

Welfare

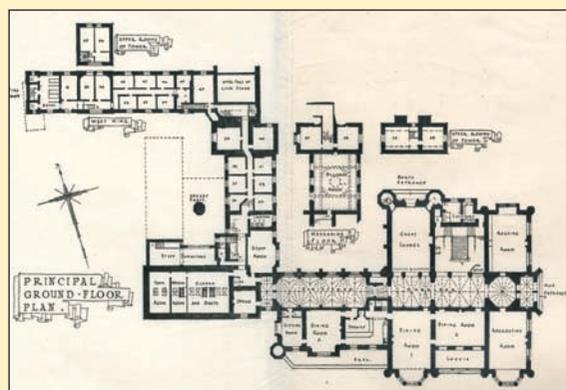


Photograph of Conishead Priory, Ulverston, c.1930 (DCRO D/Laz 178)

Convalescent Homes

For the many miners crippled by accident or industrial disease, convalescent homes were set up. The Durham Miners' Welfare Association bought Conishead Priory in the Lake District in 1928 after negotiations to buy the Hexham Hydro had fallen through. The building was altered to meet the requirements of the Welfare Association and was officially opened in 1930. 'There have been instituted up-to-date Turkish baths, spray baths of hot and cold sea water, with hot and cold water in each bedroom...' It was hoped that the 'bracing air, fine scenery and quietude will help to restore to health those miners who fall victims to accidents in our mines, or ill health.' Conishead convalescent home closed in 1972.

Other facilities included the Durham Miners' Rehabilitation Centre at The Hermitage, Chester-le-Street. The Sam Watson Rest Home at Richmond was established specifically for women, such as miners' widows, and is still in operation today.



Floor plan of Conishead Priory Convalescent Home, August 1930 (DCRO D/Laz 319)

Aged Miners' Homes

Joseph Hopper pioneered the scheme to establish Aged Miners' Homes in the county in 1898. The homes were funded by a voluntary levy from miners' wages and other fund raising activities and donations. The scheme provided free accommodation for retired miners who were left homeless when they had to vacate colliery housing. Local lodges collected contributions and allocated places in the homes. Colliery closures from the 1960s onwards created financial difficulties and Deaf Hill lodge had to hand over its five Aged Miners' Homes to Trimdon Grange when Deaf Hill colliery closed in 1967.

Pithead Baths

The Miners' Welfare Commission helped to provide pithead baths at collieries. In 1949 there were 39 pithead baths in County Durham providing use for 58% of men employed. A further three were under construction that year with five planned for 1950 and another nine for 1951.

Welfare Funds

In May 1910, Langley Park Lodge established the Workmen's Mutual Aid Society which included the following rules:

- 'To raise funds by fortnightly subscription...in aid of members who are off work through sickness...'
- 'When a member has been off work 4 weeks he then becomes due to 1 weeks payment viz 5/- & for every subsequent week the sum of 5/- up to 12 months...'
- 'That all recipients wishing to claim benefit must produce a doctor's certificate...'

Most lodges had their own schemes with rules and amounts varying. Often, members would need to have paid a certain amount into the fund before they could make a claim. In 1958, the DMA instituted the Supplementary Sick Pay Scheme for miners.

Death Funds worked in much the same way, and would provide benefits to dependents left behind when a miner died. Some would also provide a benefit to miners who lost their wives if they had other dependents.



Pat Carr and Jim Evans in Shotton Colliery pit baths, c. 1979 (DCRO D/Ph 404/24)



Opening of Brancepeth and Oakenshaw Aged Miners' Homes, 1913 (DCRO D/X 188/14/4)



Opening of Aged Miners' Homes, Shildon, 1911 (DCRO D/X 188/14/2)