



County Durham History & Heritage Forum

News from the Forum, Issue 12, December 2011

As the year draws to a close we can look back at some of the activities which have occupied the Forum and committee over the last months. The committee continues to meet monthly at Beamish Museum to plan events and activities and to look at ways to continue the networking opportunities which the Forum hopes to provide for its members. Thanks must go to the staff of Beamish Museum, in particular Helen Barker, for providing us with a meeting room and refreshments.

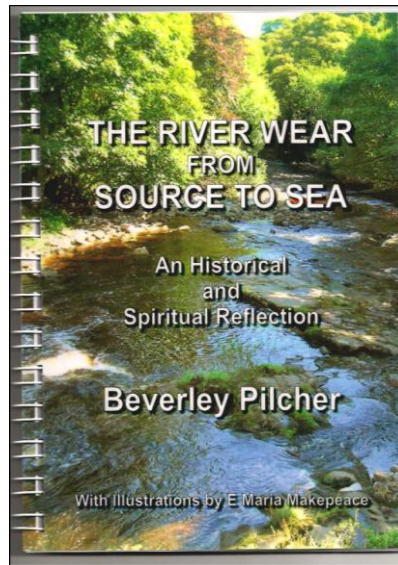
This year we attended 'Yesterday Belongs To You' at Locomotion with a stall to promote not only our own events but those of our members too. One such Forum event was the very successful Hardwick Park Family and History Awareness Day in June. The excellent weather helped to make this an enjoyable day out for all the family so, we plan to do it all again on Sunday 24th June, 2012. Please put the date in your diary. Further information will be available early in the New Year.

We had an excellent turnout for the AGM in November; thank you to everyone who made the journey to County Hall. The main speaker for the day was Suzanna Huber from the Northern Region Film and Television Archive (NRFTA). Suzanna gave a screening of excerpts from the BBC's Reel Histories DVD with some fascinating footage from around the County. It was interesting to hear attendees' comments on the films and very useful to the NRFTA to have extra bits of information to add to the records. NRFTA is the public moving image archive for the North East of England with over 36,000 hours of historical films and video which tell the stories of 20th Century life and work in County Durham, Tyne and Wear, Northumberland and the Tees Valley. Visit www.nrfta.org.uk for further information about the archive.

Looking forward into 2012 we would be interested to know if any members and groups are considering projects or events which the Forum could assist with. We are looking to develop ways in which the Forum can support member groups and individuals. How could the Forum be of help to you? Please let us know.

We would also like to hear about your events, stories and research for inclusion in forthcoming newsletters – this is a good opportunity to 'blow your own trumpet' and share with other Forum members your achievements. Contact details below. The next issue will be out in late February. Please send content through by **Friday 17 February**.

A New Local History Publication



Using seven significant places along the river Wear, this book considers the historical and spiritual significance of each location. It includes the influence of Methodism on the lives of lead miners high up in the Dales; Bishop Auckland and the Palace as a long forgotten seat of learning; the solitude and calm of Finchale Abbey and concludes in the industrial heart of the North East at the mouth of the Wear.

Each section contains a series of thoughts and meditations which enables the reader to take time to reflect on what they have read. Although it is a journey of 74 miles, the reader does not have to travel anywhere as the specially commissioned illustrations and thought provoking text provide material for both group discussion and consideration of one's individual spiritual journey. This book was launched at Sunderland Minster in mid November and is available from Beverley Pilcher, 23 Wilson Street, Barnard Castle, DL12 8JU Tel 01833 690663 or bpilcher@talk21.com. Cost £4 (£5 inc P&P)

Contact Us

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Forum please contact:

The Membership Secretary, c/o 22 Oaklea Mews, Aycliffe Village, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 6JP, or via email at cdhhforum@googlemail.com or on dlib333@btinternet.com

If you have items for the newsletter please send via email to the above address or

c/o 19 Aldin Grange Hall, Bearpark, Durham, DH7 7AR

The Committee meets monthly at in the Community Resource centre at Beamish Museum.



Heritage Open Days in County Durham 2012

My name is Ros Evans and I have recently been appointed as Heritage Outreach and Learning Officer for Durham County Council. I have just joined the History and Heritage Forum as an associate member, and am delighted to find such an interesting and committed group of people.

Part of my role (with funding from English Heritage) is to develop venues and increase participation in the Heritage Open Days, which for 2012 are on 6th – 9th September.

County Durham has such a rich heritage – and I am particularly interested in working with local groups to broaden the scope and appeal of the 4 day event.

So if you have an idea – an interesting building, an exhibition, a heritage trail, a story that should be told, etc. – please just get in touch with me.

If you usually participate in the Heritage Open Days, I would be pleased to talk to you about how you find the experience, and any support that would be useful.

You can contact me on heritageopendays@durham.gov.uk, or ring 0191 3834083 (I work part-time so will not always answer the phone, but a colleague will take a message).

Remember to keep 6th – 9th September free in your diaries for Heritage Open Days 2012

SUNDERLAND HISTORY FAIR - 2012

The 4th Sunderland History Fair will be held at the Seaburn Centre, Sunderland on Saturday 2nd June 2012.

Details will be available later.

For further information please email: Historyfair2012@uwclub.net or phone 0191 567 8887.



