

Durham Miners Association

Souvenir

**The Miners Hall
Centenary Celebrations 2015
Friday October 23 and Saturday October 24**



The Miners' Hall Centenary Celebrations Programme of Events

Friday 23 October 2015

12.00 to 6.00 pm – Open Day

All our friends and supporters are invited to a guided tour of The Miners' Hall – an excellent opportunity to see this historic building and meet old friends. Refreshments will be available.

Saturday, October 24 2015

12.00 Noon to 5.00 pm – A day of entertainment.

- 12.00 – 1.00pm Guests are welcomed
- 1.00 – 2.00pm Refreshments
- 2.00 – 3.00pm DMA Brass Band
- 3.00 – 4.00pm The Cotia Folk Singers
- 4.00 – 5.00pm Bethany Elen Coyle and the
North East Socialist Singers

Our Heritage

by Dave Hopper



The Market Hotel

On Saturday 20 November 1869 a small group of delegates from several mines met in the Market Hotel, Durham City and established The Durham Miners' Mutual Association. This was not the first miners' union to be established on the coalfield but the first that would endure. A further meeting was held in the same venue on December 18 that year when 19 delegates met representing 1,964 miners.

On August 12 1871 the first Gala was held in Wharton Park, Durham attracting 5,000 miners and their families.

The following year it was estimated that between 50,000 and 70,000 marched through Durham and on to the racecourse at Old Elvet, much to the discomfort of the genteel residents of Durham City.

By 1876, the new union was well established boasting a membership of 50,000 and having amassed sufficient funds to expend £6,000 on a new purpose-built hall and offices in North Rd Durham, opened by Miners' Agent John Forman on June 3 1876. This fine gothic building with its hall capable of holding 300



The North Road Offices

was a firm statement that the union had arrived.

The Miners Hall Red Hill, 1915



By the time the present Miners' Hall was opened by newly elected General Secretary, Tomas H Cann on October 23 1915 the membership had swollen to 120,000 miners organised in 200 lodges. If the North Road Hall was a statement

that the union had arrived this new hall, set in its own grounds resembling a coal owners country estate, was an expression of permanence, power and prosperity. However, the miners' agents were unaware that the Durham Coalfield was already in decline having reached its peak of production some three years earlier in 1912.

The first time I visited the Miners' Hall at Red Hill, as a young coal miner, the splendour of the architecture, the records, the memorabilia and the history fascinated me – I am still fascinated today.

In those days it was unusual for a miner, who wasn't a lodge official, to be given permission to visit. For most miners Redhills, as it was always known, was a foreign place and the agents who represented them were distant and aloof.

A Durham miners' life revolved around his local lodge, his welfare hall and his union committee. When local disputes arose many lodges would complain that their Durham agents were too conciliatory, too eager to see the managements side and were always opposed to any kind of militant action.

General Secretary, Peter Lee, who did much good work as chairman of the County Council bringing basic sanitation and fresh water into the villages of Durham, was in total conflict with his members during the great strike of 1926. But despite his opposition Durham miners fought on against the savage wage reduction and the lengthening of their hours of labour and defied Lee by remaining on strike a month after all other areas had returned to work. Even then they never voted to return to work but failed to achieve a two thirds majority require by the Miners' Federation Board to continue the strike.

However, the most controversial leader was Sam Watson. Watson rose to prominence on the coalfield as the Secretary of the militant Boldon Miners' Lodge. He was particularly active in the unemployed movement and the fight against the hated Means Test. In the late 1930s he supported the campaign for unity between the Communist and Labour party in the fight against

Committee Room



Fascism. Elected as an agent in 1936, he rose through the ranks to become General Secretary in 1945.

Once in control Watson became the most influential right wing, anti-communist trade union leader in the Labour Movement. He conspired with Hugh Gaitskell to have fellow miner Nye Bevan expelled from the Labour Party and became the unofficial ambassador for the newly formed state of Israel.

On the Durham Coalfield he collaborated with the National Coal Board in closing pits, opposed all local strikes and instructed local officials to support management in sacking men for absenteeism. As a result it was not long before Durham Miners were the lowest paid in the country. Only the strikes of 1972 and 74 restored wage parity throughout the coalfields and restored some dignity and credibility to our lodges.

