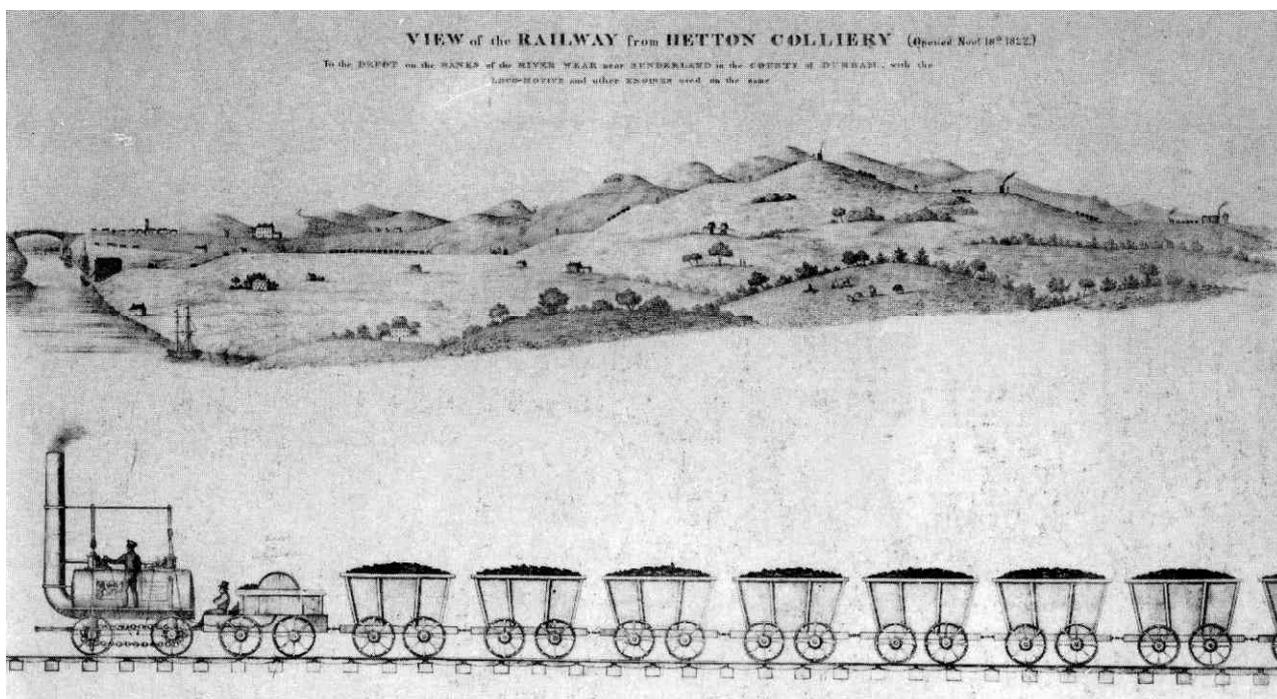


THE HETTON VILLAGE ATLAS

A Community, its History and Landscape



HETTON LOCAL & NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

THE HETTON VILLAGE ATLAS

THE LANDSCAPE, HISTORY AND ENVIRONMENT OF
HETTON-LE-HOLE AND NEIGHBOURING COMMUNITIES



Lyons Cottages at Hetton Lyons, with the cottage lived in by Robert Stephenson during construction of the Hetton Colliery Railway shown nearest to the camera.

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Hetton Local and Natural History Society



Lifting the track of the Hetton Colliery Railway in Railway Street, Hetton, in 1959

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17. EARLY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF HETTON 1800-1850

A prelude to Early Trade Unionism.

During the medieval period in Britain trade unionism took the form of workers' and merchants' guilds. Here skilled workers banded together, initially to help each other to protect their skills and find work. The early guilds were fraternities of workers organised in a form which resembled something of a professional association, a trade union, a cartel, and even a secret society. They were protective of the mysteries and technologies associated with their work or their businesses. The development of the industrial revolution during the 18th century prompted a number of trade disputes. Labour unrest grew in various industries which became worrying to the governments of the day. As a result they introduced a number of Combination Acts in 1799 and 1800, at the height of the Napoleonic Wars, which made it illegal for workers to strike. Strikers could receive three months imprisonment or two month's hard labour if they broke these laws. The Combination Acts introduced no new principle into law because unlawful combinations already carried stringent punishments including transportation. The landed gentry and owners of industries did not understand the problems of industrial society and this harsh legislation was their way of maintaining law and order. Imposition of these laws was soon met with opposition and overt public disorder occurred during the period 1815-1824 because there was no safety valve through which the lower orders could express their dissatisfaction. This public disorder included riots, marches and demonstrations.

One notable group was the Luddites (1811-16)

-

Luddites :- Men who took the name of a (perhaps) mythical individual, Ned Ludd who was reputed to live in Sherwood Forest. The Luddites were trying to save their livelihoods by smashing industrial machines developed for use in the textile industries of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire. Some Luddites were active in Lancashire also. Throughout the period 1811-16 there was a series of incidents of machine-breaking, invariably followed by executions of the culprits.

While another was the Blanketeers (March 1817) -

This protest was partly against the government's measures and partly a demonstration and attempt to petition the Prince Regent to do something to relieve the economic depression. It was a peaceful march by hundreds of depressed Manchester cotton operatives, who carried blankets to sleep in - hence the name 'Blanketeers'. It rained violently on the day the march began; the leaders were arrested at Stockport and the protest had fizzled out by Macclesfield. However, the Manchester pattern of discontent in times of hardship created the greatest fears of revolution.

The Peterloo Massacre (August 1819) -

A meeting in Manchester was planned for 9 August to elect Henry Hunt as the working-man's popular representative for Lancashire; it had to be cancelled because it was declared to be an illegal gathering. The meeting was reorganised for 16 August and it was held on St Peter's Field, Manchester, to demand parliamentary reform. The meeting was to be addressed by Hunt. The main aim was to demand the reform of parliament as a step towards socio-economic betterment: ordinary people wanted government by the people for the people. The organisers of the meeting were moderate men who wanted a peaceful event that would show that they were respectable working men, worthy of responsibility. The local magistrates brought in the Cheshire Yeomanry to control the crowd of between 50,000 and 60,000 people. The JPs decided to arrest Hunt: they also

tried to disperse the crowd, but did not read the Riot Act. As the Yeomanry moved on Hunt, people crowded on them. The Yeomanry drew their sabres and a troop of hussars, trying to rescue them, caused a panic. The result was eleven dead including two women, and about 400 wounded.

In 1824 the Combination Acts were repealed and trades unions began to emerge as a powerful force in industrial areas. After about 1830, employers began to use "The Document" as a means of controlling their employees' union activities. This "document" was really a written agreement concerning the actions of workers which was drawn up by the employers. Not only were the terms of reference determined by the employers but also the rights of the employees, or really the lack of them, were also drawn up for the employee to sign. Failure to sign meant no job and any failure to uphold the rules of the place of work, or actions taken against the employer or his place of work, would result in dismissal.

Changes in the political system were also demanded at this time and the unions began to become politicised in an attempt to change the status quo. No worker had the vote and only the very well off acted as representatives in Parliament. A tremendous struggle to change Britain into a democracy partially succeeded in The Reform Act of 1832, but the bulk of ordinary people still had no vote. Unions tried to improve things, causing a big fight back from the masters, as the bosses were then called. Deference was expected towards the rich and powerful from ordinary people. You had to 'know your place in society, or suffer the consequences. There were few rights and charity was the main form of social welfare'.

It was against this background that the early miners' unions and associations found themselves clashing with the coal owners. In the disillusionment with politics that followed the realisation that the 1832 reform of voting had only favoured the well off, especially the new class that owned industrial manufacturing, workers once again turned to the notion of trade unionism.

The establishment of workhouses in 1834 was part of a new system designed to intimidate the growing new class, the working class, into accepting the factory system. The penalty for rebellion in the workplace and consequent joblessness was dire. But unions were still being formed and were growing.

The following discussion looks closely at what happened in Hetton during the early years following the opening of the Hetton Lyons Colliery in 1822 and parallels many of the actions in other industries and trades throughout England and Wales during this period. Unrest continued throughout the 1830s and into the 1840s in the Durham and Northumberland coalfield. This unrest and dissatisfaction was assisted by the introduction of a new national political group known as the **Chartists** in 1837.

Six million signatures were collected in a massive petition, an extraordinary feat in a time of minority literacy. Detractors claimed that this petition was largely phoney. A new six point charter was drawn up, hence the name Chartists. In Newport in South Wales there was even an armed uprising in 1839 in support of the Charter and the first ever General Strike took place in 1842. Whilst it was generally poorly organised and co-ordinated, in parts of the north it was massively supported. Despite the attempts of the newspapers of the day to cast the peoples' struggle as a violent one, it was mostly relatively peaceful. There were differences in tactics and strategy that weakened the movement, but even so it was undoubtedly the most successful 'single issue' campaign Britain has ever seen and forced the pace of democratic reform.

Chartism laid the ground for a new approach. To prevent revolution the elite needed a new strategy. Between 1850 and 1880 Britain became 'the workshop of the world.' Such expansion of production created jobs and helped prevent the fear of unemployment and poverty. The policy needed more certainty about ensuring plentiful markets for Britain's goods abroad. The expansion of the British

Empire was the result. The potential profits were huge and some could be shared with the working class. The craft societies that had supported union activity and the Charter continued as these movements had not formally faded as these changes took place. Working class campaigns for the vote continued in other forms. Chartism had expressed the interests of the whole working class and had been a political, social and economic movement, even perhaps the first party of the working class. But really there were only the Tory and Liberal parties to choose from. Governments tried to curb the newly acquired powers of unions by legal restraint. Leaders of unions sought to enter parliament after the 1867 Reform Act, as Liberals, so as to influence this process.

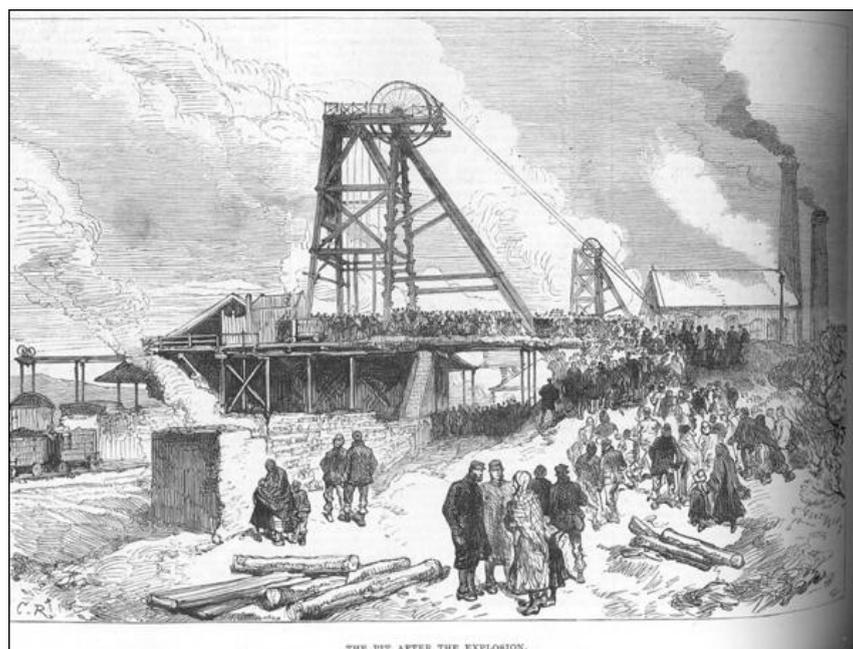
(See later section dealing with further details of the Chartist's Demands.)

The mining unions continued to flourish as the decades passed. There was more and more co-operation between coal owners and miners' leaders, but battles still had to be fought. The Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 brought about massive changes to the welfare of the children in miners' families. After 1850, many of the trade unions fought for the interests of skilled workers in their industries, but not so the miners unions, who pressed for benefits for the whole mining fraternity. They also had limited aims - wages, working hours and conditions of work. Typically, unions now became more interested in the benevolent society side of their activities; strikes were much less common because generally members received the benefits they were entitled to. National unions began to be formed by the process of local union branches combining their resources.

There is no doubt that Hetton grew in the 19th century amid a period of intense union activity. The miners and their families suffered greatly but their efforts were not always in vain. The community developed by pulling and working together, giving each other support and assistance where required.

Early Miners Working Conditions

The conditions in the mines were dire, so by the time coal mining ceased in Durham almost 12,500 mine related deaths had been recorded in the county and over 164,000 in the country as a whole. The true total must be much higher, as no accurate records for the early years exist. There was no chronicler of the pitman and his lot in the early years, though occasional burnings and drowning are mentioned in the squabbling lawsuits over the ownership of mines.



As early as 1662 a petition to the King from 2000 miners of the Tyne and Wear area, gives one of their chief grievances as bad ventilation of the pits. This was at a time when the early pits were shallow and more easily ventilated. Ventilation in pits was considered by the newly formed Royal Society and by 1677 they were examining the causes of explosions, a further terrible hazard for miners. In addition (damps) or foul air could kill insensibly. Testing was by the flame of a candle or the death of a bird. As if these environmental conditions were not bad enough, the working conditions were inhuman.

By the start of mining in Hetton, the Bord and Pillar method had been developed. Hewers, working eight to ten hours a day, using hand picks and wedges, first extracted coal along roadways or bords, while the coal in between the bords was cross cut to leave pillars holding up the roof. The coals were shovelled onto corves and hauled by putters (working 12 hours shifts) and pit ponies to the shaft bottom. There would be two shafts, an up draught and down draught, to provide ventilation which was effected by a furnace or boiler fire producing an up draught, causing air to rise, producing a down draught in the other shaft. There were vast areas to ventilate, including the areas already worked out (the Goaf) using a complex system of doors and partitions to direct the flow of air. Trapper boys, from the age of six or seven and working 12 hour shifts, opened and closed the doors by means of a chord to allow the passage of corves. There were no cages to give access to the mine at this point; a chain attached to a winder was used to lift the corves, and the miners would attach a loop to the chain and place their foot in the loop and grab onto the chain. Access for the trapper boys was by the same means, usually with an older miner holding on to them. A terrible accident at Elemore colliery shows how hazardous this could be. A miner, Henry Hunter, was ascending when he became entangled in the descending chain which decapitated him, but when the headless body reached the surface it was still clinging onto the chain with its feet in the loop. There are many examples recorded of miners falling to their death when being conveyed in this manner. Lighting was by the Davey Lamp, a newly developed safety lamp, and if anyone has visited the mine at Beamish, for example, they will know what a faint glow this gives out to see anything by. Mine workings were notorious for water seeping into the workings and hewers would often be lying down in these conditions, while a lack of ventilation made the atmosphere hot and sticky.

Miners' wages were based on piece work payment for the number of corves filled, not by actual weight. The colliery owner could choose to reduce the wages of any grade, make errors in calculations of the coal sent up by each hewer, impose new fines for breaking rules or agreements, or arbitrarily 'set out'. Set out was the laying out of the corve contents at the bank top, and accusing the hewer of short measure or stone content. They would not pay for any corves or tubs claimed to be not properly filled, and the men had no legal redress. At some collieries at least, it was customary to pay the "keeker," the person who passed the corves or tubs as correct, at so much for each one rejected as being improperly filled; so that he had a direct personal interest in unfairness. It is recorded that the father of Thomas Burt once learnt, on coming to bank, that seven out of eight of his corves or tubs had been rejected and would not be paid for, though the colliery owner would still sell for his own profit the coal thus hewn without cost. The miners were, in fact, entirely at the mercy of the colliery owners and such working practices.

The Vend

To maximise yields from their investments, from 1726 onwards the coal owners, most of them landowners, banded together in illegal cartels which controlled the quantities shipped, and prices charged, across the Tyne and Wear. This cartel was initially known as the 'Grand Alliance' and after

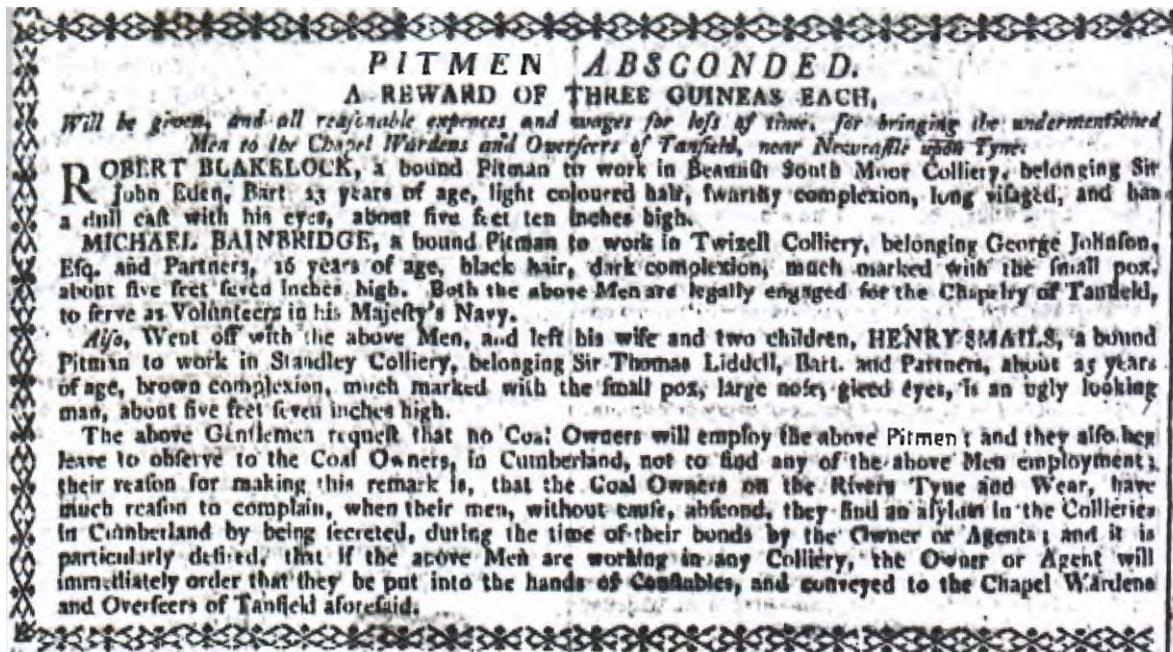
1771 as the 'Limitation of the Vend'. Later it came under the auspices of the Joint Durham and Northumberland Coal Owners' Association until its demise in the 1840s. The launching of the Hetton Coal Company, a group of mostly non landowners, branded by Lord Londonderry as "madmen",

undermined this status quo. Despite the apparent unity there were always jealousies and disagreements. The Tyne, which claimed 60% of the Vend, tried to assert its superiority even though some of the Wear collieries were bigger individual producers. On the Wear no love was lost between Lambton and Londonderry even before the foundation of the Hetton Coal Company.

The coal owners used this monopoly power to maximise their profits by restricting output and so eliminating price competition, and by controlling, as far as possible, the labour costs. Each colliery was allocated by the Cartel a level of production according to its size. This varied greatly from small drift mines and other landsale (for local consumption) workings with small workforces, to larger seasale (shipped from the rivers to London and other markets) collieries, some of which employed over 1000 men. Agreed tonnages were scrutinised relative to sales and prices on the London market, to determine size of shipments allowed to each colliery, so as to maintain or increase prices. The cartel's most important secondary goal, was to organise the owners in a united front against the claims of their workforce.

The Bond

The hated Yearly Bond was, for many years, not a legal contract of service between two contracting parties, but merely an acknowledgment by the men of a fictitious indebtedness. They could, at any moment, without cause, be discharged and evicted from the wretched hovels that were then provided for them and their families. On the other hand, if during their whole year of binding they attempted to get work elsewhere, even if they were made to stand idle, they could be summarily convicted and sent to prison. Durham Gaol was seldom without some miners serving sentences for such an offence.



*This Notice appeared in the Newcastle Courant on 11th April 1795
Note, that when found they are to be returned to their owners, just like slaves.*

PITMEN ABSCONDED

A REWARD OF THREE GUINEAS EACH

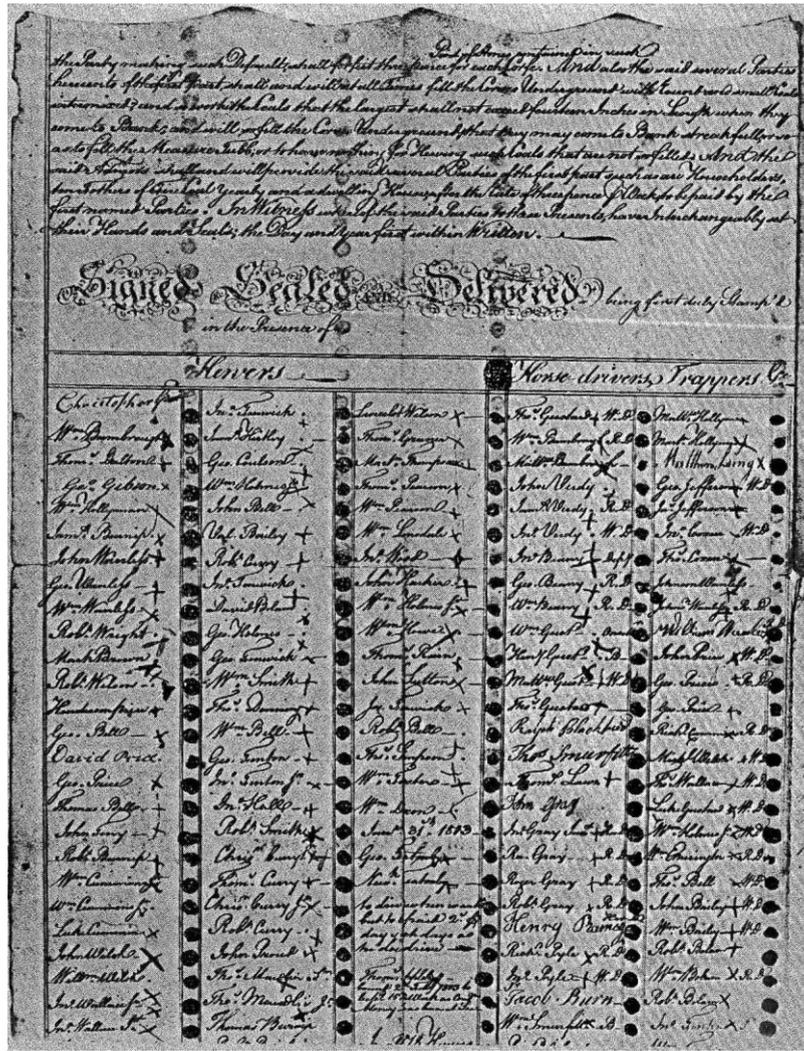
Will be given, and all reasonable expenses and wages for loss of time, for bringing the undermentioned Men to the Chapel Wardens and Overseers of Tanfield, near Newcastle upon Tyne. ROBERT BLAKELOCK, a bound Pitman to work in Beamish South Moor Colliery, belonging Sir John Eden, Bart. 23 years of age, light coloured hair, swarthy complexion, long visage and has a dull cast with his eyes, about five feet ten inches high.

