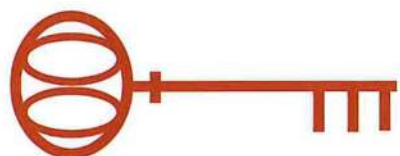


THE KEY



A NEWSPAPER FOR NORTH SKELTON & LAYLAND

*Merry Christmas &
a Happy New Year*



M. HARRISON. 03.

My Final Editorial



I have written and rewritten this final editorial many times. It has proved much more difficult than I ever imagined. Looking back over the last 12 years makes me realise how many people, each in their own way, have helped to keep 'The Key' productive. How do I start to say "Thank You" to

you all?

The very first edition was produced in the Village Arts room at the back of The Village Hall. Sandra Hinsworth, Veronica Chambers and Mike Stephens taught me the basics on how to put a newsletter together. Two years later Don offered his help - it was gratefully received. Sandra, Veronica and Mike moved on leaving Don and I to produce 'The Key' ourselves. It was hard work but the coming of the computer made things a lot easier. This partnership was to last until the present day.

I have often been asked the address of my office. Well, I haven't got one - the offices became my front room and a corner of one of Don's bedrooms. One gentleman said to me not that long ago he couldn't believe we had produced such a successful magazine in the corner of a bedroom - well we did. Jean, Don's wife, must have been absolutely fed up at times with all the clutter and PC equipment, the clatter of the printer and keyboard. Stationery and photos would be untidily strewn about but not once did she complain. Thank you for your patience and tolerance.

We both strived to keep 'The Key' as interesting as possible, local news and views taking priority. We particularly enjoyed reporting our local history.

From 'The Keys' beginnings we have had regular writers penning articles in each edition. To you all, we have read with interest your words of wisdom, humour, and advice and unfortunately on occasions sadness. As 'The Key' progressed we got articles coming in from residents who had moved out of North Skelton, but they had managed to acquire a copy of 'The Key' and we were very happy to have their effort included.

We were then amazed at how far and wide it was spreading - eventually we were getting letters and e-mails from all parts of the country, then from different parts of the world. Many a time over the last decade I have been delighted when a knock on my door brought me face to face with readers from as far away as Canada and Australia. Usually they were on holiday visiting relatives but because they receive 'The Key' they called to see me or

Don - this was very rewarding.

Now we come to the photographs. Oh dear!!! I know many of you turn to the photo gallery first! We have heard of many rows breaking out over names. I certainly knew if a name was wrong and I would be bombarded with phone calls telling me the correct names. Sorry to you all but I could only print the names given to me. Many times my memory was tested to the limit; I know for certain yours was.

Applying for funding was always difficult, but I was lucky. Pat Watson, part of a local development team, was only a phone call or bus ride away. Pat helped me in this field more than anyone. I very much appreciate all she did for us, and this also applies to all our local Councillors.

Listed below are organisations that have supported us with grants of money:

S&B Parish Council, Redcar & Cleveland Council, Cleveland Community Foundation, SRB, TSB, J Brun-don Charitable Trust, Basell, ICI and NTL.

If I have missed you out please accept my apologies. You readers have continually sent us donations and these helped enormously to keep 'The Key' financially sound. Under the terms of the A.N.S Constitution, of which we are a sub-group, all funds that remain after bills and expenses have been paid must be handed over to A.N.S. It will then be used for the good of the community.

I especially want to convey my gratitude and appreciation, first to Don who has worked tirelessly for hours and hours at a time perfecting 'The Key', to Stuart Fawcett my Treasurer and Krishna our assistant typist. 'The Key' has always been supported by my own family and they have helped me in any way they could.

A string of volunteers have, over the years, helped me to deliver the magazine freely to all doors in North Skelton. Trudging through ice and snow they never complained. Thank you.

It's the end of an era and so I say "Thanks for the memories" that will remain with me forever.

Norma

Editor: Norma Templeman, 7 Bolckow Street, North Skelton, Saltburn, Cleveland TS12 2AN
Tel: 01287 653853

E-mail: norma@templeman146.fsnet.co.uk

Assistant Editor: Don Burluraux, 8 North Terrace, Skelton, Saltburn, Cleveland TS12 2ES
Tel: 01287 652312

E-mail: don.burluraux@ntlworld.com

Treasurer: Stuart Fawcett
Assistant typist: Krishna Templeman

Some photos and articles from Issues 24 - 29 of 'The Key' can be viewed on the Internet (more will be added later). The website address is:

www.burluraux1.freeserve.co.uk/keyindex.htm

Memories of a North Skelton Bandsman

By George Hodgson

My first involvement with 'North Skelton (Hope To Prosper) Band' was whilst sitting on the step on a Sunday morning listening, when I was about 12 or 13 years old. After a couple of weeks I was invited in to listen but told to keep quiet. The players I remember at the time were Jim Wilson, Harry Carver, Tom Evans (I think his name was), young Graham Housam, and Ron Evans playing Cornet. I was mesmerised by Harry Carver's face going red then blue when he was playing, his cheeks came out like a bullfrog's!

Fred Hugill, Frank Housam on Horn, Ted Evans on Baritone, Norman Housam, Chis Cush on Euphonium, Fred Housam Trombone, Harry Pratt 'G' Trombone, Bob Evans, Tut' Templeman, Benny Dale on Bass and Tommy Templeman on Bass Drum. I am sure Dennis Housam must have been there somewhere and I apologise for anyone I may have missed. (Time effects the memory as some well know). All or most of these people were involved in the reformation of the Band later after the Mine closure.

As I grew older Ron Evans took

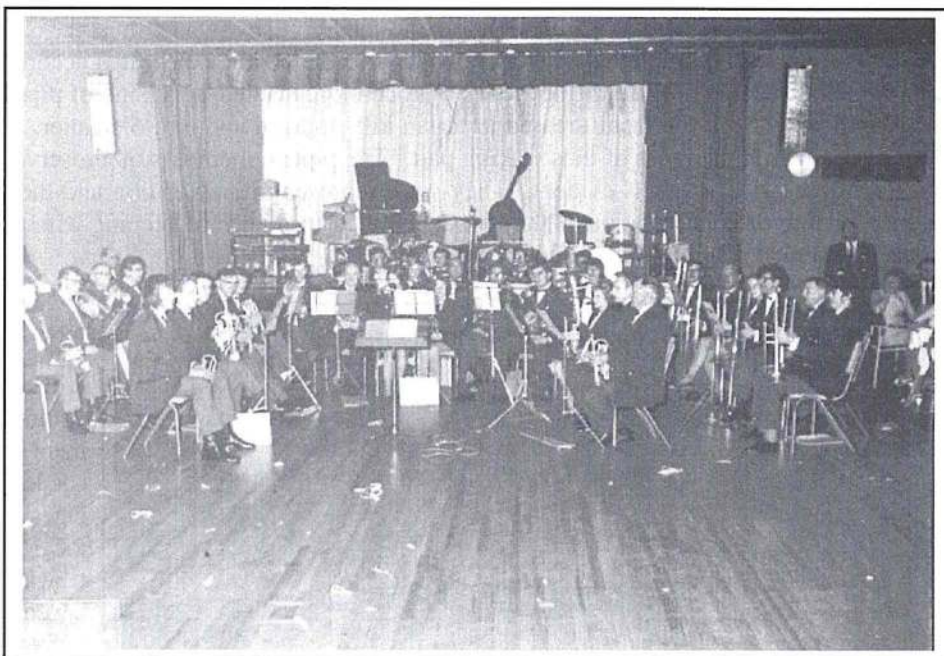
over. However, I think it was 1969 when Ken Robinson knocked on my door (I was married then and lived up William Street) and asked if I would be interested in forming the Band up again. He also rallied some of the former players plus others he knew. I could fill the magazine with stories from what happened then on, one of the most controversial at the time being the changing of the name of the band to 'The North Skelton & District Silver Band'. Some of the older members thought it an absolute outrage and a revolt by the newer and younger members. However, the vote was carried out for the name.

Our band President was Mr. George Pearson who had been the 'Mine Manager' and he continued to be right up until a couple of years ago. The 'North Skelton & District Silver Band' eventually became 'The British Steel Teesside Band'. From starting as a small unit it rose through the years to become the leading Band in the North East of England, competing at the highest level against the other top bands in the country. We also made a couple of records and tapes, one being with 'Acker Bilk and his Jazzmen'.

New Years Day was a big day in the village a few years ago. Most men and women of the village would get dressed up and the Band would lead them around the village before going up to the football field for a game of football can you believe! Many left the previous night's intake on the sidelines and after the game it was back to the 'Bulls Head' to replenish. Traffic could not get through the village during this time unless they paid a 'Toll', all proceeds going towards the 'Village Aged People Fund'. Although it was very time consuming I enjoyed my involvement with the Band immensely and I also met some wonderful people throughout the country and Germany as well. I am still able to keep in touch with many of the players. Please remember there is still a very good Band that practices in the village named 'The Langbaurgh Band'. They were formed originally from the junior members of the 'Big Band' and have gone from strength to strength and are well up in the rankings of 'The Brass Band World'.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to say I am a member of a good village and also to have been a part of a 'Brilliant Brass Band'.

Thank You All Very Much.



North Skelton Band in concert - bandmaster Ken Robinson

Across the back included are, L. to R: R Shippey, G Hodgson, C Brown, G Robinson, T Green, P Derring, P Robinson, F Housam, S Riddiough, J Hewson

Rows left to right, front to back:

1st Row : G Todd, D Housam, G Hutchinson, G Robinson,

2nd Row: H Jackson, C Swain, G Housam, C Limon

3rd Row: J Wilson, L Wilson, S Allen

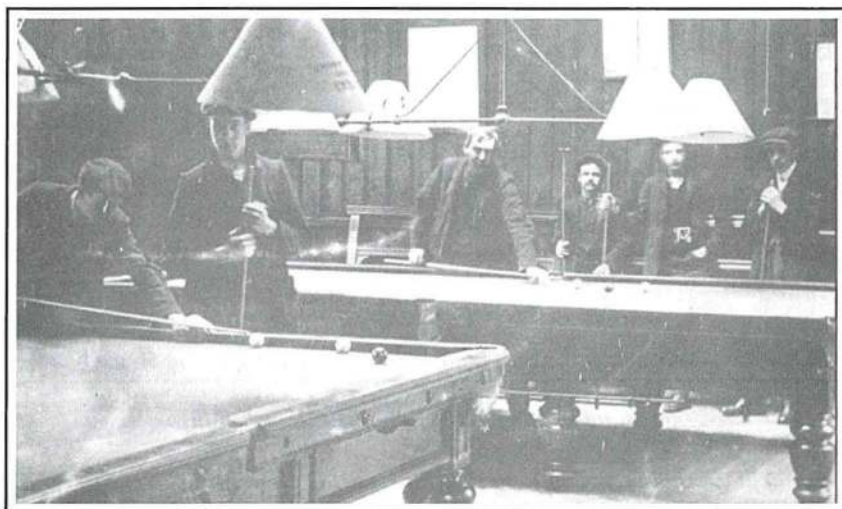
4th Row: -?-, F Housam, T Gordon, S Sherwood, D Prozbe

George Hodgson

The Hub of the Village - The 'Tute

By Colin Berwick

Earlier this year I was lucky enough to be in the Scottish town of Inverary on the opening day of the Games. This was one of the highlights of their calendar and the people celebrated accordingly. The town was decorated with bunting, and spectators lined the streets as a procession, headed by a band of pipers, marched to the Castle. The Duke of Argyll was in the forefront dressed in tartan kilt, sporran and tam-o'shanter. What impressed me particularly was the expression on the faces of those taking part. The pipers, members of a reserve regiment, were immaculately turned out and their pride was self-evident. They were representing a tradition and they were well aware of it. Their faces were a picture of concentration as they produced a performance in keeping with the importance of the occasion. They were proud men playing for a proud community.



This photograph was taken in the early 1900's and is of the Billiard Room inside North Skelton 'Tute - the characters were probably all miners. The building is now the Village Hall.

The General Strike of 1926 and the Great Depression between 1929 and 1932, had a catastrophic effect on the iron and steel industry in the North East. Local mining communities suffered greatly. Unemployment was widespread, and at one time exceeded 60% in the Cleveland mining villages. Some men found casual labour at local farms, but these were only stopgaps. It was a period of great deprivation and lasted until the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 when iron ore was needed for the war effort. In the 1930's people eked out a living as best they could. They grew food on their allotments, kept pigs and poultry, collected coal and cinders from the railway lines and brought wood for the fire from nearby plantations. My mother once told me that when Dad received money from casual employment (he had been working as a labourer putting up telegraph poles)

the first thing she did was to have my boots mended at the cobblers. Boys wore hob-nailed boots in those days – they lasted longer. The common enemy was poverty, but it forged a community of people who helped and supported each other. That feeling is rare nowadays but still prevalent to some extent in our local villages and none more so than in North Skelton.

Like the people of Inverary, the ironstone miners were proud folk. They had a hard, dirty and dangerous job, but they needed to do it for the sake of their families and for their own self-esteem. They would rather work than accept charity, but at the same time they knew how to enjoy themselves. The mine owners had provided a building where they could relax after work - it was called the Miners' Institute, but most people came to know it better as the 'Tute'. There were other places in the village to relax - the Band Room at the bottom of William Street housed the North Skelton Silver Band; the Church Rooms were the meeting places for Boy Scouts, ladies of Guild and badminton clubs. The Workingmen's Club provided entertainment, the annual show of garden produce, egg painting competitions and was a meeting place for the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes ('The Buffs'). The Bull's Head was a regular venue for members of the Band who often played for customers and paraded around the streets playing carols at Christmas. But it was the 'Tute', which was the centre of village activity – not just for the miners but also for their families and for a wider audience.

