

#### Project background

The Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project is a two year project principally funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund which will:

- reveal, consolidate and conserve the remains of the 18th century lead smelting mill on the banks of the Devil's Water river in Hexhamshire;
- tap into voluntary enthusiasm to participate in a range of conservation and heritage activities centred on the site remains, and to research the lives of those who worked there and along the lead corridor between the North Pennines and Blaydon;
- stimulate the exploration and understanding of the area and its past through innovative interpretation and educational resources and events.

One aspect of the project is to explore the documentary history of the Dukesfield lead smelt mill, the smelters who worked there, the carriers who supplied it, and the wider network of the business it formed part of, from the Pennines to Blaydon. This is our 'Reading the Past' project, which is planned to run between autumn 2013 and winter 2014-5.

A pilot project was carried out in 2012 which identified a range of relevant documents from various record offices and established the feasibility of people transcribing documents where and when they want and placing the end product in shared internet storage using 'dropbox'. The material transcribed then and since will be available to project team members to browse.

#### Objectives

Through 'Reading the Past' we want to:

- help develop skills of using historic documentary records
- transcribe a variety of material centred on Dukesfield and its network
- make it available in searchable form to provide a research database on the industry and the people who worked in it
- answer some specific questions and collect others
- have fun doing it as part of a team helping each other.

#### End products

We have three broad end products in mind as we set out, though we do not rule out moving in a different direction if particular findings take us there as the project develops. For now though, they are:

##### 1) Transcribed letters, reports, accounts and other correspondence

An online searchable collection of contemporary letters and reports, and various financial accounts. This will be of immense value to the project and future researchers by making material available from a variety of sources. This will be hosted on our project website in due course. The head of Northumberland Archives is keen on having a direct link from their catalogue of the letters in their care through to our transcripts.

##### 2) A 'people database'

Records of named smelters, refiners, carriers, agents, miners and others who worked in the lead industry which might help us and others in the future learn more about the people upon whose hard work the industry developed to become such an important part of the regional and national economy. It might, for example, help us to determine whether lead smelters lived shorter lives than others because of the years they spent in close proximity to lead fumes.

### 3) Your own curiosity satisfied!

Experience to date suggests that it is very easy –and fascinating- to get drawn into the lives of the people mentioned in the letters, or the particulars of certain incidents, disputes or themes emerging about the way the industry operated. We very much want to encourage project participants to follow their own interests and to draw out stories that catch the imagination.

## The Documents

Records have been tracked down in various archive collections and copies obtained to make them available to the project. The sources from which they have been drawn include Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museum, The National Archives, North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, Durham University Library, Cambridge University Library, and the Cumbria Record Office. They range in date from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, roughly equating to the period of the operation of the Dukesfield mill and the main period of the prosperity of the lead business run by the Blacketts and then Beaumonts. Various copies of parish registers are more accessible in various libraries throughout the district.

Some of this material has already been made transcribed (see 'What We Already Have', below.) The main collections now available for transcription are as follows. The master list is available in the Reference Material dropbox folder as 'Reading the Past – Document Control List'.

Source	Description	Format	Use for
Woodhorn	British Museum copy: chief agent letter book, 1730-4	paper	
Woodhorn	Allendale Estate: business accounts, 1727-1840	Digital-CD	
Woodhorn	Allendale Estate: chief agent letter books, 1754-1800, 1809-34	Digital-CD	
Tyne & Wear	Allendale Estate: chief agent letter books, 1800-08	Digital-CD	
Cambridge UL	Michael Blackett letter book, 1675-7	Digital-CD	
Woodhorn	Blackett/Matfen: letters to John Erasmus Blackett, 1792-9	Paper	
Woodhorn	Blackett/Matfen: letters from Mrs. Beaumont, 1793-1804	Paper	
Woodhorn	Blackett/Matfen: Winlton manor rental 1670s	Paper	
Tyne & Wear	Hughes papers: Winlton manor rental 1759-60	Digital	
Woodhorn	Allendale Estate: reports on mines & mills 1806-7	Digital-CD	
Nat Archives	Exchequer Court case – Blaydon/Greenside lead road 1690	Digital-CD	
Nat Archives	Letters from Greenwich Hospital commissioners/ 1735-7	Digital-CD	
Cumbria RO	Various lead smelting & carriage accounts 1785-1807	Digital-CD	

**Parish register transcripts** for Hexham & Whitley Chapel (in book form) and Slaley (microfiche) for mentions of smelters by name. More occupational detail are provided after 1813. Whitley Chapel records started in 1764, before which details for the Shire are included in the Hexham registers. All land to the east of the Devil's Water, ie. including Dukesfield, then lay within Slaley parish. Transcripts are available in Hexham Library. Allendale register transcripts are in Newcastle City Library.