MICHAEL BAINBRIDGE, a bound pitman to work in Twisell Colliery, belonging to George Johnson, Esq. And Partners, 16 years of age, black hair, dark complexion, much marked with the small pox, about five feet seven inches high. Both the above men are legally engaged for the Chapelry of Tanfield, to serve as Volunteers in his Majesty's Navy.

Also, Went off with the above men, and left his wife and two children, Henry Smails, a bound pitman to work in Standley Colliery, belonging to Sir Thomas Liddell, Bart. and Partners, about 25 years of age, brown complexion, much marked with the small pox, large nose, gleet eyes, is an ugly looking man, about five feet seven inches high.

The above Gentlemen request that no Coal Owners will employ the above Pitmen and they also beg leave to observe to the Coal Owners in Cumberland, not to find any of the above Men employment, their reason for making this remark is, that the Coal Owners on the River's Tyne and Wear, have much reason to complain, when their men, without cause, abscond, they find no asylum in the Collieries in Cumberland by being secreted, during the time of their bonds by the Owner or Agents, and it is particularly desired, that if the above Men are working in any Colliery, the Owner or Agent will immediately order that they will be put into the hands of Constables and conveyed to the Chapel Wardens and Overseers of Tanfield as afore said.

As the bonding was the only time in a year when the miner and his family could legally transfer from one pit to another for better wages or housing, miners were coerced into signing the bond with Binding Money. At the start of the nineteenth century there was a considerable extension of collieries in the county, and exceptional profits were made, causing a general scramble for hewers and putters at the binding time. The fear of not procuring the necessary supply of men was such that from 12 to 14 guineas per man were given on the Tyne, and 18 guineas on the Wear; and progressive exorbitant bounties were paid to putters, drivers and irregular workmen. The binding would usually take place in a public house, drink was lavished in the utmost profusion, and every sort of extravagance permitted. The increase in all the rates of wages brought into the trade a great number of labourers and their families who had hitherto never thought of pit work, and then the Binding money promptly fell.



Copy of Part of a Miners Bond
Signed with a cross as few could write their name at this time.

The Truck Shop

Civilising influences were absent in the early mining communities. There were no Co-operative Societies, Miners' Halls, workmen's clubs, schools, chapels, insurance or savings banks. There was, however, shortly after the opening of the Hetton Coal Company collieries, an absolutely unrestricted number of beer-shops. In disablement, sickness and old age, and for burial, they relied on the Parish Overseer.

The wages did not go as far as they might have done, for the paymaster employed by the coal owner to pay the men, often kept a shop close by stocked with the provisions necessary to sustain life and obliged the men to purchase directly from him, deducting the money from their wages. This practice of "Truck", as it was called, was forbidden by statute law, but enforcement of the law was lax and the so called "Tommy Shops" often kept the miner and his family in debt, which it was difficult to free himself from. It was not until the growth of the Co-operative movement that they would be completely eradicated. In modern terms it was a sort of Pay Day Loan by your employer, who then forced you to buy all of your provisions from his shop, at exorbitant prices.

Society's Attitude to the Early Miners

Many early mines were leased out by unscrupulous owners who, seeking to make as much out of their investment as possible, ground down their workers who were treated as serfs unworthy of consideration. Not only did they refuse to pay a fair wage for hard labour in dangerous conditions, they employed children at a tender age as trappers and young girls also. Due to the long hours of work, many would only see the sunlight on one weekend day for many months of the year. Early miners were often taunted for their barbarity and lack of intelligence. It was forgotten that, situated as they were, it was impossible to obtain an education; the relationship was one of master and servant. Learning among the lower classes was positively discouraged, and those who managed to get a bit of education were said to have the impertinent curiosity to know as much as their betters.

An educated pitman was a rare thing, so it is no surprise that when disputes arose the men often turned to violence, wrecking machinery and throwing corves down the shaft. Although the miners met together in numbers to discuss various things to do with their work, there was no organisation of a permanent or stable character. In 1810 the coal owners unilaterally decided to change the time of the Binding from October to December/January. The men agreed to this, but on further consideration thought their decision to be a disadvantage, but the owners refused to reverse the decision. The delegates of the men held a meeting at Long Benton and decided to strike on Binding day, which duly took place. The delegates held meetings throughout Northumberland and Durham to keep the men informed and united. They were hunted from place to place by the owners and the magistrates, with assistance from the military, and were committed to prison in such large numbers that the gaols were soon full. The gaols in Durham were so full that it was feared an infection would break out. Almost 300 were moved to the stables and yards of the Bishop of Durham and guarded by members of the militia and special constables. In the words of Richard Fynes - *The men were now awakening to a sense of the serfdom in which their forefathers had too long existed and their employers knew this, and were anxious to stifle their desire for freedom at its birth. It was preposterous that men who had all along been in the habit of looking up with awe and reverence to their employers – men who had been taught, and had learned the lesson too, to “order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters” – men who had shown no disposition hitherto to do anything beyond living and dying on this earth like brute creatures – it was perfectly intolerable that these men should refuse to bow quietly down at the imperious behests of their lords and masters; it was a thing beyond all reason, and not to be allowed for a moment that these creatures should have a will of their own, much less to exercise one; it was such an outrageous proposition, and such a piece of impertinence and presumption that these men should dare to take the liberty of thinking for themselves, that the united powers of the church, of the law, and of the army, must forthwith be launched to keep them in subjection, and prevent their presumptuous aspirations for freedom from becoming infectious.*

The authorities found the men were determined to stand by their decision, and fortunately a magistrate, Rev. Nesfield, and Captain Davis of the Carmarthenshire Militia, had the good sense to realise that the prisoners were rational beings and undertook to make a compromise with the leaders of the men in the Bishop's stables. But the men refused to back down, leaving it up to their fellow workers who were still at liberty. After seven weeks of the strike, it was agreed to move the time of binding to the 5th of April. Other issues, in particular the fines for deficient measure and foul coals, were to be resolved after the dispute was settled. The proposals were accepted at a meeting of the coal owners of the Tyne and Wear, Hartley, Blyth and Cowpen.

As this strike ended a *future miner's leader, Thomas Hepburn*, then only 14 years of age, was already working at Fatfield Colliery. He had started work at the age of 8 at Urpeth colliery, when his father was killed in a mining accident, leaving a widow and three children, of whom Thomas was the eldest.

The Rise of Methodism

John Wesley (1703–91) was an Anglican cleric and Christian theologian, who is largely credited with founding the Methodist movement, which began when he took to open-air preaching. Wesley preached indefatigably all around the country and in 1747, he visited the village of Renton (Rainton) where he preached to many miners. After the death of Wesley, the Wesleyan Methodists left the Church of England. Following disagreements over Peterloo, divisions began to appear between the poorer people of the congregation and the wealthier more respectable members. The Primitive movement was spawned from the followers of Bourne and Clowes who were charismatic evangelists. It would become a movement led by the poor for the poor using a decentralised and democratic system. In the early part of the 19th century the Wesleyans and Primitives grew apart, but they became closer again as the century wore on.

Into the mining communities, ignored by the statesmen of the time and given up as hopeless by the church, there came, between 1821 and 1850, the inspiring influence of these Primitive Methodists. Notably the humble, unschooled but devoted "ranter," carrying gradually from village to village the gospel of salvation of the Primitive Methodist Church. Very moving is it to read today of the tireless efforts of these unlettered, hard-driven, poverty-stricken men, nearly always earning only a precarious living as manual wage-earners, who nevertheless found the time and the means, as they went from one village to another, to gather together a tiny congregation, and establish a humble meeting-place at the house of a convert, which eventually became a chapel. They had great success in converting the miners. It is said that for want of time to wash themselves they would come 'black' to the preaching of the sermon, and would become so emotionally overcome by the word that silent tears would roll down their black cheeks, leaving white streaks which portrayed what their hearts felt. Great was the influence of this religious emotion, which proved effective in changing life and character, in many cases. They aimed to save the soul, but the change of heart which accompanied conversion often got rid of the person's shortcomings and instilled earnestness, sobriety, industry, and a caring outlook. Family after family became so transformed, to serve in its turn as a centre of influence. It is these men and women who, in the mining villages, stood out as men of character, gaining the respect of their fellows. From the very beginning they were the instigators of progressive developments in the mines and villages. From them would come the foundations of the trade unions, the Co-operatives, friendly societies, and attempts at adult education and they would later become the county councillors and trade union officials. They would provide the trusted checkweighers and lodge officials. Over time, with migrations from other areas, other influences would play their part, but initially it was Methodism which gave the miner and his family a feeling of self worth and the confidence to fight for their rights.

Thomas Hepburn

Thomas Hepburn was born in February 1796 in the Durham pit village of Pelton. His father was killed in a mining accident, leaving a widow and three children, of which Thomas was the eldest. He had received a scant education at the village school but could read the Bible when he began work at Urpeth colliery at the age of eight. He soon moved to another local pit at Fatfield. He took every opportunity to extend his education by private study and attending classes after work. He joined the Primitive Methodists, becoming an active local preacher, a "Ranter", which developed his powers of persuasion, public speaking and organization. Hepburn married in 1820 and soon afterwards moved to a colliery at Jarrow and then to the recently opened Hetton colliery. This pattern of moves was typical of the lives of skilled hewers, who thereby gained experience of a variety of mining

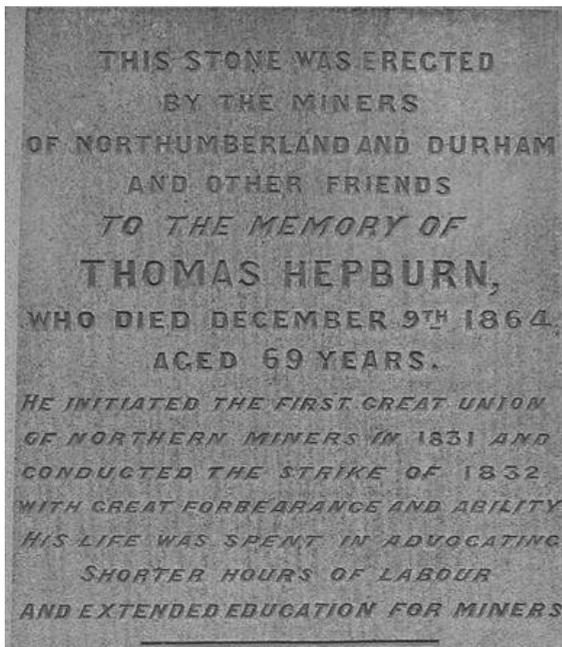


communities. Hetton was a large new colliery, with a newly recruited workforce, ripe for the establishment of its own leadership.

Though the miners had often shown a capacity for effective collective action, formal trade unionism had never achieved long term success. Hepburn became involved in attempts to resuscitate a mining union, encouraged by a number of grievances, including the long hours worked by young boys and the existence of the annual bond. He led the successful miners' strike of 1831, becoming the unions paid organiser. After the failure of the 1832 strike, Hepburn was only allowed to work in the mines again after he promised to refrain from all union activity. But Hepburn's public activities did not end there as he was prominent in the 1839 Chartist agitation on Tyneside.

Richard Fynes, the coalfield historian, described Hepburn as follows:

'Hepburn was not only a great leader among the miners, but his sympathies extended to the broad



platform of politics. He was a man with a strong constitution, an intelligent mind, active and ever ready to lend a hand to any movement that had for its object the elevation of the people... He was one of the most active men in the Chartist agitation (q.v.). Fergus O'Connor, speaking of him, said: 'He is a noble specimen of human nature, and the people of the North of England have a right to be proud of him...' When the Miners Union was broken up, he spent a number of the remaining years of his laborious and useful life in agitating for parliamentary reform, and in educating the young ones with whom he came in contact.' Thomas Hepburn is buried in Heworth churchyard.

Inscription on Thomas Hepburn's Gravestone

Attempts at Union Organisation

The 1831 Coal Strike

The Napoleonic wars ended in 1815, which led to economic depression, resulting in the increased availability of labour, which in turn strengthened the coal owner's position. The owner's policy of using dismissal to prevent combinations by workers, had shifted the balance of power away from the men. Binding money had also reduced as a result of better organisation by the owners to fix prices. The miners had planned to strike in 1822, but rumours of reductions in the price of the bond and the number of men to be employed, caused a panic to sign, thereby preventing a strike and giving the owners the upper hand. Changes to what was seen as the ineffectual Combinations Act, in 1824, made collective bargaining between unions and employers legal.

In 1825 the Tyne and Wear pitmen established their first official organisation, the United Colliers Association, which, though a friendly society, was known to both masters and men as "the union". Membership was confined to the elite workers, the hewers. There were various unsuccessful local strikes, including at Hetton, and these defeats caused the failure of their union, but its short life was probably less important than the lessons learned. The first of their pamphlets on "Rules and Regulations" of the union, published in 1825, showed the union's structure to be based on a representative system of branches and delegates, with discussion and voting on policy issues and

the election of all delegates and officers, but this highly democratic system was weakened by the fact that membership was confined to the hewers. Given the advances of Primitive Methodism in the coalfield, not least at Hetton, it seems that the pitmen, in devising the mode of union organisation, copied the Methodist class system. A number of pamphlets were published detailing the pitmen's grievances including the classic "A Voice from the Coal Mines". It was a time of preparation for when attempts could be made, in more favourable circumstances, to improve the miners' lot.

By 1831 the miners were at the end of their tether and on New Year's Day a meeting at Hetton, well attended by pitmen from all the principal collieries of Tyne and Wear, formed a benefit society for the relief of the sick and lame. However, by March the body was making industrial demands.

As a show of strength and solidarity, in March 1830 the union called a huge meeting at Black Fell and another on the Town Moor where 20,000 pitmen turned out, passing a number of resolutions on pay and hours of work. About two hundred pitmen's delegates were elected to a coalfield committee based at Newcastle's Cock Inn, which was evidence of popular support for some form of direct democracy. The owners dismissed the pitmen's claims and raised the prospect of holding the annual bindings in February. A show of force was planned by the union and a mass meeting was called for the 21st of March on Newcastle Town Moor, a working day, whereupon a big turnout would lay the pits idle with the maximum impact on the Owners. On hearing of this, the owners brought forward binding day to Saturday March 19 in an attempt to split the pitmen's ranks, but the meeting went ahead as planned, a 24,000 crowd being addressed by delegates from the back of a wagon. The main speaker spoke "with bitterness of the length of time which their children were compelled to labour, and the severe conduct of some of the agents". He was Thomas Hepburn, the Hetton hewer who was to chair all the pitmen's big meetings and after whom the union came to be known as 'Hepburn's Union'. Though his name was unheralded before this occasion, from the fact that early organising meetings took place in Hetton and that he chaired the Town Moor meeting, the role he played in re-establishing the union is evident. The meeting adopted a number of resolutions on pay and hours of work, they called for a levy on pitmen to petition parliament and decided they would not be bound in the coming April. If the employers agreed they would work unbound, if not, they would refuse to work. They also discussed being obliged to remain idle at Christmas and any compensation, as well as the length of time they were imprisoned in the collieries, to the exclusion of almost every chance of education or improvement. Further, that no man should in future buy meat, drink, or candles, from anyone connected with the collieries. This last resolution was intended to put a stop to the existence of those establishments known as "Tommy Shops" the system by which a miner and his family, was placed completely at the mercy of the colliery owners. The meeting was held without any disturbance and the miners returned to their homes in good order.

The year for which the men at the collieries on Tyne and Wear had bound themselves expired on the 5th of April, 1831. All of them refused to enter into fresh engagements with their employers until the differences which then existed were adjusted. The employers, it should be said, had agreed that the boys should in future work only twelve hours a day, and that the workmen should be paid their wages in money and be at liberty to buy goods where they chose. These were great points to have secured, but the men had made up their minds to have the whole of their grievances remedied, and continued to insist on the other conditions. On Wednesday, April 6th, the day following the binding day, a great number of miners met on the Black Fell in the hope that some further arrangements would be proposed by the coal owners; but as no proposition was forthcoming, they dispersed with a resolution not to return to their work on the former terms. In the meantime parties of military had been placed in readiness to assist the civil power in preserving the peace.

Some of the collieries resumed work with a number of men who went in on the old terms, and who were accordingly regarded as "black-legs" by their companions who remained out to fight the battle to its end. There were some excesses of violence and up to 1,500 miners visited the collieries in the neighbourhood of Blyth and Bedlington and laid the pits off work by various destructive activities, threatening to set fire to them if their demands were not met. At Bedlington Glebe Pit, they tore the corves to pieces, threw them into the shaft, and did considerable damage to the machinery. They entered the house of the resident viewer at Cowpen Colliery, who was not a favourite with the men. They broke open the cellar and took everything that they could eat and drink out of it, but did no damage to the furniture, nor did they hurt any of the family in the house. After that incident, the following letter was sent to the viewer:

"I was at yor hoose last neet, and myed mysel very comfortable. Ye hey nee family, and yor just won man on the colliery, I see ye her a greet lot of rooms, and big cellars, and plenty wine and beer in them, which I got ma share on. Noo I naw some at wor colliery that has three or fower lads and lasses, and they live in won room not half as gude as yor cellar. I don't pretend to naw very much, but I naw there shudnt be that much difference. The only place we can gan to o the week ends is the yel hoose and hev a pint. I dinna pretend to be a profit, but I naw this, and lots o ma marrows na's te, that wer not tret as we owt to be, and a great filosofher says, to get noledge is to naw wer ignerent. But weve just begun to find that oot, and ye maisters and owners may luk oot, for yor not gan to get se much o yor awn way, wer gan to hev some o wors now. I divent tell ye ma nyem, but I was one o yor unwelcome visitors last neet."

All the mining districts were in a disturbed state. Large bodies of violent and lawless men traversed the country doing a great many destructive acts, and much silly and altogether unjustifiable mischief. On the Wear they were especially violent; at one colliery they even went to the length of threatening to murder the horse keepers if they went down to feed the poor horses. A great number of special constables were at once sworn in to protect property and the Deputy-Lieutenant of the County issued an order to call out the Northumberland and Newcastle Yeomanry. Part of the 82nd Regiment of Foot, which was then stationed at Sunderland Barracks, marched from there to the neighbourhood of Hetton, where they were ordered to remain during the unsettled state of the workmen. A detachment of 80 marines and three subalterns, under the command of Major Mitchell, sailed urgently from Portsmouth for the Tyne on account of the disturbances the collieries.

A mass meeting of pitmen was held on May 5 at Black Fell which was notable for the intervention of Lord Londonderry with two troops of cavalry, who ordered the meeting to disperse and threatened to read the Riot Act:

The assemblage was therefore thrown into great confusion, and the consequences might have been serious, but Hepburn, coolly held his handkerchief up, the signal for order: and it was obeyed as implicitly as if he had been the general of a perfectly disciplined force. The Marquis, who had seen a deal of active service, is said to have exclaimed when he saw this, "I never saw one man have so much influence over a body of men as this fellow has."

Hepburn's intervention impressed Londonderry and, though he still insisted the meeting should disperse, he thought that as so much had been negotiated, it was absurd not to bring matters to a final conclusion. He thus invited the delegates to Newcastle for private discussions, where he offered 30s for a 10 day fortnight and implied that the fines would be reduced. Both points apparently met with the delegates' approval and a general meeting of owners was subsequently convened on May 6, despite their having resolved only two days earlier to eschew negotiations with the union. The

delegates promptly responded with the unambiguously-titled handbill, *An Appeal to the Public from the Pitmen*, which pointed out the progress made so far and but the offer was still unacceptable.