The main entrance was in the form of a porch, which later became an ideal shelter for people waiting for buses. A lino-covered passage led towards a bend, on the left of which was a room used for meetings and which at one time housed a library. Almost opposite was a door which led into a cloakroom and another into what was often referred to as the 'Long Room'. This was a large room with a wooden floor and a raised stage at one end. This was the main social area where dances, concerts, parties, jumble sales and large gatherings were held. Next to this door was another, which led to the rear of the main building. In this space was a separate building used as a Reading Room and occasionally as a 'changing room' for football teams. The passage in the main building finally led into the Games Room, a fairly large area, in the centre of which was an iron stove with a long chimney reaching to the roof. On the right of the stove was a space containing tables and chairs where dominoes and cards were the usual pastimes. To the left of the stove were full-sized snooker tables with seating for spectators to watch the matches. In one corner of the room was a

small cubicle where the custodian of the Institute held sway. He was the caretaker, cleaner, seller of soft drinks and took the money for the use of the snooker tables.

I had an early introduction to the 'Tute'. My maternal great-grandfather, William Harrison, had come from the Rosedale area to work at the Mine. When he retired he became caretaker and often treated me to a bottle of ginger ale. Whilst drinking it I was allowed to watch the men playing billiards and soon became fascinated with the game. Some years later I persuaded Dad to let me have a game with him and I became hooked. The cost of a game was four old pence (about 2p) for half-an-hour on the 'old table' – two pence per player. On the 'good table' it was sixpence (2½p). Quite a few boys of my age, about twelve or thirteen, 'cut their teeth' on the green baize of those tables, and it became a regular thing to play there whenever there was an opportunity. Unfortunately, Dad found out that I was neglecting my school homework in favour of a different kind of 'education', so he banned me!

During the war years the 'Tute' was used as a canteen where people could get a nourishing meal at reasonable cost. It was also used to accommodate Polish soldiers who had managed to escape from the Nazi occupation of their country. Many of these men found lodgings in the neighbourhood and were employed at the Mine. Some, such as George Tokarski and Tony Spychala, settled in the village, married and brought up families. At the end of the war, 'Victory V' parties took place all over the country and the 'Tute', draped in Union flags, was the centre of celebrations in North Skelton (see photograph on page 13). The period after the war was a time of change. Rationing of food and clothing continued and there was a need to rebuild an economy which had to change to peacetime reality. But people had suffered six years of doing without many of the things that had previously been taken for granted and wanted to enjoy the freedom that had been won. This feeling manifested itself in a variety of ways and none more so than the weekly dance.

Dances were held in a number of localities - Redcar Pier Ballroom and Saltburn Spa were very popular as were Skelton Institute, Carlin How and the Parochial Hall and Oddfellows Hall at Brotton. North Skelton, of course, held its dances at the 'Tute'. Most were held at weekends and it is interesting to look back at the times of starting and ending. Friday dances were usually from 9pm until 1 am; Saturday nights were from 8 pm until 12 midnight. Sunday was not available as there were strict laws governing entertainment on the Sabbath, so the 'Sunday' dances began at one minute past midnight and ended at 4 am Monday morning. I remember one occasion when I was walking home from Carlin How after the dance. I reached North Skelton at about 5 am just in time to meet a man who was going to catch the bus to Warrenby for the early shift. I am not sure who was the more surprised!

Two of the most popular ensembles to play at North Skelton were the 'Silver Star' and 'Dicky Hunter' bands. The Silver Star was a family band – the Robinson's. Dicky Hunter was from Middlesbrough, I believe - he was a short, rather stout man who played the trumpet. An entertainer of the time, Eddie Calvert, had made a hit record with a song called 'Oh Mien Papa' played on the trumpet. Dicky Hunter's 'piece de resistance' was this particular song - he played it every night. The dances were usually called 50-50 which meant that both modern and old-time dances were played. A *Military Two-Step* or the *St. Bernard Waltz* might be followed by a *Quickstep* or *Slow Foxtrot*. There were also 'Spot' dances where a place on the dance floor was chosen by the bandleader and the couple nearest the 'spot' when the music stopped won a prize.

It would be fair to say that those days when people made their own entertainment were the most satisfying. Community feeling was strong but it was not to last. Television was the new pastime and even the film industry took second place. The need for job mobility and housing, together with improvements in transport and communication, helped in the break up of small communities and led to changes in population trends. People moved to jobs rather than jobs to people. Nevertheless the 'Tute' continued to play its part in the life of the village. It has been the home of a youth club, community centre, kitchen, meeting place and function room. At the present time a question mark hangs over its future and it looks rather tired – but who wouldn't be after a hundred years. Happiness is an elusive quality and we are all the better for finding it. The 'Tute' provided many happy occasions from which came happy memories – memories that will last forever, and as such it has served the village well.

(It would be remiss of me not to mention something else which has provided pleasure and served the community. I refer, of course to 'The Key'. For twelve years it has entertained, informed and provided a talking point in local affairs. It is a publication which has drawn people together and re-awakened community involvement at a time when it was needed. Norma and Don are to be congratulated on their devotion and achievement. They are modest people who hate fuss, but I make no apology for this statement. Thanks to you both! You have given great pleasure to all of us.)

Colin Berwick



*VE Celebrations in Richard Street
L. to R: Hilda Barwick, Mary Brown,
Olive Templeman, Eleanor Harrison,
Minnie May*

Joe Scuffham M.M. - A War Hero from Skelton

By Stuart McMillan

Earlier this year, the village of Skelton paid tribute to one of its own...

Joseph Scuffham, M.M., known locally as Joe, was laid to rest with full military honours in Skelton cemetery. Friends, relatives and village members turned out to pay their respects to Joe. Members of the East Cleveland British Legion, the Green Howards and Veterans' Associations formed a 'Guard of Honour' at the church and cemetery. The service was conducted by Rector Graham Pacey, then with a final tribute, the 'Last Post' and 'Taps' echoed throughout the cemetery.



Joe was born in 1919 and started work at the age of 14 in the blacksmith's shop at Park Pit Ironstone Mine before being called up to the Army, joining the 4th Battalion of the Green Howards. He was sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force, arriving on French soil in January 1940. On the 10th May, Joe was a dispatch rider operating in Belgium, surviving whilst, unfortunately, others around him did not.

On one occasion, Joe drove across the ploughed furrows of a field to get a message through whilst under heavy fire. Later, he had to retreat with the rest of the army, but continued his work as a dispatch rider. Then he got word that his younger brother, Christopher, known as 'Kit' (who was also in the Green Howards) had been wounded. Joe made a desperate attempt to locate his brother in the battlefields of northern France, but he

and Kit were both captured, spending 5 years in POW camps in Poland. Kit was repatriated in 1943 with the first group under the Red Cross.

Whilst in captivity Joe, received a message that he had won the Military Medal for his bravery in France, making it, it is believed, the first of World War 2. He never went to Buckingham Palace to receive his medal after the War, but received it in a letter from King George VI.

Joe went on to try a number of escapes but with no success. He once spent time in the same prison in which some of the 50 members of the *Great Escape* were shot, he believed, under his window whilst he was there. Joe was thankfully spared the same fate and returned to his camp. During his days at the POW, Joe became well known for his fiddle playing, and was once made to play for the Nazi propagandist, Joseph Goebbels, whilst he was on a visit to the camp.

After the war Joe returned to Park Pit, then went on to work as a crane driver at the British Steelworks, near Middlesbrough. He was married to Dorothy and had one daughter, Sandra. Joe was a well-liked character in the village and will be greatly missed.



Joe Scuffham is buried with full military honours at Skelton Cemetery

From Groundhill Cottages, North Skelton to Groundhill Farm, Serpentine, Western Australia

From the humble beginnings of a miner's cottage located at Groundhill, North Skelton, two bricks mysteriously found their way into the luggage of Kath and Colin Blanchard, (who shall remain nameless) taking the 11,500 mile journey to Western Australia. They now feature in their newly cemented location of the living room of a home in Western Australia affectionately named *Groundhill Farm*, in the memory of relatives who resided in the cottages all those years ago.

The bricks were taken from the ruins of No.1 Groundhill Cottages, the last reminder of the 12 cottages built originally to house the miners. My Grandparents, Jack & Jane Hodgson, brought up a large family in one of those cottages, which from memory had two bedrooms, no bathroom and an outside toilet in the yard - a far cry from the modern housing these days.

My parents, Derek & Rene (nee Cross) Hodgson, purchased No.1 Groundhill Cottages from my Uncle Albert & Aunty Margaret in about 1956. I spent the first five or six years of my life there, and during that time my brother Mike was born in 1958. I remember walking down *Mucky Lane* to North Skelton for shopping in all weathers, and Mike and I having a bath in front of the fire in the living room in an old zinc tub. I also remember the huge snow drifts that threatened to isolate us from the rest of the village. It must have been a nightmare for my mother coming from a reasonably modern house in Loftus - well at least it had a bathroom, definitely a step back in time.

In about 1960 or '61 the houses were to be demolished and my parents were offered a Council house in Laburnum Road, Brotton. At a later stage, after the birth of my sisters Tina & Karen, we moved to a larger house in Linden Road opposite Warsett School, or Brotton County Modern as it was previously known. We all attended that school. As children we would walk from Brotton to Groundhill to play amongst the ruins of the cottages. Years later you could still make out the 'Huckleberry Hound' wallpaper we had in our bedroom and the pen scribble that my brother Mike and I put on it!

After leaving school and starting in the workforce it wasn't long before I met my wife Fiona (nee Abbott). We got married at St Margaret's Church at Brotton and purchased a house in Railway Terrace (which is now a rose garden & park bench). Our son Philip was born in 1975. We then moved to Eden Road in Skelton where our daughter Erica was born (1977) and from there we moved to Hawkstone Close in Guisborough where our third child, Andrew, was born (1979). During the years we lived in England we often visited Groundhill Cottages to show our children where their grandparents and great grandparents came from.

I mentioned earlier that my parents purchased the house at Groundhill from my Uncle Albert & Aunty Margaret. They had spent a number of years living in Western Australia and would often talk about their experiences and show us photos. So Fiona & I decided that we would try living in Australia, and 23 years later and one more child, Emma (1982), here we still are. My brother, Mike, followed us out a few years later. He went back to visit the UK last year and one of the first places he went to was Groundhill. He also caught up with all his old mates, much to the displeasure of their wives, because of the long drinking hours and reminiscing that went on!



Groundhill Farm, Western Australia



The two bricks from Groundhill Cottages, North Skelton, firmly cemented in the lounge wall of Groundhill Farm, Australia

Fiona and I went over to visit the Old Country in July 2002 to see relatives and friends, and once again we went to Groundhill. We then thought about taking a couple of bricks and putting them into our new house in Australia, but we would have been over the weight limits for our suitcases. We mentioned this idea, to our friends Kath & Colin (who will still remain nameless) not thinking they would surprise us a few months later by bringing back the two bricks from Groundhill!

As you can see from the photo, the bricks have been firmly cemented into the wall in the lounge of our new home as a special feature. The house in Serpentine, Western Australia is on 72 acres and we now breed miniature Dexter cattle. The house should be complete in February 2004.

One the photos that appeared in an edition of the Key magazine was that of my Dad, Derek. It's an old school photo, a nice memory, as sadly he is no longer with us.

As this is the last addition of the Key magazine I would like to thank Norma & Don for the years of dedication in putting the magazine together and all the good memories, stories and pictures of relatives and friends.

Brian Hodgson, Groundhill Farm, Serpentine, Western Australia

More Memories from Brian Addison (Young 'Nimble Nat')



Brian Addison - aged 20

(Continued from Edition 35....)

After serving my apprenticeship as a joiner at the Pit I was then called to go for a medical to do my National Service at Middlesbrough. After going through every medical test you could think of, and also a written test, I was finally told at the end of the day that I'd passed 'A1' to go into the RAF. I thanked God for that, as there wasn't such a load of bull**** in the RAF! Ironically, there were only two of us out of the whole class who were successful enough to pass for the RAF.

At the beginning of November I received a letter to report to RAF Cardington, Bedfordshire, to be fitted out with uniform, boots etc. A week later I was billeted at RAF Wilmslow, Manchester, to do my basic training, but being a joiner I was in great demand coming up to Christmas and we worked, constructing a rocket for the kids' party.

Back to training - being one of the shortest blokes on parade, I was put on the front row holding my rifle. The Corporal shouted "Port arms!" and I am still standing there with my rifle on the floor red-faced. He flew at me and asked in his loudest voice, "Who the **** are you - Bill Haley? You horrible little man," to which I replied, "What do you expect? I've been in the joiners' shop throughout most of the rifle drill." He just shook his head and walked away.

After nine weeks training I was sent to Dowdeswell Court, Cheltenham, which had been an old mansion. One day, the C.O. decided to hold a fire hose drill which started off well but ended up a bit of a fiasco. Two men ran pulling a handcart with a fire hose on board, to connect to the mains which was just outside the main gate.

After simulating this procedure the lads came running like hell back down the tarmac drive. About halfway down the C.O. was waving his arms in a frenzy - the lads thought they weren't going fast enough but what had happened was that the brass end of the hosepipe had fallen off the cart and was digging up the tarmac as they raced along. The C.O.'s closing comment was, "The Fire Brigade from Cheltenham would have been a better option!" After a pleasant twenty-one months at Dowdeswell Court I was finally de-mobbed in 1959.

My wife and I have been married for 42 years - I have two daughters and a loving grandson called Reuben. Three months ago there was a knock on the door and it was my old pal, Dennis Readman. We had a long natter about the good old days and our cycling trip to Scotland. Dennis was talking about buying a bike again, and funnily enough I had one given recently, but I think we'd both shy off another trip to Scotland! My best effort at the moment is a *whizz* round the block with my grandson - but I'm working on it....

I'm sorry to hear that this will be the last edition of 'The Key' because Norma, you've given a lot of pleasure to so many people with all the amusing stories and articles over the years.

