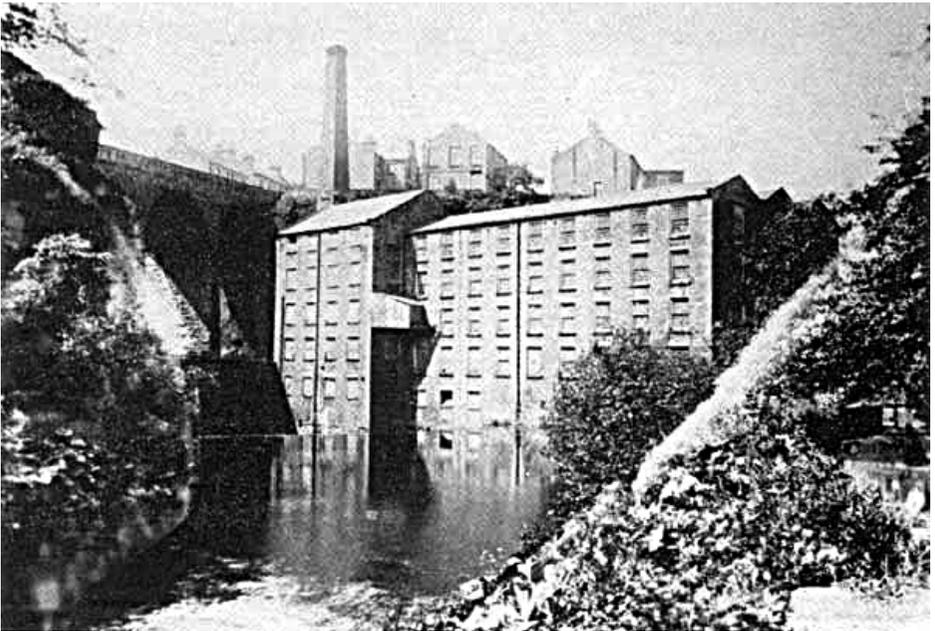


New Mills Local History Society

Newsletter



Autumn 2006

Meetings - Autumn 2006

Meetings are usually held in Sett Valley House on the second Friday of the month, starting at 7:45pm.

The exception is the New Mills Festival Lecture on Monday 25 September by Dr. Derek Brumhead. This will be held in New Mills Town Hall starting at 7:30pm, followed by refreshments.

Friday September 8	Joan Powell	Nineteenth Century Hayfield
Monday September 25	Dr. Derek Brumhead	The Mills of New Mills
Friday October 13	John R. Morten	The Cromford and High Peak Rail- way
Friday November 10	Mike Redfern	Recent Researches at Nether Ald- erley Mill
Friday December 8	Dr. Jane Laughton	Medieval Macclesfield

Committee 2006-2007 (elected at the A.G.M.)

Chairperson	Gaynor Andrew (743117)
Vice-chairperson	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 Pat Evans Richard Wood Barry Dent Derek Brumhead Barbara Done

www.newmillshistory.org.uk

THE COMMUNITY EXCAVATIONS ON THE IRON AGE FORT AT MELLOR

Friday 13th January 2006 - Dr. John Roberts

John Roberts, who is the professional archaeologist in charge of excavations at the Mellor hill-fort, began his talk by pointing out the position of Mellor on the eastern edge of the Pennine slope overlooking the river Goyt, the county boundary, beyond which lies the Cheshire Plain, Today its inhabitants experience the scenic charms of the Peak District while being able to commute easily to Stockport and Manchester. This location "on the edge" probably held a similar significance to the builders and early occupants of the hill-fort.

Since its rediscovery in 1995 from a photo of crop marks in the field behind the Old Vicarage taken by Ann Hearle, archaeologists from Manchester University have led local volunteers in excavations. Forty-one different trenches have been opened up, their precise locations based on geophysical and air photo evidence. The results have been startling and the Mellor hill-fort excavations have taken on a national significance.

John Roberts came armed with a series of excellent slides, including some aerial views of the site. He dealt first with the small, outer ditch, which was the first feature to be revealed. It is a V-shaped incision into the flagged sandstone forming the bedrock. Although it has been traced for a considerable length, it has yet to be demonstrated that this ditch encircles the hill. John Roberts takes the view that it marks a boundary rather than forming part of a of the hill-fort and as such may encompass all or a considerable part of the summit.