By the middle of June Londonderry was growing increasingly desperate to get his men back to work, as heavy borrowing in developing Seaham as a port facility, combined with his notorious habitual personal extravagance, meant he was facing 'serious cash problems'. He believed his bankers were trying 'to buy their way cheaply into the trade' and was anxious that his mines should be generating income. He invited his own men to meet him at Penshaw on May 7th. The general consensus of the owners' May 6 meeting was, said Londonderry, that 'we were all to treat with our own people', and he thus offered his pitmen the terms he had put to the delegates on May 6th. These were not at the expense of the other points, and Londonderry's only quibble concerned the fines, which he said 'must be left to my honour'. He then left for Ireland to assist in his son Lord Castlereagh's election campaign, leaving directions with his viewers "to settle my arrangements with my men, in a manner and spirit consistent with firmness, and at the same time to afford due and proper payment to the various inferior details with which my colliers were dissatisfied." His pitmen did not accede, but Londonderry's move caused consternation amongst the other owners, not least Lord Durham. Londonderry had merely taken the May resolutions to their logical conclusion, but his offer produced in the pitmen an upsurge of confidence in the justification of their claims and in their ultimate chance of success. The Hetton Company's and Lord Durham's pitmen 'immediately demanded the same terms'. The confidence of the Wear men was not however echoed on the Tyne, where some men were considering a return to work, causing disunity between the men of the two rivers. At the pitmen's delegate meeting of May 10th, it was resolved that no pitman should bind until terms were agreed at every pit, but further divisions were about to open. Londonderry's financial problems were so pressing that he saw the only solution as being 'to sell as much coal as he could without too much concern for owner solidarity': thus, with his pitmen still declining his offer, on May 12 he granted all their demands whereupon they agreed to bind, causing further splits amongst the pitmen. The men at Newbottle and Hetton also signed their bonds, leaving the Tyne men unhappy. Londonderry's men were no sooner bound than they went on strike again. As a consequence of the pitmen having succeeded so completely, all the other branches of colliery workmen were uniting and going on strike through the persuasion, it is understood, of the Delegates. By bringing in ancillary trades such as enginemen, carpenters and banksmen to stop the pits, the bound men could avoid legal obligations to work. Londonderry had thus given his men all their demands for no immediate gain. The dispute had moreover escalated, damaging the owners' tenuous unity. Only two days after Londonderry conceded, Lord Durham also gave in and his pitmen commenced to bind. This was a particular blow to Hetton, which now faced the desertion of its men to the Londonderry and Durham collieries where better terms were on offer, but the owners hurriedly resolved that none should bind any Hetton hewer without the permission of the Hetton owners. The owners were now in disarray and started to evict the remaining unbound miners, including at Hetton, and there were many disturbances, even a death at Willington, and riots were feared in Newcastle. No uniform return to work was yet taking place but the general strike policy had been abandoned, and the pitmen were settling with their owners wherever possible. Having effectively won the battle on the Wear, the pitmen played on the vulnerability of the smaller concerns to maximise their gains as the owners' unity evaporated. Working unionists were limiting output and financially supporting the strikers against their owners, Londonderry's men donating a quarter of their wages and Durham's limiting earnings to 3s per day. Londonderry's viewer, Buddle, looked upon the deteriorating situation with utter dismay. He felt the owners should resist the men's demands, but he was 'acutely compromised' by his Lordship's capitulation. There was still no general or uniform return to work, but the owners' continuing disarray meant they were now effectively beaten. Hetton settled on May 25 and by late May a general drift back to work was under way, and from the comments of the owners and viewers we must assume that the pitmen secured most if not all of their aims.

The 1832 Strike

On 13th August 1831, fired up by their victory, the pitmen's union held a big meeting on Boldon Fell. Pitmen and their new comrades the Blacksmiths, Joiners, Deputies and Overmen, marched to this meeting in their thousands behind bands and banners. Perhaps this was the forerunner of the Durham Big meeting. Some of the leading delegates were mounted on a cart. Hepburn first presented himself, and recommended order, sobriety, and attention to their religious duties, as the best means they could adopt to preserve the advantages they had gained, and to keep up in the public mind that favourable feeling which had been so generally exhibited towards them during the strike. R. Atkinson spoke recommending that Hepburn, who had been one of the most active promoters and sustainers of the strike, should be appointed and maintained by the union, to visit the different collieries, and enforce the rules of the association, the necessity of good conduct, and the duty of the men attending to the education of the younger branches of their families. Further addresses were delivered with great fervour, were patiently listened to, and loudly applauded. However, a motion had not been prepared for the support of the Reform Act, which was supposed to be the main *political* topic and a resolution was deferred to a later meeting. The immense assembly dispersed in the manner it had arrived.

The successful strike of 1831 had had two effects. In the first place it had greatly increased the militancy and confidence of the union. Frequent meetings were held, violence was occasionally used against non-union miners and the union began to dream of a closed shop. In the second place, the owners had learned a lesson. Most of them had never before had to face a large strike; the last general walkout had taken place in 1810. But the defeat of 1831 put them on their guard and made them long for an opportunity to even the score with their workers. The roles of owners and men were now reversed with the pitmen masters of the collieries, courtesy of their control of manning and output. An uneasy truce prevailed, but the owners, angry and indignant at having had their authority usurped by their social inferiors, seemed determined to test it whenever the opportunity presented itself.

When for instance the Hetton brakemen and firemen struck on August 28, their bonds (contracts of employment) were legally rescinded by a magistrate, on the grounds that they had been violated, and when the enginemen also struck the owners vowed to leave the coals at bank rather than submit to their demands. The Hetton owners then circulated the names of the discharged men and the Coal Trade committee resolved that no workman was to be engaged without strictly enquiring into the cause of his having left his last situation. The Blacklisting of any ringleaders from employment had dire consequences in those times. The Hetton owners even tried to set up a benefit society for those working underground in an attempt to split the workforce but it never got off the ground due to the lack of support from the men. Another tactic of the owners was to attempt to dilute union power by introducing workers from outside the area, in particular lead miners from West Durham.

The owners had become emboldened by the introduction of a Coal Trade Indemnity Fund, to reimburse owners who had accommodated the military during the strike and to assist collieries who were being laid idle by the union. At Callerton, Coxlodge and Waldrige owners had introduced lead miners, which was opposed by the union men who withdrew their labour, so the owners' tactics were to have some of the men arrested, charged and imprisoned.

On the 24th December 1831, almost 1,000 men assembled at Waldrige Colliery, near Chester-le-Street. It appears, that the miners employed at this colliery had refused to work, and in consequence the owners had employed some 26 to 30 lead miners who were down the mine at the time. The assembled men stopped the engine kept for pumping water, and then threw large iron tubs,

wooden cisterns, corves and other articles, down the shaft, by which the workmen below were placed in the utmost danger. To apprehend and convict the perpetrators, His Majesty's government offered a reward of 250 guineas, and a free pardon to any accomplices, to which the owners added another 250 guineas. At the Durham Spring Assizes, held on the 2nd March, 1832, seven men were put on trial for these outrages, and after a patient investigation of ten minutes the jury found six men guilty. They were sentenced to from six to fifteen months imprisonment. Mr. Hepburn and other leading union men deprecated in strong terms this misconduct, and said it was not the proper way for men to get their grievances settled. "Unfortunately," he added, "the innocent were suffering for the guilty, as the owners and authorities were determined to punish someone, and if he was only a miner belonging to the union it is sufficient for them; for he knew of some men who had been taken from their bed and imprisoned, who were never near the riot."

In 1832 the miners made a further demand, and came out on strike. On the 3rd of March the bonding time renewal was close, and a general meeting of the men of the two counties was held at Bolden Fell. There was an immense number of men from each colliery bringing with them banners bearing various mottoes and devices. *The owners, jealous of the growing strength of the union, had decided that at the next yearly binding, no man, being a member of the Miners' Union, should be bound, and consequently should not be allowed to work at their collieries.* The men who had joined the Association were convinced of the advantage of unity, and showed no disposition to leave the union at the behest of their employers. The principal object of this meeting was, therefore, to take such measures as were best calculated to defeat the owners; all the men being determined not to bind unless the Union men were also bound, Mr. Hepburn, chairman, urged upon the meeting the necessity of all their future proceedings being strictly legal, in light of what had happened to the men at Waldridge. The other speakers were Waddle, Parkinson, Arkle, and Atkinson, who all urged the necessity of supporting the Union for the maintenance of each other, and asserted that no less than £10,000 had been paid in the last twelve months from the Miners Fighting Fund. After a few remarks had been made about the outrages which had been committed and the unfairness of the authorities on the other hand, for seizing whoever they came across belonging to the Union, whether guilty or not the assemblage was further urged in all future steps, strictly to keep the peace. The meeting then dispersed.

On April 14th in the same year, another large general meeting was held on Black Fell. Mr. Hepburn was in the chair and addressed the meeting saying that: "Their opponents had got an idea that there was a reaction amongst them (the men), and that they were tired of associating for their common benefit. The present meeting, he thought, would be a sufficient answer to that, but he would go further; though one half of them were bound and the other half not, the half which was bound had not broken any faith with their fellows - they had only acted on agreement. It was agreed among them that such of them as could get their rights should bind; and such of them as could not obtain these rights should remain unbound until they were conceded to them. There was also another agreement amongst them, which was, that those who got themselves bound should support those who were not bound ("hear, hear", and "we will"). It was on that principle that the present meeting was held. They had met to declare their determination still to support each other in their reasonable claims, and that support should extend to the uttermost farthing. He would explain what he meant. It was that whilst he had a halfpenny, his fellow-sufferer should have the half of it (applause). If they were firm to one another, they would get what they wished for. Firmness obtained their privileges last year, and would do so this. Why were they now standing out? Did they want to better their conditions? He said, no-- they only wanted to be as well as they were last year, which some of their masters were refusing them; and the common rights of all must be respected before they bound themselves (applause)." Several speakers addressed the meeting, all reiterating the necessity of supporting the Union, which they said would eventually baffle the machinations of their employers. Before closing the meeting, Mr. Hepburn addressed the men in a very encouraging strain. He asked

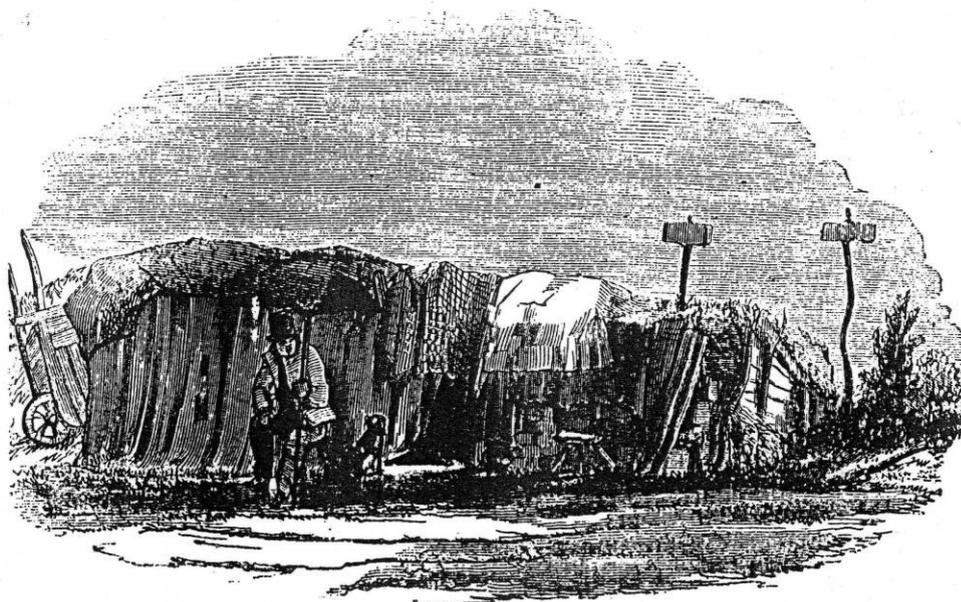
them "To make a few sacrifices, and twelve months would teach them a great deal. Things would come round in such a way that there would be need of more miners than were ever employed in England before, as pits were then being sunk to the north and south of them in their own counties, as well as in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, all of which would want men to work them. It had been said that they ought to get knowledge, and he would teach them how to do that. Let libraries be established amongst the collieries, which might be done for about a shilling a man in the year and he thought that was obtaining knowledge at a cheap rate. In conclusion, he urged them to part quietly, and let the world see their determination to support good order." The meeting then broke up, the men formed under their respective banners, and left the place of meeting in a most peaceable manner.

All the collieries were now at a standstill. The owners, learning from the Waldridge experience, had in many cases engaged new hands (strangers) to take the places of those on strike. The original miners still retained possession of their dwellings, which were now required for the strangers. The owners would have to either submit to the strike by their former servants or put the newly engaged strangers in possession of the houses. They determined on this latter course. Steps were taken to prevent as much as possible any disturbance. Special constables were appointed, a strong force of London police were in readiness (40 of these were to be stationed in Hetton), assisted by a detachment of the Queen's Bays, and those who refused to join the combined workmen were furnished with arms for their own protection. Commencement of the work of forcible ejection was first begun at Hetton.

Bitter disagreements existed between the men and the owners, whose viewer at both Hetton and North Hetton was Mathias Dunn, hated because of his role in recruiting blacklegs. The pitmen were in no doubt as to the motives behind the owners actions "*the breaking up of the Union is, with the Owners, the great end to be attained. They have built up their bulky fortunes upon our sufferings, our mutilation, and too often on the destruction of many of us, leaving us in sickness to the precarious charity of others; and now when we, by our united means, seek to provide against the privations incident to old age and sickness, we are branded as conspirators, and are to be put down by a combination of masters*" But the Hetton owners were now past listening to their men and proceeded with the evictions on Easter Saturday, April 21, under the supervision of the magistrates. With a large body of police and military in attendance, no resistance was offered as twenty families were turned out, mostly men from Easington Lane. These evictions marked an important juncture in the dispute, but had fatal consequences for one blackleg.

It was at the Brickgarth in Easington Lane that many of the first Hetton evictions took place. But it was also here that some local strike breakers lived, side by side with the union men. After the evictions on Easter Saturday the pitmen were left with their furniture in the street as their families lodged with neighbours or friends, or camped out, but many of the men stayed up into the night near the two sentry fires to watch over their furniture. It was indicative of the climate of hostility that Hetton Colliery was issuing stocks of arms and shot to the strike breakers for their self-protection. John Errington, one such former strong union man, had been out drinking on the night of the evictions and passed by one of the fires. Jeers were audible to observers a hundred and fifty yards away as he was seen to pass from the light of the fire into the darkness. About a minute later came the loud discharge of a gun, accompanied by a powder flash. Someone had apparently laid in waiting for Errington. Dunn received a report of the incident and it was thought that there would be every chance of convicting those responsible. Magistrates sat at Hetton on Easter Sunday and an inquest commenced on Easter Monday, but because Errington was a blackleg the coroner's jury needed two weeks of 'long and tedious investigation' to narrow down the suspects. The verdict, on May 3rd charged John Turnbull and George Strong "with having each fired a gun at the deceased with intent to kill and murder him", and Luke Hutton and John Moore were charged as accessories.

They were taken under an escort of cavalry (it being feared that a rescue would be attempted by their comrades, by whom they were loudly cheered) to Durham gaol to take their trials at the next assizes. This was to the satisfaction of Dunn, the Owners and the Coal Trade, but there was little remorse from the Hetton pitmen at Errington's death. One viewer wrote that "even the Ranter preachers are lauding this act - the murder was the instrument in the hands of the Almighty, to inflict this judgement on the miscreant who betrayed the Union" As Errington's funeral procession passed down Easington Lane to the Four Lane Ends, the people there assembled saluted it with groans and hisses. More special constables were now sworn in and arms supplied them, part of their instructions being that whenever they found a few miners standing together they were to take them and lock them up, either in the colliery stables or in the empty houses. The inevitable result of such a general order was that a large number of arrests were made, and those taken were treated with great injustice and indignity. Some of them were bound hand and foot to the mangers in the stalls all night, with neither food nor water, and, if they attempted to make the least resistance, a cutlass or pistol was held to their faces.



Miners Camp Following Evictions

There is a published account of the Trials of the Pitmen and Others, Concerned in the Late Riots, Murders, etc. in the Hetton and Other Collieries in 1832. We will therefore only summarise the outcome. The 1832 Summer Assizes was to be held at Durham Crown Court starting on July 30th. They were opened by Mr Justice James Parke, accompanied by an array of the great and good of the time, including Bishops, Lords, Gentlemen, Magistrates, Judges from the Kings Bench, Knights, JP's and Coal Owners. The presence of such figures did not augur well for the accused unionists. In a society guided by aristocratic values, precedence and order, the feeling that the lower classes should know their place was strong and jurors would be against the insubordination typical of a strike. There might thus be some doubt as to whether accused pitmen could expect an impartial hearing from a jury whose social composition was so loaded, but there were no working class jurors in those times, jury service was reserved for the respectable property owner who would defend the interests of private property and capital against the assaults of unpropertied workers. The accused pitmen thus faced trial by a jury not of their equals but social superiors, most if not all of whom were to some degree known to, or influenced by, the North East coal owners. After the jurors were sworn in, Judge Parke began a long biased preamble. He appeared uncommonly preoccupied with tainting

trades unions for he promptly launched into a discourse on the undesirability of unions in general and thus by implication the pitmen's union also. Parke was far from being an impartial Judge. Parke's summing up of the case against Turnbull and Strong lasted almost two hours, late into the evening. It was with some surprise then, that the jury was out for only five minutes before returning with a verdict of acquittal. It appears that the lack of witnesses and fruitless discussion of dubious testimony was decisive in the minds of the jury and maybe the verdict undermines the criticism of the jury's social composition. But if the identity of Errington's assassin was unclear to the jury, it appears to have been an open secret in Hetton.

After the work of ejection of strikers from their homes had finished at Hetton, the ejecting party proceeded to Friar's Goose Collieries, about two miles east of Newcastle. *We give here the verbatim account by Richard Fynes:*. On reaching the colliery they were met by a great number of miners who were assembled there. Mr. Forsyth, who was leading the constables, delivered to his men two rounds of cartridges containing swan shot, with strict orders not to fire till commanded. He then advanced, and was greeted by three defiant cheers from the miners. This act of delivering shot to the constables seriously exasperated the miners, and, coupled with the insolence of those who were busy putting their furniture to the door, and who, not content with bundling their furniture to the door as if it were rubbish, kept calling them cowards, aroused in the breasts of the men a very dangerous spirit. While the police were still proceeding with the work of ejection, having entered the house of a miner named Thomas Carr for that purpose, a large number of miners attacked the premises appointed as a guard-house, overpowered the sentry, and carried off the guns. The noise and shouting brought Mr. Forsyth to the place, he drew his cutlass and endeavoured to make his way through the immense masses of men to the assistance of the police, and he was twice knocked down in his attempt; but at length with great difficulty he reached his companions. The latter were most unhappily stationed in a narrow lane which was overlooked by a hill on each side, and on which the miners stood and threw brickbats, stones, and other missiles at them. The constables, thus pressed, and considering their lives in danger, fired amongst the crowd, and then, making a rush, got out of their unfortunate position and gained a rising ground near to the house of Mr. Easton, the viewer. The miners fired at them as they retreated, and five or six of them were wounded, and one severely so. Mr. Forsyth was wounded in the head and leg with stones, and one of the special constables was also severely cut about the head. The police, from the place of their retreat, sent off two men express for the military, but the miners, suspecting their object, obstructed their passage as much as possible. About twelve o'clock one of these messengers galloped through Newcastle on his way to the Barracks, without his hat, with a huge cut in his face, and with one of his ribs broken from the injuries he had received. The soldiers set out without delay for Friar's Goose, attended by the Mayor of Newcastle and the Rev. Mr. Collinson, Rector of Gateshead; but no further disturbances had taken place, and by the time of their arrival the men had in a great measure dispersed. The police proceeded to search all the houses in the neighbourhood, and apprehended every man they found in them, whether he had been present at the riot or not. Two men, who said they had just come from a delegate meeting, tried to explain to the police that they were not present at the riot; but they were knocked down and tied in a cart. One, being more resolute than the other, and knowing that he was innocent, tried to make his escape, on which the police sat upon him with their knees on his breast, and when they arrived at Newcastle Goal he was so much exhausted that they had to carry him, not knowing whether he was dead or alive. There were upwards of forty others, including three women, taken at this time to Newcastle Gaol. They were all subsequently committed for trial at the next Durham Assizes, and after their committal were taken to Durham Gaol under an escort of cavalry. Many others who were arrested were either bound over to keep the peace or discharged. The position of the miners was now a very dangerous and difficult one. In most places they had the mortification of seeing their houses occupied by strangers who had come to usurp their place at work. Their villages were filled with insolent and tyrannical policemen or special constables who were pampered by the owners with beer and other refreshments, and

who showed their gratitude to the masters by knocking down any of the men on strike who came in their way, and by locking them up if they presumed to say anything. The owners were gradually and sensibly getting the upper hand of the men, and crushing the union out of existence, but notwithstanding this, and all the difficulties and the many acts of injustice they had to contend with, a number of the men still determined to stand out. On the 26th of May, another general meeting was held at Boldon Fell, Mr. T. Hepburn in the chair, when several resolutions were passed, but none of them contained anything betokening a speedy arrangement of the differences with the coal owners. Men, women and children were seen begging about the district; the men, hounded and hunted by the police and military, their wives insulted by the wives of the other men who ought to have had more generosity, and their bairns laughed at and mocked at by other children. By the opposition of the owners, the support the latter got from the authorities of the country, and the punishments which several brave men had to endure, more men were every week breaking away from the ranks of the union, and recommencing work, and there was now a general desire to get to work. On the 11th of June, about five o'clock in the afternoon, as Mr. Nicholas Fairless, of South Shields, a magistrate for the County of Durham, was riding to Jarrow Colliery, he was accosted by two miners, who seized and dragged him from his horse, and felled him to the ground. He was left lying in an almost lifeless state, and from the dreadful nature of the wounds in the skull he expired on the 21st of June. One of the murderers, William Jobling, was apprehended (*quite possibly the innocent party*), but the other escaped. A reward of £ 300 was offered by the vestry of St. Hilda and the Government for his apprehension, but he was never found, though it is believed that he stopped in the district till after the execution of his comrade, and finally visited his body where it was gibbeted on Jarrow Slakes, after which he departed for America. On the 16th of June another general meeting was held, which was about the last one of this association, and there was a great falling off in the number of attendants. The strike had now lasted for upwards of two months, and had been characterized by great severity on the part of the owners, and by occasional outbursts of violence and bloodshed on the part of the men. The pits in most places, worked by strangers and those who had returned dispirited to their work, were now in almost full operation again, and it was felt by many of the most sanguine that the men had suffered a defeat. But they were not desirous of expressing their belief in this respect, because they were aware that one great object of the masters was to break their "rebellious and mutinous spirit," as it was termed, and they had sagacity enough to know that, if they capitulated too easily they might bid farewell to all independence for some time to come. Animated by this spirit, they therefore determined to hold out in the face of so many difficulties, even when prudence would have dictated the adoption of a different course.

