

NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 68



January 2022

Season's Greetings



**Hope you have a wonderful Christmas.
May 2022 bring you everything you need**

Committee Members:

Chairman	Roger Bryant (744227)
Vice Chairman	Andy Cooper
Hon. Secretary	Michael Daniels (746449)
Hon. Treasurer	Maureen Hall (742837)
Hon. Archivist	Andrew Screen (742198)
Hon. Photo Archivist	Roger Bryant (744227)
Hon. Editor	Ron Weston (744838)
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Ordinary Members	Nicki Burgess, Pat Evans, Pat Stanway

Festival Lecture 2021

Maps of New Mills Through The Centuries

Roger Bryant

On 22nd September about 70 people attended the 2021 Festival Lecture when Roger Bryant spoke on 'Maps of New Mills Through the Centuries'. He showed about 50 maps from 1577 to 2021 illustrating many aspects of the history of the town.

The oldest map to show any details of the New Mills area is Saxton's map of Derbyshire, 1577. Other early maps show parts of the Forest of the Peak. One of these, from about 1585, has the New Mills area

marked as 'Greate Waste', even though settlement in the area was well advanced by that time. There are several maps relating to disafforestation in 1640 when the wastes and commons of Bowden Middlecale were divided between the tenants and the king. One map has the New Mill marked on it. This was the corn mill from which New Mills takes its name. A late 17th century map of great interest shows Randalph Ashenhurst's estate in Beard and part of Ollersett. Some houses, roads and field names are marked, together with wharfs on the River Goyt. Another interesting map is a plan of the Friends' estate in Low Leighton by Joseph Hobson, 1758.

Burdett's map of Derbyshire made in 1767 was the first real advance since Saxton in 1577. Then maps were produced for transport improvements such as a map of the proposed Peak Forest Canal in 1793, some turnpike maps of the early 19th century, and railway plans of the later 19th century. George Newton's plan of a proposed water supply in 1830 provides the first detailed map of much of New Mills followed soon afterwards by the highly detailed tithe map of 1841 (both these maps can be seen on the NMLHS website).

The first Ordnance Survey map of the area was published in 1842 at a scale of one inch to the mile. The 1870s brought 1:2,500 OS maps (approximately 25 inches to the mile) and from the 1880s there were also OS maps at six inches to the mile. Currently available are the Explorer/Outdoor Leisure maps of the area at a scale of 1:25,000 (approximately two and a half inches to the mile). These date back to a first edition in 1955. The old one inch OS maps have been replaced by Landranger maps at 1:50,000 and there is now a digital database (OS MasterMap). A highly useful map is 'New Mills Parish Paths', first issued in 2000, the work of Denzil Hallam and others. It is still available and shows all the footpaths that are public rights of way.

There was a wide range of questions after the lecture. Then refreshments were served, kindly provided by the Town Council and supplemented by wine provided by the Society.

Roger Bryant

Friends and Comrades: Religious Society of Friends in Tsarist Russia and Soviet Russia

Sergei Nikitin, 8th October 2021

Sergei Nikitin, formerly Head of Amnesty International in Moscow, gave us an absorbing and, at times, moving account of the humanitarian work of British and American Quakers in Russia, a topic which he has studied in detail at first hand.

Quaker Societies in Britain and America became involved in charity work in Tsarist times and were particularly concerned in alleviating the extreme distress found among the urban poor. Quakers came to Russia, not as missionaries but as volunteers offering practical help and expertise. There is a Quaker graveyard in St. Petersburg dating from the nineteenth century.

The situation became very grave in Russia during the First World War when millions of men were killed. Loss of so many breadwinners created an enormous number of orphans and the Quakers did what they could to help, establishing orphanages and running feeding programmes. The scale of the problem of orphans and refugees went far beyond the efforts of international aid and the Quakers from Britain and USA wisely concentrated their efforts on Buzuluk, a small town in the south of European Russia.

