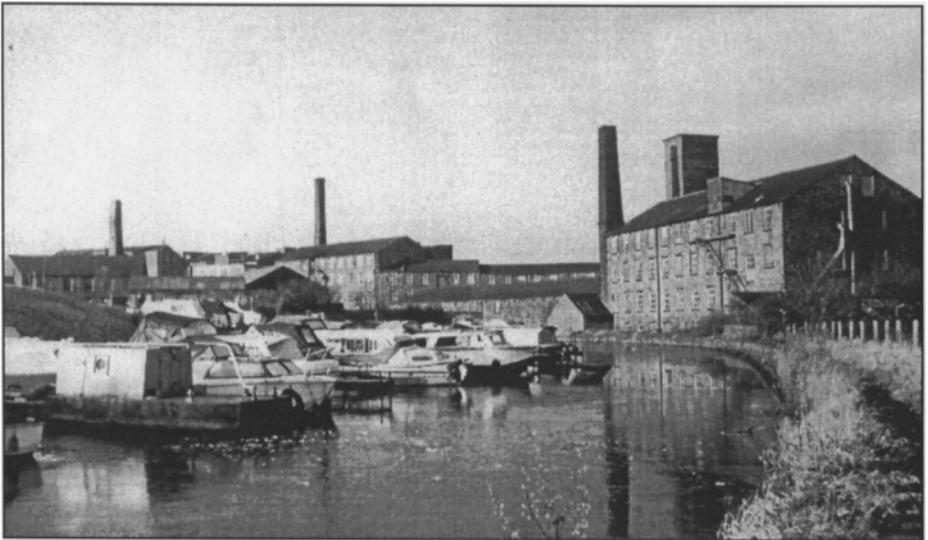


New Mills Local History Society

Newsletter 29



Peak Forest Canal and Newtown marina in 1985.

Autumn 2002

AUTUMN PROGRAMME 2002

Fri. 13th. September
SIR MARTIN DOUGHTY
“**New Mills: A Self-Made Town ?**”

Fri. 11th. October
MELANIE TEBBUTT
“**The Do’s and Don’ts of Oral History**”

Fri. 8th. November
DAVID GEORGE
“**Liverpool Road Station, Manchester**”

Fri. 13th. December
JANET ALLAN
“**Elizabeth Gaskell’s Manchester**”

COMMITTEE 2002-2003

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Vice-Chairman	BARBARA MATTHEWS (743935)
Hon. Secretary	JOHN HUMPHREYS (743581)
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www.newmillshistory.org.uk

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

11 August 2002

Dear Friends,

After a busy week, it is all too tempting to spend a Friday evening with your feet up watching telly; but I hope you will continue to give the Society your loyal support on every second Friday of each month.

There is an attractive programme of talks commencing in September and a friendly reception awaits you.

Often when we speak of the history of New Mills we mean that of the four hamlets of Beard, Ollersett, Whitle and Thornsett, and residents of Newtown may sometimes feel aggrieved at the constant exclusion of their neck of the woods. That neglect has now been rectified. Derek Brumhead's new book, "**NEWTOWN - the growth of an industrial suburb in the nineteenth century**", is a masterly and definitive account, which includes some fine photos, both ancient and modern, and a useful collection of extracts from old maps showing the evolution of Newtown in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A snip at £3.50 (£3.25 if purchased

at a meeting), can you afford to be without it?

Copies of Derek's book will be on sale at the forthcoming meetings from September onwards, together with all our other publications. Something for the not too distant future: the third of our collections of old photos will be available shortly, entitled "**NEW MILLS- A Century of Change**". Details of the launch, to which you as a member will be cordially invited, will be announced soon.

Were you a volunteer at the recent Commonwealth Games? Perhaps you were a spectator. If you were, I'd be very grateful if you'd write something about it for the Newsletter describing what you did and what the experience was like. Such accounts are not only of interest to the contemporary reader, they will also be the very stuff of local history for a future generation.

Ron Weston

LETTERS FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR

11th January - Sheila Morten

Although Sheila and Denys Morten had heard of the existence of letters written by Denys's father during the First World war, chiefly to his parents, it was not until 1986, following the death of Denys's mother, that Sheila found them, stuffed into an old shoebox.

And there before us was that very box with the letters inside. Jack Morten's heavy suitcase, the mattock he had used to dig trenches in the Sudan and at Gallipoli, and much other memorabilia besides.