"Many thanks to you and Don!"

Brian Addison (Young Nimble Nat)

A message of Joy and Hope for Christmas

It is with mixed feelings that I extend Christmas greetings to you all from the Church in Skelton. On the one hand our hope and reassurance is rekindled once again as we celebrate the birth of the Christ-child in a stable 2000 years ago and remember how his life changed the world and how his example of selfless love continues to bring life and light to the darkest places of our world today. Although at times our world can seem a forlorn place there are still so many ways in which our hearts are cheered and spirits lifted by the kind-heartedness of people around us and the ways in which people give so much of themselves to benefit both our community and individual people in need. Thanks to the efforts of so many people our community is a brighter

and happier place this Christmas.

Sadly, however, one of the brightest lights in our community is diminished as we read this last edition of *The Key*. Our grateful thanks must go to Norma and Don for their tremendous work and to all those who have contributed words of such quality for our interest and enjoyment over the years. This may be the last edition, but just as so much of what we have read over the years cheered our hearts by the memories it has evoked, so our memories of *The Key* will remain long in our minds for the joy it has given.

A Happy Christmas to you all.

Rector Graham

My 39½ Years Working in Local Government

By Dennis Preston

I was born a 'top-ender' at 45 William Street, North Skelton on July 19th 1937, the first child of my parents Jim and Ruby Preston. My early childhood was spent kicking an empty tin up the back of William Street - my Mum always said that whenever she heard a tin rattling up the street she could guarantee I was following it! I started school at 5 years of age at North Skelton Primary School (now Betterhome's DIY centre) under the guidance of the teachers there, the Kirkbright sisters from Brotton. It was here that I spent 6 years, until reaching the age of 11 when I graduated to the lofty heights of Stanghow Lane County Modern School at New Skelton, under the then headmaster, Mr Wilf Bonas. Here I spent 4 happy years until the early summer of 1952 when my thoughts turned to looking for employment.

Firstly, I was successful in applying to Skinninggrove Iron Works and was granted a place in the 'Brickgang'. I also had an application for employment with the then, Skelton and Brotton Urban District Council, as an apprentice painter and decorator, and you can imagine my dilemma when I received a letter telling me my application there was also successful. After much debate and

chewing over I decided the Council post was more for me. I was told to report to the General Foreman, Mr Matt Hicks, at 7.30 am on October 15th 1952, at the Council Offices in Skelton High Street.

The day arrived, so armed with my 'bait box' and Thermos flask, I nervously made my way to work for the very first time. On arrival I was introduced to Mr Ernie Bannister who was to be my mentor for the next 6 years whilst I learned my trade. The rate at that time was 8 pounds 10 shillings (£8.50) for a 44-hour week for a tradesman. We worked Monday to Friday, 7.30 am to 4 p.m and 7.30 to 11.30am on a Saturday. Our main task was painting the outside of council houses - in those days they were all painted the same, with green gutters and doors and cream windows. Hence, some wit, (I think it was the lorry driver, Mick Buck), christened us with the name Mr Cream & Green. We also did many other tasks, including painting white road lines by hand on 'Cherry Tree Corner' at Boosbeck and also on the crossroads at 'Myers Corner' at Lingdale. Can you imagine trying to do this task with the traffic that's flying about now?

I attended the College of Art in Roman Road, Middlesbrough, on day release, learning the many arts of my trade (e.g. graining, papering and sign-writing), until I reached the age of 21 when I was requested to attend a Council Meeting to receive my indentures. Present were the full council members, including Reg Simons, Harry Ingleby, Jim Graves, George Benson, and Lloyd Kirkbright amongst others. At this time a Mr Wilkinson was the Clerk of the Council, Mr Fred Stringer was the Surveyor and Mr Jim Rhodes the Health Inspector. I left, proudly clutching my papers, and I still have them stored away in my strong box.

As time went by, more council houses were being built and our painting gang increased to 5 in number. Then, in 1972, it was decided that an incentive bonus scheme was to be introduced for the full work force. This entailed employing a bonus scheme calculator, and being pretty good at figures I was asked if I would attend a 6 weeks crash course at Constantine College in Middlesbrough, which I duly did. On completion I received a diploma stating I had successfully achieved the required standard, which led to me being appointed to the monthly paid white collar staff. I stayed in this position until 1974 when all the small authorities were disbanded and a new larger authority was created, later called Langbaugh Borough Council. This meant everyone had to apply for advertised posts in whichever department they wished to join. I applied to the housing department for the post of manager at the Hollybush Farm Depot, which I was granted. I spent the next 10 years there, being responsible for the workforce covering the maintenance of council houses in East Cleveland, an area covering from Easington, Loftus, Liverton Mines, Skinninggrove, Brotton, Skelton, Boosbeck, Lingdale, Saltburn and Marske (approximately 6,000 properties).

The powers that may be then decided that all operations were to be centralised at the depot at Limerick Rd, Dormantown. This led to the closing of the Hollybush Farm depot, which now has houses built on it. I operated from the depot at Dormantown under various titles until 1992. Then, after 18 months of bargaining, I was granted early retirement at the ripe old age of 54 after completing 39½ years of my working life in local government.

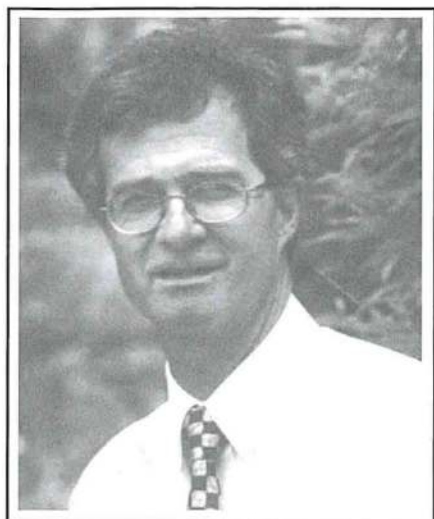
A-ah, what happy memories....!

Dennis Preston



Dennis and Pat Preston

Doc Spot...



Coughs colds and influenza - more from the past....

I love dipping into my old medical books to see how things have changed. Some things have come back into fashion and some things remain. What struck me particularly when reading descriptions of illnesses is how good they were, how accurate and often scary; illnesses that we expect to be mild were then dangerous or fatal.

Colds first then. We have all had a cold and felt rather sorry for ourselves for a few days, maybe get a few days on the sick if we are feeling particularly 'grotty'. We now know that these are caused by a number of viruses and are passed by droplet spread. So close contact with someone with a streaming nose and sneezing is a good way of sharing the illness. In my 1910 book, the cause was felt to be getting cold after being in a warm, enclosed space. Getting cold feet or being exposed to fumes was also to blame. So it is easy to see where the phrase 'catching a cold' comes from.

To prevent a cold you needed to be toughened up; lots of fresh air, tepid baths followed by a cold douche was recommended. For treatment, various mixtures were advised which included sweet spirit of nitre (saltpetre, also used in gun powder), acetate of ammonia (which must have knocked your head off), camphor (moth balls) also very smelly and ipecacuanah (a good cough remedy which is now out of fashion). No disguising that 'cold' was in the house.

If there is a lot of aching, Dover's powders should be used. These contained ipecacuanah, sulphate of potash and opium. In fact opium, morphine and cocaine feature a lot. Somehow, I think an entire nation must have escaped from the methadone programme for heroin addiction, but perhaps I am wrong.

If the illness became chronic then a change of air is best, usually the seaside. Quinine was also used a tonic

in these situations as well as helping to treat very high temperatures. The descriptions of bronchitis, pneumonia and pleurisy are scary - these were very serious illnesses. About pneumonia, my book reads, the illness cannot be shortened, it has to run its course. Basically, you ride it through with crashing high fevers, drenching sweats and dangers of heart failure and death.

Warm poultices of linseed and mustard are to be placed on the back and chest. Moist air and Dover's powers, and Seltzer water (any ideas about this?) are the thing - may not alter the course but it must have felt like something was being done. Antimonial wine (antimony is a mineral) for the cough, unless loose, when tincture of Senega (any ideas?) was the prescription. It was very important to have an adequate diet which should include milk, egg, broth and brandy.

Pleurisy is very unpleasant now - 100 years ago it was much worse. Remember that antibiotics are not yet available. In this condition part of the chest is very painful, making it hard to breathe in and out because the pain is so extreme. Often fluid will collect inside the chest between the lung and the chest wall. The physicians thought that the fluid could be reduced by various ways which included leeches over the affected area, poultices, and reducing drinks or purging with Epson salts. By modern thinking this does seem to be counter-productive, weakening the patient rather than helping. In the serious lung infections there was a real fear that it could pass to others. Burning all sputum and keeping the room vaporised with camphor was thought to help.

Heart failure was relatively common when the infections were severe. Blood letting, ether, carbonate of ammonia and Sal Volatile (ideas?) were to be taken as well as alcohol.. My comments above apply, but physicians also had extracts of digitalis, now given as digoxin, to improve the power of the heart.

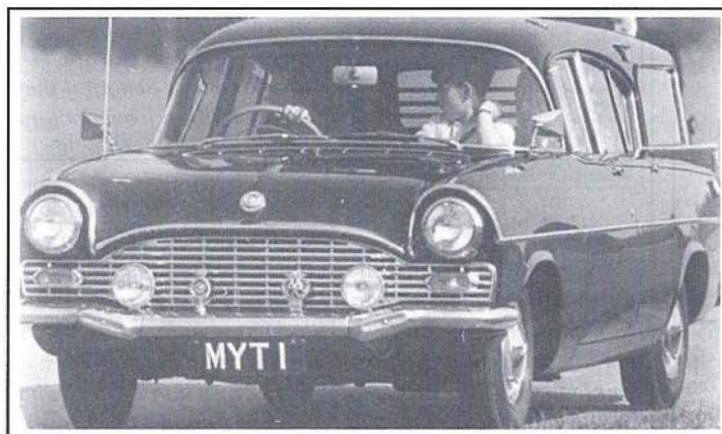
Survival from a cold was usual; but serious infections were frightening for the patients and their families. The approach 100 years ago was to soothe, comfort and nourish the individual. The combined use of stimulants and sedatives was common and now is not practised at all. Alcohol and morphine were in common use for treatment of infections as well as pain, teething and sleeping problems. On reflection, I think addiction must have been common place, but I doubt any stigma was attached.

So, at the first hint of winter, start the cold baths, get in a good supply of noxious smelling chemicals. Stock up at the off-licence and a trip to your local drug dealer is probably a wise move. Actually, DO NOT do that. Instead, if you are at risk of getting seriously ill with Flu or related illnesses, do get a flu vaccine. Keep fit and healthy and enjoy watching other people with colds - until you succumb yourself. Happy sneezing!

Dr. Roger Neville-Smith

Eddie's Car Page

By Royal Appointment



Here the Queen is shown driving a chubby-cheeked Prince Andrew home from watching Prince Philip play polo.



Judging by the regal grin, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II enjoyed driving the Vauxhall PA Cresta shooting brake which she used for most of the 60's and which is kept in the Sandringham museum.



Not a lot of people know this, but the Queen Mother was a 'Classic Car' fan and Patron of the Ford V8 Pilot Club. In this photograph, the Queen Mum is seen chatting with Trevor Millard, the then Club Chairman. The V8 Pilot shown was restored by Ford and also resides in a museum on the Sandringham Estate.



Prince Charles has been an Aston Martin man for most of his driving career. He has owned several Astons, including a £12,000 V8 Vantage. Here you see him (left) inspecting it (inset photo) in 1986. In the main photo he is using a DB6 as he collects Princess Anne from the King Edward VII Hospital for Officers. The bystanders and photographers seem far more concerned with the Princess than Charles' new Aston. If Charles knew then what he knows now, maybe he'd have 'put the wood down' to get the wind blowing through his hair while he still had some left!

A Tribute from Mam . . .

*'She searched around for old-time news
For photos with memories and local old views'*



I would like to pay a small tribute to my daughter, Norma, in this, the final edition of *'The Key'*. Norma has been editor of *'The Key'* for the past 12 years and has put hours and hours of work and thought into each and every issue. I know a lot of people

will miss the magazine, including myself. The old stories and photographs were so interesting and brought back so many memories. We all looked forward to each new edition as they took us back to the good old days when North Skelton was a thriving pit village with everything going for it.

There was the Institute where they played billiards, snooker and dominoes, and had Monday night dances and whist drives. Then there were the Church Rooms where they played badminton and which hosted many parties and wedding receptions. North Skelton held regular Carnivals and Parades at a time when many other villages didn't. The War Memorial still stands proud and is still in a lovely condition after all these years.

When the Pit was still working there used to be what we called 'The Miners' Day Parade' and sports events down the football field. I remember Arthur Gosling and my husband, Fred Burluraux, winning the three-legged race and myself winning the ladies' 100 yards. Then, to finish the day, there was a lovely concert in the 'Tute'. I especially remember Norah Sturman singing a lovely solo that evening.

'The Key' magazine took us back to those good days - many kind people sent Norma lovely old photographs and interesting stories. She was very grateful for all those contributions and spent hours writing replies of thanks and other correspondence. I am proud to think she brought a lot of interest and nostalgia to people, not only from the village but worldwide. From a very small beginning, *'The Key'* grew and grew to what it is today. Sadly, there will be no more. . .

Thank you again, Norma.

Rene Burluraux (Norma's Mam)

A Letterbox Reply . . .



Sheila Lane

With reference to the 'Letterbox' article in the December 2002 issue of *'The Key'* by John Braven, in which he states that, "a boy or girl only attended the Grammar School if they were children from doctors, etc.", I wish to refute his allegations.

I passed the 'Scholarship' as it was then known in

1959, along with Neil Harrison, who writes amusing, informative articles regularly in *'The Key'*; Bernard Allison, who tragically was killed in an underground mining accident at Boulby Potash Mine in the mid-70's, ironically whilst I was employed there; Brian Foster, who happens to live on Layland Estate, as I do. All of us from ordinary working-class families, as I am sure many of the other local lads and lasses were who passed the 'Scholarship'.

