



1906-2006

# Bowburn Interchange



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# Bowburn banner comes home!

*MP and brass band join celebration as Racecourse banner returns after repair and conservation*

**T**HE first of this year's Bowburn banners finally returned to the village on 9th March. It is the last one used at the Durham Miners Gala before the pit closed: the one with a distant view of The Racecourse on Big Meeting Day, on one side, and a unique aerial view of Connishead Priory, the miners' convalescent home, on the other.

The banner was immediately installed in the magnificent and unique swivelling banner case, designed and constructed by John Johnson, and unveiled on 11th March by Roberta Blackman-Woods MP and Walter Hinton, one of the 250 people in attendance.

The event was celebrated by a concert by the Reg Vardy Band, who also played "March Bowburn", an item specially commissioned for Bowburn's Centenary.

In about 1970, this banner was acquired by the Colliery Officials & Staffs Association (COSA)

but was returned from Mansfield in January last year. (See *Bowburn Interchange* no. 32.) Since then it has been with paint conservators Jim Devenport and Norma Johnson, at their studios at Humshaugh, near Hexham. They have retouched and repaired the paintwork (see photos) and finally placed very fine strips of silk over the "COSA" lettering, with the original Bowburn wording sign-written on top.

This new layer was carefully prepared so that the COSA lettering and, indeed, the original Bowburn wording beneath it were not

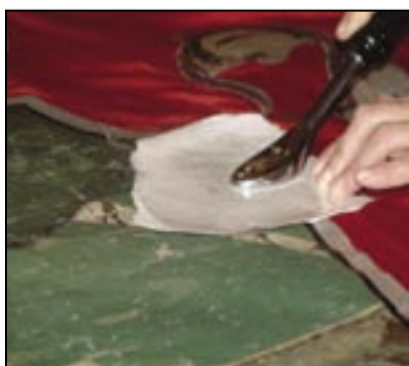
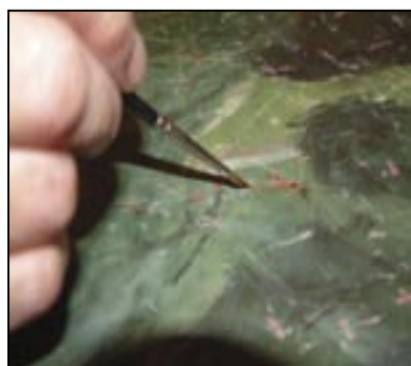


Roberta Blackman-Woods and Walter Hinton cut the ribbon to "unveil" the returned banner, watched by John Johnson, banner case builder, Dennis Morgan, Banner Group chairman, and others

damaged. For they are part of the banner's unique history. In years to come, it will be possible to lift the silk layer, to show future historians the original lettering.

The Racecourse banner was briefly brought back to Bowburn in July last year, when it was on show at both local primary schools and in Crowtrees WM Club. Now

it is home for good! It will only very rarely be removed from its special case, which allows it to be turned without handling the banner, thus avoiding possible damage.



From top left, anti-clockwise: The banner arrives at Humshaugh studios last year; conservation work in progress, and photographing the result before it returns to Bowburn. (Photographs by Jim Devenport and members of the Bowburn Banner Group.)

## Do you want to carry the new banner?

**B**OWBURN'S new banner will be paraded through Bowburn on Big Meeting Day, Saturday 8th July, and then through Durham.

Several banner bearers can be involved, as marching through Durham will include going to the Racecourse, from there to the Cathedral (where the banner will be blessed) and then back to the bus. Others can hold the strings.

All volunteers will receive a free banner token to commemorate the occasion.

Contact any member of the Banner Group to put your name down, or attend one of the events listed on this page.

On 16th June, everyone is invited to practice carrying the banner, work out how to deal with the wind and other problems, how to enter the

Cathedral etc., as well as enjoy memories of dancing with the banner and other Big Meeting traditions. Be there!

