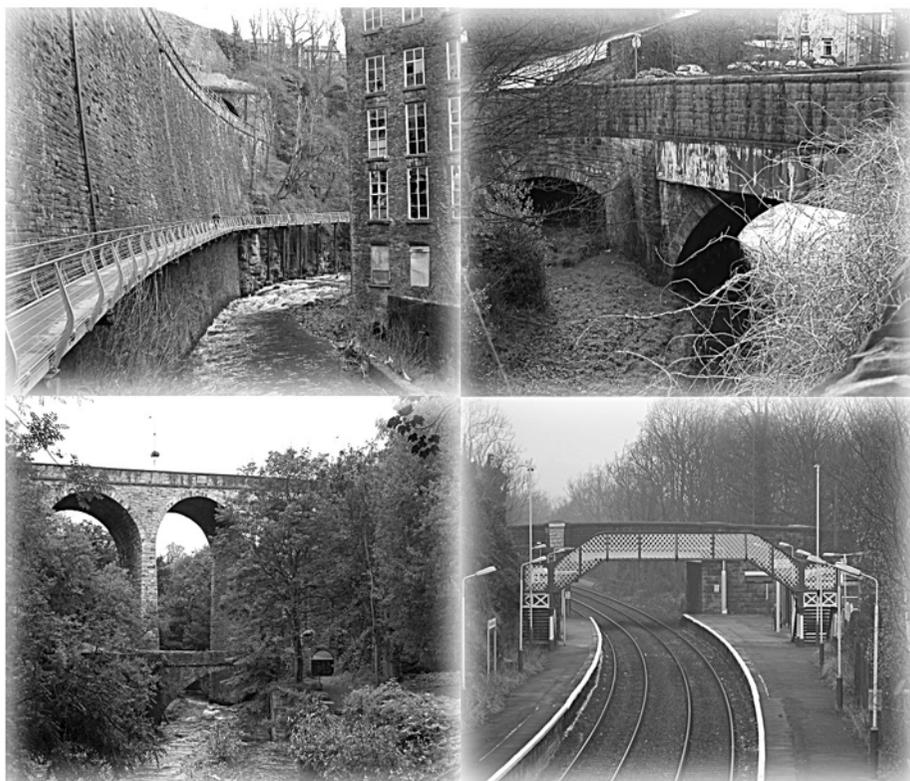


# **New Mills Local History Society**

## **Newsletter 36**



Spring 2006

## SPRING PROGRAMME 2006

All meetings are held in Sett Valley House,  
on the second Friday of the month, starting at 7.45 p.m.

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Friday January 13	<b>“The Community Excavations on the Iron Age Fort at Mellor”</b> Dr. John Roberts
Friday February 10	<b>“Whittle in 1841”</b> Ron Weston
Friday March 10	<b>“Hatched, Matched and Dispatched: Customs of Birth, Marriage and Death”</b> Raymond Rush
Friday April 14	<b>“From Horse Bus to Metrolink”</b> George Turnbull
Friday May 12	<b>A.G.M. followed by “John Pollitt”</b> John Humphreys

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### NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY COMMITTEE 2005-2006 (elected at the A.G.M.)

Chairman	GAYNOR ANDREW (743117)
Vice-Chairman	BARBARA MATTHEWS (743935)
Hon. Secretary	JOHN HUMPHREYS (743581)
Hon. Treasurer	JOAN POWELL (742814)
Hon. Archivist	ROGER BRYANT (744227)
Hon. Editor	RON WESTON (744838)
Ordinary members	OLIVE BOWYER, DEREK BRUMHEAD, BARRY DENT, PAT EVANS, JOHN SYMONDS, RICHARD WOOD.

[www.newmillshistory.org.uk](http://www.newmillshistory.org.uk)

## A Letter From The Editor

**A**nother year has gone by since I last wrote to you. On that occasion I mentioned the proposed commemorative book to honour the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the Society, which falls on 24th May 2007. I'd like to take this opportunity to bring you up-to-date.

The editorial committee set the end of July as a deadline for submitting articles. We now have a wealth of material, particularly on reminiscences of the recent past, thanks to Barbara Matthews and Barry Dent, who have transcribed yards of oral recollections from tapes. Derek and I are now editing it all. Selecting suitable illustrations will be a major task in the coming months.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed.

A Happy New Year to one and all!

