he established paraded through the village with lanterns.

The first Monday was observed as a general holiday when the various places of business in Houghton, Hetton and Easington Lane closed, and all availed themselves of the holiday time. Schools closed for a whole week in October for the time-honoured feast. Itinerant vendors, on both horse and foot, came to the town. In the Market Place a formidable array of shows assembled, in which wonders were exhibited and performed, backed up by a large number of stalls for the sale of articles of commerce, such as edibles and drinks. There was horse racing at Houghton Feast long before the Hetton Race Company was registered in the 1890s. The following are events on Day 1 of the races.

On **Monday, the 7th of October 1867** the following races took place:

The **Houghton Stakes** of £2 each, with £10 added. Weight for age. Distance 1 ½ miles. Three runners over two heats. Mr. Brown's – Minnie, Mr. T. White's – Tally-ho and Captain Pearson's – Deceiver. In the first heat, Tally-ho was the favourite and took the lead from the start. At the turns however, he ran very wide, which allowed Minnie to creep up and take the race, winning easily by a length. In the second heat, Minnie took the lead and maintained it throughout, and won easily by three lengths.



Horses and riders at Houghton Races.

The **Hetton Handicap** of 10 shillings each, with £5 added. Once round and a distance. Three runners over two heats. Mr. Anderson's - Glen Moray, 4 years, 8st 4lbs, ridden by Meggison, Mr. T. White's - Tally-ho, 5 years, 10 st, ridden by Lindsley, and Mr. Jones - Tramp, ?age, 9st, ridden by Owner. On the first heat betting was: evens on Glen Moray. Tramp took the lead at the start, and cut out the work at clipping pace for half the distance, when he was headed by Glen Moray, who easily stalled off the effort made by Tally-ho a distance from home and won easily by two lengths. In the second heat: no betting. Tally-ho took the lead from the start and for some distance appeared as if about to make a race of it with the favourite. On making the last turn for home, Glen Moray suddenly shot to the front and exhibiting superior galloping qualifications over his two opponents, ran home an easy winner by three lengths. Glen Moray - first, Tally-ho - second and Tramp - third in both heats.

Match - One mile. Catch weight. Owners up.

Captain Pearson's - Deceiver was the favourite. Mr. Brydon's - Factory Lass was indulged with a long lead to begin with, but her rider displayed great unsteadiness in the saddle, and as they traversed the far side of the course he came to grief, leaving the Deceiver to go in alone. Factory lass galloped in with her rider some time afterwards.

Other races included the **Harrington Stakes**, the **Consolation Scramble**, the **Lark Stakes**, the **Member's Plate**, the **Brewer's Plate**, the **Tradesmen's Plate**, the **Miner's Plate** and the **Hetton Hurdle Race**.

It was reported that the great event of the Feast had always been the races. Other events included quoit-playing, tug of war, pole-leaping, foot-racing, 200 yards handicap, hurdle racing and a bicycle race; dancing was kept up merrily to the strains of the Houghton brass band.

There can be no doubt that the race meetings held at the Houghton Hall Lane racecourse would attract many people from Hetton, particularly during Houghton Feast. The racecourse was set on open fields and attracted many local horseowners and riders. The last meeting took place in October 1938. After the war the land was used to build housing known today as the Race-course Estate.

The Hetton Race Company

The Hetton Race Company Limited was first registered in 1891 and, thereafter, organised horse racing, foot racing, football matches and the Houghton and Hetton handicap at the Houghton Feast Races and Sports. Although Houghton Feast has changed over the years, the tradition has survived and is still celebrated with church services, musical entertainment, fireworks, stalls, fairground and, most significantly, the roasting of the ox and sale of roast beef sandwiches. It is an opportunity for the local community to celebrate their rich heritage.



Foot-runners lining up to race at Hetton.

Foot running became a popular sport after the turn of the century. It had a national interest but each village in the north had their favourites who ran for fame rather than fortune. It also gave an opportunity for gambling to take place and foot runners often travelled great distances, such as Powderhall in Edinburgh, to make money for their fans. Unfortunately the sport was open to fraud as runners sometimes held back to alter gambling odds in later races or over-ate and so slowed up in competitions.

Greyhounds and whippets have also long been a part of the mining community, some men having the same attachment to their dogs as others had to pigeons, other animals or birds. When the outbreak of the Second World War led to a reduction in the Feast activities, horse and foot racing were replaced by greyhound racing. The Hetton Race Company managed the Houghton Stadium Club which opened its gates in 1939 and provided the Club with premises on the Houghton Stadium Ground (Houghton Race Course Estate) until its closure in 1971.

Sports

From time immemorial cricket and football have been the most popular sports and Hetton has seen its share of professional players in both. In team sports with local teams there would no doubt be serious competition and rivalry. Every organisation had its own cricket or football team, representing the church, colliery or school. It was said that an afternoon at the cricket field offered cheap and long entertainment, a family event where ladies made the tea, and men later discussed the game in the Social Club.

Eppleton Cricket Club

Eppleton Church Cricket Club was founded in 1884 for the recreation of the local mining community; the captain of the first XI team was invariably the local vicar.

Cricket was such a popular pastime, thousands of spectators attended. Regular matches were played during the 1880s and '90s with substantial prizes for the winning team; twenty-five pounds was not uncommon with heavy bets being placed on the outcome of the games. At the first match on May 30th 1884, played against Hetton-le-Hole second XI on the Hetton ground, Hetton scored 80 runs against Eppleton's 43.

From the club's committee minutes are two little gems, namely,

‘two stone of bird droppings were to be purchased for fertiliser’

‘the Reverend Hindle (will) arrange two police for the game against Hetton Lyons’.

In 1895 Arthur Newsome from Hunslet, near Leeds, took up a teaching post at Eppleton, and became a prominent member of the Eppleton Church Cricket Club as a player and Club secretary for almost 30 years. In 1902 Eppleton Church Cricket Club was one of the founder members of the Durham Senior League. In 1903 the Eppleton batsman, J. Dolphin, who was batting number three in their first game in the League, was renowned for his big hitting and was reputed to have fitted a piece of lead in his bat to make it heavier.

There have been tragedies in the Club's history, with one player lost in World War One and another to the pit. An outstanding player, David Glen, played for Eppleton and Durham City, was top of the League averages in 1937 and League President between 1965 – 1973.

The Club employed a professional player as early as 1896: K. Smith from Yorkshire was paid two guineas per week during the season. During the 1920s and '30s other notable club professionals were Stan Ellis (first class player for Lancashire and Durham), Maurice Nichol (a local man who played for Durham and Worcester) and local man, Harry Gibbon. One of the best known and most feared characters of the day was the Reverend Law, the club's captain and secretary of Durham County Cricket Club until his death in 1952.

In 1976, Ken Ferguson, a much admired member of the Senior League, who gave a life-time to Eppleton Cricket Club, took his thousandth wicket for the club against Whitburn. Sadly, Ken died in 2013.

The club, from 1977 – 1994, employed international professional players: David O'Sullivan (New Zealand), Steve Small (Australia), Jimmy Adams (West Indies) and Nehemiah (Jonny) Perry. Jimmy Adams later became captain of the West Indies whilst engaged by Eppleton, and was officially recognised as the best batsman in the world by Deloitte Test Ratings. In 1990 Jimmy Adams scored 1213 runs in the season with an average of 101.8 runs. Two years later he was to score 1147 runs at an average of 114.7 runs. It is evident that employing these professionals considerably boosted the club's profile, the first XI being crowned League champions in 1927, 1976, 1989 and 1993.

More recently, one of the club's ex-junior players, Scott Borthwick, made his full England debut in 20/20 cricket whilst touring India. Subsequently, the 23 year old leg-spinner, played for England's first XI where he took his first wicket on day one of the Fifth Test in Sydney, Australia, in January 2014. Regrettably, England lost the Ashes with a humiliating defeat.

The present club is able to field three senior and four junior teams during the season and has a successful social club. Maurice Nichol and Harry Gibbon, both Hetton lads, achieved tremendous success in the field of cricket.

Maurice Nichol, born Hetton-le-Hole 10 09 1904, perhaps the most successful cricketer to play for The Eppleton club No. 3, who began with Durham at the age of eighteen, top-scored for the county with 477 runs at 34.07 in the Championship-winning year of 1926. He then hit 496 at 29.33 in 1927. Keen to escape his mining background, after a trial at Surrey, he moved to Worcestershire for 1928, scoring a century against the West Indies in his first-class match. His top-score was 262 against Hampshire in 1930. Maurice died in Chelmsford in 1934.

Harry Gibbon, born Hetton-le-Hole 1906, an amateur for Eppleton and New Seaham Park, then a professional for Sunderland, Eppleton and Bacup. He played in a Championship-winning team in his second season with Durham. An excellent league cricketer with a wide range of strokes, who was especially strong on the onside. He hit his first century for Durham in 1928. His greatest triumphs

came in 1930 against Surrey and in 1934 for Denbighshire, scoring a century in 1934 and taking 7/16 in 1935. Harry died in Barrow in 1970.

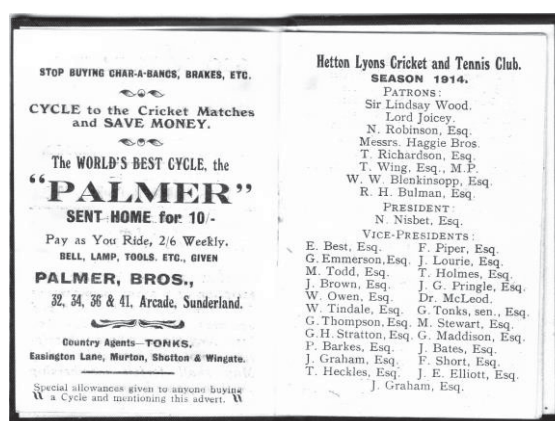
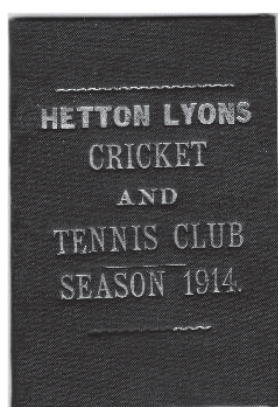
The information about Hetton Lyons Cricket Club is scanty.

Hetton Lyons Cricket Club

The club was formed in 1865 on land which belonged to the Bowes-Lyon family. In 1886 the club amalgamated with Easington Lane Lilywhites. The club played in the Durham Coast League and was the first team ever to win the League in 1926.

One hundred years later the land on which the club was built was purchased from the Bowes-Lyon family.

It is heartening to learn that Hetton-le-Hole's proud cricketing tradition is being maintained by successful junior teams (both Eppleton and Hetton Lyons Cricket Clubs) who are competing in the Durham County Cricket League (North-East Premier League). In addition Hetton School, which prides itself in sporting achievements, has young cricketers playing for them, with plans to work, as Hetton School Cricket Academy, in partnership with Durham Cricket Board and the two local cricket clubs.