Though in comparatively small numbers, the miners on strike still continued to meet at various places to discuss their grievances and to endeavour to rally a few more adherents around their now fast dissolving union, but all in vain. Tommy Hepburn and his followers saw their band every week growing smaller. At a meeting of men on strike, which took place at Chirton, near North Shields, on the 8th of July, an affray took place between them and the special constables. Mr. Cuthbert Skipsey, a miner belonging to Percy Main, who bore the character of being a very quiet, inoffensive man, was trying to make peace between the parties when George Weddle, a policeman, drew his pistol and deliberately shot him dead on the spot. Mr. Skipsey was a man very much respected at the colliery where he lived, and by his tragic end a widow and six children were left to the protection of the public. On August the 3rd, after a trial which continued about twelve hours, Weddle was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour. A very different sentence to that handed down to the gibbeted William Jobling.

Another worrying factor was an outbreak of Cholera, which was brought into the port of Sunderland by a cargo of flax from Riga. The usual practice to prevent the disease being spread was to place the vessel in quarantine for 14 days. At Sunderland this was waived due to a mob claiming increased unemployment and poverty. It was thought that this action was influenced by the commercial

interests of the coal owners. It was reported that there was panic among some of the miners at Hetton, who fled the area.

By mid-August the strike was almost at an end. The large number of new hands, which the owners had brought in from other counties, gave them an opportunity of choosing who they liked amongst their old servants. The labour market was so oversupplied that large numbers could not get work and as the men who had returned to work were no longer subscribing for those not bonded, many of the miners and their families were at the point of starvation, having no houses to live in, with their furniture still laid at the roadside or stored in farmers byres or public house yards. This state of things happily did not continue very long, for soon the coal trade employed them, but with the understanding that they should have nothing more to do with the union. But on no account could the leader of the miners union, Thomas Hepburn, and the other leading unionists who had fought so hard and faithfully for the welfare of the men, be allowed to get work at any collieries in Northumberland or Durham. Buddle confirmed that on February 16, 1833, "the *Cock Parliament* was dissolved yesterday, and the Union Army disbanded". Hepburn started to sell tea about the colliery districts, whilst still promoting unionism, but in many instances the men dare not look him in the face, whilst others ignored him and he was ultimately almost driven to starvation. The great man who had led the miners during their struggles in 1831 and 1832, now very shabbily dressed, and with no one to talk to, proscribed and hunted, by 1838, had to go and beg at the Felling Colliery for employment. The viewer, Mr Forster, knowing he was a man of his word said "I will give you, work if you will promise to have nothing more to do with unions". Hepburn consented and on those conditions he was employed at the Felling. Many thought that he would be demoralised, but in his calm resilience he would say " If we have not been successful, at least we, as a body of miners, have been able to bring our grievances before the public; and the time will come when the golden chain which binds the tyrants together, will be snapped, when men will be properly organized, when coal owners will only be like ordinary men, and will have to sigh for the days gone by. Hepburn kept his word and did not return to union activity, though sorely tempted to take a leading part in 1844. He did however continue his interest in politics and played a prominent role in the Chartist agitation which saw the reconstitution of the Northern Political Union in June 1838, and later could be found addressing Political Union meetings on the "miserable state of the poor" and many other topics.

There were others who would carry on Hepburn's work. Following the defeat, the union turned to the publication of a magazine with the purpose of educating members and providing a focal point for the faithful, thus ensuring the continued existence of the union. A newsletter entitled *The Spirit of the Tyne and Wear: or the Master's and Workmen's Guardian*, better known as "the pitmen's magazine" was edited by James Johnston of Hetton. It carried articles, songs, poems and letters on topics such as West Indian slavery and the revolutions in France and Poland, propagating the theories of radical political economy which came to prominence during this period.

The owners though still had worries about the men who, in the view of Mathias Dunn referring to the Hetton pitmen, "despite their defeat great feeling prevails for some Union of their own which will I believe be carried on in spite of fate". The 1831-2 Strike became the symbol of the rewards of unionisation', and was, says Colls, "seen by later generations of trade unionists as the beginning of their history and the end of their pre-history".

The first election to the reformed parliament came in December 1832. Troops were stationed at Hetton and other villages during December, but there was no trouble and a Whig government was duly elected. The Whigs in power were to prove very different to the Whigs and their supporters in opposition. Their reform of the poor law was widely criticised and their popularity declined as they sought to consolidate themselves in power. Locally they even attempted to suppress a proposed meeting of the Northern Political Union in February 1833.

After a series of riots and disturbances by the old pitmen against the new comers, a handbill was published warning that the blacklegs had been issued with firearms, and that the colliery meant to establish a police force. On the 2nd of March 1833, a riot of desperate proportions broke out at the Brickgarth in Easington Lane, between the Durham miners and the strike breakers imported from Derbyshire. The Durham men overpowered the southern men, who took refuge in their houses. Pursuing their advantage the Durham pitmen attacked, breaking windows, doors, chimneys, etc., whilst the Derbyites retaliated by firing guns at their assailants, loaded with shot, marbles, broken spoons and pieces of pewter. One man named Dodds was dangerously wounded and several pieces of pewter were extracted from his body, and two others were battered by marbles and slugs. After great difficulty the attackers were compelled to disperse. The Riot lasted three days and police were called out from Durham.

There were sporadic attempts to establish the union again. A two-month long strike took place at South Hetton in early 1834, Buddle noting in February that "the Cabinet is formed: Hepburn, Sammy Waddle, Benjamin Pyle, Charles Parkinson and Paul Atkinson are all in pay and active employment"

Whilst union and political activities were to continue in Hetton and Easington Lane, the employers were now in the ascendancy, making reduction after reduction in their wages, as the miners had no power to resist, being so dispirited after their recent struggles. The main struggle to establish trade unions moved to other parts of the county and country. The first national union of mineworkers was the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland (MAGBI) and its first meeting was held on 7th November 1842 in Yorkshire, with Martin Jude at its head. Their declared aims were to reduce hours of labour, to secure fair wages, to campaign for government intervention and for inspectors to be appointed to enforce the laws enacted for the protection of the men. In 1843 the owners at Wingate Colliery introduced wire ropes for hauling the cages to bank, to which the foolishly prejudiced men objected, causing a long strike. The nearby Thornley Colliery, one of the largest in Durham, came out on strike in the same year. Warrants were issued against 68 persons at the instigation of the owners, for absenting themselves from their employment. One of the first actions of the MAGBI was to appoint a young lawyer, William P Roberts, as the miners' advocate. He told the Court that without any doubt the tyranny was enacted by the owners in their unfair treatment of the miners. Each one who was called stated that it was impossible to make a living under the bond and they would just as soon go to gaol. The chairman pronounced the men guilty and sentenced them to imprisonment, but Mr Roberts applied to the Queen's Bench whereupon they were acquitted. He won many cases for the miners which sent shockwaves through the ranks of the coal owners (see Richard Fynes for full details of the cases). Delegates from Durham and Northumberland had attended a national conference in Glasgow on 25th March 1844, to encourage the Scottish miners to join the union. The national committee gave Durham and Northumberland permission to hold county strikes. This was the first truly universal strike, unlike the strikes of 1831 and 1832 where individual collieries had been allowed to settle with their owners. Now all the collieries were out and agreed not to return until all had settled. This all or nothing strategy was a big risk as the union had few resources in the event of a prolonged strike. It proved to be a long bitter struggle with the owners employing strike breakers and evictions. As more and more blacklegs were introduced from all over the country, the men's resolve began to weaken and by the end of August it was all over; the miners returned to work bitter and disillusioned, forced to accept the owners' terms and having to resort to clandestine union meetings. Martin Jude worked tirelessly to keep the cause of unionism alive during this difficult period and in 1860 his work came to fruition when Parliament passed the Mines Act which governed the safety and inspection of mines. They would go on to secure that the position of checkweighman be filled by a union official, which was a major step forward. Sadly, Martin Jude didn't live to see these great achievements and he died a pauper in 1860 in South Shields. In 1868 the Trade Union Congress was formed. Following a major dispute at Wearmouth Colliery, on Saturday 20th November 1869, the Durham Miners' Mutual Association was established at a

meeting of delegates, in the Market Tavern in Durham's Market Square. This new union came into existence at a fortunate period of history, for Durham coal was entering an unprecedented period of prosperity, the history of which is documented elsewhere.

The Chartists

In 1831 there were riots in England when Parliament decided against reform to give Britain's industrial cities and towns better representation. Up to 70 rioters were killed, many were arrested and some were executed. People believed that something similar would happen in London unless Parliament reformed the voting system. Partly in response to the riot, Parliament passed the 1832 Reform Act, which stated that:

- One in five men - those who owned property and earned more than £10 per year – would get the vote.
- Seats must be created for MPs in new industrial towns such as Birmingham.
- Seats for MPs from rotten boroughs had to be removed.

There was a mixed reaction to the new political changes. The middle class was happy, but the working class still could not vote. Elections remained corrupt and the power remained with the rich MP's in the countryside rather than the industrial towns. The indignation of the people was beginning to be expressed in very strong terms as to this injustice. The Chartist movement was the first mass movement driven by the working classes. It grew following the failure of the 1832 Reform Act to extend the vote beyond those owning property.

In 1838 a People's Charter was drawn up for the London Working Men's Association (LWMA) by Thomas Lovett and Francis Place, two self-educated radicals, in consultation with other members of LWMA. The Charter had six demands:

- All men to have the vote (universal manhood suffrage)
- Voting should take place by secret ballot
- Parliamentary elections every year, not once every five years
- Constituencies should be of equal size
- Members of Parliament should be paid
- The property qualification for becoming a Member of Parliament should be abolished

In June 1839, the Chartists' petition was presented to the House of Commons with over 1.25 million signatures. It was rejected by Parliament. This provoked unrest which was swiftly crushed by the authorities. When demonstrators marched on the prison at Newport, Monmouthshire, demanding the release of their leaders, troops opened fire, killing 24 and wounding 40 more. A second petition was presented in May 1842, signed by over three million people but again it was rejected and further unrest and arrests followed.

In April 1848 a third and final petition was presented. A mass meeting in London was organised by the Chartist movement leaders, the most influential being Feargus O'Connor, editor of 'The Northern Star'. O'Connor was known to have connections with radical groups which advocated reform by any means, including violence. The authorities feared disruption and military forces were on standby to deal with any unrest. The third petition was also rejected but the anticipated unrest did not happen.

Despite the Chartist leaders' attempts to keep the movement alive, within a few years it was no longer a driving force for reform. However, the Chartists' legacy was strong. By the 1850s Members of Parliament accepted that further reform was inevitable. Further Reform Acts were passed in 1867 and 1884. By 1918, five of the Chartists' six demands had been achieved - only the stipulation that parliamentary elections be held every year was unfulfilled.

The national Chartist unrest was taking place at a time of revolutions in Europe, but there was virtually no attention paid to the movement in North East England by writers who thought that "the North" ended at Lancashire and Yorkshire. Yet Chartism in Northumberland and Durham attained a stridency and vehemence which was rarely matched and never excelled elsewhere. By June 1848 Easington Lane had formed one of the earliest Chartist groups and immediately set up a rifle club. Newcastle was also one of the places which by 1839 was attracting special government attention because of suspicion that arms were being collected there. Newcastle and Sunderland both had organisations to promote the Charter. Newcastle had revived the old Northern Political Union, while Sunderland had formed the Sunderland Charter Association, later to become the Durham County Charter Association. They operated separately, but frequently exchanged speakers and held mass meetings together. Despite the deprivations of the miners and other workers, the North East was experiencing a rapid economic expansion in shipbuilding, coal mining, glass making, pottery, chemicals, brickworks, etc., reflected in the completion of the Granger Dobson reconstruction of Newcastle. There had been a massive population increase, with people coming in from many areas of the country. With unsettled social conditions, grievances were strongly felt and sought expression which was directed towards Chartism. The movement was composed of middle class Radicals, principled men, shop keepers, and working men of all the new trades, from many regions and countries. There were many rousing speeches at a meeting of the Newcastle Female Political Union in 1839, which was addressed by Thomas Hepburn on the Poor Law, and Mr Cockburn who followed by calling on the women saying "If the people are driven to extremities, they will find that there are women, too, ready to dare for liberty what Boadicea dared for empire." The pit villages would become the centres for female Chartism. Easington Lane had one of the earliest branches of the Female Political Union. Women and men, it would appear, stood together from the start, sharing the fight. In the words of Elizabeth Mallet of Thornley "... that her husband had served in the army and was ready to lead or to follow. She too, had learned what pistols were made for and she would say to her husband, in the language of Ruth 'wither thou goest I will go', even if it were to the mouth of the cannon."

By the summer of 1839, when the time grew near for the presentation of the National Petition, the rhetoric at mass meetings was turning violent and revolutionary. Robert Knox had argued " the majority has a right to use any means that will gain its rights. *If fighting in the field with the pike or musket will get those rights*, the people have the right to use the pike and the musket." Following the rejection of the Bill the area was in a disturbed state and the Durham County Chartist Association called a meeting on Sunderland Town Moor which took place with James Williams presiding. The well attended meeting had just started when a long train of railway wagons pulled up alongside the Moor and discharged at least 1000 men from the colliery districts. They came from the Thornley, Haswell, South Hetton and the Hetton collieries. Earlier in the day, Chartists from Sunderland had visited Thornley and aroused the men who were not working. These men gathered the surface workers together and tried to have the underground men brought to the surface. The colliery agent arrived in the midst of all this and tried to calm the men down. However, the men rejected his attempts and, armed with staves, toured the village forcing their hesitant colleagues to join them. They then set off for the Sunderland meeting, stopping off at the other colliery villages along the way to collect more followers. Along the way they forcibly took possession of trains on the Durham and Sunderland Railway and compelled the engine drivers to take them to Sunderland, causing a sensation when they arrived. The meeting then continued with many rousing speeches, not least from the colliers. Mr Garry of Easington Lane spoke saying "We are the millions that make every wheel of industry turn. We tell the Whig and Tory tyrants, we will no longer live under their tyranny" and Mr Readhead from Thornley said "I do not like mischief, but if we cannot get our rights without mischief, we must have it". He then proceeded to say "Arm, arm quickly and effectively and be ready to defend your homes from the tyranny of government. You have as much right as any man to arm yourselves, as any man against the damnable police. The rifling time will come, God will

protect the poor". Although a rousing meeting there were no further incidents and the meeting broke up peacefully, with most of the miners returning home by the trains they had arrived on. A few would be given emergency accommodation.

A 237

COPY OF
Resolutions,
PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AT A
GREAT MEETING,
OF THE
INHABITANTS OF SUNDERLAND.
HELD ON THE
TOWN MOOR, Monday, July 15th.

1st. Resolved.--That we the Chartists of Sunderland, do hereby solemnly and truthfully declare that we seek to gain the rightful principles of the **PEOPLE'S CHARTER**, by no other than *legal and peaceful* means, and indignantly repudiate as a foul calumny the assertion that we have violent intentions respecting the persons and property of others; but having seen a marked disposition on the part of our rulers, now to rake up the tyrannical enactments of a Castlereagh, and to crush by Brute Force the *Moral Power* of the People; we do therefore believe it to be a sacred duty to enjoin all to be prepared for the worst.

2nd. Resolved.--That we hereby in good faith, do express our readiness to assist the proper power in preserving the peace, and especially the constitutional right of the People to meet for the discussion of their grievances; and considering that the entire control of the Civil and Military powers is vested in the hands of the **LOCAL MAGISTRACY**; should they **ILLEGALLY** and **UNCONSTITUTIONALLY** bring either of these powers to attack a peaceful assemblage of the People, we declare our determination to uphold the **MAJESTY** of the **LAW** by making them responsible for the consequences. *in their lives and property*

3rd. Resolved.--That this Meeting urges on all friends to Peace, Order, and Justice, the imperative necessity of immediately enrolling themselves members of the Charter Association, in order that the True Men may be known, the power of the People ascertained, and that that unanimity of exertion may be secured, which is essential to the speedy & peaceful triumph of the people's cause.

(Signed,
G. GAMSBY, Chairman.

Printed for Williams & Binns, Bridge Street,

Resolutions of the Chartist Meeting

Although no injury or destruction of property occurred, the magistrates quickly took action. They went immediately to Thornley, where they swore in over one hundred special constables as well as calling for troops from Newcastle. Three of the pitmen who had attempted to force the railway to take them home were fined £5, and when they could not pay were sent to gaol for three months. Sunderland magistrates took action against James Williams and his partner in Chartism, George Binns. *The poster shown above is copied from the National Archives and was accompanied by a letter from the Sunderland magistrates to the Lords in London, pointing out that the language at the meeting was more seditious than the poster, as written in by them.*

The pair were charged with using seditious language in their speeches and in a handbill issued later entitled "An Address to the Middle Classes". Binns and Williams were arrested for sedition, but were freed on bail. Their trial at the Durham assizes did not take place until August 1840 when both were found guilty and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. When Binns was released from Durham gaol in January 1841 thousands of Sunderland citizens turned out to welcome him home. After a public meeting in Durham the men marched back to Sunderland.

TO THE

MIDDLE-CLASSES

OF THE NORTH OF ENGLAND.

GENTLEMEN.

WE Address you in the Language of Brotherhood probably for the last Time—up to the very last Moment you have shut your Senses to Reason, but now that the last Moment for moral Appeal has arrived perhaps you will listen to this last Appeal of the People.

With a folly that will be the Wonder of future Ages you have placed a blind Confidence in the Whig Aristocracy—you have surrendered into their Hands your "right of Thought"—and any Decree that they please to send forth you look upon it as if it were a Decree from on high.

And now let us ask you a few Questions touching the Claims which this Aristocracy has upon your Respect and Confidence. Reflect upon those Questions and answer them like rational Men.

Are you and your Posterity not Mortgaged to pay the Boroughmongers' Debt?—Are you not compelled to pay, on an Average, three times the proper Value for Bread, Meat, Wine, Spirits, Teas, and everything you consume, in order to support the Jew Swindlers and a perfumed, insolent, idle Aristocracy?

Are you not shut out from the many Sports and Recreations which once were the Health and Pride of Englishmen? If, after your six Months' Confinement in the Ware and Counting-house, you wish for a day's Sport over the Lake or Mountain, are you not told that the Fish, the Fowl, and the Wild Animal, all must be preserved for my Lord's Use and Amusement, and if you persist to assert your natural Right over them are you not punished with Fine and Imprisonment?

Will the Aristocracy associate with you—will they endure an Alliance by Marriage, with what they impudently denominate your base blood? Do they not, in one Word, despise and oppress you as much as they despise and oppress the Working-men, the only Difference being that you are able, and it would appear *willing*, to bear the Yoke, whilst we are unable, and, thank God, neither are we willing to bear it?

Is not the Money plundered from the People and spent in the Debauch of the Court, or the Profligacy of the Continent—is this Money, we ask, not virtually abstracted from your Trade and Profits? Would we carry away our Money to squander it on the Dancers, Gamblers, and Prostitutes of the Continental Cities, or would we lay it out at Home in Food, Clothing, and other necessary Articles, to the great Benefit of domestic Trade and Manufactures?

We entreat you, not for our sakes, but for *your own*, not for the sake of our Families, but for the sake of *your own Wives and Children*, to take up these Questions like Men, and calmly and rationally discuss their truth or falsehood. Discussed they must be now, either physically or morally—one way or the other—even if you are content to remain quiescent Slaves you will be permitted to remain so no longer.

But then comes your Bugbear—"If you, the Working-men, had Power in your Hands there would be no security for Life or Property. One Fact you will yourselves admit is worth ten thousand Arguments—if these Facts do not convince you, to talk of reasoning any longer is altogether out of the Question.

Look to America—in the mercantile States of that Republic all Power is in the Hands of the People—their will is Law; and is the Manufacturer less safe in his Business—the Trader less secure of his Property—than in England? Why, the very fault of American Society is the over Encouragement and Importance that is given to its Trade.

Look, too, to Switzerland, whose Laws must receive the Sanction of the whole Male Population, assembled in Arms, from 16 Years of Age upwards. Where is the Country on the Face of the Earth can boast of more Security for Life and Property—more absence of Crime of more positive Virtues than are to be found in the Mountains, Vales, and Cities of Switzerland. Look at the soothing Tranquility of these Democratic Countries, and contrast them with murderous Anarchy, that even at this Moment desolates Aristocratic Spain.

Dear are our Families to us—dear our humble Homes—our Feelings are as human as your own—and if compelled to take the Field in Vindication of our sacred Rights we shall do so with Hearts yearning for our helpless Families, whom many of us must never see again; to this alternative we are driven by a dire and uncontrollable Necessity—we are not "Men of Blood."

But Blood is on the Land; it falls without a Record—Heavens! upwards 100,000 Souls—are yearly sacrificed to Famine and a broken Heart—the old, the helpless, the unresisting Die and no Man writes their Epitaph.

If you be not as blind, as hardened of Heart as ever Pharaoh was of old you must perceive that a mighty, a thorough Radical Change must now very speedily take place in the Constitution of Society in these Islands—a Change which it is not your Power to avert, though it is in your Power to give it a peaceful Character.

Do you call the Courage of the People in question?—Why, even the *Tory Times* acknowledges that "contempt of Death is natural to every Errand-boy in England."

But it is not a Question of Courage we are discussing now, it is a Question of *Necessity!* watch your own Child as with Tears it implores for a morsel—see the Eye of your own Wife or Sister grow dim with Famine—feel Hunger tearing your own Vitals—then hear the Appeal of a Starving People answered by the Death Shot of the Plunderers, thus leaving no Alternative but to submit to Death by Famine or Sword, or to rise in the MAJESTY of our MANHOOD, and by the Power of our Right Arms vindicate our right to live and enjoy the Fruits of our Industry and Skill.

You Ask the Power to avert this terrible Alternative—you have it for ONE MOMENT longer—let that Moment pass, and you are done for ever. It is your intense and BLIND Selfishness that is rendering almost inevitable a Civil Convulsion. This Fact will be remembered in the Day of Trial. You have not been with us, and therefore you ate against us. Should the People (and it were folly to doubt it,) succumb, they will owe you no gratitude—should they fall, you will be involved in their ruin. You will *then* learn how Wealth is produced and Trade flourishes under the Patronage of Idlers by Birth and Plunderers by Profession.

