



# County Durham History & Heritage Forum



## News from the Forum, Issue 2, April 2009

Welcome to the second newsletter from the Forum. This is an opportunity for members to post their news and promote future events. So please keep your news coming! The newsletters are now available on the Forum website, <http://www.durhamweb.org.uk/historyforum/>

## News from the Steering Group

The Group continues to work behind the scenes and has recently started the process of developing a constitution for the Forum with the guidance of Julie Taylor, Durham City CVS. We plan to have this ready to present at the Conference and AGM on Saturday 17 October.

The development of the website continues with more information being added. The newsletters will be available under the 'Forum News' link and the Membership listing is now available on-line also. The next step is to get the Speakers' list onto the site. Please continue to send in your completed Speaker information forms so that we can get a comprehensive list together for the benefit of members.

You will remember that in the previous newsletter we mentioned the need to get some funds together to allow us to move the Forum forward. A letter to members seeking donations accompanied the newsletter. In light of this request and in seeking support from other areas we now have a 'pull-up' promotional banner to take out to events and exhibitions. This banner was kindly funded by Rosemary Laxton, Head of Libraries, Learning and Culture, Durham County Council.

We would like to thank the following groups for their donations to the Forum funds:

Aycliffe Village Local History Society;

Chester-le-Street Heritage Group;

North East War Memorials Project;

Brancepeth Archives and History Group.

The Forum will be holding a small display at this year's 'Yesterday Belongs to You' local and family history event. The event usually attracts over 2,000 visitors and exhibitors from around the County, Region and beyond. If you have your own table on the day, don't forget to mention the Forum to your visitors!

On Saturday 13 June the Weardale Society will be hosting an event for members. On offer for the day will be guided walks around Stanhope Church and Quarry and a visit to the Weardale Museum and High House Chapel. A charge will apply for this event to include refreshments and a light lunch. A booking form and programme will be circulated with this newsletter and via emails.

A half-day Oral History training session will be held at the Resource Centre, Beamish Museum on Saturday 19 September 2009. The session will be led by Jo Bath. Jo is a trained oral historian and one of the Oral History Society's North East Region net-workers. Many of you will have met her in her post at Beamish Museum. Booking forms will be available shortly.

On a final note, thank you for your continued interest in the Forum. Membership Forms for the year 2009/10 will be available from August.

For further information about the Forum contact:

Local Studies, Durham Clayport Library on 0191 3864003

Julie Hawthorn on 0191 370 8845

John Banham [johnbanham@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:johnbanham@tiscali.co.uk) (For the website)



## News from the Members

Bishops' transcripts for the diocese of Durham

Many members of the Forum are probably aware that among the Durham Diocesan Records in Durham University Library are bishops' transcripts of the registers of baptisms, marriages and burials for most parishes and chapelries in the diocese of Durham (including most parishes and chapelries in Northumberland before the establishment of Newcastle diocese in 1882).

The earliest transcript in Durham dates from 1660 and the latest from 1919. For the majority of parishes and chapelries, however, transcripts survive only for the period from ca 1760 until the mid nineteenth century, and in many cases there are significant gaps within the holdings. There are no transcripts of marriage register entries after the introduction of civil registration in 1837. A list of the outside dates of all known surviving transcripts in this series, and of strays identified in other collections administered by Durham University Library and Durham Cathedral Library, is now available online at <http://flambard.dur.ac.uk/dynaweb/handlist/ddr/ddrbts/>

In an exciting new development digitised images of all these transcripts have now also been made freely available on the pilot record search website of the Genealogical Society of Utah (part of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) at <http://pilot.familysearch.org>. To access the images select Europe on the map of the world, then choose the collection England, Diocese of Durham Bishops' Transcripts ca.1700-1900. Note that the names included in these images have not been indexed and so will not be found by doing a name search on the FamilySearch website.

Article: Margaret McCollum, Durham University Library

## **Gateshead Heritage @ St Mary's**

In December 2008, Gateshead Council's first heritage centre opened in the former St Mary's Church above Gateshead's quayside. Last used as a church in 1979, the building then suffered two serious fires. Basic repairs were undertaken by the Civic Trust in 1985 prior to Philips Auctioneers buying the building in 1990. From 2000 – 2007, the building was used as a Visitor centre by Gateshead Council who bought the former church helped by money from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Now restored, with the intrusive additions made by Philips removed, the building contains displays focussing on Gateshead's history and heritage as well as a small family history area.

Regular history events are held together with monthly family history surgeries. These are held on the third Saturday of each month from 10.00am – 1.00pm and are supported by the Northumberland & Durham Family History Society.

For further details of events, check out our website or contact Anthea Lang, Local History & Heritage Manager on 0191 433 4696

## **Websites**

A selection of Forum member websites – why not take a look? These and other sites can be viewed via the 'Members' section on the Forum website

<http://www.thedaft.org.uk/>

<http://www.faithfuldurhams.com/>

<http://www.haswell-history.co.uk/>

<http://www.murtonheritagesociety.co.uk/>

<http://www.newmp.org.uk/>

<http://www.communicate.co.uk/ne/whs/>



## **Do you have a connection with Crusader tanks?**

Did you work with Crusader Tanks during World War 2?

