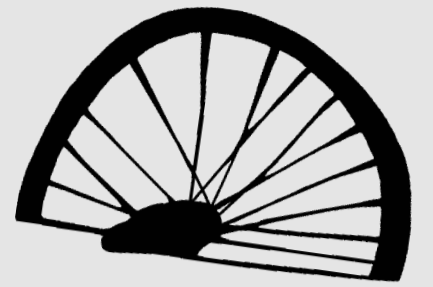




# Bowburn Interchange



# TWO banners come home

## Banner Group celebrates exciting week

**M**EMBERS of the Bowburn Banner Group were beaming from ear to ear this month when not one but TWO original Miners' Lodge banners returned to the village.

Various attempts have been made in recent years to get back the last Bowburn banner. Unfurled in 1959, it was acquired by the NUM COSA (the Colliery Officials and Staff Association) after Bowburn colliery closed in 1967.

Then news came last year that a return was possible in time for the village's Centenary in 2006. So the Banner Group was formed to raise money for repair and conservation, and to produce a new banner for the village.

### Phone call from Mansfield

On 17th January, the Banner Group held its public inaugural meeting. Then less than four weeks later, Ken Hollingsworth, COSA's General Secretary, phoned to say the banner could be collected.

Plans were immediately made for transport. David Hopper, General Secretary of the NUM (Durham Area) offered a minibus and driver. Julie Hawthorn, Durham County Council



Banner Group brings the 1959 banner from Mansfield to Red Hill



Community Heritage Officer, promised special packing material to protect the banner in transit.

Seven members of the Group duly went down to Sutton-in-Ashfield, in Nottinghamshire, on 18th February and drove back triumphantly with the treasured 1959 Bowburn Miners' Lodge banner – though it now has the words "Colliery Officials and Staff" painted on it.

### Double delight

Their delight was even greater, though, because just three days before COSA's phone call, an even greater treasure had been donated to the Group, quite out of the blue.

The famous Edith Cavell banner has been described as "one of the most important banners in Durham Miners' history". It was believed to have been destroyed many

years ago. But a phone call on 5th February from Mr. W.A. Moyes, author of the classic 1974 book on Durham Miners' banners ("The Banner Book"), invited the Banner Group's secretary, Mike Syer, to visit him. "I've got something you might like to see", he said.

When Mike arrived the next day at Mr. Moyes' home, he was stunned to be presented with what remains of this historic banner. The Banner Group then met and the

banner was proudly admired by members and trustees only a day after its very existence had been revealed.

This banner has portraits of First World War hero Nurse Edith Cavell on one side and of miners' leader John Wilson MP on the other.

Much of the surrounding background is missing and the portraits themselves have suffered with the passing of time.

Members of the Group carefully wrapped the banner in tissue paper and tyvec, a special material supplied by Julie Hawthorn.

### Conservator takes over

It was taken the next day to the County Durham studios of Caroline Rendell, one of the few textile conservators in the country able to deal with such treasures. Caroline is seeing what work needs to be done to conserve the banner for long-term care and display. She will be assisted by specialist paint conservator Ian Davenport, of Northumberland.



The Edith Cavell banner is unwrapped in Bowburn

## How many banners?

**B**OWBURN Interchange has previously reported that there were three Bowburn Miners' Lodge banners.

One, we said, dated from 1919. (This portrayed Edith Cavell.) Another was produced in 1923 and the third and final one was unfurled in 1959.

Have there, however, been more than three banners?

Firstly, was the Edith Cavell banner really the first one? Did the Lodge have no banner at all

between 1908, when the Lodge first affiliated to the Durham Miners' Association, and 1919? Could Edith Cavell's portrait have been painted over an earlier banner? If so, was that already Bowburn's, or was it from another lodge? It was damaged and replaced in 1923. Was that because it was already fairly old?

Secondly, did one banner really last from 1923 till 1959? That's a long time. Most banners only lasted about twenty years.

Bowburn's banner in the 1920s appears to have had the same design as it had in the 1950s. But was it the same one? It was not uncommon for a lodge to replace its banner with a new one of exactly the same design. Did this happen in Bowburn – perhaps in the late 1930s?

