



# County Durham History & Heritage Forum

News from the Forum, Issue 8, December 2010

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Welcome to issue eight of the Forum's newsletter. This is a brief update before the New Year arrives. From 2011 the newsletter will be circulated in February, May, August and November so please keep your news coming in. Content can be emailed to [cdhhforum@googlemail.com](mailto:cdhhforum@googlemail.com).

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## News from the AGM

Popular local television personality John Grundy, in his role as President of the Forum, attended our first annual general meeting at Locomotion in Shildon, on Saturday, 20 November. Following the Chair's update on the work of the committee since the inaugural meeting in February there was an opportunity for some questions from the members about the forthcoming activities of the Forum. After the meeting John Addyman gave a talk on 'How they built them, early civil engineering in County Durham with particular reference to the railways.' The minutes will be circulated to members.

The Forum can be contacted at [www.durhamweb.org.uk/historyforum](http://www.durhamweb.org.uk/historyforum) or e-mail, [cdhhforum@googlemail.com](mailto:cdhhforum@googlemail.com)

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## Can you help?

Annfield Plain Family History Society has a new book by Fred Wade due out early in the New Year, However, they are looking for old Photos of the Bellingham area for the cover. Can you help? If so please contact John Milburn at [secretary@annfieldplain-fhs.co.uk](mailto:secretary@annfieldplain-fhs.co.uk)

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## Message from the North East War Memorials Project

The North East War Memorials Project is progressing, and have now recorded over 4,100 memorials between the Tweed and the Tees. We have recently opened an "In Memoriam" page so that people can place information on their relatives or others under their own name. It would help us considerably if Local History or Heritage Groups could keep an eye open for their memorials and to notify us of any building closures where a

war memorial might be in need of a new home. We are also seeking photos of the outsides of buildings, especially those which have been demolished or put to other use, such as churches and schools. We are very aware that there are people living abroad, or even in this country, who have no means of knowing where their ancestors worshipped and where a memorial bore their name, so we include photos of them where we can. We always acknowledge our sources and are happy to give talks on the subject of war memorials.

Janet Brown, Chair, North East War Memorials Project.

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### Darlington Library celebrates 125 years

Staff and customers at Darlington's Crown Street Library have been busy celebrating this year. The library's 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary fell on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October and special events were held to mark the occasion.



The library was opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1885, thirty-five years after the passing of the Public Libraries Act. Edward Pease (1834-1880), had been a great advocate of public libraries and in his will left £10,000 either for a free library or some other educational purpose. Prior to the opening of this library the only libraries in Darlington were small subscription libraries. Previous attempts to acquire a public library had met with opposition. Those in favour saw them as an open sanctuary, a source of self-education and improvement,

those against objected to the extra halfpenny or penny it would add to their rates and felt an unwillingness to provide a means of educating those they considered inferior.

Local architect G.G Hoskins was employed to design the building. The foundation stone was laid in 1884 and the library, completed in 1885, was a great source of pride in the town. Local newspaper the North Star reported, "no public library in England is more perfect as regards to its general arrangements and comfort facilities".

The opening of the Edward Pease Library was a momentous occasion. The Mayor requested that "shops and other places of business in the town be closed from 12 o'clock at noon, on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the day observed as a public holiday". Lady Lymington, daughter of Edward Pease, performed the opening ceremony. The Northern Echo stated " a free library.... is the most democratic agency of a democratic age. It caters for young and old, for student and idler. Its hospitable portals are open to all and its beneficent influence is felt by all".

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We hope, in future newsletters, to focus on the activities of members with updates on project both old and new. Getting to know more about your community and society, areas of research etc. Whilst we would like you to continue sending in your programme information these may be circulated as a separate item rather than within the newsletter. That way we can have a more 'newsy' newsletter. So...please let us have your news! Let's spread the word.

Finally, Best wishes for 2011. Let's hope it's not too snowy.

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Hon. President: Mr John Grundy. Chair: Dr Winifred Stokes