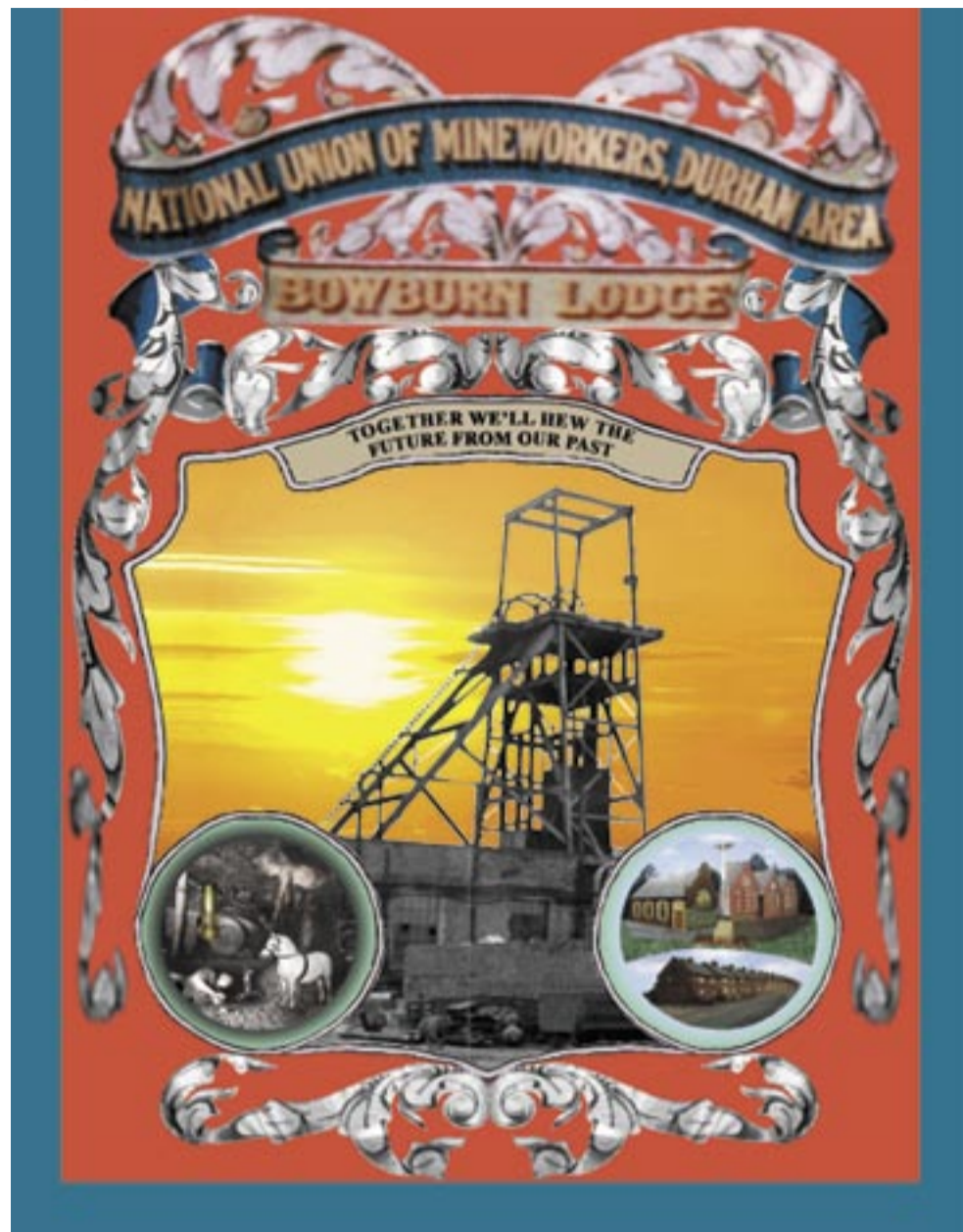
## From church pews and a working model to the real thing

**T**he invention of a case that can show either side of the banner, without having to handle it, is unique. A patent is being applied for.



(Full story on page 2.)

**Bowburn's new banner:  
"Together we'll hew the future from our past"**



**"Emancipation of Labour" ... in colour?**

Bowburn Miners Lodge had three silk banners made by the famous London and Chesham company of George Tutill. The second of these was last marched into Durham in 1958, before being replaced by the "Racecourse" banner.

Several photographs have been found of this splendid banner. A number of its bearers have been identified, too, either from these photos or by their coming forward to say they remember carrying it.

However very, very few people took colour photographs in the 1940s and '50s! And few people can remember details of this banner, even if they themselves carried it. (This is not really surprising, of course! Can YOU remember the colour of your boyfriend's shirt, or your girlfriend's dress, the first time you met them?)