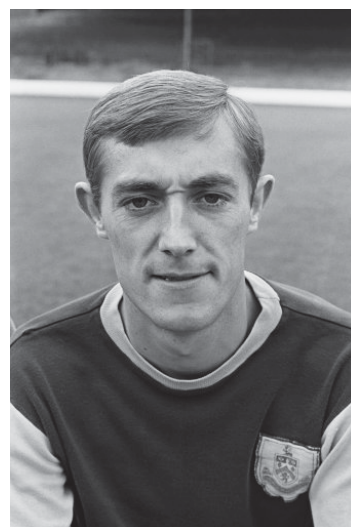


Some may feel that football is a more popular sport in Hetton than cricket. There have been teams attached to many organisations. There have been some outstanding football players throughout the years, many from mining stock.

Bob Paisley, born Hetton-le-Hole 23 01 1919, attended Eppleton Senior Mixed School and played in Hetton Junior Football Team. In 1939 he was in the F. A. Amateur Cup Final for Bishop Auckland at Roker Park; signed for Liverpool. In the 1950 F. A. Cup Final Bob Paisley got the all-important first goal for Liverpool against Everton. He was regarded as the most successful manager in English Football. He died in 1996 and is commemorated in Hetton, with a plaque on the wall of the previous Barrington school (now the minimarket) and a memorial in the park area alongside.



Bob Paisley



Harry Potts

Harry Potts, born Hetton-le-Hole 22 10 1920, became a professional footballer with Burnley. His highlight was the 1947 F. A. Cup Final at Wembley. In 1950, he transferred to Everton for £20,000. He was a coach at Wolves and manager at Shrewsbury, then returned to Burnley. He was one of the most successful managers in Burnley's history, leading them to the League championship in 1959 – 1960 and runners-up two years later. After a short stay at Blackpool, he returned to Burnley for 1977 – 1979 seasons. Harry died in 1996.

Cycling

Hetton had a cycling club in the late 1800s as pitmen liked to keep themselves fit. They dressed like country gentlemen and rode off into the countryside. Cycling is still a popular sport today for both large and small groups. The club has a cycle track at Hetton Lyons Country Park.



Hetton Cycling club at Finchale



Easington Lane Cycling club c1910

Courtesy of the Bob Moody Collection

Thankfully, these traditions still continue and these sports are still as popular today.

Breweries, Public Houses, Working Men's Clubs

It is evident that the brewery trade in Hetton was a thriving business since from the establishment of the mining community there have been several breweries operating in spite of many attempts to dissuade pitmen from indulging.

Brewing and Breweries

At the beginning of the 19th century individual brewers produced individual products – beer (hops added), ale or porter.

The 1830 Beerhouse Act allowed any ratepayer to sell beer on his premises without the need of a magistrate's licence. In the 1830s the anti-spirit campaign, with its tolerance of moderate beer consumption, had come under strong challenge from the total abstainers. Visits to the North East by the celebrated Temperance lecturers, Joseph Lynsey and Thomas Whittaker in 1835 and 1836 resulted in the formation of teetotal societies in many towns (North East Temperance League).

The 1840 Act introduced a requirement that only the resident occupier of a beerhouse could hold the licence.

By the 1850s brewers were more likely to be producing beer than ale.

The magistrates were not, of course, exclusively upholders of the law, some had anti-drink sympathies and others were also employers. To open a beerhouse it was necessary (but only a formality) to buy a licence for two guineas which allowed the retail sale of beer, ale, porter and perry. It was also necessary to put up a bond with sureties for any fines resulting from breaches of the provisions of police regulations with respect to such things as drunkenness on the premises, adulteration of beer, short measures and riotous behaviour.

In 1869 the Wine and Beerhouse Act encompassed beerhouses, beershops and beer retailers when a justices' licence was required, just as for all other full licences.

By 1870 justices had the power to refuse to grant or renew licences for all types of retail outlets. Hence Brewster sessions (see below).

The 1872 Licensing Act encompassed the licensing of premises selling beer and spirits, limiting the number of places and the opening hours from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. and the sale of intoxicating liquor to those below age sixteen. The Act also prohibited gambling on the premises.

Houghton-le-Spring Brewster Sessions

The Houghton-le-Spring Brewster Sessions were held yesterday, August 31st 1881, in the Houghton-le-Spring Police Court before Mr. John Kidson, presiding, Mr. E. F. Boyd and Mr. E. Richardson. Superintendent Farbridge reported that there were 140 innkeepers in the division and the following had been convicted during the past year.

Ann Nutman, Hetton-le-Hole, permitting drunkenness, fined 20s and costs.
Thomas Willis, Great Lumley, illegally selling, fined 5s and costs.

Robert Barron, George Smart and Robert Forster, all of Penshaw, had been fined 40s, 20s and 40s, and costs, respectively, for adulterating whiskey. After being admonished therewith the whole of the old licences were renewed.

After 1880, especially with North East brewers, stress was placed on design and layout of buildings.

Between 1890-1914 the number of breweries fell by more than half and the trade was publicly admitting by the 1930s that other forms of amusement, the picture house and the desire to keep fit for strenuous sports like cycling, were making rapid advances. In addition, the licensed club was an alternative to the public house, selling alcoholic drinks.

Hetton Breweries

There has always been a discrepancy about the number of breweries in Hetton-le-Hole, and which one opened first.

Thomas Lamb & Sons, Hetton-le-Hole Ltd, *The Hetton Brewery*

Contrary to opinion, Lamb's Brewery did not open in 1823. Thomas Lamb was born in the Market Place, Houghton-le-Spring, in 1823. Having musical talents, he practiced violin in Newcastle, became a musician and music teacher, and organised colliery bands, performing in Durham. He abandoned his profession, married Mary Wilson, started a brewery business in Old Brancepeth Castle Inn, and then became proprietor of the Commercial Hotel, Brancepeth.

In 1861 he purchased Hetton Brewery, close to the Union Street Chapel, from the late Joseph Love of Durham (Joseph Stabler listed 1858; Francis Love listed 1848 – 1856), and his sons and grandsons joined the family business and continued successfully making spirits.

Thomas was active in public life as a member of Hetton-le-Hole select vestry, a member of the Board of Guardians and the Highways Board. He was also a director of Hetton and Easington Lane Water Company. Most worthy of note was his generosity to public charities, providing an annual tea and the giving liberal gifts to the deserving poor and those receiving parish relief at Hetton, Hetton Downs and Easington Lane, upward of £300 on each occasion. He also contributed to many other worthy causes.

His company was noted to be most entertaining, his ready wit and racy stories being long remembered by a large circle of friends. Oh to be a party to some of those stories!

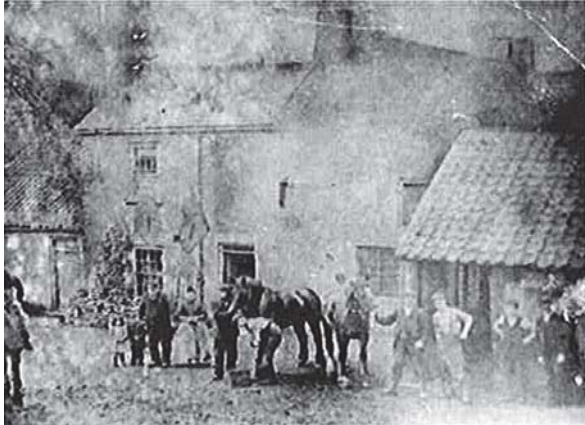


Old Brewery pub c1905. 60metres from the brewery

When Thomas died in 1908 he left an estate of £76,248.

In 1913 their products were awarded first prizes at the Brewers' Exhibition for Lamb's Pale Ale and Lamb's Oatmeal Stout. The company belonged to the family until 1954 when Thomas Lamb & Sons Limited was bought by Vaux and Associated Breweries.

Thomas Raine, *The Bleach Green Brewery*



A sale notice for the Maltser's Arms and brewery, occupied by Raine, appeared in 1837. A death notice of 1850 referred to the wife of Thomas Raine of the Brewer's Arms Inn. A sale notice of 1854 referred to a brewhouse at the Brewer's Arms, Front Street. In 1856, a Mr. Raine had advertised a 'neat and convenient brewery' for let. Thomas Raine was listed at the Bleach Green Brewery in 1851, and as a brewer in 1855.

c 1890 The old Bleach Green Brewery which became a smithy

Joseph & Mrs. March, *The King's Head*

Joseph March was listed in 1848. By 1851 Mrs. March was occupying the inn and a brewhouse capable of 14 barrels.

John Willis was listed as brewer in 1848, and as a farmer and brewer in 1851.

Mr. Surtees was leaving a brewery and a piece of garden land and a public house in 1853.

Bertram Bulmer advertised a 'convenient small brewery with dwelling house and good supply of water' in 1858.

There has always been a large number of public houses, inns and hotels in Hetton for both social drinking and entertainment. The King's Head, Richard Street, is dated from 1823; in 1827 The Fox and Hounds, Bog Row, the New Inn and Lyons Inn, Four Lane Ends, The Queen's Head, Golden Lion and Hetton Downs Hotel, Hetton Downs; in 1828 the White Lion which closed in 1877. The Abyssinia Hotel, Four Lane Ends, is mentioned for its name alone and the Prince of Wales, known as the Number 9, in Railway Street.

As well as pitmen being paid in the pub every other Friday, inquests following mining disasters were held in the Magistrate's Court, the Colliery Inn, Front Street. Reverend Nichol of St. Nicholas's Church, was both rector and magistrate for the Parish.

The Working Men's Club Movement

Pubs were the main meeting place in the mining community, but the idea of a Working Men's Club or Institute was introduced, for working men to meet, chat, and improve themselves, free from intoxicating drink. This concept, however, soon changed.

The Working Men's Club and Institute Movement

Henry Solly (1813 - 1903), British Unitarian Minister and Social Reformer, was concerned for the rights and prosperity of working men which led him to support the Chartist Movement. While

serving as a minister at Lancaster, 1858 – 1862, he became convinced that working men needed recreational clubs. Accordingly, in 1862, he founded the Working Men's Club and Institute Movement in London.

The aim of this new Movement was to encourage the formation of clubs by working men where they could meet for conversation, business and mental improvement, with the means of recreation and refreshment, free from intoxicating drinks. In addition, clubs would constitute societies for 'mutual helpfulness in various ways' (taken from the prospectus written by Solly). The clubs would allow for 'unrestrained social intercourse', and would be places where the middle class and gentry could be brought in touch with, and influence, the working class. Solly became the Union's first paid secretary in 1853. A fine organiser he founded clubs all over the country and soon made the Club Union into a national organisation. However, as secretary he wanted everything run his own way. In 1867, when he opposed the Club's practice of selling alcohol, he was forced to resign. He returned in the 1870s but left again after disputes about salary. The movement which he started, nevertheless, proved to be a permanent feature in British life. When he died in 1903 there were 992 clubs with over 380,000 members.

