

New Mills Local History Society

Newsletter 28



THE HARE AND HOUNDS - "NEWTON'S FOLLY"

Spring 2002

SPRING PROGRAMME 2002

Fri. 11th. January

SHEILA MORTEN

“Letters from the First World War”

Fri. 8th. February

KEITH HOLFORD

“Four Castles and a Family”

Fri. 8th. March

DEREK BRUMHEAD

“The Growth of Newtown in the Nineteenth Century”

Fri. 12th. April

ANN HEARLE

“Mellor Hilltop (10,000 years of occupation)”

Fri. 10th.. May

A.G.M.

DAVID HEY

“Millstones on the Moors”

All meetings are held in Sett Valley House, starting at 7.45pm. Visitors are welcome.

COMMITTEE 2001-2002

Chairman	RICHARD WOOD (743243)
Vice-Chairman	BARBARA MATTHEWS (743935)
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Hon. Editor	RON WESTON (744838)
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HAZEL GROVE: A VILLAGE ASHAMED OF ITS NAME

14th September 2001 - Ian May

The autumn season got off to a good start with Ian May's lecture on Hazel Grove. He explained how four Saxon farms named Bosa's-Dun, Nor-Burgh, Turec's -Ton and Bram Halm became Norman manors and later four townships with names we are more familiar with today, Bosden, Norbury, Torkington and Bramhall. It was first documented in 1560 that a smithy was leased to Richard Bullock, this was located in the vicinity of the A6 close to where Norbury church stands today. The smithy became a popular meeting place and with the development of the turnpike roads was situated at a junction of two main roads. The area known as Bullock Smithy expanded and became very undesirable with fourteen public houses in less than a mile. Prominent residents in 1795 planned to abolish the name and revive the "ancient and proper name of Hazel Grove". Plaques stating the new name were placed on the first and last

buildings in the village, the Red Lion and the George and Dragon public houses. However in 1810 the old name still lived on, the famous Bullock Smithy Wakes were advertised in Punch, with activities such as bull and bear baiting and smoking matches for all ages. In 1836 the local cotton and silk manufacturer's took action to change the name of the village and create a better image for the area. The Stockport Express in 1836 reported the name changing celebrations with bands playing and a procession of 3,000 people. Thirty-six gallons of beer also helped to make it a very happy occasion. The Beadle sounded his trumpet at eight places stating "The village shall become Hazel Grove herefore and forever." This name changing ceremony is still celebrated every 50 years. Ian May gave an interesting and entertaining talk that included many amusing anecdotes.

Barbara Matthews

THE BOWER'S OF TORR TOP AND ASPENSHAW

12th October 2001 - Ron Weston

The society's archives contain several hundred deeds, many dating back to the seventeenth relating to the Ollersett Estate once owned by George William Newton (1788-1871). These documents inspired our speaker Ron Weston to carry out further research and put some flesh on the bones of this colourful character of local folklore 'Squire Newton'. He enlisted the help of family historian Sheila Richardson who has a talent for finding out far more than the simple facts. As they gathered their research material together it became apparent that G.W.N. played only a part in the story that was unfolding. Also a vital missing link in the history of New Mills was coming to light through Newton's maternal ancestors, the Bower family of Torr Top and Aspenshaw. Ron explained how three generations of the family were originally modest yeoman farmers who became rich men and substantial landowners. We were given a description of early eighteenth century New Mills with farms scattered around Whitle Common, the boundary of which lay on the slopes behind what is now Market Street and Springbank and stretching back to Shaw

Marsh. The Bower lands consisted of a large meadow in the vicinity of Union Road today. The common was vital to farmers like the Bowers for the grazing of sheep, however this common land became split between king and tenants, and eventually the family were able to purchase a large area of the former Kings part, which greatly increased their Torr Top estate. In addition to farming the family were also involved in the manufacturer and selling of woollen textiles, paper making and tanning. They owned a fulling mill and papermill situated in the Torrs and were probably the first to harness the water-power in the gorge and also the first to employ people in New Mills. We heard how the connection with the Aspenshaw Estate came through the marriage of second generation George Bower to Elizabeth Buckley of Aspenshaw. It was a fascinating talk, local history at its best. Anyone who missed it can find all the details in Ron Weston's publication *Men of Property*. Several people were heard to remark how they were looking forward to the next episode in December.

