



DURHAM  
*In Time*

## Coundon – a short history

by Jane Hatcher

### General Background History

Coundon has a long history as a small rural village. The place name means cows' hill. It was given as Cundon in pipe rolls of 1197, and as Crundon on a 1766 map of County Durham (1). This area has one of the longest histories of coal-mining in County Durham, and the Auckland rolls of 1350 mention a mine of sea-coal (coal which was transported by sea) in the field of Coundon (2).

In the Boldon Book of 1183 there were two Coundons, Great and Little (3). This was a time before we had a money economy, property was held in return for service, either military or agricultural. Great Coundon consisted of six carucates of land belonging to the Bishop. A carucate was an area of land based not on measurement but on the amount which could be ploughed by eight oxen drawing one plough per year, varying with the type of land, but averaging about 120 acres. At Little Coundon there were twelve cottagers, each holding six acres of land, which they were allowed to work two days per week from St. Peter's Day (29 June) to Martinmas (11 November), and one day per week for the rest of the year, which they held by a rent paid not in cash but in kind, each of them being liable for tilling four acres of the landlord's land and rendering a hen and 100 eggs (4). At some stage in the Middle Ages part of the vicinity became a grange, or farm, belonging to the monastery in Durham, it consisted of 380 acres. Coundon Grange later became a settlement in its own right (5).





## DURHAM *In Time*

Coundon village lies just east of what today is the A688 trunk road but was the turnpike road between Bowes and Durham. In the Durham County Record Office are papers relating to the 'farming' of the Coundon [Toll] Bar in 1861 (6), and Coundon Gate T.P. is shown on the 1st edition of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1856. A small church, dedicated to St. James, was built on the roadside at Coundon in 1841, along with a parsonage and a National School (7). The Coundon area was until 1842 part of the ecclesiastical parish of St. Andrew's Auckland (8). The church was rebuilt in 1872 on a new site set further back from the road, and on a much grander in scale, the accommodation being increased from 400 to 530 sittings (9). Again dedicated to St. James, it was designed by the leading architect Ewan Christian, and is an imposing stone building in the Early English style with lancet windows, large and with an apsidal east end (10). Instead of being served by a perpetual curate, it now had its own vicar. Chapels were also built for the Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists and New Connexions (11).

The Coundon area saw the building of some very early industrial housing, due to its coal mines being active at the period when coal owners first started to build primitive dwellings. One of the early rows was called Eden Terrace, shown on the 1st edition of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1856, but not named until the 2nd edition of 1898 (12). The earliest miners' houses consisted of two ground floor rooms with an attic in the roof-space, whereas those at Coundon represented a slight improvement in having a dormer window.

The 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1856 shows the small village with development in a triangular layout. The old St. James Church, what is termed the Parsonage as the church was a perpetual curacy, and the National School are shown





## DURHAM *In Time*

to the south, with development identified as New Coundon Place. To the south-east, at Tottenham, are five of the early colliery rows, also Isaac's Houses. A sandstone quarry and also limestone quarries are marked. Just to the south of Coundon is marked Grange Hill, and to the west on the main road the Coundon Gate Toll Bar is marked. Nearby is a brick works. Just to the north is New Coundon with the Hermitage public house.

A trades directory of 1856 (13) has 23 commercial entries for Coundon, plus four farmers and eight taverns also a beerhouse. In the commercial section there are a number of shopkeepers, a coal inspector, a colliery cashier and a coal owner, as well as the manager of the brick and tile works at Coundongate and an earthenware manufacturer. There are a total of 10 entries under Coundon Grange (14), three relating to coal mining and one victualler.

The area was badly affected by the Durham Coalfield strike in 1892. The Bishop Auckland Co-operative society paid dividends to help, and the vicar, Rev. Thomas Farquhar Hill, distributed flour to ease the distress in Coundon (15). By the 1894 Directory (16) the number of commercial entries has grown to 80. Eleven are victuallers and two beerhouse-keepers, (covering a wider area including Black Boy). There are two agents for the Prudential, and Coundon has both Conservative and Liberal clubs. There is a surgeon and a patent medicine dealer. Eight entries relate to mining. Coundon Grange has 35 entries (17). Eight relate to coal mining, two are victuallers, and there is a Reading Room and Library.

