

SUMMER 2013 | VOL 3 ISSUE 1 | ISSN 1757-3890

THE HOUGHTONIAN



QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF HOUGHTON HERITAGE SOCIETY

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WWW.HOUGHTONLESPRING.ORG.UK

CAN YOU HELP?

If you have any old photographs of Houghton-le-Spring that you would like to share, please contact the Society via www.houghtonlespring.org.uk/contact

FACES AND PLACES

Photographs are treated with care and respect and are returned promptly once they have been copied.

Allowing your precious photographs to be copied and shared ensures that they will be around for generations to come.





WELCOME TO THE HOUGHTONIAN, the quarterly magazine of the Houghton-le-Spring Heritage Society. This is our tenth consecutive issue, numbered as Volume 3 Issue 1 and looks at the start of the Society's activities in 2013.

A LARGE SECTION OF THIS ISSUE is devoted to Houghton's star of stage and screen, Linden Travers, who would have celebrated her 100th birthday on May 27th 2013. The Society held a special event in Houghton Methodist Church to commemorate the anniversary and a good many people turned up to enjoy the movie No Orchids for Miss Blandish.

AS ALWAYS WE'VE had a busy start to the new year and a selection of photographs are featured in this edition showing some of the work the Society does in our community. We have planted trees with children at Burnside Primary School and spent time with supporting other groups, including HOPE and Houghton Amateur Radio Club. We even managed to pay a visit 'underground' at the Houghton Mines Rescue Centre which is celebrating its centenary year. Thanks are extended to all at the centre for giving us such an enjoyable afternoon in the dark confines of the mock coal face.

YOU WILL NOTICE some changes in this issue as we have replaced the Website Updates column with a selection of our tweets. We use a Twitter feed on our home page to keep you updated with our news and changes to the website.

Thank you for reading and I do hope you enjoy this issue.

PAUL LANAGAN, CHAIRMAN
H-L-S HERITAGE SOCIETY

follow us on
twitter
@houghtonheritag

Note there is no 'e' at the end of our Twitter name due to length limitations

1 Feb 2013

"Bye, bye Blockbuster" pics added to the Houghton Heritage Society Facebook group. Just visit www.fyassbyuk.com to see them. #blockbuster

9 Feb 2013

Can you help fill in the gaps for these Houghton Street Names? See: www.houghtonle-spring.org.uk/houses where we look at their name origins #streetnames

13 Feb 2013

Visit www.fyassbyuk.com (Facebook in pitmatic dialect) to see our 3 articles about the fascinating Riani family, Italian icecream sellers

20 Feb 2013

The Houghton Heritage website now has a handy Google searchbox to help you quickly find the pages of interest to you

10 Mar 2013

Pics of the unveiling of Houghton Rectory Park in April 1949 now on our Facebook group at www.fyassbyuk.com #houghtonlespring #park

24 Mar 2013

Pics of Houghton's Palm Sunday procession with a donkey across the Broadway online at www.fyassbyuk.com #palsmsunday #houghtonlespring

14 Apr 2013

Fans line the streets of Houghton as Sunderland AFC tour after winning the FA Cup, 1973. Pics on our FyassByuk group. www.fyassbyuk.com

30 Apr 2013

See what we have planned for @SunderlandLive Local History Month www.houghtonlespring.org.uk/events inc Linden Travers 100 & The Houghton Heritage Walk

24 May 2013

The Houghton Heritage Walk is today at 6:30PM. £4 per person inc free 180 page book.

27 May 2013

27/05/1913 - Linden Travers born in Houghton-le-Spring, daughter of William Halton Lindon-Travers & Florence Wheatley

16 Jun 2013

To advertise in the @houghtonfeastHQ 2013 programme of events, contact: info@houghtonfeast.co.uk #houghtonfeast #houghtonlespring

20 Jun 2013

Video showing the set up of the North East's Largest Fun Fair at Herrington Country Park

22 Jun 2013

"You're impittent!" - now there's a phrase I've not heard in a while! www.houghtonlespring.org.uk/articles #houghtonlespring #houghtonheritage #pitmatic

24 Jun 2013

Houghton-le-Spring key rings now available on eBay

These tweets and more can be seen on the HH homepage. We tweet regularly to keep you up to date



IF YOU ARE reading a printed or photocopied version of THE HOUGHTONIAN and are having difficulty seeing the print, did you know you can read the online PDF? This can be increased in size up to a whopping 6400% in Adobe Reader!

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- TELEPHONE 0191 561 6383 FOR DETAILS.

HOUGHTON'S STAR OF STAGE & SCREEN

IT IS HARD to study any area of Houghton-le-Spring's social history without it being punctuated by a member of the Wheatley family. The Wheatleys were a large, prosperous family and it is not surprising that their history is as equally fascinating as the flavours of the sweets in their numerous shops which were dotted along Newbottle Street.

Much of the research for this article on the family was done while consuming a bag of sweets and at the same time watching old black and white flicks. The sweets were of course black bullets and helped to invoke the history of the Wheatleys' confectionery factories in Houghton; the movies were *The Lady Vanishes* (1938) and *The Stars Look Down* (1940), both starring Houghton-born **LINDEN TRAVERS**, great-granddaughter of the confection founder, George Wheatley, whose right leg was blown off by a cannon ball during the Crimean War, but whose disability didn't stop him from founding a successful confectionery factory in Houghton. Today we look at this successful family, who were well known for their shops on Newbottle Street, and in particular the family member who made it to the silver screen!

On May 27th 1913, Florence Wheatley, granddaughter of the late

confectioner George Wheatley, and her husband, William Halton Lindon-Travers, became the proud parents of a baby daughter who they named Florence Lindon-Travers. The young Florence was educated at the La Sagesse Convent School, Jesmond, probably owing to its proximity to the Tyneside theatres which her father managed.