Although there is little information about Hetton Working Men's Clubs, which is possibly attributed to material having been destroyed, it is well known that these clubs have always been a great part of leisure in mining communities. Not only were they venues where marras would meet but also where allotment and garden produce was exhibited, concerts and other musical entertainment took place; they were the very hub of pit leisure.

Hetton and District Working Men's Club

The first working men's club was opened on Saturday, December 22nd 1906 in Pemberton Street. Another new club was built behind Richard Street and opened on Saturday, April 15th 1911. Tragically, James Smith, an old man who lived in Barrington Terrace, fell down dead that very day about 7 p.m. In 1957 the Club was partially burnt down. As a temporary measure, the old Comrades' Club in Market Street, which was empty, was used by the Club until their own premises were rebuilt and refurbished the following year.



Hetton Big Club in the 1920s.

Hetton Big Club, as it was known locally, to distinguish it from other social clubs in Hetton, provided a wide variety of interests and activities to its members and their families. Not only did it offer some of the best music and vaudeville but it had a full-size bowling green and snooker and billiard tables. There were a number of music performances held within its grounds and good use was made of the bandstand. The main World War 1 memorial was established within its grounds, with names of the fallen in World War 2 added later.

Hetton Victory Club

After World War One ended, Hetton Victory Club opened in Railway Street. New premises were built in Richard Street in 1938.

Hetton Social Club

Hetton Social Club on Station Road, which was originally built as the Conservative Club, was erected in 1897 at a cost of £2,000. The name changed to Hetton Social Club in the early 1940s. This rather good looking building is probably the oldest social club in Hetton.

Hetton Comrades' Club

Hetton Comrades' Club opened in Market Street in the early 1920s. The Club moved to new premises on Houghton Road in 1956 to a large house that had once been Dr. Black's home. When the Club closed in 1992, due to financial problems, it became a private club, the Croft Club. Since then it has been demolished and houses now stand on the site.



Opening of Hetton Comrades Social Club 1956



Hetton Social Club once the Conservative Club.

Music Hall, Theatre, and Cinema

A pint, a bit of relaxation in the local pub or club, a bit 'crack' with marras after a hard shift at the pit, spin a few yarns, and sing a few songs. This is how the music hall developed in the back rooms of pubs and clubs.

Music Hall and Theatre

Music hall evolved from sing-song in pubs, probably as the karaoke of the day. It was virtually the first kind of entertainment to cater specifically for working class tastes. In the 1830s landlords set aside back rooms in their pubs for what were termed 'saloon concerts'.

Collet's Theatre

We know that in 1840 Collet's theatre operated in Tommy Raine's yard behind the Brewer's Arms in the centre of Hetton and extended back into the field behind. Two productions of note were 'Murder in the Red Barn' and 'Maria Martin', the chief characters being Jimmy Dunbar (one eye) Green and Donkin, the villain, assisted on stage by Old George, the clarinet player.

As music halls began to develop, the Theatres Act in 1843 was put in place to restrict the powers of the Lord Chamberlain given to him under the Licensing Act 1737 so that he could only prohibit the performance of plays when he was of the opinion that "it was fitting for the preservation of good manners, decorum of the public peace, so to do." It also gave additional powers to local authorities to licence theatres.

By the 1850s many inns had their own halls for simple theatre and concerts and their number continued to increase in the 1860s and 1870s.

From the 1870s onwards performers began to turn professional and songs were written especially for them for which they held the public performing rights. Marie Lloyd was one of the best known music hall performers. After the 1870s, music hall became more formalised and took place in variety theatres where the performer was on a stage and the audience confined to rows of seating. Music and dancing licences were now required for public performance and few variety theatres had a drinks' licence.

Such a theatre, the Standard Theatre, was built in Hetton.

The Standard Theatre

The Standard Theatre was erected in 1874 at Mount Pleasant, near the Quay. Built from red brick, the theatre could seat 800 persons. Access to the pit was half way along the right-hand side; the gallery, added in 1900, was at the front, left-hand side. At each side of the stage were changing rooms and the props were housed in a lean-to shed at the rear of the building.

Mr. J. Watson of the Criterion Theatrical Company was the proprietor, having been granted a license by the Houghton-le-Spring magistrates for the performance of stage plays 'in a wooden building roofed with tiles, situated at Mount Pleasant near Hetton.'

Located on the bank of the Quay by Bog Row, the Standard Theatre was a most unusual design. It had a gallery on the up-hill side of the auditorium in place of a balcony. The double doors were added when it became a garage, the door to the stalls being on the side of the building. The door on the left was the door leading to stairs and eventually to the gallery.



The former Standard Theatre, now an agricultural merchants

The theatre closed in 1916 when the gable-end was demolished and the premises used as a garage for a bus company. Later tenants were Messrs. Hall and Summerbell. The present trader is Mr. W.



Inside the Standard Theatre today

The stage was located where the raised platform with steps can be seen in the photograph. The platform has been lowered so that lorries can be loaded with ease. The gallery was to the left supported by the four metal poles coming from the roof.

In spite of the Standard Theatre closing it would appear that the advent of the cinema generally brought about a revival in theatre premises which could double up as venue for the showing of films, the silent movies.

Cinema

The living theatre survived many threats to its existence down the years but the most formidable was the challenge of the cinema. The first 'flickers' of this new entertainment medium were seen around the beginning of the 20th century, starting as 'Animated Picture Shows' on fairgrounds and then becoming a regular feature of music hall programmes. Usually advertised as 'The Bioscope Pictures', the images seen were of the 'chasing' type, the forerunner of the serial of later years. It was the fairgrounds which popularised the 'living pictures' and brought the cinema to the people of Britain.

At Houghton Feast, the established annual event in early October, travelling showmen with 'Ghost Shows' would be at the fairground. Randall Kay Williams (1846 – 1898) was one of the best known travelling showmen and illusionists of the Victorian age. He had the distinction of owning the first double-entrance Bioscope in the country. He had begun with a tent for showing the films, transported on a horse-drawn dray, together with a gas engine to generate power and a trumpet organ to provide the music. The original Bioscope had an 89-key Gavioli organ, but later an even larger 110-key instrument was purchased which needed a traction engine to pull it with the Bioscope. Surprisingly, Randall appeared on stage at Hetton-le-Hole on August 9th 1894 in 'The Great Ghost Show'.

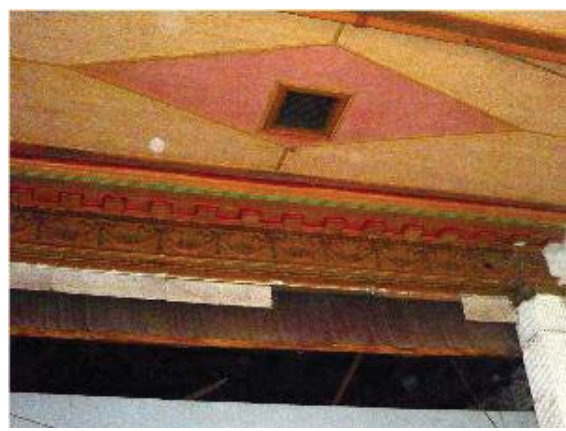
The Pavilion Theatre and Cinema

The Pavilion Theatre was built on land known as the show field, at the top of Richard Street, by Ralph Barton, Salt Works' owner, in 1909. The manager was Mr. William Travers of Houghton-le-Spring. Bill and Linden Travers, son and daughter of William and Florence (nee Wheatley, of sweet factory fame), were to become famous actors.

The theatre doubled up as a cinema. Two films were shown each night. After the first showing this film would be taken to the Mill pub and in exchange a film which had been shown at the Picture House, Fence Houses, would be brought back. Silent movies were accompanied by live music. In 1912 the musicians were Mr. Hodgkiss, cornet, Mr. Barton, violin and Mr. Robson, piano. The musicians would frequent the pub across the road after the first film. The film 'The Three Musketeers' was shown in 1921 and 'The Prisoner of Zenda' the following year. In 1923 the Hetton and District Choral and Amateur Dramatic Society performed the comic opera 'Highwayman Love', produced by Eric Mason and in the March of the following year 'The Dogs of Devon'.



*The old Pavillion Theatre's balcony decoration.
The projector room was at the rear.*



Ceiling colours and detail in the Pavilion

By the 1930s it was said that many people showed a preference for the picture house over the pubic house.

The last film to be shown when the Pavilion closed on June 6th 1959 was 'Home after Dark'.

The Imperial Theatre and Cinema

The building of the Imperial Theatre and Cinema in Station Road (next to the Conservative Club, later to become the Social Club) commenced in 1922 but was not completed until 1926. Although built as a cinema it was also used for live shows, the first production being performed by the Hetton Opera

Company. Mr. A. Share of Fawcett Street, Sunderland (furniture dealer) was a sponsor and, apparently, organised a clock to be installed at the right hand side of the stage.

Mr. Tom Hall, previous duty doorman of the Standard Theatre, was doorman at the Imperial, followed by Mr. Kirtley.

'Isle of Lost Ships' was the first sound film shown on March 4th 1930.



Imperial Cinema, Station Road. Now demolished

In 1960 Stall Cinemas took over the ownership of the Imperial and films came from offices in the Tyne Theatre, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne. Films were shown nightly and Tuesday afternoon. Tuesday matinees were popular, particularly with pensioners.

On October 10th 1962, when the Imperial closed, the last film to be shown was 'The Hangman'.

Shops which displayed details of the cinema's films for the week were given free admittance.

The 'pictures', 'flicks' or 'flickers' provided wonderful entertainment over the years with matinées for children and evening shows for adults. There was a supporting film, the main film and a newsreel, with forthcoming attractions in between. Now sadly all the local cinemas have closed . . . but memories remain.

Bands and Musical Group

All kinds of music have been enjoyed in colliery villages over the years, whether it be choral music, a sing-song around the piano at home or in a club, concert parties and bands, especially brass bands. These events were held in a variety of venues: churches and church halls, welfare halls, pubs and clubs. Such entertainment is still enjoyed today although the structure and venues have changed considerably.

The History of Banding

The early 19th century bands, from which developed the mid-19th century brass bands, were the army and auxiliary forces, village and church bands.

The 1850s was a particularly important period in the growth of banding when there were three major types of band:-

- (i) a band linked to a single workplace,
- (ii) a subscription band, with support from the wider community or institution such as the Mechanics' Institute or Temperance Society,

- (iii) a band adopted by the 1859 Volunteer Movement: the Volunteer Corps would be called out in case of invasion.

