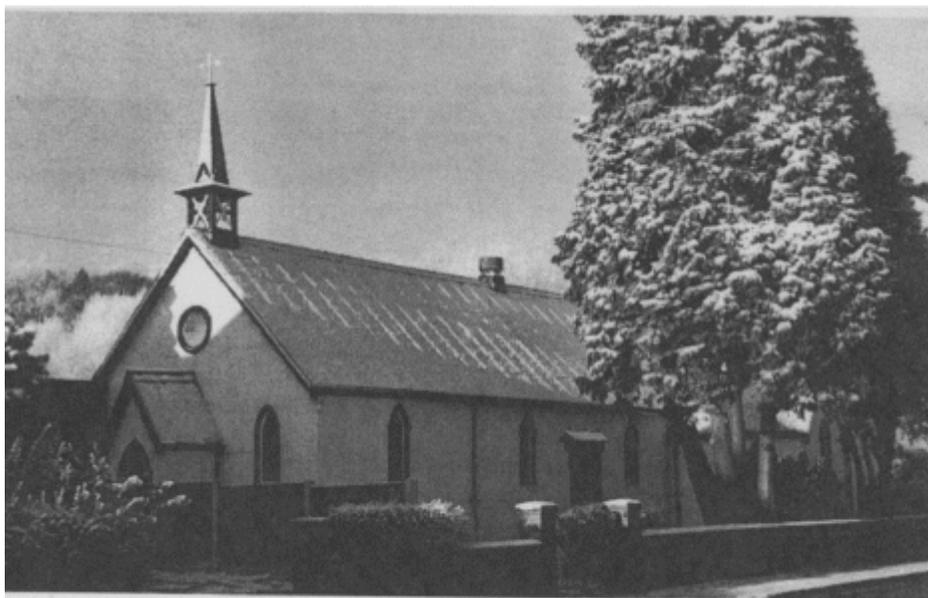


New Mills Local History Society

Newsletter 27



Exterior of St. Paul's Church, 2000

Autumn 2001

AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2001

Fri. 14th September

IAN MAY

“Hazel Grove: A Village Ashamed of its Name”

Fri. 12th October

RON WESTON

“The Bower Family of Torr Top and Aspenshaw”

Fri. 9th November

PAULA RANAS

“A History of Stockport Market”

Fri. 7th December

RON WESTON

“The Newton Family of Ollersett”

COMMITTEE 2001-2002

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| Vice-Chairman | BARBARA MATTHEWS |
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THE NESBIT CONNECTION

12th January 2001 — Gwenda Culkin and Barbara Matthews

Few members could be unaware of our town's most recent claim to fame: that the writer of "The Railway Children", E. Nesbit, may have drawn her inspiration from our local setting. Gwenda and Barbara were largely responsible for establishing the circumstantial details supporting this claim by relating the documentary and literary evidence to the landscape. Their presentation of their case has been outstanding: an exhibition in New Mills library to coincide with talks by members of the E. Nesbit Society last year; a booklet giving a guided tour of the sites in question; now, this excellent talk to the Local History Society.

Gwenda vividly portrayed the character of this Victorian writer, her emancipated life-style and the unconventional household in London over which she presided. E. Nesbit's half-sister lived at Ridge End, Marple, and later at "Paradise" near Cobden Edge, which lies adjacent to the house called "Three Chimneys". It was during her visits to her married sister that the author became famil-

iar with our area and set several of her stories in this locality. Gwenda also explained that the research into the E. Nesbit connection had been prompted by an enquiry from researchers in the E. Nesbit Society which happened to coincide with a project by Derbyshire Library Service to encourage libraries to present the works of local authors to the public.

With the aid of some excellent slides, Barbara presented us with the locations along the literary trail which could be related to passages in "The Railway Children" and other works of E. Nesbit. It would be superfluous to repeat the details here when the guide, entitled "The Nesbit Connection: Edith Nesbit Literary Trail", is available at the library at £1.

