

# MEN OF SEATON CONTINUE TO FARM

## THE LAND OF THEIR FATHERS

TODAY we are indebted to Mrs W. G. Humphrey, of West Farm, for an interesting and informative article on the history of Seaton. This is the full text: "Seaton is a pleasant little village, situated on an eminence about one-and-a-half miles west of Seaham and six miles south by west of Sunderland." That was Fordyce's description of the village in his History of Durham in 1857.

Surtees called it a "cheerful little village on an easy swell of country surrounded by green enclosures." The old mansion of

of two messuages in Seaton, Slingley and Seaham." Other portions are mentioned as belonging to such families as Wren, Parkin, Atcheson, Wilson, Eden, Blenkinsop and Bewick. In 1616 Robert Collingwood granted tenements to Thomas Gregson, of Murton on the Whinns.

In 1829 residents of Seaton and Slingley were Mr William Brough; John Shilton, shoemaker; William Douthwaite, butcher; Mrs Mary Hickson; Ralph Hodgson, yeoman; John Pattison, tailor; and Jonathan Taylorson, victualler of the Horse "cock-fighter" Inn. The farmers were Thomas Brough,

Station to be taken to Durham. Inhabitants were awakened by the music of the bands and the lively chatter of the miners' families on their way to the Gala. A special ticket office was erected at the side of the crossing to cope with the influx of passengers.

### The Smithy

The old National School, originally in the living of St Mary's Church, and later transferred to the living of Christ Church, is the centre of the village community life.

There weekly whist drives are held, the Women's Institute holds its meetings in the school-room and it is also used as a polling station at election times. Seaton is in the rural district of Easington, Durham County mobile library visits the village each week.

Seaton boasts two public houses, the Seaton Lane Inn, and the Dun Cow. The picture of Seaton Lane Inn shows the original site of the old blacksmith's shop (to the right of the pub). For many years the sound of the smithy at work could be heard in the village. With mechanization of the farms, the shop closed and Tom Davidson, the blacksmith, lives in retirement in the village.

### Heart Of Seaton

Seaton Hall, the original home of the Middletons was taken over by the Londonderry Collieries in 1913 to house the manager of Seaham Colliery. Since then successive officials of the National Coal Board have lived there.

Gradually, as new houses were built in Seaton, there came many professional people—in the main doctors and teachers—who serve the population of Seaham and district. Mrs Dora Chaytor occupies the village shop.

Agriculture is at the heart of Seaton and it is interesting to note that the estate of Colonel Launelot Allgood Gregson—mentioned in Whellan's History of Durham in 1894—is now owned, and has been added to, by Major Anthony Allgood Gregson, who lives in Shaldon, Devon. The major visits his estate regularly and in no sense is remote from his tenants.

### Ayrshire Herd

Many of the old farming families, Joseph Willis, John Brough, Thomas Boland, Robert

By  
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the Middletons, shadowed by a few tall fir trees, occupies the summit of the hill and retains in its mullioned windows and projecting gables some traces of the old hall house of the 17th Century.

At an early period Seaton formed but one integral manor with Seaham. Under the division of 1295 half of each village was allotted to the families of Hadham and Yeland. The descent of Hadham's moiety was included in that of Seaham until 1501, when, on the death of Thomas Hadham without male issue, Seaton descended to his grandson, John Blakiston, ancestor of a race of resident proprietors until 1635.

Ralph Elliott, James Shotton, Mary Smith and James Thorbourn.

It is interesting to note that here was the nucleus of village life—the occupations and trades of the inhabitants telling their own tale of village activity. In 1801 the population of Seaton and Slingley was 916; in 1811, 126; 1821, 95; 1831, 134; 1841, 175; 1851, 200; 1861, 236; and 1881, 288.

### The Dun Cow

In 1890 land was owned by Colonel Launelot Allgood Gregson and the executors of Joseph Willis and John Brough; also by Messrs Brough, Carr, Blyth and Robson. There were 1,358 acres, with a rateable value of £7,788 0s 4d.