It is not known when Florence started using her stage name of Linden Travers, but she made her first stage appearance at the Newcastle Playhouse, now known as Northern Stage, at the age of 20. This was to be an eventful year for Linden, as her paternal grandmother, Alice Travers, also passed away and was buried at Jesmond Old Cemetery in February 1933.

Linden's confidence on the stage continued to develop and in 1934 she played the lead in 'Murder in Mayfair' at the Glove Theatre in London's West End. The play was more than an opportunity for Linden to shine to the public; she caught the eye of a gentleman called Guy Leon, whose sister was in the cast, and they later married. Their first child, Jennifer Susan Leon, was born in Chelsea in February 1939.

Linden starred in her first movie, in a supporting role, in the film 'Children of the Fog', which was released in December 1935. Around this time, she became the centre of attention at the Houghton Film Society, which met in a building on Robinson Street (now demolished), when she made a visit home to her



CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

family in Houghton. Another return visit to her home town saw her attending the funeral of her maternal grandfather, Robert Wheatley, upon his death in April 1937. Robert had been in charge of the Mill House confectionery factory in Houghton following the death of Crimean War veteran, George Wheatley, in 1906. The early 1940s were extremely busy for Linden and she starred in an impressive range of movies and stage shows, mostly in supporting roles but as the lead in 1948's 'No Orchids for Miss Blandish', echoing her appearance in the stage show of the same name six years earlier. She starred alongside many well known stars including George Formby as well as directors such as Alfred Hitchcock.

Linden married her second husband, James Holman, in 1948 and the couple had a child a year later called Sally Linden Holman. That same year, Linden played the part of Beatriz de Peraza in what was to be her last film, 'Christopher Columbus', which was released in October 1949. She continued to appear in television plays until her last appearance on the screen in a BBC tribute to Alfred Hitchcock, celebrating the centenary of his birth in 1999.

Linden loved the arts, and lived in a house called Lorraine in St Ives, Cornwall, where she spent her time as an artist. She loved art that much that she and her sisters, Alice Wilton and Pearl Morant, opened the Travers Gallery in Kensington, London in 1969 until 1972. When Linden's husband, James Holman, passed away in 1974, Linden spent the years afterwards travelling around Asia and Africa, echoing the interests of her brother, actor Bill Travers,

who founded the Zoo Check Campaign, later known as the Born Free Foundation. In the 1980s she studied psychotherapy and qualified as a hypnotherapist.

Linden Travers passed away on October 23rd 2001 in Cornwall at the age of 88 years and her funeral service took place at St Ives Parish Church. Linden's obituary in the Guardian described her as a: "Gifted actress who moved comfortably from femme fatale roles to light comedies."

Linden Travers is often described by movie aficionados as being out of synch with the industry, that she was before her time and should have been a bigger star, but it is comforting to know that a light still shines on her name in Houghton-le-Spring for there are two large sumptuously framed photographs of Ms Travers in the Wetherspoon's Wild Boar public house, while Houghton-le-Spring Heritage Society continues to pay tribute to Linden, with the support of her niece, the award winning actress and star of Downton Abbey, Penelope Wilton OBE, who is the Society's patron.

*Paul Lanagan
Local Historian*

Houghton Heritage Society held a special event on Saturday May 25th 2013 to commemorate what would have been Linden's 100th birthday on May 27th. The movie No Orchids for Miss Blandish was screened in Mautland Street Cinema and a standing ovation was given at the end for Linden.





WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Can you help solve these Genealogical & Heritage Quests?

LOVING LINDEN TRAVERS

Is it possible to fall in love with a woman 100 years old? I have decided it is not. If so, that person would need to see a psychotherapist, and the only one I would want to see is a hundred and not taking new patients. No, I am definitely not in love with Linden Travers. That would be to love a ghost. No, that train has left the station, and as someone once said, "The ghost train neveh comes byeck!" It's a good thing because my wife might become angry with me. Fortunately, she is not, and I aim to keep it that way! How I found out about Linden Travers may be of interest, particularly since I am from 'across the pond' in the USA, where there is a healthy appreciation for British culture, especially in televised comedies and dramas, but British movies are not so common. Alfred Hitchcock became an 'American' director so his films are known here, but until recently you saw only the same few. Quite recently I saw *The Lady Vanishes* for the first time. There was a character in a minor role that had an immediate appeal to me, and I decided to find out who she was. Mrs Todhunter (Linden Travers) had been in two dozen films, was a stage actress, a psychotherapist, hypnotist and most importantly to me perhaps, also an artist. Her proclaimed favorite film and best role was in *No Orchids* for Miss Blandish. I am an avid (and competitive) orchid grower. This was going to take some time. A link or perhaps just the name of Houghton-le-Spring attracted me to that web-site and I began to correspond with Paul Lanagan. I ordered a DVD of *No Orchids* then *Lady Vanishes* and the collection had begun. It was her countenance that first held me spell-bound. As an artist I shall say that I have studied beauty all my life, particularly what makes for a beautiful woman. When I first saw Ms Travers I said to myself... "well there is a line in *The Terror* when Linden walks in the door and a rather sloppy drunk says, 'It's finally happened!'" Linden's character replies, 'What has happened?' to which he replies, 'After all these years, I finally fallen