I was actually born at 85 High Street, Skelton, the present site of the Halifax Building Society/Estate Agents. My father deserted my mother when I was 4 years old, so circumstances dictated that we moved to live with my Aunt Rhoda Skipper (my mother's sister), the then licensee of the 'Wharton Arms'. There were no council houses or Social Security benefits granted to single mothers in the war years.

So, John Braven, who I remember from those school days at Skelton Green Junior School under the Headteachership of Miss Saunders, perhaps you should get your facts right before putting pen to paper - or is it merely 'sour grapes' on your part because you didn't pass both halves of the 'Scholarship'?

May I take this opportunity to thank Norma for her hard work in compiling each and every edition of *'The Key'* over the past 12 years, not forgetting Don's input. I have kept every issue since its inception and I am sure I speak for many readers in saying that it will be dearly missed.

Sheila Lane (nee McCann)

The Pentecostal Church (once the Methodist Chapel)

Volunteers have worked tirelessly to give the Pentecostal Church a face-lift. The offerings from the congregation have enabled them to make repairs to the wall and to paint the outside. What an improvement this has made to Vaughan Street.

Merry Christmas and well done!

(There are many voluntary workers in North Skelton, some we never hear about. You are all worthy of a special mention).

Thank you!

PHOTO GALLERY



'Victory V Party' in North Skelton 'Tute - 1945/46

*Back L to R: Louie Stevenson, Annie Leeks, Lydia Harrison, Norah Teasdale, Olive Templeman,
Eleanor Berwick, Cliff May, Norah Coates, Hilda Vasey, Mrs Reece, Meda Sanderson
Middle Row: Mrs Bunnett, Mrs Hugill, Grace Wynn, Norah Harrison, Mabel Whiteley,
Mrs Gordon, -?- , Mr Carver
Front: Geoff Hudson, Kathleen Berwick, Sheila Harrison, Carol Thomas*



North Skelton Co-op and the Co-op House (pre Holmbeck Road houses)

Skelton Cadets - c.1944

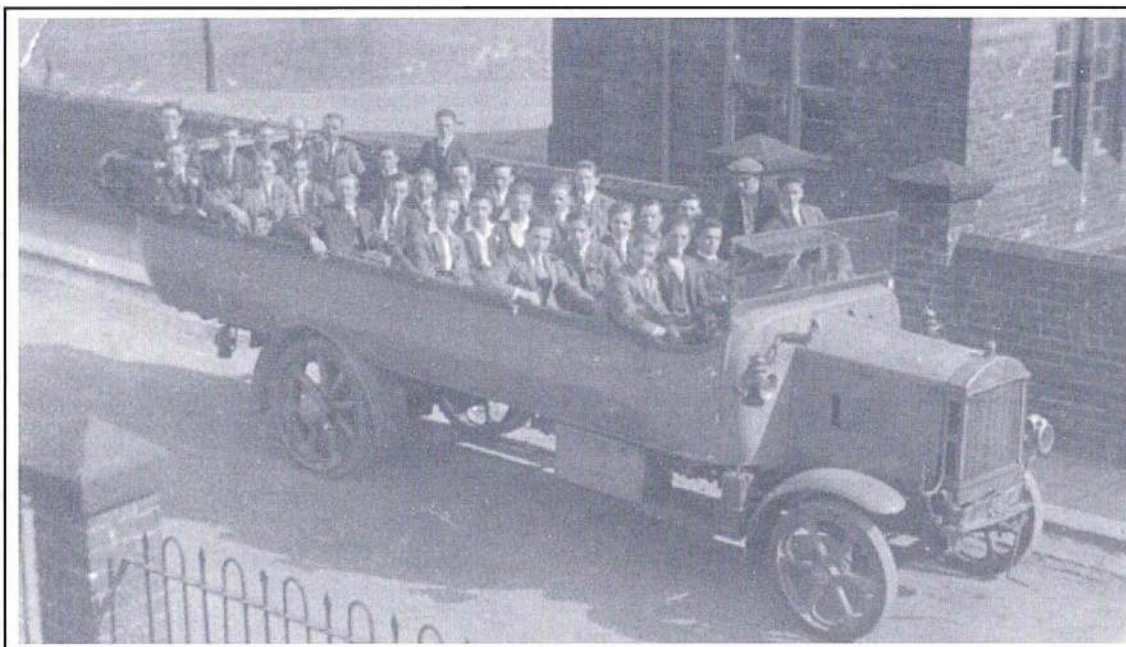


*Back Row L. to R: Harold Pigg, Stan Watts, -?- , -?- , ? Stocks, -?- , -?- , Harry Pigg, -?-
 Middle Row: Denis 'Pants' Robinson (Cpl), Tony Hood, -?- (Cpl), Keith Corner (CSM), -?- (Junior Officer),
 Wilf Bonas (Headmaster - Officer-in-Charge), ? Butcher (Sgt), Len Douglass (Cpl),
 Les Tilley (Cpl), Jim Shaw (L/Cpl), -?-
 Front Row: -?- , -?- , -?- , Tommy Wright, -?- , Eric Bringlow, -?- , -?- , -?- , Ruben Hood*



Brotton Brownies at Castle Howard - c. 1970

*Back Row L. to R: Adrienne Smits, Mary Reece, Pam Snaith, Ann Reece
 Middle Row: Pat Scott, Elizabeth Mussett, Kay Plews, Sharon Backhouse, -?- , -?- , -?- ,
 Gaye MacLean, Susan Wilks, Jayne Smits
 Front Row: -?- , Janette Domencic, Jill Bailes, Alison Wood, Marie Wood, Judy Reece,
 -?- , Karen Wilson, Lynn Hauxwell*



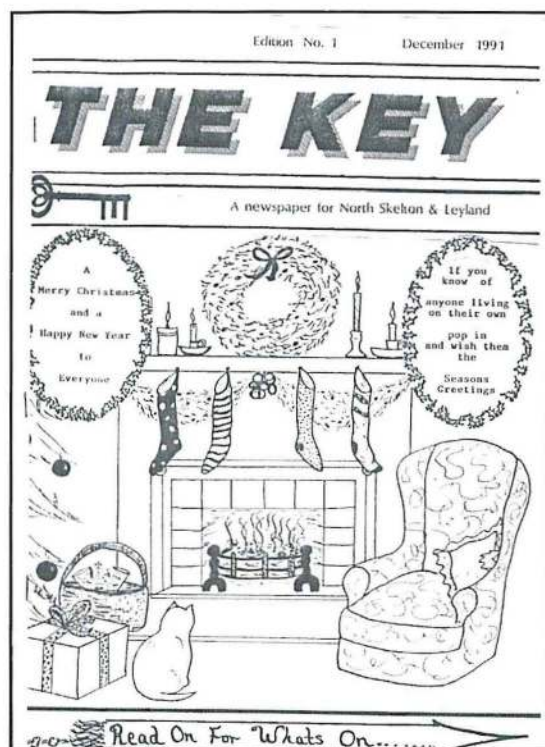
*Hemmingway's Bus - 1922 trip to Whitby Regatta
Skelton Church B.C.F.C.*



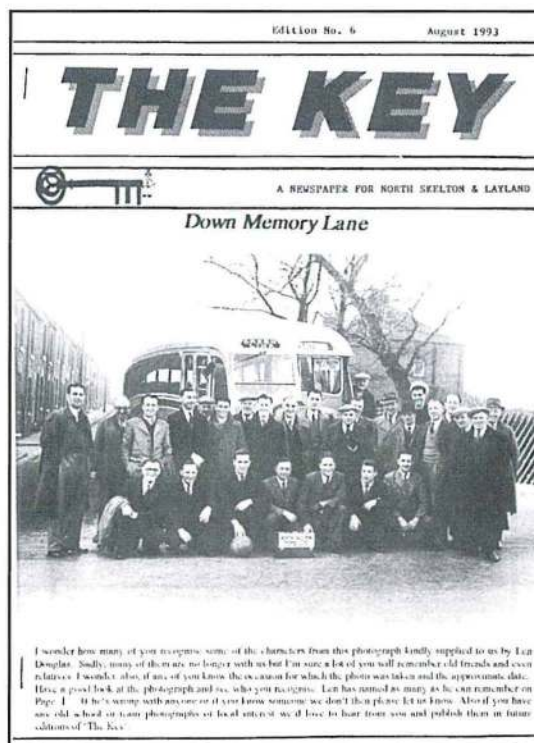
On the seat over the road from Dixon Street, Skelton - early 1970's

*L. to R: Jim Walmsley, Andrew Ward, Norman Hopper, Tommy Holt, Arthur Appleton,
Jack Curnow, Eric Brown, Jim Parker*

Here are some of the front covers of 'The Key' from over the years



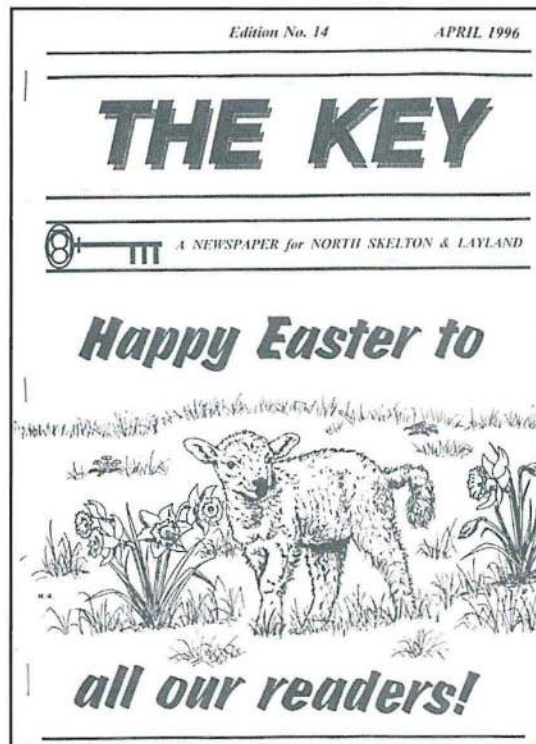
Edition No. 1 - December 1991



Edition No. 6 - August 1993

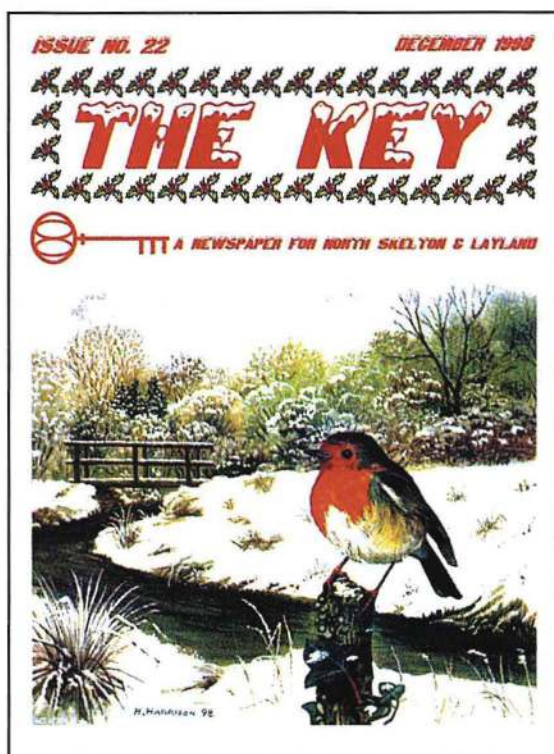


Edition No. 9 - August 1994

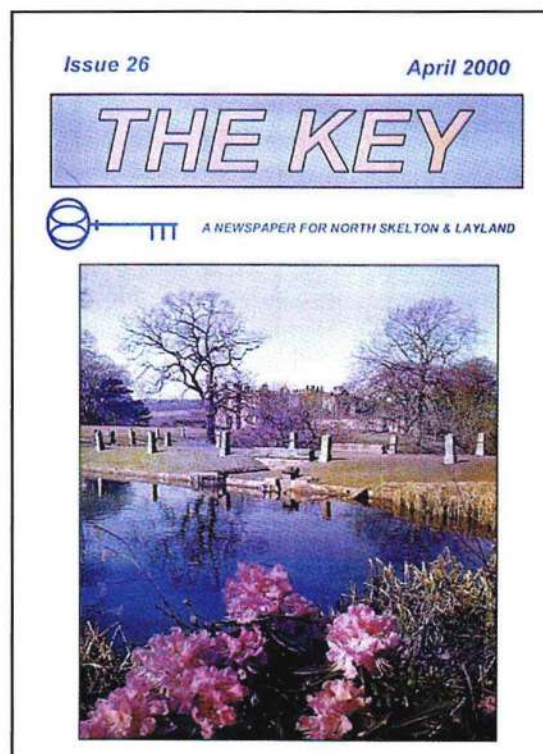


Edition No. 14 - April 1996

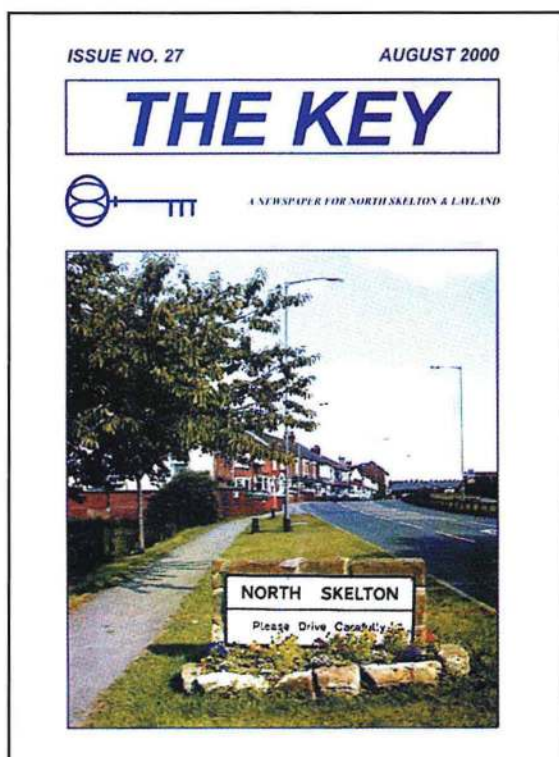
From December 1997 we printed the front page in colour . . .



