

# Shotley Bridge

A Village Survey and Brief History



Shotley Bridge Village Community Trust

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**Shotley Bridge -  
A Village Survey and Brief History**

Revised edition.

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The Secretary,  
Shotley Bridge Village Community Trust,  
2, Church Bank,  
Shotley Bridge,  
County Durham  
DH8 0NP

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**A Village Survey and Brief History**  
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## INTRODUCTION

This publication falls into two quite different parts.

The first is a report on a survey undertaken by the Shotley Bridge Village Community Trust in September, 1988 of residents' views about the village and the scope or need for improvements. The report ends with a set of recommendations for action by the Village Trust.

The second part consists of two brief histories, written by Village Trust members. The first by Joyce Houlston, is a general history of Shotley Bridge. The second, by Douglas Vernon, deals with the industrial history of the wider area, which resulted from the early initiatives in Shotley Bridge.

Whilst this publication is aimed primarily at residents of the village, we hope that visitors and others will also find it of interest.

Our thanks must go to all the members of the Village Trust as well as those friends and the pupils of Blackfyne Comprehensive School who helped with the village survey, and to all those residents of the village who filled in the questionnaire.

In particular, we are grateful to the Durham Rural Community Council for help and advice from Lesley Turner, their Countryside Officer, and for their grant towards the costs of the village survey and this publication.

Finally, we would like to thank our typists, Helen Keerie and Iris Mann for their hard work and patience.

Geoffrey Fisher  
John Glendenning  
Doug Scott  
Richard Slater  
Sheila Suddick  
John Worters

Village Survey Working Party



ENTRANCE TO SHOTLEY HALL  
GATEPOST FIGURES ATTRIBUTED  
TO JOHN GRAHAM LOUGH

## **SHOTLEY BRIDGE VILLAGE SURVEY**

### **Why a village survey?**

When the Village Trust was set up at a Public Meeting in March 1988, many of those present said what they would like to see done in the village. Whilst the meeting was well attended, with more than a hundred people present, we felt that it would help to guide the Village Trust in its work if we had a more comprehensive idea of residents' views. The Trust therefore set up a working party to prepare a questionnaire to be distributed to the households in Shotley Bridge, organise its distribution and collection, analyse the results and prepare a report setting out the results with recommendations for action.

One of our first problems was to define the area we call Shotley Bridge. The village is not free-standing like most others where village surveys have been undertaken. It is part of a wider built-up area based on Consett. Administrative boundaries all have their short-comings and anachronisms. We therefore drew our own boundary, which for good or ill, has been the basis for this village appraisal.

The boundary is shown in Appendix 1, but to give a brief description, the limits extend to the White House on Ebchester Road, Shotley Hall, Shotley Grove, Cutlers Hall Road, as far as, but excluding, Backstone Burn, both sides of Benfieldside Road from Western Hill to Snows Green, Woodlands Road, the Hospital, Elm Park and the Derwent Braes (Yuill) Estate and West Law Road to West Law Farm.

Because Shotley Bridge is part of a larger community we felt it inappropriate to include the full range of subjects covered by many other village surveys. Housing, education and employment, for example, must all be examined in the context of the wider community. In any event, our main interest is in the village environment.

The questionnaire was composed of seven sections:

- 1      YOU (aimed at gathering information about the age of people and the length of time they had lived in Shotley Bridge)
- 2      ROADS AND TRANSPORT
- 3      COMMUNITY FACILITIES
- 4      THE ENVIRONMENT
- 5      FOOTPATHS
- 6      TOURISM
- 7      GENERAL (an opportunity for residents to raise any other points not already covered)

1074 questionnaires were delivered - one to each household in our defined area - in mid-September, 1988. The collection was made at the end of September and in early October when 524 were returned. This is a response rate of 48.8%, which we consider most satisfactory. The extent to which the questionnaires were answered varied widely. Some were limited to one or two responses to the YES/NO questions. Most people had some comments to make in addition to answering the YES/NO questions and one questionnaire was returned with three additional pages of typed comments.

Every response, however limited, was a worthwhile contribution and our thanks go to everyone who took the time to respond to the questionnaire. We are also grateful to four fifth-form pupils from Blackfyne Comprehensive School - Debbie Kennedy, Donna Harris, Sarah Rhode and Karen Bates - who helped with the collection of the questionnaires.



The first section of the questionnaire asks for information as to the size and composition of the household in age groups and length of residence in the village.

Three diagrams present the information obtained in a visual form (these diagrams follow page 19) and represent:

Fig. 1 Age of residents.

Classified under four age groups: a (16-59 yrs); b (0-4 yrs); c (5-15 yrs); d (60+ yrs)

Fig. 2 Distribution of types of households.

Classified by the ages of all the occupants as above

Fig. 3 Length of residence in the village.

Showing the number of replies in groups of five years; from (0-5 yrs) to (81-85 yrs)

### Question 1

*How many people live in your house : aged (0-4), (5-15), (16-59), and (60+ )?*

484 valid replies were received, i.e. 92% of the returned questionnaires.

The largest group of residents is that aged from 16 to 59 years (approximately 60%) with a further 19% of 60 years or over. Children between 0 and 15 years form 20.5% of the population of the village, of which there are nearly three times as many of school age (5-15 yrs) as of pre-school age (0-4 yrs). A higher proportion of pre-school age children might have been expected.

In Fig. 2, it is the type of occupants, classified by age group, not the number of such occupants in the household, which is indicated by the letters a, b, c and d; singularly or in combinations.

The following points may be noted:

- (1) Almost exactly one-third of all households have children of any age between 0 and 15 years and of these more than half have a child or children of school age (5 - 15 yrs) only;
- (2) There is a very small proportion of households, 4.14%, which have both pre-school and school-aged children;
- (3) Almost exactly a quarter of households contain only a person or persons of 60 years of age or over, with a further 9.3% with an adult or adults of 16 to 59 years, without children, living in the house;
- (4) Only a very small proportion (1.44%) of households have a person or persons of 60 years or over where there are also children living. As this percentage includes some families where one parent is over 60 years or over, it indicates that there are very few grandparents living with young families in the village.

### Question 2

*How long have you lived in Shotley Bridge?*

The replies have been presented in 17 five year groups, from (0-5) to (81-85) years and Fig. 3 shows the number of replies in each group; 513 valid replies were received with 7 returns (1.3%) not answered.

The largest category (25.6%) is of households where the person replying has between 0 to 5 years residence, followed by those of 6 to 10 years (15.3%), which means that 41% of the repliers have been in the village for 10 years or less. This may partly reflect new housing development, such as the Derwent Braes Estate, as well as the occupancy of older houses by newcomers to the village. Just over 50% of replies indicate 15 years of residence or less, compared to the very long span of years at the other end of the bar chart; just over 8% have over 50 years, including one of over 80 years residence.

## ROADS AND TRANSPORT

## Section 2

This section was concerned with bus services, the state of repair of roads and pavements, traffic conditions, parking and road signs.

### Question 4

*Do you use the bus services -*

*Regularly? (21.8%)  
Occasionally? (44.3%)  
Never? (32.4%)  
(no reply 1.5%)*

To summarise, just over one in five use the buses regularly and just under one in three never use them.

### Question 5

*Would you like to see any improvements:*

- |                                  |           |          |                |
|----------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------|
| a) in the bus service routes?    | YES 26.0% | NO 42.2% | No reply 31.8% |
| b) in the bus service frequency? | YES 26.0% | NO 38.5% | No reply 35.5% |

This question produced a large number of requests for more buses to particular places (Consett, Durham, Chopwell, No.1, Delves etc) or via particular routes (Newcastle via Scotswood Road, Consett via Woodlands Road etc).

By far the greatest number of comments concerned the bus service to the Elm Park/Summerhill/Yuill Estate area. The comments from this area can be summarised as follows:

- More buses to Elm Park - 34 comments
- More buses direct to Consett - 13 comments
- More buses via Blackhill to Consett - 11 comments
- More buses via Queens Road to Consett - 9 comments

A number of replies in the last category gave the reason as serving the doctor's surgery on Queens Road.

Two main points which seem to arise from these comments are:

- (1) The 771 bus between Newcastle and Consett which serves Elm Park travels through Shotley Bridge and Bridgehill on its way to Consett and should be more direct;
- (2) at one bus an hour this service is not frequent enough.

It was also suggested that the 745 should be re-routed to serve Elm Park.

Other points raised were:

- a) better services to the hospital - 29 comments. (A large proportion of these came from the Cutlers Hall/Riverside area);
- b) more buses on evenings and at weekends - 21 comments.
- c) buses at more regular intervals - 17 comments. (to illustrate this point a resident of the Riverside area stated; "three buses come through the village to and from Consett in 5 minutes, then one 20 minutes later, then nothing for 35 minutes";
- d) fewer buses (to Newcastle) travelling via the Metro Centre - 12 comments

There were also calls for more reliability from the bus services, more information (timetables posted at the bus stops) and, from the Riverside area, more buses travelling up Blackhill (to give access to the shops).

#### Question 6

*Are you aware of problems with:*

- a) the state of repair of roads and/or pavements?*
- b) traffic conditions affecting road safety?*
- c) parking?*

*a) state of repair*

YES 48.1% No 37.5% No reply 14.5%

About three-quarters of the comments relating to this question concerned the state of carriageway or pavement to individual roads or specific sections of road. The following roads received the most frequent mention:

The Terrace/Village Hall access -	46 mentions
Woodlands Road -	32 mentions
Church Bank -	12 mentions
Snows Green Road -	12 mentions
Rosedale Avenue pavement -	12 mentions
Wood Street area -	7 mentions
Benfieldside Road -	6 mentions
Woodlands Crescent -	5 mentions

Clearly the accesses to the Village Hall raise the greatest concern because of the unmade and unadopted state of that end of the Terrace and the bank to Snows Green Road. Woodlands Road is the other main source of comment, with particular mention of the road surface at the junctions with Rosedale Avenue and Benfieldside Road. To quote one resident;  
**'according to the ambulancemen, Woodlands Road is the bumpiest road in Derwentside'.**

The condition of the pavements from Golden Acre to the Rosedale shops also received particular mention, hence the appearance of Rosedale Avenue pavements in the above list, despite being outside the area of the survey.

To some extent the list reflects the roads of greater length and usage (Benfieldside, Snows Green, Woodlands Roads) but the inclusion of Church Bank and the very short Woodlands Crescent are worthy of note.

*b) traffic conditions*

YES 46.2% No 34.2% No reply 19.6%

The speed of traffic and dangerous junctions or bends were the two greatest sources of comment under this heading [See under c) for reference to parking]. Over half the comments (80) were concerned with the speed of traffic, either generally or at specific locations, notably:

- (1) on the road from Daisy Hill to Snows Green Road - with particular mention of Brown's Corner/Benfieldside Road junction;
- (2) traffic entering or passing through the village from Ebchester and Blackhill directions;
- (3) to a lesser extent, Benfieldside and Woodlands Roads.

There was also some concern, voiced by residents of Elm Park Road, at the speed of traffic coming down the narrow road from the Hat and Feather.



Dangerous junctions and bends were mentioned in a total of 31 replies. The following 14 locations were mentioned, although none stood out from the rest:

- Snows Green/Benfieldside Road junction
- Snows Green/Front Street junction
- Snows Green/The Terrace junction and bend
- Benfieldside/Woodlands Road junction
- Benfieldside/Western Hill junction
- Benfieldside/St. Cuthbert's junction
- Woodlands Road/Hospital Gates bend
- Elm Park/Hospital Gates bend
- Front Street bends
- Wood Street access by bridge
- Messenger Bank/Front Street junction
- Highgate corner
- Crossroads at top of Daisy Hill

With regard to the bend and junction between Snows Green Road and The Terrace, some people said that this was particularly a problem when cars were parked on Snows Green Road. The restriction of parking either side of the junction was suggested.

The other aspect of traffic safety which attracted a substantial number of comments (22) was the danger for pedestrians crossing Front Street in the village centre. A number of people suggested that a zebra or pelican crossing should be provided.

Other aspects of road safety which were mentioned included overgrown branches and bushes either obstructing the pavement and forcing pedestrians onto the road (Snows Green Road) or obstructing drivers' vision (Briary Bank).

*c) parking*

YES 50.0% No 30.9% No reply 19.1%

The problems of parking, both in the lack of off-street provision and in the congestion and hazard caused by on-street parking, raised the greatest number of comments, although often it was difficult to tell which aspect was in the respondent's mind.

The following were the main locations mentioned:

In the village centre	-	90 mentions
At the Junior and Infants Schools	-	50 mentions
On Benfieldside Road	-	44 mentions
At the Catholic Church	-	28 mentions

Within the village, those answers that were specific referred in roughly equal numbers to Front Street, from the Working Men's Club to the Post Office, and the lower end of Snows Green Road, from Lloyds Bank to the junction. A number of people referred specifically to parking opposite the Post Office and to the disregard for the yellow lines, with suggestions for greater enforcement and/or further restrictions.

One person, commenting on the shortage of parking space in the village said that;  
**"a stranger driving through the village would probably choose not to stop because parking is so difficult".**

Parking at the schools and Catholic Church obviously refers to particular times, the setting down and picking up of children and at church services.

