

**New Mills
Local History
Society
Newsletter 23**



Autumn 1999

AUTUMN PROGRAMME 1999

**Fri. 10th September HOWARD
SMITH
“Transport by Packhorse”**

**Fri. 8th October
ALAN ROSE
“Methodism in Mellor”**

**Fri. 12th November
RON WESTON
“Medieval Hartington”**

**Fri. 10th December KEITH
HOLFORD
“Bugsworth”**

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HAYFIELD UNION WORKHOUSE

8th January 1999, Joan Powell

“The poor are always with us;” and always have been. In medieval times the monasteries, inspired by Christian charity, were at the forefront in the provision of succour to the needy. It was not until Elizabethan times that legal measures for looking after the poor were introduced. Parishes were made responsible for coping with poverty amongst their own residents and were allowed to collect a rate in order to do so.

Incredibly this ancient system, the so-called “Old Poor Law,” remained in force until 1834 when the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed - one of the many Whig reforms of the day. Joan Powell explained how groups of parishes or townships could form a “union” to deal with their own unemployed as well as the increasing numbers of vagrants wandering the roads in search of work and sustenance. Workhouses were established, run by elected Guardians, staffed by salaried officials and paid for out of local rates.

Initially the national scheme was supervised by just three Poor Law Commissioners in London, with the aid of a Secretary. In 1847 a Poor Law Board took control and in 1871 the emerging borough and county councils were made responsible. A change in policy in the early years of the twentieth century emphasised the need to provide care for the elderly and infirm poor and in 1919 the Ministry of Health was made responsible for the nation’s workhouses. The workhouses gradually lost their role in the 1930’s and many became hospitals.

Throughout their history the workhouses carried the stigma of being public charities that paupers entered as a last resort. Conditions were to be “as repulsive as possible as is consistent with humanity.” It was believed that the workhouse regime should be slightly preferable to prison, but provide a standard of living below that of the poorest paid worker in the district - in the early nineteenth century, a miserable standard indeed.

Joan then outlined in more detail the history of the Hayfield Union Workhouse at Low Leighton. The first meeting of the Board of Guardians took place in December 1837, with representatives from Hayfield, Mellor, Beard, Ollerset, Thornsett and Whitle. The first Clerk to the Board was Ebenezer Adamson, also schoolmaster in Hayfield. Land belonging to Whitfield School was purchased at Low Leighton and £1700 was spent in the erection of the building, which remains substantially unaltered to this day.

The total capacity at two to a bed was 166. The sexes, even married couples, were rigorously separated.

All able-bodied men were put to work at oakum-picking or stonebreaking; women at stone-crushing, cooking, cleaning and childminding within the workhouse.

Joan presented some interesting thumb-nail sketches of some of the more colourful Masters and Matrons.

In 1903, after years of deliberation, a new, single-storey infirmary, built to replace several small buildings that had been erected at various dates, was opened.

Joan brought her excellent presentation to an end by showing some slides of the workhouse. The interiors, showing the children's attics, the bathing facilities and the vagrants' cells, brought home to us the spartan conditions of a workhouse.

Joan considered the Hayfield Union Workhouse to have been above average in fulfilling its purpose humanely. Certainly it remained free of the abuses and scandals to which many other workhouses were subject.

The workhouse finally closed its doors to vagrants in 1931. Several of our senior members were able to recall the final years of the workhouse, remembering the vagrants who came at dusk and left each morning after breakfast to beg their way to their next destination, inevitably, another workhouse.

LEGENDS OF LONGDENDALE

12th February 1999. David Frith

David Frith gave us one of his virtuoso performances, airing with faultless delivery his encyclopaedic knowledge of his subject.

He began with the Roman period, taking us out of Longdendale and well beyond into the Peak district as we followed the Roman roads towards Buxton and Brough in one direction and Manchester in another.

