

### WALBOTTLE WALKABOUT

Mr. Sockett and Mr. Munro have spent some time recently making an historical walk around Walbottle. There is still some research to be done but the information below may help to make an evening stroll more interesting.

- 1 Start a walk at the bridge over the New Burn in Walbottle Dene. The road on which you are standing is the Military Road built in 1751. The road was built to allow troops to reach the West Coast quickly because during the 1745 Rebellion, General Wade had great difficulty in getting to Carlisle. Walbottle Dene was one of the many places where his waggons got stuck. Until 1879 the road was run by a Turnpike Trust, tolls being charged to users of it. The Dene itself served as the boundary between the townships of Newburn and Throckley. The New Burn flowing through the Dene was formerly used to power water mills; a map of 1620 shows at least two of these working, probably to grind corn. A local celebrity in the nineteenth century was 'Willie of the Wood' a Scot who brought a family up in a makeshift hut in the Dene and who finally turned the increasing number of visitors to his advantage by selling them ale and cheese.
- 2 The Military Road follows the line of Hadrian's Wall and stone from the Wall was used to make it. The farm on the left as you approach Walbottle School is Dene House and in the gardens may be seen the remains of a Roman Milecastle. This Milecastle, which is the school badge of Walbottle High School, stretched across the road. When the new bus bay was being built on the South side of the road workmen cut into the surface of a Roman rubbish dump containing many oyster shells, the Roman equivalent of fish and chips.
- 3 The site of Walbottle High School provides us with two interesting finds. A pipe stem stamped GAMBIER PARIS was found here. Gambier was a Parisian pipe-maker in the 1780's and the pipe may well have belonged to one of the French clergy who escaped to England following the French Revolution. Some of the clergy lived in this area being given the cottages known as Frenchman's Arms Cottages. Daniel Defoe in his Northern Tour comments on seeing these French priests in the Walbottle fields in their long cassocks and floppy hats. Just to the right of the school gate will be seen a ditch. This is the ditch which ran in front of Hadrian's Wall and was excavated some time ago by Mr. Sockett.
- 4 The Engine Inn shows an early steam locomotive in it's sign, but it is called this, because on this site stood a stationary steam engine used to haul coal waggons up from the river on their way to the collieries which lay to the North. Several waggonways converged before reaching the Engine Inn and passing through Walbottle Village to the staiths on the River Tyne at Lemington. Before the Tyne was deepened after 1850, the coal was emptied into 'keels' to be taken down to the mouth of the Tyne where stood the waiting colliers. The Waggonway from the North Walbottle Colliery stood further East and the site of this may be clearly seen. This waggonway was the last self-acting inclined plane in Northumberland.



5 The site of Whitehall Road and Richmond Terrace was previously the site of Walbottle Old Row. These houses were demolished at the beginning of this century. There were 21 back to back houses, all having only two rooms, a living room and an attic which was reached by an open ladder through the living room ceiling. Two outside water taps served all the houses and the houses were extremely damp and very dark. In 1912 a tender to build new houses on the site was accepted by the Newburn Council and the Old Row was demolished.

6 In this field may be seen the line of the Vallum, the ditch which lay to the South of Hadrians Wall and marked the end of the military zone. To the left is Walbottle Quarry which supplied much of the stone for roofing tiles and floors in the village. In 1878 there were still cottages in the Quarry but most were in a ruinous state, the best of them being occupied only by a cow.

7 The Public House, the Percy Arms, recalls the fact that the Lord of the Manor of Newburn was the Duke of Northumberland, Percy being their family name. The road leading past the Percy Arms on your left is almost certainly one of the very early lanes which led to the fields around Walbottle when all the farms were in the village itself.

