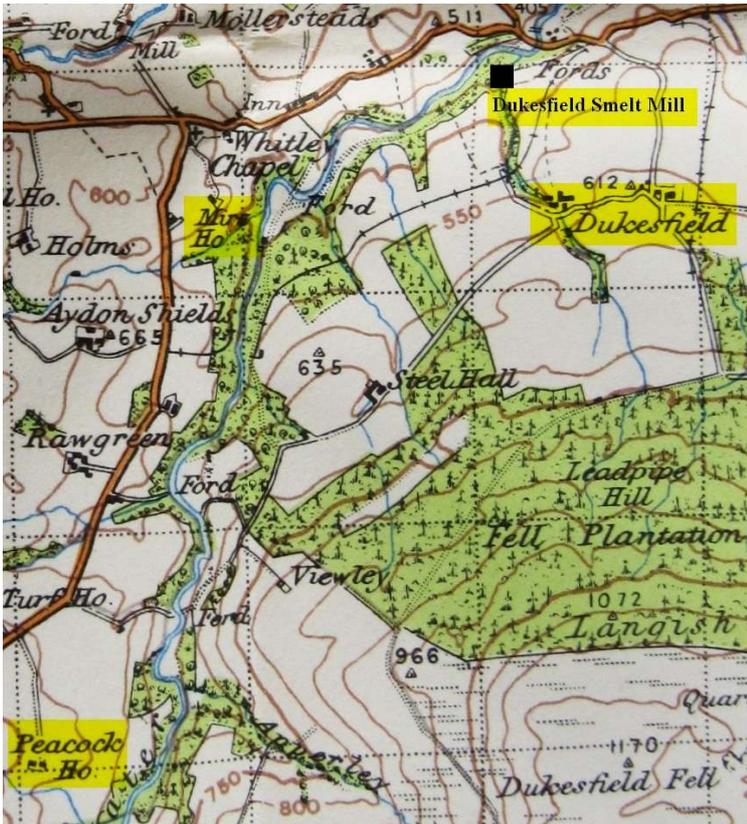


From Lead Ore to Moon Rock

Following my retirement as a senior lecturer in geophysics at the University of Newcastle, I, like many others, became interested in family history after looking through old photographs of unknown deceased relatives. In researching my forebears I discovered that 75% of them were connected with lead mining in the North Pennines. Of these, one family, with the quite rare surname Chatt, originated in Hexhamshire and was undoubtedly connected with Dukesfield Smelt Mill. Here is a summary of my investigations. My forebears are in bold text as are occupations. I have underlined the first entry of the places where they lived.

8 generations back - **John Chatt** (circa 1672-c1729) married **Alice Cartington**.



The marriage took place in 1697 and the groom was described as a **labourer** of Dotland. Dotland is about 1 mile north of Whitley Chapel and had dwindled to a single farm by 1839. Across the road is the site of a medieval village which has been comprehensively researched by Greg Finch (Hexham Historian no 18, August 2008).

John and **Alice** had 9 children, all of whom were born at Mire House during the period 1698 to 1717. Mire House is about 1/4 mile south of Whitley Chapel (see map) and about 1 mile SW of Dukesfield Smelt Mill. My ancestor, the youngest child (born in 1717), was also called **John**.

Another son, Thomas, married Jane Fairlamb in 1736. They were living at Mire House in 1752 when their 4th child Richard was born.

7 generations back - **John Chatt** (1717-1789) married **Elizabeth Short**.

The above marriage took place in 1752 and they had 6 children. Hannah (1755) and John (1757) were born at Mire House. Mary (1759), William (1764) and Nicholas (1770) were born at Moss House (not shown) which is only about 250 metres NE of Mire House.

Unfortunately there is no record of the birth (about 1760) of **Thomas**, my ancestor, but we know that his parents were **John** and **Elizabeth** because of parish register entries of the baptisms of some of **Thomas's** children (see generation 6 section below).

On 23 January 1789, **John Chatt** of Peacock House was buried. Presumably **John** had moved there from Moss house sometime after the birth of his son Nicholas in 1770. **Thomas's** brother William (b1764) married Lydia Philipson in June 1789 and in July 1790 their daughter Elizabeth was born at Peacock House. **Thomas** was also at Peacock House around this time (see generation 6 below). Only a vague outline of the foundations of Peacock House is now visible.