He spoke of Old and New Glossop and of Thomas Middleton, whose book “The Legends of Longdendale”, written in 1904 inspired David’s talk. A typical tale from this source was that of the doctor who, seeking the alchemist’s eternal quest to turn base metal into gold, engaged the help of the Devil. Aid was promised in return for the doctor’s soul but the Dark Eminence reneged on the bargain and no riches came the doctor’s way. When the Devil had the audacity to claim his soul, the doctor fled. The old road, known as Doctor’s Gate, was the route the doctor took, as he raced in full flight from his deadly pursuer. In the nick of time the doctor managed to leap a ditch, successfully putting water between himself and the Devil (we all know that the Devil cannot cross standing water). That ditch, of course, has been known as Devil’s Dyke ever since.

David went on to tell us about the graveyard of Mottram church, which during the eighteenth century became so frequented by bodysnatchers that a guard had to be placed over all new interments.

A famous son of Broadbottom was Laurence Earnshaw whose great skill as a clockmaker and geometrician culminated in his construction of an astronomical clock.

When the Longendale reservoirs were built to supply drinking water (one of the earliest municipal water supply schemes on this scale), many of the properties that were to be drowned were demolished and cleared for fear of pollution of the drinking supplies.

Hadfield and Hollingworth; Woodhead and Salters’ Bridge: every place had a story to tell; and David told it.

We were treated to a lively and engrossing talk embellished by some well-chosen slides. We look forward to hearing from David again.

EYAM (further aspects of its history)

12th March 1999, John Clifford

When John Clifford talked to us last year about his researches into Eyam and the plague, it was clear that he had much more of interest to relate than time allowed; hence, his recall to resume his story.

John began by telling us about Eyam church. When it was being restored in 1868, some early frescoes were uncovered. They were not laid bare at that time and it was not until 1961 that they were finally restored to view.

A cupboard traditionally held to be the box that contained the cloth that brought the plague from London to Eyam still hangs in the church. During the plague the villagers decided that no burials should take place in the churchyard for fear of contamination. At that time it was thought that plague might be spread by a miasma. The belief that people should not come within twelve feet of an infected person or body was a reasonable assumption at the time and would be seen as a sensible precaution today. Church services, consequently, were held outdoors, with the congregation standing in well-scattered family groups. They must have been melancholy affairs. The Anglican priest Mompesson and the Non-conformist minister Stanley worked together at that desperate time for the common good.

Research into the parish register shows how plague deaths varied considerably with the seasons, reaching their peak in the summer months. Early researchers seem to have grossly under-estimated the size of Eyam's population in the seventeenth century and consequently over-estimated the proportion of the population that died of plague.

One relic of the plague years, Mompesson's chair, disappeared for many years but was eventually rediscovered in the 1880's in a Liverpool second-hand shop. Mompesson's house has survived and is still much as it was in the seventeenth century.

Nor has Stanley's role been forgotten: a memorial dedicated to him stands in the village. Many have seen him as the real hero at Eyam

The familiar nursery rhyme "Ring-a-ring of roses" is said by some to refer to the symptoms of death by plague. Other experts, however, have cast doubt on this explanation.

Finally, John Clifford reminded us in his carefully researched and logically presented account that Eyam had more history to its name than the plague. In the churchyard stands an eighth century cross where the Christian message was preached before the ancient church was built. In fact Eyam Cross probably stood outside the village and was lost until rediscovered in the 1790's, rescued and erected in the churchyard.

THE MANNERS FAMILY AND ITS HOMES

9th April 1999, Tony Winslade

Tony Winslade, in his interesting, informative and well-illustrated talk, dealt with two of the country's best-known stately homes, Haddon Hall and Belvoir Castle in Leicestershire. Both properties of the Duke of Rutland. Our speaker emphasised the many contrasts that could be made between the two: Haddon, a domestic place that had been allowed to blossom in peace; Belvoir, a castle that had known calamity and violence in great measure.

This review concentrates exclusively on what Tony Winslade had to say on Haddon.

Succeeding generations of the owners of Haddon Hall - Peverel and Avenel, Vernon and Manners - had from the twelfth century onwards built, enlarged and improved the house until its original modest structure had become a whole series of buildings surrounding a courtyard on a limestone slope overlooking the river Wye.

In about 1170, the manor of Haddon passed from William Avenel to his sons-in-law, Richard Vernon and Simon Basset. The Bassets faded quickly from the picture and the four hundred years of Vernon ownership of Haddon began. The Vernons were circumspect in their politics and the hall became a cherished and much embellished home under their ownership.