Typically, Jack and his young friends at the Heaton Mersey Lacrosse Club had signed on together, enlisting in a territorial battalion of The Manchester Regiment. After basic training at Littleborough, near Rochdale, they were posted east in September 1914. They spent some months camped out near Khartoum in the Sudan, and Jack's letters home, read with clarity and feeling by Sheila, were unfailingly lighthearted in spirit. We soon came to realise that his apparent pre-occupation with food and the basic necessities of life was a "safe" subject for correspondence. No doubt Jack wanted to spare his parents from

worrying about him as much as possible and he also needed to avoid the censor's indelible pencil.

He also spared them the horrors of Gallipoli, surely one of the most bungled episodes of the war. What Jack did not say, indeed could not say, became increasingly obvious from Sheila's reading, and these omissions were perhaps more moving than any of Jack's descriptions might have been.

After Gallipoli, where Jack lost so many of his companions, he was posted to Sinai, an inhospitable desert where a railway was under construction. By this time, Jack had received a commission and emerged at the end of the war with the rank of Captain.

Jack had gone into the army as a fresh-faced boy and emerged unscathed four years later, after a distinguished military career, a man. Sheila and Denys gave us a marvelous presentation of this rite of passage and we are grateful for all the time and trouble they took to make our evening so enjoyable and illuminating.

"I Remain Your Son Jack", letters from the First World War. Edited by Sheila Morten, 1993, Sigma Press is unfortunately now out of print, but Sheila informs us that a large-print version is now available.

FOUR CASTLES AND A FAMILY

8th February 2002 - Keith Holford

The epic story of Joel Clayton of Brierley Green in Bugsworth, who was one of the earliest British immigrants into California, was told to us by Keith Holford on a previous visit. Clayton, California is now twinned with Bugsworth and Keith has been there to talk on the township's founder. His latest venture has been to research the history of Joel Clayton's wife, Margaret McLay. The couple met in Oklahoma and married. Mrs Clayton's birthplace was in Fintry, Stirlingshire and Keith, chiefly for the benefit of his Californian friends, made a pilgrimage there to find out what he could of the McLay origins.

Keith gave us a detailed tour of Fintry and its environs. He had taken slides of many of the places that the McLays would have known, including, of course, the four castles featured in the title of the talk. Keith is an accomplished local historian and could not resist investigating a great deal of Fintry's history on the ground, whether it was directly related to the McLays or not. It is an area full of historical interest in its own right, as Keith was to reveal.

Keith Holford is sure of a warm welcome here at New Mills and it is hoped that he is able to offer us more topics with which to regale us in the future.

THE GROWTH OF NEWTOWN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

8th March 2002 - Derek Brumhead

In the late eighteenth century the district then known as Warksmoor (now spelt Wirksmoor), which was destined to become an industrial suburb of New Mills, was an uninhabited rural area of wooded slopes and pasture leading down to the river Goyt. By the end of the nineteenth century there were two new roads, the present A6 and Albion Road, five new cotton mills on the banks of the Peak Forest Canal, an iron foundry, a railway station, warehouse and sidings, a Board School, a post office, a laundry, six pubs,

a Methodist Chapel and Sunday school, two rope walks, and many shops. By 1901 over three hundred new houses supported a population of over 1500. Originally quite separate from New Mills (it was in Cheshire), Newtown was joined to it administratively in 1876, and physically by the opening of the Union Road Bridge in 1884, both events accompanied by considerable controversy.

See next page for details of the associated publication.

MELLOR HILLTOP (10,000 years of occupation)

12th April 2002 - Ann Hearle

Apart from a couple of Bronze Age burial mounds on neighbouring hill tops, almost nothing was known of Mellor's prehistory prior to the discovery in 1998 of the hill fort ditch. In the dry summer of that year Ann Hearle noticed yellow cropmarks in the field behind her garden at the old vicarage next to Mellor church. Thinking that they might be significant, lost remnants of medieval Mellor perhaps, she involved Archaeologists at Manchester University, who immediately suspected the discovery of an Iron Age hillfort. A geophysical survey (in the best traditions of Timeteam) established the line of a ditch. Trial trenches were dug which confirmed the extent and depth of the ditch and a few scraps of Iron Age pottery were found. Equally exciting was the unearthing of Roman tiles, pottery and glass. The Hearles had acquired an

archaeological site in their garden and, in the quietness of retirement, discovered a new and unexpected purpose in life.