Ron Weston

## THE DUKE OF BRIDGEWATER'S CANALS AT WORSLEY

9th September 2005 - Glen Atkinson

**A**fter conducting us on our summer outing so successfully, Glen Atkinson was especially welcome. His stimulating and informative talk, based on some evocative slides and an intimate knowledge of his subject, provided an excellent start to our new season.

Opening in 1758, the Bridgewater Canal is rightly considered to be an industrial monument of international importance; but, as Glen Atkinson explained, the canal, often said to be the earliest, was not unique. Furthermore many of the canal's remarkable underground features were engineered by an unsung hero, John Gilbert, rather than the celebrated Brindley. The canal was built to connect the Duke of Bridgewater's coal-mines at Worsley to Manchester, the coal seams being intercepted underground at three different levels by stretches of canal running through brick-lined tunnels. By the close of the nineteenth century, some 25 miles of underground canal tunnels had been constructed. John Gilbert had introduced an underground inclined plane to link the different levels of canal tunnel. By operating at different levels it was possible to cross and re-cross the coal seams, thus exploiting much more of the available coal. Glen's remarkable photographs are testimony to the extraordinary skill of those bricklaying craftsmen labouring under difficult conditions underground. The coal was exploited by a series of galleries extending from the canals. Women and children were employed as human beasts of burden to haul the coal along the galleries on sledges to be loaded onto the waiting canal boats. The building and maintenance of these boats was an industry in itself, as was the manning of them. The boats had to be moved along the tunnels by "legging". In its heyday



around 1880, the whole enterprise employed over 4,000 people - miners, tunnel builders, boatmen and many others.

Despite the appalling working conditions that had to be endured underground, Worsley was by no means the worst of the Victorian

coal-mining empires and some elementary welfare schemes were introduced by the employers to alleviate suffering and privation amongst the workforce. During the latter part of the nineteenth century the underground canal system considered one of Britain's most remarkable wonders of construction and attracted many celebrated visitors, including several of the crowned heads of Europe.

Coal production at Worsley declined during the twentieth century and the canal system underground was finally closed in 1968. At present, there are plans to re-open part of the system as a visitor attraction, but Glen is of the opinion that the expense and difficulty of doing so will prove too great

*Ron Weston*

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**THE BRIDGES OF NEW MILLS**  
**Monday 19th September, 2005**  
**Derek Brumhead's Festival Lecture**  
**in New Mills Town Hall**

**G**iven the popularity of the New Mills Festival and the reputation of our speaker, a packed house was to be expected. Our organisers were far from disappointed in this, for there must have been several hundred people in the audience.

Derek began by reminding us that the medieval core of New Mills lay at the bridge spanning the river Sett, near Salem Mill where the ancient corn mill, known as the new mylne was situated. This river crossing, Derek explained, was immediately upstream from the Torrs, which although providing valuable water-power sites during the Industrial Revolution, had always been a formidable barrier to communications. The existence of cotton mills and workers' cottages in the Torrs during the nineteenth century had resulted in several low-level bridges being constructed. These were unsuitable for anything but local traffic and turnpike trusts, seeking to build more convenient roads through New Mills, resorted to high level bridges across the Torrs. These were the Church Road bridge, opened in 1835 and reinforced in 1880, and the Union Road bridge, which linked New Mills to Newtown in 1884.

One must not forget that prior to the construction of these new road bridges, there had been an earlier, if less spectacular, bridge-building phase which came with the construction of the Peak Forest Canal at the end of the eighteenth century. Canal bridges such as the one at Bank End are surely amongst our most handsome industrial monuments.

Railway construction came late to New Mills and no doubt the difficulty of negotiating the Torrs was a deterring factor. The railway engineers tunnelled under the town to take lines to Hayfield and Chinley, thus breaking through into the Torrs instead of attempting to bridge the gorge. The construction of the railway through Newtown necessitated some upheaval, including the dislocation of road routes. Hence, new bridges had to be built and roads realigned. Similarly, a realignment of Marsh Lane was necessary, resulting in the construction of two new road bridges. Beyond Marsh Lane, that same line also brought into being three new railway bridges over Lady Pit Lane: two of them carried main lines; the third traversed the marshalling yard at Gow Hole, which has now been demolished. Of the bridges carrying roads over the Hayfield line, one, at High Hill Road disappeared when the Sett valley Trail was constructed. Surely, the finest railway bridge in the locality was the one that was built last, the viaduct crossing the Goyt Valley in a graceful curve and constructed for the Midland Railway to by-pass New Mills and Stockport, was not opened until 1902.