The last of the Vernons, the great Sir George, "King of the Peak," succeeded to Haddon in 1517 and lived until 1567. He was a great builder and lived in magnificent style there. Much of his wealth was derived from lead-mining. His second daughter, Dorothy, is said to have eloped with John Manners, son of the Earl of Rutland, and it is through their marriage that Haddon passed into the hands of the Manners family.

The long history of new building was at first continued under the Manners family; but after a dukedom was conferred on the Earl in 1703, the much grander edifice at Belvoir became the family seat, and Haddon remained virtually uninhabited for many years. This lengthy period of neglect was halted only during the present century when the Ninth Duke determined on a thorough-going renovation. His restoration of the hall became his life's work and now Haddon looks just as it did in the days of its former glory.

LOCAL WORTHIES OF NEW MILLS

14th May Melanie Tebbutt

Melanie Tebbutt, in her thoughtful and thought-provoking talk, explored the reputation and character of New Mills as perceived by its inhabitants through their choice of political leaders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She began by pointing out the contrast between the end of the nineteenth century, when there was a strong sense of local pride in the social and economic achievements of the town and the end of the present one, with much resentment at the loss of Urban District status and an accompanying sense of powerlessness and loss of independence.

Local political and social life was greatly influenced by the calico printing industry of New Mills. Many outsiders came here to work, bringing with them new ideas and aspirations. Employers and managers did much to foster technical and scientific education in the town, whilst workpeople were active in promoting self-help within the community. Melanie mentioned such leading figures as John

Nicholls, first head of the Mechanics' Institute in the 1860's, who later became the first head of New Mills Board School in 1889. Calico printers training under Nicholls went as managers to many parts of the world. The establishment of a free library in New Mills in the 1880's was an important event in the education of the townspeople. Several wealthy mill and factory owners donated books and funds to this institution.

But the people of New Mills were distinguished mainly by their attempts to solve their own problems rather than relying on the benevolence of their masters. The contributions of self-made men to the life of the town is remarkable, as the obituaries found in the High Peak Reporter testify. Edward Godward, for example, a Quaker, devoted his life to being Secretary to New Mills Co-operative Society and became the first Chairman of New Mills District Council and a county councillor. Brunswick Mill in Newtown became a powerhouse of civic progress as well as technological innovation in the late nineteenth century. The mill supplied many public servants from the ranks of its employees.

During the inter-war years economic decline brought with it a new attitude of uncertainty. As the old civic leaders retired and died, so the old spirit of optimism and self-help faltered. But, as members of our audience were quick to assert, this spirit was not quenched entirely - witness the building of the swimming pool and the campaign to resist the construction of the Disley by-pass through New Mills.

Melanie's stimulating talk had the effect of bringing into the spotlight a view of New Mills that many of us unconsciously felt.

All the above reports are by Ron Weston.

Personal memories of the New Mills air raid - 3 July 1942

I began my working life in January 1939 aged 16 and a half years in the general office of the local Co-operative Society which was situated at the bottom of Hall Street, premises now occupied by Fountain Bathrooms.

When war was declared in September 1939, the junior members of staff - myself and Reg Oakes - had the job of sticking brown tape, lattice fashion, on all the windows. Then began the clearing of the archives, as all the historical ledgers, documents, etc had to be sent to the CWS HQ in Manchester (Did they survive the Manchester blitz I wonder ?). In the check office was an old, locked safe which no one in living memory had seen open. It was decided to engage a locksmith to open it and it revealed just one item - a pistol ! This must have been almost certainly the pistol used by the cashier in the 1860s when he had to carry the cash home through the Torrs. (See John Humphreys book on New Mills Co-operative Society about this).

During my working days the office was open until 8.00 p.m. on Mondays to Fridays; and so to that fateful day Friday 3 July 1942. We had just downed pens and were going to collect our coats, etc, when there was a most frightening noise from overhead. It seemed that the building was collapsing and we ran outside into Hall Street just as a loud explosion was heard and smoke and dust was rising over Low Leighton. My only thought was to get home and without going back for my coat and bag I ran down Cross Street and High Street and through the mill fields (now Ollersett estate). Believe me, Roger Bannister was not the first person to run a four minute mile. I met one man who asked if I had seen anything lying around and still running I said 'no'. I found out later that he was looking for unexploded incendiary bombs!

