

## **John Gladstone (Jack) Ramsay (1870-1952)**

John Gladstone (Jack) Ramsay [JGR], of “Oak Lea”, Durham Road North, Bowburn, was under-manager of Bowburn Colliery, being responsible for its day-to-day management from when it started production, in 1908, till he retired in 1937. He was also a leading local Conservative (“Moderate”) Party politician, and a prominent Parish and Rural District Councillor.

He was born on 13th April 1870, at Page Bank, Durham, and started work at the colliery there when he was aged 12 and a half. By 1901, before moving to Bowburn, he was an overman at the same colliery. He was the eldest of the ten [surviving] children of George Ramsay (1844-1906) and Eliza Mary (née Gladstone) (1839-1891). His mother was from a family of gamekeepers and woodmen at Wallington Hall<sup>1</sup>, the property of the Trevelyan family, near Morpeth, Northumberland. His father was the youngest son in a well-established mining family, from Wylam, Northumberland. George Ramsay was at one time an office clerk, presumably at Page Bank Colliery, but was towards the end of his life a deputy overman there. One of his brothers (Jack Ramsay’s uncles) was also working at Page Bank Colliery, when Jack was born (he was later an overman there); another was an overman at Tursdale Colliery, which was owned by the same company, Bell Brothers Ltd, and was later its manager.

When Bell Brothers founded Bowburn Colliery, in 1906<sup>2</sup>, its workforce and their families came from various sources<sup>3</sup>. Many were attracted from miscellaneous pit villages around County Durham and a few from further afield. But a high proportion were either from families that were already established in the area – in Quarrington (a parish that included the former tiny hamlet of Bowburn), Coxhoe, Cornforth and Tursdale. And a high proportion came from Bell Bros’s other pits. Some of these families had followed each other around for two or three generations. Jack Ramsay was from one of the latter families. And he was well connected.

His father’s brother, William Ramsay (1832-1905), was manager of Bell Brothers’ Tursdale Colliery, till he retired in 1903. (Ramsay Street, Tursdale, was presumably named after him.) He was succeeded as manager by his under-manager, his son (JGR’s cousin), John Ramsay (1862-1934). The latter was the manager of Bowburn Colliery, as well as Tursdale, when it was first being developed. (Its original, provisional name was “New Tursdale”). Like his father, he lived at West Hetton Lodge, Quarrington. John’s daughter, Jane Elizabeth Mary (born 1889), married local farmer Robert Oxley, of Park Hill Farm, in 1907. William’s other son, Robert William Ramsay (1879-1960), was one of the first engine fitters at Bowburn Colliery.

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1 Family tradition has it that one side of the family might have been descended from Capability Brown, who was born in 1716 at nearby Kirkharle and partly laid out the estate grounds of Wallington Hall. The existence of such a link is, however, unproven.

2 The downcast shaft began to be sunk on 24th July 1906 and was completed on 2nd April 1908.

3 Most information in the following paragraphs is drawn from successive censuses, in particular that of 1911. Of the 181 householders that year in the five new colliery streets, two were widows; one was a police constable; one was a Joiner (Buildings Industry), and one was a House Painter. The remaining 176 were working at the colliery. Of these, 136 were born in Co. Durham. Of the remaining 40, 13 were born in Northumberland and 6 in Yorkshire. A further 127 miners lived in these houses, mostly sons of the householders. Of these, 110 were born in Durham and 9 in Northumberland. Only eight were born elsewhere. This is because most of the miners whose families had moved from Cornwall, Cumberland, Lancashire, Norfolk, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Wales and elsewhere had done so a generation or more earlier.

George and William Ramsay's sister (JGR's aunt), Mary Ann (1831-1911), was married to William Harle (1828-1911), the manager of Bell Brothers' Page Bank Colliery. Their son, Richard Harle (JGR's first cousin) (1850-1936), was manager of Browney Colliery – also owned by Bell Brothers – before he also took over from his father as manager of Page Bank. Another of their sons, Peter Harle (also JGR's first cousin) (1867-1936) was the manager of Bowburn Colliery from about 1911 till the early 1930s. Peter's nephew (son of Richard Harle, William (1894-1915), was actually the first manager of Bowburn when it started production. But he left in about 1911, presumably through ill-health, and died soon afterwards, aged 36.

