

# The Scordale Miner

Music: Nigel Harbron

Words: Clive Griffiths and Nigel Harbron

My name is John-ny Arm-strong, I'm Dur-ham born and bred. I  
walked a-cross from Tees-dale for the min-ing of the lead. I rent a com-pa-ny cott-age, shop  
in a com-pa-ny store. Each day I tramp from Hil-ton's Green to mine Gal-e - na ore. I  
am a Scor - dale mi - ner, I have the hard - est hands. From  
win - ning the soft - est met - al from out the lime - stone bands.

My name is Johnny Armstrong, I'm Durham born and bred.  
I walked across from Teesdale for the mining of the lead.  
I rent a company cottage, shop in a company store,  
I tramp four miles from Hilton's green, to mine galena ore.

*Ch: I am a Scordale miner, I have the hardest hands,  
From winning the softest metal from - out the limestone bands.*

The noise of crushers numbs you, the damp seeps in your soul.  
You're down the shafts and levels, and working in a hole.  
The hushes scour the fellside, to reveal a shining vein,  
We're piling up the heaps of spoil - they're gleaming in the rain.

We're Quaker-owned and Quaker-led, they try to make us think  
Of prayers and hymns on Sunday while we're dreaming of a drink.  
We marched with picks and shovels, to work the barren fells,  
Now fresh-faced lads from Catterick Camp bombard the place with shells.

There's nowt but sheep up here now, the mines have all shut down,  
But sunken shafts and spoil heaps still scar the battered ground.  
The valley is forbidden now, but the memories linger still -  
The clogs of Scordale miners still ringing round the hill.



*Here is a view of some of the Scordale Workings taken by Clive Griffiths in 2015, almost 100 years since the site last saw any mining activity. It's still not a pretty site/sight, as lead mining was never exactly a subtle business. Just as North Wales was trashed to provide slate for the growing urban population, so the North Pennines was similarly exploited in the search for lead.*

*Mining for lead ore (galena) was probably no more dangerous than the mining of coal, but what happened next wasn't a lot of fun, as the ore had to be heated in smelt mills in order to extract pure lead, thus giving off lethal emissions.*

*Although the London Lead Company was, indeed, a Quaker-led company, and, therefore, a relatively benevolent employer, this didn't stop it using child-labour, not least because children were so much more suited to clambering up smelt-mill chimneys in order to scrape off any residual lead deposits.*

*Nowadays, Scordale is within the M o D's Warcop Range, so access is restricted to days when the red flags aren't flying, hence the reference to 'fresh-faced lads from Catterick Camp' in the song. Clive Griffiths (a friend in the village) took a stroll in the area one quiet day, and penned the original verses of the song as a result.*