I had almost reached Low Leighton when I ran into the police sergeant and I should mention here that I had joined the Women's Auxiliary Police Force whose duty was to man the auxiliary police station whilst constables were on the beat. The sergeant said "you are just the person I need at this moment - go straight to Ratcliffe's shop and man the telephone". The Ratcliffe's kept a butcher's shop at number 82 and lived at the premises. In the living room at the back was a large deal table which had been moved against the wall near the wall-mounted telephone. I couldn't see anything that was going on outside but there was plenty of activity in my makeshift office, including men bringing in long black objects and pushing them under the table, so many in fact that eventually my feet rested on them. I didn't know until my duty was finished that they were unexploded incendiary bombs!

Just as I arrived at the shop, I met my mother and her friend who were returning from a walk. Coming along Low Leighton Road they saw the bomb doors of the plane opening and they ran up a garden path. Both were knocked over by the blast but apart from a grazed elbow were not hurt although very badly shaken.

My father, Albert Marriot, was a member of the ARP and as a long-time member of St Johns Ambulance Brigade was allocated to the rescue squad. So he was in the thick of the activity. It was a long time before he would talk about it all but I remember one anecdote. He was searching the ruins of Mr Handford's house (Whitfield Villas) and touched what he thought was a rug, when it moved, stood up and shook itself. It was the family dog, stunned but uninjured! From Low Leighton he had to go the bombed site at Hayfield and this was even more traumatic, for six people were killed here. Needless to say, mother and I didn't go to bed until father arrived home in the early hours, exhausted and in modern parlance, badly traumatised. He didn't want to talk except to ask how mother and I had fared and when I mentioned my "footrest" he exploded! What was going to happen to that sergeant for having placed me in that situation was nobody's business! However, by next day and after a good rest it was all put into perspective as a job that had had to be done.

On the Saturday morning, of course, I had to go to work and it was amazing to see dozens of small boys running to and fro on Church Road collecting bullets, for the cricket field remember had been strafed with machine gun fire. For some unknown reason I didn't pick up any bullets for myself, for at 20 years of age you are not into that kind of thing! On the Sunday evening my friend Dorothy and I reported for duty at the police station for an evening's duty and in the corner by the top gate was standing on its end an unexploded shell ! Inside, the duty constable opened the door which led to the cells and the toilet, and pointing to a small object on the floor said that if we had to go to walk through then go carefully as it was the shell's detonator! Needless to say, that door was not opened by us that night!

Afterthought - when I was walking home on the Friday night it was strange to see that the windows of every second house in the lower end of Laneside Road was broken. Ours at number 24 was all right but there was a large piece of stone on the doorstep although it had not actually hit the door. I still have this stone as my war souvenir.

Irene Jones

The Local Historian. February 1999

This issue has been placed in New Mills library and includes the following articles:

Gillian Clark, 'Infant fashion in the eighteenth century: evidence from foundlings nursed in Berkshire'

J V Becket, B Cowell, and M E Turner, 'Parliamentary enclosure hedges and landscape preservation'.

Rex Leaver, 'Bees round a honeypot: professionals and politicians in an enclosure promotion in Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, 1819-1820'

Matthew Woollard, 'Local history and computing: the case of the Bristol historical database project'.

There is also a subject and author index for volumes 26 and 27 (Feb 1996 to Nov 1997) and 'Local History News;' for Spring 1999.

WORK STARTS ON MILLENNIUM WALKWAY (JCH.272.99)

After more than two years of planning and fund raising, work on New Mills' ambitious Millennium project is finally under way.

Contractors have moved into the town's Torrs gorge and begun work to construct a 175-yard long elevated steel walkway, which will span the otherwise inaccessible cliff wall above the River Goyt.