Two of Jack Ramsay's own brothers were among the first miners at Bowburn Colliery and living there in 1911. They were Robert William, described as Coal Miner, Shifter, and Edward Snowball, an Onsetter. Two more brothers, Frank and Walter, were to follow later: *Who's Who in Co. Durham, 1936*, reported, "There would be no doubt that John [JGR] served as an inspiration to many of his younger brothers and, because of his seniority in the mining business and his contacts with the mine owners, his brothers found a ready avenue for their aspirations. A number of them, including Frank, Walter and Edward, followed him to work at Bowburn Colliery in the early years of the century."

Jack Ramsay was married, first, in 1894, to Elizabeth Richardson Cumpston, with whom he had his only child, Mary. Elizabeth died in 1925 and he married her cousin Dorothy Richardson four years later. His first wife's sister, Mary Ann Richardson Laverick, was living in Bowburn in 1911 with her husband, Thomas Laverick, a deputy overman. Two of his sons by an earlier marriage were miners at the colliery and also lived there. So did her brother William, though by 1911 he had retired, perhaps through ill health.

Frederick Small, Colliery Onsetter, of Walker Street, Bowburn, was the brother-in-law of JGR's cousin, Isabella Small (née Ramsay). Richard Harle Clough, Colliery Blacksmith, of Steavenson Street, Bowburn, was a grandson of Mary Ann Harle (née Ramsay) and nephew of Peter and Richard Harle, JGR's colliery manager cousins. William Clough, the Colliery Engineer at Tursdale, and his cousin (paternal aunt's son), Francis Barkhouse, the Colliery Engineer at Bowburn, were probably related to this Clough family, albeit at some distance. Richard Harle Clough's sister, Frances Isabella, was married to William John Hepple. He appears not to have been closely related to the Jane Hepple who married William Harle, manager of Tursdale Colliery, in 1854. However all these families – Ramsay, Harle, Clough, Hepple – together with several others, originated in the early 19th century in the Wylam area, in Northumberland. It was there that Bell Brothers were first established, in 1844<sup>4</sup>. Some members of these families had moved together ever since.

Other families that had followed that trail from Wylam to Bowburn included Armstrong, Cowings, Small and Waugh<sup>5</sup>, while several others had followed on the last stage of the journey, from Page Bank to Bowburn, such as Baker, Barker, Browbank, Burdus, Callaghan, Carlin, Cox, Cruddace, Drake, Eagle, Fairley, Halliday, Henderson, Hughes, Lynn, Mason, Morley, Nichol, Pinder and Richmond. In 1911, one or more members of 22

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4 Bell Bros also owned the ironworks at Walker, Newcastle upon Tyne, which had been founded by their father, Thomas Bell, in partnership with William Losh & Thomas Wilson, in 1809. In 1854, they established the more famous Port Clarence ironworks, on the Tees.

5 The Bestford family could perhaps be added to this list, as it too originated in Wylam. However they actually moved to the Bowburn/Quarrington area early in the 19th century, presumably as employees of another of Wylam's pioneers, William Hedley, who acquired pits in Quarrington in the 1820s.

Bowburn households, all but two of them in the 188 houses<sup>6</sup> in the colliery rows, had been born at Page Bank, Stockley or Willington. So also had four Stephenson, Thompson and Wheatley households at Tursdale.

A former Bowburn miner, who started work at the colliery in 1931, at the age of 14, but first cycled to get there from his parent's home in Broom Park, told me that there were then 600 men working at Bowburn. All of them, he said, "from datal men to under-manager", were related to each other! He was not made to feel welcome and had once joked that he was late for work because he had had to show his papers to come beyond Shincliffe.