The inner ditch is a more imposing feature. One to two metres in depth and hacked out of solid rock, it is obviously the chief defensive element. Unlike most hill-forts, there is a complete absence of visible banks and ditches, even from the air, which is the reason why it was lost to memory for so long. The curve of the ditch on the south-west side seems to take in the curve of the churchyard wall (the land falls away steeply beyond it) while on the opposite side, by the entrances to the church yard and the Old Vicarage, the ditch encompasses these properties closely. In fact, it seems likely that the ditch follows the drive of the Old Vicarage.



Over a hundred pieces of Iron-age pottery were unearthed from the external ditch, most of which have been reassembled into a large, single pot. This, "the Mellor Pot", is of great importance, not only to the dating of the site, but also to the region generally, where very little iron-age pottery has been identified. The inner ditch was back-filled at the end of the Roman period and contains a range of Roman pottery dating from the second to the fourth centuries AD. Radio-carbon dates from charcoal



found in the inner ditch show that the hill-fort was occupied in the early Iron Age around 430 BC and a number of round houses dating from this period have also been revealed. Thus, there was occupation of the site, perhaps intermittently, for over 800 years,

The most recent excavation, in the Hearles' garden of an area within the interior of the fort, revealed a row of large post-holes, together with medieval pottery and a radiocarbon date within the period 1000 to 1200 AD, This might be interpreted as a medieval timber hall which stood alongside the church, both lying within the fort.

Several finds from the period prior to the construction of the Iron age fort push back the early phases of occupation of the hill summit as far as 8,000 BC, when Mesolithic hunters left a scatter of flint waste and Mesolithic tools. These, together with Neolithic and Bronze age evidence, give us a view of Mellor in every period from early post-glacial times to the modern era.

Much has been achieved already on this community dig, but, as John Roberts emphasised, there is much more to be discovered. To this end, a more extensive long-term project has been drawn up embracing much more than a programme of excavation in an application for future funding. Archaeological Trust deserves our full support.

Ron Weston

www.mellorarchaeology.org.uk

WHITLE IN 1841

10th February 2006 - Ron Weston

By 1841, Whitle had become the most urbanised and industrialised of the four hamlets that made up New Mills. The town became the centre of rapid industrial development during the final decade of the eighteenth century when cotton spinning mills were constructed at water-power sites along the rivers Goyt and Sett. Mills and workers' houses were concentrated in the Torrs on the Whitle side of the river, while the construction of turnpike roads to by-pass the Torrs and "the bottom of New Mills" on the northern side encouraged the extension of the town along these new arteries through Whitle. The other industry that had developed in New Mills, and which by 1841 had become the major employer, was calico printing. Print works at London Place and Strines, both in Whitle, had become secondary industrial nodes, swelling the population of the hamlet.

The hectic pace of industrial development in New Mills brought a familiar consequence: a population of 1,878 in 1801 had almost doubled by 1831. Although local families were caught up in the town's transformation and growth, many more were drawn in from more distant areas, as far away as Scotland and Ireland.

Farming in Whitle, once the major economic activity, was in decline. Although the commons on High Lee, Broadhurst Edge and above Whitle Bank had been enclosed in 1828, no new farms had been created. Instead, the land was either added to existing farms or used for industry, transport or housing.

Combining the information given in the 1841 census returns with that found in the tithe apportionment of the same date gives us a detailed snapshot of life in Whitle at an opportune time. By 1841, New Mills had passed through the opening phase of the Industrial Revolution. The decade 1831-41 had seen a marked slowdown in the town's rate of growth. It had been a period of consolidation, of recession, even. The demand for new dwellings had ceased; indeed the census records many empty houses. There was much unemployment and a great deal of poverty and distress as a result. There was a hiatus in the development of new factories until the coming of a new generation of mills using steam power in the 1860s, and this occurred in Newtown rather than the old locations along the rivers. The only innovation in Whitle was the "new road", a diversion of the turnpike across Spring Bank to avoid the congestion and steepness of High Street. In 1841, though, the new road had attracted very little new development.

By 1841 the two disparate groups in the population, the old rural families and the newcomers, had lived together for the best part of a generation, had inter-married and begun to forge a community with a life and character of its own: radical in politics and non-conformist in religion; almost wholly working class. The forest hamlet of Whitle had been transformed by an urban population whose associations, interests and attitudes lay with Stockport, Manchester and south Lancashire rather than the rural Peak.

