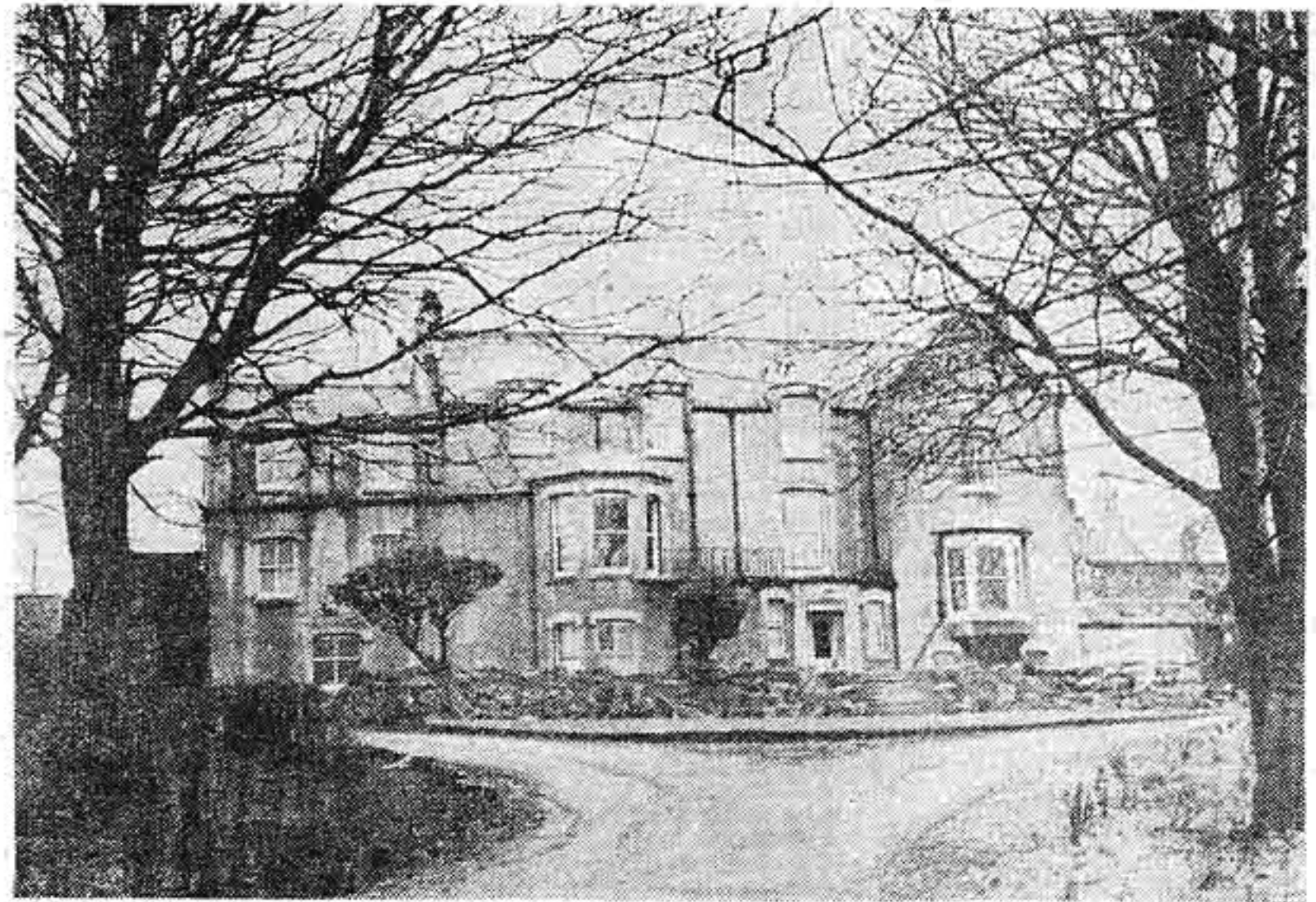


THE GHOSTLY FIGURES THAT HAUNT THE LONELY LANES OF SEATON

OUR last two articles on Seaton and Slingley evoked a spate of letters, containing, inter alia, information, commendation and criticism, which proved both refreshing and rewarding. Such letters show a lively interest in a particular locality, which is, in fact, the aim and object of our whole series. Here are points from several letters which seemed well worthy of publication even though some of the points have been dealt with already in these columns.

