



DURHAM
In Time

Craghead – a short history

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General Background History

Craghead does not have a long history, being a village which grew up when collieries opened in the area. Early maps show the place-name as Crag Head, a simple descriptive name.

The 1st edition of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1854 marks the hamlet of Crag Head at the junction of a lane, marked variously as Craghead Lane and Wagtail Lane, with a lane running south-east towards Wheatleygreen Lane and Holmside Lane. The Punch Bowl public house is marked at the road junction. The hamlet merely consists of many scattered houses and coal workings, with the Burnhope Waggon Way running approximately parallel to Craghead /Wagtail Lane. Further west of Wagtail Lane is the National School. Craghead does not appear in early trades directories due to its later development. The area in which it lies formed part of Holmside parish.

Whellan's *Directory* of 1894 (1) reports that Craghead was at that time being much improved, with a large number of houses built, due to the development of the collieries in the neighbourhood. A new parish church had been built at Burnhope Colliery in 1869, and services were held on Sundays in the schools at South Moor and Craghead. Craghead also had a Primitive Methodist Chapel, a plain brick building which had been built in 1890, with a Sunday School underneath, and could seat 300 people. The colliery proprietors, Hedley & Co., had built the Holmside National School between Craghead and South Moor in 1877, it could take 203 boys and had





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an average attendance of 180. The Hedley Memorial Schools at Craghead, built in 1887, took girls and infants, with a capacity of 250 and an average attendance of 230. Of the 72 commercial entries for Holmside, 20 specifically refer to Craghead, and there was already a Craghead and Holmside Co-operative Society. Three entries are for pubs (the Craghead Hotel, Punch Bowl and John's Castle Inn), and 4 entries are concerned with collieries.

By the time of the 2nd edition of the map in 1898, Crag Head has grown considerably. There are several new streets of terrace cottages, including Wylam Street, John Street, William Street, George Street and Oswald Street. There is a school at the road junction, and a Methodist Chapel to the south. The 3rd edition in 1926 shows even more development, with a new school and institute on Edward Street, and a sewage works has been provided to cope with the larger population. South of the wagonway is St Thomas's Church, the church hall and allotment gardens and a club.

Mining History

This area contained some of the earliest and also the longest working collieries in County Durham, for some which were sunk in the 18th century worked until the mid-20th century.

The 1st edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey map provides considerable evidence of early small-scale mining activity, with 'Old Shafts' marked just south of Craghead. To the east, William Pit and George Pit are shown to the east. These would later be referred to as Craghead (William) and Craghead (George) pits, closing in 1969 and about 1920 respectively (2), although William Pit was shown as disused on the 1926 edition of





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the map. To the south-west is shown Holmside Colliery, later called Holmside (Thomas) or Thomas Pit, which is said to have closed 1919-23, and also to have been part of Craghead Colliery in 1945 (3). Across the Twizell Burn to the north east the map shows Pelton West Colliery, with a Water Engine and its own wagon way running towards Pelton Grange. West Pelton (Alma) was sunk in 1793 and only closed in 1958, and West Pelton (Handenhold) was sunk in 1857 and worked until 1968 (4). Further north the 1st edition map show Twizell Colliery, next to the Jingling Gate pub. Twizell (Gate) colliery was sunk 1739 and did not close until 1938-42. The Twizell Burn Drift worked 1843-1954 (5).

On the 2nd edition of the map in 1898, William and George Pits are now marked as Craghead Colliery, and more buildings are shown. Holmside Colliery also has additional buildings, and has gained Thomas Pit. West Pelton (rather than Pelton West) Colliery is mentioned south of the Twizell, with a coal drift near the stream, and Alma Pit and other new buildings (some on the site of the water engine), north of the river, and Handenhold Pit further north still. Twizell Colliery also has new buildings and housing, and is described as Gate Pit.

By the 3rd edition of the map, at Craghead Colliery, George and William pits are disused, but Thomas Pit at Holmside Colliery seems still to be working. To the east, the southernmost part of West Pelton Colliery is now marked as Whitehall Pit, and there is more development at Alma Pit, but gasometers have been built and become disused. There is considerably more development at Handenhold Pit, including gas works, coke ovens, and a disused gasometer. A small amount of development has taken place at Gate Pit Twizell Colliery.





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(1) Francis Whellan & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1894), pp.1246-1249.

(2) Durham County Record Office, *Durham Collieries*, (2001), pp. 26 and 36.

(3) Durham County Record Office, *Durham Collieries*, (2001), p. 73.

(4) Durham County Record Office, *Durham Collieries*, (2001), p. 78.

(5) Durham County Record Office, *Durham Collieries*, (2001), p. 75.

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