Barbara Matthews

A HISTORY OF STOCKPORT MARKET

9th November 2001 - Paula Rands

We have little definite knowledge of Stockport before the thirteenth century, though its market charter of 1260 pre-supposes the existence of a sizeable settlement well before that date. Stockport occupies a plateau-top site skirted by a dramatic gorge in red sandstone. Just below the point where the rivers Goyt and Tame meet to form the Mersey was the bridging point across the gorge where the town grew up. Commanding the entrance to medieval Stockport was a castle which once stood in the corner of the market place known as Castle Yard. The castle was demolished in 1649 and as no drawings or paintings of it have survived we have little idea of its appearance. The parish church at the other end of the market place, built between 1290 and 1300, was demolished and rebuilt in the early nineteenth century, except for the chancel, the only surviving part of the original church.

Paula Rands readily conveyed her enthusiasm for the history and archaeology of Stockport, achieved a good rapport with her audience and showed a ready command of

her topic. Her own observations (derived chiefly from peering into holes!) and experiences which she shared with us helped to present a vivid picture of medieval Stockport. A late seventeenth century map of Stockport shows several details of the market., including the butchers' row, conduit, ancient market cross and market hall. All this was swept away in 1740. Fortunately, several of the houses surrounding the market place have much earlier structures concealed behind Georgian or Victorian facades. The most celebrated of these, known as Staircase House, dates from c.1450 and is currently being restored. When work is complete, it will become the town's heritage centre.

In 1851 a new market hall, inspired by London's crystal palace, was constructed. Much of old Stockport has been destroyed in recent decades; but a few old buildings remain. There has been a hostelry on the site of the White Lion, according to Paula, for a thousand years!

Ron Weston

THE NEWTON FAMILY OF OLLERSETT

14 December 2001 - Ron Weston

Writing a review of a talk given by oneself is like preparing one's own obituary and readers will understand if I decline to attempt this. Usually I would have asked someone else to write a review: but time is short and I cannot risk any delay to the publication of this Newsletter. Nevertheless, I wish to put on record two valuable comments made after my talk by members of the audience.

We were told that The Hare and Hounds and the high walls of Ollersett used to be known locally as "Newton's Folly" which is a remarkable example of "folk memory" passing down through the generations. Secondly, we were informed that J.K. Winterbottom's

embezzlement of a client's insurance policy, a crime for which he was transported to Tasmania, was not the only one: on an earlier occasion he had also misappropriated funds from a Turnpike Trust when acting as its Clerk. Thus, my portrait of Winterbottom as an upright man brought low by a single act of folly needs some modification. My opinion of George Newton remains unaltered: he was a fool with his money and treated his creditors badly: but, unlike Winterbottom, he was an honest man who did not commit fraud or break the law in any way.

Ron Weston.

Continued from back page

OP 9. Thornsett in 1841: Land and People	£3.25
OP 10. New Mills: a look back at its Industrial Heritage	£4.95
OP 11. Where Two or Three Are Gathered Together - A History of St.Paul's Church Strines	£7.50

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 regarding availability 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.

LIFE IN 'ALCATRAZ': 1939-1943:1946-1966

It was March 20th 1940 and I had attained the exciting age of 14 and in OUR day 14 was the age when you went to work. In most cases the job was there, your parents had found it for you, no saying I don't like it, or it will not suit!

My father worked at the MELLOR BLEACHING AND DYEING CO and walked there in the morning and back at night a trip of 8 miles and the thought of another wage about to appear was a bonus. Father's wage was £2. 4s. 0d (£2.20p) per six day week and that kept a family of four, and since my sister JEAN had started school my mother had gone back to LOWES MILL on a part time basis as a weaver. They were very short of weavers and the order book was full, a rare thing in the cotton trade, so in my case I had my orders to report at the mill at 7.30 sharp. I had passed by this mill many times and heard all the noise, seen the women coming out at the end of work covered in fluff. I was destined for this environment. 7.30 came and I went through those big gates with my mother, lots of women going too and very FEW men, on looking back I can see

why the old hands called it ALCA-TRAZ.

My mother took me down the stone steps to the 2nd floor this was called the NEW ROOM and where I was going to learn the trade. This place was full of Lancashire looms, 96 in all. My mother had 3 looms in what was called a running alley, one loom weaving a nice coloured towel, the 2nd loom weaving a napkin and the third loom a high quality hospital towel.