that the ghostly figures which haunted "Ladies' Close" might decide to materialize. There were those who swore to having seen this dread apparition, for the legend is that in the country lane or "lodden" leading to Hatherley House Farm and bounding Slingley fields, a servant girl was once murdered and buried near a gateway. Since then her restless figure, shrouded in white, is reputed to walk "Ladies' Close" at intervals. Another "haunting" is the ghostly black dog that roams the path from Slingley through

attested by the Bishopwearmouth registers. In proof of the tenure of the estate, in 1585 we find a licence dated 26th July: 27: Elizabeth, 1585, given to George Middleton, gentleman of Silksworth, a trustee to the estate, to grant to Thomas Middleton of the Manor of Seaton, near Seaham, 20 messuages, eight gardens, ten tofts, ten orchards, 1,000 acres of arable and 1,000 acres of meadow lands, 50 acres of pasture, 100 of wood, 1,000 of moor, etc., with 12s rent in Seaton Slinglawe and Seaham, owned by Robert Eske, and other lands belonging to John and Elizabeth Claxton.



Seaton Hall, ancient home of the Middletons, now occupied by Mr G. Renwick and his family.

By
C. A. SMITH

The first is from a correspondent, self-styled "A Slingley Thompson." I quote it in full. Further to the article by C. A. Smith on February 4, one could not leave the confines of Seaton and Seaham without a second look, at the anciently-known "Slinglawe" or "Slingley-Du-Hill" (where animals were snared). The constant reference to Seaton-with-Slingley carries the supposition that the rolling acres of Slingley cover a hamlet in its own right.

a field, known as the 'straight neck,' to the railway leading to Murton junction and is only seen when a Thompson is about to die. (Absit omen! C.A.S.)

Bad Drainage

Many are the stories that are told of the doings of the folk who lived on the hill—the organized shoots, shared by man and dog; the heartache of bad drainage that left a shimmering lake covering crops in the bog field, ruinous to the farmer but a joy to the wild duck; the hopes and disappointments the very ruthlessness that could be Slingley and all that Slingley meant to those wresting a living from the land.

The eternal question that may never be answered yet is continually posed—"is there a lost village of Slingley?" and "will it ever be found?"

Many thanks for this interesting and helpful information. A second letter to the Echo is from Mrs Barbara Middlemiss, of Green Bank, Seaton, who writes in a different vein.

I have had so many requests to do something about the article in the Echo that I must say a few words on the history of Seaton.

I see there is no mention of Will Bulmer and his four sons. His father and grandfather before him farmed on Stotfield Farm and was the joiner and undertaker at Seaton. My father, David Carr, farmed on Haverley House Farm. Harry Boland, whose father farmed Sharpley Hall Farm, married my sister from Haverley House and has lived on Field House Farm for 38 years.

History Of Seaton

No mention of Ernie Thompson's wife, Cora Hedley, who was born on Seaton Moor East. Her mother was Olive Morgan from High Sharpley Farm. These are just a few omissions which are too numerous to mention here, but the rest you will find in my "History of Seaton" of which I hope to have copies published for the Seaton W.I. This history is long overdue. Owing to ill health I had to discontinue it. However, after this, I feel it is up to me to get on with it—and the sooner the better.

Thank you Mrs Middlemiss for your letter and we trust that your many "disgruntled friends" have been somewhat appeased by our later articles, which were, in fact, already in the Press. I trust that you will also send us a copy of your "History of Seaton." One of our photographs is of Seaton Hall, the old manor house of the Middletons and now occupied by Mr G. Renwick, of the N.C.B., and his family.

