

# THIS SEAHAM PIT BOY WON WIDE ACCLAM AS MINING EXPERT

LAST week I spent a very pleasant hour with Mr and Mrs E. Trotter at their home at Denehouse Road, Seaham. "Pleasant" because such meetings tend to enlarge one's circle of friends and often prove most rewarding to the would-be local historian. This visit was no exception, for both Mr and Mrs Trotter have their roots deeply set in Seaham, and not only display a marked interest in its history but possess considerable factual knowledge as well. Indeed, the time passed all too quickly with so much to discuss, to ponder, and enjoy.

Mr Trotter is, of course, one of Seaham's well-known sons and his family, particularly through his grandfather, have

long been connected with mining in this area. In fact, people tell me that the Vane Tempest Colliery is in more than one sense "Ernie Trotter's monument."

As a boy, young Ernie attended the old Higher Grade School which later became the Bede Collegiate School, and is now the Bede Grammar Schools. (His headmaster was Mr G. T. Ferguson). Mr J. Trotter, his father, was the well-known senior assistant at the High Colliery Schools.

### HAD TO SHOUT

After leaving school he applied for a post at the Londonderry offices. In due course he was granted an interview by Major V. C. S. W. Corbett, chief viewer to Lord Londonderry.

Major Corbett resided at Chilton Moor House, but kept a house in Church Street, Seaham, where he used to lunch every working day. Young Ernie attended the interview and had to shout the details of his application down an ear trumpet, for the Major was very deaf.

The interview proved satisfactory and Ernie was told to see Mr Tom Brough for a post in the colliery offices.

After a few weeks Tom Brough called him in and said: "Have you your pit clothes ready?" "What for?" said Ernie.

By  
**C. A. SMITH**

"To serve your time to be a colliery manager," replied Mr Brough. "Didn't the Major tell you?"

So Ernie went home to tell his parents and to get things ready. His mother was horrified, but Ernie won her over and his clothes were bought.

We show a picture of Ernie proudly set to go at the age of 16.

### METICULOUS

So he served his apprenticeship at the "Nicky Nack" and liked it. When he was fully fledged he took on various jobs (e.g. if the back overman was ill) and he "travelled the pit." During the first world war, when "Billy Spence," the colliery clerk, fell ill, Ernie took over much of his work under the direction of the manager, Mr Swallow.

Administration rules and requirements; records of men due to be called up for Service were typed out by Ernie with meticulous care. Soon his own call up would be due; so Ernie went to the recruiting officer at Sunderland and joined the Air Force to be stationed at Seaton Carew bomber station, where Blackburn Kangaroo planes were used. And he enjoyed it all.

In 1919, after the Armistice, he was discharged and returned to Seaham Colliery where he became surveyor with Mr Hepplewhite, who was now well on in years. Here Mr Trotter became responsible for the plans of the colliery. In 1921 plans were under consideration for the proposed Vane Tempest Colliery and Mr Trotter under Mr Swallow's instructions, did the surveys, etc., and took charge of the putting in of the shafts—all of which was excellent experience.

### IMPRESSED

The result of his work so impressed Mr Henry Armstrong, of Messrs William Armstrong and Son, the Newcastle firm of consulting mining engineers, that he invited Mr Trotter to assist them at the Newcastle offices. The offer was accepted and Mr Trotter became assistant to the consultant engineer until he gradually took over the duties of consultant to the L.N.E.R. for Armstrong and Sons.

When Mr Henry Armstrong retired, Mr Rollo S. Barrett, the son of Mr Charles Barrett, manager of Seaham Colliery, succeeded to his office.

Ernie Trotter now assumed extra responsibilities, as Mr Rollo Barrett spent much of his time in London with the Coal Commission preceding the nationalization of the mines, with the result that Mr Trotter was given the heavy responsibility of advising the L.N.E.R.

in both Northern Counties, and later of supervision as far down as York and the West Riding and of the Yorkshire and East Midland coalfields. Eventually Messrs Armstrong and Sons covered the L.N.E.R. from London to Edinburgh and Mr Trotter also advised on the Scottish coalfields as well.

Finally he became a partner in the firm of Armstrong and Sons of which the present head is Mr Hamilton Russell, who is connected with the family, and Lord Boyne, and a cousin of Mr Rollo S. Barrett, once of Seaham Harbour.

### NEGOTIATOR

Until his retirement Mr E. Trotter was known throughout the country for his services as adviser to and negotiator with colliery and railway companies on behalf of Armstrong and Sons.

We show a picture of him taken during his steady convalescence from serious illness: an illness which the devoted care and attention on the part of Mrs Trotter had done much to alleviate.

Mrs Trotter is the daughter of the late Mr W. J. Young, whose printing etc. business was referred to in a letter we received along with photographs from Mr John L. Parker, of U.S.A., and which we have printed in this series.

### THE GARDENS

Incidentally, Seaham's first telephone exchange existed in the back of Mr Young's establishment at 28 North Railway Street where Miss Edie Armstrong acted as operator.

I am reminded that Mr Trotter's mother was formerly Miss Fair, who at one time was mistress at Chilton Moor School close by Major Corbett's residence. Now her grandfather, Mr Ralph Fair, appears in the 1825 Directory as the gardener and licensee of the Seaham Adam and Eve



Above left: Ernie Trotter in his first pit clothes at the age of 16. Right: Mr Trotter at home.

Gardens, which he established there.

The 1861 Ordnance Map shows that these gardens were then far more extensive than now and covered the site and area of the later Dene House.

