

Historic Environment Report for October 2022

20 optimistic members gathered in September under leaden skies outside the erstwhile 'Three Tuns' public house for the promised village walk round Eggleston. In gentle drizzle Nicky and Ruth gave a thorough introduction, making clear that the quiet, peaceful village we see today was once a much busier place. It was at its height population-wise in 1861 (788), declining by 1801 to 300, but recovering to reach 448 by the 2011 census. We were standing on the village's central green which largely retains its 17th century layout and buildings, although most are now private houses. The Three Tuns, dating from about 1840, closed recently, but Nicky used illustrations to show us the range of facilities once included here and in adjacent buildings (blacksmiths, joiners, cartwrights and, inevitably, undertakers inter alia). The earliest settlement hereabouts is thought to date from the 11th century, while the main visible features from medieval times are the series of strip cultivation terraces.

Starting our walk we passed the current Village Hall, originally the Mechanics Institute and Reading Room built by the London Lead Mining Company in 1845. Nearby we viewed the former Methodist Chapel of 1828 and School (1861). Turning off the main road and passing Bales Farm we gained further evidence of the industrial past of the 19th century village as we reached South Terrace, a row of surprisingly well-appointed homes built for the miners. Each had a sizeable garden suggesting a relatively prosperous lifestyle but even more impressive was the manager's house which could have been taken for a minor stately home. We then climbed through the fields in the footsteps of the Blackton lead miners on their way to work. As we reached Hill Top and stood opposite the Moorcock (Eggleston's second inn), the heavens really opened! We were shown the 1857 Primitive Chapel still standing on the intriguing-sounding Neamour Lane.

Returning quickly to the village green we took shelter (rather late!) to be given further details; we were shown the Chimney Stone erected in 2000 to commemorate the now-demolished chimney that towered over the Blackton mine. By now the rain had eased but we were concerned about our health, so called it a day about ten minutes earlier than intended. Despite missing the walk down to the old Chapel of Ease adjoining Eggleston Hall, a few members did call in for a much-needed coffee at the Hall tearoom. Despite the weather it had been a fascinating walk and left us with many opportunities and plans for further exploration in, hopefully, more clement weather. Thanks again to Nicky and Ruth for their research and presentation which made it a lively and informative session. Pevsner's description, provided by Nicky, is worth quoting in conclusion: *"Lying between tamed and untamed Teesdale, Eggleston embraces both to great effect, polite at the edges but with a wild heart. Its houses border an open space, with manicured green to the North and Estate landscape to the South. In the middle is a great field of Teesdale fell, complete with tumbling stream and grazing sheep, magnificently untouched."*

Picture 1: The Mine Manager's House, Eggleston



Picture 2: The Group at Hill Top