HATCHED, MATCHED AND DESPATCHED: Customs of Birth, Marriage and Death 10th March 2006 - Raymond Rush

"That was a bit different", I heard more than one member of the audience remark; referring, no doubt, to the speaker's comical performance as much as the bizarre and hilarious content of his talk.

Dressed in the traditional smock of the Norfolk yokel, Raymond Rush, who is a well known broadcaster on Radio Stoke, regaled us with accounts of some of the more freakish and ludicrous customs and superstitions in British folklore regarding birth, marriage and death. While many of his observations struck a chord with members of the audience, others, I am certain, were entirely new, judging by their responses.

Several members of the audience readily concurred when Raymond suggested that when labour was imminent one should never tempt Providence by bringing a pram, cradle or baby clothes into the house. However, few of us seemed to have heard of his description of the preparation of a "groaning cake" to be eaten in pregnancy, which contained diuretics such as rhubarb and dandelion root, together with hempseed for pain relief.

Raymond's account of the serving of "church ale" at a wedding aroused much interest. It was the custom in some places for the churchwardens to brew a barrel of ale to be set up in the church behind a "bar" when a wedding was due. The ale would be sold to the congregation "across the bar" and the money raised given to the bride and groom. This was part of the Church's policy to encourage marriage. During the early nineteenth century, one in seven infants was born out of wedlock and the Church wished to discourage such immorality, particularly as the Church was legally bound to support the illegitimate children of a parish. The bride on this occasion was decked in her "bridale" gown.

Death was often accompanied by the tolling of a "passing bell" to ward off evil spirits that might prevent the ascent of the soul into Heaven. Ancillary to this device were the "passing pillow", which if suddenly removed from under the head of the dying person might cause asphyxiation and a speedy death before the final note of the passing bell had died away. Death might be even more precipitate if the "passing maul" were to be applied! Raymond also reminded us of the origin of the word "bonfire"- bone fire -which was the burning on All Hallows Eve (31st October) of disinterred bones that had been stored in the churchyard osuary. There was a belief that the spirits of the dead roamed free on that night and the souls of the damned might enter Heaven on the rising smoke of the fire. Only after the failure of the Gunpowder Plot was the event changed to 5th November.

This was an entertaining but also an informative evening.

Ron Weston

FROM HORSE BUS TO METROLINK 7 April 2006 - George Turnbull

George Turnbull has been involved in the Museum of Transport in Boyle Street, Manchester, for over 25 years. He is the archivist and owns an ex-Manchester double deck bus. He is also Head of the Local Studies Unit in Central Library, Manchester, so in every respect he is well qualified to give a talk on the history of Manchester public transport.

The first part of his talk was devoted to giving a rather brief survey of the stages through which Manchester's transport passed in the nineteenth century - horse bus, horse tram, electric tram, motor bus, trolley bus and Metrolink. When he turned to his slides, it quickly became evident that his main interest was in motor buses and the audience was



treated to a feast of slides illustrating the various bus types and their attractive liveries which once graced our municipal authorities. Several examples of these with their route numbers (there's the old 53 !) brought out nostalgic memories in the audience who had travelled on these buses. Examples of many of them can be found on show in the Transport Museum which is obviously worth visiting. George also brought with him several examples of working ticket machines, with tickets to print off, and this aroused a great deal of hands-on interest. George was pleased with the interest that his talk aroused and told me afterwards that he had learnt some useful points from discussions with members of the audience after the talk.



The talk was clearly very successful although I have to admit that the title gave me expectations of a more detailed analysis of the historic stages. For instance, the role of the horse bus and horse tram in the spatial growth of Manchester - covering a period of nearly seventy years - is not sufficiently appreciated. But a chapter by Ted Gray in *Moving Manchester*, a volume on Manches-

ter's transport history published last year goes towards redressing this.

Derek Brumhead

JOHN POLLITT, 1844-98

12 May 2006 - John Humphreys

John Pollitt was secretary of New Mills Co-operative Society for about 24 years from 1866 and John Humphreys, our own secretary, appears to be the only person in New Mills to have shown an interest in the man and his career. This arose out of a degree dissertation which John wrote a number of years ago, and which resulted in a book in the Society's series, *New Mills Co-operative Society 1860-1890* (History Notes No 20).