The Volunteer Movement was responsible for many brass bands in the second half of the 19th century, when popular interest in them was at its height and brass bands were woven into the fabric of popular music culture, being appropriately called 'The Golden Age'.

The first Brass Band

The first brass band is claimed by author John Enderby Jackson to have been formed near Blaina, Monmouthshire, at Brown Brothers Mill, in 1832. Enderby, born in Mytingate, Hull, was the son of a tallow chandler and soap boiler, who was later to claim to be the founder of Brass Band Competitions. Most of the players in private bands were drawn from travelling show bands. Indeed, travelling shows almost always had their own band, which featured in their advertisements, the famous and the best being Wombwell's Circus and Menagerie.

After cheap valve instruments became generally available, almost every village and mine had its own band and choir by the middle of the 19th century. Music making was, perhaps for the first time, a regular part of community life and not just a pastime for the upper or middle classes. Membership of these bands was primarily from the working classes and the majority of working class bandsmen were miners.

Miners, working long hours for small wages, began to value their leisure time and became more organised. The expansion and formalising of leisure brought about regular band practices in a set place, at a set time. Banding was encouraged by mine owners as it was thought music-making had a civilising influence and brought about moral improvement. In addition, 'banding' added to festivities at opening ceremonies and workers' treats and dignity to formal occasions such as political rallies and demonstrations.

Brass Band Competitions

The earliest version of the National Brass Band Championships, organised by Enderby Jackson, took place at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in Hyde Park, London, with the opening of Crystal Palace. The exhibition building was then moved to Sydenham, South London, where it stood from 1854 until 1936. With the cooperation of Crystal Palace Management Enderby organised an annual band contest from 1860 to 1863. He even organised, in collaboration with the railway companies, the transportation of bands and their supporters, free-of-charge, to the capital. This was the first time amateur bands visited the London area. There were two contests which took place on consecutive days. Both days concluded with a spectacular massed brass band concert, performed by almost 1,400 of the contestants. Spectator admission for day one was 2/6 and 1/- for day two.

Banding in Hetton-le-Hole



Hetton Silver prize band c. 1890.



Hetton Silver Band National Contest winners 1947

Brass band music has a long association with North East England and, particularly, the mining communities. The colliery band will immediately spring to mind and the long tradition of brass bands accompanying the colliery banner and respective lodge to Durham for the 'Big Meeting' or 'Gala', where the North-East's mining heritage is celebrated.

This event, funded principally by the Durham Miners' Association, started in 1871, and has now become a day of nostalgia, with pitmen sharing a common bond with family and friends. The colourful parade of banners and bands, which arrive early morning by train or coach, processes from the Market Place to the former racecourse by the River Wear, where speeches by trade union and political dignitaries, and fairground and other entertainment, take place. For many years banners and bands have paused in front of the Royal County Hotel to serenade the speakers and guests.

Each lodge banner bears an individual theme, proudly proclaiming past achievements and aims for the future. In earlier times, the banner was used to promote the benefits of being in a union and to provide the union with an identity, acting as a rallying point for its members. Many banners have depicted pit life, mining notables or commemorated pit disasters, when the banner would be draped in black. New banners are still being made, which is a tribute to the survival of this old tradition. The blessing of new or restored banners by the Bishop of Durham in the Cathedral was first held in 1897 at the annual Miners' Festival Service and continues to this day. The Eppleton banner, made in 2011, depicts the 1951 disaster in which nine men lost their lives.



Hetton Silver Band leading the pit banners in Hetton on their way to the Big Meeting.

Durham Big Meeting has been the largest social and political event in the history of the North East coalfields. At its height the Gala attracted 250,000 people and was the largest Trade Union event in Europe. It has continued, inspite of the collieries having closed, and still has the power to lift the spirits and warm the hearts of the many thousands of spectators year after year.

Brass bands enabled musicians to travel, especially with the advent of cheap rail fares. Several bands have been formed in Hetton although little information is available, other than when they were formed or were active.

Hetton Saxhorn Band

In the 1840s Adolphe Sax, a Belgian instrument maker developed a family of bell-up, valved brass horns, the saxhorn, described as of the bugle type, played with a cup mouthpiece. Hetton apparently had a Saxhorn Band which was active in 1878.

Hetton Silver Band

Hetton Silver Band was founded on April 1st 1887 by three members of a public house band. Local musicians were invited to a meeting in the Union Street Methodist Church School and, as a result, a tin practice hut was built in South Market Street. The first conductor, Mr. W. Straughan, was both a violinist and trombone player. Between 1887 and 1907 the band won numerous local contests but its real success came in 1908 when it won the Durham and Northumberland Brass Band championship and the English and Scottish international contest.

A brick band hall was built in 1912, supposedly with the 1,000 guinea prize money the band won at the Grand Shield, Crystal Palace. The land had been purchased from the Hetton Coal Company for £25. This new hall was apparently built around the tin hut with bricks from East Hetton Colliery Brickyard, and was the only purpose-built band hall in the region. The Silver Band had strong links with the mining industry and played for Eppleton Miners' Lodge at Durham Big Meeting.

In 1914 the band won the second section at Belle Vue, Manchester, and again in 1947.

In 1926 the band broadcast from Radio Newcastle.

In the 1970s and '80s the band moved up from the fourth section to play in the championship section.

Sadly, in 1992, a fire caused serious damage to the building and instruments. On a happier note, in 1994, now known as the Hetton Band, the band won the C.I.S.W.O. finals in Blackpool.

In 2009 the band merged with Broughton Brass Band, South Hetton, to form the Durham Miners' Association Band.

The band hall was dismantled and has been re-built at Beamish Open Air Museum, opening in May 2013, where it now stands proudly in the replica Pit Village.



Hetton Band Hall prior to demolition.



The Band Hall reopened at Beamish Museum

The following is an excerpt from a poem entitled *Hetton Band Hall* which hangs on the wall in the new band hall at Beamish.

Music is our heritage
And brass bands reign supreme
In bringing folk together
And forging self-esteem.
From days of sad remembrances
To days of celebration
The brass band stirs emotions
Whatever the occasion.

Hetton Colliery Band

Hetton Colliery Band was formed in 1890 and was still active in 1914.

Hetton Rechabite Brass Band

There is mention of Hetton Rechabite Brass Band being active in 1894.

Hetton Colliery Brass Band

Hetton Colliery Brass Band was still active in 1903.

Hetton Ragtime Band

The Defty family were well known for entertainment in the back yard of their property at 9 Richard Street. They had an orchestra, held concerts, and organised fund-raising events for voluntary organisations, miners and service personnel. Many people in Hetton will remember Defty's Minstrel and Variety Shows with fondness.

Salvation Army Band

The Salvation Army movement started in 1878 and a group was formed in Hetton in the early 1880s. They had their headquarters in the Avenue.



Salvation Army Band Hetton c1900.

Hetton Jazz Band

Early Jazz bands were formed for entertainment and special occasions. Band members dressed up and played a variety of instruments. Membership was never long lasting.



A Jazz band of c1900 in Hetton.

Associations and Clubs

Although pitmen frequented pubs and clubs there were times when more structured leisure was pursued. Sometimes this was for educational purposes when Reading Rooms were an ideal venue. However, there were times when men sought personal improvement in the more structured environment of an organised group.

The Conservative Association

This club was built in 1897, at a cost of £2,000. The premises have been used by Hetton Social Club since the early 1940s.

The Freemasons

No one knows with certainty how or when the Masonic Fraternity was formed. A widely accepted theory among Masonic scholars is that it arose from the stonemasons' guilds during the middle ages. In 1717 four lodges in London formed the first Grand Lodge of England, and records from that point on are more complete.

Within thirty years, the fraternity had spread throughout Europe and the American Colonies. Freemasons became very popular in colonial America. George Washington was a Mason. Over the centuries, Freemasonry has developed into a worldwide fraternity emphasising personal study, self-improvement, and social betterment via individual involvement and philanthropy.

During the 1800s and early 1900s, Freemasonry grew dramatically. The Masonic tradition of founding orphanages, homes for widows and for the aged, provided the only security many people knew. The four million Masons worldwide continue to help men and women face the problems of the 21st century by building bridges of brotherhood and instilling in the hearts of men ideals for a better tomorrow.

The basic organisational unit of the fraternity is the lodge. It is believed the term comes from the lodges (shelters) constructed at the building sites of cathedrals and castles during the Middle Ages. Masons worked and lived in these shelters. Each lodge is headed by an officer called the 'Worshipful Master', 'Worshipful' meaning 'highly respected' or 'honoured'.

Freemasonry is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for religion. It requires of its members a belief in God as part of the obligation of every responsible adult. Freemasonry is open to men of any faith, but religion may not be discussed at Masonic meetings.

People sometimes refer to Freemasonry as being a 'Secret Society'. In one sense this statement is true as any social group or private business is 'secret' in that its business meetings may be open only to its members. Freemasonry does also have certain handshakes and passwords, customs incorporated into later fraternities, which are kept private. In terms of what it does, what it teaches, who belongs, where it meets, there are no secrets. It is a private fraternal association of men who contribute much toward the public good, while enjoying the benefits of the brotherhood or a fraternity.

In Freemasonry, as in all other areas of life, women play an important role. The opportunities for women to participate in freemasonry are widespread, from social interaction in the Orders for both men and women, to the 'women only' Masonic-related organisations.

Masonic Lodges still maintain today the long-standing tradition of restricting membership in Freemasonry to men. This tradition is based on the historical all-male membership of stonemasons' guilds. There are, however, other Masonic-related organisations which limit their membership to women only and are established to fulfill their unique interests and specific needs.

Hetton Freemasons

The Hetton Masonic Lodge was named the Bernard Gilpin Lodge after Bernard Gilpin, eminent scholar and clergyman, greatly beloved for his hospitality and generosity to his parishioners at Houghton-le-Spring. The Lodge was consecrated on Monday, December 12th 1904, at the Miners' Hall, Front Street, Hetton-le-Hole, with 37 founder members.

The Lodge did not obtain its own premises until 1906, at a cost of £783, and it was lit by gas, and a coal fire in the lodge room. From the outset members of the Lodge paid fraternal visits to other lodges in the province, though fraternal visits and lodge banquets were postponed during the First World War.

As early as 1915 brethren were chosen to give Masonic lectures at Lodge meetings. This practice continued up to the Second World War and was reintroduced in 1957 and continues today.

The Bernard Gilpin Royal Arch Chapter was consecrated in 1922 and the Bernard Gilpin Lodge of Mark Master Masons in 1928. In 1929 the Building Committee was 'wound up' and the Lodge took total control of the building. The 25th anniversary was celebrated in December 1929, when a brief history of the Lodge was given and a framed 1st circular presented to the Lodge, with the founders' names in the circular read out.