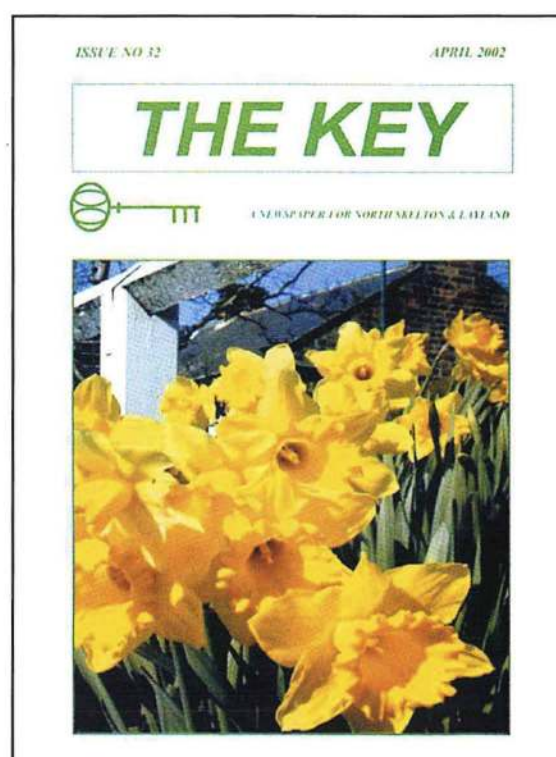
Issue No. 22 - December 1998



Issue No. 26 - April 2000

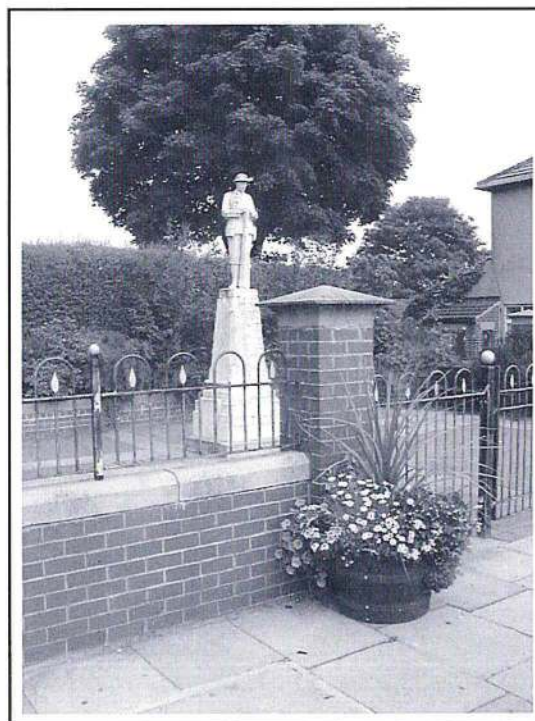
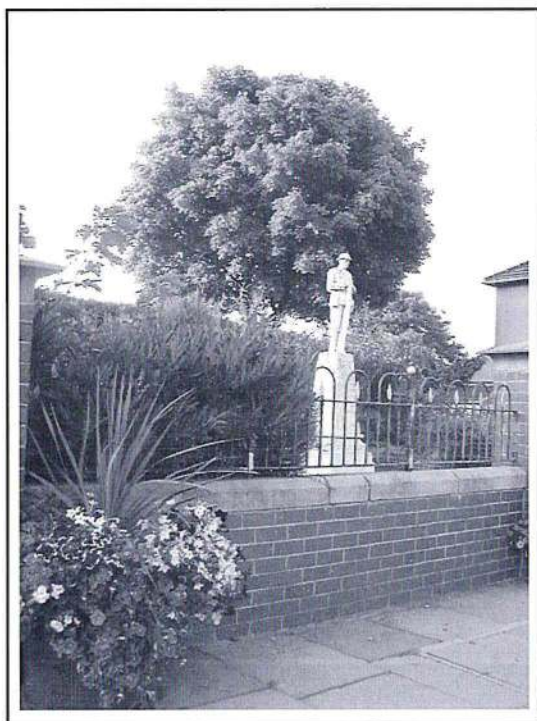


Issue No. 27 - August 2000

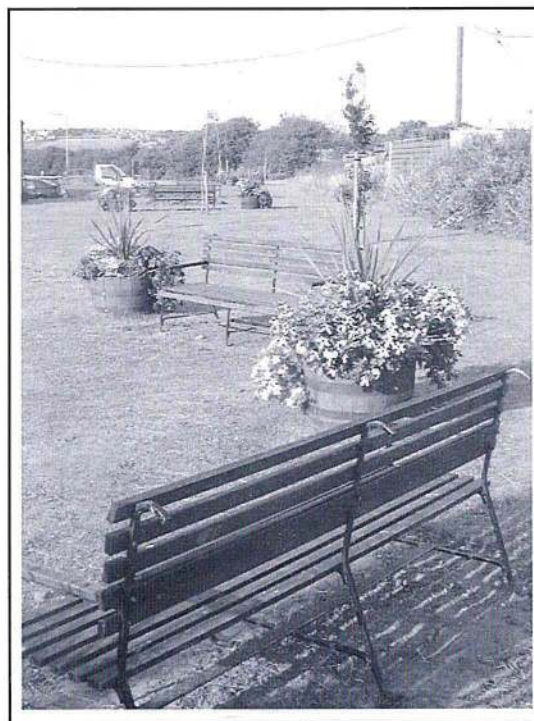


Issue No. 32 - April 2002

*The following photographs are examples of just a few
of the achievements made by Action North Skelton
to improve the appearance of the village*

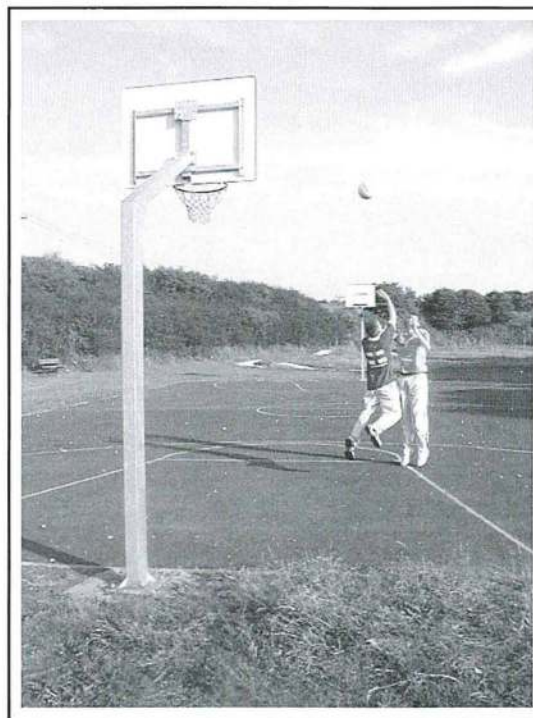
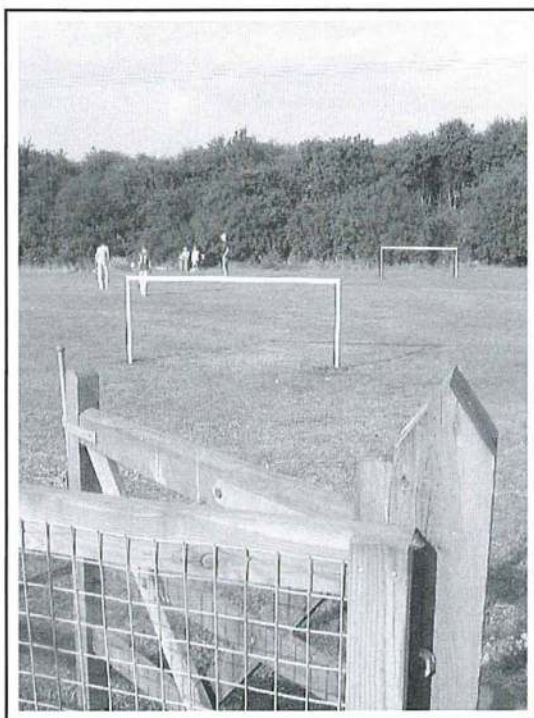


ANS were highly involved in the improvements to North Skelton War Memorial area

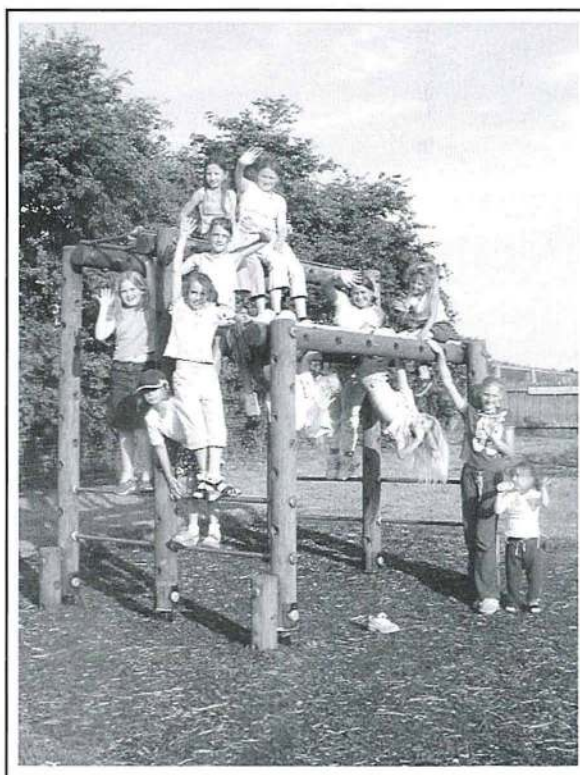
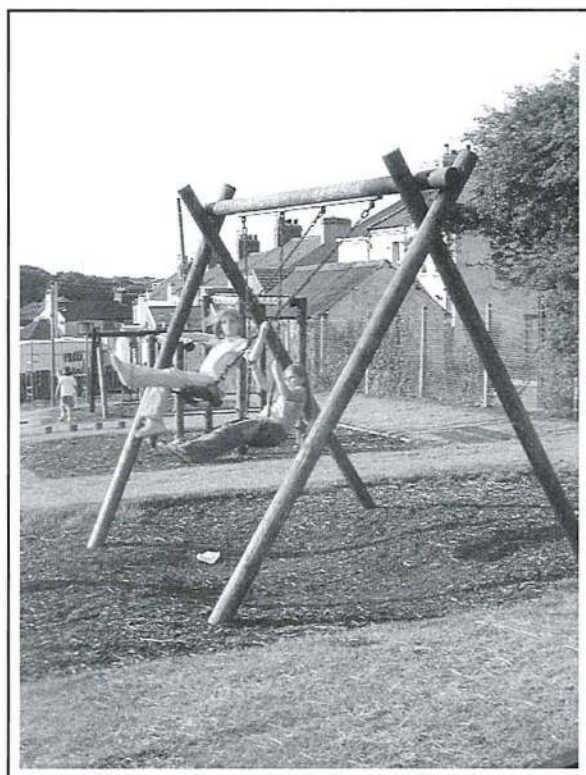


Seating and flower tubs at Sparrow Park (left) and the top of the streets (right)

More ANS improvements . . .



. . . recreational areas including a footy pitch (left) and a basketball court (right) . . .



. . . and a safe and happy play area for our children



The final photograph to appear in The Key photo gallery is of this colourful show of flowers in the grounds of St Peter's Church. May we take this opportunity to thank Merv Marley for the many hours of work which he puts in to allow us all to enjoy such a wonderful display.

The Lamps

A Letter From Oz ...

Dear Norm,

'Ah'm sick of it 'ere, Tilly's not too keen either. It's too hot, we're sweatin' like bulls all day long. Now, 'ah must admit t' kids love it an' they're no trouble. When they're not at school they're swimming in t' pool. Oh aye! We've got a pool an' it's as big as a football field. Kids love it an' Tilly does an' all. 'Ah must admit she cuts a fine figure of a woman in one o' them bikinis. It's a pity 'er stitches stand out where she 'ad 'er operation. I 'aven't been in, 'ah've nivver tuk to watter. Poor old Spot, he's never settled, he paddles about as miserable as sin. 'Ah did manage to buy two ferrets but they're both dead now. One died of sunstroke, t' other drowned. It tumbled in t' pool an' couldn't swim. Mind you 'ah wasn't bothered cos 'ah've nivver clapped eyes on a rabbit yit! There's plenty o' kangaroos but 'ah somehow don't think a ferret'll tackle one o' them jumpers. 'Ah've tried to settle, 'ah went next door just to be neighbourly like. He looked a nice fella. 'Ah said, "Can yer tell us mate, where's t'nearest Workingmen's Club?" Well Norm' he looked at me as though 'ah was crackers! He said "What's one of those?" 'Ah couldn't believe it so 'ah told him. "It's a place where yer all meet an' 'ave a drink o' beer an' play darts an' dominoes an' 'ave a talk an' all that."

"We don't have those here," he said. "We have get-togethers in the golf course club house. You could of course join us." Well I ask you Norm', me playing golf! Anyway, 'ah thought about it an' decided 'ah would 'ave a go. 'Ah bought a set of golf sticks an' one of them little balls an' went to 'ave a practice in mi' garden. Norm', 'ah swung them sticks as fast as a strippers tassle an' 'ah nivver 'it it once. 'Ah think t' problem is that t' ball needs to be a bit bigger cos' t' end of t' golf stick is o'wer little an' all. Now! 'Ah would 'ave practiced a bit longer but what come out from under t' bushes for its daily walk, a Tarantula! That's a spider yer know. They're as big as dinner plates here. If yer stamp on one to kill it its like shoving yer foot in a cowpat. Tilly and t' bairns are scared stiff and 'ah'm not so keen either, so that was t' end of mi' golfin' career.