On Benfieldside Road, the problem arises primarily between St Cuthbert's Avenue and the Highgate, where there is a high level of resident parking on a busy road. Here, the problem of congestion, caused by parking on both sides of the road, was raised several times.

A general comment that was raised concerned the incidence of parking on the pavement, particularly by the Briary Service Station on Benfieldside Road and at the bottom of Church Bank, near the take-away.

#### **Question 7**

*If you think the village centre needs a car park, where should it be?*

By far the most popular sites were Wood Street and the plot of vacant land below Lloyds Bank on Snows Green Road, which were suggested 95 and 78 times respectively. Together, these made up more than three-quarters of the suggestions for specific locations. Other suggestions included the Crown and Crossed Swords car park (19), the field opposite the Catholic Church (18), the Gas Works land (9) and the car park adjoining the Golden Flower (6). The first and last of these are, of course, privately (or part-privately) owned car parks already in existence. Suggestions for these were usually accompanied by comments that they could be extended, that public use should be with the consent of the owners, or that the owner could impose a toll for public use. It should also be remembered that, with the exception of Wood Street, the other sites are also in private ownership.

Other comments included suggestions for a number of small car parks and that car parks should be provided with the disabled as well as the able-bodied in mind.

Eleven people indicated that they did not think that a car park was needed.

#### **Question 8**

*Are road signs adequate?*

YES 65.8%    No 18.4%    No reply 15.8%

*If NO, what suggestions have you?*

Two thirds of the respondents thought that the road signs were adequate with less than 1 in 5 showing dissatisfaction. Of the comments received in this latter category the majority were split fairly evenly between comments concerning traffic control [i.e. speed restriction, no entry, etc] (32) and directional signs to places or facilities (31).

Under the traffic control category, one main concern was the lack of provision or positioning of speed restriction or "SLOW" signs either generally, or at particular locations. In particular, the need for "SLOW" signs .....

- (1) before the bends on Front Street;
  - (2) on the road down from Daisy Hill;
  - (3) before the bends on Snows Green Road;
  - (4) at the bottom of Cutlers Hall Road
- were mentioned.

However, the single point that received the greatest attention was the "NO ENTRY" signs at the foot of Church Bank. The main problem appears to be that these are too far forward and therefore not visible to traffic seeking to turn left from Snows Green Road. It was also suggested that they are too high.

Amongst suggestions for directional signs, the need for more, or more prominent, signs to the Hospital received by far the greatest attention (17 mentions); otherwise there were suggestions for better signs to places (Consett, Durham, Newcastle), local facilities (the picnic area, Derwent Walk, St. Cuthbert's Church and the Community Centre) or "places of interest".

With tourism in mind, a number of people suggested special name signs for Shotley Bridge referring to the village's history e.g.;

"...could have Sword Makers emblem on Shotley Bridge signs welcoming visitors..." or;  
"Welcome to Shotley Bridge - Olde Spa Town".

A third category of signs is the individual road name. There were one or two suggestions for improving these, but the main point raised was the need at the entrances to Woodlands Road and Queensway estates for "...leading to..." signs.

Two general points must be made under this question. Firstly, many people, being all too familiar with the area, found it difficult to give an objective answer to this question. Hence two comments; "Being familiar with the area does not allow comment, as this is more obvious to strangers", and; "Never look at signs, I know where to go".

The second is the danger of an unco-ordinated proliferation of signs. In the words of one writer; "There seems to be an awful lot of signs in the village, can they not be rationalised?"



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

### Section 3

This section posed questions about the provision of such facilities as public toilets, public telephones, post boxes, litter bins and street lighting in the village. It also asked for the residents' views about the police presence in their area.

#### Question 9

*Do we need toilets in the village?*

YES 61.1%    No 23.1%    No reply 15.8%

There was some diversity of opinion as to where toilets should be situated, but 17.2% favoured the old site - opposite the Kings Head. This was the most popular choice. However, there could be objections to this, since they would be situated next to a dwelling house.

The next most popular site was Wood Street, with 12.8% in favour. Here, there is a picnic area and car park, and, if the toilets were positioned thoughtfully, they could be distant from houses yet close to local amenities.

Although not specifically stated, 11.5% favoured a central location which could be covered by both areas mentioned. A somewhat ambiguous response, 3.5%, said near the car park, which could mean the Crown and Crossed Swords car park, or the Wood Street car park. Alternative sites mentioned were the Snobs Green play area and the tarmac seating area, next to the Working Men's Club.

As to type of toilet, it was suggested by one person that a warden controlled, lock-up Portaloo be provided.

#### Question 10

*Is there any problem with the existing provision of:  
Public telephones?*

9.9% felt that there was a problem but this was overshadowed by 63.4% who felt that there was not, 26.7% did not reply.

The most common suggestion was that the existing telephones should be given more frequent attention (1.7%).

#### *Litter bins?*

On the existing provision of litter bins, the returns showed an almost even distribution, with 40.6% stating that there was a problem and 38.8% that there was not, 26.0% did not answer.

Of those who thought that there was a problem, 25.6% wanted more bins distributed throughout the village; 3.2% at the Chinese Takeaway and 13.2% at other places.

Suggestions made were that the existing bins (too small?) should be emptied more frequently (6.3%). Other suggestions were that they should be made more attractive, that there was shortage of rock salt bins, and that a neat and unobtrusive "bottle bank" be provided.

### *Street lighting?*

A fairly small percentage (9.9%) were dissatisfied with the lighting provision and 66.2% considered the provision adequate. The question was not answered by 23.9%.

Suggestions were offered by 7.3%. On this section it was commented that:

- (i) Lighting to Village Hall needed to be improved
- (ii) Lighting to Snods Edge Lane was inadequate
- (iii) The trees at Snods Green Road should be trimmed as they were obscuring lights
- (iv) Lights were needed from the Briary to the Terrace
- (v) Lights were needed down the path from Queensway to Shotley Bridge
- (vi) Lights were needed at Northstead Drive.

### **Question 11**

*Are you satisfied with the Police presence in your area?*

On the question of Police presence, 48.1% were satisfied and 36.6% dissatisfied. Of those who expressed dissatisfaction 31.1% stated that there should be more foot patrols.

Other comments amounted to 6.9%, and the most frequent comment was that there should be more Police on foot patrol at night.

### **Question 12**

*Any other comments concerning community facilities?*

This question invited other general comments, and was poorly received; 83.0% not answering. It was stated by 1.5% that the village should have a chemist's shop; 2.5% that the Village Hall access should be improved; 1.7% that information about the village activities be improved.

Other comments were:

- (i) That there was nowhere for young people to go
- (ii) That a village community workshop be established
- (iii) That the Memorial Cottages should be restored
- (iv) That there were insufficient seats throughout the area
- (v) That there was too much dogs mess in the area
- (vi) That there should be more fayres, dances and flower shows.



## THE ENVIRONMENT

### Section 4

This section of the questionnaire asked what residents found attractive and unattractive in the village. It also sought views on whether litter was a problem and whether people thought that certain public areas, e.g. the Riverside, Recreation Ground and Derwent Walk, needed improvement.

#### Question 13

*Looking at the village, is there anything you find particularly attractive?*

*If Yes, what?*

YES 55.9% No 14.9% 29.2%

Most answers to this question can be placed in three categories: gardens, flowers and shrubs (114 mentions); other references to the countryside (133 mentions) and buildings (119). These answers may be itemised as follows:

Countryside:	the riverside	59
	trees	25
	countryside generally	18
	views from road approaches to the village	15
	the Spa	10
	the Derwent Walk	6
Buildings:	generally or old	34
	Snows Green Road	19
	Lloyds Bank	18
	the village centre	12
	the bridge	12
	The Crown and Crossed Swords	12
	The King's Head	7
	St. Cuthbert's Church/Church Bank	5

Many of the comments on flowers and shrubs specifically mentioned the Council tended plot at the foot of Snows Green Road. 21 further households liked **"everything"** in the village. Several people appealed to preserve the best of the village as it stands. Examples include;

**"(It is) important to keep the original charm"**

**"keep it unspoilt"**

**"Existing mature trees should be preserved"**

*Looking at the Village, is there anything you find particularly unattractive?*

*If Yes, what?*

YES 44.7% No 24.4% No reply 30.9%

Again the answers can be split into three main classes: land and buildings considered unsightly because of their condition (125); buildings considered out of keeping with the remainder of the village (109); and litter [including dog fouling] (49). Concern was particularly notable with respect to the Wood Street/Riverside areas and with the approaches to the village. In both cases there seems to be conflict between commercial interests and aesthetic or leisure interests. It is clear, from answers to this question, that villagers consider industry in the village (despite its light nature) to be at odds with attractiveness.

#### Question 14

Do any of the following areas need improving:

a) The riverside?

YES 40.3% No 30.0% No reply 29.7%

211 of the 368 people who answered this question thought that the area needed improvements. Of those who gave suggestions, the two main areas of concern were very clear: path improvements (particularly so that wet weather access is improved) 61; and, keeping the area tidy (clearing litter, discouraging fly-tippers, maintaining verges, etc) 62.

Other requests include the provision of more seating and preventing dog fouling.

The riverside area has an important part to play in the life of the village.

Further improvements suggested include;

**"Extend the walk from the mill race to the footbridges"**

b) Derwent Walk?

YES 16.0% No 45.9% No reply 38.1%

Only 82 of the 328 of those who answered this question thought the walk needed improvements. Among the more popular suggestions for improvements were (in descending order): trim overgrown shrubs; clear litter; improve the surface; prevent the dogs from fouling and ban horses. None of these attracted more than 15 suggestions.

c) Snows Green Recreation Ground?

YES 27.3% No 37.0% No reply 35.7%

143 out of 337 of those who answered this question suggested that improvements could be made. There were four main areas for improvements. They were, judging by the comments made, keenly felt. The most frequent complaint was that of dogs fouling in an area where children play. Suggestions to remedy this ranged from providing a fenced area for dogs to exercise to banning dogs from the area altogether.

The other major improvements suggested were in the amounts and types of play equipment and especially in the provision of safety surfaces to lessen the effects of falls from play equipment. The care and maintenance of the area was also important. Although less frequently mentioned, several people suggested seating and a gated entrance to improve safety.

d) The Wood Street Picnic Area?

YES 27.5% No 31.9% No reply 40.6%

This question had the lowest response of all (59.4% of all returns), and fewer than half of those who replied (144 of 311) felt that the area needed improving. In spite of this, the strength of feeling expressed was notable, e.g.:

**"Wood Street looks like a scrap yard";**

**"It's a disgrace";**

**"What a picnic area? All we could find was a piece of grass surrounded by cars overlooking a haulage yard";**

**"There's nothing attractive about the site";**

**"There's no requirement for a picnic site in the village"**

Suggestions included:

"Move it (the picnic site)";

"Make it into a tourist attraction";

"The riverside, the old mill and transport yard should be developed. It could be a beautiful feature of the village, with perhaps a restaurant, shops and parking";

"The area could be made more attractive. A similar river in Matlock is gorgeous with small boats, illuminations, etc.";

"Relocate the allotments".

The most popular suggestions were to improve the existing buildings, to clean the area, and to make it more interesting. Several people referred to the area as bleak, boring, uninteresting, etc..

The Wood Street area is one of great contrasts. It is the former heart of the village and retains historical interest in many of its buildings (although these, in some cases, are in poor repair). It is near the river and commercial heart of Shotley Bridge and so offers an attractive site for many developments. This being the case, many comments refer to the conflicts between the current use, both of the site itself and more particularly of the immediate surrounding area, and the possibilities for change.

*e) Any other suggestions?*

Of the 64 made, the following were most popular or noteworthy:

- (i) Preserve the old Mill Race
- (ii) Reinstall the fountain at the foot of Snows Green Road
- (iii) Lower the Slonks wall
- (iv) Develop the Spa
- (v) Develop the Heritage Centre
- (vi) Invest in the riverside to attract tourists
- (vii) Clean the Gas Works site for leisure use (woodlands, walks, etc)
- (viii) Develop the sporting facilities at the Spa
- (ix) Prevent dumping over the Slonks wall and get rid of the rats
- (x) D.D.C. should put pressure on the owners of the derelict sites to tidy them
- (xi) The bank between the Crown and Crossed Swords and St. Cuthbert's Church should be landscaped
- (xii) Extend the walk from the footbridge to the roadbridge
- (xiii) Plant flowers, in beds or tubs, at the top of Church Bank
- (xiv) Provide more playing facilities for children on the field between Benfield Close and St. Cuthbert's Avenue.

**Question 15**

*Is there a problem with litter?*

YES 55.5% No 25.0% No reply 19.5%

Litter was seen as a problem by 291 of the 422 people who answered this question. When asked where, the most popular response was "everywhere". Many people were concerned about very local areas but sites generally seen as troublesome were; beside the shops; at bus stops, along the riverside (especially over the Slonks Wall) and on The Cut joining the Briary with the Terrace. Many people suggested that public litter bins should be provided and that a roadsweeper be employed. Several people said that penalties for fly-tipping should be strictly enforced.

Reference to litter and to fouling of public places by dogs were made in reply to many questions emphasising the concern that many residents felt. Here is one major improvement that could be made to the environment of the village without great expense.