Anne gave us a graphic account of how in the next three years the story of Mellor hillfort unfolded, with a programme of new investigations, the establishment of Mellor Archaeological Trust and the quest for funding to continue and expand the excavations. It is an inspiring story that has given people in Mellor an opportunity to participate in a stimulating piece of local research and discovery at first hand. The success of this community project is due, largely to Anne's enthusiasm and enterprise.

Members of the Society look forward to hearing more on this subject from Anne in the future.

Ron Weston

THE GROWTH OF NEWTOWN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The latest publication of New Mills Local History Society is an account by Derek Brumhead of the growth of this new industrial suburb. It follows his talk given to the Society last March. A4 in size, with 36 pages, the text includes a table of housing and population between 1851 and 1901, 12 maps from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and 16 photographs, many from the Society's collection. It is on sale at the Society's meetings, at New Mills Heritage Centre and at Book Stop on Market Street, price £3.50.

MILLSTONES ON THE MOORS

10th May 2002 - David Hey

Walkers on the East Moors in the Hathersage area are likely to come upon the huge millstones hewn out of the local gritstone (Millstone Grit) scattered about in the bracken. They are all that remains of a once-flourishing industry, the topic of David Hey's scholarly and informative illustrated talk.

It was the character of the coarse gritstone that gave rise to the industry. In Victorian times millstones were carved to serve many purposes, apart from grinding corn in mills. The trade in millstones eventually collapsed just before the Second World War, but who can tell when the industry began? David Hey has done his best to answer this question, chasing references in medieval documents. In the Eyre family papers, for example, millstones were recorded as being quarried at Yarnfield Wood, near Padley, in the fifteenth century. But the trade must be earlier than this: "Stanage" means "stone edge" a place-name dating from the Anglo-Saxon period; and quern stones used to grind grain by hand, fashioned from Millstone Grit, have been found associated with Roman period sites.

It was the grinding of grain into flour that always formed the basis of the millstone fashioning industry. The traditional diameter of a millstone was 60 -64 inches. Shaping and dressing this hard intractable stone was a highly-skilled task, handed down from one generation to another in certain farming families.

Part of that expertise was the choice of a suitable piece of stone. Many of the stones lying around today are partly finished rejects. To have worked so hard in vain must have been heartbreaking.

Derbyshire millstones were used throughout the country. Each stone could grind up to 100 tons of grain before being replaced; but in larger mills this meant every few months.

How were they moved? David Hey has recorded the routes of several smooth runways or steady gradient running down from the gritstone edges. Each millstone was dragged downhill on a horse-drawn sled. Waggons then took the stones to the river port of Bawtry, near Doncaster, and then onto the Trent. Movement by water was the preferred method of transport wherever practicable. In the first decades of the twentieth century millstones were being exported to grind wood into pulp for the paper industry. Others were despatched by rail to Manchester for grinding the pigments used in the bulk manufacture of paint. But this was merely the aftermath of a trade that had provided us with flour, one of our staple foods, for centuries.

David Hey is a gifted speaker and a noted academic historian. It is to be hoped that he can be persuaded to talk to us again on a future occasion.

Ron Weston

BOOK REVIEW

Derek Brumhead

The Great Arc: the dramatic tale of how India was mapped and Everest was named.

By John Keay. Published by HarperCollins, 2000, 182 pp, 31 illustrations and 3 maps. ISBN 0 00 257062 9, £14.99.

The Great Indian Arc of the Meridian, begun in 1800, was the longest measurement of the earth's surface ever to have been attempted. It was conceived by a genius, William Lambton who set up the standards of accuracy which aimed for discrepancies of no more than hundredths of an inch in miles of observation. Its 1600 miles of inch perfect survey took nearly fifty years and the difficulties and hazards described in this book beggar belief. Through hills and jungles, featureless plains, floods and fevers, monsoon rains and deserts the men of the Survey would dig in and wait often marooned for weeks in their tents, laid up with terrible diseases and under attack from enormous tigers and scorpions and spiders the size of your hand. Malaria wiped out whole survey parties, the cost in lives more than most contemporary wars. Overcoming all of this they carried the Arc by trigonometrical survey (triangulation) from the southern tip of India up into the foothills of the Himalayas. Millions of numbers were measured, checked and re-checked.