After the October Revolution in 1917 an even greater economic disaster ensued, with the collapse of civil order and the outbreak of civil war. This brought the great famine of 1921; one of the most severe that Europe has ever known. Quakers from Britain and USA worked heroically: feeding the starving, caring for orphans and bringing expert medical help. Our speaker mentioned several of the British helpers by name and showed surviving photos of some of them at Buzuluk. A photo of the American contingent at Buzuluk in 1922 showed both male and female personnel. Sergei mentioned Dr. N. Mackenzie, who went to Russia to organise medical help, working with Russian doctors and training others.

If the famine of 1921 was unprecedented in its severity, then that of 1931 probably exceeded it. The communist regime closed the borders to foreigners and the Quakers were made to leave. The outside world did not witness the enormity of that national disaster.

As hostility to the West hardened in the 1920s and '30s, Russian Quakers were persecuted, imprisoned and exiled. Yet despite this official antagonism the Quakers were held in great respect and affection by many Russians and their work remembered for decades afterwards. The Quakers had always avoided religious dogma: enough to say, "We try to live the way that Jesus taught."

In more recent times, despite the Cold War, there was some limited contact between Soviet Russia and western Quakers. In 1962, for example, there was a Quaker delegation to Moscow and the 1960s saw several Quaker student groups from Britain visiting Russia. After the fall of the Soviet Union the Quakers were invited back. Registered as a business, the Friends can publish and sell their literature.

Everything in Russia is immense, not least the scale of that nation's misery, privation and suffering over the last two centuries and it would be unrealistic to claim that the Quakers had in practical terms done no more than scratch the surface, but, as Theodore Rigg, one-time head of the Quaker mission to Russia, maintained, it was vital to "encourage" the Russian people and that was the chief purpose of the Quaker presence.

Ron Weston

Post script

Intrigued to find a Russian with fluent English living locally, I searched the internet for biographical information on Sergei Nikitin and found this on the "Rights in Russia" website:-

"Originally from Gatchina near St. Petersburg, Sergei Nikitin studied the physics of semi-conductors at the Leningrad Polytechnic Institute and worked at scientific research institutes in Leningrad and Gatchina. Sergei had many occupations, some scientific and others artistic or humanitarian. He worked in museums and old, Russian estates as a

painter and decorator for a Leningrad restoration organisation. He learned English through the Beatles songs. Sergei has been involved in historical research works on 'Quakers in Russia' since 1996. In 1999, he took up the position of Director of the Moscow office of the international Quaker organisation, Friends House, Moscow. From 2003 and for the next 14 years he worked as the head of Amnesty International's representative office in Russia. In 2017 Sergei retired and moved to the U.K."

The Story of Buxton Opera House

Trevor Gilman, 12th November 2021

Trevor Gilman began his talk by reminding us of the reason why the town of Buxton came into existence. For over 2,000 years the hot spring has attracted settlers, dedicated first to the goddess of the Iron Age Celts, Anu, then to the Roman deity Arnemetia and re-invented as St. Anne in Christian times. The alleged healing power of the waters brought generations of visitors, chiefly wealthy ones, to Buxton. In the 1780s, the magnificent Crescent was constructed for the Duke of Devonshire, adjacent to Buxton Hall. Town houses, apartments, shops, a spa, theatre and other entertainment facilities followed as the fashionable Georgian scene came to town. Buxton continued to thrive in Victorian times with improvements in communications, first the turnpike roads and then the arrival of railway links after 1865. Several large hotels and hydropathic establishments were built, while attractive public gardens and shopping streets were laid out. Suburbs of spacious villas set in large plots were constructed to house the wealthy and retired middle classes.

The Opera House, designed by the famous theatre architect Frank Matcham, was built in 1903, next to the main entrance to the Pavilion Gardens. The theatre attracted many famous actors, singers and musicians. But in the 1930s the town and its theatre fell upon hard

times, the theatre closed, only to reopen as a cinema once 'Going to the pictures' became a national pastime. In the 1970s, the fortunes of the Opera House changed again when the popularity of the cinema was eclipsed by the television age. The cinema closed in 1976. The reopening of the Opera House as a theatre was an act of faith by dedicated enthusiasts. The building was partly restored and the first of the highly successful Buxton Opera Festivals took place in 1979. This successful relaunching of the Opera House as a theatre of national importance culminated in the major refurbishment of 2001 – 2007.