At 7.30 the overhead shafting started to turn and the day began, the mill was powered by a twin cylinder steam engine, plus a big water-wheel, this you could use on its own if the load was light, such as short time working and the cotton trade was very prone to that sort of situation, it was a very unstable industry. Next to the engine house was the boiler house, with two Lancashire boilers, coal fired with coal brought to the mill by JIM WOOLY and his horse and cart, the coal yard being where the super store LO COST is now or more recently CO-OP PIONEER, and before that from the PINGOT PIT up Laneside Road. STANLEY

POTTS was the engineer and RALPH LIVERSAGE was the boiler man /fireman.

All looms were driven from overhead shafts with leather belt drives, NO guards and NO ear muffs in those days. Looms were dangerous things and could cause nasty accidents and if you needed proof a trip to MR HIBBERT the cashier who had lost half his hand in a set of cog wheels would convince you more than a warning notice.

Starting time came and the racket began, the noise was deafening and the shuttles were flying, we were making towels and a gruff looking man was walking up and down the aisles, this man was the TACKLER or to give him his Sunday name the OVERLOOKER, just to think that one day I would be doing his job. The LOOM consisted of an iron frame, a rotating top and bottom shaft and on top of the iron frame a DOBBIE (this put the pattern in the towel). Connected to the dobbie was a series of wooden lats, holding steel EYES which the individual cotton threads passed through, these lifted and dropped so forming a SHED through which the shuttle flew at speed. The tacklers job was to repair this lot of wood, steel, leather, springs,

string, and all that went to make the loom. His job was hampered by all sorts of problems, the WEATHER being one. If it was too dry he had a problem and if too damp it put more drag on the shuttle and caused mayhem; also the weaver was on piece rates and the tackler tied up with a production bonus so ALL were the losers if things went wrong. As well as all this, the cotton before it came to the loom had to go through the hands of the TAPE SIZER this was a process of treating the cotton with a solution of size to which had been added a "secret" mix known only to the trade and if the tape sizer got it wrong, life was hell and wages were very well down for every one.

I was first taught how to stop the loom, this was an art, you had to whip the starting handle from the fixed pulley on the loom to a FREE pulley in seconds and hold the forward thrust of the loom at the same time, this could knock you off your feet, but after a while you got the hang of it and managed to stay firmly on the ground. After a few months I got a loom of my own and in time I got TWO so I became trained and started to produce napkins from both looms, no letting me loose on high quality

hospital towels, if you made a mess of any towels you were called into the warehouse to see the foreman (this too was to be my job in the future).

All the women used to **talk** to each other by lip reading and I got used to this foreign chatter, the manager HARRY BULLOUGH who had been in the trade all his life was an expert. He used to parade up and down the aisles before going to the cotton exchange in town and say 'pick up any waste cotton on the floor, that is our money you are kicking around.'

The mill contained 320 Lancashire looms on four floors or **sheds** as they are called in the trade, another floor held the slashing room or to quote its SUNDAY NAME, the tape sizing room. This dept. could break or make a weavers life, it treated the cotton with size mixed to a special formula and too much or too little meant weeks of misery to a weaver. This sizeing was to strengthen the cotton for the **bash-ing** it was going to receive at the loom .

The mill had NO air conditioning of any sort and three male sweepers were kept busy every day

sweeping the cotton dust up from the looms and the mill floors. Every six weeks Bottomly Bros. used to come with a large container lorry and put a full load of fluff on board, they said it was used for making mops! The women had to be strong too because they had to lift weights of over 28 pounds onto bars on the loom to keep pressure on the warps and to adjust the amount of terry that was put on the towel .

Finally my time was up as a weaver and I was promoted as PEGGER. This job entailed putting wooden pegs into holes on wooden bars, these in turn went onto the dobbie and lifted various shafts to put the pattern in the towel. A wooden peg in the wrong place and the pattern was wrong.

Then a few years was spent on a very boring job, the term given to it was TWISTER, when the warp was used up in the loom, a new one had to be knotted onto the old one this meant tying thousands of knots onto the old warp. You were paid on piece work as to how many knots you tied, the finger and thumb were used and a lubricant in the form of whitening, a powder used in the old days to re-

decorate walls and ceilings, was used on your fingers; at times your fingers got really sore and reduced your earnings, some of the old hands used to PEE on the fingers to harden them! All this piece work payments for ALL hands in the cotton trade caused lots of problems and in some cases rows and 'agro'.