in love!" It was like that for me. I said to myself, it has taken me 59 years, but finally I have found the most beautiful woman that ever lived. Now I know that there was Cleopatra, and Helen of Troy and then there was Linden, but I can't think of anyone else quite in that class. It is not that she reminds me of a woman I loved, but she reminds me of every woman I have ever loved. When I look at her face or even think about it, it brings an instant joy to my very heart. Quite literally it heals my heart just to think about her. I began to collect images from the internet and was even able to purchase a few photos and publicity stills. I had already framed a 1951 promo still from *No Orchids* but it wasn't long before I convinced myself to obtain the photo I most loved. Good things (as well as bad) come in threes, and an inexpensive still from the 1937 movie *Brief Ecstasy* in Buenos Aires rounded out my collection. I found 6 films altogether that play on US DVD players, and my wife who is also a film noir fan watched them with me. All of this was in the month or two before the centenary on May 27th, which in the USA on that weekend was a holiday we call Memorial Day (for war veterans). I will never again forget when that holiday is. *No Orchids* holds a special place for me, as it did for her. Knowing it was the favorite book of the Spitfire pilots and so on, during WWII peaked my curiosity. I am a great fan of flying movies in general, but *The Battle of Britain* in particular. I got a retired library hardback with a slightly askew spine from a British internet seller. I am reading it slowly to relish the taste, like a Jesmona black bullet (yep, the last two tins in the US are due here on Wednesday, but hopefully they'll reorder them, because my wife loves mint!) As an American reading the British form of 'American gangster slang' it has a humour all its own, not entirely intended! I cannot say that I have any information about the lady in question that is not available on the internet. I never met her, and have no idea what kind of person she was. But from what I've read, and I've read a lot, I have an idea.

As an artist, a visual artist, and Linden was certainly a very fine one, although I have seen only one painting, 'Death of a Gentleman' is first of all a 'seer' that is, a person who looks at the world with open eyes. In her case very beautiful eyes, but eyes that saw, not just captured the hearts of men. That she was an early visionary and saw the threat of war at a time when most British were asleep to the fact (the central theme in *The Lady Vanishes* as well as another film I'll not spoil by giving away the end) was certainly visionary. I place no blame; the Americans were even more oblivious. Though much has been conjectured about the painting mentioned above, to me it is clearly a still life arranged to symbolically foreshadow the war and a kind of death of nobility as well as the unfathomable loss of life. The textures of glass, wood, metals, bone and fabrics, the lighting, the spilled Champagne are wonderfully rendered and symbolic in the tradition of the British art movement known as the pre-Raphaelites. Testimony to her fine education at La Sagasse in Jesmond I suppose. All these images can be seen in the 1937 film *Brief Ecstasy* as well. Perhaps my favorite in a way. I also imagine her to have been a very happy person. Well educated, encouraged to follow her dreams, having two successful children, retiring from a successful career at age thirty-six, touring the world, time to paint and even run a gallery and finally settling a short stroll from the sea while living to age 88 seems to mean she pretty much had it all, even by today's standard, and in her day it must have been almost unimaginable. I hope she was happy. She makes me happy! I am happy when I am in the shade of a Linden tree. I am happy when I drink Linden tea or the closely related hyacinth tea, which settles the stomach and calms the heart and lowers blood pressure. I am happy anytime I look at her "byutiful fyace" or hear her lovely voice with its haughty accent. But I am most definitely not in love with her. Ask my wife.

Marc Levenson
USA

REMEMBERING STEAM

I remember my Auntie and Uncle living on West View in Success, and when visiting there, always wanted to wander up to the top and see the engines coming and going to the Lambton Engine Shed. Unfortunately we tended to visit at the weekends when the line wasn't operating, but made the occasional visit mid week so that made up for the disappointment. Strange the effect steam engines have on people; Pete Waterman asked a psychologist this question a few years ago on television and the answer was that the smell of steam and oil reminded people, especially males, of baby lotion of their infant days (oh to be a psychologist)!

Ian Lawton

A FEW REPLIES

Regarding the inquiry of Steve Glass, to my knowledge there was not a Boy's Brigade in Houghton in the 1930s. I suspect his father was more likely in the Church Lads Brigade, which flourished at this time. My suspicion is confirmed by his reference to a photo of his father's Brigade taken outside St Michael's Church of England - the Church Lads' Brigade was sponsored by the Church of England, whereas the Boys' Brigade was sponsored by the Methodist Church. A very good photo of the Church Lads' Brigade taken in 1934 appears in "Houghton-le-Spring & Hetton-le-Hole in Old Photographs". Regarding your interesting article on Houghton Junior School in the last Houghtonian, I wonder if the Infants School and Junior School were built at the same time? After two years in the Infants School, I well remember being marched across the Infant play-yard into the back entrance of the Junior School. Best wishes,

Jack Morley
President

Houghton Heritage Society

THANK YOU!

I have just found an old mate thanks to Houghton Heritage Society.

Kevin Cansfield
Houghton-le-Spring

PHOTO FOCUS



THE GOSPEL HALL ON MAITLAND STREET AND THE CORNER OF GEORGE STREET SOMETIME BETWEEN 1933 AND 1965. PREVIOUSLY, AROUND 1907, TWO ROOMS ABOVE FRANK JONES'S CHEMIST SHOP ON NEWBOTTLE STREET WERE USED AS A PLACE OF EVANGELICAL WORSHIP. BY 1912 THE HOUGHTON-LE-SPRING ASSEMBLY (EVANGELICAL) HIRED A HALL IN POTTERY YARD FOR USE AS A PLACE OF WORSHIP BEFORE MOVING TO THE GOSPEL HALL. AFTERWARDS, PREMISES IN NESHAM PLACE WERE USED BEFORE A LARGE CHURCH, KNOWN AS THE BETHANY CHRISTIAN CENTRE, WAS BUILT BETWEEN HETTON AND DURHAM ROADS. THANKS TO LENA INCH FOR SHARING THIS WONDERFUL VIEW.