Trevor Gilman is an engineer by profession, who has made an expert study of the internal changes to the theatre over the years. No internal restorations, however, could alter the basic structure of the theatre. Matcham's 'Edwardian Baroque' remained and still remains fundamental despite changing social attitudes. In the early years of the twentieth century, rigid class distinctions prevailed and were built into the design. The opulence of the Dress Circle is in harsh contrast to the spartan Gallery. Bars (which ladies were forbidden to enter) were also segregated according to the class of customer, as were lavatories. Back-stage, dressing rooms and other facilities also varied in quality according to the status of the artistes. Even today, both theatregoers and performers are made aware of these former distinctions.

Some changes have occurred, however. Trevor explained that the danger of fire in theatres was very real in the early days. Major incidents brought legislation compelling theatre executives to construct fire escapes and fire-proof screens and curtains. The improvement of ventilation and water supply behind the scenes as well as in the auditorium were also made compulsory. Buxton Opera House is a much safer place today than in 1903.

Theatre-in-the-round may be more up-to-date and democratic; but, for some, to sit in segregated tiers before a proscenium arch waiting for the curtain to rise is still a magical experience. Long may that continue!

Ron Weston

The High Peak Dambusters

Frank Pleszac, 10th December 2021

In 2019 Frank Pleszac gave us a talk on the New Mills Air Raid. He made a deep impression on his audience, not only by the quality of his presentation but also by the astonishing amount of detailed research that Frank had put into the subject. Thus, those of us who had heard his first talk came to hear this second one with eager anticipation. We were not disappointed.

The destruction in 1943 of the Ruhr dams with 'bouncing bombs' by the crews of the Lancaster bombers of 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, has been immortalised in the film of that name. While giving the film full credit for successfully portraying the dramatic qualities of the raid, Frank in his detailed researches had exposed some popular misconceptions. In particular, the Derwent dams and reservoirs, featured in the film, to our local pride, as the exclusive venue used in training, were in fact supplemented by other sites elsewhere. But Frank then demonstrated that we in this locality have other compelling reasons to be proud. The four-engine Lancaster bombers were designed, tested and mainly built at Woodford, where many local people were employed. Furthermore, some of the 133 crew members of the 23 bombers that took part in the raid came from this area.

Frank has made a particularly detailed study of the life and career of Sergeant Jack Marriott of Chinley, a flight engineer in one of the bombers which took part in the raid. Marriott, together with the rest of the seven man crew, was killed when the plane was brought down near Emmerich in The Netherlands. Altogether, eight of the Lancasters were lost.

With the aid of maps and superimposed arrows, Frank gave us a detailed report of the raid from start to finish, showing the varied fortunes of all the aircraft and their crews. He used brief excerpts from the film to add realism to the story.

Perhaps the most moving part of the talk was Frank's account of his research into Jack Marriott's life and untimely death as recounted to him by members of Jack's family, particularly his parents. Frank showed us the official letters to Jack's parents from his commanding officer, the Air Ministry and, more informally, the parents of his fellow crew members. Jack's name is inscribed on the Chinley war memorial and there is a simple monument at Emmerich marking the spot where the Lancaster crashed.

Frank Pleszac's book, "The High Peak Dambusters", will appear in February.

Ron Weston

Secretary's Note

We have had several changes to the composition of our Committee following our recent AGM. It would be remiss of me to let some of those changes pass without comment.

Derek Brumhead has been responsible for arranging our speakers for a long time. The quality of his work is reflected in the health and success of the Society. He will be missed, though in Judith Lanham we have found a very able replacement.

Barry Dent also stepped down and for a little while it seemed we might be without a Website Manager. Thankfully Jeff Osbourn has volunteered though he acknowledges that he has a very hard act to follow. Much of the work Barry performed went un-noticed and has been shared around other members of the Committee.