Then, in February this year, Tyne Tees TV showed an episode of "The Way We



Were", which included a colour film clip of the 1955 Miners Gala. Sharp-eyed Jimmy Wilkinson thought he spotted the Bowburn banner and played the clip over and over again, till he was sure he was right. The colours are still not at all clear. (See photo below.) But from



the shape we think it was the Bowburn banner and therefore have some good clues to go on, in guessing its colours.

If you have a colour photograph, please let the Banner Group have a look. Meanwhile, well done Jim!

Also, the Bowburn Banner Group is still a long way from having a complete list of the names of those who carried Bowburn's banners on Big Meeting Days in the past.

If you have any names, even if you are not sure of the year, please contact Mike Syer (377-1491) with details. Thanks.



**Is this a colour photo of the "middle" banner? Have you got a better one?**

**It's an open and shut case!**

**First banner case swings into use**

THE magnificent Bowburn banner case, made by retired miner John Johnson of Bowburn, was commissioned by Norman Emery on Friday 3rd March. A week later it became the final resting place for the Racecourse banner. (See front page.)

This case is the first of three unique cases being made from the pews of Christ the King Church, Bowburn, donated for this purpose.

It is truly spectacular, for its entirely original design, by John Johnson himself, allows the banner within it to be turned without anyone touching it. To do this, the whole case can swing away from the wall and then the internal section swivelled within the outer frame. The case is obviously very heavy. (The acrylic sheets alone weigh 348kg – about 767lbs.) So the banner will not be turned very often!

The other two cases will be a bit simpler, though still made from the historic pews and again of entirely original design. One will be identical in height and width to the first case and will face it in the Community Centre foyer. This will contain Bowburn's new banner, with "The March of



**The first banner case under construction**

"Time" on one side and scenes from Bowburn Colliery on the other. It is planned to use this banner, at the very least, every Big Meeting Day. It can therefore expect to be handled regularly. So the complex design to prevent such handling will not be necessary. If the banner needs turning, to display the

other side, it can just be taken out and re-hung.

The third case will be different again and will be mounted on one wall of the Community Centre main hall. It will contain the Edith Cavell banner. This will only very rarely be turned, since conservation work requires banner fragments to be stitched to a hanging fabric which, if turned, would obscure the banner picture of John Wilson.

The second banner case should be up in time for the new Bowburn banner to hang there in July and the third will be ready for the Cavell banner by 8th September.



**John Johnson demonstrates his first model... and the real thing**

**What happened in 1906?**

THE sinking of Bowburn Colliery began on 23rd July with the ceremonial cutting of turf by Gertrude Bell, daughter of the chairman of Bell Bros.

James Johnson, of E. Johnson & Sons, East Boldon, began sinking the next day and finished on 15th January 1908, going down 110 fathoms (201m) to the Brockwell seam.

Piling was needed, because of the uncommon depth of quicksand and swelling clay. In September, a group of mining engineers came to admire the work, shown round by A.L. Steavenson, Bell Bros.' agent and M.R. Kirby, their engineer.

At the colliery itself, a temporary pit heap and engine house had been erected before shaft-sinking began, as had brick kilns (to use clay from the shaft), offices, workmen's shops and an engine shed.

**The "Racecourse" banner visited Bowburn last year**

THIS month's return of the Racecourse banner was actually its second re-appearance in Bowburn.

Before it was repaired and conserved, it was taken to Bowburn Infant & Nursery School last July, as this photograph in the Local History Society's 2006 Calendar shows. It was also displayed briefly at the Junior



School and Crowtrees WM Club.

(Copies of the Centenary calendar are still available.)

New houses had been built at Coronation Terrace, Coxhoe, for the first workmen and, by July, further "comfortable four-roomed houses with sculleries and washhouses" were under construction on Durham Road. Steavenson Street (odds) followed, and Steavenson St. (evens) was built the next year, totalling 95 houses.

In May, Bell Bros. Ltd.

had agreed to lease land west of Bowburn Bridge to Durham RDC "for sewage irrigation". (These works remained in use till the new Bowburn North council estate was built after WWII and today's sewage works were built further down-stream.)

Such measures were certainly needed, given the serious typhoid epidemic in Coxhoe that year.