Can you remember a new banner being unfurled just before the Second World War?

## Did you carry the banner?

**D**ID you, or your father or other relative or friend, ever carry the Bowburn banner into Durham on Big Meeting Day?

Which year was that? Who else was there?

Have you got any photographs of any of the Bowburn banners? Or of groups at the Miners' Gala?

Or any newspaper clippings about them?

**Please help put together a complete history of the Bowburn Banners! Contact the Banner Group by phoning (0191) 377-1491. Or join us!**

## Perch pronouncements No. 23



## Lent Course get started

The Bowburn Christian Network is running a discussion course over Lent about "How Christians fit into modern society".

It is running twice, once on Tuesday evenings, in people's houses, starting at 7.30pm with refreshments. For details, contact Richard Walsh on 377-9963.

The parallel course

is on Thursdays, at the Methodist Chapel, starting at 11.00am, guided by the Rev. Andrew Lunn.

For more about the Bowburn Christian Network, see <http://www.rapidagent.co.uk/bcn/>

**Tsunami Disaster Appeal**  
**Coffee Morning**  
 on **Saturday 26th February**  
 in **Bowburn Community Centre**  
 10.00am - 1.00pm

# Bowburn Miners' last banner comes back at last

**THE last Bowburn Miners' Lodge banner was unfurled on 17th July 1959, the eve of that year's Big Meeting.**

Like the first known banner, it was unusual. Though produced by Tutill's, the long-established London banner-making firm, the banner is believed to be unique in that it showed two aerial – or at least long-distance – views.

One side has a rare distance painting of the Racecourse on Durham Miners' Gala (Big Meeting) Day. It shows scores of banners and thousands of miners and their families gathered for that event.

The other side shows Conishead Priory, the miners' rehabilitation home, opened in 1930. This was a popular subject on Durham banners. But, as Norman Emery has put it, "only Bowburn broke the mould, with a fine aerial view of the Priory".

There are many photographs of this banner. One shows it passing the Royal County Hotel, Old Elvet, on Big Meeting Day, 16th July 1967 – the Saturday before Bowburn colliery closed. A

paper carrier bag hung from one of the poles, on which Mary Pragnell had written "Going on the dole next week".

The banner was later acquired by the N.E. Regional NUM Colliery Officials & Staff

Association (COSA). This was not unusual, as traditionally the last banners of all NUM lodges were expected to revert to the ownership of the NUM. (Some were then sold on to entirely different unions, even in other countries.)

COSA paraded the banner, now with the words "Colliery Officials & Staff" painted over "Bowburn Miners' Lodge", at the Miners' Gala in 1972 and, in

hung in their stairwell ever since.

First enquiries about returning the banner to Bowburn were made in 1999 but it was said then to be too fragile to move. However a visit by members of Bowburn's local history group last August found it in much better condition than had been feared. Though by then over 45 years old, it had clearly been well cared for – though probably not very often used in any parade.

Ken Hollingsworth, COSA's General Secretary, said then he would return the banner to Bowburn... eventually. (He also kindly donated some photographs and North East COSA minute books to the local history group.)

After the Bowburn

the previous year, at a demonstration against the 1971 Industrial Relations Bill, in London.

When the Region's COSA office closed, the banner went to their national offices in Nottinghamshire. It has

Bowburn Banner Group's steering committee was formed in September 2004, however, plans to find funding to repair the banner in time for Bowburn's Centenary celebrations in 2006 began to develop. Pressure built up to return the banner more quickly. David Hopper, General Secretary of the NUM (Durham Area), has helped enormously, as also has the Mansfield MP, Alan Meale.

The banner was collected on Wednesday 16th February and will now go to a conservator to assess what work needs to be done on it, and what this will cost.

Next year, it should be on permanent display in Bowburn Community Centre.

BVC apologises to PC Henderson for not printing their special Christmas advert in our last edition of *Bowburn Interchange*. (Full story in next edition.)



## Why the Edith Cavell banner is unique

**THE** portrait of Edith Cavell makes the first known Bowburn Miners' lodge banner unique as it so rare for recognisable women to be portrayed on such banners. It is also the subject of an interesting story and some mystery.