Derek reminded us that while some bridges had been demolished, the one at Hyde Bank Mill being the latest victim, other new bridges had come into being, notably the Millward Memorial bridge in the Torrs and the Millennium Walkway, both built to make our area more accessible to visitors.



This was an excellent contribution to the New Mills Festival and a splendid piece of industrial archaeology.

*Ron Weston*

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## **OLDKNOW, RADCLIFFE AND THE SPINNERS**

**14 October 2005 - Dr John H Smith**

**T**here are not many speakers who can sit at a table without any 'aids' and hold their audience's interest for over an hour. But John Smith is one and he did just that on yet another of his popular visits to the Society. A very good turnout of over forty persons heard John speak of the early cotton industry in our region and the contribution made particularly by Samuel Oldknow of Marple and William Radcliffe of Mellor. As usual, John was able to bring into his account unusual peripheral observations which highlighted his mastery of his subject.

The talk commenced with the introduction of cotton as a new fabric for the masses. In pastoral areas such as our Pennine upland fringe, it was necessary for farmers and their families to practise a dual economy and spin and weave wool and flax for their own use or as by-employment. In our immediate area there was no tradition of cotton in farms, not even fustian, a combination of flax and cotton. Yet in Oldham and Ashton only 15 miles away, cotton-linen manufacture gradually made progress from the early seventeenth century and domestic fustian weavers worked for chapmen and manufacturers. However, circumstances were to change when cotton was introduced into other parts of north-west Derbyshire and eastern Cheshire. By the 1780s jennies for spinning cotton weft (crosswise) with 80-120 spindles were available and were installed in workshops. Also, carding machines ('engines') were developed to give out cardings to be roved and spun by domestic workers, and improved jennies were also adapted for making rovings.

The spinning jenny, of course, was invented by Hargreaves but it could not spin yarn fine enough for the warp (lengthwise) thread. But when Arkwright invented his water frame and Samuel Crompton, the mule, (both were water-powered spinning machines suitable for installing in a 'factory') the

yarn produced was much finer and it became possible to make fine calico cloths in successful rivalry with India. Samuel Oldknow turned these new spinning inventions to full account when he established a calico mill on Hillgate in Stockport in the late 1780s, where he installed a Boulton and Watt steam engine. At Mellor, where he purchased the Bottoms Hall estate in 1787, he built a water-powered mill in the early 1790s employing over 50 pauper children from London, but he eventually seems to have lost interest and the Mellor mill came to produce only the coarser yarn. However, despite reputedly earning £17,000 a year at Stockport, Oldknow's ventures were run largely on credit (he even issued his own paper money to his workforce) and he overstretched himself with other projects -building up the local community, promotion of the Peak Forest Canal and its lime trade, turnpike roads (including the road to New Mills), rearing sheep, and building the Marple lime kilns. He became indebted to his friend Arkwright for huge sums and eventually had to mortgage the Mellor properties to him and go into partnership with his son. When he died in 1828 he was unmarried, still in debt, and his property went to the Arkwrights.

The huge increase in the production of yarn at the end of the eighteenth century led to a shortage of handloom weavers. Always men (women did the spinning), they became such a highly sought-after and well-paid profession that they were known to walk around ostentatiously with five pound notes stuck in their hat bands. Such was the surplus of yarn that exports expanded and were vehemently opposed by spinners such as William Radcliffe of Mellor. The shortage of weavers encouraged the Rev. Edmund Cartwright to invent the first power-driven, but inefficient, loom in the 1780s. But it wasn't until the 1820s that it began to affect seriously the livelihood of the hand-loom weavers, having been progressively improved through the efforts of Horrocks, Johnson, Roberts and Radcliffe. The latter aided by Thomas Johnson, in 1804 constructed a dressing-machine to prepare yarn for power weaving and he also took out three patents for power-looms turning the process into a more or less continuous one which brought down the price of weaving, and with it, of course, the wages of the hand-loom weavers, who had to become factory workers.

