



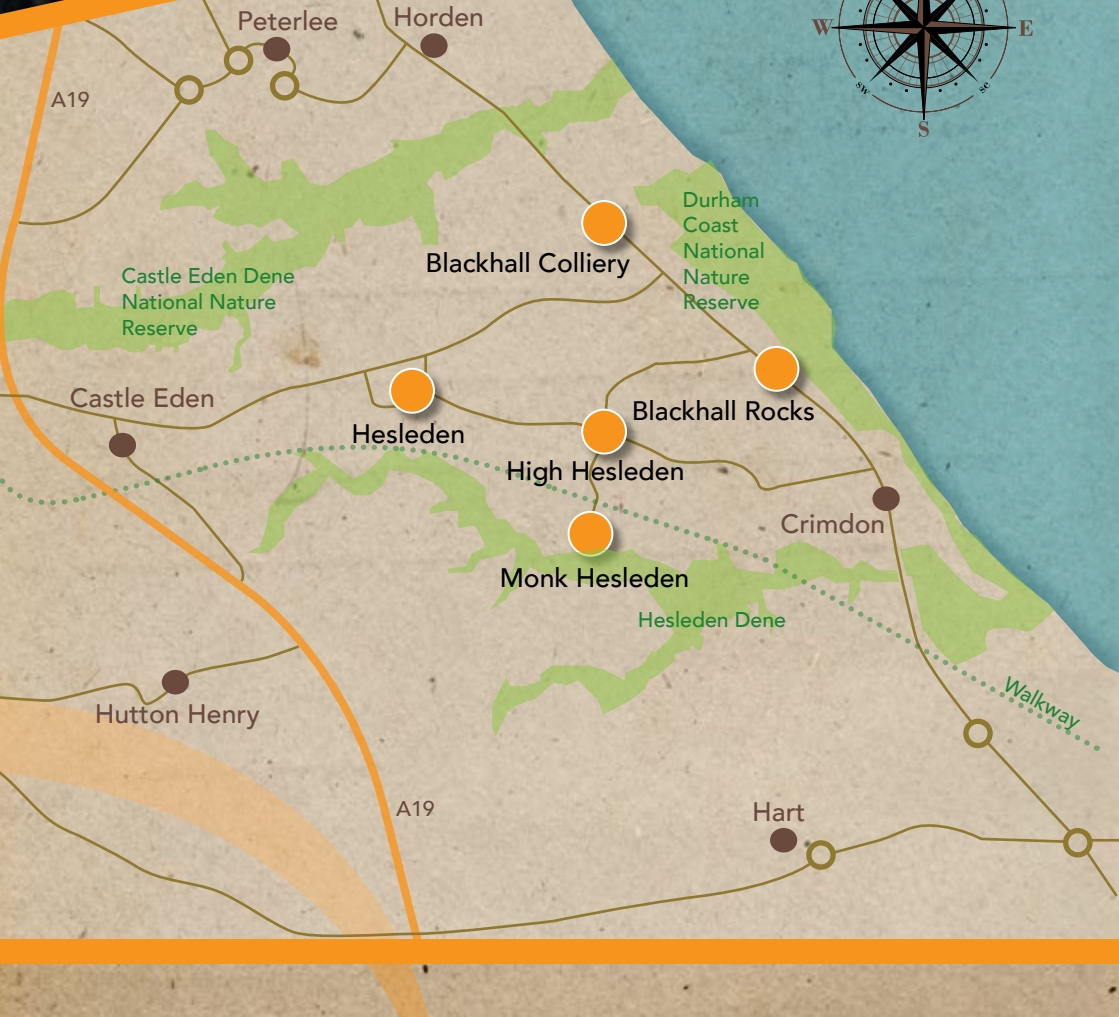
Heritage Coast
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esc Capturing Coastal Memories

A history of the Blackhalls and Hesleden

By Blackhall Colliery Primary, Hesleden Primary
and St Joseph's RC Primary, Blackhall





The Blackhalls and Hesleden has an interesting past. A lot of what is here, how the place looks and how people live has been shaped by the coal mining industry that was here for many years. This is what we found out about our local area when we started to investigate.

Caitlyn



Castle Eden Colliery, 1900

Hesleden Station



Mines and the railways

Mining is a really big thing in our local area. There were pits in Blackhall and Castle Eden as well as in other local villages such as Wingate and Horden.