To mark the event, representatives of the County, High Peak Borough and New Mills Town Councils, the Millennium Commission and commercial contributors gathered at the site this week (Tuesday August 3). The start of work was signalled by County Council Leader Martin Doughty and the Millennium Commission's Lisa Shackley who performed the official ground breaking ceremony.

Proposals for a link in the gorge's footpath network, which include the Midshires Way, go back many years. But difficulties of access to the site severely hampered the planning and the breakthrough only came when the Millennium Commission agreed to meet £215,000 of the project's £525,000 cost with a lottery grant.

The local councils have between them contributed £100,000 in funds and services, and local and national companies and organisations have added £210,000 to give the project the go-ahead.

Martin Doughty thanked all those who had helped make the walkway possible. The co-funders include Tilcon (South) Ltd, Bowmer & Kirkland Ltd, Global Environmental Community Trust Ltd, Haul Waste Ltd, Waste Recycling Environmental, and the Environment Agency.

“We have been keen to create this link for a very long time,” he said. “But without the magnificent support we have received from the Millennium Commission and our other contributors it would not have been possible.

“Once complete, the walkway will provide a spectacular attraction and a direct route through this gorge for the thousands of walkers and visitors who come here every year. And for many local people who have been unable to negotiate the steep slopes and steps on the existing footpaths, it will offer a level, wheelchair-friendly path through this heritage-rich area.”

Main contractors Thyssen Construction Ltd expect the walkway to be completed by Christmas.

5 August 1999

Press enquiries to Chris Hartley on 01629 585082 or email: chris.hartley@derbyshire.gov.uk



■ On site at the Torrs are Lisa Shackley of the Millennium Commission; Chris Slavin, Tilcon (South) Ltd; and Cllr Martin Doughty, Leader of Derbyshire County Council.

‘NEW MILLS’ CHINA, WILLIAM POTTS & WILLIAM MACHIN

This story started with the article by Nancy Gunson in the Northern Ceramic Society Newsletter, Dec. 1987, No.68 which was based on information given by Mr Griffiths.

In the article was a photograph taken by Anne Bennison of a teapot, sugar box, cups and saucers etc. These had bone china body, relief decoration of small mauve colour thistle and ‘pansy’ sprigs.

At New Mills in the early 1830s brothers John and William Wainwright Potts, textile manufacturers, adapted their calico printing process using engraved steel rollers for the production of printed designs on long lengths of tissue paper. This was cut up into suitable pieces and applied to pottery surfaces for their print decoration. The process was patented and applied at the Waterloo Pottery in Burslem where the established potter William Machin took William Potts into partnership.

Meanwhile the Potts brothers had experimented at New Mills and a few pieces of earthenware are known decorated with a printed acorn design and marked on the base with a printed backstamp with the words ‘ W W POTTS PATENT Printed Ware, St Georges Potteries, NEW MILLS DERBYSHIRE’. An oven had been built at the St Georges Works.

Mr Griffiths and others suggested that the oven was used not only in connection with the printing process but also for the production of ware, including the relief decorated teaset which is now at New Mills Town Hall. There is no direct evidence for this and the truth may be that the ware print decorated at New Mills

was made at William Machin’s factory at Burslem.

As investigation proceeded six more teapots (and accompanying pieces) have been found which appear to be related to that illustrated in the NCS Newsletter. These include

(2) Teapot and sugar box of similar rococo style but of different shape. They have the same mauve sprigs in the same disposition on the pots. (Bentley collection)

(3) Teapot of exactly the same size and shape as (2) together with cups and saucers (different shape). The pieces are print decorated in blue with ‘Twisted Tree’ design. (Evans collection, New Mills area)

Maybe the print decoration was applied at the St Georges Works.

(4) Teapot with rococo shape in similar style to (2) and (3) with printed pink lustre Honeysuckle decoration, plus other pieces. (Bentley Collection)

(5) Another teaset with the pink lustre Honeysuckle decoration. Tea pot has size and shape as (2) and (3). Sugar box has the same rococo shape as Teapot

(6) Teapot at the Hanley Museum with size and shape as (2) (3) and (5). It has floral/geometric decoration.

(7) Another pink lustre decorated rococo teapot of different shape and different pattern. It has features related to the other pink lustre pieces (Bentley collection).