We also read in records of 1890 that the principal residents of Seaton included Edward Charnley, biscuit manufacturer of Seaton Hall; Mr Bryan Hodgson, Joseph Jackson, blacksmith and assistant overseer; William Kirby, stationmaster; George Paxton, blacksmith; and Miss Mary Ann Smith, schoolmistress at the National School.

Other names mentioned include John William Tarbitt, victualler, of the Dun Cow; Farmers at the time included Thomas Boland, Benjamin Milburn Brough, Henry Wall, John Elliott (Seaton Moor) and William Archbold Weightman at Haverley House.

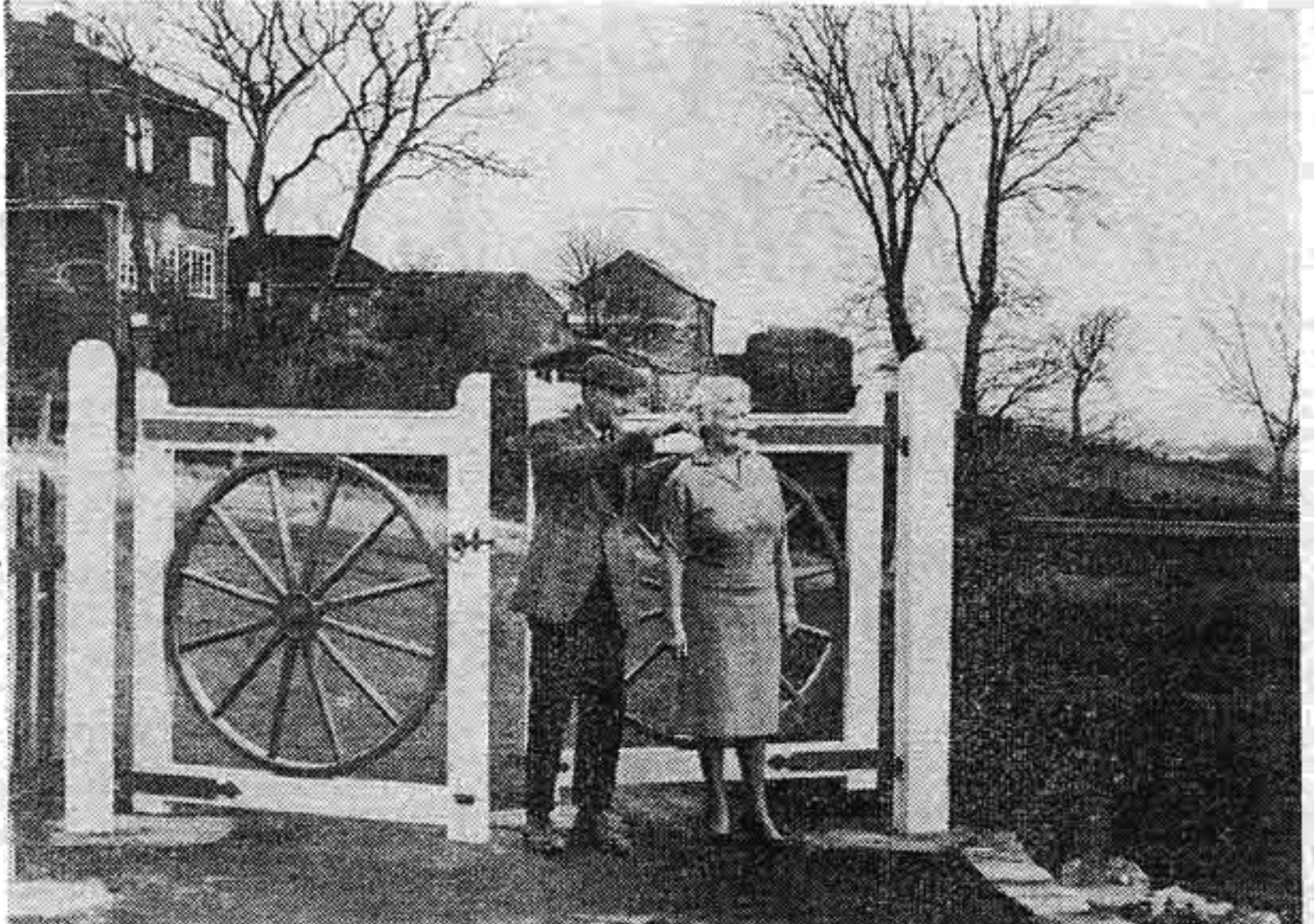
We read that in 1851 the Durham-Sunderland branch of the North-Eastern Railway "had an extent of four miles and six feet and an area of 21 acres" in this township. Its contribution to the local rate was £16 13s 3d in 1851 and £19 18s 9½d in 1852. The gross amounts collected in these years were £68 10s 7d and £79 18s 11d.