A History of Durham City Amateur Swimming and Water Polo Club



Durham City Amateur Swimming and Water Polo Club is Britain's second oldest swimming club. It was founded in 1861 at 36 Sadler Street in Durham City. Members swam in the Durham Baths and Washhouses, which had been built six years earlier in order to improve sanitation and public health in the city. Admittedly the water in the two 'ponds' would have looked dirty by today's standards due to the peat-lined floor and the lack of filtration.

Members also swam in the river Wear and held regular races. Their activities sometimes sparked off letters to the press about bathers 'in what was little better than the nude, deporting themselves in the water in an abominable manner and later scamping about the Race Course to save the expense of a towel. Young ladies dare not walk there.' These races continued well into the 1970s, with competitors swimming upstream from the Baths Bridge to the rowing club and back again. Special washing facilities were laid on for swimmers because they were usually covered in mud after this race!

In 1932 the Baths and Washhouses were replaced by Elvet Baths, which had two swimming pools, bathrooms, laundries and living quarters for the superintendent. The heat from the pool was diverted to heat the drying rooms and women supplemented their income by washing and drying other people's clothes.

Our oldest club member Ken Spirit and his wife remember swimming in the pools in the original baths and washhouses, and the excitement when the new pool opened. Ken taught himself to dive using the book he called his bible 'The Art of Springboard Diving' by F.W. Hobden. However the club had to wait several years until they could play water polo due to fears that the splendid stained glass window at the back of the building might be damaged.

After World War Two there was a period of intense activity and fundraising in order to enable the club to 'encourage the art of swimming in all its branches'. A copy of a letter written in 1948 by the club secretary to the council lists polite requests for improved foot-washing, diving and seating facilities, and an increase in pool temperatures from a chilly 50° degrees to a warmer 70°.

Ken Spirit won diving awards, including gold at the Northumberland and Durham Diving Championships. Another diving star was Charmian Welsh, also self-taught, who progressed from regional competitions to the Olympics during the 1950s.

In 1961 the club held its 100th anniversary dinner. In 1962 six members were awarded life membership for exceptional service to the club. This tradition of voluntary support from dedicated coaches and volunteers has continued over the years, and membership has mushroomed since a brand new pool, Freeman's Quay, opened in 2008.

The club has marked its 150th anniversary with the support of Durham County Council, which created a floral display depicting a swimmer. Additionally Durham County Council chairman

Dennis Morgan awarded Ken Spirit, Charmian Rawlings and the club Chairman's medals, and the Mayor of Durham presented the Junior League trophy.

Some things have not changed over the past 150 years – the camaraderie, commitment and continuity, with three generations of some families now involved. However there have not been any races in the river Wear for quite a few years!

Article by Lucy Smout Szablewska.

Lucy would love to hear from anyone who has any further information or stories relating to the Swimming Club and baths - e.mail : secretary@dcasc.org.uk

Below is some information sent to Lucy by the grandson of J.C. Bailey who competed in the Durham City Amateur Swimming Club Gala in July 1905. A copy of his programme is shown below.

J. C. Bailey, Sportsman, Dies at 69

QUALICUM BEACH [Canada] Funeral rites were held Tuesday for a prominent figure in community, sporting and army circles, J. C. Bailey, 69, who died Thursday in Veterans Hospital, Victoria.

The late Mr. Bailey had a distinguished career as an athlete, and served overseas in the First World War, winning the meritorious service medal and twice being mentioned in dispatches.

Born at Durham, England, in 1881 he became known as a swimmer of great promise at the age of 17, and held many trophies and prizes. He was second to the winner of the world's 500-yard record, held the swimming championship for the northern counties for 12 years and was also second in the mile swimming championship of England.' [source not known].

Forthcoming Events

Cleveland & Teesside Local History Society - Winter Programme 2011-2012

Saturday 11th February, 2012

Venue: The Dorman Museum, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough

10.00 - 11.00

Crazy Castle and The Demoniacs
Cleveland Hellfire Club

Speaker: Dr Tony Nicholson

11.30 - 12.30

Cleveland's Reaction to the Royal Divorce Scandal

Speaker: Prof. Malcolm Chase (Leeds University)

Saturday 24th March, 2012

Venue: Middlesbrough College, Dock Street, Middlesbrough

10.00 Annual General Meeting

10.15 – 11.15

Skelton Castle and the De Brus Family

Speaker: Dr Ruth Blakely

11.15 – 12.45

Snooping Snaps of North East Life
Speaker: Julian Harrop, Beamish Museum

Further information from [Cleveland & Teesside Local History Society](http://www.clevelandandteessidelocalhistorysociety.org.uk/)

Durham County Local History Society Talks

All talks are to be held at St.Giles parish hall, Gilesgate, Durham DH1 1QQ

Saturday 21 January, 2.00 pm

Speaker: Jenny Garnett

Saturday 18 February, 2.00 pm

The Life and Art of Viva Talbot (1900-1983)

Speaker: Dr Joan Heggie

Saturday 17th March, 2.00 pm

Researching the 70th Brigade

Speaker: John L Dixon

Further information at

<http://www.durhamweb.org.uk/dclhs/>

Durham County Vintage Collectors Society 2012 Vintage Rallies

Saturday 12 & Sunday 13 May

DCVCS Weardale Rally

Unthank Park, Stanhope, DL13 2PQ

Saturday 16 & Sunday 17 June

DCVCS Annual Rally

Mainsforth Sports Complex, Ferryhill Station
DL17 9AA

Saturday 6 & Sunday 7 October

DCVCS Autumn Rally

Croft WMC, Hurworth Place, Darlington

Public Admission:

Adults £2.50 Child 50p