The seven teapots have related features, as indicated, plus strainer hole patterns, lid shapes, workmen's marks. Some of the latter have similarities to those on pieces made by the Machins at Burslem. Some saucers have painted pattern no. 1136, this is a good fit with Machin pattern nos. in the 1830s.

I am to give a presentation on these findings to the Northern Ceramic Society in the afternoon of Saturday 27th November at Liverpool (see attached programme). The lecture room is in an annexe to the Walker Art Gallery, itself next to the Museum and only a few minutes walk from Lime Street Railway Station. /

July 1999

John W Bentley



NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

New Mills History Notes (A5)

This series is being produced by New Mills Local History Society to help circulate information about the history of the New Mills area. Anyone who has material which might be suitable for inclusion in the series is asked to contact the Editor - Ron Weston, The Thorns, Laneside Road, New Mills, HIGH PEAK, SK22 4LU. Tel. 01663- 744838.

1. and 2.	New Mills in the 1820s		o/p	
3.	Whittle Enclosure		£0-90	
4.	Mills of New Mills (see O.P.7)		o/p	
5.	New Mills 1830 - 35		£0-90	
6.	Railways of New Mills and District (see below*)		o/p	
7.	Turnpike Roads and Riots		£2-25	
8.	The Lost Mills of Rowarth		£0-90	
9.	The New Mills Tithe Award (central area only. inc.map)		£2-95	10.
	Deeds of New Mills and District		£0-90	
11.	The Peak Forest Canal Upper Level:Towpath Guide		£ 3-25	
12.	A History of Providence Congregational Church New Mills		£0-90	13.
	Memories of Strines		£1-50	
14.	The Lost Chapel of Rowarth		£0-90	15.
	The Coal Mines of New Mills		£.3-25	
16.	Bowden Middlecale - occupants of the land 1778 - 1811		o/p	
17.	More Deeds of New Mills and District		£0-90	18.
	New Mills 1835-39		£0-90	19.
	Three Local History Walks		£0-90	20.
	New Mills Cooperative Society 1860-90		o/p	
21.	The New Mill and some other Corn Mills of High Peak		£1-25	22.
	The New Mills Air Raid: Fri 3rd. Jul 1942		£0-75	
23	The Peak Forest Canal Lower Level : Towpath Guide 1		£3-25	
24.	The Living Past: New Mills People in late Tudor and early Stuart times		£2-25	
25.	The Downes Family, Husbandmen of the New Mylne, 1571-1679		£2-25	
26.	A Lifetime at Strines Printworks		£3-25	27.
	The Hayfield Union Workhouse		£3-25	

* Available as Railways of New Mills and District: their development and impact 1840-1902. Trans Lane and Ches Ant Soc offprint. Price £1-50 - we can supply copies.

Continued overleaf.

Occasional Publications (A4)

OP1.	Gravestone Inscriptions; St. George's Rd. Methodist Cemetery	o/p OP2.
	New Mills and District, a look back (old photos)	£3-75
OP3.	The Peak Forest Canal, its construction and later development (A5)	£3-25
OP4.	Church of the Annunciation St. Mary's Catholic Church New Mills; graveyard records	£1-00
OP5.	Ollersett in 1841: Land and people	£2-95
OP6.	New Mills in 1851 and 1881 as seen through the census returns	o/p
OP7.	The Mills of New Mills (revised edn. of No.4 above)	£2-95
OP8.	The Enclosure of Thornsett	£2-95
OP9.	Thornsett in 1841: Land and People	£3-25
OP10.	New Mills: a look back at its Industrial Heritage	£4-95

Probate Transcription Series

Wills and Inventories of New Mills People (general title)	
Book One 1540-1571	£3-25
Book Two 1571-1582	£3-25
Book Three 1586-1607	£5-95

Most publications are available at a discount if purchased at the Society's meetings. They are also on sale at the Heritage Centre.

For further details or orders please contact Ron Weston, Editor New Mills Local History Society. "The Thorns", Laneside Rd., New Mills, HIGH PEAK. SK22 4LU. Tel. 01663 744838.