The 2nd edition of the 6 inch map of 1898 gives the street names of the three main lines of the village, Wharton Street to the north, Victoria Lane to the east, and Collingwood Street to the south. Further west is Church Street and Gurlish Terrace,





## DURHAM *In Time*

and beyond that a smithy at the road junction. The larger church is now on its new site, the National School seems to have been rebuilt, and there are three Methodist Chapels, two on Collingwood Street and one on Victoria Lane. Four pubs are marked, but only the Greyhound is named. George and William Streets are shown to the south of Collingwood Street, but only William Street is named. To the south are Grange Cottages. Further east is Avon Terrace, and the five rows at Tottenham are identified as Eden, Tees, Wye, Esk and Tyne Terraces. New Coundon has a station on a new railway line, the Bishop Auckland and Ferryhill Branch of the North of England Railway.

The 3rd edition of the map published in 1921 now shows Croft Terrace built across the centre, and George Street West and East are shown. West Avenue and Howlish View are nearby. Ship Terrace and a house called Broomside have appeared to the west. Clyde Terrace East and South on Victoria Lane flank a new school building. Another Methodist Chapel has appeared off Collingwood Street. There are two lots of Allotment Gardens. To the east there is new development of colliery rows at Leeholme, and there is a big complex of schools on a new road, Leeholme Road, linking Coundon with Leasingthorpe.

The 4th edition, published in 1936, shows some infilling between Croft Terrace and Victoria Lane, where there is now a Roman Catholic Church and large school. There are more allotments, and a Greyhound Stadium to the west. The Durham County Record Office has papers relating to this dated 1947 (18). A lot of new development has taken place on the north side of Leeholme Road.

On all the maps, Howlish Hall is marked to the south nearer Coundon Grange. Here was based the first residential centre set up by the Ministry of Labour in 1935 for





## DURHAM *In Time*

young people aged 14-18 years. The idea was to train those from areas of high unemployment for jobs available in other areas. The Howlish Hall centre was administered by Durham Education Authority on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, the other two in the country were run by the YMCA. The scheme folded in 1938 as the number of job opportunities increased as a result of the likelihood of war breaking out (19). Howlish Hall was anciently the seat of the Hopper family, then the Walkers, and in 1856 it was occupied by C.L. Wood esq., a coal owner (20), and in 1894 by Robert Robinson, a mining engineer (21)

### **Mining History**

The Coundon area had some of the earliest coal mines in County Durham, a reference in 1350 has already been mentioned. The Bishops of Durham were to the forefront in exploiting coal reserves under their land, which included the Coundon area. In 1737 a case for damages was brought on behalf of the Bishop's colliery in the manor of Bondgate in Auckland against the Bowser family's colliery workings under Coundon Lane (22). In 1804 Bishop Shute Barrington leased a piece of waste ground and garden called Black Boy to George Wall of Stainton, yeoman (23). Black Boy Colliery would become one of the earliest mines to be worked at a relatively deeper level a little later in the 19th century. NCB records of it go back to 1833, but it was clearly older, as were other workings in the area. When in 1820 the Stockton to Darlington Railway was being proposed, the possible branches included one to Coundon (24). Jonathan Backhouse of the banking family of Darlington acquired Coundon coal mines in 1832 (25). In 1839 a draft memorandum was drawn up between James Scaife Crawford of Newcastle, gentleman, and Joseph Longstaff and John Collingwood of New Durham, coal workers, for the working of Justice Coal Pit,







## DURHAM *In Time*

which had already been sunk, in closes belonging to Crawford called Brimmsides in Coundon, in the Five-quarter and Main seam, except around the shaft (26).

Moving forward to evidence provided by the 1st edition of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map, the nearest mine to Coundon shown on this is Jawblades Colliery immediately to the west of the village, with Coundon Gate Pit a little nearer the old main road. Old Black Boy Colliery, Black Boy Colliery (Machine Pit) and Black Boy Colliery (Gurney Pit) are all only a short distance to the south, and Eldon Colliery (John Henry Pit) is also close by. These are all have transport links to railway lines in the form of waggonways, inclines or branch lines.

The population of Coundon in 1801 was 163, but doubled every 10 years in the 1820s and 1830s, and then rose less rapidly to over 1,000 by 1851. In 1856 it was said that Coundon village was chiefly occupied by the colliers employed in the neighbouring mines, and also that the coal was of good household quality, and was worked to advantage despite being 25 miles from where it was shipped on the Tees. Coundon Gate Colliery was also mentioned as being extensively worked by Messrs. Edmund Backhouse and Co., the coals being shipped on the Tees and at Hartlepool West Docks (27).