When I think of W.S.Lowe, and the people who worked there, the people of today in 2001 would not believe that these people were as they were and that such a place existed. In 1950 a big event came to pass at the mill. Messrs W.Clapham and his workers came to install a hoist or crane in the place. They cut a large hole through every floor and put in this great back saver a wire rope hoist. The days of the sherpa at Lowes mill were coming to an end. Previous to this all raw material warps weighing one to three hundred-weights had to be carried down many flights of stairs and all towels made had to be carried up four flights of stairs to the warehouse for inspection and sewing.

Things were looking up and the drives were changed on the looms. The old twin cylinder steam engine was retired and an electric motor

was installed at the end of each line shaft. During the war a canteen was formed from a redundant room in the mill and ENSA, a travelling concert party, used to come to perform and cheer every one up PLUS being a canteen you could get hot meals of a sort and sandwiches too; the event was called MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK! People from outside of the mill used to attend this big knees up.

I marvel that the old employees lived so long, many well into their 80s before they passed on and some of them had no hearing problems etc. in spite of all the racket that goes on in the weaving sheds; also many times the shuttle would fly out missing them and landing in the river, some had many escape tales to tell.

I used to see and have a chat with many of the old workers after they retired SYDNEY WYATT, BEN GREEN, HARRY ARDERN, LEN FLEMMING, WILY POOLE, BUCK LIDDIARD, AND THE LATER ESCAPEE GEORGE STATHAM, all recalling ALCATRAZ days. The big grumble was trying to manage on the BASIC old age pension and not having one from the firm.

In the pre-war days the mill owners had a big mill at STAYLEY-BRIDGE. I went to see this place one day and remember it was a spinning place too, but after the war the merchants HIGHAM-TONG bought the mill. Highams had the run of the place and MR HIGHAM had two SONS who he thought they would take over, and one of them did just that. ROBERT was the mechanical minded one and JOHN went on to buy a laundry or two. Robert got down to running the mill and as it is today Robert has stayed to the bitter end and seen it close

One funny story to end the history of Alcatraz, I think it was about 1942 and I was coming home on leave after a trip from west Africa and I came in to Salford docks to unload. I did not need to bring my gear off the ship as I was re-signing back on the same ship. When I came off the train at New Mills Central station I looked down to my old firm and saw the windows blown out, what a mess it all was. A German bomber had dropped a bomb or two in the river, aiming for the gas holders down there and apart from windows no other damage, even then the old hands were there cleaning up and getting the old place ship shape.

A funnier thing followed. The men found an UNEXPLODED bomb in the river and got a rope hauled it up the stone retaining wall, put it in a wheelbarrow and carried into the ENGINE HOUSE there they hoped to “clean it up” and stand it there as a war replica, but MR. BULLOUGH got to know about this and called the bomb squad who had it taken away and exploded on the hills. A court case came about and all these men attended the town hall and were fined for their efforts. So, Alcatraz had a narrow escape and perhaps when it becomes a heritage project I hope it has the same luck - but in that mill are many GHOSTS and I hope they all rest in peace and perhaps the stories can be told of the “bad old days”.

One of the few remaining story tellers

Harold Froggatt, MAY 2001

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, see address at end.

1 and 2.	New Mills in the 1820s	O/P
3.	Whitle Enclosure	£1.25
4.	Mills of New Mills (see O.P.7)	O/P
5.	New Mills 1830 - 35	O/P
6.	Railways of New Mills and District	O/P
7.	Turnpike Roads and Riots	£2.25
8.	The Lost Mills of Rowarth	£1.75
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	£1.50
23.	The Peak Forest Canal Lower Level : Towpath Guide	£3.25
24.	The Living Past: New Mills People in late Tudor & 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
28.	Men of Property: The Bowers and the Newtons	£3.25

Occasional Publications (A4)

OP 1.	Gravestone Inscriptions; St. George's Rd. Methodist Cemetery	O/P
OP 2.	New Mills and District, a look back (old photos)	O/P
OP 3.	The Peak Forest Canal, its construction and later development (A5)	£3-25
OP 4.	Church of the Annunciation St. Mary's Catholic Church New Mills; graveyard records	£1.00
OP 5.	Ollersett in 1841: Land and people	£2.95
OP 6.	New Mills in 1851 and 1881 as seen through the census returns	O/P
OP 7.	The Mills of New Mills (revised edn. of No. 4 above)	£4.95
OP 8.	The Enclosure of Thornsett	£2-95

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