We all had a grand night last night. I 'ad a bar-becue on mi' pratio. 'Ah cooked kangaroo steaks an' sausages, an' burnt 'em a bit. See Norm', 'ah must 'ave thought 'ah was fillin' tubs down Noth' Skelton Pit the way 'ah was shovellin' coal on that fire. Next thing there was flames an' smoke billowin' everywhere. We-e-ll, World War 3 brock out. 'Er next

door, Ozzy born and bred, went crackers. Fire engine arrived an' 'ah said to 'em, "Ah could 'ave put it out missel, 'ah've got a pool full o' watter there. But, t' kids loved it!

Kangaroo grub was poor though, tough as bull's lugs. 'Ah wanted to do all sorts Norm'. 'Ah was dyin' to tek' our Ed pannin' for gold. 'Ah'd got mi' eye on a nice little donkey an' riddle. That didn't work out cos' t' hills are that far away that t' donkey would 'ave collapsed afore we got there, an' us with it. Then there's what you call an outback. It's like Merry's Gill an' down t' Slack, only a lot bigger. You get yerself a horse and a cowboy 'at wi' corks hangin' down, that's to stop the mossies from landin' on yer face. There's big money in that, an' wi' me 'avin' a bob or two 'ah could afford to go for a couple o' weeks. 'Ah decided not to go though, 'cos it's not t' same as goin' up fields with yer mates. By 'eck, 'ah don't 'alf miss 'em all. Not only that, what's put t' tin 'at on it all is 'er next door. 'Ah bought our twins new bikes. Well yer know what bairns are like, they were up and down t' flags and round t' block. Just as she came out of 'er gate our Milly came 'ell for leather in front of 'er and up-skittled 'er. She went berserk with our Milly. 'Ah flew out just as 'er 'usband took hold of our Milly. 'Ah went to chin 'im an' missed. She shoved 'er face into mine an' started shoutin'. "I'm sick of you pom-mies coming over and doing what you like in our country!" That did it Norm'. 'Ah got 'old of 'er fella's shirt neck an' started bellowin' at 'em both. "YOUR country!" 'ah shouted, "YOUR country, yer brass-necked pair! If it 'adn't been for Captain Jimmy Cook from Great Ayton you would nivver 'ave 'ad a country! Rolf Harris didn't come across it yer know, Jim Cook did. Norm, 'ah was now in full flow an' 'ah let 'im have t' lot. 'Ah poked mi' face in front of 'ers as 'ah shouted, "An' what about t' Sydney Bridge built wi' ironstone from Noth' Skelton Pit! That bridge is one of t' finest in t' world and so is t' iron it's built wi'. An' while we're on, 'ah'm glad it was us who won yer Rugby World Cup. 'Ah bet Captain Jim Cook is lookin' down on Johnny Wilko wi' a chest on 'im like Tarzan. Proud as Punch!" 'Ah was red in t' face by now as I gave 'em mi' partin' shot. "Well, 'ah'll tell yer summat missus, yer can stick yer country and yer kangaroos up yer jumper 'cos us lot are off back 'ome!" An' we are Norm'. We are comin' 'ome. 'Ah miss mi' mates and t' green fields. 'Ah can't live mi' life like this. 'Ah miss goin' rabbittin' an' 'avin' a pint in t' Club and t' Bull. Most of all, 'ah miss Noth' Skelton 'cos it's true what they say, there's no place on earth like 'ome. If we get our skates on we'll all be 'ome for Christmas Eve. Just in time to raise our glasses and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

Love to you and yours,
Davy Lamp.

IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE.... I'M ON A DIET!

By Neil Harrison

Isn't some music evocative? I don't mean the hip-hop, bling-bling, gang-man din currently pounding out of garages up and down de whole of de UK. No, it's more that certain melodies or lyrics in the right circumstances will make you pause, smile and remember. Generally, the songs we enjoyed in our teens and early adult years are more likely to remain fresher for us than a host of Euro Song Contest entries.

For example, the Liverpool Kop have adopted *You'll Never Walk Alone* as their anthem, possibly on the tenuous premise that Gerry & The Pacemakers had a hit in 1963. In fact the song originated in the musical *Carousel* in the early fifties and was mawkishly rendered by Shirley Jones (stunning) and Claramae Turner (matronly) in the film version. When advised that his '*crie de cour*' tune was regularly belted out by 40,000 hairy-a**ed Kop fans, Richard Rodgers could only mutter "Good God!" In praise of said soccer fans, there have been many tear-jerking renditions of *Abide With Me*, at numerous Wembley finals and funerals plus *(The Old Rugged Cross)* are its main airings.

When I was your '*shy of girls all giggly and blushing in their presence*' (from about 13 to this very day), I absolutely believed every word of the pop songs of the time, and still do. Proof positive came in some morale-busting experiences with girls of fickle lights, non more salutary than the words in the Nat King Cole/Ronnie Hilton hit *A Blossom Fell*..., the key couplet being...

*'The gypsies say and I know why,
A falling blossom only touches lips that lie...'*

...and so it proved one bleak autumn day in Saltburn Woods.

Did I heed such fortellings? No. About the same time, the Dream Weavers advised me in *It's Almost Tomorrow* that....

*'It's almost tomorrow, but what can I do
Your kisses all tell me that your love is untrue...'*

So at various times thereafter, lyrics and tunes composed by utter strangers pointed me in a certain direction, but their long-distance advice was mostly ignored by the arrogance of youth and vapidty of true love. Oh, yes it is always true love, the real thing, this time I know she's the right one. Thankfully, it was not all doom and gloom. *My Sweet Lord* (George Harrison – no relation), *Those were the Days* (Mary Hopkins) and *You Don't Have to Say you Love Me, Just be Close at Hand* (Rusty Springboard) will, even now, conjure memories of good times, dewdrops of true happiness on the thorns of life....aa-hhhh, *Memories are Made of This*.

Last day of summer term at Guisborough Grammar, just after lunch – a truly magical time. The long summer vacation beckoned, some pupils were leaving for higher, lower or intermediary events. We were all gathered in the Main Hall, then we rose as the Head (J R Routh, Esq.) led in his staff, resplendent in their (newly-laundered) gowns, garnished with their Honours silks. Some to cheers (Farrington), some roundly booed (Mr Noble in his first full year causing him exceptional blushing) and then the closing hymn, *To Be a Pilgrim*, pounded out on an old piano by Mrs Routh. I can see it now, I can *SING* it now....

*'There's no discouragement, shall make him once relent
His first avowed intent...to be a pilgrim...'*

....and that is what I have been and remain, brothers and sisters - a pilgrim.

Life is rarely free from the 'Forces of Darkness'. I was in the *Bongo Club*, over-the-border in Middlesborough, the night *The Excelsior* burnt down - some say from a discarded cigarette and a careless late-night barmaid. Who knows, but lives were lost, young lives. Playing in the Club that night, on the jukebox, was an instrumental number, Horst Jankowski's *Walk in the Black Forest*, and although it is rarely spun today, I cannot resist a shudder when those plaintive notes *pling-plong* out on the airwaves. Again, *Albatross* (Fleetwood Mac), holds bitter-sweet memories for me. Most will know it merely as a laid back hammock-swinging drifter of a tune.

Some songs you know at once will be instant hits - *Puppet on a String* (Euro song contest), *I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing* (a Coca-Cola ad, for goodness sake!), *Goldfinger* and other Bond movie themes, and The Animals' hit, *There Is a House in Skelton Green*...

When Fergus Grant (lawyer) joined the Cricket Club he had a terrible stammer/stutter (when does one become the other?), but laughed gamely and used some fruity language when Prothero and I invited him to join us in the chorus of that erudite and linguistically perfect song, *Gilly-Gilly-Ossenfeffer-Katzenellen-Bogen-By-The-Sea*. By God, Woodrow, they don't write them like that anymore!

There have been three hits from famous Harrison's - the above mentioned George (*My Sweet Lord*), plus Noel (*Windmills of My Mind*) and more recently, my very own '*If I Had To Do It All Over Again (I'd Do It All Over You)*'.

I close with a competition for you in these uncertain times for the future of *The Key*. Please enter, e'en if you know me not well, nor just a little. Which of the following titles best summarises my character/personality?

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Adventures of the Love Crusader</i> | (Sarah Brightman) |
| 2. <i>Alone Again (Naturally)</i> | (Gilbert O'Sullivan) |
| 3. <i>Daydream Believer</i> | (The Monkees) |
| 4. <i>You've Lost That Loving Feeling</i> | (The Righteous Bros) |
| 5. <i>Yesterday Man</i> | (Chris Andrews) |
| 6. <i>Oh Yes, I'm the Great Pretender</i> | (The Platters) |
| 7. <i>Addicted to Bass</i> | (The Puretones – 2002, apparently) |

e.mail me @ www.icantbelieveitsnotbitter.co.uk

Neil Harrison - 01287 654208 - a-lookin' forward to hearing from YOU!

Community Technician's Technical Tips

Surfing the Net: "What's all this 'Search Engine' stuff?"

You may well ask dear readers. But we need these 'search engines' as the web has got so big that it's not easy to find stuff. Think of it as similar to the growth of the telephone network. At first only a few people had telephones and the operator could easily connect you to where you wanted to be, but now there are so many millions of different numbers that no one person could possibly know all the connections. Similarly with the web, with thousands of new webpages being uploaded every day it has just got too big.

So if you want to find out about '*Llama farming in the UK*' and you don't know the web address, then what do you do? Well, you can either use a web directory, (very similar to Yellow Pages except for the web). Examples are: *Yahoo* (<http://uk.yahoo.com>), *Ask Alix* (<http://www.askalix.com>), *Google* (<http://www.google.com>), or even <http://www.yell.com> (the website of *Yellow Pages*!). You can use these as you would use your Yellow Pages (i.e. you would look in a category where you think there will be web pages about '*Llama farming*'). I looked this up in the *Google* directory while I was writing this article and the following category path gave me results:

Business -> Agriculture and Forestry -> Livestock -> Camelids -> Llamas

However this would have fallen short if you didn't know that a Llama was a type of *camelid*. This is where a Search Engine is a bit more efficient but cumbersome. A search engine looks at the content of web sites as well as the descriptions. So if you put in a search engine the words *Llama* and *farming* you will get a long list. Lets try in <http://uk.altavista.com>. That brought up 3657 individual web pages. Lets refine it by asking it to look at web sites from the UK and Ireland only. Well that's better - only 308 that time but still a lot to look through. The directory approach only brought up 191 sites. The reason for this could be that any site that has somewhere in the content the words *Llama* and *farming* will be found by the search engine. So, for instance, in our example I found a report on environmental damage, a clothing company, and a Llama trekking tourism site, (and that was only on the first page!).

So directories have their 'pros' as well as their 'cons', as do the search engines.

So we're bidding a fond farewell to '*The Key*' which, rarely for a small community newspaper, has a global readership. I'm sad to see it go but wish Norma and Don well for the future.

Neil Harland – Community Technician



Dear Norma

I was very sad to see that 'The Key' is to cease publication at the end of the year but fully understand the reasons for the decision. It must have occupied your life for the last 12 years despite other normal family responsibilities and the need to keep body and soul alive.

Both Don and yourself should be very proud of what you have achieved. It has always been an enjoyable read. I suspect however that it has also had an important impact on the village in terms of social cohesion and responsibility which people have traditionally had for each other. In my time during and after the war virtually everyone knew each other and one's actions were always subject to the comment, "I'll tell your Dad or Mam what you are up to if you don't stop!" - or whatever....

More than that, the 'Bobby' lived at the bottom end of Wharton Street and regularly held what would now be known as 'surgeries' for people who had strayed from the path of village righteousness as he interpreted it.

I haven't told my brother Alan that production is to cease but he would want you to know that your magazine has been greatly appreciated in Vancouver Island and has kept him in touch despite the geographical and time distance, which in his case stretches sixty years or more.

A final point - could I possibly have two copies of the Christmas publication? This will allow me to keep a copy for myself. The advertisements of local services might prove useful one day - particularly those relating to house maintenance.....

Your sincerely

Colin Lancaster

Dear Norma

Thank you so much for my edition of The Key. I am so sorry there won't be any more issues after this one but I do understand that all good things eventually have to come to an end.

It's a wonderful magazine and you have worked so hard to keep up the high standard which we all appreciate.

Good Luck for all you do in the future and once again many thanks for caring.

Sincerely

Marjorie Chester, Darlington

Norma

Just a note with cash to cover expenses for the last edition of The Key. As usual, a good read but sorrow to the fact that you are giving up the publication.

I can understand why - people just sit back and take things for granted and don't realise what goes on behind the scenes to get everything together.

I look forward to the next issue, even though it will be your last.

All the best

Ian Keeler

Dear Norma

Thank you for sending me 'The Key'. I am so sorry to hear that the next issue will be the last one. I have so enjoyed reading your magazine and keeping in touch with my 'roots'.

All my issues are now in South Africa with my old school friend, Sylvia Payne. She couldn't get enough of them!

Still, everything good has to come to an end sometime.

Once again, thank you, it's been a pleasure.

Best wishes to you all.

Yvonne Vickers, Marske

Dear Mrs Templeman

My Aunt, Peggy Plumb, recently gave me a few back copies of The Key which I read with interest and a great deal of nostalgia.

I was born and bred in Skelton, initially at 13 North Terrace, but moved away with my work in the 1960's. My grandfather lived all his married life and raised 8 children at No.12 North Terrace. I was one of the lucky ones who went to Guisborough Grammar School and some of the photos in The Key brought back happy memories.