## FOOTPATHS

## Section 5

This section is concerned with problems of those paths in the village, country footpaths and the rights of way and whether existing signposting of local public footpaths is adequate.

### Question 16

*Are there any problems with footpaths in the village?* YES 27.3% No 43.7% No reply 29.0%

The comments were mainly concerned with the following categories of problem:

Dogs fouling the footpaths; 30 comments

Pavement parking of vehicles so as to cause inconvenience to pedestrians using the footpath, damaging it so as to make the surface dangerous to walk on, and/or obstructing the vision of traffic, etc; 6 comments

Overhanging trees or bushes mostly along the road from Elm Park to the village, particularly at the Recreation Ground at Snows Green; 17 comments

Two other categories of topic were related to particular locations:

- (a) The Cut (also known as locally as "The Hen Run"), mainly concerned with its surface material and to a lesser extent with overhanging or unchecked vegetation. The surface was described as: **"Covered by the Council with loose stones, making it dangerous to walk on"** particularly for **"women with high heeled shoes and for the elderly and infirm"**; and, it was claimed, **"ruinous to footwear"**. There were complaints that it was, **"used as a rubbish dump"** and that it was not lit at night.
- (b) The Terrace, which gives vehicular and pedestrian access to the Village Hall and also to a few private houses, is not fully made up, particularly where it turns northwards to descend sharply back to Snows Green Road by the Car Park above the Chinese Takeaway. Here the surface has loose material which tends to be washed away down the slope in wet weather. Alongside this steep track is a continuous series of concrete steps, with a handrail, recently constructed under Community Enterprise. At the top of this track are stone flagged steps which date from the time when the Hall was part of the Wesleyan Methodist Church premises of which the Church itself has now been demolished. One comment seemed to refer to these steps and suggested; **"These should be cleaned up"**, so as to bring them back into use - they lead directly into the bottom part of Church Bank.

Both these two paths - The Cut and the access path to the Village Hall - received considerable comments; (31) and (8) respectively, but were also frequently mentioned under other headings of the questionnaire and are clearly major points of concern to many residents.

Other more individual matters, mentioned in a general category of 46 comments, were concerned with the condition of footpaths in general, or those footpaths mentioned below:

- (i) From Benfieldside Road to Cutlers Hall Road at the north end of Backstone Burn, which was described as a **"dangerous ash path"**. It is steep but some improvement works have recently been carried out. Half way up it gives entry to Priory Close which leads to Benfieldside Road via Newstead Rise.
- (ii) From Front Street down Messenger Bank to Wood Street. This is very steep and no provision has been made for the safety of pedestrians going down.
- (iii) A similar danger for pedestrians is at the bottom of Snows Green Road where the pavement runs past a terrace of houses with projecting steps and is steep and narrow, being constricted by a raised flower bed on the other side.



Elsewhere in the questionnaire there has been some call for a return of the fountain which used to be in the vicinity. Perhaps a better footpath here could be provided if this restoration takes place in the future.

One comment said that: **"It would be helpful if the Chapel hedge on the bend could be cut back to the wall"**

In answers to this question there were general complaints as to the state of the surface of footpaths, particularly those with flagstones which are often broken and uneven, having been damaged by vehicles parking on them. A universal complaint was the presence of litter.

A number of replies called for the return of the **"lengthsman"**, i.e. a street cleaner paid by the council to keep a stretch of road and footpath clean and free from leaves, litter, and dog muck and to report damage and deterioration.

#### Question 17

*Are there any problems with country footpaths or public rights of way?*

YES 19.5% NO 46.8% No reply 33.7%

These figures, while similar to those obtained from the previous question on footpaths in the village, indicate rather less concern for the problems of the country footpaths and public rights of way. However, this may be affected by the present state of footpaths in the country as concern was expressed that paths have become overgrown (35 comments) and so are tending to fall into disuse. The main area concerned was along the riverside and one statement put into words a feeling which came through a number of other comments: **"When I was young the Riverside was great. You could walk easily from Shotley (Bridge) to Allansford. Families picnicked on the river banks"**.

Concern (18 comments) was made on the number of footpaths which were, or had been, ploughed up by farmers, sometimes with the removal or closing of stiles and the consequent loss of public right of way. Where country footpaths remain open, they are in places very constricted by unpleasantly close fences, sometimes barbed wire, as well as becoming overgrown. The replacement of stiles convenient for the old or infirm by 'climb over' stiles was also described.

Individual footpaths mentioned are:

- (a) The riverside path from Shotley Bridge to Allansford, which includes the dry flat rocks between the two bridges over the river. One suggestion was that wooden slats, or duckboards, should be provided at the worst sections, it being so muddy in wet weather.
- (b) The riverside path from Shotley Bridge to Panshields Farm. This was formerly so overgrown in places as to be unclear in direction. (This footpath has now been cleared and signposting improved). Some replies said that this path should be continued to Ebchester along the riverbank.
- (c) Riverside access to the Spa, i.e. from the Wood Street picnic area across the former Gas Works site, presumably, was also requested. It does not exist at present.

The loss of public right of way was raised in a number of replies received. Without commenting on the legal rights or the circumstances involved, these former routes are described below and may also be mentioned in the appraisal of Question 18 - Signposting.

- (a) Springhouse Lane by Springfield House to the Low Road opposite the Spa
- (b) Selbourne Gardens, and the bottom of Woodlands Crescent (where the broken fence exists) past the old Hunt Kennels to the Hemmels on Snows Green Road.



- (c) Back of the junior school on Snows Green Road to the Low Road
- (d) From the riverside to the former Hole Row Farm, now the Royal Derwent Hotel at Allansford
- (e) Newlands from Panshields Farm across the fields

Suggestion for improving the situation, apart from physical work on the footpaths themselves and fences, stiles etc., were for:

- (a) A survey of footpaths to be carried out and rights of way clearly marked. One reference was to "waymarkers" i.e. coloured plastic arrows nailed to trees, gates, etc., to indicate clearly the way
- (b) More footbridges over the River Derwent, three locations being mentioned:
  - (i) From the Wood Street Picnic Centre at (or near) the point where the present large pipe crosses the river, onto the footpath on the west side of the river
  - (ii) From the former gas works site to the above footpath, after access through this site has been obtained
  - (iii) From the Spa to the above footpath

Presumably it would be a matter of choosing one or possibly two of these three locations for a new footbridge or bridges.

#### Question 18

*Is the signposting of public footpaths adequate?* YES 47.3% NO 18.2% No reply 34.5%

The total number of replies was very nearly the same as those received for Question 17 (Country Footpaths) but fewer expressed dissatisfaction with signposting. No particular categories of comments emerged although 54 in all were received and some of the points raised are indicated.

Some replies overlapped with those given for Question 17 and to a lesser extent for Question 16 (footpaths in the village), being concerned with the same route or routes and often whether they constituted a public right of way which would be evidenced by an official signpost.

Some specific routes were mentioned, principally along the riverside and the walks from there (some 5 in all). Three such walks requiring signposting are:

- (a) To Hole Row Farm (Royal Derwent Hotel) from river;
- (b) Leechwood to Orchard Farm;
- (c) Small bridge (by riverside) to Field Head Farm

Another important route was the Derwent Walk, where it was felt there should be better signposting in the village and elsewhere to tell people where it is and how to get into it.

The quality of the signposting received a few comments calling for signs to be "readily visible" and "clearer" besides being satisfactorily positioned where they were required. They should display: "areas of interest" to strangers, such as the Spa and the riverside. The provision of waymarkers has already been mentioned under Question 17 (Country Footpaths).

A final point concerns deliberate interference with footpath signs and a particular example was given: "on the path (starting) at Springhouse Lane leading to the former Shotley Bridge Station (now on the Derwent Walk) someone turns the sign (to point) across the road". Another comment said that: "signposting was adequate but signs had disappeared by neglect or intention".

## TOURISM

## Section 6

### Question 19

*Do you think that Shotley Bridge should be promoted as a tourist attraction?*

YES 53.2% NO 20.0% No reply 26.8%

Whilst not all of those who replied in the affirmative to this question were as enthusiastic as the person who said: **"We have a very nice village here and it is full of history - I think we should let the rest of the world know about it"**..., the majority appeared to be in favour of the move to promote tourism.

Those people were asked to describe how this might be done. Analysis of their replies revealed 4 major aspects of the area which might be developed for tourism:

- (i) The riverside area
- (ii) The history of the area
- (iii) The Spa
- (iv) As a centre for walks etc

20 writers agreed with the respondent who said that; **"The general beauty of the riverside environment should be preserved and developed"**, but many of these pointed out that the present condition of the riverside left much to be desired. The general condition of this area was criticised as was the condition of the buildings there. Lack of access was noted and the absence of facilities such as toilets and car park was mentioned. One respondent said that: **"There is no safe or convenient area in the entire village for families to sit by the waterside"**.

90 people who agreed with the promotion of tourism thought that the history of Shotley Bridge should be exploited, with many references to the Swordmakers, the old mills and the "gentry" who used to live here. There was much praise for the work of the Heritage Centre with several suggestions that it might be extended. The establishment of museums, and craft workshops to celebrate the "Swordmakers" and the development of "Iron and Steel-making" were frequently mentioned. The proximity of Ebchester with its Roman connections was also cited in this connection. One respondent with an eye for the past summed up these ideas when he wrote: **"Perhaps a permanent exhibition detailing the history of the village, its Roman connections, the iron and swordmaking, the paper and flour mills"**. He suggested an integral cafe and gift shop and thought that the old mill buildings would make an ideal site for such a venture.

47 respondents thought that the Spa might be resurrected as a tourist attraction. Shotley Bridge was once famous for its "waters". Charles Dickens even sampled them during a brief visit here. It has to be remembered that the Spa and its grounds are not on public land but perhaps the co-operation of the owner could be obtained to bring about; **"... the opening of the Spa as it used to be..."**. It might even provide employment and revenue if the water could be **"...bottled and sold"** to tourists or even **"exported"**.

Several replies hinted that the Spa grounds could be used for events such as fairs, fetes, etc. and one suggested that the tennis and cricket clubs could identify more closely with the village - perhaps extending their facilities occasionally to visitors and villagers alike.

42 villagers explained that the development of tourism could be helped by promoting Shotley Bridge as a centre for walks and other outdoor pursuits both locally and further afield. **"A very beautiful walk could be created all the way from Allansford to Ebchester fairly easily"**. Pony trekking and hiking were mentioned with Shotley Bridge as a good centre. We were reminded that Durham, Newcastle, Hexham, as well as the moors and the Derwent Reservoir were within easy reach of the village.

Much reservation was expressed in answer to this question. 32 replies pointed out that information should be available to tourists in the form of maps, notices, guides, brochures etc., probably provided by the Tourist Information Centre, and 37 people urged greater publicity, **"of the right professional kind"** in order to let the tourist know where we are and what we have to offer.

Because we are so close to the A68, which is a major route to and from Scotland, signposts from, say, Allansford could invite traffic to divert a while and visit Shotley Bridge. Some foreign visitors might be attracted in this way, perhaps even some Germans who should enjoy learning about the Swordmakers.

15 people thought that the village needed to be; **"tidied up and kept that way"** if visitors were to find the area attractive and 9 noted that there would be a need for more accommodation. Youth Hostels, Hotels, even Guest Houses were suggested to supply this new demand.

Other interesting ideas put forward in this section included; **"gift shops"; "guided tours"; "more seats"; "nature reserve"; "a Lido"; "flower beds"** etc.. The provision of a caravan site was suggested by two respondents. They did not say where it might be sited but assured us that the Caravan Club rules would ensure the continued peace and tranquillity of the village.

In framing our questionnaire we did not ask those respondents who were against tourism to explain their objections. Nevertheless many did so. One person thought that the area was; **"not attractive enough"** whilst others advised that the various deficiencies and imperfection should be remedied and the **"attractions"** put in place before tourists were actively encouraged. Reference to the economics of such an exercise was summarised in the following replies; **"The cost of development (of tourism) would not attract an adequate return on capital"** and **"The financial benefits may not be worth it if it spoils the peace and tranquillity of the village, which to the residents is very important"**.

General reluctance to encouraging tourism was summarised by the lady who wrote; **"There are already parking, litter and toilet problems.....The residents need looking after before tourists"**. She suggested Consett as a tourist centre and concluded: **"Shotley Bridge is full enough"**.

Perhaps a compromise might be....; **"only to attract small numbers of tourists who will appreciate the history and amenities of the village: no mass tourism"**.

Notice should also be taken of the respondents who referred to recent negative media coverage of our region in programmes such as **"When the Dog Bites"**, which focus on the less attractive aspects of the area.

**Question 20**

*...any other changes you would like to see in Shotley Bridge?*

174 of the forms returned (33.2%) contained a comment.

Many interesting and novel points were raised here. The replies were analysed and the following summary, with supporting quotations, is intended to give a brief perspective.

8 villagers took the opportunity to express their satisfaction with the place as it is: **"The village of Shotley Bridge is a lovely place to come back to after a day's work"** and **"...I find Shotley Bridge a delightful village to live in, as have the many visitors who have, over the years, spent time with us"**. These comments were from people who had come into the village from other areas. A long established resident said: **"I am proud of the place and pleased to be a resident of the village"**. A further 3 respondents wanted their village to remain unchanged: **"I would like to see the character remaining as it is"**.