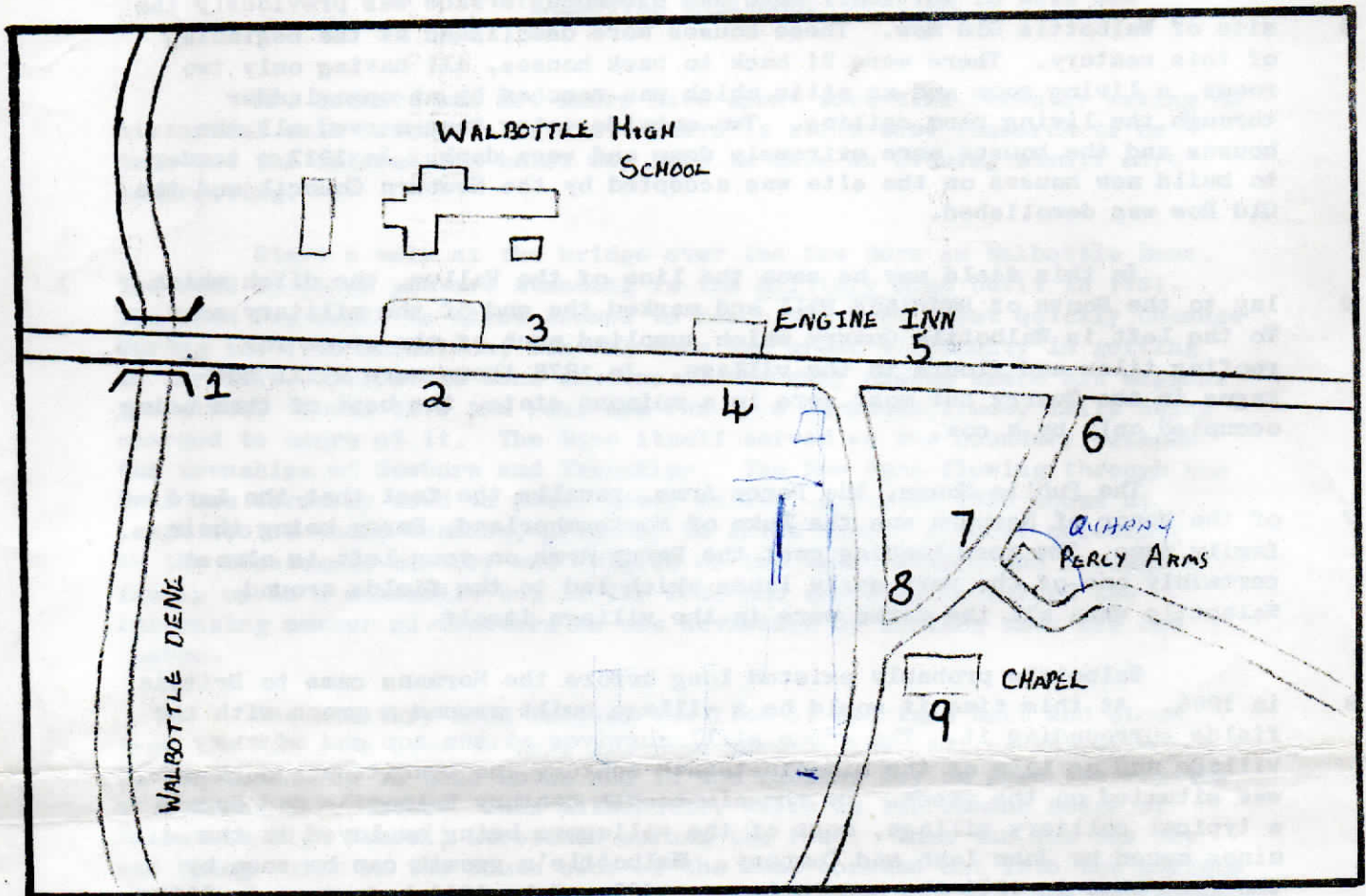
8 Walbottle probably existed long before the Normans came to Britain in 1066. At this time it would be a village built around a green with the fields surrounding it. The green still survives at the top end of the village and as late as the mid-nineteenth century the traditional duck pond was situated on the green. By the nineteenth century Walbottle had become a typical colliery village, most of the villagers being employed in the mines owned by John Lamb and Company. Walbottle's growth can be seen by the fact that in 1801 the population was 462 and by 1911 had risen to 2653. Walbottle was one of the townships of Newburn Parish. After the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 it was part of Castle Ward Union. In 1894 the Newburn Urban District was formed and Walbottle remained part of this until 1974 when it became part of Newcastle. In 1893 Dr. Andrew Messer was appointed Medical Officer of Health. In his report of 1894 he complained about Walbottle. There were very few drains; most people emptied slops on to the street and the houses were in an unsatisfactory condition.

9 The present Methodist Chapel is joined to the older Wesleyan Chapel now used as the Sunday School. Up the hill formerly stood the Colliery School which was provided by the colliery owners along with a teacher's house and free coal. In 1842 it was noted that two thirds of the children attended Methodist Sunday School and that many adults attended the evening school at Newburn. There was a dispute in the nineteenth century between the Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists when the Colliery Viewer took over the Wesleyan Chapel to be used by the Primitive Methodists so that the Colliery School would have use of the Primitive's Chapel.

Turn over to Page 7 for map of Walbottle Walkabout.



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## THE BLAYDON RACES

The Blaydon Races began exactly one hundred and seventeen years ago in 1862 and sadly they came to an end in 1962. Playing a great part in the last races was the now famous Dan Smith. Although the races were held in Blaydon everybody came from all over the world. The Blaydon Races were not horse races in the true meaning of the word, but Sulky races which are very popular in America, and are similar to the chariot races of Ancient Rome.

Stephen Kelly.