I was elected General Secretary in 1985 in the aftermath of the year-long strike alongside the late Dave Guy who became President.

We were determined that Redhills would no longer be a forbidden place for Durham Miners. Rank and file members were encouraged to drop in and have a look around and be inspired by the history of the building their forbearers financed. We organised brass band concerts and exhibitions in the council chamber and encouraged other unions to use the building as a meeting venue.

Redhills finest hour was in 1990 when it was our turn to host the National Union of Miners' Annual Conference and rather than pay for a seaside venue we brought the conference to Redhills. It was an acclaimed success and made me proud to be a Durham Miner.

Whatever the future holds in these uncertain times we are determined that this magnificent building will remain a facility for the use of the Labour Movement and the people of Durham.

It is our Heritage and we must cherish it.

Dave Hopper

October 23 2015



Debating Chamber

Miners Agents

1869 – 2015



William Crawford
1869 – 1990



John Johnson
1890 – 1910

Jas Robson
1911 – 1934
William Whiteley
1912 – 1922
Thomas Trotter
1913 – 1932
William P Richardson
1915 – 1930
Jos Batey
1915 – 1922



Will Lawther
1933 – 1945

E Moore
1935 – 1953

J Joyce
1946 – 1957
C Pick
1954 – 1967



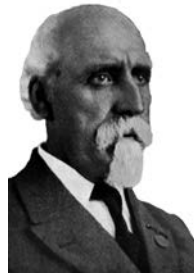
Tommy Callan
1970 – 1985



W H Patterson
1869 – 1896



Thomas H Cann
1896 – 1924



Peter Lee
1919 – 1935



Sam Watson
1936 – 1963



Alf Hesler
1957 – 1970

J C Robinson
1958 – 1972
J Rooney
1963 – 1970



Harold Mitchell
1970 – 1985

Nichol Wilkinson
1870 – 1882



John Forman
1872 – 1900



William House
1899 – 1917



J E Swan
1923 – 1945

J Kelly
1945 – 1961
J Foster
1946 1956



Walter Malt
1967 – 1979



Jimmy Inskip
1979 – 1985



John Wilson
1882 – 1915



Samuel Galbraith
1900 – 1915



Jas Gilliand
1925 – 1945



Dave Guy
1985 – 2012

*Dave Hopper
is now Durham
Miner's longest
serving General
Secretary*

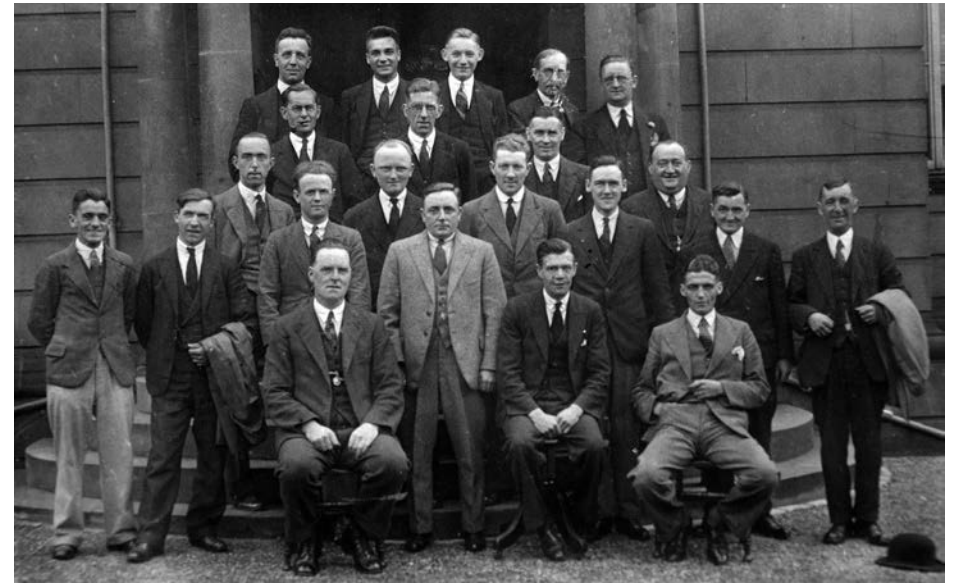


Dave Hopper
1985 –



*The First Deputation from the Durham Miners' Association to the Coal Trade Office
Newcastle upon Tyne February 17 1872*

*Back row: N. Wilkinson, WH Patterson, M. Thompson, T Ramsey, G Jackson, J Forman
Front row: W Askew, W Crawford, J Handy, T Mitchinson*



A group of lodge officials circa 1933 with members of staff.



