

New Mills
Local History Society
Newsletter



Edition 25

Autumn 2000

AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2000

Fri. 8th September

MIKE SMITH

“A Walk Around Chapel-en-le-Frith”

Fri. 13th October

KEITH HOLFORD

"Four Castles and a Family"

Fri. 10th November

ALAN SCHOLEFIELD

“Ninety Years of Aviation in Manchester”

Fri. 8th December

BILL JOHNSON

“Tithe Maps”

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BARRY DENT, PAT EVANS, JOHN SYMONDS, RICHARD WOOD.

EDITORIAL

The millennial year is proving to be very eventful for New Mills: the walkway has become a major attraction; the town was featured on a commemorative stamp: Torr Vale mill has turned out to be of exceptional interest to industrial archaeology: it also transpires that the famous story “The Railway Children” was set, at least in part, in the Strines-New Mills area, according to experts in the E. Nesbitt Society. The Heritage Centre goes from strength-to-strength, as does the Local History Society.

One way to keep up the good work is to contribute an article to this Newsletter: or why not write to give your views on our programme and how it might be improved. What other activities or projects would you like the Society to undertake?

The next issue of the Newsletter comes out at the end of the year. with the first week in December as the deadline for the receipt of contributions.

Let’s be hearing from you.

Ron Weston.

UNDERGROUND WATERWAYS OF MANCHESTER

14th January 2000 - David George

Once again, David was a welcome visitor to the Society when he spoke, unusually, on the waterways of Manchester which are below street level. He first turned his attention to the Manchester and Salford Junction Canal, which joined the river Irwell (at Water Street) to the Rochdale Canal (at Chepstow Street). Initially, when built in 1839, this canal was above ground but over the years it became built over by streets and some famous buildings, such as Granada TV studios, the Great Northern Railway Company's Warehouse, and Central Station now G-Mex. Little of the canal can now be seen (the part below Granada TV was used as an air raid shelter during the war) but there is a spectacular renovation of the lock at Water Street adjacent to the new Victoria and Albert Hotel (opposite the Coronation Street set). The former canal tunnel under Lower Mosley Street, however, is still in use, but only by those people who use the G-Mex car park and then use the tunnel under Lower Mosley Street for access to the Bridgewater Hall. I wonder how many think the tunnel is a new feature ?

David then switched his attention to Castlefield where there are underground waterways going back to the time of James Brindley who built the canal terminus there. The most famous is the Castlefield tunnel, which was built in 1765 to take excess water from the river Medlock at Knott Mill, under the canal basin to rejoin the river Medlock further downstream. At Castle Street, opposite Knott Mill Station, can be seen a short canal arm, off the Rochdale Canal, disappearing into a red sandstone face. It was once underground and provided underground access for boats almost as far as Liverpool Road.

David finished his talk by describing the route of the Rochdale Canal between Knott Mill and Oxford Street, not under the ground but, as he emphasised, under the streets. There are several locks along this stretch and there are good views of them looking down from Great Bridgewater Street. The towpath allows an interesting walk along the whole length and there are a number of refurbished mills and warehouses to be seen. One of the most spectacular sites is opposite the Bridgewater Hall, where the Manchester and Salford Junction Canal joins the Rochdale Canal. Here, the line of the original canal has been cleaned out and a basin feature made next to the Hall. Theoretically, the audience can arrive by canal boat, although I have not yet seen that in my many visits. The towpath trail ends at Oxford Street, where the Rochdale Canal goes under the St James Buildings, next to the Palace Theatre. This canal is unusual in that, in order to see it, you have to look for it over bridge or street parapets. It is amazing to think that when it was built about 1805 it traversed green fields - the buildings which now border it came much later to hide it from our view below the streets to form canyon.

Derek Brumhead

TORR VALE MILL

11th February 2000 - Derek Brumhead

The cotton textile industry could not have developed in New Mills without water power, a natural resource created by the glaciation of the Goyt valley and the subsequent formation of the Torrs. Thus, Derek began by explaining the geology of the Torrs, where suitable water-power sites were eagerly exploited for the construction of cotton mills after Arkwright's patent on the water frame expired in 1785. At this time, two early mills, Beard Mill (Hyde Bank Mill) and Barnes Top Shop, were joined by three others: Rock Mill, Torr Mill and Torr Vale Mill. Of these, only Torr Vale has survived as a textile mill to the present day.

All the mills in the Torrs underwent considerable alteration and expansion in the nineteenth century and probably reached their zenith in the 1880s. All converted from water power to steam in the first half of that century: but water power was not entirely abandoned. The recent RCHM survey of Torr Vale

Mill has revealed a detailed sequence of technological events. The first building stands high on a crag overlooking the river bend - too high, apparently, to have been served by water power. It may have been a spinning shop, housing jennies operated by hand. A larger building was constructed alongside the original mill on the river bank. A weir was constructed, allowing the operation of two water wheels in this building. In the 1860s a steam engine was installed, which augmented the water-power and, when necessary, replaced it. This greatly improved the regulation of the power supply.