The story was told to Arthur Moyes, author of "The Banner Book", by John Hutchinson, believed to be once of Durham Road, Bowburn, but then of Gilesgate.

He related how the portrait had been painted by a colliery painter, Mr. Marrington, who was demoted in consequence by the colliery under-manager (John Gladstone Ramsay).

It is not known when exactly this took place. Mr. Moyes suggested, in his book, that it was in 1919.

That was the year Edith Cavell's body was returned to England, amid nationwide publicity. Enormous crowds lined the streets of London as her cortege proceeded, with military escort, to a special service at Westminster Abbey.

Norman Emery, in his 1998 book "Banners of the Durham Coalfield" cautiously puts the date as in or after 1915, this being the date of Nurse Cavell's execution. There was an international outcry at the time and it is quite possible that the portrait was painted as a nationalistic war-time gesture.

It has been suggested that Mr. Marrington's "disgrace" was a result of the pit having German connections – though what these might be (other than the close relationship the coal industry throughout the North East had with Germany before the First World War) is not clear. Indeed, the death of fifty Bowburn men in that war, including many volunteers (including the headmaster, Joseph Pyke Wake), seems to indicate support for the war against Germany.

It is possible that the banner was older than this anyway: it may have been over-painted for Bowburn Miners' Lodge after being acquired from another lodge. It might even be a pre-1915 Bowburn banner, which was over-painted by Mr. Marrington. It is hoped the conservators now handling the banner will shed some light on this.

If both sides of the banner were indeed painted, or over-painted,



Edith Cavell's portrait on the Bowburn banner, photographed this month

one of the greatest Durham Miners' Association Agents. So he is on many banners produced after his election as Agent in 1882. But it is not common to find portraits of miners' leaders painted on banners after their death.

Wilson died on 23rd March 1915.

This banner was damaged and replaced in 1923 by a traditional Tutill's banner, made in London.

If anyone has more information about Bowburn's earliest known banner, or about Mr. Marrington,

after 1915, it is again unusual in portraying John Wilson MP on the other side. Wilson was

the Banner Group would be very pleased to hear from you. Please phone (0191) 377-1491.

## Who was Edith Cavell?

**EDITH** Louisa Cavell was born on 4th December 1865, the daughter of the vicar of Swardeston, near Norwich.

She trained as a teacher and then a nurse and in 1907 went to Brussels, to take charge of a training school for nurses.

When the Germans overran Belgium in 1914, she stayed on to care for the wounded. As a member of the Red Cross, she should have remained aloof. However she became involved in concealing and smuggling away soldiers trapped behind enemy lines.

After a Belgian 'collaborator' had passed through her hands, the school was searched and on 5th August 1915 Nurse Cavell was arrested. She freely admitting her guilt.

Despite intervention by the neutral American and Spanish embassies, Edith Cavell was condemned by Court Martial and shot by a firing squad on October 12th. She is reported to have said, "I have been kindly treated here. I expected my sentence and

I believe it was just."

The Allies, however, were less forgiving. Nurse Cavell was proclaimed a martyr. Her name and portrait were used to urge men to enlist and fight the Germans. Recruitment doubled for eight weeks after her death was announced.

After the War, her remains were retrieved from their rifle range grave and returned to England. They were escorted with great ceremony to Dover, then to Westminster Abbey (on 15th May 1919) and finally to Norwich Cathedral for interment.

An annual service is still held at Norwich Cathedral on the anniversary of her death and a two-yearly festival is held in Swardeston, where she was born and brought up.

(For more about Edith Cavell see [www.edithcavell.org.uk](http://www.edithcavell.org.uk))

The first known Bowburn banner, c.1920



### Bowburn Banner Group presents the Reg Vardy Band (formerly the Ever Ready Band) in Concert



on **Friday**  
**25th February 2005**  
in  
**Bowburn Community Centre**

Bar opens at 7.00pm

Concert starts at 7.30pm

Tickets (£3) from Community Centre (0191-377-0571), Bowburn Library, Bowburn Surgery, Mike Syer (377-1491) or Dennis Morgan (377-0553)