

St George's Church

The growth of mining operations in South Moor at the end of the nineteenth century meant that the population almost doubled in the decades from 1891 (1472) to 1901 (2572) and 1911 (4054). To meet the needs of the expanding community a separate civil parish of South Moor was created in 1894 from part of Lanchester civil parish, and the new ecclesiastical parish of St George was created from Holmside parish in 1898. These administrative changes were marked by the appearance of two new public buildings on what was then known as Tommy's Lane.

A new parish church, dedicated to St George, opened on 30 March 1898 on land donated by the South Moor Colliery Company.

"The new church was formally opened for divine worship on Wednesday, and at the same time a plot of land adjacent, about an acre in extent, was consecrated as a burial ground. The building as it stands has cost something like £2,230, and it will entail a further outlay of about £400 to complete the structure and to fence the burial ground. The designs were prepared by Mr J W Thompson, architect, Newcastle, and Mr Alfred Routledge of West Stanley was the contractor. Accommodation is provided for about 300. The dedicatory ceremony was performed by the Right Rev Dr Sanford, Assistant Bishop of the Diocese.... Subsequently a public tea was provided in the infants' schoolroom, and was largely attended." Newcastle Courant, 2 April 1898

The first burial was William Groathead, aged six days, and there were numerous weddings for soldiers and their sweethearts:

Interesting Khaki Wedding at South Moor:

St. George's Church, South Moor, was the scene of an interesting wedding on Saturday afternoon; the contracting parties were Private Henry Gilbert, 3rd Durhams, son of Mr (and the late Mrs) W Gilbert, of 56 Pine Street, South Moor, and Miss Isabelle Stevens, daughter of Mr and Mrs George Stevens, of 49 Third Street, Quaking Houses"

Stanley News, 5 September 1918

The graves ground attached to the church is an official Commonwealth War Burial site with First and Second World War graves.

St George's Church (view looking east from Tommy's Lane)



St George's Church (view looking east from Tommy's Lane)



St George's Church and graves ground on the 1915 Ordnance Survey map



Miners' Hall in 1909 (view looking east from Tommy's Lane, Stanley, 1909)

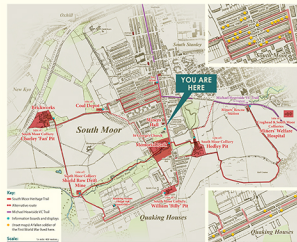
Miners' Hall

The year 1898 also saw the opening of the Miners' Hall. In the photograph of the opening ceremony John Wilson, the Liberal Member of Parliament for Mid-Durham and General Secretary of the Durham Miners' Association (DMA) is seen shaking hands with Mr Ormston, a miner. Wilson, a founding member of the DMA, had been a miner himself in Durham and, for a short spell, in America.

The hall, paid for from miners' subscriptions, was built on land donated by the South Moor Colliery Company. The hall acted as the social and cultural hub of the community. A variety of evening classes were also held for miners and their families to further their education as formal schooling ended for most at the age of 14. The first floor of the building was raked so that plays and magic lantern shows and other events could be presented without anyone's view being obstructed. Towards the end of the war the hall was the venue for entertainments and presentations (many men were given gold watches) to welcome back returning servicemen.



Miners' Hall opening ceremony (view looking east)



South Moor Heritage Trail

South Moor and Quaking Houses were typical colliery villages that developed before and just after the First World War, around four collieries of William Healey's South Moor Colliery Company.

South Moor Heritage trail is a five mile circular walk around key eight heritage sites of South Moor and Quaking Houses that existed during or soon after the First World War. Each site is marked by an interpretation board detailing the significance and heritage of the site. Each interpretation board is linked via a QR code to a South Moor heritage website providing further information about the history of the site. Rights of way between the eight sites along the trail are marked by 'way markers' to keep you on the right path.

Over two hundred miners from South Moor and Quaking Houses were killed in the First World War. Their names are engraved at the gates of the First World War Memorial Park. The Heritage Trail marks the former colliery houses in which they lived with a fallen soldier plaque - can you find them in the colliery terraces?



Colliery House (view looking east from Tommy's Lane)



The Billy Pit (view looking east from Tommy's Lane, Stanley, 1909)



The Billy Pit (view looking east from Tommy's Lane, Stanley, 1909)



Colliery House (view looking east from Tommy's Lane, Stanley, 1909)