

NEW SEAHAM'S TRIBUTE TO ONE OF ITS BEST-LOVED BENEFACTORS

THE parish of New Seaham was formed in 1857, when Christ Church was built by the Marchioness of Londonderry three years after the death of her husband. It was, in fact, one of her many tributes to his memory. My records tell how the parish was formed from that of Seaham, that it contained some 560 acres and before many years had reached a population of 5,000, most of whom were miners.

The church was described as a handsome stone building in the English decorated style with nave, aisles and chancel. The south aisle was added in 1862, soon after New Seaham became

liery; John Gregg at Mill House; Nicholas Hoy, miners' secretary; the Rev. D. W. Jones (curate); Edmund George McSweeney, surgeon; Jonathan Murray at the New Seaham Inn; Alfred Reynolds at the Mill Inn; Mrs Annie Richards, infants' mistress; Mr George Turnbull; William Wilkinson, schoolmaster.

Hutton Jubilee

Shops were few in number, but the names of Butters, Hepplewhite, Johnson, Mawston, and Smith appear in my lists as shoemakers, butchers, grocers and drapers, the last two trades being usually combined. The colliery, which has already been described, was then working the deep Harvey seam, Main Coal, Maudlin, Hutton Jubilee, and Hutton Nos 2 and 3. The

part of an account of the parish written some years ago by a former vicar, the Rev. Oswald Hogg, now of Castle Eden, and whose son John was until lately teaching with me in the classics department at Bede Boys' Grammar School.

The parish of New Seaham was formed out of the ancient parish of Seaham St Mary's more than 100 years ago. It was then a small compact parish, surrounding the church and colliery, but in 1931 the boundaries were enlarged when the old parish of Seaham was united with Seaham Harbour (St John's). The village of Seaton was then included in New Seaham parish. Although the parish was then enlarged, its population (8,000) remained much the same as many old colliery houses were demolished and their occupants deported. This process is still going on but new estates are being built within the Parish.

By

C. A. SMITH

A separate chapelry on July 26, 1861. The living was designated as a vicarage in 1866 though I am a little puzzled by the differences in the recorded dates. However, the nave arcades were formed of "four chamfered arches supported by octagonal pillars with moulded caps." The east and west windows are very fine. The stained glass in the former, depicting the Last Supper, is in memory of the third Marquess by his children. The west window represents the Resurrection and was given by Lady Frances Anne in 1858.

A small brass tablet at the south side of the chancel, near the pulpit, reads: "To the memory of Frances Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry, who built this church for their use, A.D. 1857, and laboured in many ways to promote their highest interests, the parishioners of New Seaham dedicate this humble tribute of respect and gratitude. Erected by subscription, 1865."

Church Memorials

The vicarage, built in 1858, is described as, "a good stone building situated near the church and is also the gift of the Marchioness, whose family hold the patronage of the living." Later records, up to 1890, mention the chapels belonging to the Primitive Methodists, Wesleyans, and the Christian Lay Church, and, of course, the memorials in the churchyard to those who lost their lives in the great explosions at the colliery.

The Miners' Hall, built in 1889, "a handsome brick building with stone facings, cost £2,000." Its lecture hall could accommodate 750 and there were commodious committee room and a reading room, which was well supplied with daily and weekly papers.

Seaham Colliery reading room, established in 1857, was supported by the miners' subscriptions. The Londonderry schools for girls and infants were established by the Marchioness in 1857 and had an average attendance of 420. The High Colliery schools, built at the same period for boys and infants, had an average attendance of 550 children.

As many readers like to peruse lists of names, here are some of those who lived and worked in New Seaham about 70 or more years ago: Joseph Birbeck, postmaster; Sergeant J. Adams, drill instructor; Mrs Eliza Armstrong, girls' school mistress; John Brough, Park House; Thomas Brough, colliery manager; Robert Curry, colliery engineer; George Dodds kept the Seaton Colliery Hotel; William Draper under-manager at Seaham Col-

Jubilee was reached through a great fault and after three years cutting in 1887 — the Queen's jubilee year. The 1,700 men and boys then produced between 2,500 and 2,800 tons a day, most of which was shipped at Seaham Harbour and Sunderland Docks, a small portion only being for landsales.