The rest of the forms contained suggestions for "changes" in Shotley Bridge.

30 people mentioned the condition of specific roads or aspects of road safety that needed attention. Of these, 4 thought that there should be a by-pass and 6 regarded a zebra crossing in the village centre as "essential" (See Question 6b)

The condition of the road leading to the Village Hall was mentioned in 8 replies. This is an unadopted road but ideas such as; **"access roads to the Village Hall should be resurfaced.....especially if O.A.P.'S are going to be encouraged to use the hall"** might be considered. Someone pointed out that; **"...It would even look better"** if re-surfaced. (See Question 6a)

The general appearance and tidiness of the village featured in the replies of 18 residents. Various eyesores were identified but the main criticism was directed toward **"litter"** and leaves, etc, left on pavements and roadsides. What is needed, apparently, is a general **"tidying up"** to keep Shotley Bridge **"clean and tidy like it used to be"**.

Occasional mention of maintenance and restoration to buildings was made but this; **"must be left to the conscience of its owners"**. A solution to the litter problem was provided by 11 respondents who recommended that a 'lengthsman' should be employed to: **"sweep the pavements weekly and remove litter including the streets out of sight of tourists"**. He could also **"... make sure that the bus stands, litter bins and telephone boxes were kept in order"**. (see Question 16)

Still on the subject of street cleanliness, 14 respondents complained about the practice of dog owners who allowed their pets to foul public places such as pavements, grass verges and even the Snows Green Road playground. This is unsightly as well as being unhealthy. Several people suggested **"heavy fines"** for offending dog owners. One person revealed that they; **"go out after dark with that intention"**.

12 people mentioned the shops in the village. Some thought that it might be nice, for example, if; **"shop frontages could made more attractive, and in keeping with an old village"** but others noted the need for additional shops - a butchers, a general dealers and especially a chemist.

The Village Trust has been working for the restoration of the Memorial Cottages since its foundation in March, 1988 and it was pleasing to note that 6 residents proposed new uses for the buildings to halt



their further deterioration; "...a museum concentrating on the swordmakers", "an Art Gallery as we have a talented artist in the area" or, "perhaps the Memorial Cottages could be converted to old people's bungalows". Any of these ideas would end the vandalism that has created an eyesore at the very entrance to the village.

The work of the Village Trust was mentioned in 4 replies. One suggested that we should encourage development on the riverside; "from the village to the Spa as a community facility", and another that we should; "attempt to inculcate and develop a village community spirit". Perhaps this is what the respondent who thought that people should be; "encouraged to join in village community events" intended. Such events were asked for by several respondents. Their ideas included fetes, fairs, shows, festivals, and even a carnival.

We thank the person who wished us; "Good luck in your effort" and applaud the spirit of the gentleman who said we could contact him for voluntary remedial/restoration work on walls and fences etc.

The village centre was frequently mentioned throughout this enquiry but in question 20 five people said that they thought the village had no centre or "focal point". One thought that "the natural centre is a dangerous bend" in the main road. Suggestions as to how this might be remedied included creating a centre in Wood Street, at the Spa or, "pedestrianising" the existing centre. Whether a new centre is created or not at least 8 of our residents would like the old stone fountain, which used to reside outside Barclay's Bank, to be reinstated, if it can be located.

Other changes recommended included: the provision of nursery schools, putting seats at strategic or scenic positions, creating more facilities for young people (e.g. cycle tracks, a coffee bar) the planting of more flowers in beds and boxes to brighten up the village generally and relocating the library.

5 people thought that there was a need for more housing to be built; "at a reasonable cost" including, "some old people's bungalows" whilst 6 insisted that no further building should be allowed. "...please no more high density housing of modern materials".

31 'general' or 'one-off' suggestions were found. They included; "The provision of covered bus stops"; "a resident bobby"; "the establishment of a Parish Council" and "a new large hotel". There was a plea that the occasional flooding of the road at the junction of Snows Green Road and Benfieldside Road should be remedied and that a 2 way system on Church Bank should be re-instated.

"Civic Christmas lights in the village centre" would look very nice and the suggestion of "lower rates" is extremely attractive.





# AGE OF RESIDENTS

Classified under four age groups

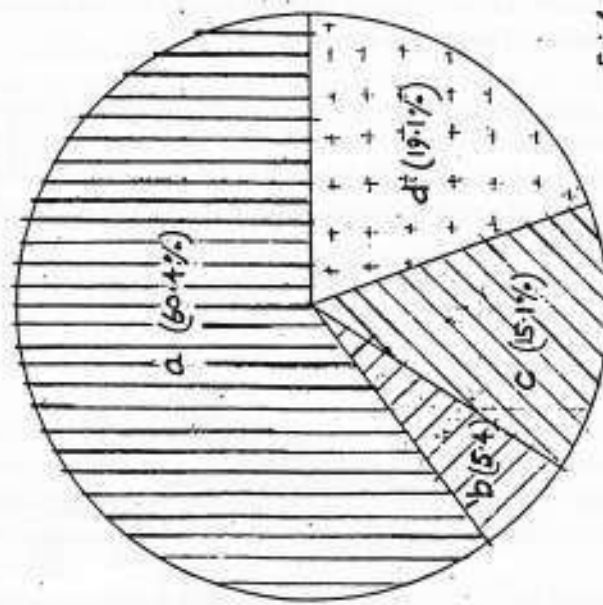


Fig 1

Age Groups	Total	%
a = adults 16-59 years	803	(60.4)
b = children 0-4	73	(5.4)
c = children 5-15	201	(15.1)
d = adults 60+	254	(19.1)
Total	1330	(100.0)

# DISTRIBUTION OF TYPES OF HOUSEHOLD

Classified by types of occupant recorded in survey under four age groups.

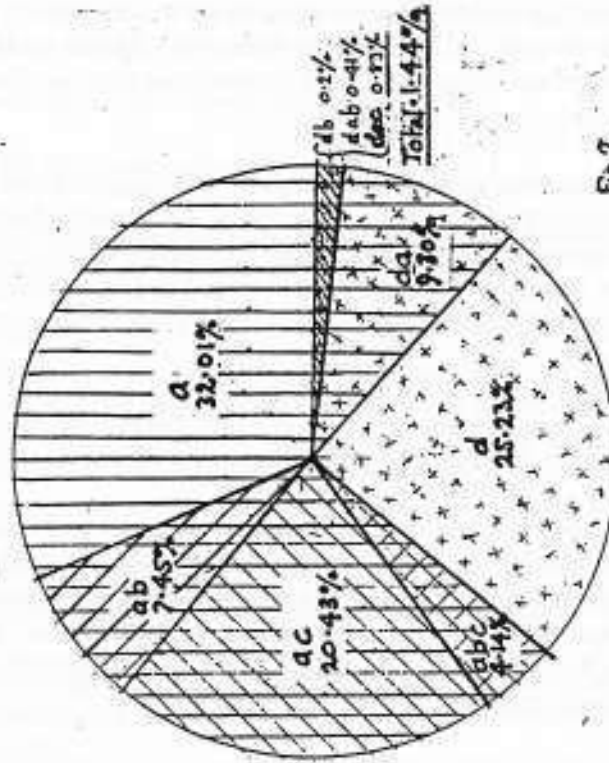


Fig 2

Key to Chart:

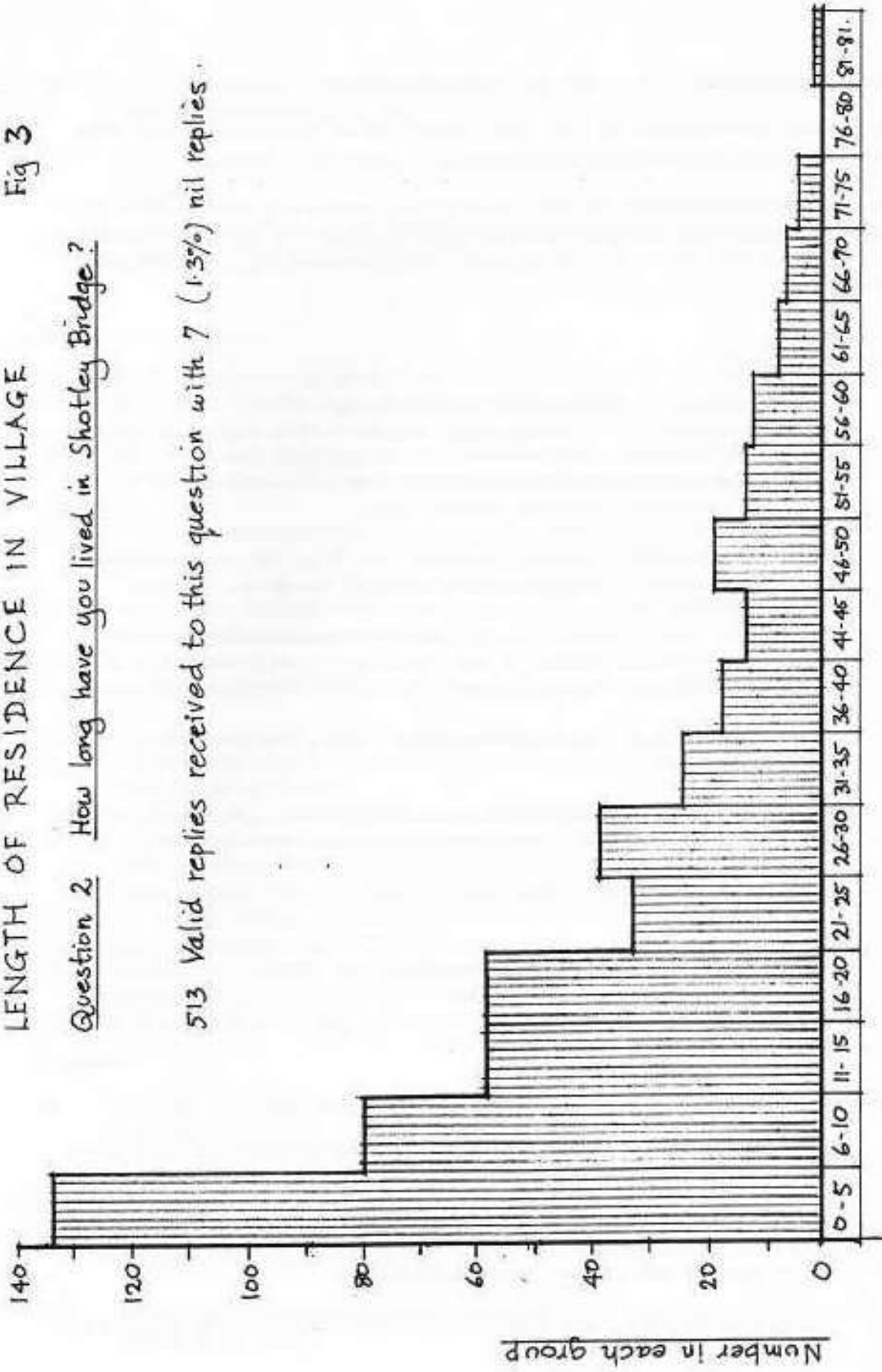
- a = adult/adults, 16-59 years only.
- ab = ditto + child/children, 0-4 years only.
- ac = ditto + child/children, 5-15 years only.
- abc = ditto + children 0-4 and 5-15 years.
- d = adult/adults, 60 or more years only.
- da = ditto + adult/adults 16-59 years.
- dab = ditto + ditto + child/children 0-4 years.
- dac = ditto + ditto + child/children 5-15 years.
- db = ditto + child/children, 0-4 years only.

# LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN VILLAGE

Fig 3

Question 2 How long have you lived in Shotley Bridge?

513 Valid replies received to this question with 7 (1.3%) nil replies.



Length of Residence in Village (5 year groups)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations for action by the Village Trust are put forward as a result of the preceding analysis of the questionnaire returns.

The recommendations fall broadly into three categories, those involving an approach or request to a local authority for action by them, those suggesting action by the Village Trust itself, and those raising a particular issue which requires further investigation by the Village Trust before any action can be recommended.

### **Roads and Transport**

1. Approach Durham County Council with a view to obtaining:
  - a) a better and more direct bus service between the Elm Park/Yuill estate area and Consett;
  - b) a bus service between Cutlers Hall/Riverside area and the Hospital;
  - c) buses from Shotley Bridge travelling via Blackhill and No.1 to Consett; and
  - d) a better distribution of information about bus services.
2. Investigate the possibility of improving the accesses to the Village Hall in conjunction with the Highway Authority, local residents and the Village Hall Management Committee.
3. Approach the Highway Authority to express concern at the speed of traffic on Snows Green Road, to request that they investigate (i) ways of reducing the speed of traffic and (ii) the feasibility of restricting parking on either side of The Terrace/Snows Green Road junction.
4. Request Durham County Council to investigate ways of making Front Street safer for pedestrians to cross.
5. Ask the Highway Authority to ensure the regular trimming of overhanging branches which obstruct the pavement on Snows Green Road and drivers' vision on Briary Bank.
6. Investigate the possibility of providing a suitably located car park for the village centre.
7. Ask the Highway Authority to re-position the "NO ENTRY" signs at the foot of Church Bank so that they are more visible from Snows Green Road.
8. Investigate the possible means of providing feature name signs at the entrances to the village.