Likewise Peter Done who managed our refreshments at our meetings for many years. This task is now being shared around other committee members. Three longstanding and valuable members of the Committee whose work has contributed so much over so long. We hope you continue to enjoy the work of the Society in 'retirement.'

Mike Daniels

WHERE WAS NEW MILLS POST OFFICE?

Roger Bryant

This article is about the central post office in New Mills that has moved between High Street, Market Street, Union Road and Torr Top Street. No details are included of the other post offices that existed at various times at Birch Vale, Rowarth, Low Leighton, Newtown and Strines. They could perhaps form the subject of another article.

From the available information it seems that there were only very basic postal facilities in the early 1820s. In Pigot and Dean's directory of the Manchester region for 1824-25 the entry for New Mills, Bugsworth, Furness, Hayfield and Whaley states 'POST OFFICE - The letters are delivered by a Foot-post from Disley, who carries to the office any letters that may be ready, but does not wait'. The directory entry for the Marple area gives some details of the post office at Disley: 'Hancock Wm. vict. and post-master, Ram's-Head Inn, & Posting-house, Disley'.

To judge by Pigot & Co.'s directory of 1828-29 the New Mills postal service operated from High Street: 'POST OFFICE, NEW MILLS, Receiving House, Jordan Bradbury, Mason's Arms. - Letters are conveyed by a foot post every morning at nine o'clock to DISLEY'. (Jordan Bradbury was the innkeeper at the Mason's Arms.)

In 1828 a petition was forwarded to try to obtain a more direct service for the New Mills area (Stockport Advertiser, 21 Nov. 1828) and progress was made in early 1829 (same paper, 20 Feb., 6 Mar.). Then on 31 July 1829 the paper carried the following notice.

Coach Office, New Mills, July 29, 1829.

NEW MILLS, HAYFIELD, AND MARPLE.

THE Inhabitants of the above places and parts adjacent, are hereby informed, that according to a grant from the Post-Master General, A HORSE POST will commence running from Hayfield, through New Mills and Marple, to Stockport,

on THURSDAY August 5, 1829, and will continue daily, to convey Letters and Parcels, directed to, and sent from, any part of the United Kingdom.

The following persons having been duly sworn, will receive and punctually deliver, all Letters, &c. under the above regulation, viz. MRS BULLIVANT, Marple; MR ADAM BRIERLEY, New Mills; MRS RACHAEL QUARMBY, Hayfield.

The Coach Office was presumably the Mason's Arms, and 'Messrs Jordon, Bradbury, and Co.' also announced that a light market coach, licensed to carry twelve outside and called the New Mercury, would run 'on the usual days' from New Mills to Marple, Stockport and Manchester. A few more details of the new daily horse post were given in the same issue of the paper:

. . . It will leave Stockport immediately after the arrival of the London mail, in the afternoon, and proceed to Marple, where it will leave a bag for that place and the neighbourhood; from whence it will proceed to New Mills, and leave a bag, and from thence to Heafield, where it will rest for the night. It will leave Heafield a little after seven each morning, call for the New Mills and Marple bags, and arrive at our post-office at nine; which will be in time for the London mail. It may naturally be expected that where there has been occasion so long to get letters carried by private hands, old habits will not at once be forgotten; but we understand it is the intention of the gentlemen who have exerted themselves so greatly to obtain the post, to permit no offence of this kind, which may come to their knowledge, to go unpunished. . . .

According to the notice in July 1829 quoted above Adam Brierley was the person appointed to be in charge of the post in New Mills. Glover's 1829 directory of Derbyshire lists him (with spelling Brierly) as a draper. Pigot & Co.'s directory of 1835 states 'POST OFFICE, NEW

MILLS, Adam Brierley, Post Master' and also lists Adam Brierley as grocer, druggist, and retailer of beer. I don't know where his premises were located, but somewhere at the bottom of High Street seems likely.