On the other Hand, should the People of England be put down—supposing, for a Moment, the Impossibility—what then? Why, to use the Words of more than one Whig Journal, they will "DISPERSE IN A MILLION OF INCENDIARIES," your Warehouses—your Homes—will be given to the Flames, and one black Ruin will overwhelm England!

Are you prepared for this? If you are content to be trampled and spat upon by the Aristocracy—if you have no pity for your Brothers and Sisters in the humbler Walks of Life—if you feel not for the *Myriads* who annually perish of Cold and Hunger—still ask yourselves, are you prepared to see your own Homes in a Blaze—your Property given to the Flames, and no Insurance to redeem it; yourselves, perhaps your Wives and Children shrieking to midnight Outlaws for that Merry which in the Day of your Power you denied them.

Praying that God, who endowed you with common Sense and human Feelings, will free your Minds from Prejudice and dispose you to do your Duty in this terrible Crisis.

We remain, your (if not your own fault) sincere Friends.

THE COUNCIL OF THE DURHAM COUNTY CHARTER ASSOCIATION.

PRINTED FOR WILLIAMS AND BINNS, SUNDERLAND.

The handbill "An Address to the Middle Classes" referred to above

Prior to their arrest, elaborate police precautions were taken against demonstrations. About 170 special constables were called out and a placard distributed in town warning against illegal meetings. Additional arms were obtained and the special constables remained on duty every night for the next week. Although a meeting was hastily called for the day of the arrest, it dispersed quietly when

magistrates pointed out that it was illegal. There were no more open meetings in Sunderland until after the attempted general strike in August.

This was not the case in Newcastle where the arrest of John Taylor, a delegate to the National Convention in Birmingham, and the riots there, provoked a protest meeting. The language of the speakers was so violent that subsequently five of them were indicted. Bronterre O'Brian urged "If the peoples blood was shed in the peaceful discharge of their right of meeting, why, let the borough magistrates be answerable in life and property". Another, John Mason accused the Birmingham authorities of "high treason against the queen and constitution", saying "he would rather see every village in the country a smoking ruin – he would see the black demon of desolation spread its wings over the land - rather than see the present system of oppression continued much longer".

Many in Newcastle learned of the arrests from printed placards announcing a meeting on Monday July the 8th. Many workmen laid off by a strike, bands and marches, supporters from Winlaton and Swalwell, some reported to be openly displaying weapons, gathered at the Side and marched in procession to the Forth for the meeting. Thomas Hepburn, the miners leader, was active in the Chartist movement and the formation of the Northern Political Union. He addressed the meeting calling for restraint and orderly conduct, but the speeches that followed included references to "blood for blood", warning the magistrates of their responsibility "both in person and property, for any injury that might be sustained by the people". The meeting passed resolutions and paraded through the town again, but despite the uproar no injuries occurred. Good natured meetings would continue at the Forth until on July the 10th when the mood grew less playful, a call was made for a General Strike (to be called the "Sacred Month"). By July 14th 40,000 men on the Tyne and 20,000 more on the Wear, were pledged as "ready to vindicate their liberties" when called on at a few hours notice. The strike action was to be co-ordinated with the rest of the country by the Northern Political Union, who would issue a call to the Middle Classes for their support against "a perfumed, insolent, idle Aristocracy", promising that "Vengeance, swift and terrible" would overtake them if they "assisted the Aristocracy to murder the working classes". It was well known that the Chartists possessed weapons and fire arms. Things were hotting up and the borough Watch Committee called for increases in the Police Force and soldiers stationed at the garrison. A meeting on July the 30th resulted in confrontation and a riot, which would become known as "The Battle of the Fourth", when many men were arrested. The General Strike was called by the National Convention for August the 12th, but after reports from delegates, they postponed the strike until an indefinite time in the future. This anti-climax caused regional confusion through the lack of the guidance of the national leadership. In the north east, despite the disillusionment of some groups, the Newcastle Chartists decided to stick with the date agreed for the Sacred Month, issuing a handbill announcing the strike in threatening language. Among those in Sunderland and in other areas who had not been consulted on the decision, there was an unwillingness to strike. Robert Knox, the DCCA delegate to the Convention, issued a tract calling for support from the Middle Classes in conciliatory terms, saying "Labour and Capital are like two halves of a bank note – useless when separate, valuable when combined." All of the groups were invited to attend a meeting in Sunderland on the 12th, which lasted from 6pm to 5am the next morning. By a narrow majority it was decided that in spite of "warm admiration for the spirit displayed by the men of the Tyne, ... the general holiday at present is unadvised and premature and ought not now to take place." There was still some militancy, particularly in the mining villages, and the magistrates took steps to reinforce the police and military, before the assigned day and posted notices banning meetings. There was even a sloop of war stationed in the Tyne to protect shipping and deter violence. When the day of the General Strike arrived, the call failed miserably in most places, in spite of all the anxious demands for additional troops. The stoppages that did occur were mainly in the South Durham collieries, with only Thornley of the Wear collieries striking on the first day. Other collieries came out on the second day at Littleton and Sherburn, with others expected to join on the third day. However, a meeting of the

Council of the Charter Association at Sunderland on the second day decided against the strike in the colliery districts because it could not be carried without the support of the towns. This brought the Durham strike to an end. On the Tyne the men were more militant but troops, arrests, convictions and lack of support from elsewhere soon ended the strike. The astute John Buddle expressed the view of many, when he wrote, "The thing is now ... completely at an end and we may expect an interval until some *fresh hare* is started. It is not likely that this will be too long, as we have some restless spirits constantly among us." The lack of organisation, leadership and unity, both nationally and locally, did not lead to the revolution that some had expected despite their eloquent speeches. Dedication to the Chartist principals remained strong in the region, but it became a moderate movement linked to the middle classes and had lost its potential for physical force.

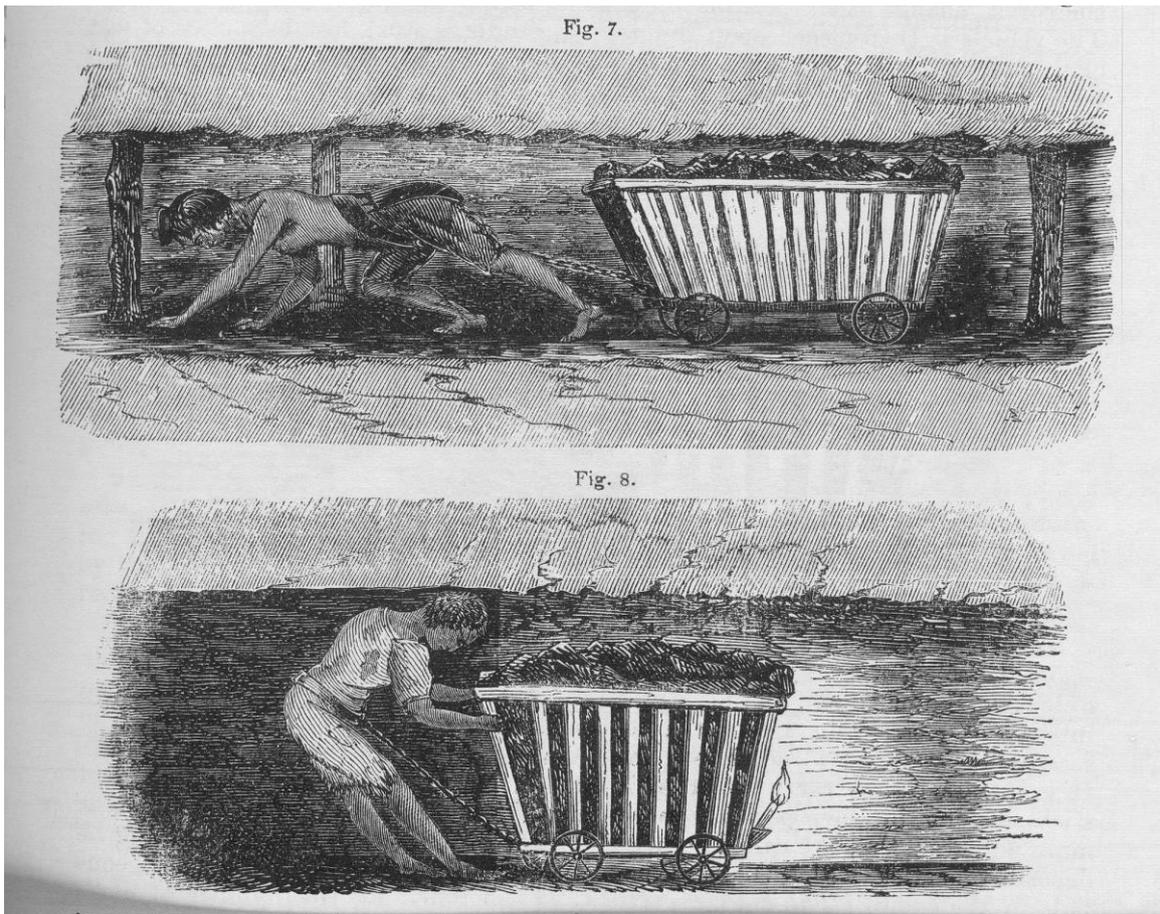
The Northern Political Union (NPU).

By 1840 northern miners were shifting the emphasis of their discontent to the working conditions particularly for women and children. Coal owners still relied heavily on the efforts of children and were prepared to take advantage of them wherever they could.

Children in Mines - Mines Act of 1842

At the beginning of the 19th century methods of coal extraction were primitive and the workforce of men, women and children laboured in dangerous conditions. Women and children worked underground for 11 or 12 hours a day for lower wages than men. The public became aware of conditions in the country's collieries in 1838 after a freak accident at Huskar Colliery in Silkstone, near Barnsley. After violent thunderstorms, the rain had put out the boiler fire and the engine could not be used to take the workers to the surface. Children who worked in the mine had already spent nine hours underground and forty of them decided to get out of the pit by way of the ventilation drift to Nabbs Wood. A stream overflowed into the ventilation drift causing the death of 26 children; 11 girls aged from 8 to 16 and 15 boys between 9 and 12 years of age. Queen Victoria took an interest in the disaster, and the loss of so many young lives in a pit was a factor in the setting up of a Royal Commission to enquire into women and children working in coal mines.

Lord Ashley headed this commission of inquiry which investigated the conditions of workers especially children, in the coal mines in 1840. Commissioners visited collieries and mining communities gathering information, sometimes against the mine owners' wishes. The report, illustrated by engraved illustrations and the personal accounts of mineworkers was published in May 1842. Victorian society was shocked to discover that children, as young as five or six worked as *trappers*, opening and shutting ventilation doors down the mine before becoming *putters*, pushing coal tubs. Lord Ashley deliberately appealed to Victorian prudery, focussing on girls and women wearing trousers and working bare breasted in the presence of boys and men which "made girls unsuitable for marriage and unfit to be mothers". Seen as an affront to Victorian morality it ensured the bill was passed.



This image shows children working in coal mines. It is taken from a government report compiled by the Children's Employment Commission in 1842

The Children's Employment Commission carried out 496 interviews with children, miners, mothers, viewers, doctors, prisoners in gaol, etc. Below are some of the interviews from Hetton Colliery:

No.403 April 7th, 8th, and 9th Robert Claffin

Aged 14. Minds the catches of the cages, that draw the tubs and the rap (a signal-hammer). Gets 1s. 9d. a-day. Lives with his parents. Is down the pit by 4 o'clock in the morning and up to 4 in the afternoon; a good few times has worked longer; an hour or 2 hours if anything particular happens. This last month perhaps he has worked 7 times an hour or so extra. He gets his breakfast before he goes; takes baits down with him, as much as he likes and eats them when he wants. Sometimes he feels sick like, but nothing more; is never laid off and never had the doctor, except 2 years ago, when he got his leg jammed by a waggon in this colliery and was laid off 9 weeks. The leg is not so sound as before, and rather hurts him sometimes. Cannot read or write, but goes sometimes to night school and the (Methodist) Sunday-school.

Nine boys: one, 16 years old, is a flatman or chalker on; one, 15 years old the same; one, 14, a driver; one, 12, a driver; another, 12, a driver; another 12, a driver; one, 9, a driver; another, 9, keeping 3 doors and a switch; one, 9 keeping a door. None of these go to day or night school; all go to Sunday-school. Four read the Testament; 3 read the spelling-book; 2 only write their names. All work 12 hours down the pit, from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m. and sometimes are 13 hours down.

The first of these boys, George Arington. Once had his ankle split: a lad knocked him down and the waggons ran over him; was laid off 28 weeks at first, then went to work and came back again and

was kept off 4 more weeks. Is not sound in that ankle now and cannot work at very heavy work (his ankle bone projects beyond his shoe and is evidently seriously injured). Once caught a fever in the Downs pit from the bad air while he was working in the broken (pillar working) and was laid off 2 months. Then he was removed to another pit, as the doctor ordered him from Downs pit. He has been in this (the Low Main pit) but is going back to the Downs next week. When he is there he feels not right and has a pain in his head.

No.405 William Robinson

Aged 12. Fell from the limmers when he was a driver, a year ago and the wheels over him. Was kept from work 5 weeks, has also been kept off; about the same time, 3 days from being lamed by a cage in the heel. Sometimes he has pains in his head and does feel them so much when out of the pit. He is off a day now and then from sickness.

No.407 Robert Halliday

A tub fell on him last year and cut his hand and laid him a month off work but he is quite well now.

The above 9 witnesses all work the same hours, from 4 a.m. to 4 p.m., and occasionally are down 13 or 14 hours altogether. Their food is bacon, bread and coffee; some they take before they leave home in the morning and some is taken down the pit with them, which they eat when they like; when they go home at night they get meat and potatoes. They are sometimes beaten. William Robinson was about a month ago, beaten one day by the waggon-way man across the hands with a driving whip, which made some blood come. Several have had a few thumps at different times; one has been once kicked but not severely, by Willy Gardiner who also thumped Robert Halliday and knocked him against a stone, for trifling disobedience. Witness was not disabled from working. Their parents draw their money, and give them out of it 1d. or 2d., or 3d. They complain that the hours of work are over long for them.

No.409 Robert Bell

Aged 15. Is a helper up, and works at the Downs pit. Four years ago, while driving, he was run over by a waggon and his leg all cut. He was kept off 16 weeks. Is not lame now; walks pretty well but sometimes feels a pain in his leg when he is walking far and also down the pit when he has hard work and shoves out hard (his leg is much scarred). Was also lamed at bank; when clearing the way a waggon ran over him and he was kept off a month. His head was much bruised, a hollow scar now exists, and he now feels very bad with it sometimes.

No.413 James Arrington

Aged 15; flatman, or chalker on. Keeps an account how many tubs pass him and where they come from. When a trapper, was lamed and kept off half a year. He now feels his leg rather weak. Also his fingers were once lamed and he was a fortnight off. Has had a fever and believes it was from the bad air in the pit. Reads, writes his name, but does not go to day or night, or Sunday school now.

No.414 Ralph Spooner

Aged 16. Is a chalker on. Was lamed slightly 4 years since. Has felt bad from the smoke in the Downs pit shaft, which sometimes makes him sick and force up his meat again. Reads and writes. Goes to (Ranters) Sunday school but not to night school.

No.415 George Scholey

Aged 15. Is a chalker on. Was lamed a year since by falling off limmers and the wagon going over him. Reads, writes, goes to Sunday school but not to night school.

No.416 Morgan Frater

Aged 15; a chalker on. Cannot read or write. Goes to Sunday but not to night school.

No.436 George Taylor

Aged 6 years old in July. (Examined at the National Barington-school.) Goes regularly to work every night in the week that the pit works, at the Elemore George Pit, at 12 o'clock (at night); comes up at 8 or 9, or 10 or 12 o'clock next day; his duty is to give out candles, and oil the lamps ready for the work at 3 o'clock; gets 1s. 3d. a night for this. Sometimes he goes about with George Armstrong, at 6 o'clock in the morning, with the compass; George Armstrong is the keeper who keeps the men working in a straight line. Before he goes down about 6 o'clock (p.m.); he takes with him 2 pieces of bread and butter and nothing else which he eats when hungry; perhaps about at 5 o'clock in the morning taking water if thirsty and the other when he wants has quite enough bread, could not eat more. Gets his dinner when he comes up, or at 12 o'clock; his dinner is sufficient, and consists of meat potatoes and puddings. About half-past 1 (p.m.) he comes to the school washed and dressed and stays till half past 4 p.m.; then he goes home and gets his tea between 5 and 6 o'clock he goes to bed soon after. The overman calls him at a little before or a little after 12 at night when he gets up and being dressed goes to the pit; does not go down on Friday or Saturday nights but goes on Sunday nights at 12 o'clock. Sometimes perhaps 3 or 4 times last year, he stopped down the pit from 12 one night till 5 the next evening for which he gets 2s. 6d.. This happens when some boys are off by accidents and he is asked to stop but is not forced to do so; he wished to do so; on these occasions his bait comes down to him. After being up from 5 o'clock till 12 at night he went down again as usual (this only being above ground 7 hours). He is never sick since he has been at the pit, which is two years. He has not been laid off a day for illness or sickness, or for anything; nor has he felt sick or bad at all in that time. He likes the work very well and would as soon down as playing about above. In 2 years he has perhaps worked from 12 at night to 5 next three or four times; finds no difference between being below and above. He is an orphan and lives with his uncle and aunt, to whom the overman gives the money due to him. Aunt gives him about 1s. a fortnight for pocket-money. Can read (fairly), write, cipher; regularly goes to (Church) Sunday-school. His stature is 4 feet 9 inches. He is an intelligent boy and the schoolmaster praises him, but has frequently found him drowsy and sometimes fast asleep at the desk. He appears little and spare but not unhealthy, having some colour in cheeks.

There are 47 interviews at Hetton Pit and 19 at the Hazard Pit. Anyone interested in viewing the full document will find it on Hetton Local History Group web site at www.hettonlocalhistory.org.uk

The owner's picture of the trapper passing his hours "in fond and childish amusements" accords badly with the memory that Geordy Black had of his childhood:

When aw was a bairn, carried on my fether's back,
He wad tyek me away te the pit,
An gettin i' the cage, an gannin doon below,
Was eneuf to myek a yungster tyek a fit.
To sit an keep a door, midst darkness and gloom
Ay, mony an hoor by mysel,
An hear the awful shots that rummelled throo the pit,
And lumps o roondy coal cum doon pell mell

That was the trapper's life. He rose at two, and went to work. All day he sat in his "neuk" in the darkness, the string of his door in his hand. Sometimes a kindly hewer would give him a candle to cheer his loneliness. More often a putter would find him asleep, and enraged by having to open the

door himself, would fall on him and beat him. Sometimes he would stray from his post, to play with a near-by lad.

Disasters and Deaths of men and boys in the collieries in and around Hetton

Disasters

A disaster is recorded when more than 5 miners are killed in one incident at a coalmine.

Thankfully there have been very few disasters in the Hetton area and although all of them are serious, none of them have resulted in a huge loss of life as has happened elsewhere in the country. The disasters of note are:-

Eppleton Pit :- 18/1/1836 **20** men and boys killed

6/9/1951 **9** men killed

Elemore Pit, Easington Lane :- 20/12/1886 **28** men and boys killed

Hetton Lyons Colliery :- 20/12/1860 **22** men and boys killed

Fatalities

Colliery	Year opened	Year closed	No. of Years	No. of Fatalities
Hazard	1818	1933/34	115	20
Moorsley	1821	1935	114	57
Hetton Lyons	1822	1950	128	170
Elemore	1827	1974	147	168
Eppleton	1833	1986	153	195

The number of fatalities shown above are the ones which have been recorded. There may have been other fatalities which have not been recorded. The deaths had a variety of causes including roof fall, gassing, fire and explosion, crushing, flooding etc. Examples shown below are from records of the Durham Mining Museum.

Timeline

1686	Hetton Hall bought by John Spearman.
1707	Union with Scotland, to become the United Kingdom of Great Britain.
1712	The Newcomen Steam Engine, used to pump water out of Cornish tin mines.
1745	Jacobite Rising.
1746	John Spearman sells Hetton estate to the Countess of Strathmore, the Lyons family lived in the hall until about 1812.
1747	John Wesley preaches to the miners of West Rainton.
1758	Hetton Smithy – blacksmith’s shop erected.
1765-76	Watt designs and develops a more efficient steam engine, with rotary motion.

- 1765 Pitmen of the Tyne and Wear stop work over the conditions of the Bond.
- 1787-99 French Revolution, climax in 1789
- 1791 Thomas Paine's book *The Rights of Man*, banned in Britain.
- 1792 French Republic proclaimed and Louis XIV executed.
- 1793 Thomas Paine (American revolutionary) visits Britain and France to supervise manufacture of castings he ordered for a bridge designed by him. Nearly guillotined on visit to his friends in France, finances collapsed and castings sold to build bridge over the River Wear.
- 1796 Bridge over Wear completed.
- 1799 Napoleon Bonaparte emperor, spreads revolutionary principals throughout Europe.
- 1799 Combination Acts were passed to prevent unlawful combinations of workmen, prohibited trade unions and collective bargaining, as a response to the fear of Jacobin activity.
- 1800 Phineas Crowther of Newcastle, patents the vertical steam winding engine.
- 1801 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.
- 1805 Battle of Trafalgar. Lord Nelson defeated the combined French and Spanish navies without loss, but was mortally wounded.
- 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade.
- 1810 Coalfield Strike.
- 1813 Puffing Billy, developed by William Hedley to transport coals from Wylam to the staiths at Lemington, a distance of 2.5 miles.
- 1814 George Stephenson, builds his first steam driven locomotive, the Blucher.
- 1815 Battle of Waterloo. Anglo-allied army under the command of the Duke of Wellington combined with a Prussian army under the command of Gebhard von Blücher, defeated and deposed Napoleon.
- 1819 Peterloo Massacre. Meeting of radicals charged by Manchester Yeomanry, 11 killed and hundreds injured.
- 1819 Protest Meeting, Newcastle, Town Moor. Disciplined march by 50 000 plus pitmen, keelmen, sailors and other workers, addressed by radical speakers.
- 1819 Hetton Coal Company formed.
- 1820 Cato Street Conspiracy. Attempt to assassinate the cabinet.
- 1822 Hetton Railway opened, the first complete railway designed by George Stephenson, to be operated without the use of animal power. It ran 8 miles from Hetton to the staiths at Sunderland, using a combination of locomotives and fixed hauling engines.
- 1824 Combination of Workmen Act, repealed the 1799 act, but lead to a spate of strikes.