Because of the mines we had lots of railway lines, they were mainly used to transport coal but it did mean we had a local train and local train stations. In Hesleden the place where the train station was can still be seen today.

Mining in Blackhall goes back a lot longer than we thought. Back in the 18th century there was a lead mine in the area before coal mines were even around.



Blackhall Colliery Facing South, 1929



On the beach

Our beach used to be mainly used for mining and because of that it was black with coal. There were aerial lifts and the cliffs were used for shoots for the waste.

The beach used to be a big part of life in Blackhall and The Rocks and Crimdon were both places people went on holiday.

There used to be postcards to buy and there are photographs of people enjoying the beach and the dene.

In the dene there was lido and a mini golf course, there were huts and cabins and lots to see and do.

Every year there was a carnival and there would be a carnival queen competition.

The beach has been cleaned up lots, but sometimes the sea still washes in parts left from mining machinery and some of it is buried deep in the sand.

Tin School Colliery Infants, 1919



Cinema, school and ice cream



Pieronni's corner, 1928

In the colliery we used to have two cinemas, but back then they called them picture houses. At The Rocks we had an ice cream parlour called The Blackhall Rocks Café, it was ran by an Italian family called the Pieronni's.

Life in the Blackhalls and Hesleden was very different. A lot of men worked down the pit and the women mostly stayed at home and looked after the house and children.

The schools were different. We used to have Yohden Hall, which was like Wellfield and Dene House is now. We had the primary schools, but they were called infants and juniors. The school we have in Hesleden hasn't changed much over the years. We found a picture from the class of 1920 sat in front of the school and it was easy to recognise.



Blackhall Colliery Brass Band, 1930

Blackhall used to have a prize-winning brass band. The brass band was a big part of life in the colliery and the band would march to Durham with a banner each year. This still happens today and we still have a brass band, but mostly its young people who learn to play the instruments.

Sports were really popular too and they still are. Blackhall has always had a very good cricket team; football teams from Blackhall and Hesleden have been very successful at winning trophies over the years.

Tunes and teams

Blackhall Colliery Welfare Football Team, 1930's



The Castle, Castle Eden



Blackhall Rocks Hotel



Hotels, castles and homes

There are lots of grand houses and buildings in the area. Some have been around for a very long time.

The Hardwick Hall Manor Hotel used to be a family home and dates back to the time of the Scots and the 1300's. The 'castle' at Castle Eden was once the home of the Burdon family who were very important and famous at the time. The castle isn't really a castle, it was a big house that was extended and then extended again. Each time the house was made bigger it made it look a little different. The house was sold a few years ago and made safe again after lots of years of being neglected by its owners, the coal board. It is now divided into three separate houses, each one is a part of the castle built at a different time.

There used to be a grand building on The Rocks that was called the Blackhall Rocks Hotel. It was a temperance house, which means it was a place where there was no alcohol. People went there for holidays and they enjoyed the nearby beach.

Leek show at a Workmens Club, 1945



Allotments, gardens and welfare parks

Allotments were a very important part of colliery life. For people living in the colliery houses where they had no gardens meant they had somewhere to grow vegetables and food to eat.

There are still allotments today in Blackhall, they run behind the houses on the Coast Road and near to Meadow Avenue.

Miners also used to grow flowers in their allotments and they had flower and vegetable competitions each year. Gardens were always well kept and so was the local park. The Miners Welfare park was opened in 1929 by the Miners Welfare Scheme, they built a lot of houses in the area too.



Beaches, caves and cliff tops

The beach always had caves and the cliff tops had ponds. When the pit was open the area was black with coal and the wildlife was scared away. Machinery took over and changed the way it looked. Since the pits closed and the miners lost their jobs things have changed a lot in the area.

Most families were affected by the pits closing and they hated Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister at the time for making it happen. People felt very sad about the pits closing and people found it hard to find other work. People were poor and lots of things closed.

One of the good things that came from the pits closing was the cleaning up of the beaches and the cliff tops and the nature and wildlife returning.



After many years since the pits closed, people still think back to the times when everyone had jobs and the community was all friends and everyone worked together.

The things that children wish they had today like cinemas and places to go swimming were the things that were here when the pits were open.



Whale washed up on Blackhall beach, 1938



Blackhall Rocks, cliff steps



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