With a theodolite which weighed half a ton and whose transportation

across the Indian subcontinent was an achievement of epic proportions, observations had to be conducted from flimsy platforms above the ground or from a hill and mountain peak, with the views often obliterated by blizzards and torrential downpours or blasted by thunder and lightning. Paradoxically, the best survey work was carried out during and immediately after the monsoon, regardless of the discomfort, when the dust was laid and the heat-haze dispersed. When an eminence was seen, perhaps over twenty miles away, a party would be dispatched to occupy it, clear it, and set up a tower topped with a flag or light. This could take weeks while the base party waited in their saturated tents and seas of mud. With the "great theodolite" up and ready, sightings would be taken, bearings recorded and signals exchanged. Then, it was on and up to the next peak, and so the triangulation was advanced by another line.

The author has been to these places (he has written four acclaimed histories of India) and his writing exudes the various flavours of the Indian climate and landscapes. His book is a wonderful exposition of the art of

triangulation, the sort of equipment required, and the host of errors that could accumulate. Surveyors could only plot the positions and heights of distant peaks if the location of their own peak was already known, in terms of latitude and longitude. and its height above sea level. But there were all sorts of parameters which could affect the measurements. The earth's surface was curved so that triangles added up to more than 180 degrees (known as spherical excess); plumb lines were not always vertical being skewed by deep-seated dense rocks; measurements of elevations had to take into consideration refraction through the atmosphere

As each point was advanced in turn from a prior observation, a web of triangles forming a pattern like the trunk of a tree was pushed northwards up the centre of the Indian peninsula (Eventually, branches sprouted west and east to Bombay and Calcutta). On reaching the 400 mile-wide Ganges plain, there were virtually no hills from which to triangulate, visibility was impeded by trees and villages and a haze, the result of millions of dung-fuelled cooking fires. Desperate measures were necessary to achieve lines of site - miles of forest were cut down, obstructive hill summits physically lowered and, following difficult ne-

gotiation and promise of compensation, even whole villages razed to the ground. (Which says much for the British hold on this land, for all this work was originally, started and paid for by, the East India Company.) Even then, specially constructed brick sighting towers had to be built (some still stand), and the superstitions of the local people overcome - it was known that the theodolite was a telescope and suspicions were rife that the surveyors were spying on women folk and, what is more, that the images were upside down.

The survey made possible the accurate mapping of the entire sub-continent and calculation of the curvature of the earth, and the development of roads, railways and telegraphs. Remember this when you next look at an atlas. It also made possible the first accurate measurements of the Himalayas and established the fact that these were the highest mountains in the world. The highest was eventually named after George Everest, the Superintendent of the Survey, a martinet and stickler for detail and discipline for twenty years (1823-43), following his mentor, Lambton. In the offices of the Survey in India today. you will find his name still revered and pronounced as apparently it should be: Eve-rest.

Mr I N McLean
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27 June 2002

Dear Mr Weston

On a recent visit to the New Mills Heritage Centre I purchased your Spring 2002 Newsletter. I found the newsletter very interesting and am writing in the hope that you can include a request for information in your next issue. My father, Allistair Douglas McLean, was born in New Mills but subsequently moved to Bamford and then to Sheffield. I have photos of him at school and play in the town but it is not him that I am researching.

My request for information surrounds my grandfather, PC 159 Neil McLean, who was stationed at New Mills twice during his career in the Derbyshire Police. Before I go on I must be a bit diplomatic here and say that this request is aimed at the more senior residents as Neil was in the town for two periods, June 1902 to April 1903 and March 1919 to his retirement in February 1933. I can see you shaking your head now! Yes it is a long time ago, but anyone who had contact with him (I should be so lucky!) or remembers any stories that may have been passed down through the family would be appreciated. I would also appreciate any photos of him during his time in New Mills as I only have a few and all but one of those were taken in or around his house at 7 Chapel Street (I believe the street has been re-named.). I have a large collection of newspaper court reports relating to Neil's time in New Mills and in particular an infamous man called Wafter Graham Rowland and I would be interested in any stories anyone has about him. I would point out that I have a number of books about Rowland and his murderous ways but there's nothing like a personal anecdote!

I would ask that if anyone has any information that they write to me at the address above and with that in mind I give my permission for you to include it should my request be published. I have also asked for a request to be placed in a local Parish Magazine to widen my search, so to speak!