# Mr. Marrington – fact or fiction?

**B**OWBURN *Interchange* has previously reported the tale of Mr. Marrington, painter at Bowburn colliery, demoted by Bell Bros. for painting Edith Cavell on the Miners' Lodge banner. This story was told by John Hutchinson (formerly of Durham Road, Bowburn) to Arthur Moyes, author of the 1974 "Banner Book". It has been re-told many times since... but was it true?

Mr. Marrington, it was said, painted a "home made" banner, which displeased both the colliery management and the miners' lodge. Since it depicted Edith Cavell, whose execution in October 1915 was widely used to promote support for the war with Germany, this could have happened as early as 1916. But

## How long was the Cavell banner used?

But then some older members of Bowburn's mining community came forward, after the *Bowburn Interchange* story last year, to say they could remember the Edith Cavell banner – quite an achievement, if it had ceased to be used 82

of all time). But perhaps it was from the 1921 lock-out, which would have been compatible with the 1919-to-1923 version of the Cavell banner's history. Evidence inconclusive.

A postcard was found showing the other side of the banner (which portrayed Durham Miners' Association agent, John Wilson MP) marching through Coxhoe. But research showed this photograph was probably taken in 1920 – again quite compatible with the short life story.

Then, early this year, a Pathé News reel of the 1935 Durham Miners' Gala was found, which clearly showed Bowburn's famous banner taking part. And, soon afterwards, it was realised that a photograph of the 1938 Gala in Michael Richardson's, "The Durham Miners Gala", showed the John Wilson side of Bowburn's first banner.

## When did the next banner arrive?

So it is now definitely known that the Edith Cavell banner lasted till at least 1938. Perhaps it was replaced by the "All Men Are Brethren" and "The Emancipation of Labour" banner soon after that, say in 1939. And perhaps that too lasted for twenty years, till the "Racecourse" banner was unfurled in 1959.

There was no Big Meeting between 1939 and 1946. If the Cavell banner was actually used in 1939 as well as 1938, was it also used after the War? The next known photo of the Bowburn banner was in 1950, when the "Emancipation of Labour" one was used. When was this unfurled? Was it bought new from Tutill banner-makers? Or might it have been second-hand, acquired from a Lodge that had closed?

So there is a mystery about this banner too! But, meanwhile, back to the first one...

Even if the Edith Cavell banner was a Tutill banner on damask silk and lasted for twenty years, there's still a puzzle. Did Bowburn's miners not have a banner before 1919? Did they sink the colliery (from 1906) and produce coals (from 1908) and, indeed, belong to the Durham Miners Association (probably from 1908), without taking part in the Big Meeting, or doing so without their own banner?



Who painted this portrait? Nurse Edith Cavell on the Bowburn banner, with one eye cleaned by conservators (photo by Bill Bates, 6/3/2006)

Or was there a "home-made" banner before 1919? And was there a Mr. Marrington, the victimised colliery painter, after all?

banner showing Edith Cavell and John Wilson was not Bowburn's first banner after all. Perhaps it was the second one.

Perhaps the Tutill

The search for evidence continues!



Bowburn soup kitchen – 1921 or 1926? (with thanks to Mr. Harry Lynn for this photograph)

it is more likely to have been done in 1919, after the end of World War I, when her remains were returned to England with great ceremony. That was in May. So her portrait could well have been painted in time for the Miners' Gala on 26th July – the first one since before the War.

The story went, however, that the banner only lasted till 1923, when it was replaced by a "proper" one, made commercially by Tutills, of London.

## The mystery deepens

The mystery started to deepen, however, when fragments of this famous banner were returned to Bowburn early in 2005. (See *Bowburn Interchange* No. 32.) For a start, it was painted on silk – not the sort of material the pit painter would have had lying around the workshops.

Then it was found that this was actually, itself, a Tutill banner. Had Mr. Marrington painted Nurse Cavell's portrait over an earlier banner, perhaps? (Was that the reason for his supposed disgrace?) When the University of Northumbria in Newcastle agreed to do x-rays and other analyses of the banner fragments, this was at first thought to be a useful line of enquiry.

were ashamed of (or even angry about), did it? One resident's father was remembered to have often said that the Cavell banner was the best one there had ever been. Again, this did not seem to fit the original story.

Then there was the problem of how long the banner that replaced it must have lasted. For this one was in use until 1958: the final banner that replaced it (the "Racecourse" banner) was unfurled in 1959. So did this "middle" banner last from 1923 till 1958 – 35 years! – when few other banners ever survived longer than about 20 years?