### Pleasant Place

Let us take a look at the village of Seaton-with-Slingley as it is today. It can still be called a pleasant little village, population around 500, with its inhabitants enjoying the advantages of village life and the beauties of the countryside—yet not denied the proximity of town facilities.

Until September 1, 1952, the folks of Seaton travelled by passenger train, via Ryhope, to Sunderland; otherwise they walked to Seaham Lodge to catch a bus travelling to Sunderland on the A19. When Seaton station was closed to passenger traffic a direct bus service between Seaton and Sunderland was organized and a skeleton service exists today.

There were scenes of great activity on Durham Miners' Gala day, when the bands and banners from Seaham and Dawson Collieries walked to Seaton



Mr and Mrs Humphrey at the gates of their home in Seaton. The gates were made from a pair of wheels taken from an old horse-drawn fertilizer drill.

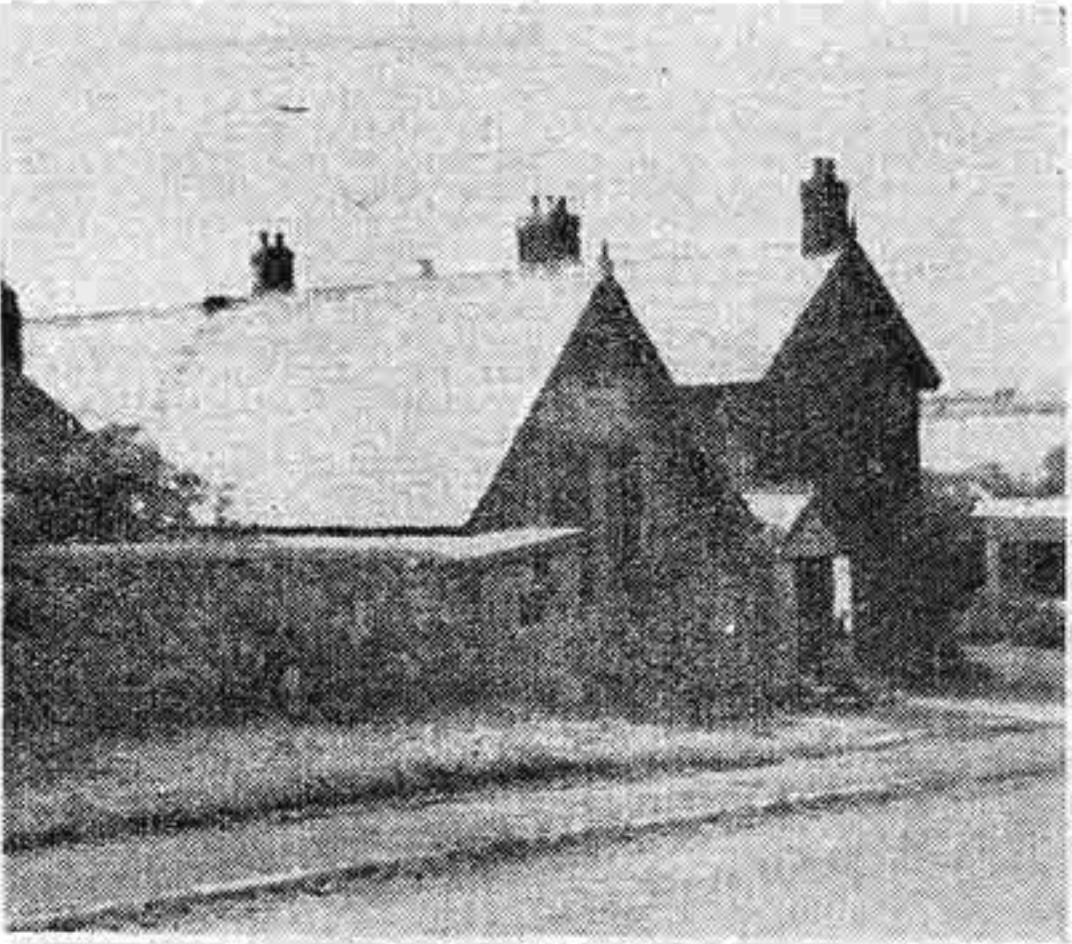
Carr, Robert Blyth and Frank Robson, have descendants living in the village and its environs.