The great historical importance of Torr Vale Mill, now a grade two listed building, lies in the fact that this technology of combining water and steam power is still uniquely manifested there.

Close behind the water-powered building is a weaving shed. Both spinning and weaving were carried out at Torr Vale, which is another unusual feature.

While it is gratifying to learn that Torr Vale has been accorded recognition as an asset of national importance, there still remains a considerable challenge for the future: how to conserve the mill for future generations. Public funds, however generous, will not suffice: it is necessary to find a profitable use for the buildings, and this will not be easy.

We are grateful to Derek, not simply because he has given us a stimulating and well-informed account of Torr Vale Mill, but also for his enthusiastic contribution to the cause of rescuing this historic site and increasing our understanding of its importance.

BUILT BY BRINDLEY

10th March 2000 - David Frith

David Frith made a welcome return visit as a speaker to the Society when the subject of his lecture was James Brindley, the canal engineer, who was a wheelwright by trade. David began with a visit to Brindley's mill at Leek, before moving on to Worsley Delph, the site of the entrance to the Duke of Bridgewater's coal mines. He explained how Brindley constructed 46 miles of underground canals on different levels in order to bring out the coal in long, narrow tub boats, called "starvationers." Next stop was one of the wonders of the waterways: Barton Swing Aqueduct, built to replace Brindley's stone aqueduct, which was demolished when the Manchester Ship Canal was constructed along the course of the river Irwell.

A journey down Brindley's Grand Trunk Canal, now named the Trent and Mersey Canal, brought us to Harecastle Hill, a major obstacle for the canal engineer. Here we saw how the problem was overcome by tunnelling through the hill. Brindley's original tunnel is now closed, but a later one engineered by Thomas Telford is still in use.

Passing through the southern portal of Harecastle Tunnel, our next destination was the Potteries.

At Etruria the Caldon Canal joins the Trent and Mersey. James Brindley died as a result of a chill caught while surveying the line of this canal. The waterway terminates at Froghall Basin, where a line of lime kilns still stands. The limestone was once transported to the canal by a network of tramways from the quarries on Cauldon Low.

The talk closed with a visit to another of the waterways wonders, the Anderton Lift, which at one time lowered boats from the Trent and Mersey down to the Weaver Navigation. Plans are afoot to restore the boat lift completely.

David assures us that we have not yet exhausted his list of lectures and we look forward to his future return.

Barbara Matthews

WALLS ACROSS THE VALLEY

14th April 2000 - Dr. Brian Robinson

The great expansion of towns and cities during the Industrial Revolution created an increasing demand for water. In the Peak District, the gritstone moorlands and valleys proved ideal for water catchment.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, major cities flanking the Pennines had secured a water supply for themselves by flooding local valleys - such as the Don Valley above Sheffield, and Longdendale, which secured an initial supply for Manchester. After 1900, a second generation of water supply schemes was

put into effect, including the spectacular Howden and Derwent scheme, built to supply the towns of the East Midlands. This was the subject of Dr. Robinson's talk, which, together with a multiplicity of slides based on his superb collection of old photographs, was very well received and greatly appreciated.

Every aspect of the construction of the reservoirs and dams was carefully explained and vividly illustrated: but the most absorbing part of Dr. Robinson's talk was his graphic description of the life and times of Birchen Lee, the raw settlement of huts and cabins created to house the workers and their families. Here a whole generation of people drawn from every corner of Britain lived and inhabited at first hand. This was local history at its best.

Ron Weston

FIRST WORLD WAR ARCHIVE RESEARCH

12th May 2000 - Heather Taylor

In this unusual talk, Heather Taylor reflected on her experience of researching diaries, journals and letters in the Liddell Collection. This extensive archive of first-hand accounts of those who had experienced the First World War is held at Leeds University. For several years, a team of volunteers has been appraising and summarising its contents.

Heather Taylor gave us some examples of the wide variety of material with which she had been involved and brought the experiences of several people vividly to life. Some of the most absorbing diaries and letters belonged to young women who, like the more famous Vera Brittan, had volunteered to serve abroad as nurses and had found the experience both horrifying and liberating. There was, for example, Meg Marshall, an ambulance driver based at Calais: "always in trouble and a bit dizzy."

The journals of Rev. Williams, who was priest in charge of St. George's Church, the English church in Berlin, give a unique account of life in that city and attitudes towards the war from the British perspective. The German authorities allowed the church to remain open throughout the war years.