The Adam and Eve Inn derived its name from two ships' drows, or figure-heads, representing the sea god Neptune and possibly Arethusa (or as some allege Minerva) which stood as ornaments in the gardens for many years, and were probably misnamed Adam and Eve.

At any rate this public house became very popular, especially at week-ends, when drinks were served in Ralph Fair's attractive gardens. The innovation won the approval of the third Marquess of Londonderry, who left instructions that as long as the Fair family held the gardens etc., they should do so rent free.

### BECAME SENATOR

When Ralph Fair died, his son, Richard Dunn Fair, did not take over the gardens because the idea of a public house was repugnant to his wife, a strait-laced Victorian

lady whose shipowner father had lost all his vessels in a severe storm, in consequence of which she became governess to the Candlish children of Shotton Hall.

When she married Richard Fair, they went to Sherburn Hospital where her husband became head gardener and she cooked for the brethren. Thus, Richard's younger brother, Ralph Fair junior, continued the Adam and Eve Gardens until his death, when they passed to the families of Marriott and then to Smith, of whom a nephew, Mr David Smith, is the present proprietor.

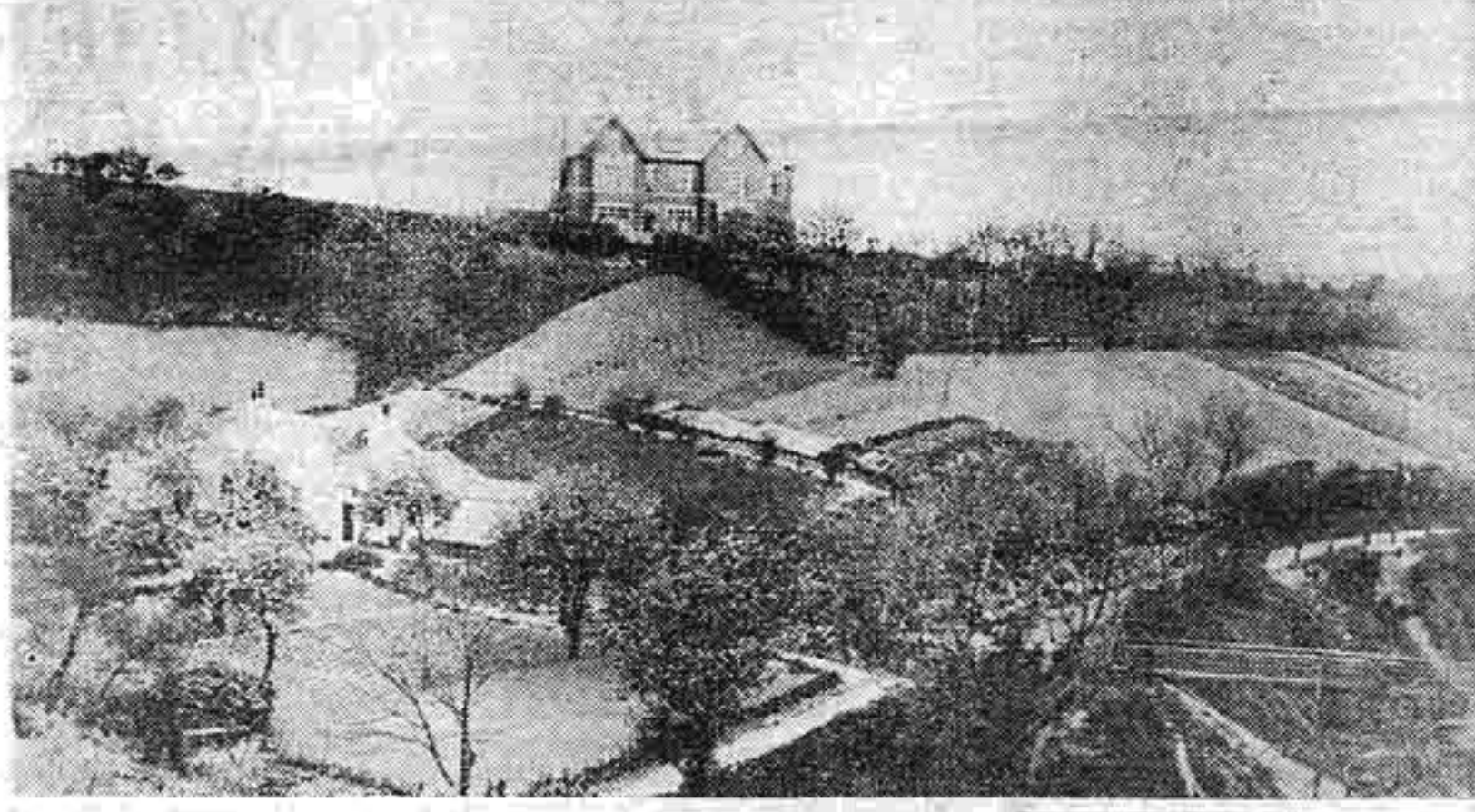
Two points of interest are that the first Ralph Fair's brother emigrated to the United States and eventually became Senator Fair. His daughter, Virginia, married Vanderbilt, the American millionaire, and to this date the name Virginia has obtained among the distaff side of the Vanderbilt family.

Finally, Richard Dunn Fair and Brian Hodgson, shoemaker of Seaton, and one other, were the "three lives" upon which Colonel Gregson held portions of the Seaton estates.

(To be continued)



A Seaham resident and a friend ride on his remarkable-looking "penny-farthing."



Top: An early picture of the Adam and Eve Gardens and public house at Seaham before the erection of Dene House. Above: A later view of the spot after Dene House was built. Below: The gardens and house as they are today.

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