HARRY CROSTHWAITE'S HOMECOMING AFTER THE WAR, CIRCA 1940S. HARRY WENT ON TO JOIN HIS FATHER'S DENTAL PRACTICE, ABOVE THE RED LION ON CHURCH STREET.



WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

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YOUTUBE VIDEOS

Thank you so much for these little videos it is heartwarming for us to view these having been born and lived in Houghton before moving 30 years ago to Northampton, but still class there as 'home'.

*Pauline Thuburn-Tatters
Northampton*

LINDEN TRAVERS

Good morning Houghton Heritage, I am a fan of Linden Travers through two of her movies (and also an avid orchid grower). I am writing to ask about the photo used in the poster of her centennial celebration and elsewhere. Can you tell me when this photo was taken (either her age or time of photograph), or what it was used to promote (a film or stage production, or other use)? Any other information (I have looked at Wikipedia and IMDB) about her or the provenance of that photo would be greatly appreciated.

*Marc Levenson
Maryland
USA*

THE ROBINSONS

We have been researching our family history and have identified two branches which originated in Houghton-le-Spring. They made their way to Newcastle in Australia in the second half of 1800s. The most important of these is Elizabeth Jane Robinson who (according to her Death Certificate) was born in Houghton-le-Spring in 1882. Her father was John Robinson and her mother was Annie Stobbs. John Robinson was a coal miner. She apparently arrived in Australia in 1890. As a consequence of Elizabeth's birth being after the 1881 Census and her departure being before the 1891 one we cannot find any hard information about her history in the UK. Also we cannot find a Birth Certificate for an Elizabeth Jane Robinson in Houghton in the UK BDM site which corresponds exactly with these dates. The best we can do is Q2 1881 and Q4 1883. Obviously either of these could be the one but surviving relatives seem to be fairly firm that her birth year was 1882. I see from the Houghton-

le-Spring Heritage website that you have identified a John Robinson and an Annie Stobbs in the Houghton-le-Spring Hillside Cemetery and that you have an inscription from John Robinson's headstone. Information from either of these sources might provide some useful leads. The other family we are tracing is Wanless. The ones who migrated to Newcastle in New South Wales came from East Rainton, Seaton and Seaham in 1882. Could they have any direct connections with the Wanless family whose names appear in your records? We have followed up fairly accurately what happened to them after they arrived in Australia and would be only too happy to email you their stories if it was of any interest to you.

*Warwick Newland
Sydney
Australia*

SAND DANCERS

Hello Houghton Heritage Society, I am in Australia and am trying to find information about my great grandparents. My grandfather was born in South Shields in 1912 and I am wondering if his parents are buried there. We don't know much as his parents died young and he came out to Australia at 16 years old. At the time of his birth they lived in South Shields. His father was Thomas Taylor (a water leading coal miner). His mother was Margaret Ann Liddle (this is the name on his birth certificate) I'm not sure if his parents were married? In any case there is both a Margret Ann Taylor and Margaret Liddle are listed on your website records. I believe his father died in France during World War 1 and his mother died of consumption. I guess both of their deaths were sometime between 1912 and 1928. If you could help I would be very grateful, as the above are the only details I have.

*Jacki Jackson
Australia*

DRAPERY SHOP

Dear Houghton Heritage, I hope you can help me with research I am doing. For the past two years I have had an independent film maker, making a documentary

film about my life. My grandmother, Annie Hall, had a drapery shop in Houghton so I am trying to gather as much information as possible. I know my father, John Hall had his First Holy Communion in the Parish Church (March 13th 1955) which was confirmed by the Bishop of Jarrow (I have the card with this information on). Sadly, I have no family left alive to ask about other details or get photos from so I am very happy I have found you. I hope you can help. Do you have any photos of 'Annie Hall's Drapery Shop' or the large house they lived in with a drive? I believe they had servants too. I have an address here; 116 Newbottle St. But I'm not sure if that is the same house they owned while my grandmother worked in her shop and my grandfather Robert Hall worked as a Foreman in a coal mine. I would really appreciate even just one photo of her shop or the street they lived in. Thank you for taking time out to read this.

Susan Hall

HOUGHTON INSTITUTE

I am trying to discover the origins of my foster-sister Elspeth Whitehouse. Her mother was Evelyn Gabrielle Mary Swift, and the child was born at Himley Hall, Staffordshire, where her mother was a laundry-maid. The father is not known. Elspeth was born on 5th August 1930. Mother and child were sent to the workhouse at Lichfield, Staffs. My parents fostered Elspeth, and she grew up as my sister. She became an Army nurse, and was later a Sister in a London hospital. She died in 1987. Staffordshire Record Office found, in some Public Assistance Minutes of 31st October 1931, the settlement and removal of Evelyn Gabrielle Mary Swift to Houghton-le-Spring Institute. It would seem that Evelyn and her child were separated, with her baby staying at Lichfield, while she went to Houghton-le-Spring. I am anxious to find any information about Evelyn Swift at Houghton-le-Spring, how long she stayed there, and where she went then. I hope you can help me. Yours sincerely,

C. J. Whitehouse

SAMUEL NELLESS BURIED?

Hello there, I am interested in any information you have on Isabella Nelless listed on your website under St Michael & All Angels churchyard burials for 1581 - 1854. I have a bishop transcript that says an Isabella Nelless was buried on 15th May 1831 in Houghton-le-Spring, so am expecting this to be the one. I was hoping to find two Isabellas buried at St. Michael and All Angels as I actually have two Isabella's Christened to a Samuel and Mary Nelless: one in 1825 and one in 1828. Is there any chance there are actually two and the name has only been listed once in your index? I am also curious as to whether you can advise me to the likely resting place of a Samuel Nelless (Isabella's father) who died on May 3rd 1864 resident of Easington Lane. Thanks in advance,

Andrew Nelless

BOG HOUSE FARM

Does anyone know of Bog House Farm or where it used to be?