### **Community Facilities**

9. Ask the District Council to provide a public toilet at a site to be agreed in the village centre. The toilet to be of the compact, automatic type to minimise vandalism and misuse.
10. The Trust should investigate means of raising funds to acquire a high quality, good sized type of litter bin for the village, to be installed with the agreement of the District Council and provided that the Council is able to ensure a regular emptying service.
11. Ask the District Council to prune those trees in Snows Green Road which are obscuring the street lighting.

- 12 Draw to the attention of the District Council the suggestions under Question 10 as to where additional street lighting is required.
- 13 Draw to the attention of the Police, the response to Question 11 and the requests for more foot patrols.
- 14 Investigate means of publicising information about village activities, possibly making use of the Heritage Centre and the Tourist Information Centre.

#### **The Environment**

- 15 The Trust should examine planning applications on a case-by-case basis and, where appropriate, make their views known to the District Council.
- 16 The Trust should take the initiative, in consultation with the District Council, for putting forward plans for the future development of the Wood Street area.
- 17 The Trust should examine ways of enabling existing industrial sites to "blend in" with the village.
- 18 Investigate the possibility of lowering the wall opposite the Slonks and at the same time discouraging "fly-tipping" over the wall.
- 19 Ask Durham County Council to review the maintenance of the surface of the Derwent Walk.
- 20 Ask the District Council to implement a ban on all dogs from all or part of the Snows Green Recreation Ground.
- 21 Ask the District Council to install safety surfaces under the play equipment and provide additional equipment at the Snows Green Recreation Ground.
- 22 If necessary, investigate ways that the Trust can raise money to assist with 21.
- 23 The Trust should commit itself to an annual Spring Clean Day, paying particular attention initially to the Riverside and The Cut.

#### **Footpaths**

- 24 A working party should be established to undertake a survey of non-roadside footpaths to determine:
  - a) existing rights of way;
  - b) the need to improve footpath surfaces;
  - c) the need to remove obstructions;
  - d) the need to remove litter and fly-tipping; and
  - e) the need for signposting/waymarking
- 25 Ask the District Council to investigate the possibility of employing a lengthsman to maintain footpaths in the village.

- 26 In consultation with Northumberland County Council, examine ways to improve the state of the riverside footpath between the two footbridges at Shotley Grove.
- 27 Ask the District Council to improve the surface of and ensure the continued maintenance of:
  - a) The Cut, from Briary Gardens to the Terrace; and
  - b) the path from Benfieldside Road to Backstone Burn.
- 28 Investigate the feasibility of establishing a footpath on the County Durham bank of the river from Shotley Bridge to Shotley Grove (the first footbridge).
- 29 Seek to establish, in the long term, a footpath on the County Durham bank of the river from Shotley Bridge, via the Wood Street area and The Spa, to Ebchester, with a bridge across the river, probably in the Wood Street vicinity.

#### **Tourism and General**

- 30 Tourism should be promoted in the village, but with caution. The level of promotion should be consistent with the facilities and attractions which are available in the village.
- 31 Seek to develop community activities such as fairs, fetes, etc, in the village.
- 32 Tidy up the village and brighten it with further flower planting.
- 33 Investigate the opportunities for putting further seats in strategic and scenic locations.
- 34 Investigate the possibility of replacing the fountain that was formerly located in the village centre.
- 35 Take note of the special needs of both the young and the elderly in the village.
- 36 Examine ways of discouraging the fouling of public places in the village by dogs.

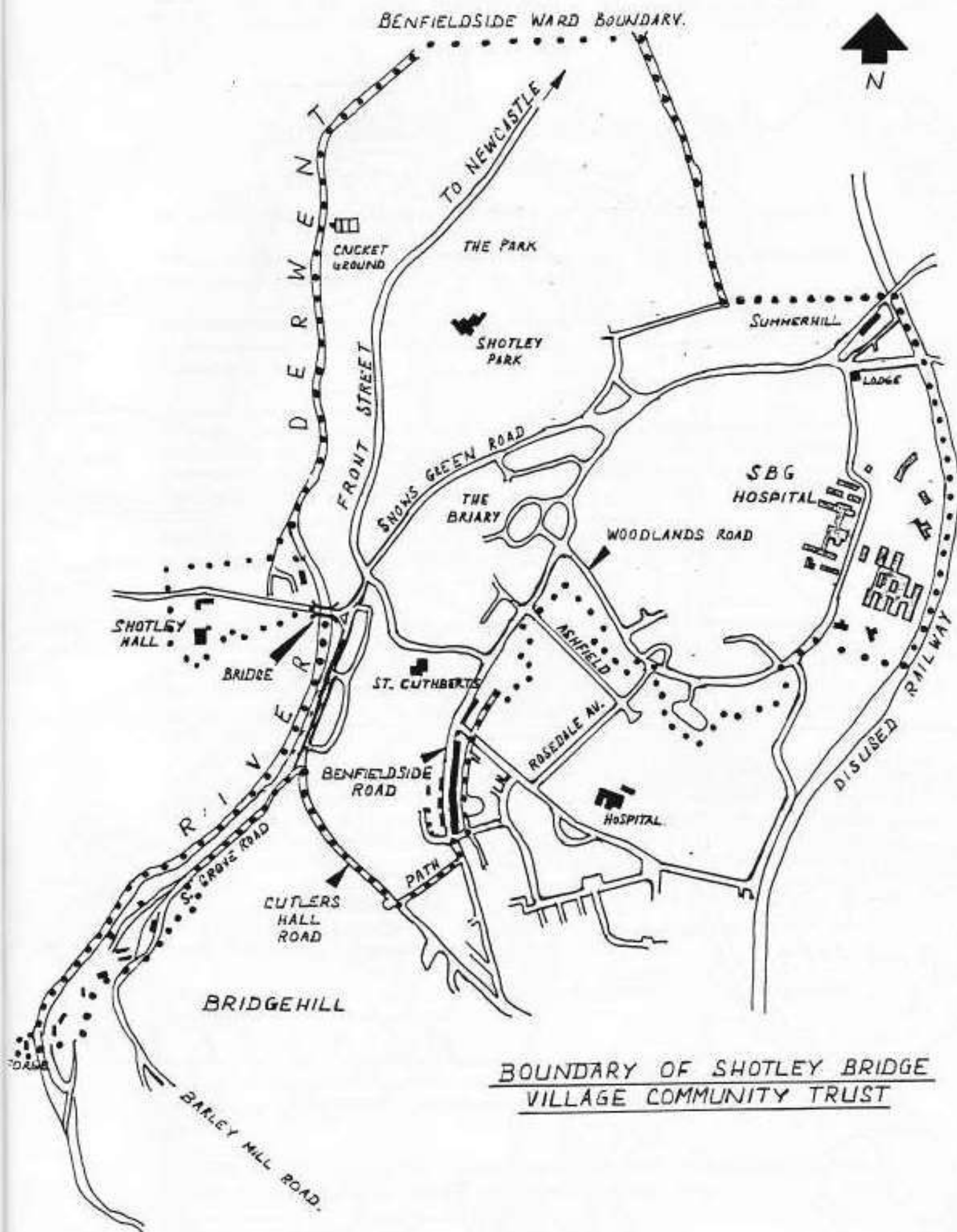
Over half these recommendations provide scope for further direct action, research and investigation or detailed negotiations with local authorities on the part of the Village Trust. Given that it is impossible to tackle all these issues at once, the Trust must now consider which of these recommendations it wishes to give priority to, bearing in mind:

- a) the relative importance of each issue, from the Village Trust viewpoint;
- b) the opportunities available from achieving some tangible results in a relatively short space of time; and
- c) the resources - finance and manpower - that it is likely to be able to devote to each issue.

#### **NOTE OF RESERVATION**

The views and opinions reported in the survey do, of course, reflect the situation in the village in September, 1988. While we have tried to take account of any subsequent changes when drawing up the recommendations, there may still be occasions where we have been "overtaken by events".





Shotley Bridge in 1897 : from Ordnance Survey 2nd edition.  
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## SHOTLEY BRIDGE: A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

Joyce Houliston

"It was a grand place for a lad", said an old gentleman, looking back over more than ninety years.

"What a privilege to be born in Shotley Bridge! I have such happy memories of my girlhood there", said a lady now in her eighties.

"It was a lovely, happy place to be. We were all poor, but it didn't matter. We were all the same and we had a smashing time when we were kids", from a couple in their sixties now and known to all 'Old Shotley' people.

*How was it in our village long ago?*

In the early years, the valley was well wooded on the lower slopes. On the higher parts were waste lands with some birch and hawthorn, gorse, broom, ferns, bracken and heather. Many streams made their way to the river and there were springs of clear water which seldom dried up. Much more water flowed in the Derwent then than now and it was described as a rushing river.

Few people lived here and they gathered in sheltered spots near the river's edge and by springs and streams, making small settlements linked by rough tracks used also by travellers and traders visiting the Roman camp at Ebchester and later, monastic outposts.

Much use was made of the easily worked stone, timber from the forests and materials suitable for thatching simple dwellings. Thatched roofs and stone tiles were in common use as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century. Clearings were made in the forest and ironstone worked and smelted from pre-Roman times. Early occupations were a poor kind of subsistence farming, growing pulses, oats and barley, keeping pigs, sheep and a few cows, hunting deer, wild boar and small animals, fishing and weaving wool cloth.

In Anglo-Saxon times, lands between Tyne and Tees were given to the religious community of St. Cuthbert. After the Conquest, William, wanting to establish firm control over his northern territory and keep out trouble makers, appointed a Norman bishop, Walcher, as Earl of Northumberland with absolute control over all matters economic, judicial, military and pastoral in the Palatine - a Prince Bishop. He was allowed to build a castle as his residence, raise an army and mint his own coins. His only loyalty was to his monarch and people in his sphere of influence were obliged to render him service and pay him dues. Land around Shotley Bridge was under his jurisdiction. He owned the forests and rivers and all within them, as well as the minerals. Land and property was leased at his discretion. Succeeding bishops had the same authority.

There are frequent references to The Bishop's Mills, The Bishop's Woods and The Bishop's Banks. Almost all the hills near Shotley are banks!

Halmote Courts were held twice yearly, usually at Lanchester; they were meetings of selected residents, forming a jury whose task it was to see to the smooth running of things. This rule continued for centuries but with diminishing authority as Parliamentary democracy became more and more important.

In 1836 after the death of Bishop Van Mildert, the last remaining powers of the Prince Bishops were transferred to the Crown, but the Bishop of Durham remains a premier bishop.



Old roads tend to follow water courses and the road from Snow's Green follows the way of a stream. There was a ford and stepping stones where it entered the Derwent. A similar stream joined the river on the opposite bank, so there was a natural meeting place, around which grew the old village. Simple bridges were replaced by the one we see today. It was designed and built in 1822 by Jonathan Marshall of Shotley Field. John Lough, the famous local sculptor, was apprenticed to Marshall and later worked on buildings in Newcastle. The Collingwood Monument at Tynemouth is his work.

Several mills were sited on this stretch of the river. From the thirteenth century there are references to a corn mill, a barley mill, a fulling mill (where wool cloth was made) and from the 1600's a paper mill making coarse brown paper from any available rags and tough plant fibres. This would be for wrapping rather than writing or printing.

Mill stones taken from the river had to be paid for. Grinding mills were for the benefit of all and everyone had to use them on payment of a fee. The miller had to pay the bishop a portion of his takings.

Great use was made of pack horses and donkeys since carts could be used only where suitable tracks existed and they were few.

The Malting, a house over-looking Wood Street survives from these early times. Its original purpose is not clear but it probably had to do with milling or brewing. The house Mawingo on Front Street is an old ale house. There is a stable and was a smithy on the site. Builders working years ago on Hill Top Farm, where now only walls remain, found the date 1666 cut into roof timbers. The King's Head (or Bridge End) is referred to from 1688 and is possibly much older though now greatly altered. A similar hostelry stood on the opposite bank, probably where Orchard House stands. Opposite Orchard House was Derwent Dene, The Old Hall, Jacobean, said to be built by a physician to the Duke of Cumberland, responsible for the massacres at Culloden and the subsequent Highland Clearances.

Shotley people must have looked suspiciously at strangers, some messengers and spies, passing through at the time of the Rising of the North in 1685 and various attempts to put a Stuart on the throne in the 1700's. Most likely because of the unrest, sword makers from Germany were persuaded to come to England and found our village suited to their purpose. They came to a small but well established community and were able to adapt buildings to their needs. They made homes for their families and workers near the riverside. They would find the hamlet of Snow's Green with cottages, farms, a bleaching green (for linen cloth) and homes for estate workers centred on "Snaw's" Green House which is the oldest gentleman's residence surviving in the area.