Although JGR was actually the under-manager, with the manager being first William Harle, then Peter Harle and then (c.1932) P. L. Richardson (probably no relation), as far as most miners at Bowburn were concerned, he was the manager. "Jack Ramsay was the manager", said one ex-miner. "He was a thick-set man. He was there for a very long time – unlike the number of managers that followed him", said another. "I didn't see much of him personally but he was generally regarded as strict but fair", said another.

These were men who had known him, or known of him, when they were still quite young. For the preceding generation, which, with Ramsay himself, first formed the Bowburn Colliery village, he was well known and clearly an active community leader.

On 24th November 1915, for instance, he presided at a concert at Bowburn Schools to raise funds to provide "Christmas presents to soldiers and sailors who have enlisted from Bowburn Colliery". When, in March 1916, "the workmen employed at Bowburn Colliery... decided to pay a levy of twopence per man per week and a penny per boy, to raise funds to provide a suitable welcome for the local soldiers and sailors on their return from military and naval service", JGR was the chairman of the new Bowburn Colliery Soldiers and Sailors Christmas Presents Fund. The secretary was Robert Griffiths, the checkweighman; the treasurer was W. F. Gardner, the colliery cashier. (At Christmas, they had sent postal orders valued 6s 6d each to 117 men and given £1 18s to the relatives of four men missing and prisoners.)<sup>7</sup> During that War, Ramsay was also chairman of the local Pensions Committee; treasurer of the local War Savings Committee; local food officer; responsible for compiling the National Register and the enrollment of suitable recruits for HM Forces, and a special constable in charge of the Bowburn area.<sup>8</sup>

When the Bowburn District Nursing Association held its first Annual Meeting, in April 1926, JGR was elected chairman. (The President was the colliery agent, M. H. Kirby; J. Coates, the miners' lodge delegate, became Treasurer; schoolmaster G. F. Holmes and his wife [another Harle relative] were the Secretaries.)<sup>9</sup> At Easter 1930, when Bowburn W.I. donated 157 eggs to the County Hospital, the dyed egg competition was followed by

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6 Six of the 188 houses in the colliery rows were unoccupied on census night: there were no census records for 11, Durham Road; 9, 12, 28 & 29, Clarence Street, and 38, Wylam Street. 39, Clarence Street was probably also unoccupied; a census return [no. 280] seems to have been allocated to it but does not then appear among those published by ancestry.com or findmypast.com. There are therefore records of only 181 households.

7 Durham County Advertiser, 7th April 1916

8 Durham County Advertiser, 28th May 1937

9 Durham County Advertiser, 30th April 1926

entertainments, and the vote of thanks was proposed by Mrs. J. G. Ramsay (JGR's wife) and Mrs. R. Ramsay (his sister-in-law).<sup>10</sup>

When a whist drive was organised in the Institute Hall by the Welfare Hall and Miners' Lodge committees, in March 1932<sup>11</sup>, in aid of the Mayor of Durham's Fund for new X-ray apparatus at Durham County Hospital, the MCs were J. G. Ramsay and W. F. Gardner.<sup>12</sup> They seem to have shared this duty quite often. In March 1934, for instance, after First Aid certificates and badges had been presented in the Welfare Hall by W.G. Grace, agent for Bowburn Colliery, and an address and thanks had been given by W. F. Richardson, H. M. Inspector of Mines, it was Ramsay and Gardner who then acted as MCs for the whist drive and dance that followed.<sup>13</sup>

Gardner was possibly the more active of the two in community affairs. On his retirement, in 1945, the Durham Advertiser reported: "As this mining community grew, Mr. Gardner threw himself heart and soul into the many and varied activities which go to make up village life. He served for a long period on the Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council, became secretary of show committees and of sports events, was a prime mover in the miners' welfare schemes, and has given his services freely in many other directions, notably in connection with charitable organisations. Indeed it is not too much to say that the name of Bill Gardner and Bowburn are synonymous. No man is more popular in the district..."<sup>14</sup>. However it was Ramsay who took the higher profile roles. He chaired the Parish Council, for instance, while Gardner was sometimes vice-chairman. (See below.)

