



DURHAM  
*In Time*

## Horden – a short history

by Jane Hatcher

### General Background History

The name Horden is first mentioned in the History of St. Cuthbert of c.1050. The name is interpreted by place-name experts (1) as having two Old English components, “hour” meaning “dirty” and “denu” meaning “valley”, (from which we get the word “dene”). Thus Horden was being described as a dirty valley then, 850 years before it was affected by coal-mining! Horden was of sufficient importance to give its name to Horden Point on the coast. This area of East Durham lay within Easington ecclesiastical parish.

A map of 1766 (2) shows the village as ‘Harden’. Horden remained small and unindustrialized until the end of the 19th century, the original village having shrunk until it consisted only of its handsome manor house dating from the early or mid-17th century (3). The 1st and 2nd editions of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1858 and 1898 do not show any development, just Horden Hall. By the 3rd edition of 1922, however, there is considerable development. The Leeds Northern line of the North Eastern Railway is running roughly north-south, with the new mining village of Horden to its west, Horden Station and the Station Hotel at the southern end of the new settlement, and Horden Colliery with sidings at the north end. Road links with other neighbouring colliery villages took some years to follow the rail links.

The new settlement, built by the colliery company, is laid out on a grid plan of terraced streets numbered sequentially to Thirteenth Street. As quite a late colliery settlement, the standard of accommodation and facilities was relatively high. There is a church, that dedicated to St. Mary and built in 1913 to a design by J.D. Potts & Son (4), schools including Roman Catholic Schools, cricket and football grounds, miniature rifle range, allotment





## DURHAM *In Time*

gardens, a police station and a cemetery. Horden came under Shotton with Shotton Colliery in early-20th century trades directories, by 1938 (5) Horden had 8 private residents and 136 commercial entries.

### **Mining History**

Horden Colliery was one of the deep pits sunk into the concealed coalfield which lay below the magnesian limestone of East Durham. It reflects not only the demand for coal in the years shortly before the first World War, but also the improved technology which enabled coal to be extracted from deep below the earth's surface and for the considerable quantities of water encountered to be dealt with.

Work began to sink the first of Horden's three shafts late in 1900, using cast-iron cylindrical mouldings, or tubbing, to keep back the large volume of water. The difficulty of the work meant that it was 1904 before any coal was drawn. The coal was of good quality and versatile, being used for steam boilers, gas and coking plants, as well as household purposes, and for much of its life Horden Colliery was the largest mine in Britain (6). The colliery was worked by the same company, Horden Collieries Ltd., right through from sinking to nationalisation, a situation unusual in County Durham's mining history (7).

Despite the ever-present threat of water, Horden was fortunate in never featuring in the news as a major disaster pit, but did gain a certain notoriety in 1910 when it was the scene of a riot. In a dispute over the non-payment of wages after the Lloyd George budget of that year, the miners ransacked, looted and burnt the workmen's club (8).

As a large mine, with a high output and good supply of good quality coal extending out under the sea, Horden was one of several neighbouring pits which in the 1970s and 1980s were considered likely to represent the future of the British coal industry. Horden and Seaham's three pits employed 5,000 men producing 2½ million tons of coal a year (9).





## DURHAM *In Time*

However, the water and other geological problems had meant that the Horden did not make a profit for the last ten years before it closed in 1987 (10).

(1) Victor Watts, *A Dictionary of County Durham Place-Names*, (2002), p. 61.

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

(3) Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: County Durham*, (1983), pp. 327-8 and plate 61.

(4) Pevsner, p. 327.

(5) *Kelly's Directory of Durham and Northumberland* (1938), pp. 244-5.

(6) Durham County Council, *Coal mining in County Durham*, (1993), pp. 134-5.

(7) DCRO, *Durham Collieries*, (2001), p. 42.

(8) DCC, *Coal mining in County Durham*, p. 135; DCRO D/MRP 84/9 postcard of Horden Club on fire 1910.

(9) Durham County Local History Society, *An Historical Atlas of County Durham*, (1992).

(10) DCRO *Durham Collieries*, (quoting NCB 24/43), p. 42.

**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