The Society, formed in 1860, was the first to be formed in north-west Derbyshire. It did not have a parent body, and a committee ran its affairs being known as the New Mills Equitable and Industrial Co-operative Society. These words up to some years ago were emblazoned in relief on the frontage of the building on Spring Bank (the former Furnishing Department, - see Bill Barton's account in Newsletter No 33) before they were unfortunately removed in an act of unnecessary historical vandalism by a firm which then went on to vacate the premises a few years later. You can still just make out where the words were. The Society lasted as an independent organisation until February 1973, when it joined with the Norwest Co-operative Society. Its minute books, account books and various other documents dating back to 1860 were left in a room in the headquarters building on the corner of Hall Street and only saved for posterity by John Humphreys' vigilance.

Pollitt had numerous activities and at the time must have been the most travelled of the New Mills Co-operators. He frequently went to Macclesfield, Manchester, Oldham, Ashton and Rochdale on Co-operative business, attending meetings, inspecting, ordering and paying for goods (he was a member of the tea-tasting committee), and representing New Mills at District and National Conferences. By 1875 the society had 600 members and capital of £4,400. Pollitt was crucially involved in many Co-operative enterprises which have had a fundamental impact on the social, cultural and physical landscape of the town. It set up its own Building Society in 1877, and started investing in land around New Mills town centre which was later used for building. Branches at Thornsett and Newtown were established in 1892, and by the inter-war years the Co-op had become a predominant feature of local retailing. Its premises remain to this day although none of them are used for retailing. Pollitt seems to have had surveyor skills, in that he measured ground and made plans for new buildings or extensions to existing buildings. Together with Edward Godward he supervised the building of the new store which was to become the head office on the corner of Hall Street. This is 'Fountain Bathrooms' today and those who have visited this showroom will know that it consists of several levels since the building stands on a site sloping two ways at right angles, which must have created interesting problems for the architects.

Pollitt was also one of the main instigators in the formation of the New Mills Cotton Spinning Company in 1873-75 and the taking up of shares in two mills, Torr Mill and Brunswick Mill, as a form of investment, called by John, 'Productive Co-operation'. Beyond his Co-op commitments, Pollitt also found time to be involved with the Ancient Order of Foresters (a Friendly Society) in Ashton, and was treasurer of Providence Church on Mellor Road. It is not clear, however, how Pollitt was able to support himself and family for his salary as secretary was only £14.12.0 when he commenced, raised to £20 in 1874 and by 1884 had still only reached £50, with expenses paid. One occupation apparently was as a local Collector of Income Tax, but it is not known just what this interesting responsibility involved. Some of his various positions must have supplemented the wage which he received as secretary for it is apparent from the record of withdrawals, inspected by John Humphreys, that he had quite large sums of money invested in the Society.

John Humphreys also highlighted the society's early links with local Methodism. Many local Methodists can be linked to the New Mills co-operative movement which, as Melanie Tebbutt has pointed out, was 'from the beginning...always generous towards the churches and chapels in the area, both financially and practically.' It also engaged the support of some of the elite craftsmen of the local workforce, since ten of the founding officers and committee members were block printers, possibly from Strines or Birch Vale Printworks.

New Mills had a printworks library in the 1850s, and in 1852 a 'People's Institute' was established to provide evening classes, recreation and a library for young men and women. Later it was known as the Mechanics' Institute. In 1860, this appears to have transferred to a rented house on Market Street, known as the 'New Mills News and Reading Room', paid for by subscriptions. New Mills Co-operative Society was founded in the same year, and immediately built up a strong educational emphasis establishing an educational fund by 1867. The Reading Room had been failing until certain working men, no doubt co-operators, joined the committee. Evening classes were established and John Pollitt taught the free classes in the Navvies Preaching Room over Johnson's shop in Market Street.

The inadequacy of such arrangements were soon recognised, however, and a public meeting was held after which it was decided to build a public hall 'for educational and community purposes'. £2,500 was raised through public subscription, and the hall was opened in September 1871, with a newsroom, classrooms and large public meeting hall capable of holding 500. In 1879, the Mechanics Institute transferred to the Public Hall, to become 'the centre of educational work in New Mills, concentrating on science classes, mainly chemistry for young men' in calico printing and dyeing. Later, of course, this building became the Town Hall.