William Radcliffe, who John described next, was born in 1761 and came from a family of weavers living near Longhurst Lane until he moved to Stockport in 1801, where he bought Oldknow's mill in Hillgate. As a child he learnt to card and spin before graduating as a weaver. His apprenticeship

with his family taught him, in his own words "a practical knowledge of every process from the cotton bag to the piece of cloth". As a result, by 1801 he had a warehouse in Manchester and was giving work to over a thousand weavers in our region. He is famous for his book *Origin of the new system of manufacturing commonly called 'power-loom weaving'*, which is a classic contemporary account of the early growth of the cotton industry. However, Radcliffe preferred and persevered with hand looms but he was fighting a lost cause. His business ability unfortunately did not match his inventive talent and by 1807 his firm in Stockport collapsed and he was bankrupt. He died in 1841.

Both men made vital contributions to the development of the cotton industry locally, but it was Oldknow who left physical landmarks in today's local scene - building the local community, the Roman Lakes (reservoirs for his mill), the warehouse on the Peak Forest Canal, the Marple lime kilns (unfortunately a shadow of their former self), and the turnpike road from Stockport to New Mills.

*Derek Brumhead*

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## **MANCHESTER'S EARLY AIRFIELDS, 1910-1960** **11th November 2005 - Alan Scholefield**

**M**anchester has had a distinguished history, as far as the early development of flight is concerned, beginning as early as 1785 with a balloon ascent. What is less well-known is the use of some unlikely places in and around the city in the first half of the twentieth century as airfields. Alan Scholefield, with a selection of old photographs and an intimate knowledge of the subject, came along to enlighten us.

In 1910 Lord Northcliffe, the press baron, offered a generous prize for a flying machine race from Manchester across to France (more than one stop was necessary). The winner was Louis Poulihan who used an open space at Fogg Lane in Burnage as his airfield, the first in Manchester.

This competition was only the first of many; suddenly the western world had gone crazy on the new pastime of the rich: manned flight. An aircraft manufacturer that was to become famous, AVRO, was established in Manchester in 1910. The firm needed airfields for testing purposes, as did

the many showmen offering a spin in a flying machine to the head-strong. There were temporary airfields in Adswold, Belle Vue and Fallowfield. An airfield was established at Trafford Park, which came to prominence in the First World War when aircraft came into their own on the Western Front as instruments of war. Other airfields that were created to test bombers and other military aircraft coming off the production lines of AVRO and De Havilland at that time were at Miles Platting, Newton Heath and at Cringle Field, Heaton Chapel.

The war ended with aircraft manufacture firmly established in the Manchester area. Thus began the era of civil flight. Alexandra Park became an important airfield featuring some of the earliest freight air transport services as well as popular pleasure flights. In 1922 a scheduled air passenger service was inaugurated between Manchester and Croydon, where connections to European destinations were offered. Alexandra Park closed when it became



too small to accommodate the ever-larger planes that were coming into service.

Encouraged by local enthusiasts, Manchester city council made an enlightened and far-sighted decision in agreeing to finance a municipal airport.

The council had purchased an extensive area of Chat Moss and in 1929-30 Britain's first municipal airport was opened at Barton. A hangar was built and some old farm buildings converted to provide facilities for passengers. A scheduled service to Croyden via Birmingham with links to Blackpool and the Isle of Man operated twenty-seater aircraft. In 1933 the first ever control tower was built at Barton, it is now a scheduled building. Barton had its disadvantages, however, it was wet and foggy, and eventually the city council chose a new site at Ringway. Barton continues in use to this day as a venue for light aircraft.

The fact that Manchester now has a major international airport at Ringway is a result of a long pioneering history and some shrewd decisions on the part of our local authorities. It is a story well worth the telling.

*Ron Weston*

## CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE WORKHOUSE

9th December 2005 - Chris. Makepeace

**S**ims' poem "The Workhouse - Christmas Day" is a bitter recrimination against the meanness of the system of poor relief that arose out of the implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. The authorities had a problem then that has, in some respects, yet to be solved today: how to provide benefits for those lacking means of support without a) making the provision more attractive than paid labour; b) making it more punitive than a prison regime so that the poor might choose a life of crime. There was a fine balance between the two in the 1840s when there was a slump in trade resulting in mass unemployment and miserable wages.

The horrors of the workhouse system were such that they became imprinted on folk memory. "Ending up in the workhouse" was the ultimate fear of poor people with no prospect of putting something by for old age or infirmity, even in the first part of the twentieth century.



The workhouse at Low Leighton, later Ollersett View Hospital.