Black Boy Colliery is listed under Coundon Grange, which in 1851 had a population of 585, with 102 inhabited houses, and two uninhabited. Blackboy was a colliery village in the township, said to derive its name from a roadside public house, and to be chiefly inhabited by the workmen of the colliery. The colliery company supported a school for about 160 children of both sexes. The description continued "The Black Boy Colliery is worked by Nicholas Wood and Company, and its produce is shipped from Middlesbrough Docks and Stockton. This colliery was originally for land sale,





## DURHAM *In Time*

and has now two working pits and an engine pit. At the depth of forty-two fathoms is the five-quarter seam, consisting of three feet four inches of good coal, half an inch of land, three feet six inches of coal, eight inches of coarse coal, and one foot six inches of splint; at sixty-nine fathoms the Harvey seam is found, and at forty-five fathoms lower, the Brockwell" (28).

By 1894 (29), a later directory reports that no collieries are still working in the township of Coundon, but the village is chiefly inhabited by miners employed in the neighbouring mines, such as those at Westerton and Binchester to the north and east, owned by Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., which employed 800 men and boys. Under Coundon Grange, Auckland Park and Black Boy collieries are mentioned (30).

Auckland Park worked the Harvey and Brockwell seams, giving employment to 1200 and a yield of 1500 tons a day. There were 430 coke ovens, producing coke for the Bolckow Vaughan ironworks, the waste gas from these ovens being used to heat the boilers. These pits were ventilated by a large fan 45 feet in diameter. Black Boy produced 450 tons per day, giving employment to 410 men and boys (31).

The 2nd edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1898 shows many changes. Jawblades Colliery has gone, the site was now marked as Old Shaft and Air Shaft. Eldon Colliery has become Old Eldon Colliery, and waggonways which have appeared since 1856 have also become obsolete. Black Boy Colliery (Gurney Pit) is not only still open but a large new complex has appeared alongside it. Old Black Boy is now an air shaft, and Old Black Boy (Machine Pit) has become Auckland Park Colliery. A large development has taken place at Coundon Grange, with coke ovens as well as housing, and a new settlement has grown up at Eldon, where there is also a school, Methodist chapel and cycle track.





## DURHAM *In Time*

The 3rd edition map in 1921 shows, where Jawblades was, a shaft and Bishop's Park Colliery. Old Eldon Colliery has become Old Eldon Colliery (John Henry Pit). South Durham Colliery is now called Eldon Colliery, and Eldon has acquired a swimming baths but the cycle track has gone. More buildings have been added to Auckland Park Colliery.

The 4th edition of the map in 1936 shows Auckland Park Colliery still working, but many of the others have gone - Old Eldon Colliery (John Henry Pit), Eldon Colliery and Black Boy Colliery are all marked as disused.

(1) *A Modern Map of Durham Drawn from the latest Surveys, 1766.*

(2) Victor Watts, *A Dictionary of County Durham Place-Names*, (2002), p.30.

(3) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 355.

(4) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 355.

(5) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 359.

(6) DCRO D/HH 10/18/20.

(7) William Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1856), p. 298.







## DURHAM *In Time*

- (8) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 355.
- (9) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 355.
- (10) Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: County Durham*, (1983), p. 133.
- (11) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 355.
- (12) A Royal Commission Report of 1841 gives information about early mining settlements, which included Coundon. Frank Atkinson's *The Industrial Archaeology of North-East England* (p.50) particularly mentions Eden Terrace at Coundon, and says it dated from about 1870.
- (13) William Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1856), p. 299.
- (14) William Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1856), p. 289.
- (15) "Conflict in the Durham Coalfield, 1892, part II", *Durham County Local History Society, Bulletin No. 24*, May 1980.
- (16) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 356.





## DURHAM *In Time*

(17) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 361.

(18) DCRO D/X1041/20.

(19) DCRO D/E/C.

(20) William Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1856), p. 298.

(21) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 356.

(22) DCRO D/X 332/2.

(23) DCRO D/X 487/1/19.

(24) DCRO D/X 1094/4.

(25) DCRO NCB I/JB 2384.

(26) DCRO D/X 487/1/20.

(27) William Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1856), p. 298.

(28) William Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1856), p.288.





## DURHAM *In Time*

(29) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 355.

(30) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 359.

(31) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), p. 359.

**Note:** The views that are expressed on the website are the contributors own and not necessarily those of Durham County Council. This is a community website so no guarantee can be given of the historical accuracy of individual contributions