So the hunt was on for more evidence. Some early photographs of the Edith Cavell banner were offered to the Banner Group for copying. Two showed it with men and women in a soup kitchen, obviously during a mining dispute. The person who had one of these photos thought it was taken in 1926 (the year of the General Strike and the longest coal-mining lock-out



Bowburn's banner at the 1935 Big Meeting (clip from Pathé newsreel)

## Children will have their own banner

**B**OWBURN will now have two new banners this year, not one.

Barry Ormsby and Romey Chaffer, of the Bearpark Artists Co-operative, are working with children at Bowburn Junior School to produce their own banner in time for Big Meeting Day this year. They were in the school for two days in mid-February, exploring with them what banners were about and what ideas they could carry. The children's ideas are now being worked on to create the designs for the new banner.

The idea of making this second new banner arose when the Centenary Banner Project met such an enthusiastic response at both local primary schools last year. It was decided to apply for further funding, this

time from the Bowburn & Parkhill Community Chest (funded by Durham City Council from housing at Lawson Road). The Community Partnership approved the idea and Bearpark Artists duly started work.

### Unfurling on 30th June

The banner will be unfurled at a special Junior School celebration on Friday 30th June (one week before the larger community banner) and will be marched through Bowburn with the Shepherd Group Brass Band on Big Meeting Day, 8th July.

It is not yet known whether it, too, will proceed into Durham for the Miners' Gala itself, as that will have to depend on the children's parents.



Bearpark artists work with children on ideas for the Children's banner

## Advertisements

This edition of *Bowburn Interchange* is being paid for by the Bowburn Banner Group, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Bowburn & Parkhill Community Partnership's Community Chest.

Normal editions of the newsletter are produced thanks entirely to the support of local businesses and we wish to thank the following for their continuing support:

Anderson's Bakery, Armstrong Cleaning Services, Artful Ink, Bowburn Hall Hotel, Bowburn Post Office, Clarence Villa Garage, Coxhoe Kitchen, Curtains 'n' Things, Hillrise Guest House, K&E Atkinson, Lea's Village Store, NE Garage Doors, Parkside Grove Nursery, PC Henderson, R&C Builders, Somal's Shop, The Hair Hut, Village Care

## Bowburn Centenary Year and Banner Group Events 2006

Why not keep this list of the year's celebrations in Bowburn, or put them in your diary?

- Thursday 23rd March: Centenary Bingo at Oak Tree (£3), 7.00 for 7.30pm
- Friday 31st March: "Photos and Memories of Bowburn's Banners" in the Communal Hall, Lawson Road, 1.30-3.00pm
- Monday 3rd April: "Photos and Memories of Bowburn's Banners" in the Communal Hall, Bede Terrace, 12.00-2.00pm
- Friday 21st April: "Photos and Memories of Bowburn's Banners", Crowtrees WMC, 7.30pm
- Friday 28th April: Traditional/folk music night with Mike Tickell, Crowtrees WMC, 7.00 for 7.30pm
- Friday 5th May: "The conservation & care of miners' banners", by Caroline Rendell and Jim Devenport, at Bowburn Community Centre, 7.00pm
- Tuesday 23rd May: Centenary Quiz & Curry at Oak Tree (£3), 7.00 for 7.30pm
- To be arranged (May?): "Photos and Memories of Bowburn's Banners" at Bowburn Junior School
- To be arranged (May?): "Photos and Memories of Bowburn's Banners" at Bowburn Infant School
- Thursday 8th June: Kids' Club Open Morning, including "Photos and Memories of Bowburn's Banners"
- Friday 16th June: "Banner carrying and traditions", at Bowburn Community Centre, 7.00pm
- Saturday 24th June: Local & Family History Day, at Bowburn Community Centre.
- Friday 30th June: Celebration and Unfurling of Bowburn Children's Banner at Bowburn Junior School
- Wednesday 5th July: Centenary Folk, Broth & Stottie Night at Oak Tree (£3), 7.00 for 7.30pm
- Friday 7th July: Unfurling of the new Bowburn Banner by Cllr. Ernie Foster, Chairman of Durham County Council, with the Shepherd Group Brass Band, Bowburn Community Centre
- Miners' Gala Day, Saturday 8th July: Start at Park Hill at 8.00am, then Crowtrees WMC at 8.30am, then march through Bowburn with Banner and Band, then free buses to Durham. Dedication of the new Banner in Durham Cathedral at 3.00pm
- Saturday & Sunday 22nd & 23rd July: Centenary "Pitmen's Picnic", family fun day, balloon race and fireworks, on the "Daisy Field" (behind Bowburn Junior School)
- Friday 8th September, 7.00pm: Fishburn Band Concert with Unveiling of the 1919 (Edith Cavell) Banner, at Bowburn Community Centre
- To be arranged (autumn): Video and photographic displays of the 2006 Miners' Gala and Bowburn Centenary events, Bowburn Community Centre
- Sunday 12th November: Remembrance Day service and parade, with the Reg Vardy Band, at Bowburn Community Centre and at Bowburn War Memorial.