Whitley Chapel burial records: H. Kristensen, *Whitley St.Helen's Churchyard, Hexhamshire*, (Wagtail Books, 2003)

Ryton registers. A brief look at the published marriage registers 1581-1812 do not indicate that any occupational details were taken for individuals (J. Baily, *The Registers of Ryton, Marriages 1581-1812*, (Sunderland, 1902) –now available online at <http://archive.org/details/theregistersofry00ryto>

## What we have already transcribed

This is a collaborative project. In this spirit we make available to all project team members' material already transcribed for you to browse. These are the draft transcripts, and not yet subject to checking by a second pair of eyes so we cannot guarantee that every word has been accurately transcribed. They are shared now for information, and will eventually be presented in a different format, along with the transcriptions to come from this project.

If you end up using any of it in your own research and writing (and we actively encourage this!) all we ask is that you acknowledge both the original source material (location and reference), the Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers project and the transcriber's name – which you will find at the head of each document.

Transcribed material has been organised as follows:

- 1 **Letters** – consolidated files of transcribed letters, mostly taken from the long series of letter books containing office copies of letters sent out by the chief agents of the Blackett business. This is the core series covering the running of the business, the mines, ore and lead carriage, the smelt mills and refineries, and lead sales. They also contain much on other aspects of the management of the Blackett landed estate, leases, sales and purchases and much else on the family's household, and comment on current affairs in the region and nationally. Ideally we'd like to complete the transcription of the full series of letters. This folder also contains two small collections – letters from Francis Bowes to William Blackett in 1675 and from Isaac Hunter of Dukesfield to the chief agent John Erasmus Blackett in the 1790s
- 2 **Business Accounts** – a few isolated summary accounts of costs and production, and tables for individual years drawn from the main series of Blackett business ledgers
- 3 **Wills and inventories** – relating to individuals in the Dukesfield / Hexhamshire area in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, some of whom are known to have had lead industry connections
- 4 **Miscellaneous** – a variety of individual documents drawn from various sources
- 5 **Personal details listings** – listings created from individual sources. These will be added to as new work is carried out and ultimately they will be combined into our planned people database.

## Project Approach

We will have periodic meetings – share ideas/ questions, debate topics, hopefully with invited experts from time to time, but the project has been designed to enable everyone to work when and where they want, and to do as much as they want in a distributed fashion. Use of your own computer or access to one, and internet-based shared project filestore – Dropbox – let's us do this.

### 1) Setting up dropbox

Eventually we will create a project website through which we can hold and manage the material we create but in the meantime 'Dropbox' provides what we need, simply and easily. For those of you who are not familiar with it already, take a look at [www.dropbox.com/gs](http://www.dropbox.com/gs) .

You will receive an email invitation to register on Dropbox (it's free!) and will be granted access to our master folder, called 'Dukesfield - Reading the Past'. Dropbox usually creates a local version of this folder on your own computer. Because of this we have tried to keep the overall size of the folder small (currently around 50Mb in total). It therefore contains mainly of text files and no large images of original records. Please also be aware that when you change a document WITHIN your local copy of the dropbox folder it changes it for everyone. To minimise the risk of this affecting reference material that should not be changed, such documents are presented as PDFs rather than as Microsoft Word documents.

Your local copy is normally found as a new folder 'Dropbox' under Favourites within Windows Explorer. Opening this should show you the 'Dukesfield - Reading the Past' folder and sub-folders within it.