Members of the audience showed by the number and quality of their questions and observations just how much interest has been aroused by this research. All those who contributed to the project, but Gwenda and Barbara in particular, are to be heartily congratulated.

THE TALK OF THE WASH-HOUSE

9th February 2001 - Frances Worsley

Frances Worsley's talk was based on her M.A. researches into the history of public wash-houses in Manchester at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her interest in the subject covers not only the process by which these were established but also their social history, especially their role in raising the standard of public health amongst the working class communities of Manchester.

Our speaker explained that prior to the Industrial Age when most people dwelt in the countryside, the washing of clothes was a straightforward affair for most women, the family wash being accomplished by an abundance of fresh water, a mixture of animal fat and wood ashes (known as lye) and plenty of elbow-grease. But with the growth of large manufacturing towns such as Manchester, poor people were denied such simple luxuries as running water in their homes. Only the better-off could employ the services of washerwomen, or had servants to do the laundry. It was not until the 1840s after major enquiries such as the Chadwick Report revealed the shocking state of public health in our new towns and cities that measures were introduced to provide the ordinary citizen with the means to wash his clothes and keep himself clean. Manchester, with the second highest mortality rate in Britain, initially lagged behind other centres such as Liverpool and inner London; but local agitation eventually led to the opening of the first public wash-house in the town in 1846, which proved so popular that a second

was opened at Miles Platting in 1850. Others followed in other working class districts of Manchester throughout the nineteenth century. The last to be built or re-built came as late as the 1930s. Frances Worsley's slides showed the development of these wash-houses, both externally and internally. Those built in the latter half of the nineteenth century were architectural monuments to Victorian civic pride, with elaborate ornamentation whose inspiration lay in Tuscany, Egypt, India and far-flung corners of the Empire. They were monuments designed to immortalise the city fathers rather than serve the modest aspirations of their users. As the twentieth century wore on, new wash-houses, often accompanied by public washing and swimming baths, became more simple, functional edifices, reflecting new attitudes to the provision of such facilities. The demise of the wash-houses in the post-war period reflected the changes in the provision of hot and cold water in most homes, of electricity, washing machines and gardens sufficiently spacious to dry clothes. These changes also brought to an end what had been an important element in the lives of working women: the shared experience of laundering clothes. Elderly people today will look back on those times with mixed emotions: pushing a pram loaded with dirty washing up Cheetham Hill in the rain epitomises hard times thankfully passed and best forgotten; but they might still feel nostalgic about "the talk of the wash-house".

FINDING THE WAY ACROSS THE PEAK

9th March 2001 - Howard Smith

Having had the pleasure of hearing Howard Smith's talk on packhorse trails across the Peak, we were eager to hear more from this expert from Sheffield on the history of road transport and communications, and were not disappointed. Howard began his talk by reminding us of the difficulties of moving through the Peak District in past times: steep and dangerous terrain and evil weather. Packhorse journeys virtually ceased in the winter months. Travellers moving over the hills and across featureless moors used whatever landmarks, both natural and manmade, that the district afforded: prominent gritstone outcrops, prehistoric barrows or medieval crosses, for example. In 1697 an Act of Parliament concerning the improvement of the nation's highways stipulated that remote parishes should set up guide posts at crossroads to direct the traveller. This regulation was put into effect in Derbyshire in 1709 and led to the erection of perhaps hundreds of stones inscribed with directions, usually, to important market towns. These four-sided monoliths set up at cross-roads were known locally as "guide stoops" (from an old Norse word meaning "stone").

Howard Smith has been investigating the surviving stoops and has found 45 so far in the county, chiefly on the eastern side of the Pennines above Sheffield and Chesterfield. Most of his slide presentation was taken up with showing us these. Many interesting facts emerge from his research. For example, in the eighteenth century people tended to spell place-names as they pronounced them in Derbyshire dialect, e.g. Tideswell: Tids-wall; Sheffield:Shaffeld. Several of the examples shown had been removed from their original location and had ended up as gate-posts. This is because, with the passing of the packhorse era guide stoops became redundant and farmers were quick to find a new use for them.

