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DUKESFIELD

Smelters and Carriers Project

Bulletin 6 : Winter 2014-15



Welcome to the winter edition of the Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project newsletter. The project ends in June, and we have news of our plans for the Dukesfield site, for creating permanent interpretation material relating our project to the wider area, and much more.

Later in the Bulletin

Footpads

Spare a thought for the Mine Stewards who had to carry the money for the miners pays on the final stage of its journey along the lonely country roads of the high Pennine moors. In the 18th century you never knew who you might meet on the way!

see Mike Powell's article on Page 2

Dukesfield site works

Read about what is happening to the Dukesfield site now the archaeological investigation is over
See Page 3

Volunteering

There are archaeological opportunities in the Allen Valleys

see Page 4

Storytelling by Candlelight

In the lead smelting days families gathered iafter work around someone's fireside for storytelling, known as "Tom Trot" . We will be re-enacting this pastime in April - a special treat for children of all ages.

See page 3

Learning for children outside the classroom - Fun for children exploring the lead industry becomes an important teaching resource - *see Page 3*





Smelters and Carriers Research OF FOOTPADS AND HIGHWAYMEN

by Mike Powell, Reading the Past Group

So much is said and written about the hazardous working conditions faced by the miners and smelters who were employed by the Blackett-Beaumont lead company that we can be forgiven for overlooking the fact that being a lead company owner or steward could also be a dangerous occupation. Business correspondence transcribed by members of the 'Reading the Past' group has uncovered some illuminating examples of this.

In the 18th century the company's miners in Allendale, Coalcleugh and Weardale received payment annually for the ore they won from the mines. In between these 'great pays', they received small subsistence payments to keep themselves, and their families, going. This system was convenient for the owners in terms of cash flow as it gave them time to process, transport and sell the lead before they were obliged to pay the miners. On the downside, it meant that when a great pay was approaching the company had to lay its hands on large quantities of cash, which then had to be taken out to the mines by the stewards. Amassing sufficient cash for a pay was always a headache of significant proportions for the Beaumonts and their Chief Steward, John Erasmus Blackett, in Newcastle.

In a letter of 22nd April 1793 Blackett wrote to Col. T.R. Beaumont about how they were going to lay their hands on £43,300 in cash in order to make the next pay due in May. Blackett had succeeded in securing £30,000 in cash and notes from the company's bankers but the balance of £13,300 was to be delivered to Newcastle in person by the Colonel in gold and silver coin. This appears to have been a common arrangement as the miners were somewhat suspicious of bank notes and preferred to receive a proportion of their pay in hard currency. In the days before Securicor and Group 4 this was not an undertaking to be approached lightly. In a personal note at the end of the letter Blackett recounted the cautionary tale of Mr Rowland Burdon, a Newcastle banker, who a few weeks earlier was transporting a large quantity of cash in a post chaise through Oxfordshire when he was 'attacked on the road ... by three foot pads'. He had succeeded in fighting off the highwaymen before they discovered the large cash consignment he was carrying. Blackett concluded his note by saying '*I mention this to you that you may be very well arm'd and to be cautious how you travel late at night. I wish you safe travel down.*'

The 'Oxford Journal' of 18th May 1793 confirms this story. One John Wiltshire appeared in court, 'charged on suspicion of having committed several footpad and highway robberies', one of which was that upon Mr Burdon: '*Mr. Burdon said, that between the hours of one and two o'clock, on 17th April last, he was stopped in a post chaise, in which was his servant also, by three footpads, one of whom opened his chaise door, and presented a pistol at him; he immediately drew a couteau, with which he made a blow at the robber, but the fellow jumped back, avoided the blow, and snapped his pistol at him. Mr. Burdon turned round, and found that his servant had been dragged out at the opposite side of the chaise, and a man, who he believes to be the prisoner, jumped in, and after some scuffle with him, in which he wounded the footpad, the fellow pinioned down his arms, and rifled his pockets, from whence he took 25 guineas, and a gold watch.*'

Col. Beaumont was not the only person in the lead company who travelled armed when carrying cash. An entry in the company's account journals for 1787 reads:

'Pd Jno Knubley for Pistols for the Lead Stewards £16-10-6

Pd William Nicholson for Holsters &c for the Lead Stewards £6-14-0'

