Ada Lovelace

Who is Ada and Why is She Associated with Hetton?

Ada Lovelace is widely held to have been the first computer programmer. Close friends with inventor Charles Babbage, Lovelace was intrigued by his Analytical Engine and in 1842, she translated a description of it by Italian mathematician Luigi Menabrea. Babbage asked her to expand the article, "as she understood [it] so well", and this was when she wrote several early 'computer programs'. Ada Lovelace died of cancer at 36, her potential tragically unfulfilled. She is so well respected that there is even an Ada Lovelace Day which aims to raise the profile of women in science, technology, engineering and maths by encouraging people around the world to talk about the women whose work they admire.

She is associated with Hetton-le-Hole in County Durham, through her mother Annabella (Anna Isabella) Milbanke who was born at Elemore Hall, situated some two miles south west of the town. She was later to become the wife of Lord Byron, her family home was Seaham Hall where Annabella married Lord Byron in 1815. The drawing-room where the ceremony took place still exists, but has none of the original furnishings.

Byron had doubts as to his marriage and the necessity to him to reform' keep surfacing in the letters of this period. Annabella had turned him down before and Byron seems to hope for the like again, though no doubt flattered that she had refused six suitors before him.. There was usually a touch of mockery in his description of her virtues and her talents; her interest in mathematics caused him to dub her his 'Princess of Parallelograms'. Ada's parents separated after a year of marriage, one month after she was born. The dowry for the marriage had cost her father £20,000 causing him to mortgage his land, which was put up for auction in 1821, subsequently allowing them to be bought by Lord Londonderry for the building of Seaham Harbour.

For a full biography of Augusta Ada King, countess of Lovelace go to the link below:

http://www-history.mcs.st-andrews.ac.uk/history/Mathematicians/Lovelace.html