Incidentally, I can remember when the house, that your brother Don lives in, was Dobson's fish and chip shop. John Dobson, the son, recently got in touch with me through the Friends Re-united website. He is now retired and living in Hull after a career in the Gas Board.

I was particularly interested in your mention of Brian Payne, who lived at the 'Gas House'. I played badminton with him in the Church Hall at North Skelton and tennis with him at Hollybush in the 1950's. I really 'fancied' his sister Doreen! Unfortunately, Doreen was a couple of years older than me, she was sophisticated and had money because she worked at the 'shirt factory' whereas I was skint and still at school in the sixth form!

Terry Bannister, Burnley, Lancs

Dear Norma

I was very sorry to learn that the next issue of 'The Key' will be the last one.

I think you have done a wonderful job in producing such a high quality newspaper for North Skelton and Layland and I have thoroughly enjoyed reading each issue.

I do hope copies have been lodged in one of your local museums, because every edition has contained very important items of local history which are ideal for research.

I know what hard work it is producing a magazine of this quality and would like to thank you for letting me see it.

I do hope you and Don have a relaxing time when it is all over.

With best wishes

Peter N. Walker

(Most readers might probably know Peter better as Nicholas Rhea, author of the wonderful series of 'Heartbeat' books - Ed.)

Dear Norma

I am sorry to hear the next issue of 'The Key' will be the last one.

I have really looked forward to reading it as I was brought up at Skelton Green and went to school at Stanghow Lane. It was good to hear from a lot of people that I knew years ago. My brother (Bill Bennett) wrote an article about his service in the RAF. Sadly, he died in May of this year. He too would have been sad to hear that 'The Key' was finishing as he loved everything about the Skelton's and kept in touch with a lot of pals - Ted Hobbs & Sam Snaith, just to name a couple.

Thanking you,

Christina Leaper, Marske

Dear Norma & Don

So sorry to read that you are winding up 'The Key'. We can understand why, as the production of the magazine has been first class.

Regards to you both, and please pass on our regards to Brian Payne next time you contact him.

Once again, thanks for all the lovely memories

Derek & Rita Beckham

Dear Norma,

My brother, Ian, sent me a copy of the August 2003 edition of 'The Key' and I was very pleased that he did so. All the articles were interesting, but I was particularly glad to read your own story about 'Mucky Lane'. Like you, I have many very vivid memories of the lane. Bird-nesting - we once found a nest of a special finch, we called it a 'golden finch'. I have no idea if that was correct but I could take you to the exact spot even now! Watching Home Guard manoeuvres; crashing into the bridge on my bike; collecting water for my father's tomatoes; building dams across the beck; falling into the beck (of course); going on 'nature rambles' from school; and so much more...

And, of course, I remember walking along the iron rails around the cricket pitch and watching the matches. I can remember some of the incidents from games very clearly, not least 'sixes' being hit through my father's greenhouse, at least once by Len Douglass! I also remember playing on the practice pitch and watching races by youngsters - with you as one of the stars! I am so glad that there is a plan to renovate the surface of the lane, but I hope they don't make it too 'posh' - it should still be left a little 'wild'.

I was also interested to read Colin Berwick's account of the 'Railway Junction' because I had not known the details of its construction. The print of Pip Harrison's drawing of the bridges was very evocative - he really has produced some excellent drawings. I have one of the Pit he did many years ago.

I was greatly impressed by the account of the special efforts that have been made to transform the area around the old pit into a pleasant place. I have asked Ian to send me the next - sadly, the last - edition of 'The Key'. I look forward to having a record of all that you and others in Action North Skelton have done for the village. I have been back to the village only a few times in the last 30 years, but it has always appeared in my passport as my birthplace, and I am truly proud that I grew up there.

Finally, may I pay a most sincere tribute to you personally. I know how difficult it is to publish a newspaper like 'The Key'. Quite apart from the tasks of attending to the actual production and distribution arrangements, the efforts required to keep on gathering enough interesting material are immense. But it is equally obvious that this kind of publication can play a very important part in maintaining and developing a continuing sense of local community - and that is something truly invaluable, not least in a world that has undergone such remarkable changes in our lifetime.

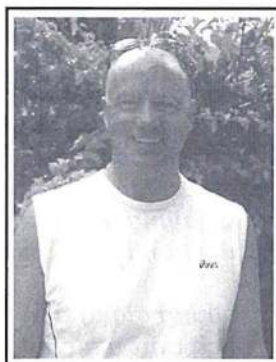
Congratulations on a splendid achievement..!

Adrian Johnson, Amersham, Bucks

A Night Down t'Slack

(Those were the safe days....)

By 'Gus' Templeman



'Gus'

Looking round at the youth of today it never ceases to amaze me at how much their lives differ from mine at the same age. Back in 1969, I was 11 years of age and was never stuck for something to do. Each season brought forth new adventures, mainly 'down t'Slack'. Sadly, because it's not safe any more, my children will never be able to enjoy the same pleasures of the countryside that I did.

At 6am, on a bright and sunny morning, a loud whistle outside my bedroom window in Wharton Street had me jumping out of bed. 'Miko' (Michael Bennett), one of my best friends was stood there shouting, "Ow'ay Gus, we're off *down t'Slack*!" A minute later I was dressed and dragging on my favourite footwear - mi' wellies. We couldn't wait to race across the railway track, then down the old muddy path which ended at the little beck known as '*down t'Slack*'.

"Right Gus, let's get a fire going." Miko would gather all the wood whilst I went in the farmer's field opposite, digging up the 'tatties' for our breakfast. Soon the fire was well alight. The 'tatties' were thrown in, and half an hour later we were splitting them open to eat, the delicious white potato inside, our mouths and faces blacked from the scorched skins.

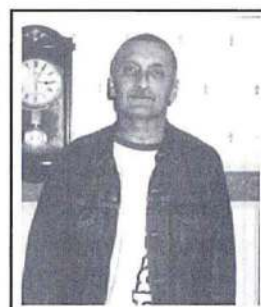
I look at bottled water today and think in no way does it compare to cupping my hands in the beck and drinking the lovely fresh spring water. Our thirst quenched and 'bellies' full, we would sit and watch the antics of all the wildlife around us. Between breakfast and dinner we set about making some pocket money. *Down t'Slack* and Hagg Wood were carpeted with primroses and bluebells - we raced to the best areas and as soon as our arms were full it was back to the village. Going up and down each street we would knock on the doors - "Want to buy any flowers missus, tanner a bunch?" I always made sure my Gran got the first bunch, they were one of her favourites. We always did well. Our pockets full of copper, it was straight into Craven's shop for *Football Chews* and *Black Jacks*. It wasn't long before our teeth matched our faces - a lovely shade of black! My favourites were *Raspberry Truffle Bars*, I loved them. It was now dinnertime, and after telling our Mams, we were off to rekindle our fire. "Let's build a camp and stay t'night," I suggested - no worry of abductions then.

Our pockets bulging with 'goodies', we set off to the Hollybush factories for some polythene sheets and wooden planks, chopping a few bushes down on our way back. We now had all the materials we needed for our waterproof camp. After all that work we were famished. "By 'eck Gus, ah'm hungry, d'ya fancy a trout?" Pulling our trousers above our knees, we waded into the beck. Very gently we felt under the big boulders - there it was, the smooth body of a rainbow trout. A little tickle, a good hard grip, a flick of the wrist, a knock on the head and it's in Miko's bag. I was next. Two minutes later I grabbed it - what a beauty! "Get two long sticks Gus," said Miko, "while I gut and clean 'em in t'beck."

The fish were then stuck on the ends of sticks and held over the fire for 10 minutes. It was fantastic, crispy skin and lovely white fish washed down with clear pure water out of the beck. Our pudding, (oh yes, we always had a pudding!) was ground nuts. We would forage for them around the river bank, and once cleaned they tasted like chestnuts, lovely and sweet. The fire still well alight, and our camp built to withstand a force ten hurricane, the rest of the afternoon was spent bird-nesting. We knew nearly every type of bird and where they would nest. Wood pigeons eggs were gourmet food to us two. We were experts at telling if the eggs were freshly laid. By holding them up to the light you can soon tell if they are OK to eat. Bedtime arrived and we banked up the fire - we were as 'proud as punch' of our camps. After making ourselves comfy we would start to tell ghost stories. Every now and then a fox would howl, always in the middle of the story - it never failed to make us jump, frightening the living daylights out of us! As the night progressed and it got darker, we would listen to badgers rustling in the bushes, and the crowing of a cock pheasant as it roosted in the blackthorn bushes. The '*twit-too-woo*' of the night owls, all these sounds were music to our ears. "Night Miko." "Night Gus, selling logs and brambles tomorrow eh!" We slept and didn't realise we had been watched. My dad Tom and Miko's dad Mike had been spying on us to make sure we were OK - of course we were.

At 5am we were awakened by the morning chorus of 'Blackies', Sparrows, Finches and loudest of all, the old Cock Pheasant. "Well Gus, lets get chopping, there's a few bob coming our way today." As soon as we started, the birds were silent apart from a lone wood pigeon looking down on us, probably thinking, "Oh no, it's Miko and Gus again, my perch won't be here in two minutes!" "Ey-up Gus, **TIMBER!**" We both shot off in different directions. **CRASH!** With axes going ten to the dozen, we soon had sacks full. "Right Miko, brambles." We knew all the best places, and it wasn't long before we had our tins full. With a sack of logs on our shoulders and brambles in hand, off we went to the village for another sale. The older village residents might remember us - if so I would love to hear your stories about us.

They were the best days of my life and didn't cost a penny. Now I'm in my mid-40's, I often wonder what happy, contented memories will my two children have when they are my age? *P.C.'s*, *Playstations*, *Mobile Phones*, and those immortal words, "**DAD I'M BORED...!!!!**"



'Miko'

Who am I?

*From being a young child
I've never known
Bonding and attachment
My seeds are now sown*

*I'm a person, a human
I feel emotion and pain
I want to be someone
And to feel alive again*

*I want to be safe
To feel loved and secure
I want to be wanted
I'm a person, an innocent, still pure*

*I hide my pain, my fear
I try hard to be strong, sometimes I can't
shed a tear
I feel my sadness will never end
I want to be part of a family, with love
and some friends*

This poem was written by one of our volunteers in an attempt to put into words the feelings of one young person who had used Nightstop.

There are many more who feel the same.

The staff and volunteers of Nightstop Teesside and Supported Lodgings are helping some of them, could you help us to get them back on track and start living the life they were meant to?

Contact Nightstop Teesside on 01642 493929 to find out how volunteers in the community are helping young people to get back on their feet and have a chance in life.

Action North Skelton

Over the last 12 years North Skelton has seen many improvements - all of these are due to the efforts of the committee members, both past and present:

'The Key' Magazine

Locks and smoke alarms free to O.A.P.'s

Play area at the back of William Street

Sparrow Park and new railings

War Memorial

V.E. Day Celebrations

Seating areas at the top of the streets, the bottom of Richard Street, Leyland and outside the Village Hall and next to the telephone kiosk

Planting of trees at the top of the streets

A BMX Track

A Basketball pitch and 2 new seats

New goal posts for the football area

A 'Pithead Gear' erected, including a base built round and planted with spring bulbs.

4,000 bulbs planted along the sides of the road from Leyland to North Skelton

50 tubs in and around the village all planted with flowers - actually there are now only 49 as some 'scumbags' have managed to steal one.

8 bus trips a year (please continue to support the Tote Double tickets)

An annual Senior Citizens Xmas Party (Friday, 19th December this year)

Free Computer lessons

This year, Action North Skelton have won two awards:

The first was the 'Green Apple Award' presented to ANS members at the Houses of Parliament.

The second award came from 'Bircham Trees' - North Skelton was one of only five venues in the whole country to receive a prize of 10 trees of their own choice to the value of £600 - £700 to be planted in and around the village.

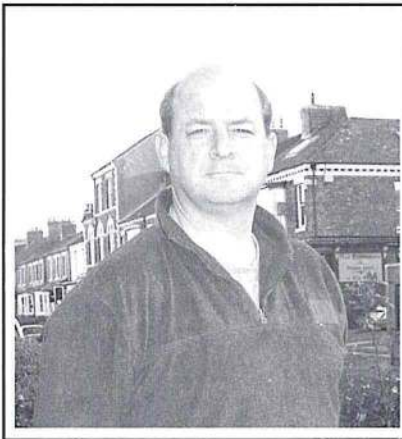
WELL DONE A.N.S!

Action North Skelton were not the only ones to have a tub stolen - Ena Sitton, an O.A.P living on Vaughan Street, had lovingly tended her flower tub for 10 years. This year it was also stolen, whoever has it PLEASE PUT IT BACK!

A set of photographs of some of Action North Skelton's achievements over the years can be seen in this issue of The Key on pages 18 & 19.

The End of an Era

by Stuart McMillan



First of all I would like to thank Norma and Don for letting me 'waffle on' in *The Key* over the last couple of years. I hope that all of you who are reading this have enjoyed my articles as much as I have writing them - from *Castles, Pits, and Schools* to *Wartime & Local History*. It's all been an education for me, but for my last *Key* I thought we'd go back to where it all started - North Skelton.

North Skelton, a village which is no more than a quarter of a square mile in area, lies a mile south-east of Skelton, and two miles inland from the sea, on the A174 between Skelton and Brotton. In its time it has seen Wars and the Great Depression, aircraft have crashed near it, and bombs have dropped on it. In 1964, it made the history books as the last ironstone mine in Cleveland to close its gates. Over the years, North Skelton has boasted a pub (the Bull's Head), a Workingmen's Club, a Village Hall (formerly the 'Tute), a School (now a DIY), post office /corner shop, petrol station and

garage (Boocock's), three chapels (one now gone, the two remaining, one of brick the other corrugated tin), one Co-op (opened on November 18th 1911 by East Cleveland Branch - Loftus & Brotton), and two famous railway bridges (one redundant today) now spanning a strange chicane road system which no-one seems to have got the hang of so far !