Liz Hall

BOG HOUSE

Bog House Farm used to be in the fields about 400 metres due south of The Beehive, not there now of course.

*Jeff Thornton
Houghton-le-Spring*

BOG HOUSE

I used to deliver a morning paper to Bog House Farm. A real pain getting there on foot. It was around the first bungalow along what is now Abbey Drive from Sedglecth Road.

*Bill Sweeting
Houghton-le-Spring*

CRACKING

There's a large crevice runs through cathedral view and the green in the middle. The coal board had to rebuild parts of two houses years ago, they denied it, but were caught out by one of the residents who was deputy overman and worked the seam underneath, one of the white mice.

*Richard Leadbitter
Newbottle*



HOUGHTON MINES RESCUE

1913 - 2013

On April 9th 2013, members of Houghton Heritage Society were lucky enough to be given a guided tour of Houghton Mines Rescue Centre on Hetton Road during its centenary year. See the video on YouTube via the **HH** website.





WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

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STREET NAMES

Does anyone remember the eight houses in the Villa Estate being called Ash or Birch Avenue, door numbers 1 to 8? The Council then renamed them Lime Avenue with door numbers now even 2 to 15 to match the rest of the street.

*Paul Anderson
Houghton-le-Spring*

TIED HOUSES

Hi everyone at Houghton Heritage, I understand that miners often rented properties owned by the mine in which they worked - a tied house system. If this is true, does anyone know which streets housed miners from which pits? (If not true, my forebears must have moved about a lot for some other reason; maybe to avoid the rentman!) Help would be much appreciated in finding information on my forebears who lived in and around Houghton from the mid 1800s until the 1950s at least. They were miners. I am particularly interested in James b.1831 in Ireland, living mainly in Union Street; John b.1863; James b.1887, my grandfather, married to Albina. The Malarkey originates from Ireland; the first English member of my family was an immigrant from Mayo who came to Durham with his Irish wife Ann living in Shop Row, Philadelphia, in 1881 then aged 50. His son John was living in Union Street, Newbottle, with his wife Elizabeth in 1891 and 1901. John's son James again married Albina Lydia and lived (according to the records) variously in Hopper Street, Balmers Buildings, Balmers Terrace, Parkinsons Terrace, New Hopper Street and Warden House. Albina's father was Lambton Purvis. James and Albina had nine children, of which Ronald was my father, born 1909. He went on to be a Methodist minister and died in 1979. The other children were James, Lydia, Linda, Audrey, Hazel, Basil, Eva, Russell. Virtually none of these street names exist now as far as I can tell and with such a complicated series of seemingly interconnected villages in the area it's difficult to sort out. To further complicate matters there was at least one (possibly two) other

Malarkey families in the area at the same sort of time. My research via the usual channels has stalled and I would be most grateful for any information. Cheers.

Phil Malarkey

TIED HOUSES REPLY:

In reply to Phil Malarkeys question about Tied Housing, yes, each pit had its own housing. Those for Houghton pit were mainly on the road from the pit gates towards Grasswell, with a few in the other direction to as far as opposite the Comrades Work Mens Club. All, I think, have now gone. They were known as 'colliery houses'. I lived the first few years of my life in three - Prospect Row, Lambton Street and Quarry Row, all within 2/3 minutes walk of the pit gate. To the miner they had the advantage of being cheaper than private rentals and were within a couple of hundred yards of the pit gate, so there were no transport costs for getting to work. To the mine owner, advantages were that there could be no excuse for being late for work, as you lived so near and that the miners' allocation of free coal could be easily/cheaply delivered, as all houses were in a circa two hundred yard radius. Following nationalisation, I believe these houses became the property of the NCB, so could be allocated to any miner, not just one who worked at a particular pit. Certainly, my father never worked at Houghton Pit in my lifetime (only Herrington and The Meadows), yet had tenancy of three such houses over about 20 years. There was a more sinister aspect to the provision of such housing; the mine-owner had a great deal of control over the work force. My Grandfather worked at Houghton Pit, and was told that his sons, as they left school, would start work at the pit. If not, he'd be fired, blacklisted (unemployable in any mines in the area) and he'd lose his home. Who called these 'The Good Old Days'?

David Brown

THE OLIVERS

Dear Researchers, I am searching for more information on this couple: William Oliver and Mary (Armstrong) Oliver. These names

appear in the lists of Burials in St Michael & All Angels Churchyard 1581 - 1854. William Oliver may be the William Hetherington Oliver who was christened in 1810 at Christ Church, Tynemouth, Northumberland, whose parents were William Oliver and Sarah Hetherington. Mary Armstrong's father was John Armstrong; she may have been born in 1814. William and Mary were married on 5 January 1829 at St. Nicholas, Tyne, Northumberland. A son, John Armstrong Oliver, was born in Houghton-le-Spring on 18 April 1830; a daughter, Fanny Sarah Oliver, was born 1 February 1832. Both children immigrated to the USA in childhood along with their grandfather John Armstrong and several of his other children. From this I infer that the Oliver children's parents had died. Would you please check the birth and death dates of William Oliver and Mary Oliver and record any other relevant information such as who else might be buried with them. Any information would be helpful as John Armstrong was my g-g-g-grandfather. Thank you.