### 2) Dukesfield - Reading the Past dropbox folder

This contains the following sub-folders:

1. **Reference Material.** This contains
  - a. This 'Getting Started' guide, Editing Conventions, and the Document Control List - central list of documents either out for transcription & with whom, or available to be taken. Check for new versions from time to time (indicated by v2 etc in the filename). These will replace previous versions in the dropbox folder
  - b. Support material - handwriting guides & example letters from our main correspondents
  - c. a glossary of commonly used terms
  - d. lead industry bibliographies
2. **Templates** - documents to be used to collect information

3. **Transcript uploads.** This is where you place completed document transcripts, and will find transcripts completed by other project team members, which you are welcome to take a look at.
4. **Queries and theories.** Hopefully we will get together from time to time to compare notes and progress, but this folder has also been created to allow anyone on the project to place files with questions or ideas and theories about what was going on and what people were up to. One of these files (glossary requests) is intended for you to add obscure words that you would like to see explained and added to the main glossary held in 'Reference Material'.
5. **Already transcribed.** This contains sub-folders to distinguish between different types of document as described in the section above

### 3) Transcription

Paper copies or digital JPEG images of documents are available to take away to read and transcribe.

It is important that documents are transcribed into a consistent searchable format to support later research and become an accessible body of material for those who want to use it in the future. So however you prefer to transcribe material we ultimately need to get the transcripts into MS Word format!

Irrespective of whether the documents are on paper or digital images it would help if they could all be transcribed into a standard form using one of the Microsoft Word templates. Please copy one each of these from the Reference Material dropbox folder to somewhere else in your own PC to use as your own template for transcripts.

1. For most documents 'document record template 2014' will be suitable. This is pretty much a free format Word document apart from having standard file naming/document ID

For each new document you transcribe please save the template on your own PC under a new filename consisting the following elements, which will make it easier for us to manage the incoming files of transcribed primary source material:

<b>Archive source</b>	ie. record office or other location – this is indicated on the file reference or document control form	3 letter abbreviation – one of the following Cambridge – CUL Cumbria RO – CRO Durham – DUL Woodhorn – NRO Tyne & Wear – TWA National Archives – TNA Parish registers – PR Then add Hexham – H Ryton - R Slaley - S Whitley - W
<b>Archive reference</b>	The reference by which the original archive can retrieve the original document	Varies based on system used. Replace slashes in original with hyphens eg. 672/E/1 should be given as 672-E-1
<b>Dates (start and end –if more than one)</b>	This will help us sort multiple files of the same type into date order. If a single file contains a range of dates give the earliest then the latest	If month is included as well as year always give the year first eg. 1770 Apr
<b>Document type</b>	To distinguish different types of material being collected	Use 'Letters' or 'Will'
<b>Further descriptor if desired</b>	Such as to identify an individual person to whom the document relates	

#### Examples

'NRO 672-E-1E-6 1815 to 1819 Letters.doc'

'NRO ZBL-209 1796 to 1799 Letters Wilkinson to Blackett.doc'

'DUL DPRI-1763-R-12-1 1763 Will Richmond.doc'  
'CUL MS Add 91 1676 May to August Letters.doc'

Please make sure there are spaces between each element of the filename.

There might occasionally be transcripts made of secondary sources, in which case the file should be named based on the author, title and year of publication, adding 'Extract' if necessary.

Save all word files as 'Word 97 – 2003' documents (ie. with the '.doc' suffix rather than '.docx')

Within the document please complete the fields at the top, so that we can identify (and credit!) you for the work carried out.

Document name/description:	eg. Will Joseph RICHMOND
Document date (s):	eg. 1763
Source location and reference:	eg. Durham DPRI/1/1763/R/12/1
Transcriber:	your name
Date:	today's date

If you are working on a long series of documents, such as a sequential part of the series of agents letters it will be more manageable to include several in a single Word file rather than a separate file for each. The length of these you should judge for yourself, but should normally be no longer than 10 pages. Please distinguish each letter from others in the same transcript document by copying and then completing the header block which consists of the curly brackets. Each bit should be completed as follows:

{{From}} forename and surname of the writer  
{{To}} forename and surname where known, or title and surname, or business name (eg. 'Messrs Plumb & Brown')  
{{Date dd/mmm/yyyy}} ie. use familiar three letter abbreviations for month, or enter only those parts of the date given, or, if none, enter unknown  
{{Notes}} if you wish to add any of your own notes about the document or correspondents, put them here. They can be multiple lines of text  
{{Begin}}  
place all transcribed text, including dates, names etc. as written, between these two markers  
{{End}}