William Humphrey, whose family farmed for more than 200 years at Hill Farm, Penshaw, occupies Seaton West Farm, together with Manor House and Village Farms in the estate of Major Gregson. There have been many visitors to West Farm to see the new yard and parlour milking system built in the spring of 1964. Milk is produced from the Ayrshire herd under the most hygienic conditions. The gates shown in the accompanying picture were made from a pair of wheels taken from an old horse-drawn fertilizer drill.

Roy Snowdon, of Hall Farm, Seaham, owns the Town Farm in the village. A progressive market garden to the West of Seaton Station is run by the Middlemiss family. Harry Bulmer is the cartwright and builder and it is interesting to note that Mrs Middlemiss and Mrs Bulmer are members of the old farming families, the Carrs, and the Bolands.

Ernest Thompson has reclaimed two or three acres from the wood at Seaton Bank Top, and there has built a pig and poultry farm. Now we are ready to leave Seaton and go on our way to New Seaham, with its wealth of history tied up in the tale of the "Nicky Nack."

(To be continued)



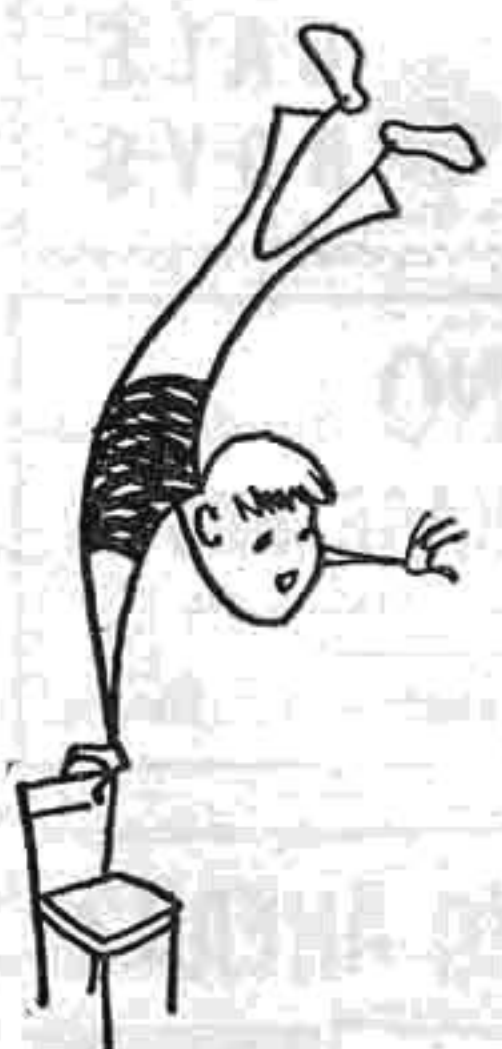
The old National School at Seaton.



Seaton Lane Inn. The old blacksmith's shop was to the right of the public house.



The dairy cows feeding at troughs in the open yard at West Farm. There have been many visitors to see the new yard and parlour milking system.



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