By 1842 James Fielding had taken over. Pigot & Co.'s 1842 directory states 'POST OFFICE, NEW MILLS, James Fielding, Post Master' and Fielding is also listed as a grocer and linen draper. According to the 1841 census he was aged 35 and the 1841 tithe documentation shows that he occupied property 414 on the tithe map, consisting of a house, shop and yard. This property was later numbered 95-97 High Street (now demolished) and was next to the premises on Dyehouse Lane that became the Pineapple Inn. Fielding continued as postmaster until about 1850 (as listed in Bagshaw's 1846 history and directory of Derbyshire and Slater's 1850 directory).



95-97 High Street, the site of the post office in 1842. At the time of the photograph (c. 1900) it was Jesse Hawley's shop. (n05406)

In the 1851 census for Market Street, Robert Collier, aged 45, was recorded as subpostmaster, bookseller, stationer and printer. Collier had his business and post office at 52-54 Market Street (the location of his shop is marked on the 1859 auction plan reproduced on page 28 of my book 'The Making of Market Street'). The post office under Collier's name is documented in several directories including the Post Office directory of 1855 and Harrod's directory of 1870 (where the post office is described as 'Post, telegraph and money order office'). Robert Collier died in 1872 (North Cheshire Herald, 4 May 1872).



Letterhead of Robert Collier, [52-54] Market Street, 1861. He was postmaster from about 1851 until his death in 1872. (n20612)



52-54 Market Street, where Robert Collier had the post office and his business as printer and stationer. This picture was taken about 1989 when Leigh's stationers closed down. (John Humphreys, n22991)

The next postmaster seems to have been George Walker operating at first from High Street. When he died in 1903 it was stated he had been postmaster for 30 years (Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 14 Jan. 1903, and other papers), so he probably started in about 1873. He was certainly in post by the end of 1875 ('Almanack' in North Cheshire Herald, 1 Jan. 1876). Morris & Co.'s 1878 directory of the Ashton-under-Lyne district has Walker as the New Mills postmaster and lists him as bookseller, stationer, printer, bookbinder and newsagent in High Street. The site of the post office can be identified as 15 High Street because it is marked on the 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map surveyed in 1879 and published in 1880. In the 1881 census George Walker is listed in High Street as a letterpress printer, aged 40.



15 High Street, the site of the post office between about 1873 and 1882. At the time of the photograph (1899) it was Dyer's barber's shop. (n03134)

In 1883 New Mills post office was in Market Street, according to Slater's directory of Cheshire (where New Mills is grouped with Disley). The name of the postmaster is omitted, but George Walker is

listed among the tradespeople as bookseller, printer, etc., in Market Street, and later evidence gives him as postmaster at 62 Market Street. It seems that Walker had moved there from High Street taking the post office with him, and he remained as postmaster until his death in 1903. In the 1901 census he was a widower, aged 60, described as printer and stationer, sub-postmaster, and registrar of births, deaths and marriages.

Post Office, Market Street (New Mills), July 7th 1888
Mr James Higginbotham
Dr to George Walker,
(Printer, Bookseller, and Stationer.)

Letterhead of George Walker, Post Office, Market Street, 1888. (n13501)



George Walker's post office at 62 Market Street. He moved there from 15 High Street about 1883 and was there until 1903. Then George Bailey took over until 1933. (n01173)

George Henry Bailey was appointed as the new postmaster in March 1903 (Reporter, 14 Mar. 1903) and he had moved into the post office with his wife by September 1903 (research by Marjorie Jones). They also occupied 60 Market Street, next door to the post office. Kelly's directory of 1904 lists George Henry Bailey, sub-postmaster, printer & stationer, & post office, 62 Market Street. In 1911, according to the census, Bailey was aged 34 and his wife Agnes Elizabeth was aged 32. Bailey died suddenly in 1933 and the post office part of the business moved to Union Road (research by Marjorie Jones). However, the 1939 national register shows that Mrs Bailey and family remained at 60 Market Street. They continued the Bailey printing business (with works off Union Road) and operated a telephone exchange.

NEW MILLS POST OFFICE.

Postmaster—MR. GEO. H. BAILEY.

HOURS OF BUSINESS.