*Joanne Foster
Madison, New Jersey
USA*

THE LAMBTON ARMS PUB

Hi, I have just been reading your excellent website regarding my family history, in particular the pub lists. I am currently researching the name 'Brownless' as part of my ancestry in the Co. Durham area and found one of the daughters of my 3 x Great Grandparents (George & Mary Brownless), a Margaret Brownless married a John Fletcher. They had a daughter named Mary who married Thomas Rigby. In the 1891 census Margaret Fletcher (nee Brownless) is widowed and living with her married daughter at the Lambton Arms, Newbottle Street, Houghton-le-Spring. Her son-in-law, Thomas Rigby, is listed as head of household and Licensed Victualler of the Lambton Arms. I noticed that Thomas Rigby's name is not listed in the innkeepers names and wondered if you would be interested to know this for your records. Also, by the 1901 census

Mary Rigby is widowed and she is listed as Head of household & Innkeeper of the Red Lion Inn, Church Street, Houghton-le-Spring (the next house on the census is Rectory Lodge and then Houghton Rectory, then Dairy Lane and Clergy House). As Mary's name was also not on your lists, I thought this little snippet might be of interest to you. I shall continue reading your excellent site and many thanks for all the hard work that must have gone into it. It must be of much interest both to locals and those further afield (such as myself) researching family history etc. Regards.

Linda Rowley

DENE HOUSE FARM

Dear sir/madam, I am a descendent from the Bowden family that owned Dene House Farm at Houghton-le-Spring circa early 1800. We will be in Durham in September and would appreciate the opportunity to research the family history. Could you direct us to the best location for help in this matter? We have the book The Peoples History Houghton-le-Spring by Geoffrey Berriman; it has a photo of Dene House Farm being worked in 1954. We would like to know the origin of the photo and the exact location of the Farm. We would like to contact him by email and ask if you could provide us with his address and/or contact details please, if you have them. In fact if you have details of any other contacts that could be of assistance, thank you if you could forward to us. Looking forward to your assistance with thanks.

*Moirá Moretti
Adelaide
Australia*

BLYTH ROBSON

Hi, I've just come across a request for help in the Who Do You Think You Are requests of the Houghtonian Mag - it's from Judy Hughes in Illinois and is regarding the family of Blyth Robson. I think I can help her (if she still needs it) - please can you put her in touch with me? Many thanks and best wishes.

Ruth Walton



HOUGHTON HERITAGE SOCIETY WORKING IN THE COMMUNITY & WITH OTHER LOCAL GROUPS

(1) Mrs Evelyn Curry, who turned 90, was presented with a surprise Hero of Houghton certificate to recognise her 50 years of membership in the Mothers' Union at St Michael & All Angels Church. The anniversary was in December 2012 but the Heritage Society made the presentation on February 21st 2013, making Evelyn the sixth person to receive the award to date. Pictured, from left, are: Paul Lanagan, Chairman; Evelyn Curry; and Rev Margaret Lee.



(2) Local historian Paul Lanagan gave an illustrated talk to the HOPE group in Houghton Methodist Church in February 2013. The talk concluded with a Houghton Heritage quiz, which got everybody talking and reminiscing.



(3) Despite the cold and the wet weather on April 12th, Houghton Heritage Society members joined forces with pupils from Burnside Primary School to plant trees in the school's wildlife garden as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Woods. Trees were kindly supplied by the Woodland Trust and a record of which pupils planted the trees was kept. This can be viewed on the HH website.



(4) & (5) Joan Lambton and Paul Lanagan offered support to the Houghton Amateur Radio Club on their WWII Radio event at the Dubmire British Legion on June 8th 2013. The sun was shining and there was plenty of smiling faces! . . . ____





WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Can you help solve these Genealogical & Heritage Quests?

GEORGE SCOTT'S WILL

Greetings Paul, hope all is well with you and yours. I have a very poor copy of my great grandfather George Scott's Last Will & Testament. It was filed in the month of October 1905. Possibly you might find a place for it in a future Houghtonian. He left the following to his children: number 3 Henry Street - son Martin; 4 Henry Street - son Frederick; 12 Outram Street - illegible; 14 Outram Street - son William; 20 Outram Street - daughter Margaret; 22 Outram Street - son Charles (my grandfather); 24 Outram Street - son Henry; 26 Outram Street - daughter Grace; 28 Outram Street - daughter Hannah; and 30 Outram Street - daughter Annie. Number 12 Outram Street might have been for his wife Sarah Jane. The filing was handled by D. Miller, Solicitor and G. H. Stevens, Solicitor, with Messers Legge and Miller.

*Charles Scott
USA*

DOWN THE PIT

As a young lad I worked at the pit bottom in the Harvey seam and ran the sets with main and tail haulage from the shaft to the main landing. Probably all a foreign language to 99% of you. Dark dangerous work, handling hundreds of tons of coal. My father Gordon Cummings was a shot firer in the same seam and in the same shift. I remember walking from Newbottle to the pit at 3am to start work. Damn cold in the winter, fantastic on a lovely summer morning with all the birds singing. Anybody out there who worked at the same time 1961 1963? Not many of us oldies left now.

Barry Cummings

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Dear Paul, we are hoping you can give us some more information on our family, and perhaps put any surviving relations in touch with us. We don't think there would be many still living in Durham as Robert Armstrong's to sons migrated to Australia but there is a large and close Family living on the South coast of New South Wales. Robert Armstrong b.1795

at Newbottle is our GG Grandfather. We had very little information until we started this journey. Robert was a Civil Engineer and wrote many books on the subject of chimneys and steam. We have wondered where someone from his background would have been educated. Our research shows Robert's Mother was Isabella Scott, sister and daughter of Anthony Scott's of Pottery fame. Robert married a Maria Hay Peat in 1841, the marriage certificate states he was a Widower - this was another surprise! Robert and Maria both died in 1868 leaving three children under 20. The middle child was Elizabeth Ann Eugenia Scott Armstrong and we have not found anything about her as she did not come to Australia with Her brothers. Robert's eldest son was Josephus Hercules Scott Armstrong and he married a Margaret Hamilton from Sunderland. Robert had a number of siblings, Barnabas died about 1829 in London, Henry died maybe 1865 at Wolviston; they are the only siblings We have any information on. Thank You for any time spent.