Up to the Second World War and immediately after there was a huge influx of candidates. A ladies committee was formed in 1951 to help raise funds for the 1959 Festival. The 1950s heralded many changes at Hetton Masonic Hall with joint management. Even though the Hall Management Committee took over the building in 1968, total control was not realised until 1975. The Lodge has had 774 members, 99 Worshipful Masters and, in over a century, only one Grand Lodge Officer.

The St. John Ambulance Association

The St. John Ambulance Association was established in 1877 from the early efforts of the Order in England to minister to the relief of suffering.

Public enthusiasm for the care of injured soldiers in the Franco-Prussian War, 1870 – 1871, led to a keenness for this to continue in civilian life, resulting in the establishment of the Association on July 1st 1877. Described as a step towards the revival of the Hospitaller work of the Order, the Association was placed under the supervision of the Central Ambulance Committee.

The objects of the Association were:-

1. The instruction of persons in rendering First Aid.
2. The instruction of persons in elementary principles of nursing, hygiene and allied subjects.
3. And generally, the promotion of works for the relief of the suffering of the sick irrespective of race, class or creed.

Through these courses of instruction the Association aimed to teach the skills which, in trained hands might save life, relieve pain and suffering, and prepare members of the public or industry for that wider service which may be given through becoming a member of that other great Foundation of the Order, the St. John Ambulance Brigade.

The St. John Ambulance Brigade

The main objects of the St. John Ambulance Brigade were twofold. The first was to provide a properly trained body of men and women to render first aid to the sick and injured, wherever required, and particularly at public gatherings.

The second was to provide Reserves for the medical service of H.M. Forces and for service with Civil Defence and the National Hospital Service Reserve in time of war or national emergency. The black and white uniforms of the St. John Ambulance Brigade at public gatherings are taken for granted but many people do not realise that this is a voluntary service.

Since February 1968 the activities of the Association and Brigade have continued as a single Foundation, which led to the formation of a single Headquarter responsible to the Director-General and covering all the work of both foundations. It was decided at this time to create a special Overseas Branch under a Director responsible to the Director-General and Commissioner-in-Chief, to co-ordinate and extend the work of both organisations in the Colonies.

In 1922 the first St. John Cadet Divisions were formed. All Cadets must qualify in Preliminary First Aid, and the Nursing Cadets (girls) are also required to pass a test in Home Nursing.

There is no doubt that one of the Associations for which Hetton will best be remembered in history will be the St. John Ambulance, and for the pioneer of ambulance work in County Durham of Dr. James Adamson, Medical Officer of Health.

Dr. James Adamson (1843 – 1920)

When he was 21, Irishman Dr. James Adamson joined the practice of Dr. George Edger, surgeon for the Hetton and North Hetton Collieries. He became Edger's assistant, then partner, succeeding him in 1878, a post he held until his death. For the first 94 years the collieries had only two surgeons.

Dr. Adamson was a pioneer of ambulance work in the county of Durham, and started the first ambulance course in 1877. He founded the Hetton Division of the St. John Ambulance Service in 1901, acting as its first honorary surgeon and superintendent. Dr. Adamson was Medical Officer of Health for Hetton Urban District Council, resigning this position in 1914. He was also medical officer and public vaccinator for Hetton-le-Hole district and Houghton-le-Spring Union, and medical superintendent at the Houghton and Hetton Smallpox Hospital.

Hetton St. John Ambulance, Brigade

Coal mining was one of the most hazardous of the industrial occupations, resulting in many accidents and fatalities. Before the foundation of the St. John Ambulance Association treatment of injured miners was poor and patchy. The miners and Union officials realised that more needed to be done to help injured workers so when Major Hutton visited the North in 1887 to spread the word about the Association they were eager to listen.

To meet these needs the Hetton Division of the St. John Ambulance Brigade was established in 1901 by Dr. Adamson. The Division was one of the first in the North-East. The original headquarters was in Dr. Watson's house, Hetton House, Park View, where members were trained and gave their voluntary service in the care of humanity.

In the 1920s the Stokoe family played a prominent part in the life of the Division. Mr. Robert Stokoe, manager of Eppleton Colliery and divisional superintendent, was tragically killed at Eppleton, and the Robert Stokoe Shield was presented as his memorial by his father Mr. James Stokoe.

In 1921, the former Hetton Colliery Offices in Office Place became the new headquarters. The Hetton Division, 30-strong, was open to anyone aged 16 years and over. There was also a cadet unit of 18 members, ages eight to 15 years. Lectures were given by doctors and practical instruction by members. There were two sections of the Hetton Brigade, one for men and the other for women. In 1929 there was a first aid class of 50 men in Hetton Working Men's Club.

In 1931 the Eppleton 'D' ambulance team of miners working at Eppleton Colliery was formed. Over the years the Division has held all the leading trophies in connection with many ambulance competitions: No. 6 District, Silver Shield, Durham County Bronze Shield, Coroner Graham Shield, Robert Stokoe Shield, Lady Bartram Shield, Sunderland Addison Bowl, Donald Bain Committee Cup, L. G. Dillion Stretcher Cup, Lambton & Hetton Joicey Cup, Sir Lindsay Wood Cup, Horden Colliery Cup and South Shields Challenge Cup.

Mr. Robert Hope joined the Brigade in 1935, served continuously, and received the highest accolade in 1972 from the Lord Prior. He became superintendent the following year, a post he held until 1989.

At the annual ambulance competitions of the Brigade the chief awards were: the Sir Lindsay wood Challenge Cup, Hetton Colliery, Hazard Colliery, Hetton Engine Works, Eppleton Colliery.



Hetton St Johns Ambulance demonstration 1960s.

An annual garden party was held in the grounds of Hetton Hall when the community could see the tremendous work of the organisation. Following the Eppleton Colliery Explosion in July 1951, to commemorate the lives of those lost, the following trophies for the annual first aid competitions were introduced in 1952:-

The Norman Holmes Trophy: Norman Holmes, captain of Eppleton Colliery Senior Team, won the individual championship for being the best captain, and led the team, who were runners-up in the Miners' National First Aid Competition at Blackpool in June 1951.

The Ronald Foster Trophy: Ronald Foster, captain of Eppleton Junior Team, won the No. 2 Area Junior Competition of the National Coal Board, Houghton-le-Spring in 1951, and many other trophies.

The Seven Comrades Shield: In memory of the seven comrades who also lost their lives in the explosion: T. L. Box, W. G. Hicks, A. Hunter, R. Parkin, A. Patterson, R. Tait and J. Walker.

The Hetton St. John Ambulance Brigade closed in 1999 due to lack of members. In addition it was felt that too much pressure was being exerted from regional and national headquarters, particularly to train as paramedics.

Public Health

The ravages of the plague became evident in the 17th century, wiping out whole families, and was followed by smallpox in the 18th century. In the 19th century, urbanisation with its overcrowding and poor sanitation resulted in outbreaks of cholera, tuberculosis, typhoid fever and other lethal diseases.

Cholera Morbus

Cholera morbus first appeared in Britain on the NorthEast coast of England, via the port of Sunderland, in late October 1831. By the end of November cholera's presence could no longer be denied. In early December Houghton-le-Spring, Hetton-le-Hole, North Shields and Lemington were affected. The nature of the disease was truly frightening. The cholera micro-organism usually entered the victim via the mouth from infected drinking water or food contaminated by the faeces of persons who had contracted the disease or who had very recently recovered from it. Dirty hands were also a source, as it was later observed that miners who shared water and did not wash their hands suffered, while nurses attending cholera patients who drank nothing and washed their hands before they left did not.



King Cholera

Cholera thrived wherever there was dirt.

Attacking the wall of the intestine, it caused violent vomiting and diarrhoea followed by collapse and fever. The cholera bacteria affect the sodium pump mechanism of the intestinal cells, with damaging loss of fluid into the bowel. The loss of body fluids causes the blood to thicken and thus turns the complexion blue, accompanied by spasms and sweating as the sufferers die of sudden dehydration, shrivelled like raisins with blackened extremities, pale, staring, pouring watery fluid from their bowel.

Matthias Dunn, viewer for Hetton Lyon's Colliery, spoke of 100 cases amongst Hetton pitmen on January 25th 1832. In the cholera panic "seventy men had fled from Hetton colliery which will cripple their workings" was colliery manager and agent, John Buddle's gleeful report to Lord Londonderry.

The Coal Company hired a reputable doctor, James Kennedy, to 'take the general medical charge of the township, and superintend the local doctors in some uniform plan of medical treatment.' His appointment lasted from January 13th until February 4th at which point he considered the number of cases remaining to be so few as not to warrant his presence any longer.

Kennedy made claims about his blood-letting treatment and success rate which discredited the Hetton doctors: before his arrival 49 cases and 17 deaths, after his arrival 221 cases and 25 deaths. W. H. Scott, surgeon to Gateshead Cholera Hospital, viewed the evidence and said, "It is probable that five-sixths of the cases prior to Mr. Kennedy's induction to Hetton bore the malignant type of disease and it is also probable that two-thirds occurring subsequent to his arrival were merely

diarrhoea.” Scott estimated the true figures during Kennedy’s stay to have been 23 deaths from 73 cases compared with figures, 17 deaths from 49 cases for the resident Hetton doctors. However, when Scott’s information was published, the Hetton Coal Company met and was lobbied by a crowd of pitmen who complained amongst other things, of the negligence of the surgeon: “The letting of blood, namely giving up 16 or 18 ounces of blood, for nothing worse than a touch of diarrhoea.”

The pitmen may have suspected the coal owners would stop at nothing in their efforts to put down their Union. There had been riots elsewhere, fuelled by popular suspicions that the epidemic was part of a plot to supply schools of anatomy with bodies for dissection, and it seems cholera came close to causing an industrial dispute at Hetton.

It was noted that, during the epidemic, a larger proportion of pitmen suffered from cholera than agricultural labourers, attributed partly to pitmen being gross feeders, but also to their crowded housing arrangements. Cottages were arranged in small squares at the time, with very little means of ventilation. Thereafter, greater attention was paid to the matter, cottages being placed in rows, to aid sweeping of the premises. However, as it was later discovered, these were not the most relevant factors.

One very definite consequence of the epidemic was an upsurge in religious revivalism based mainly on Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism, which took place all over the region. It is evident that the mining community felt very vulnerable at that time. There were local strikes where bereaved families were evicted from their homes and, of course, cholera was a great threat to mortality.

Cholera served to identify the inadequate living conditions of the poor and that there was an urgent need to improve them.

Public Health Reforms

Edwin Chadwick is most associated with public health improvements in the Victorian era. In 1832 Prime Minister Earl Grey established the Royal Commission of Enquiry on the Poor Laws, appointing Chadwick as assistant commissioner. The final report for the Enquiry was critical of the Poor Law system. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 transferred the organisation of the Poor Law from local level to a central authority.