Yet Chris. Makepeace's diligent research of conditions in the workhouses in and around Manchester in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century seems to suggest that, in material terms at any rate, these fears were unfounded. Details of the Christmas dinner and festivities were regularly reported in the local newspapers. Prodigious quantities

of roast beef and plum pudding were prepared and consumed. At workhouses such as those at Withington and Crumpsall the logistics of supply, demand and consumption were mind-boggling. There were well over a thousand inmates in each institution, to be provided with half-a-pound of beef, a pound of potatoes and half-a-pound of plum pudding! How was it all cooked; how was it served?

Charitable giving was on a large scale and well-organised in late Victorian times, and the parish poor rates were supplemented at Christmas time by

public donations. Nor were the poor outside the workhouse forgotten; children especially benefited from the generosity of the better off. Yet, for many, charity of any kind was a bitter pill to swallow.

By the early twentieth century the workhouses were mainly the refuges of the elderly poor and the infirm, rather than the able-bodied. Although conditions had improved immeasurably since the inception of the workhouse system, the humiliation of being an inmate remained to the end of its existence.

*Ron Weston*

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## **THE STRUCTURE OF NEW MILLS CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY IN 1939**

**I**n 1939, New Mills Co-op was a very prosperous enterprise. In fact in Co-op circles it was noted as a model society as it had all the facilities needed for its members, it owned all the properties, and was the largest retail business in the town.

The main building was the central grocery shop where Fountain Bathrooms are now, a large building on the corner of Market Street and Hall Street. It comprised a grocery shop on Market Street, and a large back shop with corn and flour bins. On the next level on Hall Street was the order room where grocery orders were stored and loaded for delivery to customers. On the very corner of the two streets was the general manager's office with an outside door and an internal door into the grocery shop so that the manager had a good view of everything that went on. Next up Hall Street and reached by a few steps was the general office with a cashier and office staff. Then up some more steps was the Co-op Hall which was used for functions such as weddings and funeral teas, society general meetings, and the half yearly paying of dividend money to the members. Next to this was a kitchen, toilets and the check office where girls sorted out number checks to work out the dividend. After this was the Board Room where the management met at least once a week.

Below these on Hall Street were some shops used for storing and then a room for the education committee now the house called 'The Stables', through the large doors into a small covered yard to the grocery's back door

and on to stables and the resident plumber and handyman's workshop. Only occasionally was a horse stabled here as they were kept in the large stables at Hyde Bank Road.

The next shop across the road on Market Street housed the Furnishing, Hardware and Tailoring Departments, another large building with the Hardware entrance on High Street and the Furniture and Tailoring with an entrance each on Market Street. A little way down the road at the junction of Torr Top Street and Market Street stood the central butchers with a cooked meat shop next door and a flat above the two with a door out onto Torr Top (now demolished to make the promenade). After these came a plumber's shop (not the Co-op at this time), and the shoe shop. This was a good building with very high class fixtures and fittings, with mens shoes on the ground floor, ladies shoes upstairs, and below on the Torr Top Street level was the shoe repairing workshop. All these were demolished to make room for the promenade. Across the road was the Drapery Department built in 1938 and opened by Marjorie Mason the Cotton Queen. This was a good modern shop with an upstairs sales floor, and is now occupied by Age Concern.



Going down Union Road and turning right into Albion Road, the next Co-op premises were on the left, the first was an empty shop used for storing, and then Newtown grocery store. This was a modern double fronted shop with a door leading into the bakehouse flour room. In between was sandwiched a type of garage which housed a horse-drawn bread van, and the bakehouse made up the corner into Woodside Street. This bakehouse had won gold medals for its bread and this was proudly written across the front of the building in gold letters. It also operated a night shift as its products beside supplying New Mills Co-op also went to Dove Holes, Tideswell, Litton and Eyam Co-ops. They also had a scheme whereby you could take a dish into a grocery store and the bakehouse would fill it with trifle for the princely sum of one shilling and sixpence [7 1/2p]. Of course, you always sent a big dish as it was always the same price! Lower down the bakehouse yard stood the dairy, complete with its bottling plant and it also supplied some schools with the one third pint bottles at 1/2 d a bottle.

Turning into Woodside Street, behind the Labour Exchange (on the left) stood one end of a cotton mill which housed the Co-op warehouse. This employed two men and all the grocery goods came in here, bacon, butter, etc. to be sent round to all the grocery shops as they required them. It was about three floors high and the very top floor was used by the furnishing department to store bulky items such as dustbins, dolly tubs, yellow bread mugs, placards, and things used for the Co-op carnivals. A large shed outside was used to store empty crates, wrappers etc. to be returned to the CWS in Manchester to get credit for them.