Thirty years pass and we read that the Rev. Samuel Kearney was vicar. The Salvation Army hall was in use, the war memorial was erected in 1923, off the Sunderland Road. The Drill Hall had become the Church Institute in 1910. Miners' homes had been built in 1924. The recreation ground was laid out by the parish council in 1907, the New Seaham Conservative Club, built 1895, contained many amenities. The population had risen to 6,398 and the parish clerk was Joseph Birbeck.

The private residents were Harry Armstrong, William B. Clish, James Joy, J.P., Dr G. J. Moore, Dr John A. Neilan, William H. Smith, Ralph Stephens, The Rev. J. Wadsworth was at the mission. Shopkeepers had risen to 30 or more, but these would take too long to list. John Alexander was assistant overseer and clerk to the parish council. Farmers included Charles Aikenhead at Carr House; George D. Cutler at West Cherry Knowle; Ramsay Davidson at Seaham Grange; John William Smith at Field House; Edward Clark Snowden at Mill House; and Henry John Snowden at East Cherry Knowle.

Compact Parish

Doctors E. J. Moore and J. A. Neilan, Dillon and Neilan; James Hoy was secretary of the Miners' Hall; Frederick Vasey, postmaster; James Kell, stationmaster; Schoolmasters and mistresses included W. B. Clish, Miss B. Craggs, Joseph T. Munday, Miss B. Foxhall, Miss G. Lawther, and Miss A. O'Hara. At the high colliery John E. Davidson was sub-postmaster and Thomas Smith was secretary of the Working Men's Club and Institute.

George W. Graham, assistant overseer for Seaton and Slingley. Arthur Jones at the Mill Inn; Douglas Scrafton, secretary of the Conservative Club; John Clayton, secretary of the Church Institute; John Clark and Sons, builders; A.L. and W. Roberts, New Seaham Garage; F. W. Smith, chief engineer, New Seaham Colliery; and J. Gibson, New Seaham Inn.

The story of New Seaham as it is today, except for an odd photograph, does not fall within the scope and intention of my researches. Here, however, is

"Nicky Nack"

The Seaham Colliery district is known locally as the "Nicky Nack" or simply as "The Nack." How it received that strange name is uncertain—there are at least three explanations. The parish church of Christ Church was built in 1857 by Frances Anne, Marchioness of Londonderry as a memorial to the late Marquess, which fact is recorded on a small tablet inside the church. The patronage of the living is in the hands of the Londonderrys, who have always taken a keen interest in the welfare of the parish.

The building was designed by Mr P. C. Hardwick, of London, and consists of nave, north and south aisles and chancel in the early English style. The aisles are formed by four-pointed arches, supported by octagonal pillars. A lofty pointed arch is over the chancel. The church accommodates 500. The east window of the chancel and the west window of the nave consist each of five lights, beautifully decorated. The stained glass in the former depicts the Last Supper and the latter, Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, with Our Lord as the central figure.

This west window was badly damaged by blast during the late war and has been modernized and improved. The church, too, has been recently thoroughly cleaned and decorated. The list of vicars shows: Canon William A. Scott (1857-1894), a period of 37 years; the Rev. Ed. F. Every (1894-1899) later Bishop of the Argentine; the Rev. Alexander Ramsbotham (1899-1912), father of the Bishop of Burnley; the Rev. Samuel E. R. Fenning (1913-1921); the Rev. Samuel Kearney (1921-1946); the Rev. Oswald Hogg (1946-1960); and the Rev. W. H. Jefferson.