Rev. Williams was able to visit, amongst others, Tom Cotterell, a former Oxford student arrested in Berlin at the onset of the war and interned in Spandau for the duration. He edited a Spandau magazine, studied Hebrew and advocated the idea that Palestine should become the homeland of the Jews. Cotterell and Williams both witnessed much prejudice against the Jews in Berlin, even in World War One.

These and other fascinating accounts of unusual people caught up in major historical events are the very stuff of history and often provide correctives to generally received opinions. It was instructive to be informed about such lively historical research by one of its participants.

Ron Weston

Mellor Archaeological Trust

Newsletter, July 2000

At the Open Day last September you gave your name to us as a person interested in the excavations on the Mellor hilltop. The day was extremely successful and raised over £2,000. After the Open Day the archaeologists back-filled the holes in the field, where the Iron Age ditch had been exposed, and the trench by the churchyard wall. Plastic sheeting was laid on the large, complicated area in the garden and then covered with earth to await re-opening this season.

A report on the flints found last year has been written by an expert from Sheffield University. He also looked at the flints that were found in the 1970s from the dig on the top of Cobden Edge and wrote a separate report. They make interesting reading. The main report on the 1999 work had been almost finished when some of it was lost in a computer crash. Its completion is delayed, because Graham Eyre-Morgan is on sick leave. An account of Mellor's pre-history and a display of finds attracted great interest at the Marple and Mellor Millennium Exhibition, which was mounted by the Local History Society in Marple library in June.

It has taken nearly a year, but approval for the Trust to be registered as a Charity has at last been given. Dealing with the Charity Commission takes time and patience! With donations, the Trust has £3400 to help fund excavations, reports and displays. At the inaugural meeting of the Trustees, John Hearle, resident, was elected Chairman, Val Saunders, who represents the Mellor Society, Treasurer, Kathleen Morris, co-opted, Secretary, and Don Reid, co-opted, Archivist. The other Trustees are Shan Alexander and John Baker, representing Stockport MBC, John Catterall, Mellor Church, Ann Hearle, Marple Local History Society, Norman Redhead, co-opted, Assistant County Archaeologist, and the other three residents, Stan Bannister, Peter Hodgson and Peter Jenner.

Stockport has again provided funds, to be used for this year's dig, and work started at the beginning of this month. The first task was the hard work of removing the earth from the area of very complicated archaeology, so that the slow and careful trowelling away could be resumed. Already a number of flints have been found.

Three trenches have been dug over by the new churchyard to see if the 'slot' carries on across the site. No finds have been found yet and the holes and slots are not explainable yet. The main ditch by the vegetable patch is being 'squared'! The L shaped hole is being extended to give a complete profile of the ditch, which will make it a lot easier for people to understand. A piece of Iron Age pot has been found that fits perfectly with the rimmed piece found last year. The archaeologists found this absolutely amazing; two pieces that go together found twelve months apart.

Geophysical surveying is being undertaken to try and determine the extent of the fort, but the very wet winter followed by the wet spring and summer are making it difficult to get good results.

Work is to continue for the whole of July and it is hoped part of August. Then on years. Last year's Open Day was put together very much at the last minute. This time we hope to display and label the finds in a clearer manner.

Changes in the route of Marsh Lane since the seventeenth century

Although there is nothing actually named other than field names - very useful as will be seen - a map of the Beard estate in 1676 and 1690* shows many features which we recognise today, - rivers Goytand Sett, Low Leighton, Church Lane, Laneside, Andrew Clough, Downs Bank, the bridge at Goytside, and the farms of Beard Hall, Gowhole, Bald Beard, Brownhill, Shedyard and Howcroft. Of particular interest is the route of Marsh Lane, which allows us to trace the changes to it as a result of converting it to a turnpike road and the building of the railway in the nineteenth century.

The sketch map shows the 1676 features with the later changes added. At its western end, the original line of Marsh Lane was up a steep slope behind the present houses, along the eastern edge of Brown Brow Field (part of it later to become Brown Brow Quarry), joining 'Church Lane' near the former vicarage (see sketch map). From here it went straight to Low Leighton. This part of the route is now followed by a footpath which ends adjacent to the present bus stop at Low Leighton.

About 1832, Marsh Lane and Church Lane were turnpiked¹ and it was probably then that Marsh Lane was realigned west of Brown Brow Field (in front of the present houses) and a new junction constructed with Church Lane. This change is evident from an estate map of Beard of 1875 which shows Brown Brow Field east of Marsh Lane, not west as on the 1676 map (see sketch map). When Church Road was built as a completely new road in 1835 (it was a turnpike) a new crossroads with Church Lane and Marsh Lane was established, a junction usually referred to as Marsh Lane Head. However, the true Marsh Lane Head is not at these crossroads but roughly where the former vicarage is, this being the point where Marsh Lane originally joined Church Lane (as it was later called) - see sketch map. Thus, the piece of Marsh Lane between the crossroads and the former vicarage is, in fact, part of the original 'Church Lane' or very