In 1883, a cottage on High Street was rented as a chemical laboratory, although conditions there were so poor that they were later condemned by an inspector, who compared it to the 'Black Hole of Calcutta'. Many students were young men

from Watford Bridge Printworks, which was said to have contributed 'a good quota of the New Mills men' who had gone into all parts of the world where calico printing was known. Many became managers of printworks.

The Co-op continued its own support for educational activities in the town, setting up an Education Committee of four in 1885 of which Pollitt was a member, founding a library in 1888, making donations to all the New Mills Sunday Schools and paying half the fees of children of co-operators who were attending evening classes in shorthand, scientific dress cutting, art, science and writing. In all these educational activities, Pollitt was closely involved, working closely with John Nichols who was brought from a London college by Edward Godward to take the chemistry classes. Nichols has been described as a pioneer of New Mills education, and was head of the old British school held at the Congregational Sunday school, and subsequently became head of the first Board school built on Spring Bank, and later New Mills Secondary School on Church Lane. He had the greatest of influence on the progress of education in New Mills and merits a study of his own.

John Pollitt did not rise to the same heights in public office as men such as Edward Godward, John Mackie, and James Hibbert, but undoubtedly he was in the same mould as those nineteenth century public servants, working hard for the newly established co-operative movement, education, and the good of the town in general.

The same could be said of our speaker. Over many years John has acted as Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary of the New Mills WEA (sometimes all at the same time !), he has been secretary of our society for seventeen years including organising superb annual summer outings, he is curator of the Heritage Centre looking after its collection, vice chairman of the management committee and is also a volunteer assistant, he is on the committees of the New Mills Festival and Sett Valley House, is a member of numerous societies, gives talks and leads walks, and I know is involved in many other matters - but I have run out of breath. Thank you John.

Derek Brumhead

Summer Trip to Anderton Boat Lift

Thirty-four members set off for a summer trip to see a marvel of Victorian engineering to be found in the Cheshire countryside near to Northwich. The Anderton Boat Lift was built in 1875 providing a link between the Trent and Mersey Canal and the River Weaver. It had a long and prosperous life fulfilling its role in the traffic of salt from the wyches to various markets. The life of the Lift seemed to come to an end in 1983 due to wear and the problem of corrosion caused by the salt. It rose like a phoenix to be reopened on Tuesday 26 March 2002 having been dismantled, renovated and rebuilt at a cost of over £5.5 million.

We set off to explore the salt route beginning at the museum in Northwich. After an initial film presentation we were free to explore a very interesting and well laid out series of displays illustrating the history of salt extraction through the ages in Cheshire. A very refreshing coffee break was also provided before we moved on to our next stop opposite the Lion Salt Works. Whilst a number of us took lunch in the Salt Barge Inn, others trespassed in the Lion Salt Works which was closed, but very accessible. It was sad to see the derelict condition of the works where the salt was once processed before being loaded onto canal boats. After lunch we boarded a canal boat and set off on a 30 minute trip to the Boat Lift following the route that the salt would have taken. It was very relaxing to sit back after a nice lunch and view the scenery drifting by. That is until we were disturbed by an irate male swan, protecting his family and who tried to get his head through the boat's windows to have a nip at the intruders.

We eventually arrived at the Boat Lift which now boasts a new visitors centre containing all mod. Cons. And displays. At the allotted time we walked down to the landing stage on the River Weaver and boarded a boat for a ride back up in the Lift. We were raised 60 feet to the level of the canal basin with an interesting commentary about the working of the Lift. There was time for tea and cake before climbing on to the coach for the journey home. All in all a very interesting day and highly recommended.

John Humphreys



NEW MILLS PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

New Mills Local History Society and New Mills Heritage Centre are in the process of arranging for the digitisation of over 4000 photographs mostly of an historic nature, to enable them to be more readily accessible to the public. The joint project is to include the digitisation of images of objects in the Centre's collection for publicity purposes and for the computerisation of its index. The project is being funded by a grant of £48,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Digital copies of all the images will be created and each image will be accompanied by a detailed description, which will form a large searchable database. This will provide a level of access never previously possible for the public, who will be able to browse the collection, view the descriptive data and order prints. The descriptive data is being inputted onto the data base from the index cards prepared by Roger Bryant, the Society's archivist. There is a card for every print.