Off the main High Street (Vaughan Street) are three side streets - Richard Street, where Barwick's fish and chip shop once traded (now a private dwelling) run by Sidney and Hilda Barwick. Sydney died tragically young and Hilda went on to be Mayoress to Norman Lansberry. Barwick's fish and chip shop was one of two in the village and they even delivered to the dales. Bolckow Street is named after one of the founders of the iron industry in East Cleveland - the street aptly led to the pit but looked on to the shale-tip. Wharton Street is named after the Wharton family, local squires and landowners who owned the mining rights. Then there's William Street. The rest of the old village consists of Railway Terrace, Railway Cottages and Holmbeck Road, part of the high street sandwiched in by the old Co-op building and North Skelton Workingmen's Club.

Like many other villages in the country, North Skelton has its own War Memorial, sadly but proudly listing the names of the men from North Skelton killed in the Great War and World War II. From a list I have of World War I soldiers: from Bolckow Street, 6 men went to war, 2 did not return; Holmbeck Road - 8 went, 2 did not return; Rail way Terrace/Cottages - 4 went, 4 returned; Richard Street - 27 went, 4 failed to return, one of whom was John W Parker of No 8, who was killed at the Battle of Jutland - killed on HMS Queen Mary, a battle cruiser which was hit by five shells and blown up, taking 1,220 officers and crew. Also from the same street, and in the Navy, was a man who did return - Robert Stephenson of No 40, who served aboard the submarine E11, whose officers and crew were Mentioned in Dispatches and whose Commander, Lieut Cdr M Nasmith received the VC for sinking 122 ships, some in Constantinople Harbour - the 'fortunes of war'.

From Wharton Street, 32 went to war, 6 were killed in action. A survivor from No 29, Robert Blackett of the 8th York's, received the Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry on the morning of the 7th of July 1917 in the Mount Sorrell sector. After his section commander and four of his gun team were killed, Pte Blackett carried his gun and ammunition to the objective and selected a suitable position in the trench, then repelled a German counter-attack. Throughout the action, he kept his gun in working order despite it being burned twice in heavy bombardment, and managed to protect the right flank. From William Street, 27 went, 2 were killed in action; Vaughan Street - 19 went, 4 were killed.

They fought in all the services and every Regiment in the British Army. Those who came home, some having served six years under their colours, arrived back to an uncertain future, replacing their uniforms with work clothes and returning to their previous jobs in the Mine or on the land, returning to a village that was by this time still only fifty years old.

Before the last war, an Anson plane crashed-landed near East Pastures Farm, one of the crew dying later in Hospital. During WW2, bombs aimed at the pit-head fell in a string leading to Skelton Green. Air-raid shelters were set up in the village, one in a culvert under the railway line at the 'Slack' at the bottom of Richard Street, where a Lewis gun was also in place, manned by the Home Guard. An Air-raid Warden's post was also located where Boocock's Garage now stands, and a British Restaurant was also added to the village to provide cheap

meals for the locals, details of which I penned in past editions.

"Why is *North Skelton* so called, being on the *south* side of the original Skelton?" It is a question I am often asked. Well, when the original option was taken up for the mining rights - the pit was to be placed 'to the north of Skelton', in the woods near the railway viaduct now spanning Skelton Beck, still used these days by the Cleveland Potash train. The remains of an original shaft can still be seen today - if you know where to look. This site, however, eventually proved unsuitable and so they ventured to the south of the claim, to near East Pastures Farm and more suitable ground at the other end of the ore seam. As all the legal paper work had already been done, the name stayed the same - hence North is South of Skelton! When the pit began production, the workforce started to arrive from the coalfields of County Durham, the tin miners of Cornwall, the slate mines and quarries of Wales and so on...people were then desperately looking for work. Some of the tin mines from Cornwall were of Spanish descent, having originally been fishermen, then marrying local Cornish girls, changing their names to blend in, often taking the name of the king at the time, such as George, or even calling themselves King! Have you noticed that some of our local residents today still have Latin looks! Well, maybe not...

As soon as the new workforce began to arrive, houses were quickly built, then a school and chapel, along with the recreation facilities that folk expected in a mining community. Brass bands and sword dancing were the order of the day! Up went the Bull's Head and Workingmen's Club. Within a short period, shops and allotments were all provided by the mine owners and the Wharton family for the hard-working miners and their families

Some families that remain today can trace their family trees through the other mining communities and there cannot be a history of North Skelton without mentioning the Pit, the life blood of the village. If it was not for the Pit the village would not exist, but when it finally closed the villagers fought on and survived. The workforce, who had toiled for so many years down those dark, damp mines, refused to leave their beloved homes to look far away for employment. Many went on to work locally in the chemical and steel industries of Teesside. Old photographs, and a documentary film made to record the last 'shift' in the last ironstone mine in Cleveland ('*End of an Era*') in 1964, show the smoky stacks of the street houses and, above all, the pit-head with its winding gear dominating the village - all gone but not forgotten. As in most other closed sites in the area, the pit buildings went on to other uses - in the case of North Skelton the site is now occupied by Tees Components Ltd. And as the pit disappeared, new life came to the village - in the last ten years a new housing estate has gone up behind Boocock's Garage and new dwellings have appeared on the old dairy yard at the bottom of Bolckow Street.

As the history of many English villages goes, North Skelton's isn't that long, spanning 150 years or so. The oldest building? It's hard to determine. On an official Ordnance Survey map dating around 1850, all that is shown of the area where North Skelton now stands is '*Foggo Farm*' - some of the farm buildings became the stables for the 'pit ponies'.

Power and surviving the ups and downs of British history from Victoria to our present Queen - when the village was in its infancy there was no gas light, and no flushing loos. On 4th February, 1910, incandescent lamp-posts were placed in Skelton High Street and lit for the first time on the 10th of that month. Electric street lamps first appeared at the top of Saltburn Lane, and then there were two situated outside Stanghow Lane School next to the cemetery on 5th March, 1915. It would have been a novelty to see a car or an aeroplane up until the World War 1 - there were no tarmac roads in certain parts of East Cleveland until just before World War 2. On April 7th 1921 the first motor bus service ran from Loftus to Middlesbrough, passing through North Skelton.

As for myself - I am still working on my wartime studies. *The Defence of Britain Project* with the Imperial War Museum has officially ended, but we are continuing under the wing of English Heritage who have been impressed with the quality and detail of the work we've done so far. We are close to publishing at least an index of all we have found over the last 10 years in Cleveland and North Yorkshire - 2,000-plus sites, and we're certain there are still many more to be found.

I am, at the moment, compiling a list of World War I soldiers from this area who went to war, and I am looking for photographs of these men. If your relative fought in the First World War please give me a ring on 01287 651698 or e-mail me at: s.macmillan1@ntlworld.com

...or call round to 67 High Street, Skelton, Cleveland TS12 2EF

Again, I'd like to thank Norma and Don and everyone else associated with The Key - I have enjoyed the time I have spent writing for them. I know that this high quality publication is held as an example as to how to do this type of magazine and I know it has an international following, but as all great things come to an end The Key is still the Best!

In Search of My Roots

By Kev McMahon

It has always been my intention to visit Ireland with the intention of tracing the McMahon family name. It first became a possibility when our friends Jackie & Robin Atkinson moved back to Ireland to retire. Jackie (nee Adams) taught our daughters Claire & Katie at De Brus School.

After a visit made by myself and Gina, I decided to recruit my old chum Len ('France on 2 Wheels') and another pal, Derek Bedlington, to join me on this nostalgic journey. I was travelling on my *Yamaha Virago* and Len on his *Pan European* with Derek as pillion.

All I knew was that the 'McMahons' originated in County Clare on the far west of Ireland, (hence our first daughter named Claire). We docked at Larne just before lunchtime and headed north, hugging the picturesque Antrim coast with the Mull of Kintyre clearly visible on our right on the distant horizon. (*When reading this I would like you to keep in mind that Derek had the responsibility for navigating this journey!*)

Our first main stop was the *Giant's Causeway*, an impressive headland of hexagonal black basalt pillars which stretch out to sea toward Scotland. Len found this sight so stunning that it wasn't long before he had wandered off, deep in his own world, leaving Derek and I to sit leisurely, watching the rest of the world go by. I can't say what drew our attention to the distant figure who by this time had abandoned his crash hat onto one of the pillars and was walking out towards the sea, all I can say is that both Derek & I simultaneously spotted the huge wave heading inland – Len had not... Within seconds, one biker was drenched and one crash hat full of sea water! This was the start of a series of side-splitting laughs which made the holiday a truly memorable one.

Our next stop was Londonderry and we walked the city walls, part of which overlook Bogside. I was amazed to see 30 or more surveillance cameras above us, all pointing towards the area. Further on, the shell of a burned-out bus rested below us, the remains of the previ-

ous day's disturbances. Yet, in contrast to this, everyday life was still going on around us. As we left Derry, we passed through military checkpoints, which made it difficult to remember we were still in the UK.

Our next point of call was to surprise Jackie & Robin who live in Dunkineely, a small town on the Donegal coast. Prior to us leaving home, Gina had rung Jackie and asked her if they would be at home on the following Monday as she had posted out some photographs of our previous visit, special delivery, and they would need to be signed for. This proved to be no problem and Jackie assured her they would be in. What she didn't know was that the 'delivery boy' would be Kev on his motorbike!

We stayed over with them, sharing the hospitality of their local pub where Robin plays the accordion and Jackie sings, and where the order of the evening is that many musicians arrive during the evening and everyone joins in. Only in Ireland have I experienced such heart-warming and genuine hospitality.

The next morning we rode along a narrow spit of land to St John's Point. The road was only wide enough for a car, but as the traffic was virtually non-existent this did not pose any problem! As we rode along, on either side of us we could see cows grazing on lush green grass. Suddenly one of them, chased by a dog, bolted towards me – let me assure you frightened cows move faster than motorbikes! Faced without a choice, I decided no action was the best and sat astride my precious bike and waited to be butted.

Within inches of me the frightened animal must have remembered that in another life it had been a biker because it swerved away and left me welded to the bike. As I turned round to look behind I was greeted with the sight of two grown men helpless with laughter – unknown to us; this was not to be our only encounter with charging cows.

We decided to ride to Galway to see, in the words of the song, '...the sun go down on Galway Bay'. Skirting Donegal Bay, and looking out towards the Atlantic, the views were strikingly beautiful. After much discussion with our 'navigator' we decided that Kinvarra would be the best point from which to watch the sun setting. We found a small B&B overlooking the harbour, owned by a lady whose daughter lived in Redcar. We were made very welcome, and for the first time we had a bed each, which meant we didn't need to toss a coin to decide who got the single and which of us had to share the double – but that's another story....

After we had changed we set off for a Guinness (it really does taste better there). We arrived back at the B&B at 6pm ready for a quick kip before going down to the harbour to catch the sunset. When we awoke it was pitch dark and the sun had long since set! Who said Guinness was good for you...?

That night we found a small pub at the back of the local grocery shop. We hadn't been in long before the usual question from the locals was asked – "Here on holiday lads?" I explained my reasons for being there, and before I knew what was happening I was held in a bear hug and being told he must be my cousin! As he was restricting my breathing at this point, there wasn't a lot I could do to confirm it or not. That night I wasn't allowed to buy another drink – it was a brilliant night, I think...!

From Kinvarra we took the coast road into County Clare via Lisdoonvarna and the spectacularly beautiful Cliffs of Moher. It was on this journey that communication between navigator and driver was put to the test. We were riding along, Len & Derek in front and me behind. The agreed system for signalling was that Derek would hold his right arm out for a right turn, his left out for left turn and hand on top of helmet for straight on. Simple you might think – oh no! I saw Derek put out his right arm and I duly indicated right, then executed a perfect right-hand turn, only to see Derek and Len head straight on! Mistake number one - do not forget to have a system of signalling to your driver!

Ireland has amazing different varieties of green - some fields are so vivid they seem to be illuminated from beneath. Peat diggings are still worked and *tinkers*, after collecting scrap-metal, store it in very neat piles along roadsides bordered by long hedges of Fuchsia. Clare, by contrast, was rocky and at times stark, dominated as it is by the Slieve Bernagh Mountains. Inland it is pockmarked with numerous small lakes. My ancestors, I imagined, would have found it hard to make a living in such a place. Riding through Ennis (the county town



Kev McMahon & his pal Len Thompson

of Clare) towards Limerick we got our first sight of the River Shannon, an impressively huge, slow moving river. It was on our journey to Limerick that we encountered another herd of cows. On a long, straight piece of road I could see the herd ambling towards us, taking up all the road space. I think I can be forgiven for being relieved that this time I was bringing up the rear. They were about a hundred yards ahead when we stopped and set our bikes on their stands (we are quick learners!) Still astride our bikes we hoped the cows would not knock us and the bikes over. Behind us, a young woman in a car stopped, but when the cows were within feet of us she lost patience and decided to drive through the slow moving herd. The animals, frightened by the car, scattered and charged back in the direction from which they had come. All that is, except one elderly cow that had been leading the herd. She turned and looked at the others disappearing at speed down the road and started to bellow at them as if to say, "The milking shed's this way, you daft b.....s!" The furious cowman shouted abuse at the car driver as his dogs went after the cows to turn them back. We stayed put. ..! Cows normally produce a lot of excrement - scared cows produce ten times more! We had to ride through it feet astride, to keep our balance!

Eventually, unfortunately, the holiday had to come to an end but the memories are there forever. I would recommend Ireland to anyone who wants to spend some time amongst friendly, warm and generous people.

Kev McMahon

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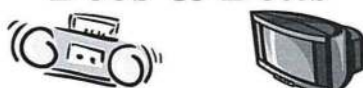
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