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EDITORIAL

I am delighted to present this second Journal of 2020, although I expect it will be early 2021 before you read this.

I appealed for articles about the role of women in Durham's history and I am pleased to say that I received a good response. Win Stokes has written about the importance of finding women's stories in diaries and letters, which are largely untapped resources in understanding our county's history. Local newspapers are another source of information which are becoming more commonly used, as digitisation makes it so much easier to find material. Eleanor Banks has used newspapers and a wide variety of other sources to good effect to tell the story of the women's suffrage movement in County Durham. Eleanor's article is one of two contributions we have received from Durham University students, the other being an analysis of the 1857 general election in the region by Freddie Hyde. I am grateful to Dr Richard Huzzey for encouraging students to submit their dissertation essays for publication and I applaud Eleanor and Freddie for their excellent pieces of work.

Sadly, we note in this Journal the passing of Jennifer Gill, County Archivist from 1989 to 2008 and a prominent member of our Society. Jennifer made an enormous contribution to the study of the county's history, particularly in preserving coalfield archives as the county's coal industry collapsed and disappeared. When I was a student in the mid-1990s Jennifer employed me as part of a small team which extracted mining records from a tightly-packed basement room at Redhills. Reading *The Great Labour Unrest* by Lewis Mates, a review of which I have included in this Journal, I realised that much of the primary material Dr Mates has consulted was taken out of that basement and deposited in the Archive under Jennifer's supervision.

John Banham has submitted some fascinating personal observations on the history of Spennymoor, marking the 50th anniversary of his association with the town. Finally, I am grateful to Tim Griffiths for digging out the lockdown measures introduced during outbreaks of the plague in Durham in the 17th century. They seemed strangely familiar.

I hope to get another Journal out in the Spring – as ever, your contributions are most welcome.

MARK EGAN
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