

E.T. Hancock

Whitwell Colliery

Paperback – 128 pages, black and white illustrations. Published in 2013 by Shincliffe Local History Society; £7.00, ISBN 978-1-909946-00-1

This book is sub titled *The history of mining and the community at Whitwell, County Durham*. Its success is in bringing together a great deal of information about a place which today is not recognisable as a settlement. Whitwell is the area at the foot of the Magnesian Limestone Escarpment in central County Durham, east of Shincliffe and south of Sherburn Hospital. The land was owned by the Master and Brethren of the Hospital, who granted leases for coal working in the early eighteenth century.

Chapters Three and Four set out the development of colliery leases and identify important leaseholders during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Leaseholders included John Gregson from a family of Durham City lawyers and Andrew White, one time Mayor of Sunderland.

Chapter Five looks at details of Whitwell Colliery developed by the Whitwell Coal Company, in which Gregson and White were shareholders. The author contrasts Hair's drawing of Whitwell Colliery from 1844 with photographs of the current landscape with its limited archaeological evidence of past industry. There is also a significant section in Chapter Five on details of colliery production in the nineteenth century and Chapter Six deals with the 13 fatal accidents at the colliery between 1846 and 1873. Chapter 10 deals with employment while Chapter Seven covers railways and waggonways but suffers from the lack of a map showing these ... copies of early OS maps are relegated to an Appendix.

Chapter Eight deals with the population of Whitwell Colliery in the Censuses up to 1901. This is supported by an Appendix on a head of households roll and details from Primitive Methodist Records in Chapter 11. Whitwell Colliery was little more than a hamlet with its highest population being in 1891 when 210 people lived there in 44 houses. Most of the miners lived at New Durham (now Dragonville) north of Sherburn Hospital.

Despite the small number of houses, Chapter Nine covers the state of housing in Whitwell. By the end of the nineteenth century this housing was in a very bad state and Durham Rural District Council's Inspector of Nuisances considered it "objectionable". This set in train numerous Health Reports which, in his conclusion, the author suggests resulted in limited and frustratingly slow action until a final closure order in 1930.

This a worthwhile book and Towan Hancock and his colleague, Jim Milburn, a retired mining engineer, are to be congratulated on all the research they have undertaken.

John Banham, Tudhoe.

Anne Orde (ed) : Publications of the Surtees Society Vol. 217.

Letters of John Buddle to Lord Londonderry 1820-1843

**Hardback - 447 pages, one coloured illustration, price £50.00.
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John Buddle (1773-1843), the greatest coalmining expert of his day, worked as a colliery *viewer* at a number of different collieries on the Tyne and Wear, including the then famous Wallsend Colliery, where he made his name. However, for over twenty years he also acted as colliery manager for one of the area's most powerful men, Charles Stewart, 3rd Marquess of Londonderry. Though his second wife's Vane-Tempest inheritance, Londonderry controlled large estates throughout County Durham including coal mines round Penshaw in North Durham and was also Lord Lieutenant of the County.

Buddle wrote more than 2,000 letters to his employer and these survive as part of the *Londonderry Papers* in Durham County Record Office. Most importantly the letters give a detailed, often day-to-day, account of the coal trade of the Tyne and Wear at a time when the highly competitive industry was expanding rapidly. However, Buddle was sufficiently confident in his dealings with his employer to write about Londonderry's always difficult financial affairs, his local political activities and the general condition of the region in a period of change. The letters reveal the sometimes troubled relationship between two very different men, one that came close to breaking-point in 1841, though the breach was repaired before Buddle's death in 1843.

Anne Orde, who is a retired Senior Lecturer in History from the University of Durham, has had to make important choices in selecting 192 letters to include in this volume. This is less than 10% of the correspondence, so the main issue for this review is whether the letters selected provide the reader with a clear idea of the significance of the overall correspondence. I expected that this judgment would have to be made in the absence of major biographies of either man, although both have useful entries in the *New Dictionary of National Biography*. However, Christine Hiskey's 1978 biographical study of Buddle has recently been published on-line and provides a most useful context for Dr Orde's book.¹

Based on Hiskey's dissertation and my own reading of Buddle's letters (albeit nearly 30 years ago), Dr Orde's introductory commentary does not sufficiently emphasise Buddle's business conflict with the Hetton Coal Company and its self-styled *manager and projector*, Arthur Mowbray. This is a pity since many of the key letters about this relationship have been printed in the selection,

¹ C.E.Hiskey, *John Buddle (1773-1843) : Agent and Entrepreneur in the North East Coal Trade*, University of Durham, M.Litt. Dissertation, 1978. http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/7452/1/7452_4517.PDF?UKUDh:CyT accessed 29 January 2014.

although some interesting letters at the turn of 1824/1825 have been omitted (when Buddle complained that dealing with Hetton prevented his attending to any other business for five months). Nevertheless, the selection covers enough to show the Hetton conflict to have been the driving force behind much of Buddle's dealings with Londonderry, affecting transactions with bankers such as Edward Backhouse and pushing forward the expensive Seaham Harbour project in the mid-1820s.

Reference to the successful development of Seaham Harbour is also largely missing from the book's *Introduction* although many of the letters cover it. In this project can be seen the best of Londonderry and Buddle's relationship. Evidence of this can be found in the *Durham Advertiser*, reporting on the Harbour's opening in November 1828 and quoting the Marquess' tribute to Buddle :

*I take great pleasure in declaring in the face of the country, that to my excellent friend and agent, Mr. Buddle, and to his talents and comprehensive mind, this project chiefly owes its present existence. To him I attribute the merit of launching me in this undertaking*²

Despite this reviewer's desire to see more interpretation of Buddle's letters and more work on the contexts they reveal, this book is an important addition to chronicling County Durham's history and the Surtees Society are to be congratulated on publishing it.

John Banham, Tudhoe.

² Quoted in Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry, *Frances Anne : The Life and times of Frances Anne Marchioness of Londonderry and her husband Charles Third Marquess of Londonderry*, 1958, p.157.