- 1825 Combinations of Workmen Act, was passed to reimpose criminal sanctions for picketing and other methods of persuading workers not to work.
- 1825 Stephenson's Stockton to Darlington Railway.
- 1826 Bowes Railway opened to transport coals to the Tyne.
- 1828 Duke of Wellington elected Prime Minister for the Tory Party.
- 1830 Orleans Monarchy.
- 1830 The Swing Rebellion, amongst West Country agricultural workers. New methods and machines threatened the established order and the workers resorted to riots and breaking of machines.
- 1831 Miners Friendly Society formed.
- 1831 Thomas Hepburn miner's strike.
- 1831 Seaham Harbour opened.
- 1832 Reform Act passed. Prime Minister Lord Grey of the Whig Party. It allowed about one in six, property owning, males to vote. Miners evicted from Hetton & Brickgarth.
- 1833 Slavery Abolition Act.
- 1834 The Tolpuddle Martyrs, were a group of agricultural labourers who were tried and transported to Australia for the 'crime' of trying to form a union.
- 1834 The Poor Law, ensured that the poor were housed in workhouses, clothed and fed. Children who entered the workhouse would receive some schooling. In return for this care, paupers would have to work for several hours each day.
- 1837 Queen Victoria.
- 1842 Children's Employment Commission, lead to the Mines Act, which prohibited females and boys under 10 from working underground.
- 1844 Coal Strike. Further strife in Hetton. Military brought in. Miners evicted.
- 1848 Wave of revolutions throughout Europe. In France the 2nd Republic established principles of Right to Work and a guarantee of work for the unemployed. Communist Manifesto published by Marx and Engels.
- 1862 Hartley Pit Disaster
- 1873 Coal Mines Regulations Act
- 1912 Hetton Lyons Council School opened 12th June.
- 1914-18 World War I
- 1918 Universal Suffrage for all men and later women over 30 years of age.

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18. RELIGION IN HETTON



St Michaels and All Angels, Easington Lane

Introduction

At the beginning of the 19th Century the area now covered by Hetton Town Council was still part of the great and mighty Parish of Houghton-le-Spring which was “ bounded by Bishopwearmouth on the north-east, by the river Wear on the north, by Chester-le-Street on the west, by St. Giles parish on the south-west, Pitlington and Easington on the south, and Dalton-le-Dale and Seaham on the east.” (History, Topography and Directory of Durham, 1894).

The impact of the Industrial Revolution came to area in the 1810s for although coal mining had gone on for many years . . . “By 1790 these earlier workings were exhausted and, with the growth of railways, it became possible to tap new seams of coal farther from the ports. The first venture in the Hetton area was in 1815 when an unsuccessful attempt was made to mine coal near Rainton Bridge. Success came in 1822 when the Lyons colliery at Hetton was opened though not without controversy and heart searching. It was a highly controversial point with geologists as to whether, in fact, coal even existed beneath the 38 yards depth of magnesium limestone, which covers this area. If it did it might prove to be worthless. Deep coal mining was still frowned on at that time and the Houghton and Hetton projects were experiments. The sinking of the Hetton Lyons shaft was a major scientific job involving the penetration of no less than 94 beds of strata. However, this difficult task was achieved and 296 yards below the surface a seam of Hetton or Wallsend coal two yards thick was found.

In 1819 the Hetton Coal Company was formed by a group of local people and the first sinking operations began a year later.” (History of Hetton-le-Hole)

So began the development of the communities of Easington Lane, East Rainton, Eppleton, Hetton-le-Hole and Moorsley, the areas now served by Hetton Town Council.

It is safe to say that since that time the churches and chapels of Hetton and District have had a major impact upon the life, heart and soul of the villages which they not only served but also ministered, whether in times of joy or in times of sorrow, of which there have been many.

Churches established within the villages of Hetton-le-Hole, Easington Lane and Moorsley have represented many denominations within the Protestant persuasion as well as the sole Roman Catholic Church at Easington Lane.

As our mining communities grew so did the need for a local church in which to worship. This led to the area being split into three new parishes of the Established Church, each parish being well represented by churches of other denominations as well.

At times some of these denominations have had their differences which saw many new churches established which began as a splinter group of a former church. Some only lasted a short while but others lasted much longer.

It is also worth to noting that many churches subsequently put aside their differences in order to be more effective. This was seen over the years as many of the different streams of Methodism amalgamated, resulting in the full ‘Union’ of 1932 which impacted upon our area.

The various churches in the area have come together under a number guises over the years and the current format is named ‘The Hetton Fellowship of Churches’ and seeks to serve the people of Hetton through ecumenical services and activities.

Today there only remains a small remnant in comparison to the number of churches we once had, but the service offered by the various denominations, and together as the Hetton Fellowship of Churches, remains a vital part of the social history of the areas of Hetton-le-Hole, Easington Lane, Eppleton and Moorsley.

The story of the churches and chapels will be told in chronological order.

Rather than focus upon a particular denomination or church the story will be told from the early 1800s until the present time.

Records for some of the 26 or maybe 28 churches known to have existed in our area are very scant and whilst we might make presumptions about church life and the rise and fall of some of the denominations and churches this will not be the case in this brief history.

Pre 1800s

The area we now know as Hetton-le-Hole has long connections with the Church going back over 800 years (Smith, 1931).

In 1187 Bertram de Hepton pledged his estate of Hepton (Hetton-le-Hill) to the Prior of Finchale Priory. In the thirteenth century William de Laton granted 30 acres of land and one acre of meadow in Hetton to the Prior and monks of Finchale and then in 1613, Edward Musgrave gave one quarter of his Manor in trust to William James (Bishop of Durham), whose family sold it in 1694.

All the while the area was served by the 'local' Parish Church of St. Michael and All Angels, Houghton-le-Spring.

When John Wesley passed away in 1791 there was no such church as the Methodist Church which was a sect that arose from the 'Holy Club,' of which John and his brother Charles were a part, in their University Days in Oxford in the 1730s. The observations by their fellow students that the members of the Holy followed a pattern of 'rule and method' was turned from a term of ridicule to a descriptive term as The Methodist cause grew.

Many Methodists remained members of the Anglican church, attending the parish church and following the Anglican rites of passage until their gradual exclusion. The Methodists sought to reform the Church of England and often appeared in the Parish Register under a separate section for 'dissenters'.

Reform never came but the Methodist movement spread with revival under the influence of the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield.

Converts grew as the Methodist leaders often preached in the open air and the Methodist structure allowed members to actively participate in their new found faith as individual members and as part of a class meeting, of which a number were to be found in each society.



John Wesley (*internet photograph*)

1800s

As far as we know the early 1800s saw the first group of Methodist Christians gathered together on a formal basis.

The Anglicans were still heavily reliant upon the parish church at Houghton to serve the needs of parishioners within its vast parish, but Methodism was keen to become accessible to all, so it will be no surprise that the first formal group that met for worship were indeed the Wesleyan Methodists.

How Methodism first came to the Hetton area is not known. It is known that John Wesley, himself, twice preached to the miners of West Rainton in April 1747 but no record is known of him visiting Hetton.

1808 saw this first group of Christians formally gather for worship, have their Society and worship times listed on the 'Circuit Plan.'

To be included on the Circuit Plan indicates that this society (church) had been in existence for some time, met regularly, and was seen to have a future.

Where they met or who their leaders were we do not know.

The date 1808 is mentioned as part of the Sunderland Echo's article on the closure of Hetton's Front Street Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Nothing else of note is known to have taken place until the 1820s, when, with the growth of Hetton and the collieries church, and chapel life took on a whole new meaning.

Hundreds of miles away in Cheshire and Staffordshire there were small groups of Methodists who were uneasy at how the Methodist Church was quickly adopting a life of respectability and frowned upon many activities, in particular the open-air camp meetings that were so popular.

Rather than contain the unease felt by these rebellious groups, the Wesleyan Methodist Church saw two groups formed that would become part of village life in the Hetton area. From this time came into being the Independent Methodists in 1805, quickly followed by the Primitive Methodists in 1807.

1820s

As has been recorded elsewhere, the 1820s would not only see the dramatic introduction of deep coal-mining into the area but Hetton took its place in our history books as the centre of the development of deep coal mines and the purpose built colliery railway.

With the opening of the local collieries and the sinking of the shafts at Hetton / Hetton Lyons / Lyons Colliery in 1820, Moorsley / North Hetton in 1821, Eppleton in 1825 and Elemore in March 1825, it is safe to say life would never be the same again.

New churches were built and new denominations were to enter the colliery village life.

By 1821 the Sunderland Echo reported that the Wesleyans were holding their own with a class of 21 members under the leadership of Andrew Hogg.

What is interesting is that the Sunderland Echo refers to this group as a Society rather than a church, a term which was typical of the time.

It is also interesting to note that the Wesleyans did not capitalise on the sudden growth in the population of Hetton & District with the opening of the aforementioned collieries but all of a sudden became one of a number of churches in the area.

Two years later 1823 saw the commencement of three further Methodist Societies as the Wesleyans began to meet in Easington Lane and the Primitives in both Hetton and Easington Lane.

The Wesleyan's first venture into Easington Lane was in 1823 when William Dent oversaw Sunday worship services held in a schoolroom. Dates and locations are unknown. (Easington Lane Primitive Methodist Church, 1869-1919, Jubilee Souvenir, 1919)

Having only been established for less than 20 years, the Primitives were keen to expand and this they did at an amazing pace.

Their appeal was to the manual workers and the miners of the newly formed Durham coalfield who were attracted to this radical movement.

The work of the Primitives commenced in Hetton in 1823 when Joseph Cook, a young man of 24, arrived in Hetton from Heworth. Finding no Primitive Methodist Society in which to worship he decided to start a class meeting the day after his arrival of which he became the leader.

The early Primitive Methodists did not use the term 'Minister' but 'Preacher' instead, so for John Branfoot, the No 1 Preacher of the South Shields station, to visit the Hetton Society and to preach at its meetings must have been quite an honour. At that time before a church building had been built meetings were held in the members homes in the Bog Row and Bleach Green areas of Hetton.

This competition for adherents does not seem to have prevented the growth in the Hetton's Wesleyan Society, for in 1824 the Wesleyans opened their new church in Front Street.

The church was located at the top of Burn Lane, serving residents of the older residential area of Bog Row and the area that was now being developed alongside Office Place, which was to become the hub of operations for the newly established Hetton Colliery.



Chapel in 1824

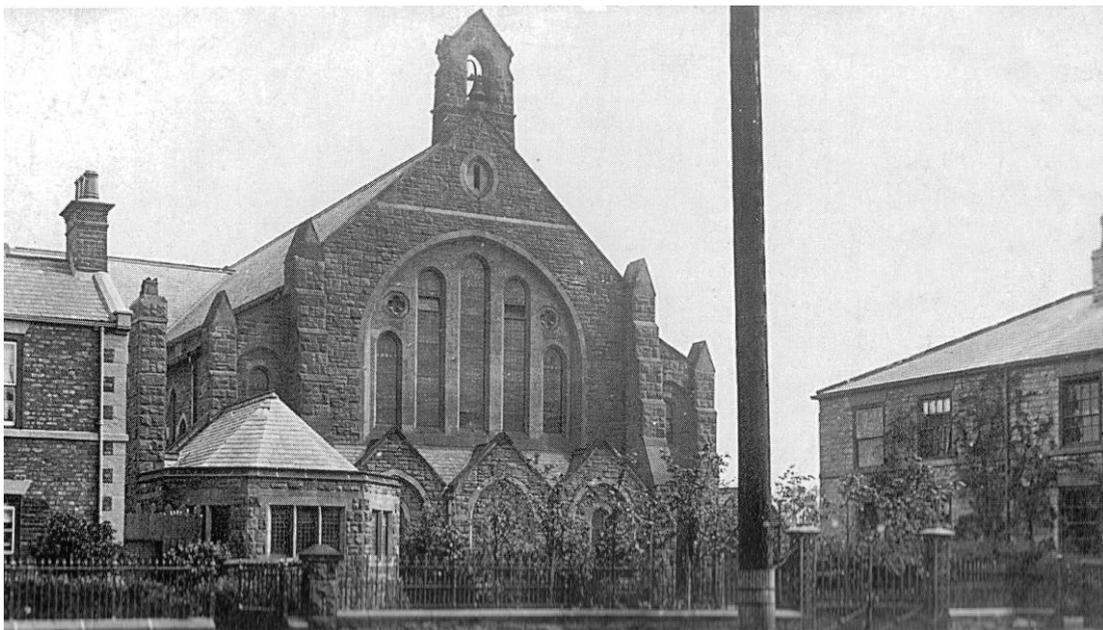
This is the site of the original Wesleyan

This same year, 1824, that saw the Primitive Methodists open their first church in Hetton.

With a foundation stone laid on the 21st June the new church was opened on 24th October at a cost of £300 and had seating for 300. The new church building was the third building away from the Railway in Barnes Street and formed part of the 'Hetton Square.'

We can only presume the effect that the growth and development of the non-conformist churches may have had on the local Anglican authorities.

Houghton parish was still intact but the decision was made to erect a new chapel in Hetton. Nothing else is known of this chapel other than it was consecrated in 15th November 1825 and served until the new Anglican church was opened in 1831 (Smith, 1931).



The site where New Anglican Church opened in 1831. It was replaced by this new larger church in 1901

As the 1820s developed so did the religious life within the area. For having only been established for some four years, the Wesleyans at Easington Lane opened their own place of worship and also the first church building in Easington Lane. (Short, 1995)

Before we leave the 1820s there is another church that needs to be mentioned. The Baptist's are known to have had a place of worship in Hetton in the 1820s which existed until the 1840s at least, for it is known that in 1834, 'In the village there are four places of worship, belonging to the Baptists, and the Wesleyan, Primitive, and Kilhamite Methodists.' (Ross, 1834)

1830s

It was in around 1830 / 31 the *Northern Union of Pitmen* was formed by Thomas Hepburn who at this time was a Hetton Miner. A Primitive Methodist, he was also a local preacher and a great orator so the records say.

As was seen by Ross, in 1834, the Kilhamite Methodists met in Hetton but no other record is known of them, so we are not able to comment any further upon their establishment, existence or demise. Kilhamites was the informal name given to the Methodist New Connexion formed in 1797 by Alexander Kilham. The 1830s did not get off to a good start for the Primitive Methodists. John Branfoot was making a return visit to the area. Travelling with John Hewson along the Hetton Railway on Saturday 26th February 1831 they heard a locomotive coming so stepped onto the other line but had not heard the wagons approaching from the opposite direction. Branfoot was killed outright whilst Hewson was fatally injured. (Union Street Methodist Church, 1858-1958, Centenary Souvenir Handbook)

To be visited, once again, by the 'No. 1 Preacher' must have been an honour for the Primitive Methodists but it ended in disastrous circumstances for them.

Later that year, the 8th of September 1831 saw the coronation of William IV. That same day the foundation stone was laid of the new Anglican chapel-of-ease with an address given by the Rev. E. S. Thurlow, Rector of Houghton-le-Spring, for it still remained in that parish. (Smith, 1931)

The consecration of this new chapel-of-ease took place the following year, in 1832, by Dr. Gray, Bishop of Bristol, as the Bishop of Durham, Bishop van Mildert, was too ill to attend.

The building is described as, "a neat building of mixed architecture with a nave and chancel separated by an arch. The nave is lighted by three arched windows on each side and the east window of the Chancel is a triple light under a painted arch. The pews are plain and will accommodate 600 persons. The interior roof is sealed and the western gable is a turret with two bells. A cemetery adjoins the Church."

The 1830s also saw much work being accomplished in Easington Lane.

A new group referred to as the 'Independents' in Whellans Directory of 1856 were known to have built their 'Bethel Chapel' in 1832 before extending it in 1842.

Like the Baptists of Hetton, very little else is known of this group.

Having worshipped in a schoolroom for some 16 years the Primitive Methodists bought a small chapel from the Methodist New Connexion Community. This chapel was to become a focal point for Christian worship for well over 100 years and used by numerous churches and groups as their place of worship but nothing is known of the group that built it.

Again, like the Methodist New Connexion group of Hetton no other record is known of them so, once again, we are unable to comment any further upon their establishment, existence or demise.

1840s

The growth of mining not only saw the opportunity of work and a regular income for families but also posed the problem of how to occupy and educate the children.

The 1841 Great Britain Committee of Council on Education considered this questions and of all the places that were available for them to visit, they included Hetton and Easington Lane within their sample. This must have been due to the population explosion that had taken place in the last 20 years, yet in their report they also reported upon church and chapel life as follows:

The chapel contains 500 sittings, 365 of which are free; the average attendance is about 350. There are in Hetton Proper four Dissenting meeting houses, of which I have received the following statement:-

- (1.) The Wesleyans, average attendance 160, number of members about 48;
- (2.) Primitive Methodists, average attendance 200, members in society 75.
- (3.) Baptist, average attendance 27, members in society 20.
- (4.) Methodist Secession chapel, average attendance 18, members in society 12.

In Easington Lane (a part of Hetton chapelry) there are also four Dissenting meeting-houses,

- (1.) Wesleyan Methodist, average attendance 240, members in society 85.
- (2.) Primitive Methodists, average attendance 170, members in society 75.
- (3.) Methodist Secession, average attendance 14, members in society 8.
- (4.) Independent, average attendance 80, members in society 45.

The report refers to the Anglican chapel-of-ease as simply the 'chapel' but it is helpful on a number of points.

It confirms the presence in Hetton of a Baptist community and in Easington Lane of a group of Independents.

However, this report introduces a new group by the name of 'Methodist Secession' and perhaps this group could be the Methodist New Connexion group also known as the Kilhamites that we have already referred to? If so, could it be that the Easington Lane Society got to be so small in 1839 (average attendance of 14 in 1841) that they sold their premises to the Primitives in 1839?

On into the 1840s we do not hear of much happening in either the Hetton area or Easington Lane, although we must presume that much work was still being achieved by the various worshipping communities as larger premises would be needed in the following decades.

One area of Hetton to have been untouched by the developing of colliery life and the growing population seemed to have been the community of Moorsley and its North Hetton Colliery, but thanks again to the Whellans Directory of 1856, we learn that there "is a Wesleyan Methodist

Chapel erected by the North Hetton Coal Company in 1844, the lower part is used as a school for children of both sexes, William Cochrane and Jane Brown teachers.”



The earliest Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, built by the North Hetton Coal Company 1844

For over 20 years the chapel-of-ease in Hetton had remained part of the Houghton-le-Spring parish until the Parish of Hetton-le-Hole was formed on April 3rd, 1847 which included much of the area which would later become part of the parishes of The Lyons and Eppleton.

1850s

The Primitive Methodist Society in Hetton continued apace with a Sunday School of over 250 scholars and soon it was decided that the building opened in 1824 was too small.

1856 saw the land alongside the current chapel cleared to Barnes Street.

18th July 1857 the Foundation Stone of the new Union Street Chapel was laid by Nicholas Wood (of Hetton Hall) and John Wales (of Lyons' House) following the purchase of the land at a cost of £66. 8s. 0d from Mrs. Dorothea Pemberton. It was 78 feet in length (North to South) and 54 feet wide (East to West). The land was bounded in the South by Union Street, the North by Barnes Street, the West by land owned by Mrs. Pemberton.



Union Street Chapel in 1920. Original school building and brewery pub were on the bottom left of the picture.

The Hetton Coal Company appreciated the role that the Christian faith played in the life of the people, helping to develop their social, educational and religious aspirations, so gifts of materials,

stone and lime were offered for the new building alongside the use of a horse and cart at week-ends to help carry the donated materials.

Men would complete their shift at the pit and head straight for the building site to help build the new chapel. Their faces were blackened with coal dust and they were met by their wives and families who would bring them food to allow as much time as possible to be spent on the chapel.

This would be repeated over the next 40 years as numerous new places of worship were built in the area.

The new Union St. Chapel, now often referred to as the 'Big Chapel', was opened on 22nd May when the women of the chapel provided tea for 1,100. The cost of the building was £1,040 and the old chapel was sold for £65.

A generation later in 1909, WM Patterson comments on what a momentous occasion this proved to be. Writing about the development of Primitive Methodism in the Sunderland District he wrote, "The opening of Hetton Chapel on Saturday, May 22nd, 1858, was one of the most conspicuous events in Northern Primitive Methodism half-a-century ago. A chapel to seat 750 people and a school to accommodate 600 children was erected in that colliery village, and over 1,100 persons partook of tea on the opening day (Patterson, 1909).

With only a Wesleyan Methodist Church to its name the smaller mining community of Moorsley seemed to be overshadowed by its larger neighbour, Hetton, but Moorsley Primitive Methodist Chapel was also erected in 1858.

In the Souvenir booklet commemorating 100 years of Primitive Methodism in the Hetton area, the Moorsley building is noted as costing £540 to build and the site was the gift of the Colliery Company and the building was of stone with a seating capacity of 180 people. It is also noted that it was a comfortable building with a small vestry attached to it.

1860s

Having seen the new 'Big Chapel' opened by the Primitive Methodists in 1858 on Union Street, Patterson tells the story a generation later in 1909 of the tensions that existed at the time of the building of the new chapel.

It appears that the Downs Area Society could have been meeting locally for Patterson says, "the Downs section of the Hetton Society was the stronger."

This being the case it is understandable that the stronger section wanted to have their own place of worship. Yet the focus of many would have been for the society to be as strong as possible in order to provide much needed finance for the new building.

It took four attempts over a period of time for the Hetton Downs section to gain permission to form their own society.