Following the typhoid epidemics of 1837 and 1838 in major cities, Chadwick was appointed by the government to enquire into the sanitation of major cities. The subsequent report ‘The Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population’ stated there was an urgent need to improve the living conditions of the poor and, in consequence, improved health of the poor would directly benefit the nation as a whole. However, the Conservative government of 1842 rejected Chadwick’s report since the costs associated with these improvements would have had to be absorbed by better-off people.

After much campaigning by the Health of Towns Association, and another severe outbreak of cholera in 1848, the government was forced to act.

General Board of Health

The 1848 Public Health Act was passed under a Liberal government. Chadwick was appointed Sanitation Officer to a new Central Board of Health. Each Board of Health was empowered to appoint a surveyor, an inspector of nuisances (with powers to clean streets and improve water and sanitation systems), treasurer, clerk and officer of health.

One of Chadwick's innovations was the use of glazed earthenware pipes for sewage, reducing the likelihood of drinking water being contaminated. However, once more the question posed was, who would pay for such reforms?

In 1851 the General Board issued a statement that the Officer of Health must report both quarterly and, in more detail, annually, on the nature, location and rates of sickness and death. In 1855 it became obligatory to employ one or more Sanitary Inspectors, replacing the Inspector of Nuisances.

Local Board of Health

The General Board of Health was abolished, and by the Local Government Act 1858 the authorities created were simply entitled 'Local Boards' and their areas 'Local Government Districts'. Medical duties were transferred to the Privy Council which was authorised to make enquiries about any aspect of public health in any area. The Medical Officer now reported to the Council. Other responsibilities in respect of local government passed to the Secretary of State, Home Department, and a Local Government Act Office was formed to administer the local boards.

In the 1866 Sanitary Act, local authorities undertook sanitary regulations when overcrowding of residences was made illegal.

In 1867 vaccination of all infants became compulsory.

In 1871 a separate agency was formed entitled the Local Government Board which took over the duties of the Poor Law Board.

The Public Health Act 1872 merged local boards into municipal boroughs.

In the Public Health Act 1874, the Local Government Board, in which rural sanitary district authorities and boards of guardians of Unions or parishes were combined, was given increased powers in respect of water supplies and infected milk was brought into the category of 'nuisance'.

Urban Sanitary Districts

The Public Health Act 1875 designated local government districts as urban sanitary districts with the local board becoming the sanitary authority, without any change of name. Reformers wanted to resolve sanitary problems because sewage was flowing down the streets daily and was present in living quarters.

The Act required all new residential construction to include running water and an internal drainage system. Every public health authority was to have a Medical Officer of Health and a Sanitary Inspector, to ensure laws on food, housing, water and hygiene were enforced. In addition, under this Act, all towns were to have pavements and street lighting.

In 1876 the Sanitary Institute was established to promote people's health, later known as the Royal Society of Health. There followed the Adoption of Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act 1889, the Adoption of Infectious Diseases Act 1890 and the Isolation Hospitals Act 1893.

Urban and Rural Districts

In the Local Government Act 1894, local boards were abolished, and urban and rural district councils took over the duties of the sanitary authorities. The new councils were elected by those entitled to vote in parliamentary elections.

Hetton Urban District Council

As a result of the Local Government Act 1894, Hetton Urban District Council was formed and confirmed by an Order of the Local Government Board dated March 30th 1895 when all functions of the various boards, except poor relief, were transferred to the one authority.

Poor relief remained the responsibility of Houghton Poor Law Union or 'the Workhouse'.

Councillors were elected by poll and at last the inhabitants were given the opportunity to have a voice in the affairs of the community. Elections were held every three years, and anyone over the age of 21 was entitled to vote. The establishment of district councils and the consolidation of their powers gave the necessary impetus to schemes for the improvement of living conditions in the community and the provision of amenities hitherto neglected or unknown.

In 1896 the District was divided into wards and members allotted to the wards of Easington Lane, Hetton Downs and Hetton-le-Hole. The Committee meetings were, at first, held in the Vestry Room at the Rectory (Hetton House) but moved the following year to Barrington Boys' school room. In later years, meetings were held in the Miners' Hall. Various committees were established within the Council, and officers appointed to these committees, one of the most important being the Medical Officer of Health, Dr. James Adamson.

Medical Officer of Health

In addition to a monthly account, the Medical Officer of Health, presented an annual report to the Council on the vital statistics and sanitary conditions of the district. This report included details of deaths, male and female, causes; birth rate, death rate and analysis of mortality; and infectious diseases. The report on the sanitary conditions were based largely on figures and information provided by the Sanitary Inspector.

The following extract compares the statistics in the Medical Officer of Health's report for 1896 to that of 1958.

The Medical Officer of Health's report for the year 1896 contained a statistical table showing that out of 533 births, 97 children died before attaining the age of one year and a further 66 before the age of five. The most common causes of infant mortality (i.e. those dying within the first year of life) were diarrhoea, measles and whooping cough.

By comparison, during 1958 there were 325 births and only five children died before reaching the age of one year. There were no deaths from the chief infectious diseases such as diarrhoea, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, etc.

The remarkable reduction in the death and infant mortality rates over those 60 years must, in no small measure, have been due to an increased awareness by the public, and central and local government, of cleanliness in personal and public hygiene. Many activities of the Public Health Department were successfully directed to that end.

All animals slaughtered in the area were inspected for disease and any animals or organs not fit for human consumption condemned. Food was regularly inspected and continuous efforts made to improve the hygiene of food shops and food handlers. Regular samples of water, milk and ice-cream were analysed, and any sources of infection vigorously investigated.

Particular attention was paid to the control of, and eradication of pests such as rats, mice, beetles, flies, and other vermin and insects. Although epidemics of infectious diseases such as the fevers, chickenpox, etc. were fortunately rare in 1958, proper precautions had to be taken for disinfestations and isolation to prevent the spread of disease. Innoculations against diphtheria, polio, tuberculosis, whooping cough etc. were regularly carried out.

A comparatively new activity for the Public Health Department came with the Clean Air Act. Regular samples of air were being taken and analysed, and observations made of colliery spoil heaps which were burning, and all possible steps taken to minimise air pollution.

The Workhouse Movement

The Workhouse Movement began at the end of the 17th century when the Bristol Corporation of the Poor was established by the 1696 Act of Parliament. The workhouse combined housing and care of the poor with a house of correction for petty offenders.



Desperation, queuing for the workhouse.

In the following two decades twelve further towns and cities established similar corporations but they were not suitable for smaller towns or individual parishes as a private Act was required. The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge began to promote the idea of parochial workhouses, and brought the need for establishing workhouses to a national audience.

By 1776 some 1,912 parish and corporation workhouses had been established in England and Wales, housing almost 100,000 paupers. In 1782 an Act was passed establishing poor houses solely for the aged and infirm and introduced a system of outdoor relief for the able-bodied.

By 1820, before the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, workhouses were being built to reduce the spiralling cost of poor relief. The 1832 Royal Commission into the Operation of the Poor Laws was established and their subsequent report concluded that the existing means of poor relief allowed employers to force down wages making poverty inevitable.

The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, considered to be one of the most far-reaching pieces of legislation of the 19th century, largely implemented the findings of the Royal Commission. The Act aimed to reduce the burden on rate payers. However, the method of financing the Poor Law system continued to be levying a 'poor rate' on the property-owning middle classes.

A Poor Law Commission was established to oversee the national operation of the system. Small parishes were formed into Poor Law Unions and workhouses built in each union for the giving of poor relief. Parishes continued to offer limited outdoor relief to the aged and infirm who were 'wholly unable to work'. A Spartan regime, 'Workhouse Test', was introduced and any relief given was considered to be a loan. No able-bodied person received money or other help from the Poor Law authorities, except in a workhouse.

After 1847, following a workhouse scandal, the Poor Law Commission was replaced with a Poor Law Board. The Workhouse Visiting Society, formed in 1858, highlighted conditions in workhouses, resulting in more frequent inspections thereafter.

The 1865 Union Chargeability Act was passed to place the financial burden of pauperism on whole unions and not individual parishes. Further welfare legislation followed the 1867 Reform Act and, as a result, the Local Government Board replaced the Poor Law Board in 1871. The Local Government Board, supported by the Charity Organisation Society, was successful in reducing outdoor relief claimants by a third and increasing workhouse numbers by 12 – 15%.



Women receiving a meal in a workhouse c 1870.

With the formation of county councils in 1888 and district councils in 1894, public housing, unlike health and income maintenance, developed outside the scope of the Poor Law. The Poor Law system, in due course, declined with the growth of friendly societies and trade unions.

In 1905 a Royal Commission was set up to investigate further changes to the Poor Law, resulting in the term 'Poor Law Institution' replacing 'Workhouse'. Means tests were developed during the inter-war period, in an attempt to offer relief but were not part of the Poor Law and numbers using the system increased. Some workhouses were used during wartime as hospitals for wounded servicemen.

The Board of Guardians (Default) Act 1926 was passed in response to Boards supporting the miners during the general strike, and workhouses were officially abolished by the Local Government Act 1929, and with them the terms 'Workhouse Test' and 'pauper' disappeared.

It must be agreed that in the Victorian era tremendous efforts were made through improved public health to ameliorate the lives of the poor.

Since Hetton was one of the sixteen constituent areas within the Parish of Houghton-le-Spring which had united for the provision of those needing parish relief, Houghton Poor Law Union or 'Workhouse' is where such unfortunates were housed.

Houghton-le-Spring Poor Law Union

In a parliamentary report of 1771 a workhouse for sixteen people existed in Houghton. By 1824 a larger building was constructed at the end of William Street, to the east of Sunderland Street (now demolished) housing 203 residents.

The name 'Union' Workhouse arose because the townships and hamlets which formed the parish of Houghton-le-Spring united to defray the cost of its erection and upkeep. Its governor was John Snaith, who was the perpetual overseer of the Parish; its visitor was Rector Thurlow.

In 1831, the population within the area of the Union was 21,093, with townships and hamlets ranging in size from Little Eppleton with a population of 17 to Hetton-le-Hole with a population of 5,887; Houghton-le-Spring had a population of 3,917. The average annual poor-rate expenditure for the period 1833 – 1835 was £4,606 or 4s.4d per head of the population.

In 1839 the management was taken over by the local Board of Guardians, consisting of thirty two members, representing these sixteen constituent townships and hamlets. The Board met every fortnight to read reports from Mr. and Mrs. Fleming, the Master and Matron.

In about the year 1850, 'Squire' Robinson provided the Christmas 'feast' at the Workhouse and there were unlimited supplies of roast beef, Yorkshire puddings, plum puddings, fruit, sweets and tobacco. Tommy, the baker, produced huge loaves of bread, each weighing seven pounds, and sweetmeats. The 'Squire', dressed as Santa Claus, and local benefactors joined in the festivities. A sight never to be forgotten in the Workhouse in the grim old days.