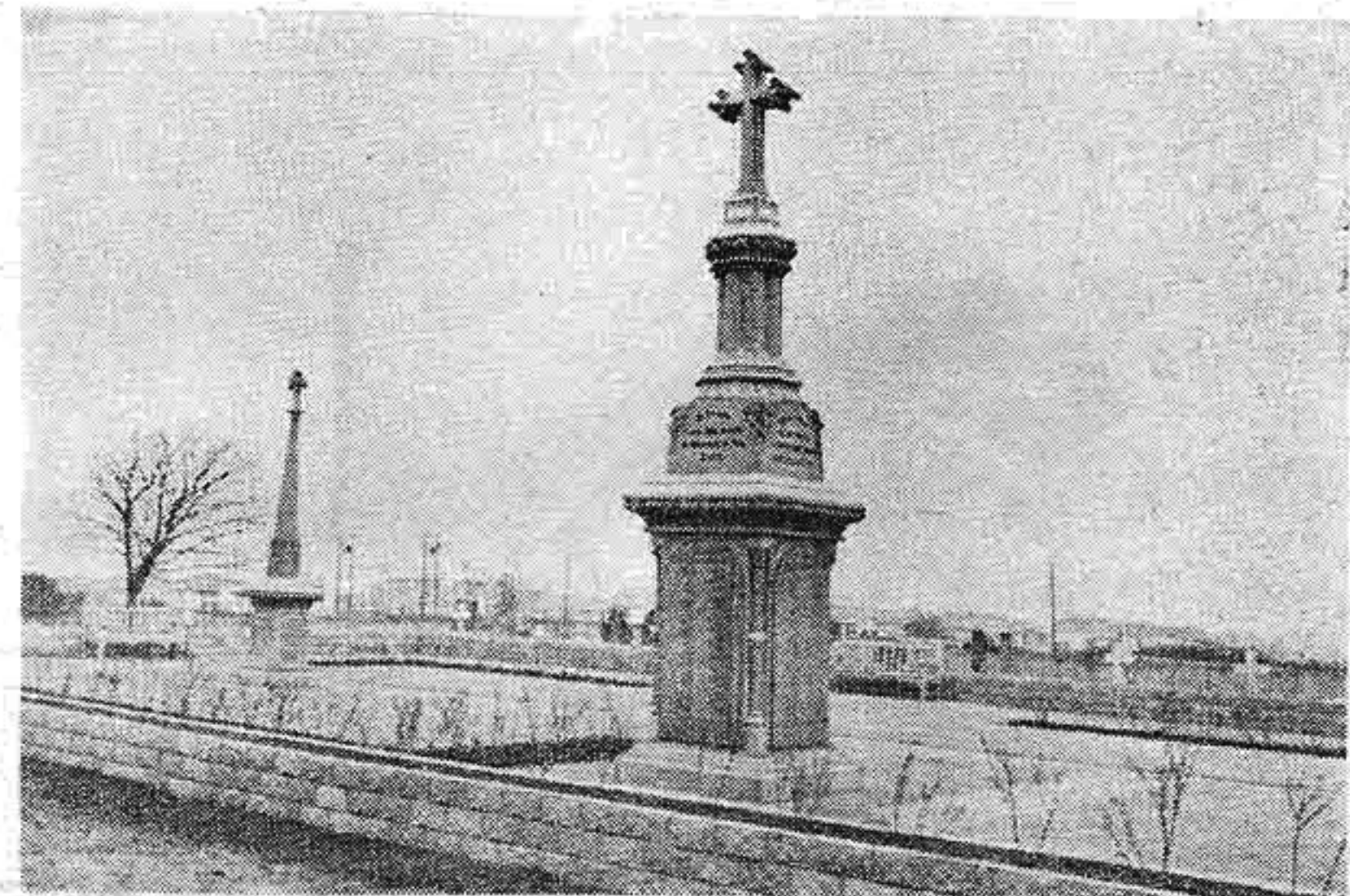
In addition to the usual Sunday services, the parish has many active organizations which function during the week, including the Mothers' Union, Young Wives' Group, Girl Guides, Brownies, Scouts, Youth Fellowship, Girls' Club and Dramatic Society.

Seaham Colliery was the scene of several very distressing disasters; the two most serious being in 1871 and 1880 when 26 and 164 lives, respectively, were lost. Two monuments, with the names of victims engraved upon them, stand in the churchyard near the east end of the church. Mr Hogg also speaks at some length upon the two disasters and also upon the character of the parish. A full report was given in the Echo under the heading, "The Church in Wearside," some years ago. We include pictures both old and new, which will be of interest.

(To be continued)



The interior of Christ Church, New Seaham, built in 1857 by Frances Anne as a memorial to her husband.



The monuments to the Seaham pit disasters of 1871 and 1880, which stand over the communal graves in the churchyard at Christ Church.



Seaham Colliery, as it appeared when it was owned by the Londonderry family. The wagons had the letter "L" painted on them.



Christ Church, New Seaham, which has a stained glass window depicting the Last Supper.



The Mill Inn, New Seaham, as it looks today.