About that time, the Quaker family Richardson, connected by marriage with the Hunter family of Medomsley, acquired land there and later in Shotley Bridge. Quakers were a courageous group with high moral principles, firm convictions about the desirability of absolute simplicity of worship and were apart from the Established Church. They were excluded from many situations and from holding high office, which is why frequently they became benefactors in small communities. For many years marriage was allowed only within the sect and burial in consecrated ground was forbidden by the Church.

The first Quaker in this area was said to be John Hunter and meetings were held in his house at Benfieldside. George Fox, founder of the movement in 1653, visited the district; the first Quaker Meeting House in England was said to be at the top of Church Bank (formerly called Benfieldside Bank). Another was built in 1790 and is now a house attached to the burial ground. That old Meeting House was first converted to cottages and a new one built in 1840 at Snow's Green Corner. No trace remains of that building.

In the early 1800's, J.B. Richardson acquired Tinkler Hill Estate and lived for a time in Shotley Lodge. Cottages were built at Snow's Green and Kirkups and Nicholsons, competent builders and cartwrights were established there.

The village began to grow away from the riverside and several houses were built on the hillsides. In many cases stone was quarried on site and the houses needed to be near a spring or well. There were a few small houses and shops between Kiln Bank (Village Hall Bank) and Church Bank. Rose Cottage, Swiss Cottage, the Georgian houses higher up the hill and Derwent House were built sometime about 1800. Derwent House was demolished in the 1930's and the Church 'Our Lady of the Rosary' built on the site in 1952.

The Richardson family became very much concerned with the development of industry in various parts of the North East and the rebuilding of Newcastle in the nineteenth century. There were connections with various prominent banking families. Large sums of money were acquired, directed and invested in the new industries being established in many areas. The advent of steam power brought about changes which swept the country. Coal was required for power, timber for use on railways and iron for the making of track and machines. The Derwent Ironworks, also known as the Shotley Bridge Ironworks, were set up in 1840; people from all parts of the country and Ireland were attracted to this area, where so many of the raw materials needed were in plentiful supply. The population figures rose rapidly and the area prospered.

Around 1812 the Scottish family Annandale, papermakers, acquired the old mill and a considerable acreage of rough ground which they named Shotley Grove. They improved and extended the mill and made a second one nearby. They installed the most up to date equipment and in time, the mills were able to produce any kind of paper. Over 300 workers were employed and the machines operated day and night. The mills were said to be amongst the finest in England. Substantial houses were built for the workers at The Grove, on Cutlers Hall Road and in Wood Street. Several large houses were occupied by the Annandales. The swordmaking industry had declined and Annandales took over much of the Oley property.

In 1841 Grove School was built by the mill owners, with places for 150 children. It closed in 1903. It was at the bottom of Cutlers Hall Road and is a house now.

Much of The Grove land was brought under cultivation and farms were taken over. A flour mill was re-established on the site of the sword mill, probably about 1840. Much use was made of heavy horses which were valuable animals, needing to be carefully looked after. There were troughs on all the hills leading out of the village and to pull the heavy wagons up the hill, the horses were harnessed two abreast and three in line. In hot weather they wore a kind of straw hat to keep away flies. Some horses were bad tempered and were muzzled.

Paper making was a highly skilled trade and a seven years apprenticeship was required. Craftsmen came from many parts of the country seeking work and were well paid. Also, people came into the district to work at the flour mill. Old residents remember seeing outworkers stitching flour bags at cottage doors on Cutlers Hall Road and hearing the sound of clogs echoing on the cobbles, as people tramped from Blackhill and Leadgate to the mills.

J.B. Richardson acquired Snow's Green Estate which was then most of the undeveloped part of the village.

Water from springs near the river was said to have curative properties. Richardson had it analysed and it compared well with water in fashionable resorts. In 1839, the Spa was landscaped and a bath



house, reading room and fountain were created where all could drink the water - if they could swallow it; it had an unpleasant taste. A large hotel was built on Snow's Green Road on the site above the Catholic Church. There was extensive stabling and a private path ran through Richardson's woodland to The Spa. A new road, The Low Road, was made, leading to Scotswood Bridge which was opened in 1831. The old road, The High Road, led to Gateshead and was no more than a rough track. Gateshead was more important than Newcastle to Shotley people before the bridge was opened. Important business was transacted there. People had to pay to use the Low Road and Gatehouse Cottage (The White House) was a toll house.

Many visitors came to the village and accommodation was inadequate. People opened their homes to paying guests. Richardson built the house Shotley Park in 1842 with a private drive into The Spa.

From 1842 a weekly market was held. The part of the village from The Old Town Hall to where the Methodist Chapel is now, was called Achey (Oakley) Bank Corner. The market place was there with covered sheds. There was no Oak Street (Clay Cut) in those days. Near the corner where now stands Barclay's Bank stood the village pump, the stocks and the pound, where stray cattle and sheep were kept until their owners paid to reclaim them.

In May and November were hirings, when farmers came to choose workers from where they congregated near The Commercial in Market Street. **"These were great occasions for merriment, when old Fred Miller brought his roundabouts and swings. The village street was lined with stalls, up to Achey Bank, crowded with buyers and sellers".**

For many years there was a Shotley Bridge and District Horticultural Society which was well supported. People were very proud of their gardens and an amazing variety of things were cultivated. Show days were eagerly anticipated and the big tent was set up, first in the market place and in later years, in the Spa. Exotic things were sent from the big houses. Entertainment was provided by several local bands, all eager to play whenever there was a joyful occasion.

Trade in the village was good, but after the Shotley Bridge Ironworks (The Tin Mill) were founded near Blackhill and as business increased, the area seemed less attractive. The demand for coal gas for street lighting and domestic use was increasing and in 1856 the Shotley Bridge Gas Co. was formed with works adjacent to The Spa. People no longer wanted to come to stay and the hotel closed. It became a private house known as Springfield. After 1900, it was used as a home for orphan girls. Later, it was used as offices by the N.C.B.. It was demolished in the 1960's.

The spa town did not materialise but the pleasure grounds continued to be used by visitors from Tyneside and Wearside. They came by road and rail after the station opened in 1867. All kinds of attractions were provided; up to 60,000 visitors arrived year after year, until the 1930's. The Spa grounds are still privately owned, used mainly by the cricket club and tennis club.

As transport became easier, trade increased in the village. There were all kinds of tradesmen employed in thriving businesses and in work of various kinds at the big houses. There were plumbers, builders, glaziers, painters and decorators, tinsmiths and blacksmiths, saddlers, an antiques shop, a newsagent, a photographer, a chemist, high class grocery shops, confectioners, several bakers, tailors, drapers, milliners and dressmakers. There was even a village poet famous in his day, Joshua Lax, who was also local ironmonger, insurance agent and agent for a bank. He lived on The Terrace, then a very smart place to be. There were several doctors.

In 1860 the Town Hall was built. The market was no longer held and houses were built on Achey Bank Corner, those on Front Street with shops on the ground floor. The Spa Hotel was next to where

now the Chapel stands. The Commercial was built long before 1800 and the Oley family had a house near to or adjoining it. After 1812, Christopher Oley combined the two properties which were then referred to in old documents as The Commercial and Swords Hotel and later, the Crown and Crossed Swords.

Below this hotel and behind the King's Head was an area called Fawcett's Yard, with shops and houses. Next to the road was a small public house called The Wheat Sheaf. The road was wide enough for only one vehicle to pass through and was called The Narrows at that point. The buildings were taken down in the 1930's. Because there were so many drinking places The Temperance Hall was opened in 1876, with library and meeting hall. Dances were held there.

Since there was no church in the old village, most residents were Wesleyan or Primitive Methodists. The nearest churches were at Ebchester and Medomsley. In 1850 St. Cuthbert's Church was built. A Wesleyan Chapel and Schoolroom (now the Village Hall) were built on The Terrace in 1855 and in 1892, a Primitive Methodist Chapel in Front Street. Both replaced old chapels in Wood Street.

A piped water supply was brought to the village in 1886 and to commemorate the event a horse trough and drinking fountain were built at the corner near Barclay's Bank. This was taken down for road widening after the last war, as were buildings between Church Bank and Kiln Bank.

J.B. Richardson Senior moved to Lanchester after 1851. The Priestmans of Derwent Lodge and the Peiles of Greenwood came to live in the village in the mid 1800's. Both families were connected by marriage with the Richardsons and took over most of their estates. All three families had to do with ironworks and collieries and did much for the good of the village. At one time the Priestmans had a tannery in Newcastle. They are best remembered for their love of horses and hounds. They had a coach named the Venture which ran regularly to Newcastle at one time. In later years it went from Shotley to Blanchland on several days every week and was one of the village attractions until 1939.

Annandales began to release their properties from the 1860's and in 1872 the flour mill was sold to the Derwent Flour Mill Co., a co-operative concern. It was a successful enterprise and Co-operative Terrace was built for some of the workers. There was stabling there, in Wood Street and in Derwent Place. In 1933 to save transport costs, all Co-operative milling was transferred to Dunston.

When in place of rags wood pulp became widely used in paper manufacture, timber producing countries set up their own mills and many British mills could not compete with the price of imported paper. The Shotley Mills closed in 1902, and were dismantled over a period; the site was then abandoned. The Gas Works closed in 1969. Trade in the village has declined steadily since the First World War.

Most well-to-do families left the village as it became more and more built up. Its character changed. Some old families were impoverished and left with properties no-one wanted. Years of prosperity have alternated with years of failure and depression. Buildings have decayed and once highly productive gardens are abandoned. The old community spirit has gone.

The village is now mainly residential. The present sees us coping with radical changes. We have beautiful countryside, some fine buildings, happy memories and a challenge. With thought for the future, regard for others, a combined effort and will to succeed, we have an opportunity to make our village once again the place where we would all most like to live.

# **A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF SHOTLEY BRIDGE AND SURROUNDING AREA**

by Douglas Vernon  
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to present a precise account, in broad terms, of the general history of Shotley Bridge and district. Accordingly, it is not a specialist, technical, nor social history (\*1). The author's intention is to draw and assemble, from a wide range of primary sources, that relevant information which should enable any interested party to gain a clear understanding of the village and district which many hold dear, and are anxious to preserve. It is emphasised that only authentic primary source material is included. Also, from many years of research experience, it is essential to stress that, in the interests of historical accuracy and continuity, the history of Shotley Bridge cannot be dissociated from the district as a whole - hence the title.

As outlined in the summary of contents, this thesis is structured in Eight Parts, all in continuity, and deals specifically with the important role played by the inhabitants of Shotley Bridge and district over many years, in the establishment and subsequent industrial and community development of North West Durham. In particular it outlines the influence upon and the impetus given to the initiation and growth of the basic industries; coal, iron and steel and, the community.

Following brief topographical details, the narrative begins in the pre-industrial period - defined as that for which only archaeological evidence survives - and traces the area history up to and including the present year - 1989.

### Shotley Bridge - Location, Topography, Climate

Shotley Bridge lies approximately 12 miles South West of Newcastle upon Tyne, C14 miles North West of Durham and C14 miles South East of Hexham. The centre of the cross roads in the village is at C339 ft. A.S.L. (Above Sea Level). By comparison, Blackhill, some 0.75 miles from Shotley Bridge is at C700 ft. elevation, whereas Consett town centre is at 870 ft. A.S.L.. This illustrates the hilly nature of the district: No.1 location, near Villa Real being the highest point at 896 ft. A.S.L.. Shotley Bridge is 2 miles from Consett and 2 miles from Ebchester.

### Geology

The area stands on the carboniferous series, (coal measures) associated with the Permian series and the mountain limestone. There are outcrops of the Great Whin Sill and in places the Millstone Grit. Iron ore and lead have been mined extensively in the distant past, but no active mining of these minerals now occurs.

The area is subject to severe - high velocity - winds, and has the reputation of being the "snowiest place in England". The prevailing wind is South West.

The River Derwent marks the North West boundary of County Durham and Northumberland. The Derwent Valley has always had an ample supply of water from this river and the banks and adjoining areas were extremely well wooded from the confluence of the Derwent and Tyne up to Blanchland in Northumberland - notably with oak, which was ideal for making the charcoal needed by the early iron smelters. The valley is still extensively wooded and the flow of the Derwent is now adequately regulated by the Derwent Reservoir, some 4 miles upstream.

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(\*1) Specialist subjects will be made available later as required.



## **2 PRE-HISTORICAL PERIOD**

### **LATE BRONZE AGE**

**C1000 - 500BC**

There is evidence that bronze was worked in this area, probably during the later period. Six bronze (probably late Celtic) spearheads were ploughed up at High Bradley, near Medomsley in 1891. These were probably made by the "Ancient Briton" tribes of the Brigantes or Ottadine who occupied this territory and who had acquired bronze making techniques from the Phoenicians.

### **IRON AGE**

**Early Period: 500BC - 75BC**

**Late Period : 75BC - C100AD**

There is substantial evidence that the Romans worked iron and coal extensively in this area from the second invasion and occupation of 43AD, up to their withdrawal C412-15AD.

Iron artefacts probably worked by the VI Legion at Vindomora (Ebchester) and the remains of an iron shaft furnace found at Lanchester, probably worked by the Swabian Legion, confirm this. Also, heaps of 'SCORIA' - mixed cinder and iron rich slag - found in recent times upstream and downstream of Shotley on the banks of the Derwent - indicate Roman and medieval metallurgical activity. Archaeological finds indicate that Ebchester and Lanchester were probably base or support areas for Hadrian's Wall. The important river crossing at Shotley, later bridged, (hence Shotley Bridge) saw considerable activity for many centuries from the Roman period to date.