Ramsay was the first Secretary of the Bowburn Miners' Welfare Committee, established when the Miners' Institute was opened, on 26th February 1921, and a Roll of Honour, on which "the names of 35 men, belonging to the district, who fell in the war, are inscribed", was unveiled by Rev. Thomas Wardle, the parish vicar. The Institute was built by Bell Bros, who also donated the memorial.<sup>15</sup>

Only a month later, on 1st April 1921, the industry was rocked by a national lock-out, following the implementation of the Coal Mines (Decontrol) Act, on 31st March, and the removal of WWI coal mining subsidies. It lasted three months and ended with severe reductions in miners' wages. During that distressful time, Bowburn famously hosted two pony race meetings, on 4th May and 8th June. Both, like an earlier race meeting during the Minimum Wage Strike in 1912<sup>16</sup>, were organised under the leadership of Bill (Wilfred Frederick) Gardner, the colliery cashier. At both meetings, the judges were Bell Brothers' agent, M. R. Kirby, and the colliery manager, Peter Harle. At the second, they were joined

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10 Durham County Advertiser, 10th April 1930

11 Note that this was before the election, later that year, of William Kelly as checkweighman at Bowburn Colliery. Was this whist drive perhaps one of the last events organised by the Miners' Lodge at which JGR was invited to officiate? See below.

12 Durham County Advertiser, 18th March 1932

13 Durham County Advertiser & Durham Chronicle, 30th March 1934

14 Durham County Advertiser, 10th August 1945

15 Durham County Advertiser, 4th March 1921

16 The pony race meeting on 20th March 1912 was expressly approved by the then Col. Maurice Bell, director of Bell Bros, after he was approached by Bill Gardner.

by Ivor Lowthian Johnson, a Bell Brothers Director. Although J. G. Ramsay was not mentioned on the race card of the first one, he was one of the two starters at the second.

Proceeds from the first race meeting were for the Village Relief Fund. However those from the second – over two months after the strike began – went not to relieve miners' families but to Durham County Hospital. Many of Bowburn's miners were involved, not just as jockeys etc. but in the organisation: the Committee consisted of Messrs. Wilkinson, R. Willey, Clowes, Fairley, Moore, Haddock, Owens, Lockey, Jackson, Elliott, Brown, Waugh, Carling, G. Lynn, Broughton, Coates, Harrison, Fawcett, J. Willey, Freeman, Bainbridge, M. Lynn, Hughes, Dunn, Mitchell and Cowings.<sup>17</sup> While the dispute was bitter in many parts of the country, one can't avoid the impression that the management and many of the men saw themselves as allies, not enemies, in this national conflict. The President of the Miners' Lodge was Cuthbert Ralph ("Cud") Morley, whose mother-in-law, Mary Ann Bowerbank (née Harle) (abt 1856-) was a second cousin of the Colliery manager, Peter Harle.

In the seven-month national lock-out, five years later, many Bowburn miners may have still clung to this allegiance. By the time it ended, with a Miners' Federation of Great Britain ballot on 29th November 1926, 393 men<sup>18</sup> had already resumed work at Bowburn & Tursdale collieries, according to the Durham County Advertiser. Four weeks earlier, it had reported that 99 had returned at Bowburn and 5 at Tursdale.<sup>19</sup> The son of one of the first checkweighman<sup>20</sup>, a 16-year-old pony driver at the time, told me that he and his brothers were "the last ones to go back to work" – implying that many others had done so before the end of the national dispute. Towards the end, he said, it was Jack Ramsay who posted a notice saying that anyone who didn't return to work would forfeit their colliery house.