Thomas's other brother John (b1757) married Mary Fairlamb in 1790. He died at Dukesfield Hall in 1835 (the year after the smelt mill closed) at the age of 78. His wife Mary was still at Dukesfield Hall in 1841 but when she died in 1845 at the age of 86 she was at Blenheim Street, Newcastle. The notice of her death in the Newcastle Courant of 19th September 1845 states that she was the *widow of Mr John Chatt, refiner of silver*.

6 generations back - **Thomas Chatt** (c1760-1828) married **Elizabeth Carr**.

When **Thomas** was 30 years old he married **Elizabeth Carr** in May 1790. She was aged 19. Some 16 months later in September 1791 their first child George, (*son of Thomas Chatt of Peacock House*) was baptised (Whitley Chapel parish register). **Thomas** and **Elizabeth** went on to have a further 9 children including **Nancy** (b1808), my ancestor.

Apart from George, the other children, starting with John in 1793, were baptised at St Peter and Allenheads Chapelries about 2 miles north of Allenheads so **Thomas** and **Elizabeth** must have moved to that area (some 7 miles SW of Peacock House) in about 1792. The baptisms also indicate that in 1793 **Thomas** was a **smelter** of Sipton Shield and in 1797 he was still a **smelter** and had moved about half a mile to Tedham.

In 1805 the baptism of Peggy says that she was the "*3rd dau of Thos Chatt carrier native of the Shire son of the late John smelter & Eliz late Short by his wife Eliz dau of Geo Carr farmer of the Shire & Mary late Armstrong*" (I have expanded some of the abbreviations).

From these baptisms we see that after he moved from Peacock House, **Thomas** was a **smelter** up to at least 1797, a **carrier** in 1800 and 1805, and that his father **John** had been a **smelter** (who no doubt worked at Dukesfield).

Thomas's son John (b1793) married Hannah Smith in 1826 and they had 5 children, 3 girls and 2 boys. In 1841 and for the next 30 years the family were at Moor Houses less than a mile north-east of Allendale. In 1851 and 1861 John was described as a **smelter** and a **farmer** of 72 acres but by 1871 at the age of 78 he had given up smelting but was still farming the 72 acres with the help of his wife, his two unmarried daughters and his son John (aged 32), the latter being a farmer of 150 acres in his own right. When John senior died (on 25 June 1874) he left £1500 in his will. This is well in excess of



£100,000 in current values. John's gravestone is in the churchyard of St Cuthbert's Church, Allendale.

Note that close to Moor Houses is Chat's Lane which I have marked on the adjacent map. (It is shown on the modern 1:25000 scale OS map). It seems likely that the name arises because of the farming of the land around Moor Houses by my great great great uncle John Chatt.

5 generations back - **Nancy (Ann) Chatt** (1808-1875) married **Henry Elliot**.

This marriage took place at Heathery Cleugh in Weardale in 1829 when **Ann** was 21 and **Henry**, a lead ore miner from Wellhope (near Killhope), was a widower aged 38. **Henry's** first wife (Frances Peart) had died in 1827 and Ann became stepmother to their four children.

Soon after her marriage, **Ann** gave birth to **Elizabeth**, her first of 5 daughters (and 4 sons) and in about 1852 **Elizabeth** (Elliot) married **John Stephenson** of Nenthead. I have not been able to find a record of the marriage but evidence linking the families comes from the 1861 census where Thomas Stephenson (aged 5) son of **John** and **Elizabeth** was staying with his grandparents **Henry & Ann Elliot** at Wellhope as was Mary Stobbs (aged 17) the daughter of Ann's sister Frances Stobbs (née Chatt). **Ann** (née Chatt) died in 1875 in Weardale, her husband **Henry Elliot** having died some 9 years previously.

4 generations back - **John Stephenson** (1829-1895) and **Elizabeth** (née Elliot) (1832-1895) were my great great grandparents. Their gravestone is in St. John's churchyard, Nenthead.

All my Stephenson ancestors including **John** were either born or lived at Nenthead and all (apart from my father) were involved with the lead mining industry.

So where does Moon rock come into this story? -- It turns out that I have unwittingly followed the tradition of most of my forebears, including the Chatts, in earning a living from rocks, although happily in a rather different way. My research in the physics department of Newcastle University was mainly concerned with the magnetic properties of rocks and I have had the privilege of studying rocks from all the Apollo missions and from two automated returns of lunar material by the Soviet Union.