### **POST-ROMAN PERIOD : THE SO-CALLED "DARK AGES"**

**C415AD to the C9**

Historians differ as to the length of this period; conventionally it is divided into three phases:

#### **5th and 6th Centuries**

This phase saw a decline in our civilisation - the so-called Anglo-Saxon period, but the important skills of metalworking bequeathed by the Romans, survived because of the diligence of the monastic fraternity; the Venerable Bede mentioned iron several times.

#### **Late C6 to C7 : The Anglo-Saxon Renaissance**

This period saw a considerable development of English technical skills, especially in iron and "direct" steelmaking (\*2); there is evidence that the blackband ironstone outcrops in the Derwent Valley, near Shotley, were worked from the time of the Roman withdrawal right through the Middle Ages, particularly upstream from Shotley Bridge to Allansford.

#### **C9 Danish Invasion**

After the initial destructive wave of invaders, later arrivals developed "decorative metallurgy" e.g. gold Runic lettering and designs on swords and other implements. An inlaid knife ploughed up at Hurbuck Farm, Lanchester earlier this century was significant proof of the Danish presence in this area.

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(\*2) Direct steelmaking i.e. direct from ore to steel, accomplished in the plastic state in a primitive bowl furnace.



### **The Norman Period (Generally classified as 1066 to C1150)**

The Normans were impressed with the degree of English sophistication in ironmaking - William of Poitiers, the Conquerors chaplain said English ironworkers were second to none. (The Normans claimed to be "administrators", NOT craftsmen!).

The Domesday Book and later the "Boldon Buke" 1183 commissioned by Hugh Pudsey (Bishop of Durham 1153) confirmed extensive ironworking in this area. During Stephen's reign (the last Norman King) this area suffered locally but in 1128 when the Cistercians came to England they gave a powerful impetus to culture and skills.

### **The Palatinate of Durham**

The Prince Bishops of Durham had the royal prerogative and wealth from all coal and iron and carried out surveys of the entire county especially the river boundaries of Derwent and Wear. Their interest in metal working is well known - the Derwent Vale especially.

### **Medieval Renaissance C1150 to 1348**

A brilliant period of English history, notably the establishment of cathedrals and universities, and also the boost given to iron and coal by a major and lasting expansion in agriculture and the opening of overseas trade, which gave the initiative (especially to Tyne and Wear) to shipbuilding and the Tyne coal trade.

Arms and armour developed and the two main areas of arms manufacture were the Palatinate of Durham and Gloucester. The techniques of "steeling" - forge welding of cemented iron to form cutting edges - was an important invention extensively worked in this area. (This is one of the skills the German swordmakers of Shotley Bridge would certainly possess).

## **3 EARLY INDUSTRIAL PERIOD**

### **Late Medieval, Elizabethan and Stuart Period C1348 to late 16th Century**

This long period saw many reports of coal and iron ore finds in North West Durham and Weardale: these were extensively worked (especially the brown haematites of Weardale). Roads and wagonways were laid down and the mineral finds exploited fairly widely across the County of Durham. In particular, the wind-blown blast furnaces, initially by bellows and later water power, were developed.

### **17th Century to 19th Century**

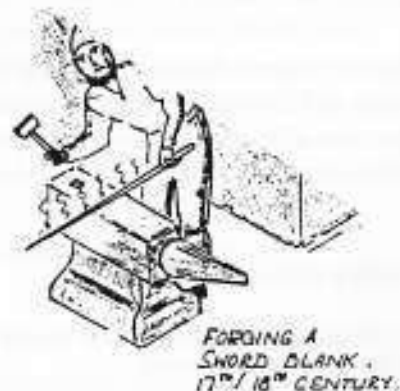
The C17 saw the start of the modern history of the iron and steel industry in England and particularly in North West Durham in which Shotley Bridge played a major role.

### **The Swordmakers of Shotley Bridge**

Precisely when the first German families came to this village will never be confirmed with certainty, primarily because many came in secret, as refugees. Historians have expounded at length - many theories have emerged; perhaps the most likely concentration occurred in the late C17 during the reign of William III 1689 - 1702, who was anxious to extend metallurgical skills in England, particularly the making of "hollow ground swords". It is likely that some came earlier, probably via Sunderland

where Harrison and Ambrose Crowley had established ironworks. The latter eventually started works at Swalwell and Winlaton and employed several Huguenot refugees.

However, it is generally accepted that some 15 German families, fleeing from religious persecution and at great risk to themselves and relatives, left their birth-places near Solingen in Cleve Berg, prospected several places in England and eventually settled in or near Shotley Bridge. Their purpose was to pursue their craft of cutlery and swordmaking away from prying eyes, but yet near enough to raw materials and access to markets. Shotley provided all they needed - freedom, seclusion, coal, iron ore, timber, stone, for grinders, etc.. Several families moved on after a short time. The best known and documented German families are Oley, Woper, Henkals, Vooz, Mohl, Faws, Tiergarden and Bertram (the latter had connections with Derwentcote).



What is vitally important in the history of Shotley Bridge is the fact that their activities established practical metallurgy in this area and led directly to the founding of one of the largest ironworks in Europe, at nearby Consett, in the C19 (\*3). Their influence began with the working of local ores, then their eventual involvement with Hayford of Pontefract, Cotesworth of Gateshead, the Hollow Sword Blade Company, and the Cutlers of Sheffield. What they started in this valley has a continuity extending right up to a well known swordmaking company of today. At the height of the German Swordmakers activity, C1750's to the Napoleonic War period, much development took place in this area, notably coal mining, lead mining and refining, limestone quarrying and agriculture.

Wagonways were laid down; tracks and roads eventually were driven through from the nearby Tyne and Wear areas. Gradually, the population increased (see Appendix 4) and much building occurred. A significant impetus was given to this area by the coming of the railways, in particular, the opening of the Stanhope and Tyne Railway 1834 (see Appendix 3).

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(\*3) Space and time preclude a full study of this subject in this general account - a detailed history of the Swordmakers of Shotley Bridge will be made available

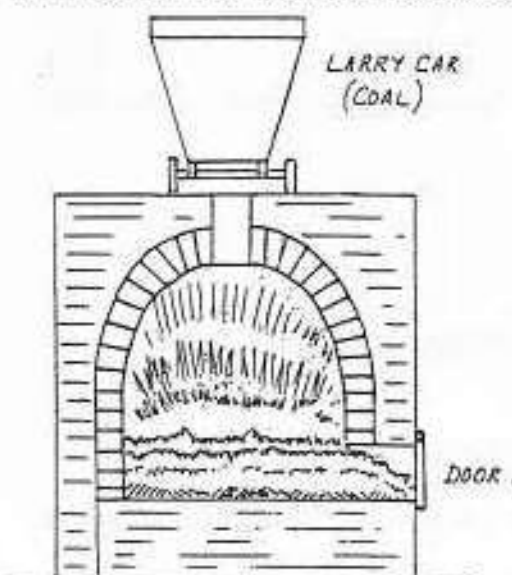
#### 4 HEAVY (BASIC) INDUSTRIES PERIOD

##### Mid 19th to late 20th Centuries

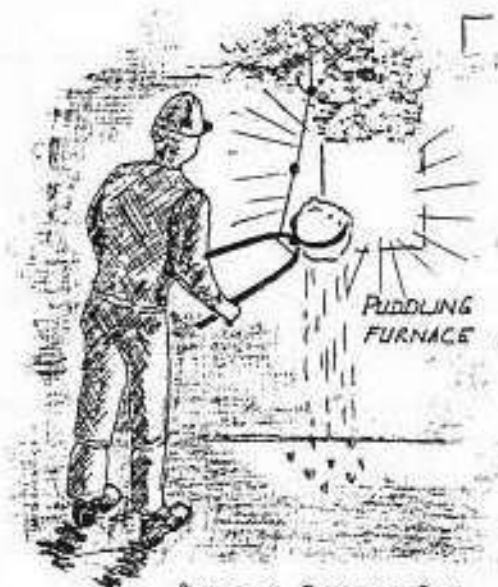
As the swordmakers went into decline after the demand for weapons fell sharply after the American War of Independence, the Seven Years War and the Napoleonic Period, the County of Durham saw many iron blast furnaces arise and a massive increase in coal, coke and iron production. With the coming of the railways after the 1830's the demand for iron and eventually steel rose rapidly.

##### 1839 : John Nicholson discovered Workable Iron Ore deposits

To satisfy the demand for metal, sharp eyes and minds were on the look-out for business prospects. Building on the legacy of previous metalworkers, notably the swordmakers of Shotley Bridge, it fell to John Nicholson to provide the next and most important initiative. Nicholson of Shotley Bridge, a joiner and cartwright, was a most remarkable man. A self-taught geologist and student of minerals, he discovered ironstone on mine working tips at the top of what is now Consett Park. He then investigated the site with William Richardson of Sunderland and Robert Wilson of Newcastle. Several shafts were sunk and "blackband" ironstone of workable quantity was found.



EARLY BEEHIVE COKE OVEN.  
18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY.



PUDDLER REMOVES BALL  
OF IRON FROM FURNACE

##### 1840 Derwent Iron Company formed

The next step was the formation of the company, by Jonathan Richardson of the Newcastle and Durham District Bank (\*4). This was done with 4 directors and a capital of £10,000. Leases of mineral rights were obtained, beehive coke ovens and two blast furnaces were commissioned, the project being given considerable impetus by the transport facilities of the recently opened STANHOPE AND TYNE RAILWAY. Another important factor was the availability of limestone from the many good quality series of the Wear Valley.

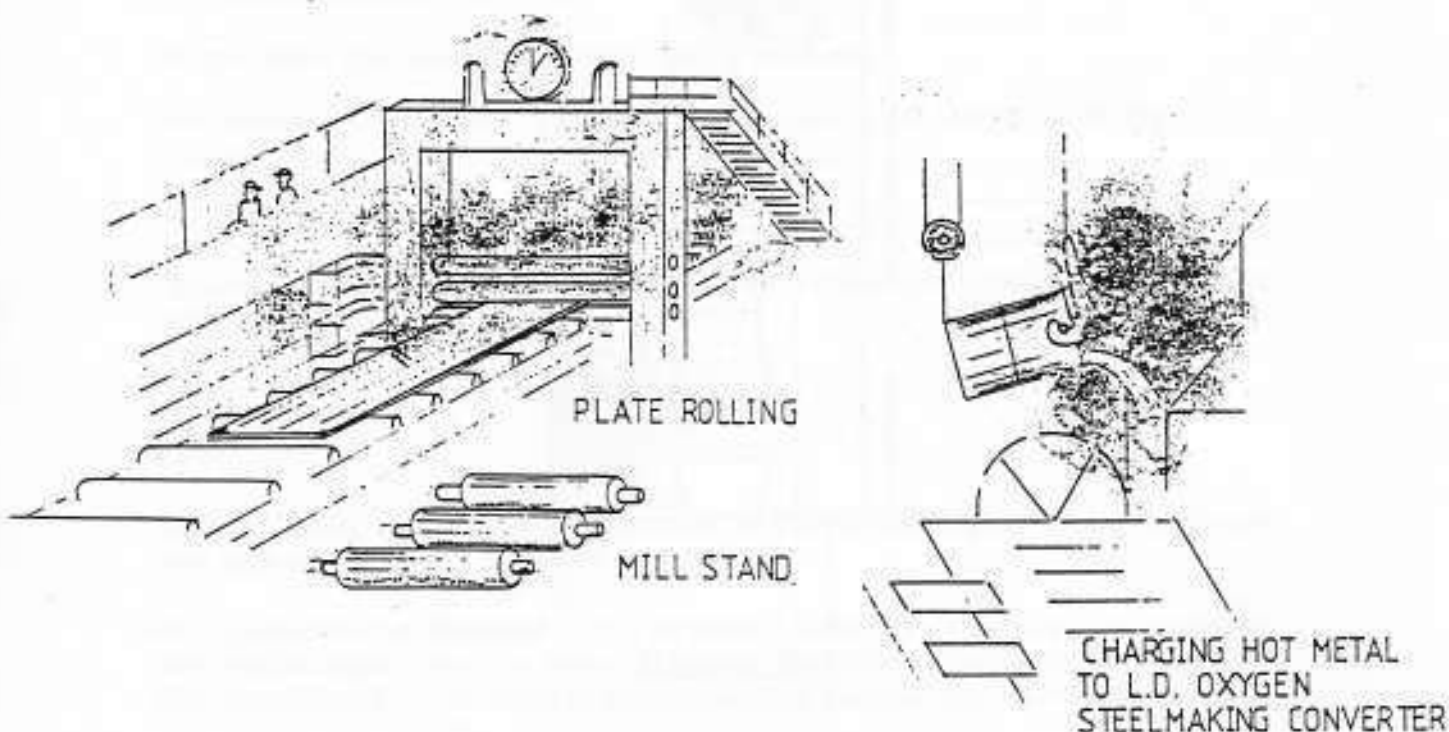
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(\*4) John Nicholson showed samples of the iron ore to members of the Black family (Quakers) who owned the Wearmouth Ironworks, who also advised Johnathan Richardson.

