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A little history

High Spen, part of Gateshead Borough in Tyne and Wear was previously in County Durham. The village was at one time centered on Garesfield Colliery but is now largely a dormitory for Newcastle upon Tyne.

The first Garesfield Colliery was actually located near Rowlands Gill. It took its name from the fact that it was located at "Garesfield" — i.e. field belonging to a guy named Gare! When the owners moved their operation a few miles to High Spen they took the name of the colliery with them, spawning new "Garesfield" place names in the process. Thus we have a Garesfield pit at Swalwell; Garesfield Lane in Rowlands Gill; Victoria Garesfield, between Lintzford Lane and Chopwell Woods; South Garesfield nearby; the Garesfield (or Bute) Colliery in High Spen; and way up the hill to Heavyman is Garesfield Golf Course! Great fun for the postman.

The colliery moved to High Spen in about 1840. It was a small affair at first but, along with rest of the Durham coalfield, expanded considerably as the Victorian economy boomed and the demand for coal soared. It changed hand, being owned by the Marquis of Bute and later the Consett Iron Company, for which it supplied coking coal for steel making.

Along with nearby Chopwell, which earned itself the epithet Little Moscow, the pit was known for its militancy in the General Strike and other industrial confrontations as [this account shows](#). A notable militant of the time was Will Lawther, a check weighman at the Garesfield pit, who went on to become president of the NUM, and was known as a moderate in later life.

After the glory days of the 19th century, demand for coal declined steadily throughout the 20th and many pits closed even before they were exhausted. High Spen's demise was in the mid 1960s. Condemned by Durham County Council to wither on the vine as a "Category D" village, it was eventually saved when local government reorganisation placed it in the newly created "Tyne and Wear". Even now, though, under the stewardship of Gateshead Council, it fails to get its fair share of resources compared with other more favoured parts of the borough.



<http://www.garesfield.co.uk/highspen/index.asp>