

WEA – Routes of Social Change – New Hartley Heritage Research Group

Next meeting: Thursday, 18th April at 17.30 - 19.30, New Hartley Residents' Social Club.

Meeting Update – 21.3.2024

Mailing list: Jill Henderson, Bob McNair, Kay Adkins, David Gilson, Trevor Brown, Teresa Jackson, Susan Rowley, Norma Brown, Terry Whatson, Maxine McGuinness, Anne Farrier, Billy Embleton, Dorothy Marshall, Peter Dixon, Melanie Todd, Janet Morris, Neil Morris, Stuart Meikle, Barrie Smalls, Ray Arthur, Julian Rogers, Jennifer Dirkin, Chris Keenlyside, Delene Keenlyside, Janette Barnes, Brian Armstrong, C. Armstrong, Sharon Vincent, Cheryl Watson, Dave Duffy, Anne Gladstone, Linda Warin, Sandra Baldwin.

Add or pick a research theme to explore!

Resumé of themes to date:

- Aerial photography and Iron Age emplacements
- Natural heritage – Geology, nature reserves and wildlife / plant / species history / heritage
- Bottle digging
- Topography / town / agricultural / lidar maps through history: National Library of Scotland Georeferenced maps
- Churches, religions, Benedictine mission
- New Hartley's history since the pit disaster – community evolution
- Music composition and performance
- Food production and recipes – Field to Table history and heritage
- Land ownership, legatees, the Delaval family – family names of mines, e.g. Isabella
- Farms, Farm ownership and leasing, Farm labour, tied cottages, tied commerce, wages and barter
- Survival strategies for strikes / poaching / living off the land / sharing and co-operation
- Family history and County records
- Local mines
- Green traditions in local pit villages

The meeting of 21.3.24:

Julian had visited Woodhorn Archives who (at a price) had downloaded and printed in large scale a beautiful, coloured map of farmed fields in 1841, together with a Tithe map list of farm ownership of the same (or similar) date. At that time, the Thompson family held a number of farms.

Dave Gilson had also been researching maps of local farms.

Julian noted that the Tithe payments of 1841 were made (or split) between the Church and the Duke of Northumberland.

Sandra noted that the Church of Latter-Day Saints (a very useful resource for family history and genealogy research) had taken women from New Hartley to Salt Lak City after the Hester pit disaster of 1862. She knew this because she had met ancestors of those women.

Melanie pointed out the excellent and non-religious experience of researching genealogy for free with the Mormon church in Sunderland.

Cheryl and Anne commented on the records held at Woodhorn of donations to widows in the Relief Register with reference to the 1862 disaster. It was noted that the village was rehabilitated from Norfolk and possibly Cornwall. Anne had been researching the very tragic life of the family of Robert McMullen. Struggling for work, Robert had moved his family to New Hartley four months before the disaster. Destitute, they arrived in New Hartley with his wife suffering from consumption while nursing their two-year-old daughter. Robert died in the disaster; Christians left them some money; a 14-year-old girl looked after the children; a bedstead was made for the widow before she died. Her sister came from Spennymoor to take the two-year old daughter.

Dave, Ray and Jill have been looking at farm plans, the farms owned by David Thompson in particular.

Linda has experience of working on local farms and could speak with great authority on farm ownership, working practices, life on the farms, and the local names of individual fields.

Dave noted that the pattern of fields hadn't really changed since the 1840s – and no doubt some time before that.

Linda explained the local field layout and how a new road was implemented. It was suggested that the focus of research should perhaps be upon Lysdon Farm rather than Red House farm because that is where the water was / is.

Barry noted that there used to be a Medieval village on the site of Lysdon farm. There were also air raid shelters in the woods.

Linda remembers her Dad having his / her? photo taken beside a strawstack stretching the full length of the field.

Ray pointed out that it was possible to date the 'Rigg & Farrow' fields by the width (and height?) of the ridges.

Jill had brought a bible which had been donated by David Wilkinson. The idea of a restoration with the 'Repair Shop' programme, which was apparently coming to town.

Christine Armstrong brought a Confirmation book from 1911, together with her Grandfather's bible. It was noted how well this would tie in with the research being carried out by Jill and others into local churches and religion.

Cheryl said she would look into dates for a visit to Woodhorn. It was noted that if there were too many interested in visiting, then there may need to be two visits because there is a limit to how many visitors could be handled at any one time.