When the "outsider" from Broom Park, referred to above, first announced that he was going to work at Bowburn, five years later, his father was upset that he was going to work at a "blackleg pit". It should be noted, however, that no other older resident of Bowburn has mentioned this label to me, and one, though he didn't transfer to Bowburn till the late 1930s, specifically told me that he had never heard Bowburn called that. It should perhaps be stressed that a large scale return to work appears to have occurred only after six

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17 Sources: Race programme, in Durham Records Office; Durham County Advertiser, 3rd & 10th June 1921

18 It is not known what proportion of the workforce this was. However the Durham Mining Museum says there were 452 miners at Bowburn in 1921 (316 underground; 136 surface) and 724 (580 underground; 144 surface) in 1930. (The latter figure is before Tursdale Colliery was absorbed into Bowburn.) So well over 50% had presumably returned to work during the month before the strike was called off and perhaps 10% or more before that.

19 Durham County Advertiser, 5th & 26th 1926.

20 Robert Griffiths, checkweighman, died in 1921.

months of bitter dispute, and that a significant number did not return till the very end.<sup>21</sup> However strong it may have been, support for the management was by no means unanimous. Nonetheless, it seems clear that a significant proportion of Bowburn Colliery's first miners were on good terms with management - and quite a few were closely related. The political scene, in Bowburn's first twenty-five years or so as a colliery village, seems to have reflected this.

Jack Ramsay was first elected to Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council in 1913, becoming vice-chairman soon afterwards. (He was re-elected to that post in 1916<sup>22</sup>.) He remained a parish councillor for over 25 years, and was chairman for twenty of those. In 1922, for instance, the newly elected Parish Council included four miners – Fred Barlow, James Peat and Joseph Pluck, all of Cassop, and [probably Thomas] Bird, of Turdsdale. There was also a Mr. Robson of Turdsdale – probably Thomas Robson, Turdsdale's schoolmaster. Bowburn's representatives, however, were J. G. Ramsay and W. F. Gardner, the under-manager and cashier at Bowburn Colliery; John Henry Storey, grocer, and Edward Toulson, publican at the Wheatsheaf Inn, Bowburn. Ramsay was re-elected chairman and Gardner was elected vice-chairman.<sup>23</sup> Gardner replaced Cuthbert Morley, the President of Bowburn Colliery Miners' Lodge, who had been vice-chairman in 1921 but was either defeated or did not stand for election in 1922. (Morley returned to the Parish Council in April 1926 – just before the 1926 lock-out – when all candidates were elected unopposed. Mr. Toulson did not stand for re-election.)

Ramsay and Gardner were party political allies, as well as fellow community leaders. "Mr. Gardner... is a staunch Conservative, being a past master and treasurer of the now defunct local branch of the National Conservative League", wrote the Durham County Advertiser<sup>24</sup>, on his retirement. They clearly worked closely together. In 1933, they were the two MCs at a whist drive in the Welfare Hall, Bowburn, "in connection with a tournament organised by the Durham Division Conservative & Unionist Association"<sup>25</sup>.

But it was Ramsay, who was also a one-time Master of the Bowburn Conservative League, who stood for public office outside the parish. He was chosen, and returned, as the Moderate Party candidate, at successive elections to Durham Rural District Council (RDC)

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21 On 22nd October 1926, The Manchester Guardian reported that a number of had returned to work at Esh Winning; a number had signed on at Browney Colliery but not yet started work; work had resumed at Malton Colliery on the owners' terms; the owners at North Brancepeth Colliery, at Littleburn, had posted notices that the collieries would be reopened on the owners' terms if there were sufficient volunteers; Black Prince Colliery, Tow Law, had started with a number of men; several men had signed on at Sunny Brow, but only one hewer turned up that day; men who had resumed work at Brancepeth Colliery had ceased, and work had resumed at St. Hilda Colliery, South Shields, where the pit had been idle for nearly fifteen months. However "Bowburn miners have flatly rejected the owners' terms." (The Manchester Guardian, 22 October 1926, p.15)

On 23rd October 1926, George Lansbury, MP, with J.E. Swann, Durham Miners Association agent, and J. Foster, Labour agent for Durham, made a surprise visit to Bowburn Colliery, "where some men and hands have been signing on to resume work". He addressed a crowded meeting and "at the conclusion a vote taken by show of hands in favour remaining loyal to the Miners Federation received unanimous support." (Durham County Advertiser, 29th October 1926).

