

# ANTIQUARIANS' PRESIDENT TAKES A LOOK AT BYGONE SEAHAM

THIS week we are most grateful to Mr H. L. Robson, President of the Sunderland Antiquarian Society, for a long letter filled, as usual, with scholarly and authoritative information, this time relating to Seaham. This letter will not only revive many memories but will also clear up several topographical difficulties arising from certain of the older photographs reproduced recently. Here is the letter of Mr Robson's letter:—

The wooden bridge, of which you gave an illustration in one of your articles, spanned Dawdon Dene about 80 yards west of the present North Road. Prior to this wooden bridge being made, a more substantial structure crossed the Dene at that point. It was embanked at either side and, on its north bank, the Love Lane side, stood

a small toll house. This toll house existed until quite recent times and must be remembered by many Seaham residents. The

By  
**C. A. SMITH**

first bridge was carried away by a great flood and the wooden structure which you show was substituted. The date of your illustration would probably be about 1855.

### Bessie's Hole

The North Road was laid down in 1861, and for this the Dawdon Dene was filled in and levelled off, as also was a small gully about 150 yards to the north called "Bessie's Hole."

This gully was the north-east boundary between the ancient parish of Dalton-le-Dale and the parish of Seaham. It became the boundary line for the new parish of Seaham Harbour in 1843.

When the Seaham Harbour Urban District Council was set up under the Act of 1894, it was again the north-east boundary. In my young days the Seaham Harbour Council had paved the North Road up to this point but no farther as its jurisdiction stopped there. Later on, of course, much of Seaham Parish came under the control of the Urban District, and the paving continued farther towards Old Seaham. Bessie's Hole can still be seen on the west side of the road, just beyond that row of houses of which the Masonic Hall is the central feature. It is just behind the end house, now taken over by the N.C.B.

With regard to the North Road, perhaps the following notes made by the Rev. Angus Bethune, Vicar of Seaham at the time, may prove of interest. "On November 30, 1860, Mr J. Ravenshaw, agent to the Marquess of Londonderry and Mr Wright, her Ladyship's solicitor, came to me, and on behalf of Lady Londonderry made application for my consent to carry the new road between Seaham Harbour and the Hall through the vicarage grounds at the mouth of the dene, viz. the tough pasture called the 'Linthings', on which stood the Rector's Lime Kiln and along which the Glebe field road ran which crossed the Dene.

### The Linthings

"This consent was given on consideration that, whereas from the foregoing memoranda of Mr Wallis that the late Sir Ralph Noel had, as Lord of the Manor of Seaham, advanced some claim to the possession of the Linthings, her Ladyship should renounce such claim and make no objection in future to the enclosure and occupation of the said Linthings by the Vicar, whereupon the road was proceeded with." In April of the present year (1861), in accordance with the above agreement, the Linthings were enclosed with a fence and cultivated by me.

Older residents in Seaham will remember these Linthings, a big open space just east of the road through which the Seaham Burn flowed into the sea. It was entirely filled in by tipping from the Vane Tempest Colliery.

Mr Bethune also wrote in 1861: "This year, after some opposition by the parishioners, the road leading from Seaton to the parish church and which passed along to south front of the hall was diverted and carried round outside the Hall grounds on the north and east; a path being made across the grounds reserved for the use of the parishioners when going to church, and restricted to them at the usual times of public worship."

### Lord Byron's Walk

In front of the Hall to the south, lay the old village of Seaham and through this ran the ancient road from Seaton. This was now closed, the village demolished, and, with its large green, turned into ornamental gardens. The new road towards Seaton is known as "Lord Byron's Walk" but much of it did not exist in Lord Byron's time.