## Photos and memories

THE Banner Group is organising a number of "photographs and memories" events over the next few months.

They will include displays of films and photos taken so far, as part of the Centenary Banner Project, and numerous pictures from the past.

If you have any photos you would like to be included, why not bring them along? They could be copied, if you would like larger versions. Or you may just like to share your memories of banners and Gala Days from the past.

All welcome.

## What happened on the 23rd?

Some of the Centenary events are on the 23rd of the month. This is because on 23rd July 1906, the ceremonial cutting of turf by Miss Gertrude Bell began the sinking of Bowburn Colliery.

Other things have happened on the 23rd, too. Here are a few.

23rd July 1932: Bowburn banner was carried at Big Meeting by J. Elliott, J. Willis, B. Marr, G. Slater, G. Haigh and G. Fleetham.

23rd July 1970: Sherburn Hill Co-op merged with the NECS.

23rd October 1972: County Council bought Bowburn pit heaps for reclamation.

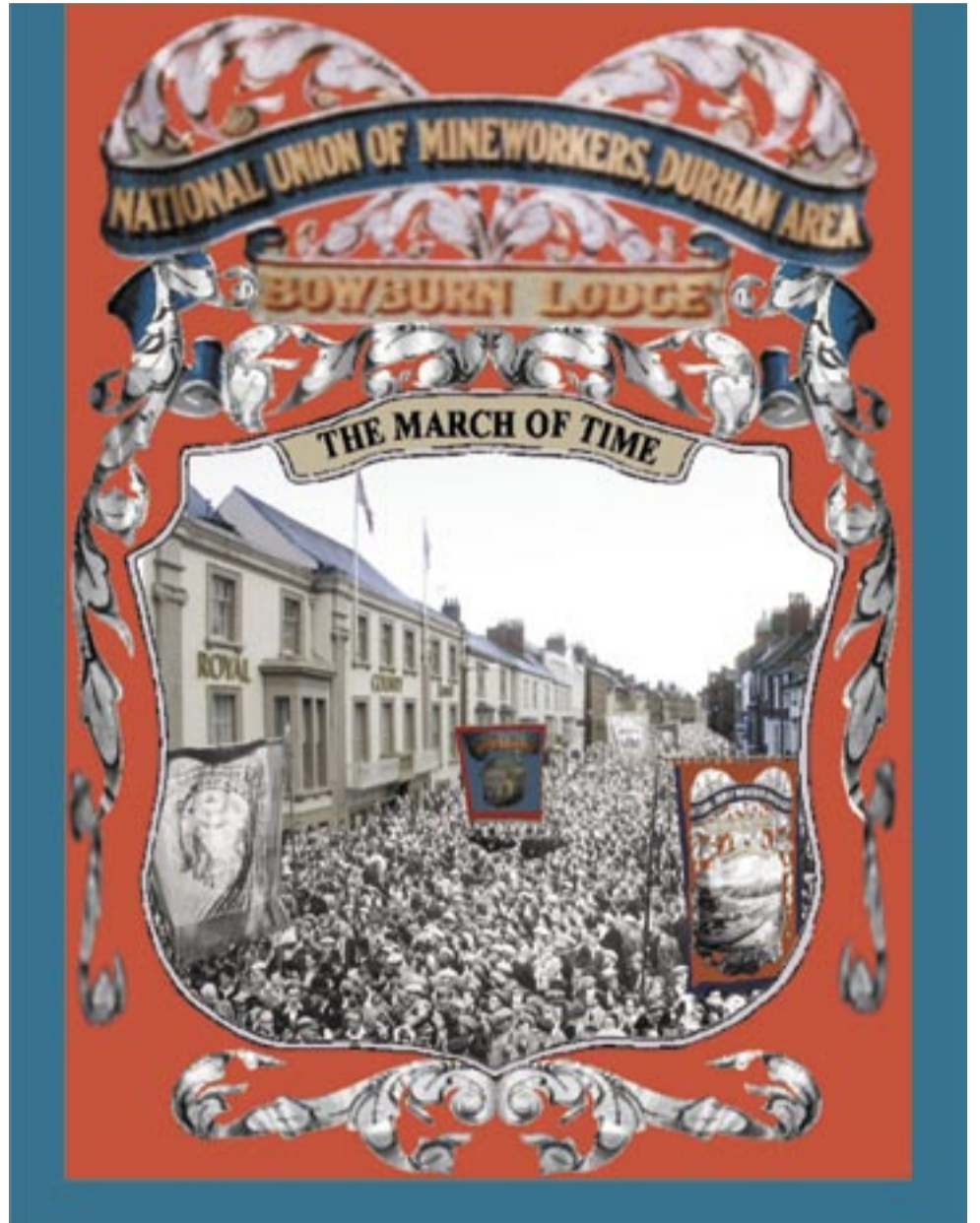
23rd July 1976: Bowburn Modern School closed, amalgamating with Coxhoe to form Landsdowne Comprehensive.