	WEEK-DAYS	SUNDAYS
For Sale of Stamps, Post Cards, Newspaper Wrappers Stamped and Registered Letter Envelopes, and for Registration of Letters and delivery of letters to callers, and for the receipt of Inland, Colonial, and Foreign Parcels.	7 a.m. to 8 p.m.	8 to 10 a.m. (No Parcels Post)
For Money Order, Insurance and Annuity business, and issue of Inland Revenue Licenses (except on Sunday, Good Friday, and Christmas Day, and other days respecting which notice will be given).	8 a.m. to 8 p.m.	} Nobusiness on Sunday
For Savings' Bank business	8 a.m. to 8 p.m.	
For Postal Order business... ..	7 a.m. to 8 p.m.	
For Telegraphic business	8 a.m. to 8 p.m.	8 to 10 a.m.
Deliveries of Letters	7 a.m. 3-30 p.m.	7 a.m.

Post Office details from Bailey's almanac for 1904 (D995/4)

The post office was at 12 Union Road from about 1934 until its closure in March 1999 (although the sorting office remained at number 10 until April 2004). It seems that the post office was initially operated by Mrs Sarah R. Bradbury, listed as sub-postmistress in the 1939 national register. William Hopkinson took over as sub-postmaster in 1940 and retired in 1958, succeeded by Councillor R. Whitehead for 14 months (Reporter, June 1958 and 31 July 1959). The last postmaster

at Union Road was John Ragdale. (The information about closure and the last postmaster was kindly provided by John Ragdale, Keith Warburton, Ian Huddleston and Toby Hardwick.)

In 1999 the post office moved to Torr Top Street to replace part of the Co-op supermarket premises, and it is still there today, adjacent to the shop that is now Sainsbury's.



The post office and sorting office at 12 and 10 Union Road in 1995. The post office was there from about 1934 to 1999. (Rosemary Taylor, n05014)



The post office and supermarket in Torr Top Street, 2012. (Roger Bryant, n10019)

Update from the Archivist

As we come out of lockdown, it's good to report that I can now access the archive at the Town Hall (albeit with prior notice), so anyone who wants to see any of the archive items should not have too long to wait – thanks to those who patiently waited over a year in some cases !

Of course, actually looking at a document 'in the flesh' isn't always easy, especially if you are not in the New Mills area, and for that reason I am now using my renewed access to the archive to create digital copies of whatever documents I can, either using a flat-bed scanner or a camera/camera-phone (copyright and other such limitations mean we will never be able to 'digitise' everything), and with the help of Pat Stanway in this regard, we now have about 10% of the archive available as PDF or JPEG files. In an ideal world, the entire digital archive would be available on the website, but the cost of buying that much storage capacity cannot really be justified, so we will pick and choose what we think should be on the website.

But increasingly everything else (or most of it) will become available digitally, so if there is anything on the archive lists that you're dying to look at, let us know via the contact form on the website with the relevant archive number, and I'll try to email you back the relevant scans. If there is anything that for any reason can't be scanned, and you live locally, I am more than happy to try and arrange a 'meet' so that you can look at the actual document. Needless to say we do not charge anything for this service – though you're welcome to make a donation via the website if you really want to.

Andy Screen

Archivist, NMLHS

Programme of Events

January to May 2022

Where and When	Title of Talk	Speaker
<p>19:45</p> <p>Friday 14th Jan 2022</p> <p>Town Hall</p>	<p>The Architecture of Manchester</p>	<p>Steve Little</p>
<p>19:45</p> <p>Friday 11th Feb 2022</p> <p>Town Hall</p>	<p>New research on the Bridgewater Canal at Worsley</p>	<p>Mike Nevell</p>
<p>19:45</p> <p>Friday 11th March 2022</p> <p>Town Hall</p>	<p>Manchester Ragged School</p>	<p>Roger Bryant</p>
<p>19:45</p> <p>Friday 8th April 2022</p> <p>Town Hall</p>	<p>Hidden Lives</p>	<p>Cathryn Walton</p>
<p>19:45</p> <p>Friday 13th May 2022</p> <p>Town Hall</p>	<p>A.G.M. Followed by The Co-op Society In New Mills</p>	<p>Mike Daniels</p>