## 5 DECLINE AND FALL OF THE HEAVY INDUSTRIES - ARISING OF LIGHT INDUSTRIES: THE "NEW" TECHNOLOGY

The coal industry went first, the steel industry followed; an adjacent ball-bearing factory also disappeared.

Strenuous efforts by several industrial re-generation organisations, starting in 1980 and continuing today, have just about replaced the jobs lost when the steel works closed. The community is re-orientating on light industries and the new computer technology; quite a challenge from heavy steel and coal, but our community is adapting well. When one door closes another (eventually) opens.



## 6 SHOTLEY BRIDGE AND ITS ENVIRONS TODAY - 1989

The village has changed little over many years - old, larger houses have been or are being converted to other purposes. Much new building is taking place but many old houses are derelict together with the remains of factories along the riverside. Many problems remain to be solved.

### The Way Ahead

Several alternatives require consideration:

- should light industries move into the village?
- what are the prospects of tourism?
- is the village to become solely a residential area - a "dormitory" district for Tyne and Wear?
- how can the village be cleaned up and the environment protected?

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

The challenge of change faces the community. The Shotley Bridge Village Community Trust was formed to meet this challenge. Perhaps the prime need is for an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the possible alternatives, leading by consensus to an agreed policy and plan of action. Much re-thinking of previously "sacred" concepts is necessary. Certainly, re-orientating and some re-education are needed. Shotley Bridge is still a strikingly beautiful place with many prospects. The village community, as demonstrated by the response to the village appraisal questionnaire, are well aware of the need for action - many very useful suggestions have been and continue to be put forward. Perhaps the main challenge is to preserve the best aspects of the "small village identity" and yet for the village to play its part in the general scenario of Derwentside. The Village Trust exists to represent the villagers in meeting this CHALLENGE OF THE WAY AHEAD.



## SHOTLEY BRIDGE AND DISTRICT FIRST CHURCHES

## APPENDIX 1

- 1790 Friends Meeting House - Snow's Green
- 1843 Larger Friends Meeting House on same site (Used by Plymouth Brethren in 1893)
- 1849 St. Cuthbert's Church - Foundation stone laid 7th March 1849 (A Dobson Church)
- 1851 Baptist Chapel - cost £700 : seated 200 (Site given by Mr Annandale)
- 1852 Primitive Wesleyan Chapel - Wood Street - cost £400 : seated 300
- 1855 Wesleyan Methodist Chapel - cost £1300 : seated 500
- 1900's Roman Catholic Church - Snow's Green Road

## BLACKHILL

- 1851 Baptist Chapel, Highgate - cost £700 Site given by Peter and James Annandale : enlarged 1876 at further cost of £600 : seated 300
- 1857 St. Mary's Catholic Church rebuilt on site of previous building demolished by hurricane in 1856
- 1865 Primitive Methodist Chapel - Derwent Street
- 1871 Wesleyan Methodist Chapel - Durham Road - cost £2500 : seats 500
- 1874 United Methodist Free Church - cost £1180 : seats 200
- 1879 Presbyterian Church of England - Durham Road - site given by Messrs. Annandale - cost £2700 : seats 400 NB. An old (earlier) Presbyterian Church was built in 1860 in Turner Street but was converted to dwellings in the 1890's
- 1885 St. Aidan's Church - Laburnum Avenue (The first church bearing the name of ST. AIDAN in County Durham) - cost £3676 : seats 460 (Vicarage built on lines of an Elizabethan Manor House)

## CONSETT

- 1864 Primitive Chapel - Front Street - seats 500
- 1866 Christ Church -Parliament Street - seats 700
- 1870's Wesleyan Methodists - Middle Street - seats 850
- 1872 Baptist Chapel - Front Street - seats 280
- 1870's Consett Methodist Church - Station Road - rebuilt 1950's

## SHOTLEY BRIDGE AND DISTRICT FIRST SCHOOLS

## APPENDIX 2

- 1841 Shotley Grove School Cutlers Hall Road  
Erected by Mrs Annandale, enlarged in 1893. Mixed and infants, attended by 120 children in the 1840's all of whom paid for their education.
- 1844 Wilkinson School for Infants  
Commonly called the Mill School, erected by Isabella Wilkinson and enlarged in 1889. 170 pupils in 1870, 90 in 1893.
- 1846 Mechanics Institute and Reading Room  
Established under the patronage of the Bishop of Durham, 909 members, library of 700 volumes. Became Shotley Bridge Reading Society in 1893.
- 1857 Boarding School for Young Ladies (Elm Park House)  
Founded in the 1850's (dates of operation uncertain)
- 1857 "One school supported by Derwent Iron Company"  
"One school supported by Tregelles and Company"
- 1859 St Mary's Catholic Church School  
Mixed and infants. 30 pupils. Taught by The Sisters of Charity of St. Paul.
- 1877 Board School, Benfieldside Road  
Cost £6000, 600 pupils

## BLACKHILL

- 1864 Mechanics Institute, Derwent Street  
Erected by Consett Iron Company Limited. Supported by the Company and members subscriptions. Library of 1000 volumes.

## CONSETT

- 1840 British Schools  
Erected under the patronage of Consett Iron Company Limited. Enlarged several times e.g. 1884-89.
- 1870's Catholic School, St Patrick's, Thomas Street  
Mixed and infants. Taught by The Sisters of Charity of St Paul
- 1876 The National School  
(Adjoined the Parish Church in Parliament Street) Enlarged in 1892. Seating for 900 pupils.
- 1879 Wesleyan School, Gibson Street  
Mixed and infants, seated 384
- 1884 Consett Reading and Recreation Rooms (Town Hall Buildings, Front and Middle Street)  
Supported by Consett Iron Company Limited. Library of 1000 volumes  
Subscriptions were:  
C.I.C. employees : 6 shillings pa  
non-employees : 8 shillings pa

## ROADS

All turnpikes and major roads developed after the expansion of iron and steelmaking (C19). The most notable improvement was the building of the "low road" in the mid C19 which offered an alternative access from Newcastle upon Tyne to Consett, via the Derwent Valley and Shotley Bridge. (This road was planned in 1832).

## RESERVOIRS

The District has always had from the early C19, probably the best water supply in the North of England, supplied from a group of reservoirs in the hills to the South West.

## RAILWAYS (CONSETT AND DISTRICT)

1834	(15 May)	Stanhope and Tyne Railway opened
1834	(10 Sept)	Stanhope and Tyne, Annfield access to South Shields opened
1842	(13 May)	Stanhope and Tyne Company dissolved, Pontop and South Shields railway company formed
1858	(1 July)	Hownsgill Viaduct opened
1859	(4 July)	Waskerley Deviation opened
1862	(17 July)	North East Railway Amalgamation Act
		Blaydon "Conside" Branch Act
1862	(1 Sept)	Lanchester Valley Branch opened
1867	(18 June)	Blaydon and "Conside" Branch opened, for goods traffic
1867	(2 Dec)	Opened for passenger traffic
1868	(5 June)	Hownsgill - Consett North Loop opened for goods traffic
1868	(1 Oct)	Crook - Consett (Carr House) passenger trains diverted to Benfieldside (Blackhill)
1896	(1 May)	Final change of name of Benfieldside Station to Blackhill
1896	(17 Aug)	Blackhill Passenger Service began
1908	(1 May)	Blaydon and Consett Branch widening completed
1939	(1 May)	Blackhill - Tow Law Passenger Service withdrawn
		Lanchester Valley Passenger Service withdrawn
1954	(1 Feb)	Blaydon and Consett Branch Passenger Service withdrawn
1955	(23 May)	Pontop Branch, Newcastle, Annfield Plain, Blackhill Passenger Service Withdrawn
1963	(11 Nov)	Blaydon and Consett Branch closed completely
1965	(2 Aug)	Waskerley and Parkhead (Blanchland) Goods Station closed
1966	(6 June)	Rowley Goods Station closed
1966	(20 June)	Lanchester Valley Branch closed
1969	(1 May)	Consett Burnhill Junction Line closed
1984		Consett to Newcastle Line closed

NO RAIL LINKS WHATEVER EXISTED FROM THIS TIME

**SHOTLEY BRIDGE, CONSETT, DERWENTSIDE**  
**SOME POPULATION AND GENERAL STATISTICS : 1801 TO 1989**

**APPENDIX 4**

**NB Reference population statistics :** Early data refers to local parishes, the middle period to Consett District and the final figures to Derwentside. It is not possible to precisely state the population of one hamlet, village or eventually town since many were returned on the census forms collectively, e.g. Early period - Shotley Bridge and Benfieldside parishes returned with Medomsley. In effect, the population of any individual village, can at best be only an estimate. Number employed - Consett Works and Mines are reasonably accurate. Agricultural workers and employees of other industries and trades people can only be estimated.

DATE	POPULATION		NUMBER EMPLOYED	REMARKS
1801	745	(Shotley (Medomsley (Benfieldside	Unknown	Population of Durham County March 10th 1801 = 143,432
1811	139	(Consett (Knitsley	Unknown	June 7th 1841 = 294,809 (Doubled in 40 years)
1831	146	(Consett (Knitsley	Unknown	
1831	534	(Shotley (Benfieldside	Unknown	
1841	195	(Consett (Knitsley	100	
1851	2777		c1200	(1851 to 1861 Consett Works, Largest Ironworks in Europe)
1861	4953		c2500	
1871	5982	Consett		
1871	4434	(Shotley (Benfieldside		
1881	6746	(Consett (Knitsley	3500	
1882	1187	Shotley Bridge		1265 if Snows Green, Cutlers Hall, Shotley Grove, Bridgehill, are included.
1882	4121	Medomsley		
1882	1403	Blackhill		

DATE	POPULATION	NUMBER EMPLOYED	REMARKS
1884	c7000 Consett and District	6000	Including collieries
1891	8600	7500	Including ten collieries
1901	Unknown	8500	Population of Durham County March 1901 = 1,125,543. County growth rate never exceeded 2.88% pa)
1911	c20,000	9000	
1921	Unknown	12,000	
1931	55,000 in Consett U.D.C.	13,500	(1930's and 1940's Consett Urban District Council population rose from 55,000 to 70,000)
1947	70,000 Consett U.D.C.	14,000	1st January 1947 including mines
(1 JANUARY 1947 NATIONALISATION OF MINES)			
1951	c100,000		
1957	c101,000 Consett U.D.C. 1/4/57	6412	Iron and Steelworks (incl. refractories) only.
1961	c91,000	6794	1 April 1961 population decline due to pit closures.
1964	c91,000 7/11/64		
1976	c90,000	5250	All grades
1979 OCTOBER - HOWNSGILL PLATE MILL CLOSED			
1980	January 89,000 September 89,000	3715	Consett Works closed

AT THE CLOSURE OF CONSETT WORKS THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF JOBS LOST WAS 3,715 as follows:

Management and Staff grades	870
Production grades	982
Engineering grades	1,225
Service grades	638
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,715</b>

96% of the redundant workforce resided in Derwentside; of these 80% lived in Consett, Shotley Bridge, Castleside, Blackhill, Bridgehill, Leadgate, Delves and Moorside areas.



## DERWENTSIDE UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES 1981

1981 Census, Derwentside

29.4% of males between 16 and 64 were unemployed  
10.5% of females between 16 and 60 were unemployed

### Comparison with National Figures:

Unemployment, Male = 15.7%

Unemployment, Females = 6.0%

## DERWENTSIDE UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

<u>MONTH:YEAR</u>	<u>TOTAL UNEMPLOYED</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
JAN:1979	1,419	10.8
JAN:1980	1,722	11.6
AUG:1980	2,290	15.4
SEP:1980	2,319	15.5
OCT:1980	2,634	16.6
NOV:1980	3,083	18.4
DEC:1980	4,138	22.4
JAN:1981	4,262	23.5
JAN:1982	4,009	25.5
JAN:1983	4,482	27.9

N.B. Figures for 1983 cannot accurately be compared with previous years because of changed census compiling methods.

**SPRING 1989:** Jobs lost on Consett Works closure just about equalled by newly created jobs - unemployment statistics now similar to those for Northern England generally.

# SHOTLEY BRIDGE - PLACE NAME ORIGIN

## APPENDIX 5

Shotley, Northumberland - (N.B. Shotley Bridge adjacent - County Durham).

1.	Schotley	1242	According to the book of fees.
2.	Scoteley	1256	According to the Rolls Service (1920-31). Also according to the Assize Rolls.
3.	Schotley	1262	According to "Inquisitiones post mortem".

### ANALYSIS

4. Shotley, Northumberland is perhaps Old English "Scotta Leah" i.e. "The Leah of the Scots". Old English Cusc(e)ote means **wood pigeon**. This suggests there may have been a simplex sc(e)ote in a similar sense. This would give a good etymology - "pigeon wood".

N.B. Shotley Bridge, County Durham - same derivation.

(Authority: Ekwall, Eilert. Concise Dictionary of English Place Names. Oxford, Clarendon Press.)



SHOTLEY SPA.