Thanking you for your assistance with this matter and I look forward to bags of mail arriving - hopefully!

Yours sincerely

Ian N McLean

Thornsett Hey coal tunnel

A note in Newsletter No 6 (Spring 1991) referred to the spoil from the digging of the Thornsett Hey coal tunnel lying in a field adjacent to Bate Mill. Recently, a hole in a field adjacent to Ladygate Brook and about ¼ mile north of Bate Mill proved on investigation to be the lost entrance to this tunnel, which was constructed in the early 1870s to bring coal out of a mine (known as Cave Adullam (sic) or Broome's Pit) beneath Broadhurst Edge. From the tunnel exit a horse tramroad took the coal to a wharf on Bate Mill Road, now the site of a children's play area (Fig 1). Peter Cox of Thornsett Hey Farm, on whose land the tunnel is, contacted the Coal Authority who arranged for a firm of consulting engineers to fill in the tunnel entrance and make it secure, and he invited me to be present. A JCB broke open the entrance to reveal a fine tunnel lined in stone so providing a unique opportunity to obtain photographs of a feature not seen since it was closed in 1885.

There is some interesting geology associated with this coal mine which worked two coal seams, called the Yard Mine and the Little Mine, both of which dip towards the east at about 1 in 7. As the section shows (Fig 2), the Yard Mine outcrops just above Aspenshaw Road, and in fact was mined by adits in the 1920s by James Morton, formerly the Under Manager of Ollersett Hall Pit (it closed in 1924). The Yard seam here is at an altitude of about 600 feet, yet to the west in Broome's Pit it was found at 258 feet below the surface. The reason is that a fault has dropped the

rocks a matter of c. 666 feet. This dislocation would have taken place hundreds of millions of years ago when all the rocks were far beneath the surface; they only appear now in this position owing to the erosion of the landscape which has produced hills separated by the Ladygate valley.

The old workings in the Little Mine, shown on Fig 2 pre-date the construction of the tunnel. They are not recorded on any plan but there is field evidence which indicates the working of coal below the surface. I walked with Peter Cox across this field and beneath our feet was a rectilinear pattern of lines of subsidence. These were the stalls (tunnels) of the ancient pillar and stall workings which were now beginning to show at the surface. Nearby, an unrecorded pit was discovered at the same time as the Thornsett Hey tunnel - a hole had appeared in the ground. This pit was also filled in and secured by the contractors.

Despite the fact that only thin coal seams have been removed, after more than a hundred years, subsidence is beginning to appear at the surface above shallow coal workings in the New Mills area. Recently, several farmers have had fields affected, the golf club had a troublesome pool of water on one of its fairways, and a 200 ft deep unrecorded air shaft was found fortuitously a few years ago as an extension to New Mills Primary School car park was being made.