22 Durham County Advertiser, 21st April 1916

23 Durham County Advertiser, 7th April 1922

24 Durham County Advertiser, 10th August 1945

25 Durham County Advertiser, 27th October 1933

for twenty years. He was chairman of the Durham Board of Guardians for a year<sup>26</sup> and was more than once vice-chairman of the RDC, being elected to that position, for instance, in 1922 and again the following year.<sup>27</sup> From 1930 he was a Commissioner for the Peace for the County and from 1933 a member of the Juvenile Court Panel.<sup>28</sup> At his retirement, the Durham County Advertiser<sup>29</sup> also reported, among other things, that he was for seven years an Executive Committee member of the Northern Counties' Colliery Officials Association and secretary and treasurer of its Bowburn branch, and that he was a "past member of the Bowburn National Conservative League and representative to the Grand Lodge".

Being returned time and again, both to the Parish Council and to the Rural District Council, clearly shows that Ramsay had considerable backing, in Bowburn itself, whether that resulted from personal popularity, or the loyalty of family and long-standing family friends, or support for the political party he represented. (Grandchildren of one of JGR's brothers have reported that he, too, was a staunch Conservative. There seems no reason to believe that this was not so of most of that family – in that generation, at least.)

At the end of the 1921 strike, on 21st December, the Bowburn Polling District Unionist Association met at the Hare & Greyhound Hotel, J. G. Ramsay presiding. That week's Durham County Advertiser<sup>30</sup> reported that news that over 100 political levy exemption forms had been handed in at Bowburn – i.e. miners opting out of their union's political levy – was "received with enthusiasm".

Ramsay was never able, however, to gain a seat on the County Council. The Sherburn electoral division, which included Bowburn till 1939, covered a much wider area than his home parish or Rural District Council (RDC) ward. The County Councillor had for many years been Ramsay's Moderate Party colleague on the RDC, a Sherburn farmer, Abraham Wearmouth. But in 1928 he was spectacularly deposed by William Kelly, miner, also of Sherburn – which "thus deprived the Council of the services of a useful agriculturist", according to that week's Durham Chronicle<sup>31</sup>.

In December 1933, JGR was selected to be the Moderate candidate in the Sherburn division for the forthcoming County Council elections, "at a well-attended meeting" in the Institute Hall, Bowburn, presided over by Mr. W.G. Grace, agent, Bowburn Colliery.<sup>32</sup> By that time (on 9th September 1932), Cllr. Kelly had been elected by Bowburn's miners to be checkweighman at the Colliery. And on 6th March 1934, he was re-elected to the County Council, with 1,942 votes against Ramsay's 1,582. This was despite a 334-word eulogy of Ramsay, effectively an election address, being published, with photograph, in the Durham Advertiser, before the election. (It used just 28 words to describe Cllr. Kelly.) Kelly had moved to Bowburn soon after his Bowburn appointment. He was a forceful and very

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26 Durham County Advertiser, 5th May 1922

27 Durham County Advertiser, 5th May 1922 & 4th May 1923

28 Durham County Advertiser, 28th May 1937

29 Durham County Advertiser, 28th May 1937

30 Durham County Advertiser, 23rd December, 1921

31 Durham Chronicle, 9th Mar 1928

32 Durham County Advertiser & Durham Chronicle, 8th December 33.

effective man who was doubtless a thorn in Ramsay's flesh from then until the latter retired. He held the County seat till his death, in 1949<sup>33</sup>. Moreover he took Ramsay's District Council seat, and his chairmanship of the Parish Council, in 1937, and retained them, too, till he died.

