

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project newsletter. The project has been incredibly busy this summer, with major events including the Open Evening at Whitley Chapel, the launch of our own "Ore'Some Ale" and of our new community play, "Carry on Mining ...Ore ". We have completed our archaeological programme at Dukesfield Arches and have begun work on access and viewing arrangements for visitors. How the site will eventually look, and the types of interpretation material on site and in the wider area covered by the project, are the subject of detailed planning at the moment. Attractive leaflets describing enjoyable and informative walks around the lead industry sites of Dukesfield and Allendale, and a circular cycle route between Dukesfield and Blaydon are nearly ready for publication. See more information on all this, and our usual listing of forthcoming events and volunteering opportunities below.

## Carry On Mining ... Ore



*(Left) A sales rep ( Siobhan McCauley) harangues Erasmus Rackett (David Nixon) and Mrs Weaumont (Lisa Berg).*

*Photos by Michael Elphick from the first performance.*



*The pony, Bugmug (Elizabeth Nixon) explains the team plan.*

The year is 1800 and something. Lead is the boom industry in the North East. The rich are getting richer; the miners are digging deeper; the carriers are carrying on carrying; and the ponies are essential in the 12 mile trudge from mine to smelting mill then the further 12 mile trudge on to Blaydon staithe with 'pigs' of smelted lead ore. That is the background to our new play, written and directed by David Nixon, featuring the company bosses Mrs Diana Weaumont and Mr Erasmus Rackett, the man in the middle, Isaac Blunter, various long-suffering smelters and miners, and narrated by an even more long-suffering Galloway Pony.

The play met a great reception at its first performance in Slaley Commemoration Hall on November 8th. The volunteer actors of On the Move Theatre put on an enthusiastic and hilarious performance, with the backstage support of Vicki Pepys who designed the costumes and who with the help of Elaine Oakley and Mandy Roberts put in countless hours of work making and fitting them. Mandy did sterling work as backstage dogsbody on the night ! Huge thanks to everyone who made this possible.

See page 4 for news of forthcoming performances at Blaydon. You can also watch a filmed clip - go to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-pnl9uSIYU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e-pnl9uSIYU)

## Ore'some Ale



Demand for Hexhamshire Brewery's superb Dukesfield brew - Ore'some Ale - has been keeping Steering Group member Gill Watmough busy ever since its launch by weather man Paul Mooney on October 2nd. Geoff Brooker has brewed a second batch, making a total of 180 gallons, and it has been sold in eleven pubs as far afield as Darlington and Alston. The Rose and Crown at Slaley has sold out twice. It also made an appearance at the Allendale Folk Festival, where it sold out on the first day. The project Open Evening at Whitley Chapel and the launch of Carry on Mining at Slaley introduced it to an even wider following. Geoff is considering a third brew in the new year.

## Whitley Chapel School at the Arches



On Monday, October 20th, first school pupils from Whitley Chapel and Slaley, accompanied by their head teachers, other staff and volunteer Pat Wilson headed to the arches. Their mission was to devise and test fun ways of finding out about the arches, so that these can be shared with other children via a downloadable clue leaflet.

They paced out distances to work out how far carriers would have walked from mines to arches; they found out what materials were used on site with a word quiz; they collected green colours to help them think how different the working site would have been 200 years ago; and they did a lot of counting exercises !