A new Union was built in 1877, designed by Matthew Thompson, at a cost of £11,000, providing accommodation for 203 persons. The elderly were accommodated at the front of the building, the able-bodied and children at the rear. Females were housed to the east and males to the west; the Master's quarters were located at the far west end of the building, adjacent to the main entrance, at the rear. The kitchen and dining hall were situated in the rear wing of the main block. There were gardens covering three and a half acres. A new board room and offices were erected in 1891 when the old board room was converted into a lunatic ward, with a padded cell.

In the 1881 Census for Houghton Union Workhouse, the staff consisted of Thomas Hope, Master of the Union, Margaret, his wife, Matron, Thomas Metcalf, Porter, Margaret Aisbett, Cook, Mary Walker, Nurse. There were 87 inmates: 52 males, 35 females; the youngest one month old, the oldest 80.

Those who were able-bodied were expected to work. The Workhouse children attended the small National school in Dairy Lane, close by the Rectory (the present Dental Practice) where they were taught by Mr. Young ('Gaffer' Young).

In all ages there have been those less fortunate than others, either in health or wealth. In the old days 'Work or be punished' was the slogan. Workhouses were bare, uncomfortable barracks, under an administration which was aimed as a deterrent, even to the 'deserving poor' who had in fact worked all their lives and, through no fault of their own, found themselves in the Workhouse.

Houghton Union erected a pair of cottage homes in 1910 on a small site to the west of the Workhouse.

After 1930 the Workhouse became a Public Assistance Institution, Heath House Hostel, later known as Heath House. The former Workhouse buildings no longer exist.

Today the Welfare State has brought about a certain amount of levelling up but there still remain those who cannot fend for themselves. In spite of welfare benefits, money is not always the answer, care and attention is often what is needed. Hence the provision of old people's homes, sheltered accommodation, etc., where life should be much freer and happier.

Maternal and Child Welfare

Although pregnancy and childbirth are considered to be normal physiological processes, not until a baby is safely delivered can mother, doctor, or midwife breathe easily.

Childbirth has always been a dangerous and difficult time for mother and baby, and it is only medical advances which have made it less so. In the past, a normal delivery to a strong, healthy mother should have been relatively straightforward when most pregnant women were attended by the local midwife, whether trained or untrained.

One in ten children died before the age of ten, a large proportion of these in the first year of life. About five per cent of babies died within one month of birth as a result of a difficult delivery or congenital abnormality. Accidents claimed the lives of many children. Young babies were smothered when sleeping in their parents' bed or from falls, fires etc., when older siblings were left in charge while parents were absent.

Any illness was a potential killer for children but diphtheria, smallpox, tuberculosis and whooping cough were particularly serious. Compulsory smallpox vaccination, which was free to all, was introduced in 1853 and by the end of the century the disease was statistically negligible. However, there was no significant improvement in the rate of infant and child mortality until the end of the 19th century when improved living conditions, especially drainage and water supply, began to take effect.

In addition the Adoption of Infectious Diseases Acts (Notification and Prevention) were a means of monitoring the incidence of disease, and taking action during outbreaks of infectious diseases or influenza. Schools were routinely closed by the Medical Officer of Health when there were epidemics.

The provision of Isolation Hospitals ensured that any adult or child who contracted an infectious disease, such as scarlet fever or tuberculosis, could be isolated from the rest of the family. Hetton's Isolation Hospital was located behind Mill Terrace, Rainton Gate.

Compulsory vaccination was not readily accepted in spite of a further attempt in 1873. In 1898 an Act was introduced which allowed conditional exemption of conscientious objectors.

No matter what public opinion might be, the overall aim of the routine childhood immunisation programme is to protect all children against preventable childhood infections, namely diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), polio, meningococcal serogroup C (MenC), measles, mumps, rubella and pneumococcal.

The Provision of Trained Medical and Nursing Staff

The following accounts illustrate that in the 18th century medical and nursing provision was left to those who chose to administer their services, wherever it was required.

A Labour of Love

An advertisement appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* dated 15 February 1765:

To the public.

These are to certify that Mrs Mary SINNOTT has diligently attended my lectures on the theory and practice of midwifery and has also delivered and been present at a number of real labours by which she has had the opportunity of being fully instructed in all the different branches of the art. Witness my hand this 21st of August 1760.

*Colin Mackenzie MD
and Teacher of Midwifery
in London.*

N.B. Her residence is at Mr Robert Scrivener's in St John's, Timberhill in the city of Norwich.

Colin Mackenzie, younger son of Mackenzies of Kilcoy, Black Isle, Ross and Cromarty, was born about 1705. He attended Professor Alexander Monro's classes in anatomy and surgery at Edinburgh University and is supposed to have served as a naval surgeon. In 1753 he was obstetrician and Dr. William Smellie's senior pupil until 1755 when he started his own teaching practice in the Borough of Southwark, London, attracting some American students, one of whom paid seven guineas for three courses of lectures. Mrs Sinnott was not the only midwife delivering babies in St John's, Timberhill, Norwich; Sarah Tomlinson, although also delivering babies at this time, was not granted a licence until 2nd January 1772.

Nursing and Midwifery Training

Thankfully, in spite of many untrained women continuing to offer services in their neighbourhoods, the training of nurses and midwives was eventually introduced, resulting in improved care for the family in general but, especially for mothers and babies.

In 1872 following examinations, a diploma was awarded to midwives who could demonstrate a minimum standard of competence.

The Matron's Aid or Trained Midwives Registration Society was founded in October 1881 but no qualifications were required to practice midwifery. It is probable that many founder members held the London Obstetrical Society's diploma although the Royal College of Midwives' records only date from 1920 and record only name, address and length of membership.

In 1874 the Metropolitan and National Nursing Association introduced the training and provision of district nurses.

In 1881 the Midwives Institute was formed.

In 1887 Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for District Nurses and the British Nurses Association were formed.

In 1893 the Select Committee of the House of Commons introduced the State Registration of Midwives and Practice of Midwifery.

Legislation was established with the Midwives Act 1902 under the Central Midwives Board for England and Wales 'to secure the better training of midwives and to regulate their practice.' Similar

Acts were passed for Scotland in 1915 and Ireland in 1918. The Boards were responsible for prescribing the training programme for pupil midwives in recognised maternity hospitals, setting examinations, licensing candidates and generally regulating the way in which certified midwives practised.

The 1907 Notification of Births Act stated that the Medical Officer of Health must be informed as soon as possible after a child was born. He would then arrange for a trained health visitor to call on the mother at home to teach her how to protect the baby's health.



Nurses in 1915

The state registration of nurses began in 1919 but the register was not ready until 1921. Midwives had to be qualified state registered nurses. The 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act required those who could afford to pay to bear or repay the cost of medical attention during confinement. In cases of poverty doctors could apply to councils for repayment.

Under the Public Health Act 1936, councils were given the power to provide a midwifery service, home nursing for expectant mothers with puerperal fever, hospital treatment for pregnant women, a doctor for illness during pregnancy or for mother and child during confinement, the provision of milk or other food for expectant and nursing mothers and for children in need of extra nourishment.

It must be acknowledged that public health interventions which had the greatest impact on the community's health were clean water and vaccines.

However, vaccination is not mandatory in the United Kingdom, even though the U.K. Department of Health recommends that routine vaccinations are given as detailed in the immunisation schedule presented by health visitors to all newborns.

Law and Order

Before 1829 law and order was haphazard and every parish dealt with crime in its own way. The ratepayers would elect a reluctant, unpaid constable every year and it was his duty to maintain law and order. He was ineffective and did little except lock up rowdies in the village lock-up and, very rarely, took a serious offender to court, at the expense of the parish.

There were also night watchmen in towns and cities, so-called 'Charlies' (dating back to King Charles II) who sat in their watchhouses doing little other than earning themselves the name 'right old Charlies'. Some of these watchhouses were made into early police stations after 1829.

In the 18th century, London had made some advances with the first paid constables at Bow Street, the 'Bow Street Runners'. These men were the earliest detectives as well as the earliest policemen. This small band of dedicated men, however, was totally inadequate for the size of the growing problem of crime.

Metropolitan Police Force

The first Metropolitan Police Force was set up in Central London by Sir Robert Peel, Home Secretary, in 1829. This pioneer force which covered a seven mile radius around Charing Cross, excluding the City of London, became the model for the later ones which spread all over the country in the next twenty five years. This was the first serious large-scale attempt to control crime, let alone prevent it.

After much rangling as to whether the force should be military or civilian, the latter won the day. The uniform was a distinct non-military blue, with top hat and tails, to demonstrate allegiance to the people and not the military. Ordinary men with no criminal or army experience were recruited; they had to be under thirty five years of age, well-built, a minimum height of 5' 7", literate, and of good character. However, senior officers – sergeants, inspectors and superintendents – were all originally recruited from the army and navy.

The police were treated with great hostility, being called 'Blue Devils', 'Peel's Gendarmerie', 'Peelers' and 'Raw Lobsters' and some were even stabbed to death. The courage and endurance shown by these early policemen is perhaps reflected in later times when they were regarded affectionately as 'Coppers'. Initially, their only defence against attack was a truncheon and a rattle, replaced later by a whistle. The force was advised 'not to spring the rattle' in case it alarmed either the general public or horses.

Pay was low - £54 per annum - the same as a civil service messenger, gamekeeper or sailor, but double that of a farm labourer. Sergeants were earning £58, inspectors £100, and superintendents £200 per annum. Constables were expected to pace the beat all night, in all weathers, without any official break or hot meal. In addition, they would sometimes be required to attend court next day. Official break times did not start until 1900. The Police surgeon noted that many constables aged prematurely and had to retire early, with no pension rights until 1890.

Increasing problems with crime, combined with squalor, disease and poverty, led to the passing of the Municipal Corporation Act 1835 which paved the way for the first paid police force. However, few Borough Councils seem to have implemented this law. The Rural Constabulary Act of 1839 permitted J.Ps. to appoint chief constables for the direction of the police force in their areas and allowed for one policeman per 1,000 population, but this was still optional. The development and implementation of a police force was still slow for several reasons:-

- it was a means of enforcing the Poor Law

- it was too expensive

- lack of interest at local level, with poor cooperation between boroughs and counties

- no provision for government inspection, audit or regulation.

However, the 1856 (County Borough) Police Act obliged counties to organise police forces, subject to government control, with a system of inspections, audit and regulation. The emphasis then

shifted from the prevention of crime to its detection. This Act was the start of the Modern Police Service.

In 1869 the National Criminal Record was set up, making use of new rapid telegraph communications between forces, followed in 1877 by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), employing 200 detectives; in 1883, 600 more were added. Durham City Police, formed in 1836, was absorbed in 1839 to become the Durham Constabulary; Sunderland Borough Police was formed in 1837.