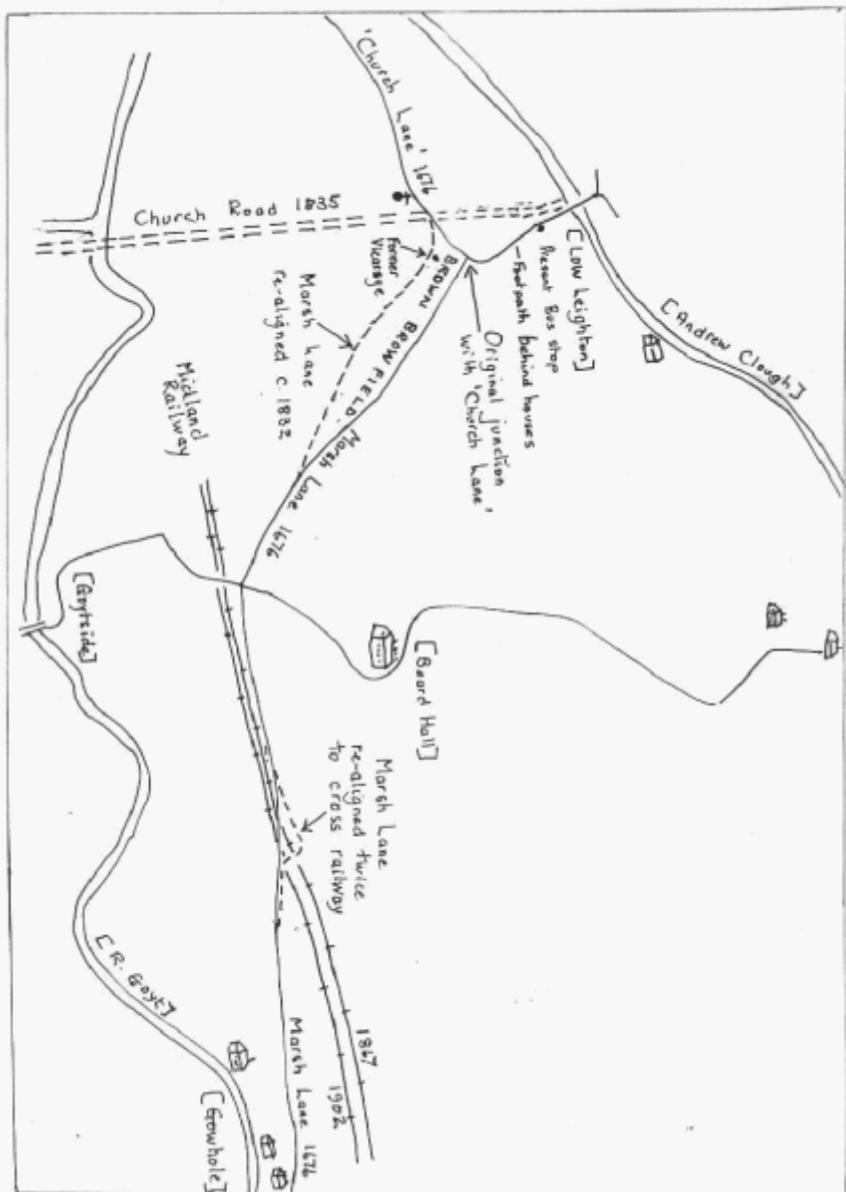
near the line of it. St George's Church, incidentally, was built in 1831 and the only way to get to it from town at that time was along Church Lane. No wonder people wrote to the paper complaining that the church was out in the country!

Towards Gowhole, Marsh Lane was diverted twice to cross the newly-constructed railway at a right angle - first in 1867, and then in 1902 when the line was doubled. East present Lady Pit Lane (or near to its present line) to Bugsworth. The section of road to Furness Vale over Furness Bridge was added when Marsh Lane was turnpiked about 1832.

1. See Roger Bryant's *Turnpike roads and riots*, (New Mills History Notes No 7).

* The original is Sheffield Record Office, Bag C 274, and the Record Office at Matlock have an inaccurate modern copy (mostly due to the near-illegibility of some parts of the original).

Derek Brumhead



COFFEE MORNING - 17 JUNE 2000

Proceeds

Door/Raffle	£31.90
Books	£80.80
Handicraft/Good as New	£50.65
Barbara's Cards £13.10	
Margaret's Cake Raffle	£20.00
Plants	£12.75
Cake Stall	£22.20
Tombola	£33.10

	£264.10

Expenses

Rent	£27.00
Sundries	£5.00

	£32.00

Proceeds	£264.50
Expenses	£32.00

Profit	£232.50

THANK YOU to all those who donated prizes and items for the stalls. THANKS especially to those who were able to come and help and who worked so hard to raise such a good amount on a hot, slow day.

John Humphreys