The next Co-op shops were on Buxton Road near the Swan Hotel. One was Buxton Road grocery and next door was a small butchers. The grocery is now More Choice Carpets' and the butchers is part of a house.

Going back down Albion Road and up Church Road, the Co-op coal office stood at the entrance to the railway goods yard, where the road entrance to the Pioneers supermarket now is. The Co-op had an extensive coal round with two motor lorries and one two-horse wagon, delivering all week. Across the road on Hyde Bank Road, the first building on the left was the Co-op stables. On Hyde Bank Road was an entrance where hay and straw were unloaded and a gas engine powered a chopper for making horse food. Down below was a cart shed where the milk floats, coal wagons and one bread van were stored and the horses were stabled at the far end of this.

Leaving the stables and returning back up Church Road, the Church Road grocery shop was on the corner of Arden Street and next to this was a butchers shop. These are now a paint and wallpaper shop. Also on Church Road was a Mr Stafford who worked in the central grocery department, and he was the agent for the Co-op Funeral Department and took details for anyone wanting to arrange funerals. Continuing uphill to Lowleighton Road, the next shop was Lowleighton grocery on the corner of Cale Road. This is now a motor cycle and scooter centre.

The next shops were at Birch Vale on the corner of Station Road and New Mills Road opposite The Grouse. There was a grocery shop and a butchers on the Hayfield side of the grocers. One of these was Cox Electric for a long time.

Continuing back through Thornsett, Thornsett grocery was next to the Printers' Arms. This was the first branch shop that New Mills Co-op had, and it later became a Nursery school.

Returning to New Mills. Up Meadow Street, off Spring Bank, was the Co-op garage. This was a large brick building with a well appointed mechanics workshop at one end where all major repairs were carried out. The Co-op's vehicles were rather a mixed bag of Dennis, Ford, Bedford, Manchester Morris and a small Jowett van. There was a transport foreman and a full time mechanic employed there. This building is now an engineering works. Behind the garage was the Co-op slaughterhouse and the Co-op field. Aldersgate now occupies this field. This building was modern and was used every Monday, the butchery managers taking turns to work there. When meat was rationed during the war, the Ministry of Food took it over as it was the largest and most modern in the area, and all the meat in the area came from there until rationing finished. The transport of meat was contracted out to New Mills Co-op and this enabled them to keep their men and vehicles on the road all through the war years. This building became Alken Engineers and is now a studio.

Leaving New Mills for outlying districts, there was a grocers at Whitehough near the Old Hall public house. It was a double fronted shop with only one door and it had been a little Co-op on its own until it joined the New Mills Society. It is now a private house. In Chinley, the Co-op had a large grocers and butchers shop on the corner of Lower Lane and Green Lane. Above these shops was a large meeting room where members of the Chinley Co-op Women's Guild met every week and the Co-op dividend was paid out every six months. Chinley grocery had a large order trade up the Hope Valley as it was easy to get there by train, and these were delivered every Friday. This is how I met my wife, as she worked there until we got married, and she went with the orders round the Hope Valley and made many friends there. This shop is now Jackson's Carpets.

The next shop was at Chapel-en-le-Frith, the Manchester Road grocery near The Elms' home. This was a small but modern shop and it is now a private house. Coming down the main road into Chapel-en-le-Frith below the Morrisons (formerly Safeway) store, on the left stood the butchers. This is now the Farmers Union Office. Next door, but separated by a drive, was the large grocers shop with a cellar at ground level at the back. Down the drive behind the grocers were a cart shed and carters room, and a stable where the coal horse and bread van horse were kept. The coal wagon, bread van and the delivery motor were kept under the cart shed. The grocery is now a carpet shop. Next to the grocery on the main road was a butchers shop

which was privately owned, then a drive, and then a combined Co-op store which was the Furnishing, Drapery, Tailoring and Shoe shop all in one and was known as the Emporium. It was well fitted out downstairs, and upstairs was a large room over all the shop where furniture was kept. This is now Bywaters Gas Shop

This concludes the account of New Mills Co-op's extensive activities and premises at the end of 1939.

*Bill Barton*

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## **THE HISTORY OF BEARD TERRACE, NEW MILLS. 56, 57, 58 ,59 HYDE BANK ROAD & 9 CHURCH ROAD.**

**I**n 1865 the Midland Railway Company bought land from the Devonshire Estate either side of the Hayfield turnpike road (Church Road) and east of Hyde Bank Road, New Mills, for the construction of the line from Manchester to Derby.