Elizabeth Gardner

NESHAM PLACE CHAPEL

Does anyone know what happened to the plaque commemorating the soldiers which was in Nesham Place Methodist church?

*Ken Henderson
Nesham Place*

NOT SO JOLLY

It's sad to discover the Jolly Potter pub at Newbottle is probably on its last legs. I used to be a regular back in the late eighties to the mid nineties; it was always struggling then but it was full of big characters and a succession great landlords such as Hughie McGill, Dave MacStay, Gordon Duckling and John Mishaman?. It's such a shame to see so many centres of the community and bases of our collective heritage disappearing.

Mark Taylor

THE RACECOURSE ESTATE

The Racecourse Estate started being built in 1946 and the first

house was at an angle at the bottom of Queensway. We moved into the first house of Balmoral Crescent in May 1947. We could see the racecourse from our front bedroom through the gap of the houses opposite us. The houses were built by council workers: builders, plumbers, plasterers and electricians. The racecourse was originally a horse racing course in the 1930s and probably closed during the War. I believe it was all demolished in the late 60s/70s to make room for private houses.

Betty Stevens

PAUL LANAGAN REPLIED:

Thanks, Betty. My research into Houghton's horseracing heritage is still. In the 1860s the Houghton Feast races took place in fields around the town. Grandstands would be erected, however one collapsed in 1878. In 1884 two boys, who were blackberrying in a field next to where the Houghton Feast Races were held, discovered a tin containing sixteen charges of dynamite under the grandstand. Mr Samuel Smyth, of the White Lion Hotel, was nearby; he took the dynamite, which was wrapped in copper wire and fused, and detonated it in a field. "Much excitement prevails in the locality, as it is supposed the intention may have been to blow up the grandstand." [Aberdeen Weekly Journal, Friday October 17th 1884] The racecourse/stadium is not on the 1923 OS map but is of course there on the 1939 edition. The outbreak of World War II led to a reduction in Feast activities owing to transport difficulties and lighting regulations. Horse and foot racing discontinued, as did the fairground, however greyhound racing took place at Houghton Greyhound Stadium. Perhaps I should publish a small article in the hope it will bring more information in?

*Paul Lanagan
Chairman*

DUBMIRE SCHOOL

I went to Dubmire School until 1979. Anyone remember me? Joanne Standish. I moved to the United States in December 1979.

Joanne Standish Herron

LUMLEY BRICKS

Has anyone got any photos of Lumley Brickworks as I spent 2 summers working there with no pictorial record in the 1960s

Roland Mawston

ELLO ELLO

Can anyone remember the police station in No 4 Shop Row, Philadelphia?

Derek Brown

REG VARDY

Hi there, I wondered if you had any old images of Reg Vardy's showroom from the 1970s or 80s? When I was a kid it was the place to go and dream - I have bought an old Lotus which was supplied by them in 1982, and I would love to find out more, maybe from people who worked there.

Mark Britten

DURING THE WAR

My Grandad (William Fish) was in the ARP in Houghton during WWII.

John Inch

SUNNYSIDE PIT HOUSES

Any one got any pictures of North Row, Sunnyside? I have seen a couple on the Society's Facebook group, but would like to see anything new that people have lying around, cheers.

Michael Dean

OFFERTON

Hello, I am trying to track down the location where my family lived back in 1841 - they are shown on that census as living at/in 'Wood House' in/near Offerton. I wondered if anyone might know where this is (or was)? Thanks.

Mark Robinson

IN A PICKLE

I can remember the pickle factory on Sunderland Street, the girls used to pass the front door on their way home at closing time; they all stunk to high heaven!

Val Milnes

* * * * *



**MORE QUESTS IN
THE AUTUMN 2013 EDITION**



HOUGHTON'S POST OFFICES

IN THIS DAY and age of instant communication, we take for granted how easy it is to contact somebody at a push of a few buttons, however it was not so long ago that the only method of communication was by the Penny Post. Here we look at Houghton-le-Spring's post offices.

In 1798, the Red Lion Inn, on the corner of Houghton-le-Spring's ancient Church Street, was listed as a Postal Inn from which riders and coaches conveyed both mail and passengers. Houghton's other old inns, the White Lion and Golden Lion, also offered a place for the mail coaches to rest or change horses, plus the opportunity for refreshment.

It wasn't until 1824 that a Post Office of sorts was established at number 3 Sunderland Street. A Mr John Metcalfe was postmaster but at this time it would have only been a 'receiving house'. In 1838 Houghton's Post Office was officially registered and full postal facilities were offered at the premises. Mr Metcalfe continued to serve as postmaster, however by 1854 a Mr Robert T. Burne was recorded as being postmaster when Houghton's Local Board, later the Urban District

Council, was established. At that time, the Post Office was, surprisingly, open weekdays from 10am until 6pm. On Sundays, callers at the window could collect their post between 9am and 10am.

By 1891 the Plews family had moved into the Post Office, making number 3 Sunderland Street their place of work and family home. Headed by Christopher Plews, of Castle Bolton, Yorkshire, the family had originally lived behind Sunderland Street in the cottages of Stocksfield Place. Prior to that they had spent time in Greenville, USA, where Christopher's son, also called Christopher, was born in 1876. The Post Office premises offered the ideal place for Christopher to run his successful photography business from, and many Carte de Visites – small mounted photographs – still exist bearing his business name and address.