The local history society at Holymoorside near Chesterfield has taken on the special task of locating, rescuing and re-erecting all the guide stoops still in existence in the county. It is good that a historical society is actively engaged in conserving the remains of the past and has the muscle to do it: the average weight of a guide stoop, we were told, is half a ton!

Ron Weston

STAINSBY MILL

6 April 2001 - Sonia Preece

For over 600 years there has been a water-powered corn mill on the Hardwick Hall estate. Until 1593 it was owned by the Savage family, Lords of the manor of Stainsby, but it was then bought by Bess of Hardwick. The grain produced by the tenants was ground for flour and animal feed. By the mid-1840s the mill had fallen into disrepair and was no longer working, so the sixth duke of Devonshire set about rebuilding it and installing new equipment. The mill was completely refitted, all the medieval remains removed, and a new iron water wheel seventeen feet in diameter and five feet wide built. There are three pairs of millstones; a pair of French burrstones and

two pairs of local gritstone. New developments in corn milling and better imported flour finally resulted in the mill ceasing work in 1952. It then fell again into disrepair. However, fortunately it came into the ownership of the National Trust in 1976 and after substantial restoration opened to the public in 1992. Sonia Preece, besides enthusiastically describing the history of the mill and its layout with the aid of slides, also was able to place it in the context of Hardwick Hall and its estate and tenants. This mill is an obvious contender for a future summer visit for our society.

Derek Brumhead

THE ANDERTON BOAT LIFT

11 May 2001 - Basil Jeuda

The speaker is very well known for his publications, classes and day courses on the transport history and industrial archaeology of Cheshire and adjacent regions. He has a very wide range of topics on which he can speak and lead excursions, and it is therefore of no surprise that he came to speak to the society on this rather less well known but fascinating subject. The Anderton Boat Lift near Northwich

in Cheshire, was designed by the engineer of the Weaver navigation (and later the Manchester Ship Canal), Sir E Leader Williams, and it is of international renown, so much so that the Lottery Heritage Fund was persuaded to contribute over £6m to its recent restoration. It is located at the point where the Trent and Mersey Canal and the river Weaver Navigation come within a few yards of one another.

It was an obvious location for the transshipment of goods, particularly salt, from one waterway to the other. The only problem was that the canal was about 50 feet higher than the river. The original solution was to use tramways, inclines and chutes into which the salt had to be shovelled by hand. Leader Williams' solution was to design a huge iron structure, 162 ft. 6 in. long, in which barges could be lowered and raised fully loaded with 200 tons of salt between canal and river. The barges were floated into water-filled tanks, or caissons, which were lowered and raised by a self acting principle, supported where necessary by hydraulic power. The lift was opened in 1871. However, the salt played havoc with the machinery and ironwork and in 1903 the unique mechanism was replaced with electrically-driven machinery. With the changes in the salt industry and the run-

down of canal and river traffic, the boat lift was taken out of service in the early 1980s. By that time it was in a parlous condition and there was a distinct danger that it would be demolished. Fortunately, a trust was formed which set about the challenging task of obtaining funding for its restoration.

Basil Jeuda has a large slide collection to support his talks, and we were treated to some splendid evocative historic photographs of the salt industry and traffic on the canal and river as well as past and recent photographs of the boat lift. They were accompanied by the usual authoritative and detailed commentary which we have come to expect of the speaker. It is hoped that he will be invited again to speak to our society.

Derek Brumhead

"A HISTORY OF NEW MILLS"

A WEA course entitled "A History of New Mills in Bowden Middlecale" will be held on Monday evenings, commencing 1st October 2001 at Spring Bank Adult Education Centre. Over the course of eleven meetings, Derek Brumhead, Roger Bryant, Melanie Tebbutt, Alan Rose and Ron Weston will combine to cover a comprehensive range of topics ranging in time from early prehistory to the twentieth century. This is a rare opportunity to get a general overview of the history of our town from some of its current researchers.