Example:

```
-----  
{{From}} Joseph Richmond  
{{To}} John Bacon  
{{Date dd/mmm/yyyy }} 3 Jul 1730  
{{Notes}} The Bacon family shared the partnership mines in Weardale with Blackett  
{{Begin}}  
To Jno Bacon Esq                      Newcastle 3 July 1730  
Sr, I am D[e]btor to yours of the 23d ult & am sorry thereby to find we differ so much in  
our Opinion of the present value of your Wessonhope oar lead, I heartily wish you may  
get £18 10s 0d for it but am well assured that he who now gives it will find his Mistake; I  
should be very Glad to conclude a Bargain with you ready to give you as much as any  
other can afford but cannot accept of it on the Terms you expect  
I am with best Respects              Sr              your &c              JR  
{{End}}  
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```

A further guide, Editing Conventions, is also available in the Reference Material Dropbox folder. We don't want to be too restrictive, but some recommended guidelines are included here for how to deal with common queries arising from the material you're looking at, or how to deal with words or phrases you simply can't make out.

If the transcript is an extract from a secondary source already published, please give the full publication details and relevant page numbers instead.

2. If you are working from parish registers or other listings of people, the '[personal details record template](#)' has a table format which will make it easier to consolidate material from various sources in future. See the examples already filed in 'What we have already transcribed/ Personal Details listings'.
3. Annual accounts template (Excel spreadsheet). Use this if you wish to compile a table for any one calendar year from the Blckett business account records.

### Handwriting guidance

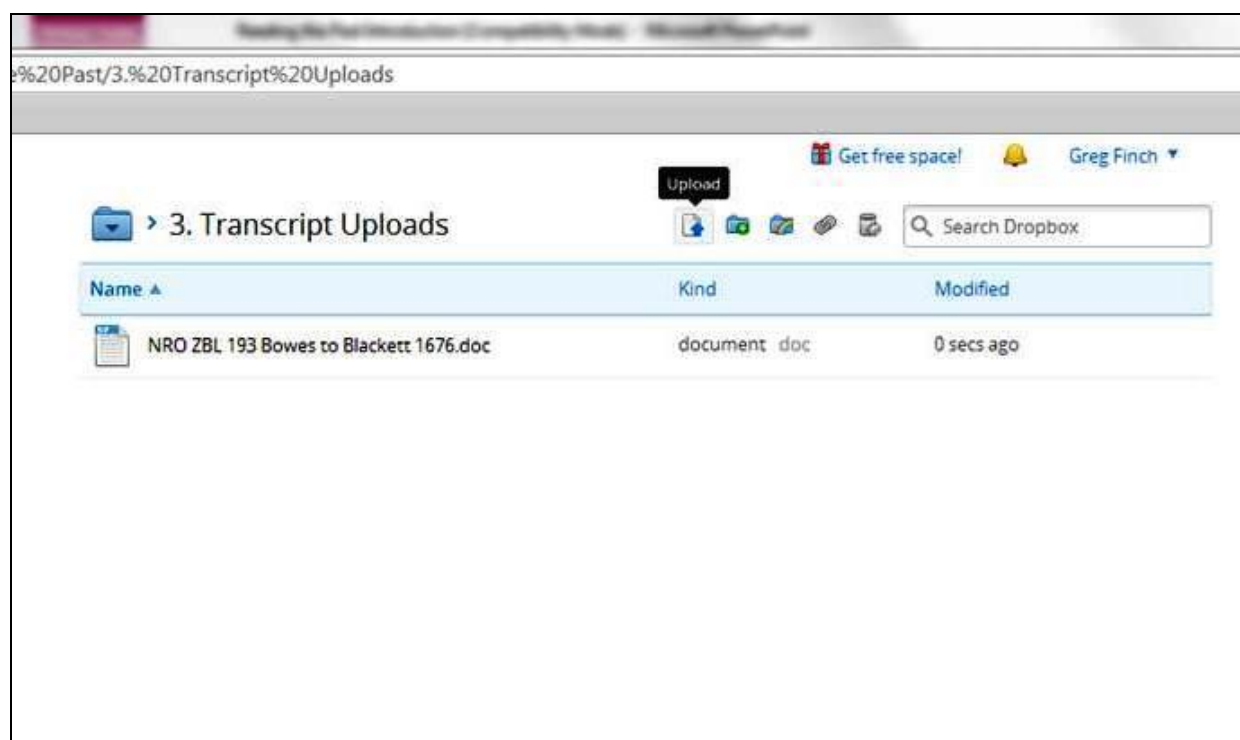
In addition to direct guidance and support to each other on reading the original material, here are a few other resources that might be helpful:

- The file 'Reading the Past - Example letters.' This contains example images of the writing of several of the main correspondents or other typical contemporary styles, together with a transcript of the piece, and some background information on the writer and other relevant context.
- the file 'Tudor Stuart Handwriting Guide.pdf' which can be downloaded from the Reference Material folder in Dropbox. These are pages extracted from Munby, Hobbs and Crosby, *Reading Tudor and Stuart Handwriting*, published by the British Association for Local History, 2003.
- The National Archives has a useful tutorial on reading the handwriting found in documents written in English between 1500 and 1800.  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/palaeography/>

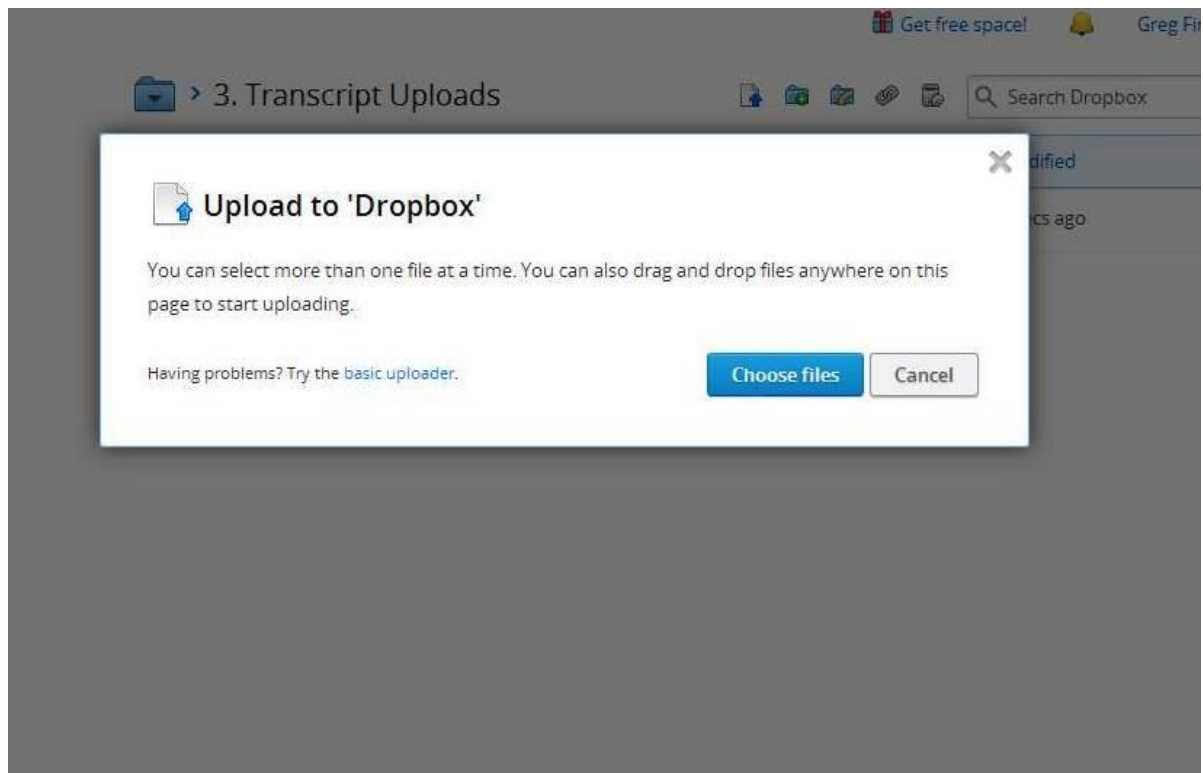
### **4) Uploading finished documents**

When you have finished a document or series of documents, or feel you've done as much as you can, please upload a copy of the file or files into the Transcript Uploads folder on Dropbox. To do this:

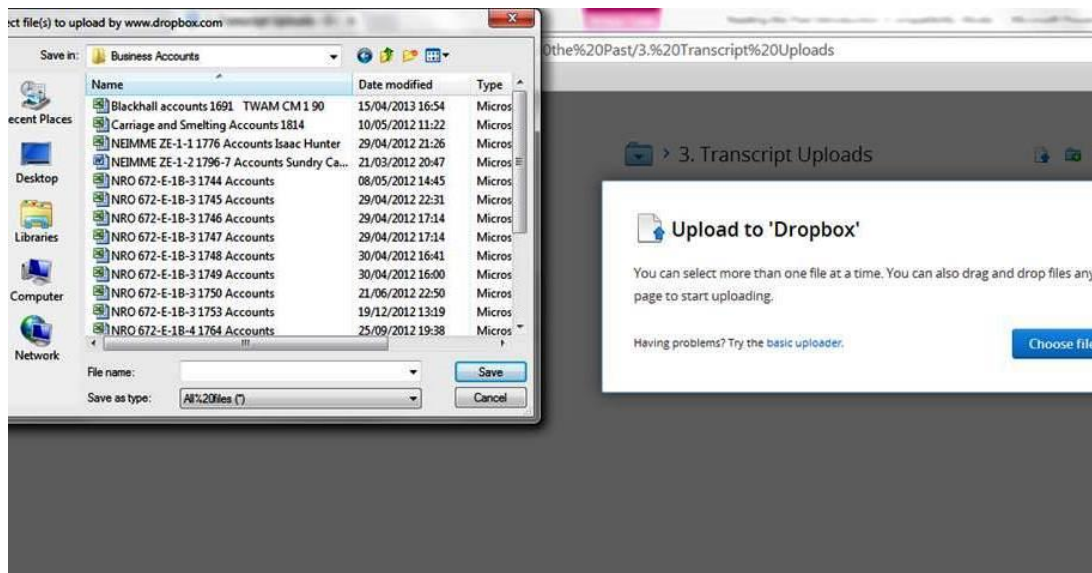
1. Log on to dropbox online using your ID and password
2. Go to the Transcript Uploads folder within the 'Reading the Past' master folder
3. Click on the button near the top of the screen (it's just along to the right of where it says 'Transcript Uploads', and looks like a document with a blue upwards arrow in it)



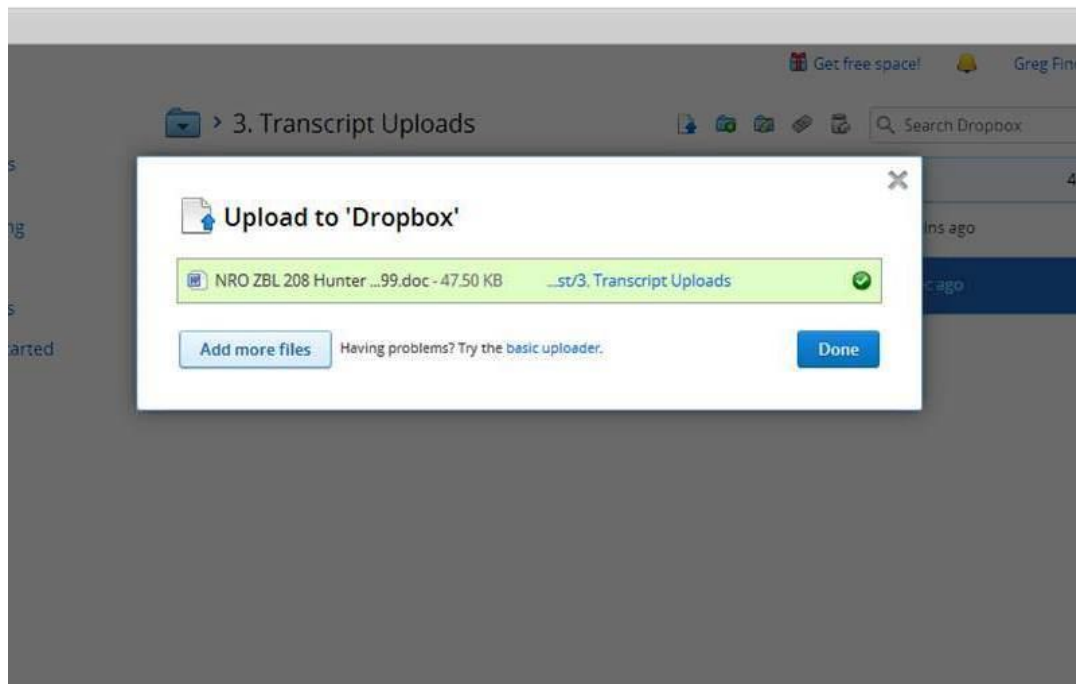
4. Select the 'Choose files' option that comes up



5. Navigate to the place on your PC where the document(s) lie. Highlight the document and select the 'Open' option



- Dropbox will confirm the upload and ask if you want to upload any more. Either repeat the process or select 'Done' and exit the upload process.



## 5) Recording your time

Under the terms of our grant, the Heritage Lottery Fund expects us to contribute volunteer effort alongside their cash. Our 'Reading the Past' project is a key part of this, and we want to demonstrate to the HLF the contribution that everyone makes (although individual privacy will be respected). Please therefore:

- keep a record of the time you spend on the project (approx hours will do; doesn't need to be exact, nor do we need to know how many hours on each day, start/end times)
- Send a simple email each month to [gregpfinch@hotmail.com](mailto:gregpfinch@hotmail.com) with the approx total hours.
- There is a project timesheet which you can use if you want to – a copy can be found in the 'Templates' folder - but a simple monthly total is fine



## Further Reading

### Historic background

N. McCord, *North East England, The Region's Development 1760-1960*, (Batsford, 1979)  
Chapter One contains a good general introduction

E.T.Hughes, *North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1952)  
An excellent account of the economic and social life of the Northeast merchants and gentry who influenced much of the development of the region in this period

### Lead Industry

Stafford Linsley *The Life and Times of Thomas Dixon 1805-1871*, (Wagtail Press, 2006)  
Edited diary of one of the last lead smelters at Dukesfield, well illustrated, with much explanatory commentary on the family, social life and smelting process

B.P.Wilkinson, 'Leadmining Families – The Westgarths and the Forsters, in Chambers (ed) *Out of the Pennines*, (Friends of Killhope Museum, 1997)  
A detailed study of these families of renowned North Pennine lead mining and mill agents of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, which includes a number of references to Dukesfield

I. Forbes, B. Young, D. Crossley, & L. Hehir, *Lead Mining Landscapes of the North Pennines*, (Durham County Council, 2004)  
High quality, well-illustrated and readable survey of the impact of the lead industry – mining, carrying, smelting – on the North Pennines landscape.

A. Raistrick & B. Jennings, *A History of Lead Mining in the Pennines*, (Longman, 1965)  
Classic history of the industry throughout the North of England