Locomotion: the National Railway Museum at Shildon is appealing for anyone who built, transported or served in one of these vehicles, as part of an exciting intergenerational project in association with Head of Steam Darlington. ‘

The Railways At War: Reserved occupations, our unsung heroes' recognises the role of the reserved occupations in our local area - and in particular railway workers and munitions workers – during World War 2.

Railways played an important part in the conflict, as they provided an efficient way of moving goods. Armoured vehicles were often transported on railways, as long journeys by road resulted in significant wear.

At Locomotion: the National Railway Museum at Shildon, visitors can see a Crusader Tank which was used in the Battle of Tobruk in June 1941. More than 5,300 of these tanks were built between 1936 and 1943.

The tank is displayed on the Warflat No. W161041, built in 1940 in Birmingham by Metropolitan-Cammell Carriage & Wagon Company. This type of wagon was designed specifically to move tanks and other heavy vehicles. Made out of bridge girders, it can bear up to 50 tons.

The theme of 'The Railways At War: Reserved occupations, our unsung heroes' is remembrance, recognition and identity of the veteran workers from the pre-nationalised North East Railway system, and the industries connected to it.

The project aims to look at the practices of the workers, and link this to learning opportunities for our present generation of school children. Resources will be developed and used to produce a set of interactive learning tools, which in turn will support a travelling exhibition.

For more information, please contact Tony Attle at Locomotion on 01388 71444 or Sarah Goldsborough at Head of Steam on 01325 460532.

### **Furness Railway Number 20 Comes East**

Locomotion - The National Railway Museum at Shildon, and the Furness Railway Trust are pleased to announce that Furness Railway No. 20, the oldest working standard gauge steam locomotive in the UK, is spending Summer 2009 as the operating locomotive in residence at Locomotion.

Built in 1863, FR No. 20 is a remarkable survivor from a bygone era and has already starred at the County Durham museum's steam gala in 2008.

The move of FR No. 20 to Shildon took place in March, and the engine will see regular use over the coming months on the 2/3 mile running line at the museum. At times it is hoped to pair the engine with the Great Eastern Railway Directors' saloon which is in the final stages of restoration in the workshop at Locomotion, offering the museum visitor a unique experience in rail travel.

Locomotion Curator Anthony Coulls said "Furness Railway No. 20 was a great draw at our Steam Gala last year, and we hope that many more people will come to both see the engine, and ride behind it whilst it is here. It's a great opportunity to see first-hand a throwback to one of the most exciting periods of railway history"

Tim Owen, Chairman of the Furness Railway Trust, said "We are delighted to be back at Locomotion, following on from the successful visit back in September 2008. The Furness Railway Trust is honoured to have its flagship locomotive invited once again to be part of the National Railway Museum."

Check the Locomotion website for up-to-date steaming information via <http://www.locomotion.uk.com/> , or call Locomotion on 01388 777999.

## **A project update from Thorpe Thewles History Group**

Members of the Thorpe Thewles History Group (TTHG) have embarked on a two-year project to record wartime (1939-45) memories and related sites and monuments in their local area. This project has been made possible by the award of a CBA Challenge Funding Grant.

The sites and monuments part of this project will look at the districts of Wolviston, Wynyard, Blakeston, Roseworth, Thorpe Thewles, Carlton, Redmarshall, Bishopton, Whitton and Stillington all of which were formerly in southeast County Durham. The memories section of the project will focus on the central zone of this rural area, which lies to the northwest of Stockton-on-Tees. This part of the project will utilise both archival and oral history research methods.

The idea for this project came about from earlier research undertaken by the group in 2006/7. This highlighted the existence of a wealth of wartime memories within the local community that were in danger of becoming lost if not recorded soon. In addition the group had identified several anti-invasion defences that were not recorded on either the Cleveland or County Durham Sites & Monuments Records (SMR) or the Defence of Britain Project database.

To date the project has identified the location of several unrecorded wartime related sites and monuments (see listing below). While some of these are now largely destroyed or are in a poor state of preservation others are in remarkably good condition.

Concrete road blocks – 4 pairs plus the site of 2 further pairs

Pillboxes – FW3 Type 23 – 4: “Lozenge” Type (northeast variant) – 1

Auxiliary Unit Operational Bases – 2

Communal And School Air Raid Shelters – 7

Military aircraft crash sites – 1

Barrage Balloon and searchlight sites – 2

Anti-aircraft battery & central ordinance magazine sites – 2

Sites of anti-glider landing poles and trenches – 3

POW Camps & Hostels - 2

Most of the above anti-invasion related sites are associated with the Northern Command 59 Divisional Reserve Stop Line.

The Thorpe Thewles History Group will report in full on the findings from this Project in December 2009. Details of all sites will be registered with the respective HER/SMR Officers in Cleveland and County Durham.

Anyone wishing to contribute information or learn more about this project should contact Mark Smith on 01740 630014 or email [tt.hg@virgin.net](mailto:tt.hg@virgin.net)

You can visit the website at <http://www.thorpe-thewles.org.uk>

## **Durham County Record Office**

As part of the transition to the new unitary authority in County Durham, the Record Office website has been changed from <http://www.durham.gov.uk/recordoffice> to <http://www.durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/> At present the new website address is not working. In the interim please use the link from 'Popular Pages' on the Durham County Council Homepage.

