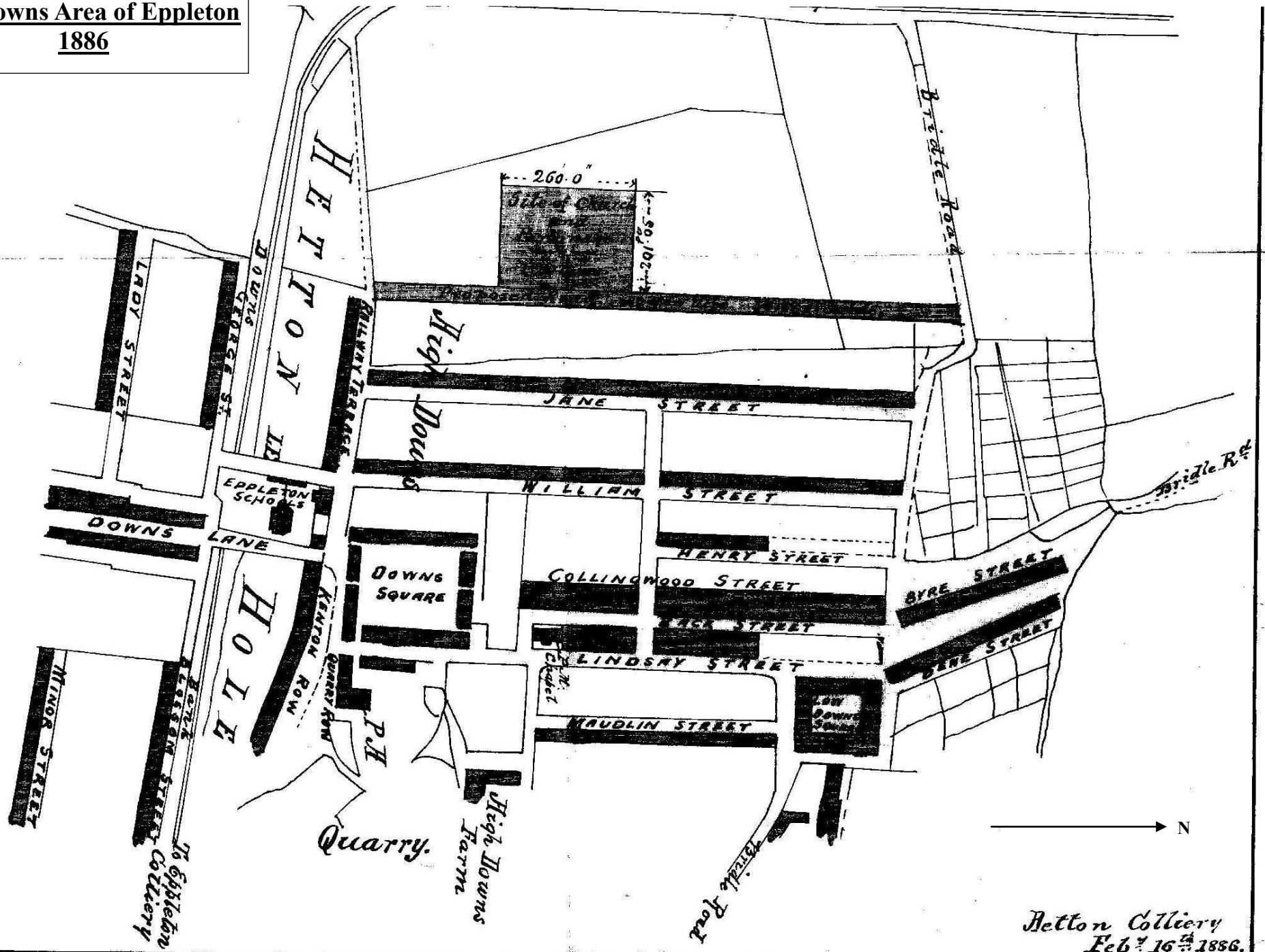


The Downs Area of Eppleton

1886



Retton Colliery
Feb 16th 1886.

Map of the Downs Area Eppleton in 1886

This interesting hand-drawn map of the Downs area in 1886 shows quite clearly the development of houses built for miners following the opening of Eppleton Colliery in 1833. It is likely that the map was drawn up to show the proposed location of the parish church of All Saints. Following the establishment of the newly-formed parish in 1883 it was felt appropriate to follow this up with the building of a new church to serve the needs of the parishioners. A new road, namely Church Road was being proposed as well as the site chosen for the Parish Church. This was to be located on the western extremity of the village of Eppleton known locally as the Downs. The name "Downs" comes from the grassy limestone hills which existed in the locality.

Since the opening of Eppleton pit in 1833 streets of houses for the workforce were built in the area. Initially there were two sets of houses called High Downs Square (shown as Downs Square) on the map and the smaller Low Downs Square further to the north. Prior to the growth of the village there had been a country lane called Downs Lane, in the area and it was near to this lane that most of the early houses were built. The streets of houses took their names from the children of the Hetton Coal Company owners who built the houses. Initially the houses or cottages as they were referred to, were two roomed affairs with little comforts like toilets and water taps. There were some improvements carried out to the houses in the 1850s and later on in the 1890s but generally living conditions for the miners and their families were both crude and harsh until early in the 20th century following important social legislation which improved housing standards.

Towards the southern part of the map and running east-west was the colliery railway extension from Eppleton Colliery to the Hetton Railway which ran roughly north and south and not shown on the map. The position of Railway Street was to the north of the railway and it was at this point that the line ran into a tunnel approximately two hundred yards in length. Incidentally the then first Eppleton School, again built by the Hetton Coal Company, had its school yard built over the top of the tunnel. Later on the school was rebuilt in the 1920s close to the north end of Jane Street and the kink in the bridle path running down to Houghton Road.

The street called Quarry Row led to the then quarry in the limestone rocks which provided much of the stone from which the miners' cottages were built. This quarry still exists today and has been much enlarged over the last 180 years.