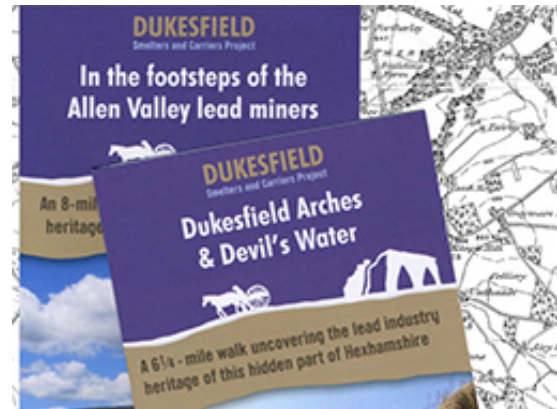
(My thanks to Ian Forbes who tracked down the 'Oxford Journal' report in the British Newspaper Archive and to Ian Hancock for information from the lead company account journals.)

Geoff Brooker - Hexhamshire Brewery

We were all saddened to hear of the loss of Geoff in January. The roaring success of the Ore'some Ale he brewed for the project began from a discussion over the bar of his Dipton Mill Inn, and we are grateful that we had the chance to enjoy working with him. Our best wishes go to his family and friends. Rest in peace, Geoff

Walks and Cycle Routes

We have now published our first two walks leaflets - one around the smelting mill at Dukesfield and another along the carriers' routes in the Allen Valleys. These will soon be followed by a third walk, round Blaydon where the lead refinery was, and a cycle route which follows some of the western carriers' routes.



Interpretation and Dukesfield Site Works

All the consolidation and conservation works on the arches, leat, chimneys and wheelpit have been completed. We're just waiting to finish off any frost damage. We've put in a few steps and stepping stones to make it easier for people to get up close to the chimneys. We plan to put three interpretation panels on the Dukesfield site: a general one by the main track, one next to the mill leat to demonstrate how the mill was powered, and the final one up at the chimneys which will explain the smelting process.

We are also planning an interpretation panel next to the Keelman's Way by the site of the Blaydon Refinery, showing what Blaydon village was like around the time the railway was being built from Hexham. Up in the hills we are commissioning milestones to mark the routes the ore carriers took and the long distances they had to travel over the moors, one for the Black Way at Sinderhope and one for Killhope Lead Mining Museum.





Visitors on the arches open day in July were able to see the last stages of the archaeological dig, at the leat, where the exciting remains of early timber walling were discovered (see above). The dig is now finished.

Legacy Website

We are busy developing our legacy website. It will include photographs and information about the lead industry and the project and help everyone to discover more through leaflets and maps. It will also host a searchable database of all the archives our Reading the Past volunteers have been busy transcribing, so you too can read some of the stories that inspired Carry on Mining...Ore.

Storytelling by Candlelight

An exciting and unique adventure for children - bring your parents or grandparents and warm clothes to Dukesfield Arches.

There will be real fires, out in the dark, with funny stories, maybe sad poems and the chance to make up new ones.

The lead workers would have made toffee on the fire, but we will have a chocolate fountain and fresh fruit.

Saturday, April 11th, 6.00 pm - bring a seat, a candle or torch and, most importantly, your imagination.

Get involved

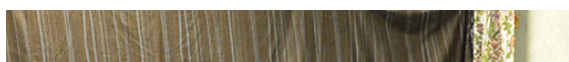
Our friends at the Allen Valley Landscape Partnership have asked us to invite you to help with their site restoration and archaeology digs at the former Allen Smelt Mill in Allendale, which succeeded Dukesfield during the 19th Century as the transport into the valleys improved.

They have the following opportunities :

- Help to clear away the vegetation covering two of the smelt mill furnaces to reveal the structure underneath
- Opportunities to get involved with investigating the archaeology of the site
- All tools and training provided. Warm waterproof clothes and sturdy footwear are required

They need volunteers to help with this work - dates to follow. If you would like to get involved please contact Fiona Knox on 01434 683517 or email fionak@northpenninesaonb.org.uk

The Allen Valleys Landscape Partnership Scheme is an initiative of the North Pennines AONB Partnership.



STOP PRESS



Carry on Mining...Ore

David Nixon's troupe of players will be performing Carry on Mining...Ore at Whitley Chapel Parish Hall on Friday 20th February at 7.30pm (Bar 7.00pm). Ticket price £5 to include free admission for accompanied children, proceeds to support the Parish Hall funds.

Our final performance is in the Allen Valleys at High Forest Community Centre, Sinderhope, on March 21, 7.30 pm. Tickets £5 (buffet supper included) from Allendale Co-op or Robert Philipson (01434 685266)



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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



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