The mansion, though much pulled about through the ages, is attractively situated and it is sad to think that a modern housing estate may one day desecrate its environs and antiquity. The Middleton family, a younger branch of the Newton Hall Middletons, resided in the 17th Century house, which was described as "standing picturesquely on the summit of a hill, its projecting gables and mullioned windows facing a screen of lofty fir trees." Let us hope this vista will be preserved for it is so easy to destroy what can never be replaced.

On The Register

As we have seen, contemporary with the descent of the Seaton moiety, coupled with that of Seaham from Thomas Hadham, deceased in 1501, to his grandson and co-heir, John Blackiston, and in succession to the Blackiston descendants until 1635, a younger branch of the Middletons possessed lands in Seaton described as a "Moiety of the Manor." In 1585 Thomas Middleton held the estate. Anthony, his son and heir, was resident there in 1615, and in 1690 Thomas Middleton, of Seaton, married Anne Middleton, of the Silksworth family, as is

Seaham registers, too, indicate that Francis Middleton, of Seaton, gentleman, was buried February 24, 1657; Joan Middleton, January 6, 1679, and Anne Middleton, widow, November 30, 1686. Thomas Middleton, son of Francis and Anne, was baptized March 21, 1690 (as an adult?). Another well-known family, the Wilsons, of Cassop and Seaton, held lands there from May 25, 1579 (Elizabeth I) and their estate was described as consisting of several parcels of land from the ownership of Hebborne, Eden, and Bjenkinsopp, already referred to.

1828 Residents

Their old seat house was at the west end of the village. In the time of Surtees, Mrs Bewicke, widow of the Rev. Wilson Bewicke, fellow of University College, Oxford, who was a member of the Wilson family, still owned this estate. Incidentally, it was a William Wilson, of Middle Herrington, who made the first purchase of the land mentioned above from Robert Eden.

My own final records reveal that in 1828 Seaton and Slingley residents included John Brough, stone cutter, Slingley; William Brough, Seaton; John Chilton, shoemaker, Seaton; William Douthwaite, butcher, Seaton; Mrs Mary Hickson, Seaton; Ralph Hodgson, yeoman, Seaton; Johnson Pattinson, tailor, Seaton; Jonathan Taylorson at the "Horse Cockfighters Inn"? The farmers at Seaton were Thomas Brough, Ralph Elliott, Mary Smith, James Thoborn, James Shotton, and Elizabeth Hutchinson. John Robson was at Sharpley Hall, Robert Thompson at Slingley Hill and, no doubt there were others as well.

At The Dun Cow

In 1895 we find Edward Charnley, biscuit manufacturer, of Sunderland, living at Seaton Hall, and Miss Mary Ann Crabbe, mistress at the village school, where 40 children attended. Joseph Jackson and George Paxton were blacksmiths, with Joseph Jackson, assistant overseer as well. William Kirby was stationmaster; J. W. Tarbutt kept the Dun Cow; Ralph Thompson was bailiff at Slingley Hill; and Mr Bryan Hodgson, gentleman, Seaton.

The farmers were Thomas Boland, Seaton; Benjamin Milburn Brough, Seaton; Henry Wall, Seaton; Edward Barton, High Sharpley; David Crosby, Slingley Hill; Jonathan Dixon, Sharpley Hall; John Elliott, Seaton Moor; and William Archbold Weightman, Haverley House.

In 1925 Miss E. Crabbe was schoolmistress; Robert Wilkinson, stationmaster; and Charles Dixon, police constable. The population of the conjoint parish was 383 and included Arnott Snowdon, of Newlands; Wardle Asquith-Swallow, J.P., of Seaton Hall; James Tiplady at the Dun Cow; Joseph Dixon, possibly at the Seaton Lane Inn. Finally, the farmers named are George Boland, Sharpley Hall; Thomas Boland, Sharpley Hall; Benjamin M. Brough and Henry Wall at Seaton Town and Seaton West Farms; Herbert Bulmer, Seaton Moor; David Carr, Haverley House; William Robson, High Sharpley; Frederick Seymour, Seaton; Frederick Westwick, South Sharpley; John Yeoman, Seaton Moor; Henry Dodds, Cooper-Slingley Hill West; and Robert Thompson, Slingley Hill East.

Next week we return to Seaham.
(To be continued.)