Derek Brumhead

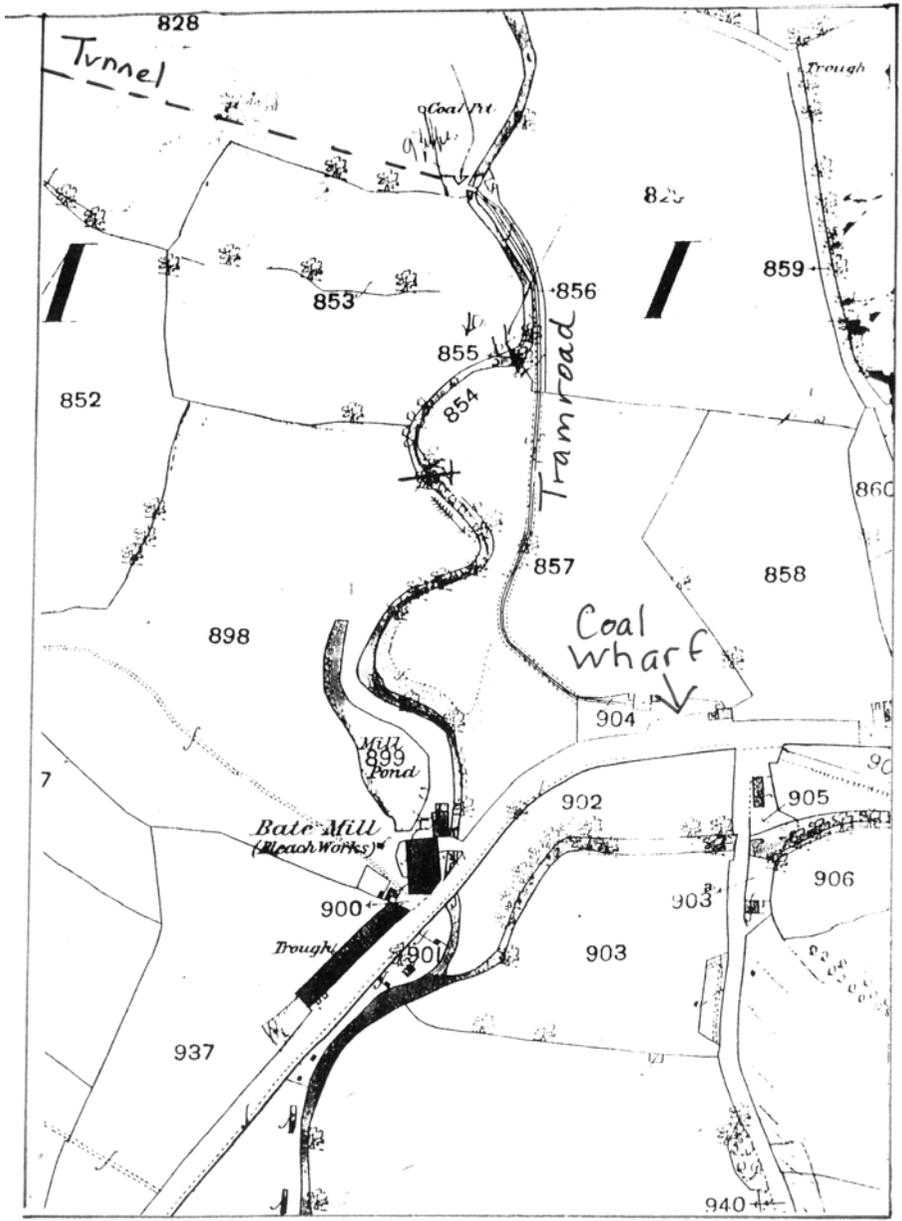


Figure 1. Tramroad from Thornsett Hey tunnel to Bate Mill Road shown on OS 25 inch map (reduced), 1st edition, surveyed 1879.

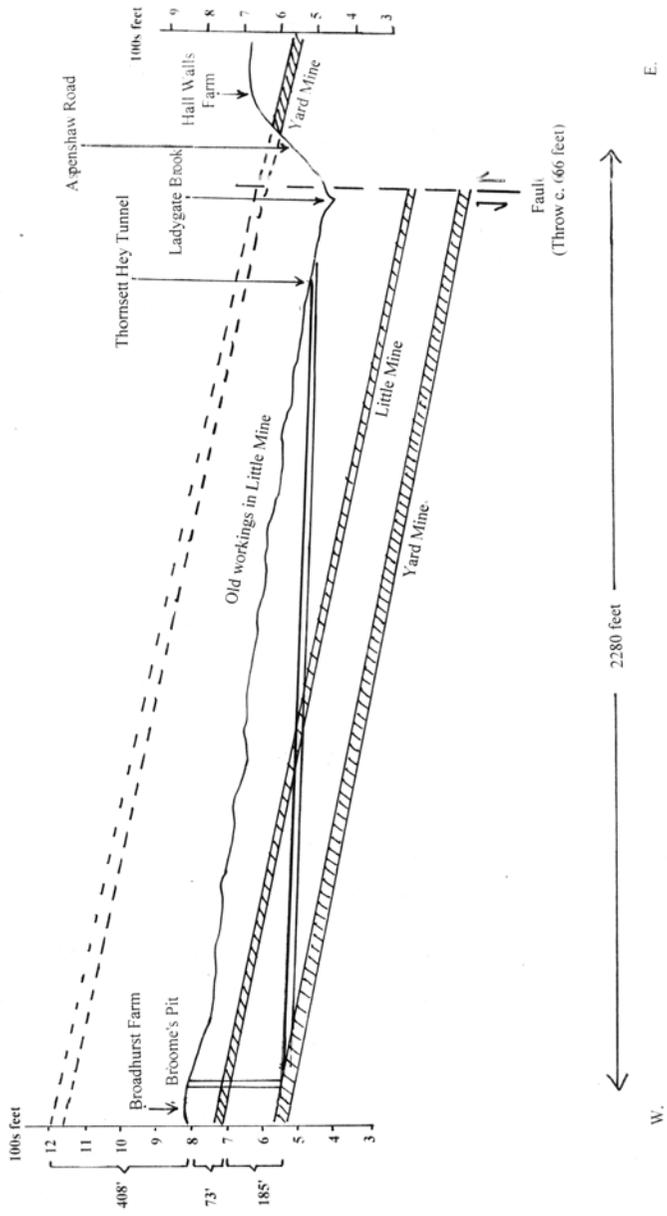
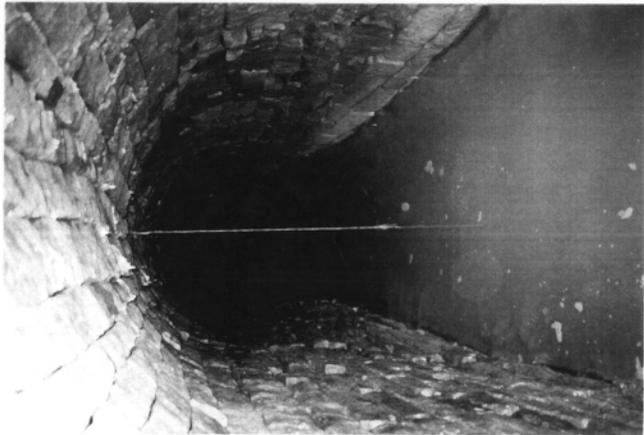