By 1900 the number of police in England, Wales and Scotland totalled 46,800, working in 243 separate forces.

The Police Force at Hetton-le-Hole

The first Police Headquarters, commonly known as the 'Lock-Up', was situated at Bog Row, next to the present premises of Mr. G.W. Wright, Agricultural Merchants, Park View. George Brasfor is identified as the Police Constable on the 1841 Census Return.

Since there was no Police Force in Hetton during the miners' strike of 1831 'special constables' were sworn in to protect property. In addition the Northumberland and Newcastle Yeomanry and part of the 82nd Regiment of Foot who were stationed at Sunderland Barracks, marched to the neighbourhood of Hetton for the duration of the unrest.

In 1832, during further unrest, a 'special constabulary' was organised by local coalowners to evict families from their cottages and make arrests; a strong force of London Policemen and a detachment of the Queen's Bays were also kept in readiness.

During the 1844 Strike troops were also called in.

Many police were workmen such as Old John Bewick of the Downs Hill, Old Bambro' of the Rose Dene Bank and local historian, Roger Lawson's father. Their uniform was swallow-lapped coats and high hats with glazed tops. They carried a 'hand', six inches long, in their pockets, which gave them authority to lock up a perpetrator without applying for a magistrate's warrant.

The Police Court took place upstairs in the Colliery Inn every other (Baff) Tuesday, officiated by Mr. Jobson, Superintendent of Police, and the Magistrate, Rector Nichol. Superintendent Thomas Johnson of Hetton was identified in Slater's Directory 1855 as being in charge of the Houghton-le-Spring Division. By 1860 there was one constable for each area: Easington Lane, Hetton, Hetton Downs and Moorsley. Sergeant Richard Newbolt and five police constables, namely John Blair, William Dodsworth, John Farrer, Alfred Grant and Richard Newbolt, were living in Hetton on the 1881 Census and P. C. Christer H. Stockburn at High Moorsley. By 1885 the Police Roll had increased to eleven 1st class constables: John Blair, William Bellam and George Stephen at Hetton; Alfred Grant at Hetton Colliery; John Farrer and Joseph Tinkler at Four Lane Ends; William Doddsworth, Thomas Higginson and Dan G. Nichol at Hetton Downs; William Wright and John Wetherell at Moorsley. William Cartwright was the 1st class sergeant.

A new Police Station, with two cells, built on Station Road was occupied in 1895 by Sergeant Lambert.

The Colliery Intelligent Officer

'It may be mentioned that the colliery employs an intelligent officer of the County Police staff and, although doubtless he has many other duties, it would seem to be his special delight and pride to scare disease and premature death from his extensive book by the detection or peremptory suppression of filth, untidiness and unsanitary conduct, knowing that all the sewage arrangements, both surface and underground, are as perfect as engineering can make them. He feels utmost confidence while insisting that Hetton shall be kept clean by every man (or woman rather) sweeping in front of his own door. At the present there is probably not a single case of fever in all the population of 10,000 committed to his charge. In addition there is a regular Police Officer, one not paid by the colliery.'

Murders and Misdemeanors

Mary Ann Cotton

Britain's first serial killer Mary Ann Cotton gave birth to Margaret Edith Quick-Manning Cotton on January 10th 1873 and was hanged in Durham Gaol on March 24th 1873 for the murder of her stepson, Charles Edward Cotton.

Baptised Mary Ann Robson at Rainton Chapel on November 11th 1832, she was the oldest child of Michael (Pitman) and Margaret Robson (née Lonsdale) who were living at Low Moorsley when she was born. Shortly thereafter the family moved to East Rainton and were said to be churchgoers.

*Enter married (1) Mowbray (2) Ward (3) Robinson (4) Cotton
Hanged Durham Prison 1873 Page 136. for Murder of Cotton's younger son (accused of 4 other murders)*

at Rainton Chapel
BAPTISMS solemnized in the Parish of *Rainton* in the County of *Durham* in the Year 1832.

When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parents Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
<i>Nov: 11th</i> No. 1084.	<i>Mary Ann</i>	<i>Michael</i>	<i>Robson</i>	<i>Low Moorsley</i>	<i>Pitman</i>	<i>Rev: Tiffin Curate</i>

The Baptism Record of Mary Ann Cotton (Robson)

When Mary Ann was about eight years old the family moved to Murton where her father died following a fall down the pit shaft early 1842 while repairing a pulley wheel. Less than two years later her mother married George Stott who Mary Ann supposedly didn't get on with. At the age of sixteen she was employed as nursemaid at the home of Edward Potter, viewer of South Hetton Colliery. This is presumably where she met William Mowbray who was living locally and working as a colliery labourer. The couple married in the Register Office, Newcastle upon Tyne, when Mary Ann wasn't quite twenty. William and Mary Ann moved to Cornwall and during their marriage had five children. Alas, William died from an intestinal disorder in early 1865, whereupon Mary Ann collected a payout of £35 of life insurance from the British and Prudential Insurance Office. Mary moved to Seaham Harbour where her mother was living, and met Joseph Natrass who was engaged to be married. Natrass did marry and moved away. Mary Ann moved to Sunderland, leaving behind Isabella, her only surviving child out of nine, with her mother.

Mary Ann then turned to nursing at the Sunderland Infirmary, Chester Road, where she met a patient, George Ward, who was an engineer. William Mowbray was in his grave less than six months

when the couple married at Monkwearmouth in August 1865. Although he was in ill health, the attending doctor was surprised when George died suddenly in October 1866. Once again Mary Ann collected life insurance on his death.

The story continues . . . Mary Ann Ward married James Robinson in August 1867 and Frederick Cotton (bigamously) in September 1870; she had two lovers, Joseph Natrass who was no longer married, and John Quick-Manning. Mary Ann had twelve children in total: nine to William Mowbray, one to James Robinson, one to Frederick Cotton, and one to John Quick-Manning. The following died: William Mowbray, her first husband and all nine children; George Ward, second husband; one child to James Robinson and two step-children; Margaret Stott, mother; Frederick Cotton, fourth husband, one child and two step-children; Margaret Cotton, sister-in-law and Joseph Natrass, lover.

James Robinson had a lucky escape. He became suspicious when Mary Ann wanted his life insured. He discovered she had debts, had stolen money, and had also forced his children to pawn household valuables, so he threw her out.

Mary Ann's downfall came in West Aukland when Thomas Riley, a parish official and assistant coroner, became suspicious when "she complained that the last surviving Cotton boy . . . was in the way" . . . and added, "I won't be troubled long. He'll go like all the rest of the Cottons." When he did rumour turned to suspicion and forensic enquiry. Samples from Charles Edward Cotton tested positive for arsenic and Mary Ann was charged with his murder.

It is said that Mary Ann Robson was a striking, though not beautiful, woman who was obviously attractive to the opposite sex, but what caused her to behave as she did? 'Shifting' from place to place for purposes of work was normal at the time and, with the expiry of the colliery bond, it was not unusual to seek more lucrative employment elsewhere. It would appear that the return to the North-East in 1860 is when the killings began but what were her motives?

The pattern which emerged was:

- find a man, live with him until it became inconvenient then murder him; numerous children, all despatched with the same callousness

- her choice of poison was arsenic, easy to administer and readily available

- the symptoms were easily confused with gastroenteritis.

She had poisoned her step-son, apparently, to clear the way for yet another new relationship, this time with Quick-Manning.

The letters, which Mary Ann wrote to her lodger from Durham Gaol shortly before her death, have recently been sold to a collector.

Murder at Springwell Terrace

John William Johnson, a farm labourer, was obviously besotted with Margaret Addison, his landlady. Margaret had been widowed for nearly ten years; her son, Christopher, a coal miner, and daughter, Margaret, were still living at home with their mother at the Four Lane Ends.

Margaret had found happiness with another, Andrew Simpson a coal miner, who was living at the Brewery Hotel in Hetton with his grown-up family. Their wedding day was planned for Saturday,

October 31st 1891. However, John William Johnson had other ideas: if he couldn't have her, no one else would.

When the engagement was announced early in October, Johnson started drinking heavily. He couldn't get out of his head the fact that Margaret loved another, even though she had given him no encouragement. In the Colliery Inn, the night before the wedding, Johnson announced that there would be a funeral before there was a wedding . . . and he was true to his word. By 9 a.m. on the wedding day Johnson was in the New Inn, Four Lane Ends, where he ordered a beer. He knew Margaret was setting off early from Hetton Station to go to her mother's home at Shincliffe. She would have to pass that way and he would be ready. He followed Margaret who had almost reached the station when he called her name. As she turned, she found herself staring down the barrel of a handgun. What ensued at that time – an argument or pleading - will never be known, but the outcome was certain – Margaret Addison lay dead in a pool of blood. Johnson had blasted two shots into Margaret's head and she died instantly.

He then walked to the nearby Police Station at Bog Row and handed himself in. Sergeant Cartwright was not at home but his wife Sarah answered the door. She calmly requested Johnson to empty his pockets, the contents of which were three cartridges, a knife and some keys. She then took Johnson to a cell and locked him up before sending for her husband. Police Constable Bellam had arrived at the scene where a crowd gathered around Margaret Addison's body. A large crowd thronged outside of Sergeant Cartwright's home when he arrived home but he waited until the crowd dispersed before transporting the prisoner to the lock-up at Houghton-le-Spring. John William Johnson had willingly confessed to Margaret Addison's murder.

At his trial, Johnson accepted his fate with dignity - murder meant hanging – and on December 22nd 1891, after a hearty breakfast, he went to the gallows. There would be two funerals and no wedding.

Dora Tate, Baby-Snatcher

On April 4th 1938 Dora Tate, a domestic servant from Ryhope, was determined to catch her man. She turned up at her future sister-in-law's house at 9 Front Row, Low Moorsley, with a little bundle, claiming that it was her brother's baby.

That same morning Elizabeth Smith had set off to Sunderland with her baby Barbara in her pram for a Marks and Spencer's sale. Since the store was extremely busy Elizabeth decided to leave the baby outside in her pram, only to discover both missing when she returned. All night long Police and public searched for the baby, to no avail. The abandoned pram was eventually found at Seaham Harbour.

Fortunately for Elizabeth and Robert Smith, Dora's intended sister-in-law had read about Barbara's disappearance in the Sunderland Echo, so when Dora appeared at her door she challenged her about the baby, and then asked her to accompany her to Houghton Police Office. Although reluctant, Dora agreed and, on arrival, broke down and confessed to snatching the baby.

At her subsequent trial Justice Goddard took into consideration that no harm had come to baby Barbara as Dora had looked after her. Dora did not end up behind bars. She was placed on probation for one year, the place or institution to be decided by her Probationer.

Murders and misdemeanours still occur whether they are crimes of passion or for personal gain.

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