Executive Committee and Agents 1919

*Back row: Jas Robson, TH Cann, WP Richardson, Middle row: J Batey, Jos Ritson,
F Chapman, Jos Ryans, W Whiteley, Jas Gilliland, J Cape, T Trotter Front row: R
Darby, M Eddy, S Whiteley, J Summerbell, S Usher, W Lawther*



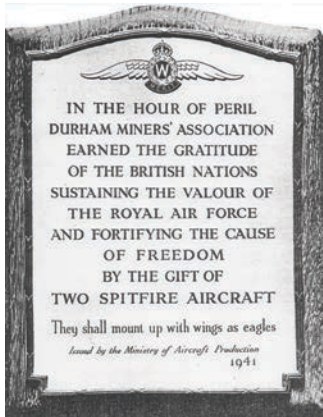
*Executive Committee 1945, Financial Secretary, Sam Watson, front row second from
left, to his left President, Jas Gilliland and General Secretary, John Swan.*



Above: Military top brass visit Redhills, to thank the Durham Miners for their contribution to the War Effort. Finance Secretary, Sam Watson, (centre) and President, Jas Gilliland, (third from right), General Secretary, John Swan, (far right)

The War Effort

During WWII the coal miners of Britain played a vital role in providing fuel for the War Effort. Apart from coal production Durham Miners' Association donated a staggering £163,611 (6.87 Million in today's money). This included £41,507 to the Red Cross Fund, £27,627 in aid to Russia, £10,000 to purchase two spitfires for the RAF and £3,000 providing six ambulances for the Anglo French Ambulance Corps. This was in addition to the many voluntary levies collected by individual lodges.



Above: Brass plaque mounted on oak presented to the Durham Miners by the Ministry of Aircraft Production

The DMA, also organised a campaign throughout the County in aid of the Lancashire Miners' Appeal to raise £1M to rebuild the Czechoslovakian mining village of Lidice where the male population were slaughtered on the instructions of Hitler in reprisals for the assassination of SS-Obergruppenführer and General of Police Reinhard Heydrich. The village was raised to the ground and the surviving women and children sent to concentration camps.



Delegates meeting 1945



Above: Sam Watson's Sunday School circa 1962. During the winter months General Secretary, Sam Watson, organised Sunday schools for local lodge officials and young miners who had shown an interest in the union. Sam Watson is in the centre of the photograph. To his left is guest speaker, Chairman of the National Coal Board (NCB), Alf Robens, under whose chairmanship (1961–1971) over half Britain's 698 coal mines closed and the labour force reduced from 583,000 to 283,000.



Executive Committee 1979. Seated from left to right: President, Harold Mitchell, General Secretary, Tom Callan, Financial Secretary, Jimmy Inskip. Back row left to right: Alan Cummings, Joe Raynor, Jack McCowleff, George Elliott, Arnold Ellis, Ronnie Skeene, Irvine Lyons and Frank Shaw.



Executive Committee 1983. Front Row: John Roberts (clerk), General Secretary, Tom Callan, President, Harold Mitchell, Financial Secretary, Jimmy Inskip and Walter Slater. Back Row: Brian Franklin, Leslie McKnight, John Dixon, Billy Stobbs, Ernie Foster, Jack Hockorage and Harry Dinning.



Executive Committee 1986. Front row left to right: Alan Mardghum, General Secretary, Dave Hopper, President, Dave Guy and Burt Ward. Back row: Jimmy Blair, Tommy Griffiths, John Chapman and Peter Hunt.



Miners and mechanics before departing to the NUM North East Area Summer School 1989

National Union of Mineworkers

National Conference 1990



NUM National Conference held in Redhills 1990.
 Insets bottom left: Alan Mardghum, Tob left: National Secretary, Peter Heathfield.

Insets top right: DMA General Secretary, Dave Hopper, Bottom right, Representative from the National Union of Mineworkers South Africa.

NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS

ESH WINNING LODGE
DURHAM AREA