For further details and information regarding enrolment, contact our local WEA representative, John Humphreys (tel. 743581).

**New Mills Library
Hall Street
New Mills
High Peak
Derbyshire
SK22 3AR
01663 743603**

As part of the New Mills Festival (7th - 23rd September 2001)
New Mills Library staff are organising the following E.Nesbit related events:

Friday 7th. September 2001

The Nesbit Connection: Illustrated talk by *Gwenda Culkin* and *Barbara Matthews*

New Mills Library Lecture Room

7.30pm Free

Monday 17th. September - Saturday 22nd. September 2001

"The Nesbit Connection" - exhibition at Central Station, New Mills.
On Friday 21st. we will be inviting schools to the exhibition and having work sheets, quizzes etc. Related to the author. Saturday 22nd. will be a general open day, with library staff on hand to promote the Library, the E.Nesbit connection and trail, and the E.Nesbit society.

Sunday 23rd. September 2001

Edith Nesbit Literary Trail - 9 mile walk led by *Gwenda Culkin* and *Barbara Matthews*

10am - 4pm

£3 (£2 concessionary) - proceeds to New Mills Festival.

Heritage Centre - Collection Corner

We are looking at ways of informing people about the recent accessions to the Centre collection. In some cases we hope people can help us with information about some of the objects, many of which have local connections. Occasionally we receive something which is a complete mystery. Here are some of the more interesting items:

- A very fine example of Royal Stafford bone china cup, saucer and plate commemorating the Centenary of St.

Georges Parish

Church 1831 - 1931. Donated by Mrs.P.Lewis.

- A baby's, handstitched, bonnets circa 1943 - 1945 which had been worn by a local child. Each with a makers label:

"Milliner & Draper, Madame Marsh, 66, Albion Road, New Mills."

Donated by Mr.A.Griffin.

- Illuminated address presented to John Beard esq. , Master of the New Mills Military Band by the Catholics of New Mills as a celebration of his 50th. Jubilee in 1925.

also Silver baton, with presentation case, presented to J.Beard, Band Sergt by Colonel Clayton of the 2/6 Batt., the Sherwood Foresters 1915.

Donated by Ian Mason.

- A very attractive, pottery, Piggy Bank commemorating the Derbyshire Fire Service Silver Jubilee 1948 - 73. Spotted in a local charity shop. Donated by Derek Brumhead.

- Framed photograph of the Staff and Pupils of New Mills County Secondary School 1921. Can you help identify people?

Donated by Joan Needham.

- Hayfield Constables Staff. We are seeking information about this and research in to the Constables, through the Parish Records, would make an interesting project for someone.

Donated by Pam Gee.

These and other items are on show in a new display. Why not call in for a tea or coffee and have a look around? We would be happy to receive further donations of items, its surprising what you may come across if you keep your eyes open. Recently, a local Carer, noticed one of her ladies throwing an old book in the wheelie bin. She rescued it and ensured that it was donated to the collection. It was: "New Mills Wesleyan Methodism by Seth Evans" !!

The Heritage Centre is also on the lookout for new Volunteers. Have you considered giving some time to help in the Centre doing what is a valuable and very rewarding activity? If you would like more information please speak to Derek Brumhead, the Administrator.

John Humphreys, Curator.

Salford Quays and The Lowry

On a breezy but sunny day in June, a good sized group of members and friends went on the summer outing to the Salford Quays. When Salford Docks opened for business in January 1894, members of the public, judged by appearance to be 'respectable', were allowed to wander freely - fortunately we were not challenged! Indeed, today, people are encouraged to visit and live on what was an intensively worked industrial site for 100 years. We were fortunate to be able to call on Dr. Derek Brumhead's knowledge of the Docks researched over many years.