Suze had visited the local hand-painted Gypsy caravans and the caravan painter (who wished the location not to be publicised). This had inspired her to revise a song of her own, "Horse-drawn", written from when she was a worker with Travellers in Redbridge. This touching song she performed to the highly appreciative group. Suze noted that in 1968 Travellers were suddenly made illegal and regarded as homeless. All rest places and sites were possessed or re-possessed by local authorities, land owners, etc. And relationships between Travellers and the settled became much more difficult. Some lines from her song: (roughly)

In sixty-eight you let them take the places I could stay;

And called me a thief when I asked what is owed...

Suze is researching the history and heritage of Traveller settlements, e.g. in Bedlington and Lynemouth.

Matthew reported back on the WEA 'Routes of Social Change' project Steering Group meeting, and thanked Jill and Dave for attending. These quarterly meetings could become very interesting as they develop because it is a chance for the different geographic groups supported by the project to share their research with each other, and to note crossovers, similarities and differences of subject and theme.

Cheryl returned to the Woodhorn visit plan. She noted that it may be possible to see the strong boxes. Two dates were suggested:

Tuesday, 14th May;

Tuesday, 21st May

Matthew will ask for responses on favoured dates with the next update letter (this). **Please e-mail Matthew: mburge@wea.ac.uk with your preferred date (of these two) if you intend to join a visit to Woodhorn on either of these dates.**

Marie introduced herself from the Cramlington History Society. The WEA is seeing whether there is interest in Cramlington from her History Society for support from the WEA to join the 'Routes of Social Change project'. Marie is also researching the history and heritage of farms and farming – and Medieval emplacements, but in the Cramlington area.

Linda noted some authors worth looking at:

Barry Stewart: 'Cramlington, its past and its people', Stenlake Publishing, 2014

Brian Godfrey, author of 'West Cramlington Colliery and Village'

Also, the Ed Waugh project on the Cramlington Train Wreckers, striking miners who were sent to prison for up to eight years, although released early under trade union and public pressure, for derailling the Flying Scotsman while on strike by de-coupling a rail on the London to Edinburgh line on 10th March, seven days into the 1926 General Strike.

Linda noted that Cramlington hospital was built on a farm site.

Anne noted that in her research of the 1862 Hester Pit disaster, she had found the story of the Tally Boy Mark Bell, aged 12, who was traumatised by having to identify the bodies, including of his own family. Anne said that she had found the research so upsetting that she had had to take breaks and stop herself from being too affected by the tragedy.

Cheryl noted that boys had to pay to go to school at the time of the disaster. And that William Brown, one of the fatalities of the disaster was a grandson of William Gladstone.

Dave Duffy added that there wasn't enough room for the graves at Earsdon cemetery because of another, earlier disaster at nearby Burradon pit. On 2nd March, 1860, an explosion killed 74 men and boys, with two men attempting rescue also being killed.

Barrie said he knew of one miner descended from a family affected by the disaster.

Dave Duffy had been looking at the wagonways and how they became branch lines. A decision was made to take the coal to Newcastle via Tynemouth, rather than designing a route to Blyth. Probably

because of pre-existing wagonways, the route to Tynemouth for coal and limestone was preferred. Coked Limestone was used at this time for agriculture in the main, neutralising acidic soil.

Janet had been looking at the social life of the village: the pubs, Astley Arms, Boiler Arms – and activities such as badger bating, for which those caught were fined 5 shillings. The women went to workhouses after the disaster.

Janet also referred to the Quarry Row shooting incident of 1899. Robert Sadler, 24, a miner from New Hartley was summoned on a charge of shooting in the back of the leg Albert Dexton of Seaton Delaval. The charge was dismissed with costs as it had apparently been an accident at a wedding at a time when the practice of firing weapons at weddings was common. Inspector Jobson said this was the third accident of this kind within a very short period.

Ray said that he was mainly researching maps and reservoirs.

Christine said that she had recorded her mother telling stories of her life, and that her grandfather had laid out the gardens of Seaton Delaval Hall.

Linda recalled the history of events at Seaton Delaval Hall. At one time, the Garden Fete was the only public event. Then there were banquets in the 'eighties.

Cheryl noted that the banquets were usually works parties. She was busy researching the names in the donated bible of the 1880s.

Brian observed that there was a 'Men's Only' toilet by the Avenue, and this had always puzzled him. Also, that the name of the station had changed to Avenue Station from Dining(?) House station.

The meeting concluded with thanks to all.

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Bring a friend!

MB.