## **Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre**

The Heritage Centre opened a new photo exhibition in March of this year – it concentrates on the mining industry and is very appropriate, given the 25th anniversary of the last strike.

The exhibition tries to cover all aspects of the industry – underground, workers, documents, etc and have used mainly photos in our archive and some loaned by members of the committee and the local history club.

Alongside the photos, are various written pieces about life in a mining village, which have been provided by the Crook Writers Group and they make a suitable addition to the images on display.

The normal displays are still available throughout the photo exhibition.

Wheatley Hill Heritage Centre is situated in the cemetery grounds and is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-12 and 2-4 and on Saturdays 2-4. Entry is free and refreshments are available.

## **Wheatley Hill History Club**

The Wheatley Hill History Club is currently planning this year's Local History Day which will take place, on Saturday 26 September, in the Workingmen's Club.

This year, the history club are launching a book looking at the development of the pit and villages of Thornley, Ludworth and Wheatley Hill from 1947-1960. This is the fourth book in a series.

The event will be opened by Alfie Joey from BBC Radio Newcastle and for entertainment Easington Colliery Band and the Durham Constabulary Male Voice Choir will be in attendance. The even starts at 10.00am and usually closes at about 3.00pm. Everyone is welcome.

Articles: Margaret Hedley, Wheatley Hill History Club

## **Local History Publication**

John Swain's latest publication, *Railway Walks: Branch Lines Around Bishop Auckland*, continues to sell steadily from selected outlets, including the Tourist Information Centre, Bishop Auckland Town Hall and Locomotion National Railway Museum, Shildon. A Limited Edition is being planned for late April, and interested parties are being invited to register their intention to purchase a copy by contacting the author at 38 Rochester Close, Bishop Auckland, DL14 0RJ, Tel: 01388 604971, as soon as possible. By popular request, a chapter on the former railway station at Bishop Auckland will be inserted as an introduction to the four disused branch lines (Spennymoor, Barnard Castle, Tow Law and Durham).

John Swain has already started on his next project, *Railway Walks 2: Branch Lines Around Durham City*, which will include some of the Durham County Council's famous railway paths such as the Deerness Valley and Lanchester Valley routes. It is hoped to launch this publication in September 2009.

## Events Around The County

### **Saturday 16 May 2009**

#### **Yesterday Belongs to You**

Local & Family History Day

At County Hall, Durham City

10:30am – 4:00pm

Durham County Council will also be launching a small touring exhibition at the event to show some of the many fascinating facts about the County's history and heritage. This is also an opportunity to seek the community's thoughts on current and future heritage provision in the County.

### **Durham Clayport Matters Group**

#### **Monday 1 June 2009**

10:30 am – 2:30 pm

Clayport Library, Durham City

An opportunity to view the newly created piece of work by the Matters showing views of Durham in all its diversity; people and their histories, the beauty of fields and fell, life and home, work and play. All welcome.

#### **Wednesday 3 June 2009**

10:30 am – 2.30 pm

Bowburn Community Centre

A second opportunity to view the work of the Clayport Matters Group. All welcome

### **CDHHF Events**

#### **Saturday 13 June 2009**

10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Guided Walk and Museum Visit

See 'News from the Steering Group' section. Booking form now available.

#### **Saturday 19 September 2009**

Oral History Training session

To be held at The Resource Centre, Beamish Museum. Limited places available booking required. A training opportunity for Members. Details to be confirmed.

#### **Saturday 17 October 2009**

County Durham History & Heritage Forum Conference and AGM

County Hall, Durham City

A networking opportunity for members. Details to follow.

### **Wheatley Hill History Club**

#### **Saturday 26 September**

10:00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Working Men's Club, Wheatley Hill

Local History Day and Book Launch

See earlier article for more information.

## Thorpe Thewles History Group

7:30 pm

Grindon Parish Hall, Thorpe Thewles

### Friday 19 June 2009

‘The Demoniacs: Cleveland’s Hell Fire Club’,  
An illustrated talk by Dr Tony Nicholson  
covering the history of the ‘Demoniacs’. This  
Secret Society, founded in the 1740s met at  
Skelton Castle where John Hall Stevenson –  
better known as Crazy Hall Stevenson – kept  
open house.

### Friday 18 September 2009

‘Saxons, Vikings & Normans – the medieval  
settlements of Teesside’ An introduction by  
Robin Daniels of Teesside Archaeology to post  
Roman development and settlements in the  
Teesside region.

Entry for both events by ticket – available  
from Linda Smith on 01740 630014 at £2.00  
each.

If you would like to promote your events via  
the Forum website please contact John  
Banham [johnbanham@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:johnbanham@tiscali.co.uk)

For newsletter items contact Julie Hawthorn  
[julie.hawthorn@durham.gov.uk](mailto:julie.hawthorn@durham.gov.uk)

<http://www.durhamweb.org.uk/historyforum/>