At this point all the Primitive Methodist societies were members of the Sunderland Circuit but such was the stronghold of Primitive Methodism in Hetton that a new Circuit was formed and named the 'Hetton Circuit' which included the societies in Birtley, Chester le Street, Easington Lane, Fatfield, Hetton Downs, Hetton le Hole, Houghton le Spring, Lumley, Middle Rainton, Moorsley, Murton, Murton Colliery, Newbottle, Ouston, Pelton Fell, Penshaw, Philadelphia, Shiney Row, South Hetton

and Waldrige Fell all in membership. This also meant that the Circuit Minister would reside in Hetton.

After permission was finally granted to the Downs Primitive Methodist Society they built their first chapel, which opened in 1865 on Lindsay Street. Many of the men involved in the building work would have done a similar task seven years earlier in helping to build the chapel on Union St.

A new building at Union Street did not mean there were no problems for the Primitive Methodists who met there. Long before public address systems were even dreamt of, preachers had difficulty in being heard in the new church building. However, with the installation of the Balcony in 1865 it was said that Union St. quickly became one of the easiest chapels in which to speak and sing.



Above the Downs Primitive Methodist Society on Lindsey Street, opened in 1865

This would have greatly helped the first Good Friday Concert which was given in 1868. We can only presume this was not only heard but also well received due to the long history that Union St had in presenting its Annual Good Friday Concerts which carried on well into the 21st Century.

The community in Easington Lane had increased considerably since the opening of the Hetton and Elemore Collieries in the 1820s and although there were a number of non-conformist places of worship to attend, Anglicans still had to travel to Hetton to worship.

So Church Services commenced on Sunday September 27th 1868 in the schoolroom of the building that would later become the Lyons Church Hall. This followed the schoolroom being granted a licence by the Bishop of Durham.

As no records remain to suggest how this new venture went we can only presume it was successful as a new Parish of 'The Lyons' or Easington Lane, was formed from parts of the Hetton-le-Hole and Pitlington parishes on February 15th, 1869. Land was bought from the Bowes Lyon Estates and the "Crown."

So, the Parish Church of Lyons came into being. The architect appointed as Alfred Swan and the builders were Harrison's of Houghton-le-Spring. The foundation stone of the church was laid on June 6th by the Rev. GT Fox, Vicar of St. Nicholas, Durham.

1869 was a busy year for Easington Lane as the Primitive Methodists had outgrown their chapel on The Brickgarth and the foundation Stone of their new Primitive Methodist chapel was laid by Sir Lindsay Wood a little further along the Brickgarth from their present chapel. The original cost of the new Chapel and School was about £1,800.



This photograph shows the original Primitive Methodist Chapel of 1827 in Easington Lane. The Primitive Methodists built a new Chapel further along the street in 1869.

As with other church building projects, The Hetton Coal Co. was most helpful to the cause as they not only supplied materials for the building but also allowed a railway line from the Colliery to the building site be provided in order to bring the provided materials to the site.

1870s

1870 saw The Lyons Parish Church completed at a cost of £4,000 and it was consecrated at Michaelmas, 1870, by Bishop Baring.



The Lyons church of St Michaels and All Angels 1892

Bishop Baring is chiefly associated with the work of church extension in the diocese of Durham. Bishop from 1861 until his death in 1879, on his translation to the see of Durham he found a diocese in which a manufacturing and mining population had increased with great rapidity, and had far outstripped the provision made for their spiritual welfare.

A movement had already been set on foot to supply the deficiency but Bishop Baring gave himself most assiduously to carrying on the work. So successful was he during his episcopate of seventeen years that he oversaw the formation of 102 new parishes, the building of 119 churches, and an increase of 186 in the number of parochial clergy.

The 1870s also saw the Wesleyans making great strides in their development with the Easington Lane Wesleyan Chapel on the Brickgarth not only rebuilt but also enlarged. In 1874 the Houghton, William Street Wesleyan Methodist Circuit gave permission at their March Quarterly Meeting for a new chapel to be built at Hetton Downs on Chapel Street. It is not known when the new building was opened but we do know it was operating by March 1875.



Independent Methodist Christian Lay Chapel beyond Brickgarth Cottages circa 1870

1874 saw a new name come into the religious life in Hetton. With so many miners arriving in the North Eastern mining communities it was natural for them to want to worship in a familiar environment hence the emergence of the Bible Christians.

This was a group established by a former Wesleyan Methodist in the West Country, and the Moorsley Society was one of the founding societies of the Durham Mission in June 1874.

Why Moorsley would be seen as a suitable place for West Country miners to re-locate to is not known but Colin Short in his history informs us that the Colliery Management seemed only too pleased to help in supporting religious causes for he says that the new Bible Christian Mission in Moorsley obtained rooms 'through the kindness of the colliery owners and managers.' (Short, 1995)

At the opening Quarterly Meeting of the mission nine members were reported.

Membership of the Moorsley Bible Christian Mission reached a peak of 32 in 1876, but the last mention is in 1881 with only 3 members. The year after the arrival of the Bible Christians at Moorsley they also appeared in Hetton for there were six members appearing on the June statistics.

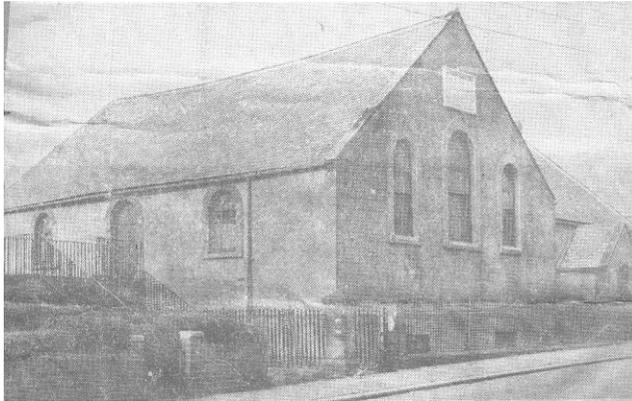
For some reason all the various streams of Methodism seem to have been very keen on gathering statistics, partly due to the fact that members were expected to pay a membership fee every time they attended their class meeting. This became known as 'Class Pence' and is still remembered today within Methodism circles.

The Bible Christian Mission at Hetton was also well supported by the Colliery Management for Short notes: "The Colliery Company has fitted up a room for ourselves and the Good Templars free of cost which will accommodate 150 persons and is superior to some chapels we have seen."

This was ample provision indeed. As far as we know this meeting room appears to have been in Hetton Downs, and was used throughout the society's existence.

March 1875 not only saw the Hetton Bible Christians make their first return of statistics but a bazaar was held in aid of the newly erected Wesleyan Chapel on Chapel Street on Friday 26th March to pay off the £500 debt remaining from the total cost of £800 of building the chapel.

The Hetton Downs area must have been a good area for church life for the chapel that had been built in 1865 for the Primitive Methodists had to be enlarged in 1877 with a schoolroom made under the Chapel.



Hetton Downs Primitive Methodist Chapel with the windows of the schoolroom visible just above the footpath

1880s

Just as the 1870s saw a new name in religious life by the way of the Bible Christians, the 1880s would also see new names appear.

The first was in 1881 when some members of Easington Lane Wesleyan Methodist Church left due to the attitude of the Minister, and formed the Christian Lay Church. The Christian Lay Churches had been established when a large number of members left Sunderland's Primitive Methodist Circuit. This was due to the Connexional powers splitting the large Sunderland Circuit into two new, smaller circuits against local opinion.

So, the Christian Lay Churches were established as local, autonomous churches with a Ministry that was unpaid and without clerical dress or title. The use of the word 'Lay' was deliberate, to remove the distinction between clergy and laity and reinforce the concept from the Greek word, *laos* meaning 'of the people.' So, Easington Lane Christian Lay Church began life with a Prayer Meeting on 22nd March 1881 initially in the Co-Operative Room.

They then hired the 'Old Miners Hall' in which to hold their meetings. This Old Miners Hall was what was originally the Methodist New Connexion Chapel which had then been bought and used by the Primitive Methodist Church before they built new premises in the 1860s.

The following year of 1882 saw another two new names appear on the religious scene so soon after each other in what is very sad circumstances.

December 1st 1882 is noted as the date in The War Cry of 'Opening of Hetton-le-Hole.'" The article in the Salvation Army's weekly newspaper went on to say, "We arrived here on Friday December 1st, and found a little opposition. But we Training Home lads have learnt to put our trust in God, and go forward in the name of Jesus, whatever comes. We had good times all day. The night meeting was a time of power; the people were held spell-bound during the time the Soldiers were talking to them of a Saviour's love. There were nine precious souls at the Master's feet, which made our hearts rejoice. We are believing for some grand times at Hetton. Pray for us. Capt. S. H. Wright"

The problem referred to in the War Cry must have been somewhat greater than the 'little opposition' that was reported, for it was in 1882 that we see yet another new group appear on the Church scene, the "Christ's Army" which came into being when a number of members left the

Salvation Army due to differences with the leadership. We learn that this “Christ’s Army” quickly established itself and began to make plans to build a new barracks on “The Avenue” in Hetton.



The Salvation Army band outside the barracks in The Avenue, Hetton 1900

Following the Primitives, the Wesleyans and the Bible Christians, the next group to seek to make a presence in the Hetton Downs were the Anglicans. On 19th July 1883 the Parish of Eppleton was created at the Court of Windsor, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England having placed before Queen Victoria their plan for the formation of the parish of Eppleton. W. Illingworth was nominated to the living by the Crown in November 1883 on an income fixed at £200 per year, this to be raised to £300 per year from the date of the consecration of the church still to be built. Mr. Illingworth held his first vestry meeting on 10th November, when Thomas Lishman, chief agent for Hetton Coal Company, was elected vicar’s warden, with Joseph Thom (master at Eppleton School) as people’s warden. (Stephenson, 1982)

The 1st Anniversary Services in 1883 were held by Salvation Army in the Miners Hall. The War Cry for this occasion reports, “All day, from first to last, mighty times. Crowds of people; hundreds turned away. No room. Thank God, there’s room in the fountain for them! The Monday saw a Holiness Convention in the Primitive Chapel. Thrilling testimonies from Happy Frank, Long Jack and several others who are wonders to the town.”

Having been established in 1881, the Christian Lay Church at Easington Lane grew to such a degree that they were able to acquire land on the Brickgarth to build their own place of worship.

This meant that they would be joining the Primitive Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists with a place of worship on the Brickgarth. The Foundation Stone of Easington Lane Christian Lay Church was laid on Good Friday 1884 and the church was completed in a matter of months for the Grand Opening took place on September 6th. The speaker for the occasion was the well-known and well respected Christian Lay Church leader from Sunderland by the name of William Branfoot. William was the son of John Branfoot, the Primitive Methodist Minister who was killed while walking to his preaching appointment in 1831.

At some point the Anglicans joined the Christian establishments with a place of worship in Moorsley. It was run as a mission church of East Rainton’s St. Cuthbert’s church and it is not known when the work commenced or when the building was opened but a new organ, built by Messrs HS Vincent & Co, was opened in the Moorsley Mission Church on Wednesday 9th July, 1884.



Inside

Moorsley Mission Church built in 1884

1884 was a busy year for building work, for Saturday 17th May saw the ceremony of laying the foundation stone at the new barracks for the Christ's Army in Hetton. The stone laying was performed by the Mayor of Sunderland, Cllr J.W. Wayman, and the Shields Gazette of Monday May 19th 1884 reported a good company was present for the occasion.

For many years the Rector of Hetton had lived in Hetton House, but with the building of a new Rectory in Station Road in 1885, Thomas Rudd, the Rector vacated Hetton House which became the home to a Doctor.

Such is the progress of the Christ's Army that they decide to build a larger building on their property to accommodate 350 due to their current building being too small.

To help in its work, the Lyons Parish Church began to use a converted cottage on High Street as the "Mission Room" in 1885.

The local Anglicans were kept busy as the following year, on Saturday, 3rd July 1886, Miss Lishman of Eppleton Hall cut the first sod on the site of the church building of what would become Eppleton Parish Church. Later that year, on the 2nd November, in the presence of the Bishop of Durham, Lord Londonderry and members of the Bowes-Lyon family, the laying of the foundation stone was performed by Lady Lindsay Wood, wife Sir Lindsay Wood, the owner of the Hetton Coal Company.



Eppleton All Saints Church

That same year, 1886, saw the Lyons Parish Church face the biggest test of its short life to date, for in December, in the aftermath of the Elemore Colliery explosion when 28 men and boys lost their lives, fifteen of those killed were buried in front of the church on land which became later known as the Churchyard (Smith C.)

After only a short life, 1886, saw the name of a church change. The Christ's Army had been established for almost four years when it was accepted into membership of the Sunderland Circuit of Christian Lay Churches and change its' name to Hetton-le-Hole Christian Lay Church. (Sunderland Circuit of Christian Lay Churches, 1886)

The following year there was renewed activity in Moorsley as the Moorsley Wesleyan Church obtained land from the North Hetton Coal Company to build a new chapel. The land was just over 435 sq. Yds, bounded on all sides by land belonging to the North Hetton Coal Company. (Moorsley Wesleyan Methodist Trustees Records). Just over a year from the laying of the Foundation Stone, the completed church of 'All Saints' at Eppleton was consecrated and dedicated to All Saints by the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Lightfoot on 20th December 1887. (Stephenson, 1982)

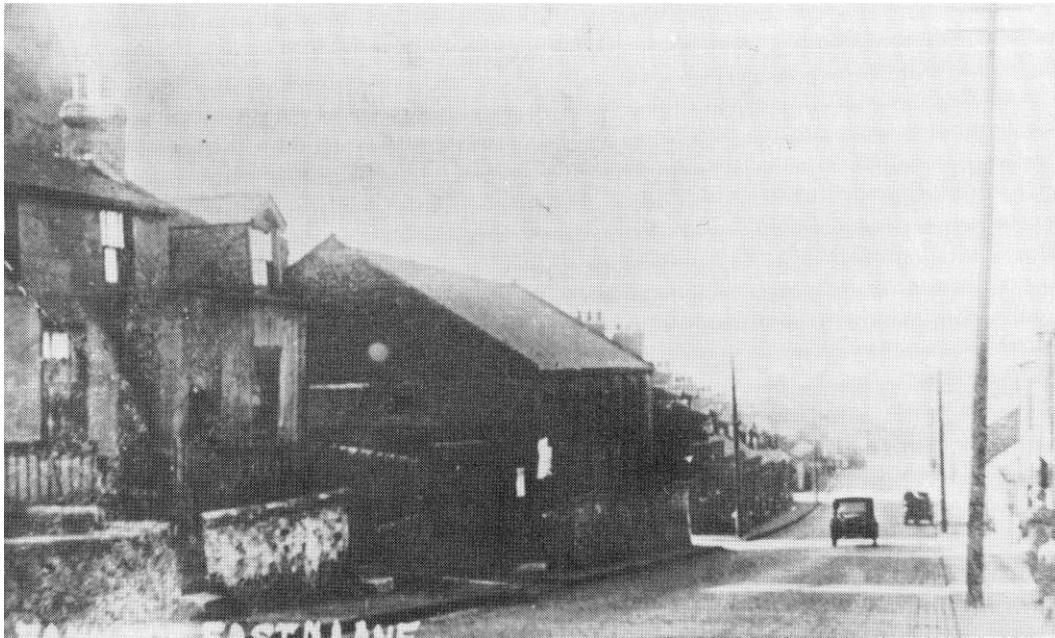
Two years later, on the 31st August 1889, Hetton's Christian Lay Church's new building was opened with special opening services. The cost of the building was a modest £450. As with so many other chapel building projects the members themselves did much of the work after a shift at the local colliery. The Lay Church was fortunate in being located close to both the Hetton and Eppleton Collieries and the miners were met by their children who had brought along food and drink to allow as much time to be spent laying bricks, etc. in the daylight.

At £450 the cost of the 'Lay Church' must have been one of the cheapest chapels of the time but it was still too large for the members of the 'Lay Church' so that on completion there were insufficient funds for heating and lighting to be installed. This means that Sunday Services were to be held morning and afternoon until such time sufficient funds were raised for their installation. (Newton, 2000)

1890s

Just over 20 years after building their new chapel on the Brickgarth, the Primitive Methodists of Easington Lane bought additional land, in 1890, for an extension, but due to Colliery strikes no work took place for four years (Easington Lane Primitive Methodist Church, 1869-1919, Jubilee Souvenir, 1919).

Having used the 'Mission Rooms' for many years, the Lyons Parish Church saw the need for a Church Hall which was built and opened in the Vicarage Grounds in October 1891. It remained in use until the 1930s (Sanderson J. , 1994).



Lyons Church Hall opened 1891

1892 saw another new name enter the religious life of Easington lane in December of that year. As reported in the 'War Cry' we read:

3rd December - EASINGTON LANE - In opening fire here we captured four fine fellows. The prospects are good for a real blood and fire, soul-saving corps. Crowded meetings with the kind of people The Army is after.

10th December - You will be glad to hear that we have opened fire at EASINGTON LANE. We are having some splendid times with the "canny" miners.

In 1892, after almost 20 years the Bible Christians saw the work at Hetton put at risk when the preaching room was threatened by property development. The eight members continued for another year or so but the returns from September 1893 show them all as having been, 'Discontinued' (Short, 1995).

By 1893, the work of the Hetton Primitive Methodist Circuit demanded that a new manse be provided for the Circuit Minister. 1873 had seen the Chester-le-Street Circuit formed and in 1891 the Houghton-le-Spring Circuit formed. So this demand in 1893 must have been to have a Minister reside in a more suitable place in the now much smaller Hetton Circuit. Until this time the Circuit Minister had resided at Houghton-le-Spring. So the 15th July saw the foundation stone laid on Station Road which was chosen as a suitable location between Hetton Railway Station and the Rectory. The new manse was to become known as "Clowes Villa" having been named after William Clowes, one of the founders of Primitive Methodism (Union Street Methodist Church, 1858-1958, Centenary Souvenir Handbook).



Primitive Methodist Circuit

Minister's House on Station Road, Hetton

Having bought the land four years previously the foundation stone of the extension to the Easington Lane Primitive Methodist Chapel was laid by Sir Lindsay Wood on 23rd June 1894 and Saturday March 16th 1895 saw the new schoolroom opened with a new gallery, a new infant school, new classrooms and a lecture hall.

(Easington Lane Primitive Methodist Church, 1869-1919, Jubilee Souvenir, 1919)

Following the rearrangements to the endowments of the parishes that were once part of the Houghton parish, the Lyons Vicarage became a Rectory now that it was inhabited by a Rector with his own freehold and not a Vicar!

Very soon after its foundation The Christian Lay Churches had established an affiliation to a group of churches centred around Lancashire and Cheshire known as the Free Gospel Churches, although many local expressions of the Group retained their own names, such as: Free Gospel Church, Christian Lay Church, Quaker Methodist, Christian Brethren, Bandroom Methodists, United Free Gospel Churches. At the 1898 Annual Meeting the decision was made to adopt the preferred title, of 'Independent Methodist,' recognising that the group of churches was independent of any central structure and could determine and manage their own affairs, but were also structured in a way that reflected other Methodist denominations and so became known as one of the Methodist Connexions. However, with so many of the North Eastern Christian Lay Churches wanting to retain the word Lay within their name, many of the churches in the North East preferred to be known as an "Independent Methodist Lay Church" until 1908 when the word 'Lay' was finally dropped.

The late 1890s saw the Bible Christians make their final venture in church planting in our area when in June 1899, they formed a new society at Easington Lane. Things must have been going well for them for they soon purchased a harmonium! Like so many before them they used what was to later become the Miners Hall for their services and followed the Christian Lay Church (now the Independent Methodist Lay Church), the Primitive Methodists and the Methodist New Connexion in using the same building on The Brickgarth (Short, 1995).

1899 saw the formation of Houghton & District Free Church Council but it is not known for how long it was in existence or for what purpose it was formed.

In 1899, due to the expansion of the area, the Church of St Nicholas in Hetton was found to be no longer adequate in size. The last service in the old church took place upon Sunday night, February 26th, 1899, Rector Newman being the preacher. The Sunday following, part of the service was held in the Church Mission Room and after that they continued the services in the Miners Hall. In April 1899 the old church was demolished, William Sparrow being the contractor. The foundation stone of the original church was found, with it's inscription of William IV, September 8th, 1831; and the stained glass window was preserved to be placed in the new building. The foundation stones of this building were laid on Wednesday May 24th, 1899, one by Sir Lindsay Wood, Bart, and the other by Mr Thomas Lamb, Brewer.



Proposed new church, St Nicholas, Hetton

1900s

Jack Sanderson has it recorded that the Apostolic Church was founded in Easington Lane in the year 1900, but this has not been confirmed by any other source. The Azusa Street Revival of Los Angeles did not take place until 1906 which is acknowledged as the origin of the Pentecostal movement, and which the Reverend Alexander Boddy, Vicar of All Saints, Monkwearmouth embraced. This is the birthplace of British Pentecostalism, where the fire first fell in September 1907.



Early Apostolic Church founded 1900.

1901 saw the new St. Nicholas Parish Church consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Durham (Dr. Westcott), on April 29th. The architect was Mr. S. Piper, and the builder Mr. W. Sparrow, of Hetton-le-Hole. The seating capacity was 800, and the style of the Church Early English. (Smith R. F., 1931)

The Anglican community were also extending though the Eppleton Parish Church in 1901. A piece of land was granted by Collingwood Lindsay Wood and Hetton Coal Co. Ltd. to the Reverend Robinson Hindle, the vicar, and to the churchwardens Thomas Lishman and William Widowfield. The site on the south side of George Street, measured 47 feet 2 ins from north to south and 88 feet 7 ins from east to west, and was to be used to build a church institute.

1902 saw the Hetton Primitive Methodist Circuit making such great strides that there was a need for a second Minister. The Rev. FW Ollis was appointed and was located at Easington Lane in the manse at 48, Lilywhite Terrace. In time the manse would be named "Bourne House" in memory of Hugh Bourne, the other founder of Primitive Methodism alongside William Clowes.