Watch out for the resulting leaflet in the New Year

## Smelters and Carriers Research

### THE SMELTERS SPEAK OUT

As the 'Reading the Past' transcription project continues, more documents are being discovered. Amongst the uncatalogued Allendale Estate papers, for example, are very interesting letters from two literate lead smelters to Colonel Beaumont, owner of Dukesfield, in the 1790s. They have been transcribed by project volunteers Jane Hughes and Diana Mulholland and are all on the same theme of trying to bring shoddy working practices to Col. Beaumont's attention. Two were written by William Armstrong of Catton saying that the smelters employed at the nearby Allen Mill wasted too much ore in the smelting process, thus increasing the final cost. This was partly because the hearths were run for too long at each blast, and getting too hot. Armstrong's first letter was written in April 1793, only a few months after Col and Mrs Beaumont inherited the business from her father Sir Thomas Blackett. The second was written in February 1795, just a week after a very similar letter from John Sparke. Sparke didn't name the Allen Mill directly, and said he was then at work refining lead on the Isle of Man, but it's hard to believe that he and Armstrong were not co-ordinating their efforts. Their motives are unclear. Armstrong asked the Colonel to keep his name out of any enquiry "as I am only a workman ... and if discovered would be a means of losing my bread". There was surely more to it than simply wanting to bring the "vast deficiency in years past" to Beaumont's attention as well-intentioned workmen anxious to "serve their Lordship". Armstrong appears not to have liked the then leaseholders of the mill (which we know from elsewhere were Anthony Hopper and George Brumell), and wished to encourage Beaumont to take the mill into his own hands. The Beaumonts did just that later the same year – and then greatly expanded in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It's great to have found some correspondence from the hands of smelters themselves – and they will be included in the online Reading the Past collection later in the project.

## News in Brief

### Project developments in the pipeline

**Pictures of the WB miners and carriers** users to what can still be seen of the smelters' and carriers' lives and work. They contain The Science Museum in London holds a beautiful maps and coloured illustrations and wonderful collection of contemporary coloured will be distributed widely, as well as being drawings of lead workers and carriers. It is clear available on the internet . Thanks are due to from internal evidence that they depict the Marcus Byron who has made such a splendid Blackett/Beaumont business - indeed a piece of job of designing them. lead shown on a cart is clearly marked with the

WB symbol ! The Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project has obtained provisional

permission from the Museum to publish the full cards, using pictures chosen from the beautiful set of illustrations (including some never seen artwork produced by participants in the project's before). **Watch out for further news.**

#### **Walks and Cycle Route Leaflets**

We will soon be publishing three leaflets the Dukesfield site and other legacies of the describing

#### **Greetings cards**

We have produced a set of five art greeting cards, using pictures chosen from the beautiful set of illustrations (including some never seen artwork produced by participants in the project's before).

various painting and printing workshops. They will be going on sale shortly and the proceeds will contribute to the long-term management of

circular walks centred on Dukesfield project. **They will be on sale at the** and Allendale, and a cyclists' circuit between **Hexhamshire Xmas Fair at Whitley Chapel** Dukesfield and Blaydon, aimed at introducing **Parish Hall on Nov. 22nd**

## Get involved .....

Thanks to all you diggers, walkers, cyclists, creatives, actors, researchers and organisers the project has been helped to success with more than 1000 volunteer days! And we still have over three months to go.

### Carry On Mining...Ore

If the opening performance of Carry On Mining...Ore has left you keen for stardom yourself, there is still time to grab an acting part! We expect the play to tour in the New Year and the cast we can call on needs expanding. There are also backstage volunteers needed. Just email Mandy at [dukesfield@outlook.com](mailto:dukesfield@outlook.com) or talk directly to David Nixon.

### Touring exhibition

So much new research has been unearthed through the project, and there are so many interesting stories to tell that we are compiling an exhibition to visit places along the lead road and beyond.

## STOP PRESS ....

### Carry on Mining at Path Head Watermill

There will be two daytime performances of our play at the fascinating Path Head Watermill, Blaydon, on Sunday December 6th : 12.30 pm and 2pm. A Tour of the mill is included in the ticket price

**Early booking is recommended** - telephone 0191 4146288, email [pathheadmill@aol.com](mailto:pathheadmill@aol.com), or Mandy at [dukesfield@outlook.com](mailto:dukesfield@outlook.com) or in person at the mill : Summerhill, Blaydon, NE21 4SP - follow the brown heritage signs from the A695 onto the B6317 at Blaydon



The Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project, is led by the Friends of the North Pennines in partnership with Hexhamshire and Slaley Parish Councils and has the active support of the landowner, Allendale Estates. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the generous support of other sponsors.  
Friends of the North Pennines: Charity No: 1137467



Help is needed now to collate material, and we will need volunteers to help move the exhibition around and man it from March 2015. Use the Dukesfield email to offer your time.