C.J. Hunt, *The Lead miners of the Northern Pennines in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries* (Manchester Univ Press, 1970)  
Good academic study of the industry in our region, using records of both the London lead Company and the Blakett & Beaumont business. Deals mainly with mining, but also some coverage of smelting and carrying

M.Hughes, *Lead, Land, and Coal as sources of Landlord Income in Northumberland between 1700 and 1850*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Durham, (1963)  
Includes a detailed account of the lead business of the Blacketts and the Greenwich Hospital and much statistical detail from the Blakett papers. A table of lead production data created by Hughes is extracted into a spreadsheet that can be downloaded from the 'reference material' folder. Thesis is available to download from <https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/dspace/handle/10443/490>

A.Blackburn, 'Life on the Lead Ways', in Chambers, B. (Ed.) *Men, Mines and Minerals of the North Pennines* (Friends of Killhope, 1992)  
A detailed study of ore and lead carriage within the Blakett business, and therefore touching directly upon the traffic in and out of Dukesfield.

D Williams et al *An Archaeological Assessment of Lead, Zinc and Silver Mining and Smelting in England*  
Created recently by the National Association of Mining History Organisations & available online from <http://www.vmine.net/namho-2010/research.asp>. A copy is also available for download in the reference material folder in the Dukesfield Dropbox

R.A.Fairbairn, *Allendale Tynedale and Derwent Lead Mines*, (British Mining, Vol 65, 2000)  
A recent survey of mines in our part of the North Pennines lead mining zone, with a focus on mining but some information on smelting mills

For further published material see  
'Lead Industry Bibliography NAMHO' - exhaustive further references organised by county  
'Lead Industry Bibliography – Stafford Linsley'

Copies of both are available in the Reference Material folder in Dropbox