1902 also saw the Hetton Coal Co. give permission for the Rector to use a building near the National School as a church hall. How long this was in use is not known.

Having only recently been established and having made such good progress it may have come as a shock that in December 1902 there were no services listed on the 'Circuit Plan' for the Easington Lane Bible Christians, but it was reported that they had been 'deprived of the services of the Miners' Hall and nothing further was to be arranged until a room was obtained, although a further request was made to the Chapel Committee. Members were still recorded for a further two quarters in March and June 1903 but nothing after that.

1902 saw Moorsley Primitive Methodist Church transfer membership to the Hetton Circuit from the Durham Circuit. This explains why we have so little information about the Moorsley Primitives before this time.

The following year was to be a difficult one for Primitive Methodism as the Rev. W.R. de Winton was killed in his bed by a falling chimney stack on 27th February. His magnificent memorial can still be seen today in Hetton Cemetery, though many may not realise but this memorial was raised by public subscription.

Although not known to have impacted any of the Hetton or Easington Lane societies, at a national level The Bible Christians merged with the Methodist New Connexion and the United Methodist Free Churches to form the United Methodist Church.

The local churches known as the “Independent Methodist Lay Churches” agreed to drop the word ‘Lay’ and to be simply known as Independent Methodists. It was during this time that the Hetton Church was registered for the solemnization of marriages. The name has never been changed so even couples married at Hetton Independent Methodist (IM) Church today will find that they have been married in the Independent Methodist Lay Church according to their Marriage Certificate. Another feature of this time is the marching banner that belongs to Hetton IM Church, in every respect similar to what we would know as a Miners Banner, depicting two scenes. One side is for the church’s Band of Hope which was a Temperance Society and the other is for the ‘Independent Methodist Lay Church Sabbath School.’ Whilst it is not known for what reason or event the banner was created it is currently on display in the Church, standing in the porch and clearly visible as you leave.

1910s

For some reason not known the Lyons Parish Church sold its organ to Easington Lane’s Independent Methodist Church for £60. This replaced the harmonium which had been in use by the IM’s since 1889. Total cost to the IM Church was £103.

Whilst not much is known of the life, work and witness of the various churches of the area it is safe to say that they would end the decade decimated as a result of the First World War.

Many of the churches both past and present have plaques and gifts that mark respect to those who paid the willing sacrifice in order for us to enjoy the freedom that we enjoy today.



The interior of St Nicholas Parish Church, Hetton

1920s

In the aftermath of the First World War, 1920 saw the first Parish Church Council of the Lyons Parish Church constituted. This was the same year that St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church opened on South Hetton Road in Easington Lane.

For many, many years the churches and chapels of the area had received very favourable treatment from the Hetton Coal Company and in particular the Wood family. 1911 saw the sale of the Hetton Coal Company’s collieries to Lord Joicey’s ‘Lambton Collieries’ and in 1921 the coal allowances for

chapels and Ministers manses by the Coal company, now known as 'Lambton and Hetton Collieries', ceased.

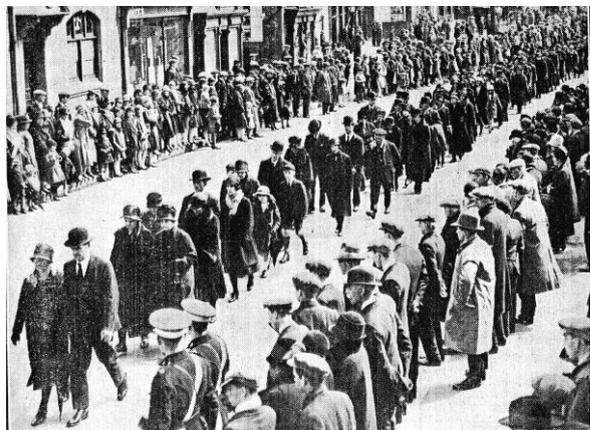
1902 brought the end of the Bible Christians use of the Miner's Hall, but by 1922 it was being used for worship services once more, this time it was the Salvation Army. Although the Salvation Army had first held meetings back in 1882, it appears it did not have a continual existence in Easington Lane. The meetings must have gone well, for a full and positive report was submitted to the War Cry highlighting many conversions and adherents to the cause.

The 1920s were not to end on a positive note. What must have started as a decade of peace and hope ended with disappointment for so many.

1928 saw the last of the Primitive Methodists Camp Meetings. This last meeting was a joint affair between the Union Street, Hetton Downs and Moorsley Societies. Camp Meetings were popular amongst all the different streams of Methodism. Hetton and Easington Lane Independent Methodists would hire Hetton Hall grounds for the purpose of a Camp Meeting.

Camp Meetings were day long events planned in advance, where there would be preaching, praying and singing. They would go on for 12 hours at a time, often longer, so it was as if the attendees had camped out, and hence the name of 'camp meeting'. With Methodists of all persuasions belonging to the group that was known to have been 'borne in song' and the Primitive Methodists, in particular, being known as 'The Ranters', it is no surprise that these camp meetings were often loud and passionate affairs. But with increased respectability becoming an expected part of life, it is no surprise that the Camp Meetings fell out of favour.

1928 was to see a tragic event that would bring Hetton to National attention. Most times it would have been the collieries and railways with their disasters that hit the headlines but on this occasion the focus was on Hetton because of a railway accident that took place on 27th June in Darlington and involved mainly women and children. It occurred when a parcels train and an excursion train collided head on at Darlington Bank Top Station.



Darlington railway disaster funeral cortege

An outing to Scarborough had seen many members of Hetton's Mothers' Union enjoy a day out but 25 people did not return to their homes. Of those 25, 14 women and a man were from Hetton.

It was estimated that 60,000 people lined the streets of Hetton for the funerals that took place on the following Sunday and many thousands for those that took place on the Monday and Tuesday.

The names of the deceased were inscribed on a screen that was located near to the altar, so every time communion was administered those names came into view.

Such was the impact upon national life that even the King and Queen had sent messages of condolences through the chairman of the LNER.

The following year, 1929, saw the Easington Lane Mothers' Union formed and the Easington Lane IM Church erect a Hut alongside their church building for use by the Sunday School. This hut remained in use for 20 years until it was demolished by a storm.



Previously a school

opened in the 1870s, this building became the Lyons Church Hall in 1929

Down the road in Hetton, 1929 saw No's 10 and 12 Railway Street purchased and opened as the "Institute" later to be called the "Youth Centre" belonging to the Union St. Chapel.

We leave the 1920s on a more positive note with co-operation between the Church and the Colliery Company evident once again. This time it was the Lyons Parish Church receiving the goodwill of the Lambton, Hetton & Joicey Colliery Co. as they were given the old school buildings by the Colliery Company to convert to a new Church Hall, though it cost in the region of £1,000 to make them fit for purpose. The Church Hall was opened on January 29th 1930 by Mr. J.F. Bell of Eppleton Hall following which the old Church Hall in the Vicarage grounds was demolished.

1930s

The 1930s open with another gesture of goodwill from the Lambton, Hetton & Joicey Colliery Co., a gift of premises to Eppleton Parish Church to replace the old church hall erected in 1898 in George Street.



Photograph of the Old Eppleton Church Hall

in George Street. Closed in 1933 and demolished.

These premises needed to be modernised, and by the use of voluntary labour two cloak rooms were provided, the floor levelled, and a couple of lavatories installed. Work progressed so well that by 1933 the old church hall could be sold and demolished.

The Salvation Army at Easington Lane must have been struggling for we learn that it was worked from the Hetton-le-Hole corps.

1932 was to be a life-changing year for Methodists of all persuasions, for the Methodist Union took place as a result of the merger of the Primitive Methodists, Wesleyan Methodists and United Methodists, but it did not include the Independent Methodists.

Following the 'Union', December 1932 saw a committee appointed to "explore avenues of amalgamation as early as possible" between the Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists in our area. However, some years later it was noted that considerable difficulty was experienced in completing the arrangements.

Following the success of Union Street's Annual Good Friday Concert, 1935 saw Central Methodist Church, Easington Lane hold their first Good Friday Concert which was Handel's Samson.

That same year saw the Reverend Law of the Lyons Parish Church start a Youth Club which became known as the Lyons Boys Club.

Following the Methodist Union of 1932 not a lot changed in the area for some time, but in 1936 the Moorsley Primitive Methodist Church closed and offered their premises to the Ex-Wesleyan Church, which was gratefully accepted. On moving to the PM Chapel the Wesleyans retained their old church and used it as a schoolroom, and from that time the church became known as Moorsley Methodist Church.

Two years later, in 1938, a committee drew up a list of resolutions that would prepare for the amalgamation of the ex-Primitive and ex-Wesleyan Circuits.

The years between 1936 and 1938 saw the Apostolic Church on Pemberton's Bank move to premises on Murton Lane.

1940s

It is no surprise that the early years of the 1940s saw little of note take place whilst the country was at war. But the churches must have felt a need to do something for 1943 saw the formation of the 'Hetton Council for Christian Action.' What the Christian Action was or their purpose for meeting is not known but what is quite unique is who the elected officials were: Thomas Wm. Stout was Chairman, Ralph Bolton was Secretary and Thomas Grey Treasurer. All three positions were held by Independent Methodists and all three were Ministers.

Six years after the resolutions of 1938 the new Hetton Methodist Circuit was finally created out of the ex-Primitive and ex-Wesleyan Circuits.

No. 3, Church View Villas (Regent Street) was purchased in 1945 as a suitable residence for a caretaker/verger for All Saints Parish Church, the purchase price accruing from a requisitioning of the church hall by the Army authorities during World War Two, although this never actually took place. 1945 also saw the Easington Lane Corp regains corps status, which suggests it must have been on a more steady footing than in previous years.

Two years later, in 1947, a new Parish was created in the area when the Parish of Moorsley St. Oswald was created out of the Parish of St. Cuthbert's of East Rainton.



The Parish Church of St Cuthbert's East Rainton whose scope was reduced to allow for the Parish of Moorsley St Oswald's.

1950s

The 1950s saw the old Brickgarth cleared and major redevelopment take place. From this redevelopment came a positive tale and also a sad one.

Easington Lane IM was struggling with premises after the collapse of their 'hut' in the late 1940s, so the members and friends of church collected 40,000 bricks from the old colliery houses of the Brickgarth in order to build a new School Room. Once gathered there then started the hard work of cleaning the bricks.



January 1954

Easington Lane Wesleyan Church closed in

The redevelopment of the Brickgarth saw one sad outcome with the closure of what had been Easington Lane Wesleyan Church on 7th January 1954.

It was formerly part of the Houghton, William Street Circuit until 1944 when it transferred to the new Hetton Circuit. On closing, the pews were sold to Hetton IM Church which had only used benches up to this time. These pews from the former Wesleyan Methodist Church are still in use today.

1955 saw Rose Villa on Houghton Road, Hetton-le-Hole purchased at a cost of £3,000 together with the adjacent land to the north and west, by the Church of England and renamed as the new Rectory.

After many hours of cleaning bricks the foundation Stone of new IM Schoolroom was laid by Church President, Tom Grey in 1955, which was the same year that Union St's Institute / Youth Centre was demolished on Railway Street.

The late 1950s was to see the first Miner's Service held at Union Street in 1957. This proved to be a popular annual event which was well supported by the local mining community.



*The first miners service at Union Street in 1957.
Good Friday special services continue.*

Having spent 6 years cleaning bricks and building their new Schoolroom, Fred Emery, Sunday School Superintendent of Easington Lane IM's opened the new Sunday School.

1960s

Nothing of note took place in the early 1960s but the late 1960s saw no less than three churches close in the area.



*Front Street Wesleyan Methodist
Church closed 1965*

The Front Street (Wesleyan) Methodist Church in Hetton closed its doors after being open for almost 150 years in 1965, Moorsley Methodist Church closed in 1966 after more than 120 years and the High Downs Methodist Church on Lindsay Street closed in 1968 after more than 110 years. So three Methodist Churches closed in Hetton in a mere three years, but they were not all demolished, unlike the Eppleton Church Hall which was demolished in 1968.



Lindsay Street Wesleyan Church closes 1965

One of the positives to come out of the 1960s was the Easington Lane Corps of the Salvation Army opening their new Corps Hall in Elemore Lane on 27th May 1967.

The local churches would once again make national headlines in 1968 through the efforts of the Independent Methodists.

Nationally, The Evangelical Alliance had established a Relief Fund principally for work overseas. This fund became an organisation in its own right and so the TEAR Fund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund) was established. To mark this occasion a launch event was to be held at Newcastle City Hall with Cliff Richard and a backing choir was needed so the Independent Methodists in the North East formed a choir and which went on to sing for many years following. This came about through Charles Grey M.P., who was M.P. for Durham but also an Independent Methodist Minister from Easington Lane. The Choir was led by George Kirkbride as Choirmaster and Betty Stout as pianist – both were from Hetton IM Church.

The event was recorded and then broadcast across the ITV Network in February and Cliff Richard & 'The Choir' made it on the front page of 'The Viewer', the fore-runner of the TV Times.

1968 also saw the visit of the 'Joybelles' to the Independent Methodist Churches of the area which included the live broadcast of Sunday Morning Worship from Hetton-le-Hole I.M. Church on Sunday, 27th April across the ITV Network. Participating in the service, was Charles F. Grey, C.B.E., M.P. of Easington Lane IM Church.



Joybelles at Hetton Le Hole IM Church 1968

1970s

Following the move of the Easington Lane Corps into new premises in the late 1960s, it was the turn of the Salvation Army's Hetton corps to move into new premises, 'Hetton House' the former Police Station. The official opening and dedication services were conducted by Charles Grey, who had recently retired as the M.P. for Durham.



Hetton Salvation Army moved into Old Police Station 1970

The last remaining church in Moorsley closed in 1970, St. Oswald's Anglican Mission Church. In its time Moorsley had been served not only by St. Oswald's but also a Primitive Methodist Church, a Wesleyan Methodist Church and a Bible Christian Mission.



Low Downs Wesleyan Methodist Church, Chapel Street, closed 1972

A further blow to the cause of Methodism came in 1972 when the former Wesleyan Methodist Church on Chapel Street, which was also known as the Low Downs Methodist Chapel, closed on 13 September 1972.

Within seven years Hetton had suffered the loss of four Methodist Churches leaving the area with just the single church at Union St. This latest closure meant that neither Moorsley nor the Downs had a Methodist Church of their own and both Hetton and Easington Lane were left with a single Church, both of these were former Primitive Methodist Churches.

Things did not work out all that well for the Salvation Army on Hetton's Station Rd either, for less than three years after moving into the former Police Station the Hetton Corps closed in January 1973 and merged with Easington Lane Corps to form Hetton & Easington Lane Corps. The Corps History Book for Easington Lane refers to 'two small Corps struggling for survival.'

It was in the 1970s during the time of the Rev. Hepple that the new Lyons Rectory was built and the old vicarage fell into disuse.

1980s

The 1980s saw a new Methodist Minister move into the area and The Rev. Kingsley Halden instigated many new ways of working and thinking. One of his ideas was the formation of the 'Hetton Fellowship of Churches' covering the villages of Hetton, Easington Lane and at that time, South Hetton. The Fellowship of Churches is still in existence today (2014).

The former Primitive Methodist Church known for a long time as Central Methodist Church, became too large for its congregation to maintain so it was demolished and replaced with a much smaller building and adjoining car park.

Hetton once again hit the headlines through its churches as George Thomas, Speaker of the House of Commons, was the speaker at the 1982 Miners Service at Union St.

It was in 1985 that Union Street Methodist Church was deemed to be "Of special Architectural or Historical Interest" and was given grade II listed status.

The Apostolic Church was one of the few churches growing in the 1980s and, as they outgrew their Murton Lane premises, in 1987 they moved from Murton Lane to the former Catholic School on Elemore Lane.



Apostolic Church moved to Elemore Lane in 1987

The following year saw the Easington Lane Church Hall suffer an Arson attack and it had to be



Arson attack on the church hall 1988

Major defects were found in the roof and front facade of the Union Street Chapel in 1989 and so began a full restoration of the building with work done in stages as money became available, but now that the building was listed all the work that was to be carried out had to be approved by the authorities.

1990s

Following a re-organisation of Methodist life in the area, the East Durham Circuit of the Methodist Church was formed and a service of celebration was held on 8th September 1990.

An order in council confirmed a scheme to unite the benefices of Hetton le Hole and Eppleton to form the benefice of Eppleton and Hetton le Hole on 23rd July 1996.

A number of members left the Apostolic Church and for a short while in the 1990s formed the "Hetton Christian Fellowship" using Stephenson House and the Resource Centre at Office Place for their Sunday Services. But in time many returned to the Apostolic Church.

2000s

The Salvation Army closed in 2001 due to low numbers and their Corps Hall was sold off and demolished for houses to be built on the site.

The 21st Century began with the area in the privileged position of having three parish churches, but this was not to last much longer.

Eppleton, All Saints closed in October 2003 and the parish combined with St. Nicholas, Hetton. The organ was sold to St. Peter & St. Paul's Church, Uppingham in Nottinghamshire.



Eppleton All Saints Closed in 2003 and demolished six years later.

The following year, in 2004, the Church of St. Nicholas, Hetton closed due to structural defects and worship transferred to Hetton Lyons St Michaels and the Church Hall over the road.



St Nicholas Church, Hetton closed 2004 then destroyed by fire from an arson attack in November 2006. Demolished in 2014

Whilst no longer in use as a place of worship, it was a great sadness that the former St. Nicholas Parish Church was destroyed by fire on 4th November, 2006. For seven years the church stood a much neglected state with the walls only being held up by scaffolding before being finally demolished in 2014.

2010s

Easington Lane IM Church were planning to celebrate 100 years of continual use of their organ with a music festival in April 2013, but only a few weeks before the organ started to be unreliable and the Music Festival was postponed. Since the organ continues to be unreliable the church is relying on a piano rather than the organ.

The churches came together in 2013 to launch a Food Bank and to provide hot meals to those in need. This service is going from strength to strength as the need remains.

Whilst there has not been a lot of note happening over the last 10 years or so, there remains a strong Christian witness in Hetton and Easington Lane.

The Hetton Fellowship of Churches seeks to unite the churches to work closer together but they still meet as individual churches each and every Sunday as follows:

- Apostolic Church, Easington Lane
- Church of England, St Michael and St Nicholas, Hetton Lyons with Eppleton
- Independent Methodist Church, Easington Lane
- Independent Methodist Church, Hetton-le-Hole
- Methodist Church, Hetton-le-Hole
- Roman Catholic Church, St. Mary's, Easington Lane



St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Easington Lane



Independent Methodist Church, Easington Lane



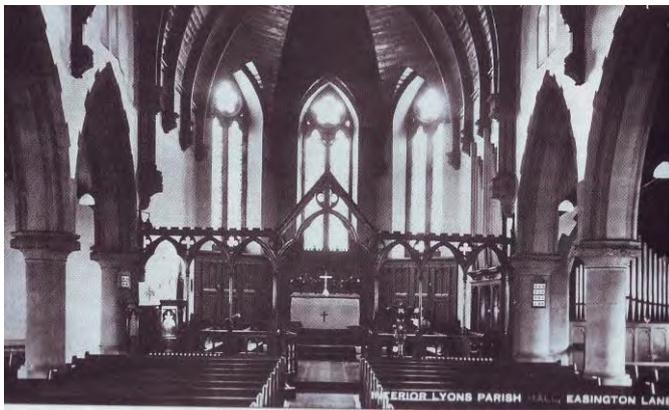
Independent Methodist Church, Hetton



Methodist Church, Union Street Hetton



Apostolic Church, Easington Lane



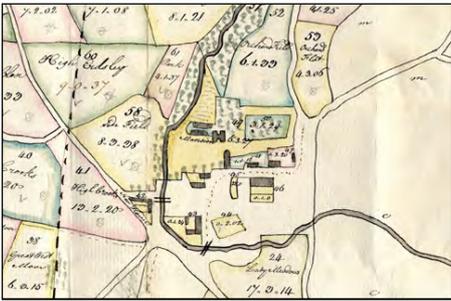
Lyons Parish Church, CofE, Easington Lane



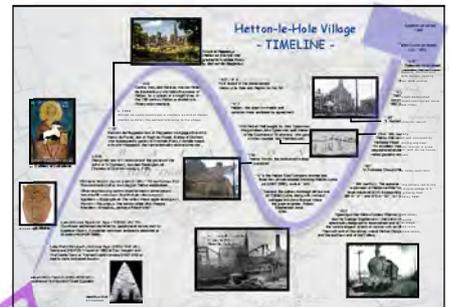
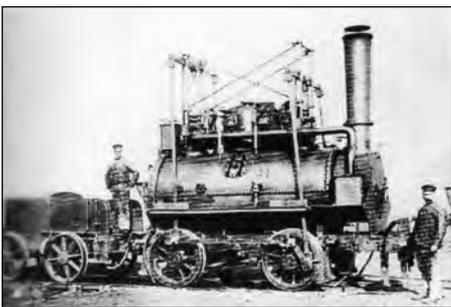
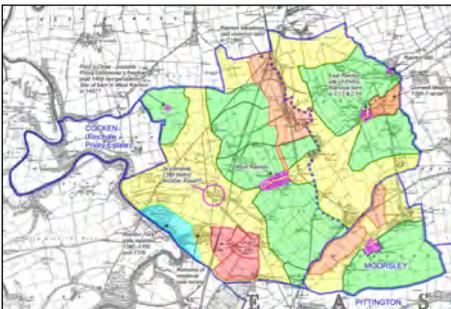
St Cuthberts Church, East Rainton



This book explores the landscape and history of Hetton from its geological origins to the present day. Whether it is Hetton's dramatic setting on the edge of the Magnesian Limestone Plateau and the rich ecology which it supports or the lives of medieval farming communities, the pioneering collieries and steam railways or the sporting life of the Victorian and Edwardian town, the Hetton Village Atlas will guide you through the area's rich heritage.



School and chapel, cottage and mansion, workhouse and factory, lord and labourer, tranquil pond and rugged quarry, all can be found within.



Hetton Local & Natural History Society