The Sunderland Street Post Office became the scene of much excitement on the night of May 18th 1900, later known as Mafeking Night. The British Empire was fighting its Second Boer War and the town of Mafeking, in South Africa, was under siege for 217 days, with the siege ending on May 17th.

CONTINUED OVER ->



CONTINUED FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE

News of the siege's end reached Houghton-le-Spring via telegram the next night at 9 o'clock. A notice was put up in the Post Office's window by Christopher Plews's daughter, and although the streets were deserted, a crowd soon gathered as the news spread. Before long, a resident called Mr J. Stokoe had arrived in an admiral's uniform plus accompanying sword and he went on to lead the crowd through Houghton's streets in celebration, as noisy fireworks were let off into the night sky.

The Post Office relocated to number 48 Newbottle Street around 1918 and these premises were in use for over forty years. The building, however was small and cramped, and not suitable for the growing demands of Houghton's residents, along with the increasing number of services which the Post Office was starting to offer.

Further along Newbottle Street, stood a prime site which housed a telephone exchange and had previously been a black shed for the horse drawn Fever Ambulance which took patients to Dene House Isolation Hospital. The plot was cleared and in December 1959 a new purpose built Post Office opened at 12 Newbottle Street at a cost of £35,000.

The old Post Office at 48 Newbottle Street shut down and the postmaster from there, Mr Isaac Jones, took up a position at North and South Shields. The property then became a bank. The new Post Office had seven windows

or positions, as they are known, to serve the people of Houghton from. The new building, which was seventy feet square with one story at the front and two at the rear, was described as "bright and ultra modern".



Isaac Berriman Ltd of Fence Houses had carried out all the plastering, plumbing and decorating, Fence Houses Brickworks Ltd provided yellow rusticated Lumley bricks, and Samuel Tyzak & Co of Fulwell Road installed the precast concrete floors. The building featured a strong room with seven inch thick concrete walls, a telegraph room, an accounts room and rooms for the supervisor and postmaster. There was also a staff kitchen and small dining-room. The Post Office's roof was said to be the first of its type in Houghton and consisted of layers of soft wood, plywood and felt, all thought to be fireproof at the time. The colour of the interior paintwork was left to the discretion of the staff!

The first customer in the new Post Office was Councillor Jim Hall, Chairman

of Houghton Urban District Council, who purchased a Premium Bond from acting-postmaster William Bateman. Mr Bateman, who had severed 22 years in the postal service even though he was aged just 36, was from Darlington and relocated to Houghton with his wife and child when he took up the position.

The Post Office is still in the same building, and although it may not be up to modern standards, it still retains many of those original features. When viewed from the street, it is still possible to see the step, handle and viewing hatch which were installed to allow passing Bobbies a glimpse inside and check all was well!

In 2012, the old Post Office building at 3 Sunderland Street was renovated having stood empty for many years since it was last used as an opticians. Workmen found a few hidden curiosities inside, including an interior wall which had the message "This wall was built by John Naisby & Junior 26th June 1954" written on it. An old Sunderland Echo newspaper, dated February 12th 1947 was discovered and carried the headline: BRITAIN'S ALL-IN CRISIS PLAN IS AWAITED about a three-day power cut across the country. Houghton had been chest-deep in snow that month, following heavy snowfall. **The photographs here show how the building has been sympathetically tidied up.**

*Paul Lanagan
Local Historian
Houghton Heritage Society*



LOOKING SMART: THE OLD POST OFFICE

CLASSIFIEDS

GRANNY WALK FEBRUARY 2013



The Houghton Heritage Society committee would like to place on record their thanks to the people of Houghton-le-Spring and surrounds who generously donated £434.50 to a group of grannies wandering about the district! This was of course the Society's annual sponsored walk, or Granny Walk to be precise, which sees members of the Society don wigs, headscarves and tights and walk to raise funds – and smiles. As Comic Relief's Red Nose Day fundraiser was imminent, the Society agreed to split the funds with the charity which helps the most needy people in Africa and the UK. You can watch the grannies' antics on the **HH** YouTube channel – but be warned: it is not for the faint hearted!



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DURHAM MINERS GALA 2013

SATURDAY JULY 13TH 2013

is the 129th Durham Big Meeting. Houghton Heritage Society Chairman Paul Lanagan and Vice-Chair Peter Corfield are carrying the Houghton Lodge banner. Meet them in the Market Place at 8:30 AM to show them your support and march with your banner. We will be following the Lambton banner which, as always, will have the Felling Brass Band leading the way.

For further details about the day please visit the Durham Miners Gala website at

www.durhamminers.org

The next issue of the HOUGHTONIAN will be available to download in Autumn 2013. Send us your details and get a copy sent directly to your Inbox!

SUPPORT US

I would like to support the work of the Houghton-le-Spring Heritage Society and include a donation of £ ____.

PLEASE RECORD THE FOLLOWING IN THE REGISTER OF BENEFACTORS (min £20 donation):

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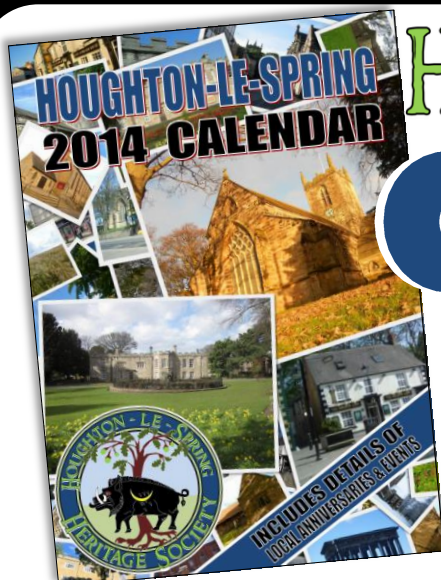
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