23rd August 1994: Roadchef service station opened by David Bellamy.

23rd June 1999: Last service in St. Paul's Worship Centre, Quarrington Hill.

# Will your face be in the crowd?

**BOWBURN'S** new banner is now being made, in Overstrand, Norfolk, by Chippenham Designs TU. It will be ready in time for the Durham Miners' Gala on Saturday 8th July and will be unfurled the night before that, by Cllr. Ernie Foster, Chairman of Durham County Council, in Bowburn Community Centre.



The designs for the two sides of the banner have been worked up from the ideas of many local residents.

John Midgley, of Chippenham Designs, visited Bowburn in September and worked with schoolchildren to find what sorts of things they thought should be included.

They suggested firstly various local buildings and landmarks, such as Christ the King Church and the original Bowburn School (now the Infants and Nursery School), and secondly coal mining scenes, such as a pit pony and a miner hewing coal underground.

They also wanted a brass band and banners, parading in the Miners' Gala.

## All agreed – Bowburn places and Gala scene

Very similar ideas were brought up at a public

meeting in Bowburn Community Centre on 19th September and members of the Bowburn Banner Group worked on all these over the following months. They experimented not just with which pictures to include, but also on how they should be arranged.

A draft design for each side was then discussed with John Midgley when he again visited Bowburn on 19th January and the final drafts were prepared. The results can be seen, above, on this page and on page 2.

One side, entitled "The March of Time", is a scene from the Durham Miners' Gala. It is actually based on a photograph taken in 1950 but a modern version of Old Elvet has been used.

All three of Bowburn's known Miners' Lodge banners are shown in the parade; a VIP of significance from each

decade of Bowburn Colliery's history will stand on the balcony of the Royal County Hotel, and a number of local miners and their families, and other local residents from Bowburn, will be seen in the crowd.

## Faces in the crowd

The Banner Group has negotiated with John Midgley to include as many local faces as possible. If you would like your face, or that of a parent or other relative, on the new banner, please contact the Group urgently. You will need a decent passport-sized photograph and £20 (cheques payable to "Bowburn Banner Group"). A maximum of 70 faces is possible (including VIPs and people from Bowburn's past) and they will be accepted on a first-come-first-served basis.

Contact: Mike Syer, 8, Clarence Street, Bowburn (tel.: 377-1491).

## Brass Band events

THE Bowburn Banner Group has now organised three brass band events, including two in 2005.

The Reg Vardy Band helped celebrate the return of the Racecourse Banner on 11th March. The Shepherd Group Band (formerly the Rowntree Band) will be with us for the unfurling of the new

banner on 7th July and the Fishburn Band will greet the return of the Edith Cavell banner on 8th September.

Thanks are due, especially, to volunteers from the Bowburn Community Association for their enormous help in organising and running these events.



A packed hall enjoyed performances by the Reg Vardy Band on 11th March