

Weardale

Words and Music: Nigel Harbron

The musical score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of five staves of music. The lyrics are: "You've heard of the Tyne and also the Tees, but what of the River Wear? It rises high on fell-tops bleak where it flows both strong and clear, But by the time it meets the sea, some forty miles away, The hand of man has played its part, and it runs both dark and drear." Chord symbols are placed above and below the notes: F, C, F, C, F above the first staff; Gm, C, Gm, Dm, F below the first staff; F, C, F, Dm, Bb, F below the second staff; F, Gm, C, Gm, Dm below the third staff; F, Bb, Gm, Dm below the fourth staff.

You've heard of the Tyne and also the Tees, but what of the River Wear?
It rises high on felltops bleak where it flows both strong and clear,
But by the time it meets the sea, some forty miles away,
The hand of man has played its part, and it runs both dark and drear.

In years gone by Upper Weardale was a hive of industry,
As miners dug into the ground, galena to set free.
But mining lead was a dangerous job as many tombstones show,
And for men and boys an early grave was its only guarantee.

As lead mines closed folk moved downstream to work in pits and mines,
And Lower Weardale soon was crossed by numerous railway lines.
George Stephenson was busy there, and Timothy Hackworth too,
Industrial growth was the only goal, spurred on by their designs.

Above the scattered settlements, heather moorland survives,
Home to grouse both red and black, but little else there thrives,
For gamekeepers are on the prowl, with poisons, guns and snares,
And other creatures living there are in fear of their lives.

At Bishop Auckland, there's a sight as a palace rears its head -
The long-time home of Dunelm's Bishops - a sacred place, it's said.
But all around is urban sprawl in contrast stark and clear,
And a once proud mining community is now spent and half-dead.

Through Durham City the Wear flows on its journey to the sea,
And for a while the river dons a mask of decency,
But soon it's downhill once again as industries build up
And when Sunderland's bridges cross its course, it is not a place to be.

So spare a thought for Weardale, for centuries stripped bare,
As man has sought his greed to feed, without ever giving a care.
Perhaps in time we'll change our ways and tread more carefully,
So future generations won't discern that we've been there.



*My mother was born in one of the houses on the right hand side of this picture. This is the railway settlement of Brusselton, near Shildon. Originally, the railway ran between the rows of houses, this being an incline, with the engine-house in the left foreground. (Pease see **'The Iron Horse'** for more pictures/information.)*



The River Wear at Sunderland in 1882. Nuff said.