MR. E. T. ROBISON

In our report of a case heard by Sunderland County Magistrates on Monday, it was incorrectly stated that Mr Edward Terry Robison, of Fee Terrace, Ryhope, was fined £20 for assault, occasioning actual bodily harm. In fact, Mr Robison was conditionally discharged for 12 months. We apologize for the error and any inconvenience it may have caused Mr Robison.

"PROGRESSING"

Mrs Emily Whelan (61), of Hylton Road, Sunderland, who was taken to Sunderland Accident Hospital yesterday after a road accident, was stated today to be progressing favourably.



Land in front of Seaton Hall, which has been suggested as a site for council houses.

The Dales

In 1610 Sir Ephraim Widdrington (Knight) and Arthur Hebborne (Gent) granted their whole messuage in Shinglawe to Cuthbert Collingwood and in 1616 Robert Collingwood granted tenements to Thomas Gregson, of Murton in the Whins, John Todd and Robert Robinson, of Dalton.

In 1615 Robert Collingwood granted another tenement in Seaton (late parcel of the possessions of John Swinburne attainted) to Edward Dale, of Dalton, who in 1643 settled the same estate to his younger son, Ralph Dale, of Slingley, both ancestors of the Dales of Tunstall.

At the time of the writing of this early extract, an estate at Slingley was still in the possession of the family of Carr, as representative of Ralph Dale, of Ryhope, eldest grandson of Ralph Dale, of Slingley. At the beginning of the 20th Century, Slingley Hill Farm West, hitherto farmed by Mr Collingwood, was rented to a Mr Henry Cooper, who farmed there until his death in recent years.

Seaton Schoolroom

Around 1925 the total acreage of Slingley Hill West, and Slingley Hill Farms were purchased by the Hetton Collieries. The old farm house, built of limestone from the area, was replaced by two modern houses, to be occupied by farm labourers, or hinds, as they were widely termed. The tenant at that time was Mr Shaw Eggleston. He followed Robert Thompson, son of Ralph, who had farmed Slingley after the death of his parents. The family of Robert owned and lived in the one-time gamekeeper's house at Seaton Bank Top overlooking the land they once farmed.

The old schoolroom at Seaton did yeoman service not only as a school but was also the venue for the farming community's monthly barn dance. Country folk walked from their distant farms in the area for that special Friday evening. The dance was by invitation only: the real chores were left to the willing and capable hands of farmers and their wives.

This was the evening when the barriers between "boss" and farmer servant went down. Farmers arraigned tables for whist, acting as M.C.s while their wives catered and waited on supper tables, clearing away and washing up dishes with a rare zest. The guests were their hired workmen, their families, servant lads and lassies; a pianist and fiddler providing the music for dancing.

Ghostly Figures

They were wonderful evenings where everyone met on level terms, with the old farming families well represented—the Bolands, Bulmers, Balmers, Hodgsons, Carrs, Coopers, Thompsons, Dows, Hedleys, Finches and Shaws from the Pacific. The long walk home for those living beyond Seaton Bank Top, had its complications. There was the chilling thought



Entering Seaton from Sharpley.



A view of old Seaton Village.

Teesside Post For British Railways Man

British Railways have announced the appointment of Mr A. R. Jefferson, who was held posts at Peterborough, Stratford, Leicester, Tuxford, Ardsley, Heaton, York, and Edinburgh, before coming to Sunderland. In 1945 he moved to Darlington, where he stayed until 1960, when he became district motive power superintendent for Middlesbrough.

Mr Jefferson, who is 62, began his career with the rail-

ways in 1919 as a premium apprentice at Doncaster. He held posts at Peterborough, Stratford, Leicester, Tuxford, Ardsley, Heaton, York, and Edinburgh, before coming to Sunderland. In 1945 he moved to Darlington, where he stayed until 1960, when he became district motive power superintendent for Middlesbrough.

Mr Jefferson is an associate member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. The Soviet Navy Ensemble—the song and dance ensemble of the Black Sea Fleet—will tour the provinces, but not the North-East, from April 5 to June 12.