Our visit began from The Lowry Centre with a morning walk, led by Derek, to explore the various Basins. As Derek gathered us together by the quayside the Lowry Footbridge rose majestically and a ship passed by on its way to Liverpool. Derek was coy about how he had arranged for this to happen. We set off along the side of the Salford Wharf, past the Water Sports Centre, where rowers appeared to be preparing to go for a training spin, and turned into the Mariners Canal. This was an imposing stretch with attractive housing on both sides and dead ahead the imposing Victoria Building at Harbour City on the other side of the Erie Basin. As we came to various viewpoints Derek graphically related the buildings, Basins and bridges to their role in the docks over the last 100 years.

We returned to the Ontario Basin where enthusiasts were putting their remote controlled yachts through their paces and where once, the 12,000 ton ships of

Manchester Liners unloaded their cargoes. Derek drew our attention to, the architecture of Manchester Liners House with its shape of a ships bridge, the style of the Dock Office and roused our imaginations to picture the scene as thousands of dock workers poured through the preserved Dock Gates.

We further explored smaller basins and South Bay looking at the interesting new housing and office building and debating whether or not it had 'worked'. With thanks to Derek for his fascinating, hidden story of the Quays we split to hunt for various places to have lunch. The afternoon was taken up with a visit to that part of the Quays where the most radical innovations are taking place.

We each went on a conducted building tour of The Lowry to gain an insight into the ideas behind the architecture and the apparently discordant colour scheme of orange and purple. The guides do not seem to have been reading from the same hymn sheet but we heard plenty of thought provoking ideas and the visits to the theatres were very interesting. Love it or loathe it, the architecture of The Lowry, the Digital World Centre, opposite and the Imperial War Museum North, on the other side of the Canal, is providing an imposing example of change. I wonder what the 11000 navvies, who dug the Canal in the 1890's, would have thought of it all. We, however, had a most enjoyable day.

John Humphreys.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENCLOSURES OF THE COMMONS AND WASTES OF BOWDEN MIDDLECALE IN THE ROYAL FOREST OF PEAK

by Derek Brumhead and Ron Weston

Under the Stuarts, improvement of the commons and wastes for profit became a major attempt to solve the crown's financial problems. Charles I took the policy further, holding forest courts, restoring ancient laws and exacting huge fines. In the royal forest of Peak, the demand arose for disafforestation, which involved the freeing of the land from forest law, the removal of the deer, the division of the commons and wastes between crown and tenants, and the enclosure and improvement of the land. After interruption due to the civil war, this led ultimately to a radical reorganisation in land ownership, with the king's parts of the commons and wastes eventually being sold to a private individual for improvement while the tenants' parts remained mostly unenclosed until well into the nineteenth century. In Bowden Middlecale, there is a very close coincidence between the seventeenth century apportionments of the commons and wastes

and the eighteenth and nineteenth century enclosures of tenants' parts both regarding boundaries and acreage. Fieldwork has confirmed that a surprising amount of evidence of the divisions and enclosures is still to be found in today's landscape, which can also be related to the physical nature of the ground and its geological structure. In addition, the boundaries with the ancient farmlands, cut out of the forest in medieval times, and freehold properties which occupied choice sites within or on the edge of the commons, can also be identified. In the course of their fieldwork, the authors came to appreciate the degree of accuracy of the seventeenth century maps, and the competence of the surveyors.

This booklet, which is an offprint from the Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, is on sale at society meetings and at the Heritage Centre, price £3.25.

**WHERE TWO OR THREE
ARE GATHERED
TOGETHER**



The Story of
St. PAUL'S CHURCH, STRINES,
STOCKPORT, CHESHIRE

and its people.

by

Rosemary Taylor

As churches go, St. Paul's, Strines is not very old (only 120 years), nor is its architecture distinguished - it is what is commonly called a tin tabernacle. Strines church was founded by paternalistic employers at a time when most people in the village were employed at the local calico printing works. Its story reflects the social changes in the village where now none of the residents are employed at the works and the majority of the congregation come from elsewhere.

A4 paperback; 72 pages plus 8 pages of black and white photos. Price £7-50.

To order, contact Ron Weston, Editor NMLHS, "The Thorns", Laneside Road, New Mills, HIGH PEAK, Derbyshire, SK22 4LU. Tel. 01663 744838.