Bowburn was changing. The colliery was growing significantly, especially after TurSDale Colliery was merged into it, in 1931. From employing 397 miners (including surface workers) at the start of World War I and 724 in 1930, it employed 2,076 in 1934 and this was to rise to at least 2,432 by 1958<sup>34</sup>, by which time six seams of coal were being worked. Even in 1936, before the Low Main seam was developed, the colliery achieved a record day's output of 3,033 tons<sup>35</sup>. More and more of this growing workforce was traveling miners, coming from Durham, Gilesgate, Spennymoor, Browney and elsewhere. (In 1937, Durham RDC was informed that "about 1,000 workers, all householders, were traveling 2 to 8 miles to work, many of these to Bowburn Colliery"<sup>36</sup>). The need for more houses in Bowburn was stressed by Cllr. J. G. Ramsay, "who claimed that, from an industrial point of view, Bowburn was one of the bright spots of the county, in that the future life of the colliery was estimated at 60 years." (It closed, however, 30 years later.) He said that a bus had failed to turn up at Ushaw Moor, one day during the previous week, resulting in 22 men missing their shift. He wanted houses to be provided by the N.E. Housing Association but this was opposed by Labour councillors.<sup>37</sup>

Durham Rural District Council's first 36 houses for Bowburn and TurSDale miners were built in 1931 – at Park Hill, on land bought from farmer John Oxley (the son-in-law of one-time TurSDale Colliery manager John Ramsay). A further 59 houses and eight bungalows were built there before World War II intervened, as well as 16 houses at nearby Heugh Hall Row, Old Quarrington, in 1938. The Park Hill estate grew to around 200 houses after the War. By then further council housing was also being built north of the colliery, on a new estate that was to grow to some 950 council houses by the 1960s.

By 1932, Bowburn's miners were no longer the small community that had been formed round the original colliery, many coming from other Bell Brothers' pits and many knowing each other and related to each other before they arrived. The miners' lodge was by now undoubtedly more radical than it had been in its early days. For a few years, that radicalism was not replicated in the village itself. Two weeks after Kelly fought off Ramsay's challenge in the County Council elections, in 1934, he failed to dislodge him from the Urban District Council, coming third, with 368 votes to Ramsay's 413<sup>38</sup>, and the

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33 See biography of Alderman Billy Kelly, by Mike Syer (2012).

34 Employment figures are from the Durham Mining Museum ([www.dmm.org.uk](http://www.dmm.org.uk)), which draws mostly on the annual Guides to the Coalfields published by the Colliery Guardian. That gives a highest figure on 2,432 in 1957, compared with 2,382 in 1958. Production peaked in 1957, with a record-breaking week's output of 16,387.8 tons in w/e 13th April 1957 (Durham County Advertiser 19th September 1958). One ex-Bowburn miner, a normally reliable source, told me that the maximum number of employees was "nearly 3,000", in 1958. While the Colliery Guardian probably did not give maximum numbers, it seems likely that the number of employees peaked at nearer 2,500.

35 Durham County Advertiser, 10th August 1945

36 Durham County Advertiser, 5th March 1937

37 Ibid

38 Durham County Advertiser & Durham Chronicle, 9th & 30th March 1934

latter again topped the poll in the Parish Council elections, with Kelly coming second<sup>39</sup>. But, within a few years, the village too was being transformed. Soon its council houses, mostly semi-detached, with modern plumbing and gardens, far out-numbered the original rows of tied colliery houses built in the early 1900s. And its electorate had converted the ward to a Labour stronghold.

Jack Ramsay retired from work on 29th May 1937, after over 54 years of service with Bell Bros Ltd., and from both Durham Rural District Council and Cassop-cum-Quarrington Parish Council, at the elections that same year. He and his wife, Dorothy, initially retired to Seaburn, Sunderland. However they moved back to Bowburn, to 14, Tweddle Terrace, where he was living when he died, on 2nd June 1952, eight days after his wife. The house was inherited by his only daughter, Mary Bowman, organist at St. John's Church and a leading member of the Women's Institute. Jack Ramsay left £3,052 11s 4d in his will.<sup>40</sup>

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39      Ibid

40      National Probate Calendar, Index of Wills and Administrations