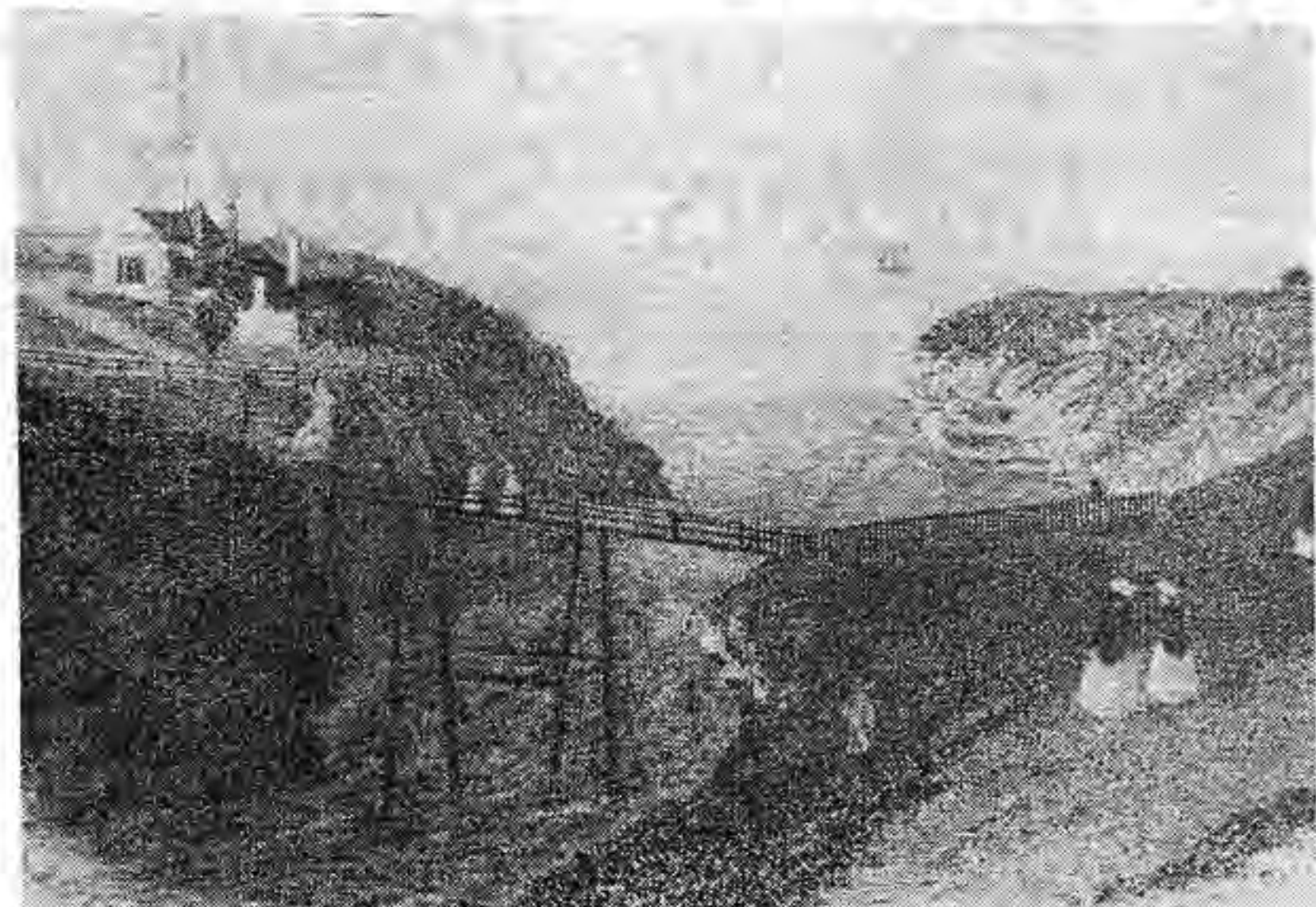
The real Lord Byron's walk, I am given to understand, was a path running from the west end of the old village along the north bank of the Dene and coming out on to the road near Seaham Hall Station. In one of your previous articles you mentioned three farms which existed in the manor of Dalden at the time when the new port of Seaham Harbour came into existence.

Two that you mention were not in Dalden, Carr House and the Mill — both were in the parish of Seaham. The three farms in Dalden in 1828 were Dalden Hill Farm (towards Dawdon Pit) Dalden Hall Farm in the Dene and Dalden Fields Farm. The last named, I believe, came to be called Dene House Farm and the farm buildings, standing just west of the Castle-reagh and the Drill Hall, were demolished about two years ago.