The Company built a stable yard on Hyde Bank Road for horses to service sidings which linked under Church Road to the New Mills East Goods Yard along with houses for Company employees (56, 57, 58 and 59 Hyde Bank Road and 9 Church Road) known as Beard Terrace.

After the sidings were taken up, the stable yard became a private coal depot, then garden centre, and later the Hyde Bank Court development.

Following the closure of the East Goods Yard, the land and buildings at railway level were used for manufacturing. In the 1980s, the (now co-op) supermarket was erected at the Church Road end of the site with Focal Design operating from the rest of the area.

The sloping land below railway level down to the River Goyt was purchased by the Town Council and incorporated into the Torrs Riverside Park, having been linked to the Torrs gorge by the construction of the Millward Memorial bridge in 1984.

The housing terrace remained in railway ownership until 1939 and 56, the largest of the five dwellings, was occupied by whoever was the most important railway representative of the day.

In 1891, a family of six headed by 60 year old station master Joseph Smith, was in residence at 56. At the turn of the nineteenth century, John Pearson, the local superintendent of railways, who supervised the building of the Midland railway viaduct over the Goyt, lived at 56.

By 1901, his son Robert, then a 39 year old widower, who was the railway horsekeeper until about 1940, was the head of the 56 household with four children and housekeeper, Mary Ann Yates, who he later married. Mary Ann became the local midwife, delivering babies in the front room which was also used by the carters to heat up meal for the stables. Robert died in number 56 aged 90 in 1952.

All five dwellings were occupied by railway workers in 1901. Besides Robert Pearson, there was Joseph Swann a carter, Henry Smith an agent, Ed. Hoggins a signalman, Henry Chapman a goods guard and Edmund Hooton a clerk, the latter two boarding out.

In 1939, the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company, formed in 1923 from the amalgamation of the Midland and other railway companies, sold the entire terrace to John Walker, a retired railway servant, for £620. Walker died three years later and the houses passed into the stewardship of the Midland Bank acting as executor and trustee.

Walker's will required life annuities of £13 and £26 to be paid from the proceeds of his estate to his housekeeper and his daughter, Mary Ellen Dale, respectively. The Bank retained ownership of the terrace on behalf of Walker's estate for many years, only needing to start to sell off individual dwellings from 1959 when John and Jessie Sheldon bought 58, including shared use with 59 of outside watercloset, for £450. In the same year, William and Margaret Simms bought 9 Church Road for £400.

At some point, 56 was combined with 57 to create a four bedroomed dwelling and the conveyance to Simms only refers to 59, 58 and 56 being the "adjoining and adjacent dwellinghouses". However, at some point 57 was re-created as a one bedroomed house, the curtilage of 56 retaining the front bedroom over and the front cellar under 57.



Mary Ellen Dale had moved into 56 some time before 1972 when she purchased and occupied 57 (ground floor, rear cellar which she used for cooking and rear bedroom) including shared use with 56 of outdoor water-closet for just £50.

The following year, the Hinchcliffe family started renting 56 with the exception of the front ground floor room which was Josie Arkawenko's barber's shop complete with red and white pole outside. The shared corridor access from the front door is still clearly marked on the floorboards. With six children, the Hinchcliffes remained tenants for 11 years. They paid a weekly rental of £5 to Mrs Dale who insisted that they shared her favourite tittle, whisky and sterilised milk, when the rent was paid.

By 1984, both 56 and 59, the last dwellings to remain within Walker's estate, were declared unfit for human habitation. 56 still had no inside toilet and a structural engineer reported that the property "has not been maintained properly for a considerable period."

Both were sold by the Midland Bank the following year. 56, including front bedroom over and front cellar under 57, was sold in March 1985 to Lawrence and Christina Hindley for £8,500, 59 was sold in May to Jean Mary Hindley, Lawrence's mother, and subsequently changed ownership a further three times in 9 months, with the price rising from £8,000 to £13,000. Renovation of both with Housing Act grant aid followed.

I bought a renovated 56 plus the bits over and under 57 from the Hindleys in 1988 and Gill bought 57 minus the bits in 1991. We have re-created the four bedroomed combined dwelling now with inside toilets!

*Martin Doughty*  
(Revised December 2004)