Figure 2. Geological section west-east to show the disposition of the coal seams on either side of the great fault.



STAINSBY MILL and HARDWICK HALL Summer Trip, 16 June 2002

In April last year Sonia Preece gave us a very interesting talk about Stainsby Mill, a 13th. century corn mill. Following an invitation to visit from Sonia, the summer trip was planned as a visit to the mill and the nearby Hardwick Hall. We, luckily, had a warm sunny day for our visit during a week of wet weather. Sonia welcomed us on arrival and led us on a tour of the mill assisted by the stewards on duty. This personal touch by Sonia made the visit so much more interesting as she was able to show us how the water-wheel and hoists worked as well as reminding us about the history of the site. We moved on by coach to Hardwick Hall and split up for lunch. The group met again after lunch for a tour of Hardwick New Hall, the home built by Elizabeth (Bess), Countess of Shrewsbury. Many of us had memories of the fascinating talk given to the Society by J.P.Skyner in October 1998 about "Bess of Hardwick". Bess was a remarkable woman, married four times and wealthy as a result, who lived until she was eighty. She had remarkable drive and energy not only to rebuild the Old Hall but then, at the age of sixty-two, she built the New Hall nearby. After a brief introduction we entered the Hall and found an instant contrast between the ruggedness of the Old Hall and the refinements of architecture and the rich furnishings of the New Hall. There are large expanses of glass windows, a 16th. century status symbol and a large part of the original contents as listed in an inventory of 1601. Legend that it was the prison of Mary, Queen of Scots had saved it from neglect and decay. The overwhelming impression of a visit is created by the great numbers of huge tapestries covering the walls throughout the Hall. The introduction to the tapestries came via an exhibition showing the exquisite needlework to be found in a variety of pieces of work (if I remember correctly, most of it done by men). Survival of the material owes much to Evelyn Duchess of Devonshire whose husband was the 9th. Duke in 1908. Over the next fifty years she oversaw the restoration and repair of many of the embroider-

ies and tapestries, undertaking much of the work herself. Some of the designs were almost certainly worked by Mary, Queen of Scots. Moving on through halls, rooms and up interesting stone stairways we arrived at the imposing Great High Chamber. Bess's status was reflected by her impertinence in having her monogram painted into Elizabeth I's coat of arms displayed above the fireplace. Rush matting, covering the floor, gave off a powerful odour which was not to everyones liking but this kind of floor covering was common in the 16th. century and was reintroduced to Hardwick by Evelyn, Duchess of Devonshire. The Long Gallery was awe inspiring with its huge tapestries and an array of eighty-one portraits of royalty, family, friends and patrons. Inevitably the final room was the National Trust shop where everyone was led at the end of the tour. Visits to Hardwick Old Hall and the various gardens completed a full and very interesting day.

John Humphreys.