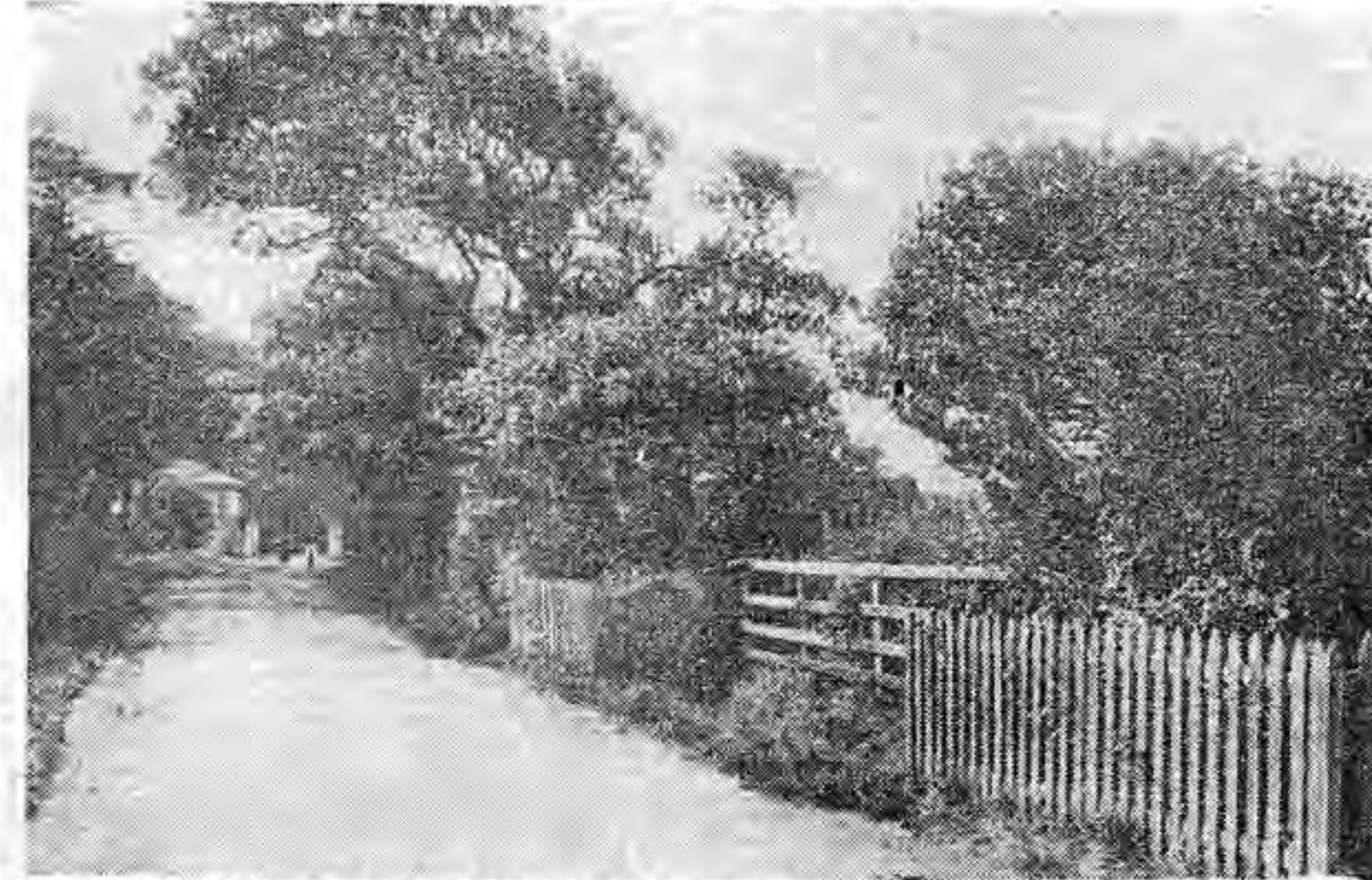
### Those Holly Trees

The Mill at Seaham, afterwards New Seaham, when the colliery was developed, had, I think, an ancient origin. It is mentioned during the Civil War in the 17th Century:

*Proceedings of Parliament Commissioners. Sunderland, September 11, 1644. Warrant to James Ayre, of Sea-*



Seaham Baths and Low Road, now the coast road going north to Vane Tempest Colliery. The bridge spanned the Dene in 1858.



A fine view of the Burn holly bushes which once grew in Byron's Walk at Seaham Hall.



The Toll Cottage on the Denehouse Road at Seaham



An old picture of Dalton-le-dale, taken during a hard winter.

ham, to sequester the profits of the windmill in his possession, late belonging to John Husband, of Sunderland. Letten this mill to the said James Ayre till Martinmas next for thirty shillings; payable fifteen shillings October 6, and fifteen shillings November 11."

Some time later John Husband, who was a delinquent — he had been fighting for the King — paid a fine of £5 to get

his property back. Mr Robson has promised to supply me with the details of his own research into the Seaham bottleworks; these I eagerly await. Meanwhile, the pictures reproduced here illustrate most of the places of interest in Mr Robson's letter not forgetting the holly trees, now shown in full to satisfy a number of correspondents.

Our appreciation and understanding of these old pictures

is enriched and enhanced by such explanations as those given above; for there we are profoundly grateful. Indeed the main purpose of these articles is to awaken and sustain an interest in local history and, at the same time, to evoke comment and criticism from those whose knowledge of a particular locality enables them to speak with "authority and not as the scribes."

(To be continued)



North Terrace by the Masonic Hall. "Bessie's Hole," mentioned in this week's article is still visible beyond the end house.



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