The digitised images will be held on the hard drives of two computers (known as Public Access Modules) which will be placed in New Mills Heritage Centre and, with the agreement of the Cultural and Community Services Department of Derbyshire County Council also in New Mills Library. Searching for images is done using keyword lists. The high resolution digital master copies will be written to CD and are the master files to be stored away safely. The Society's collection of audio tapes of oral history (at present amounting to 40 hours) will also be digitised and made available for public access together with transcriptions.

Scanning and Reproduction

House of Images in Blackburn have given much advice and support and are carrying out the scanning work and providing the necessary software, as they have already done for the Manchester Local Studies Unit (Manchester Central Library), Tameside Libraries, Derbyshire County Council, Cheshire County Council, and currently Cumbria County Council.

As part of the scanning process it is normal to create a number of computer files relating to a single print, giving 3 levels of resolution and size:-

- 1) High resolution, full size copies that can be used to create near photographic quality reproductions. These files are normally stored on CD ROMs because of their large file size and are used to provide photographic quality pictures if required, rather than from the public access on-line system.
- 2) Medium resolution, full size copies that are used on the public access system and are of a sufficient quality to be viewed on a computer monitor and to produce printed copies on a laser printer.
- 3) Low resolution, "thumb-nail" copies (about 4cm by 4cm) are used on the public access system primarily to provide the user with a range of pictures on a single screen about a given subject. From these pictures the user would select those images that are of interest and view them at an increased resolution and size as described at 2. above.

The public benefits of this project

Conservation - images are at present held in archival polyester sleeves and boxes, but there is wear and tear through use, lack of security, lack of control when in the hands of photographers for copying, unsuitable storage conditions, and physical decay. The digitisation of the collection will result in the long term conservation of original prints for the benefit of future generations.

The project will speed up access to the collection for individual users. It will enable visitors to view from a vast number of prints in any visit, limited only by their own time and imagination. The quality of copies available at a moderate cost will in all cases be vastly superior to that obtainable from photocopying the original.

The project will ensure availability of high quality and diverse images for school and college work - either by individual pupils and students or class visits. The digitisation will secure continued and increased use by publicly funded heritage agencies - for use in their displays etc. The digitisation will make reminiscence sessions for older people a practical possibility as an additional service.

The project will enable support for the individual learner and the strategy of life-line learning and contribute to the range of resources available. It will reduce ignorance of the wealth of material available, and increase awareness of the range of uses. The value of the collection can be enhanced by linking the historical images with digitised mapping and modern photographic records. The collection can be used by schools. Local community access will be improved. Greater public awareness of the collection, gained through public consultation will help to shape future expansion of the project.

Summary of existing and potential users

Educational use: In all stages of the National Curriculum, local studies appears as an integral part of the Programme of Studies. The Heritage Centre has an educational function for schools provided by Derbyshire County Council, with educational adviser/teacher and teacher for running programmes in environmental studies for schools and have had much use of photographic prints in the past from the local history society's collection. Schools have always made use of photographic material often as primary source of information. A digitised indexed collection will allow a much enhanced use of the collection, while access on the web would be even more convenient and allow increased use by a wider groups of students.

Social workers, care workers and volunteers use photographs as a key stimulus for reminiscence therapy in elderly persons' homes. People doing oral history recordings likewise use photographs to act as a springboard for memories and to focus the person on the specific subject under discussion.

Historians may require anything from a single picture to illustrate an article for a journal, to the rights to reproduce an entire book of images with captions. The more commercial forms of this user group provide a regular source of income.

Publishers often seek suitable images for the same purposes, but at a national, even international level.

Television researchers regularly require images suitable for setting the scene in a variety of historical, geographical, industrial and literary broadcasts.

People moving into new areas often wish to gather material on the history of their house, their street, their village or town, and photographs are the source most greatly sought.

Interior designers who like to decorate a new pub with photos of the area in earlier times. Set Valley Medical Centre did this. Such images are usually most readily to be found in local libraries and their resale for commercial purposes is a key source of income for the partner authorities.

Community groups of all kinds gather sets of all appropriate images for their own research use and sometimes also for publication.

Family historians seek images of the persons they are tracing. To these people, some of whom are willing and able to travel from Australia or the USA for a family reunion, a picture of the street, the farm, the house where their ancestors came from, or the church where the marriage took place, can be a treasure worth any amount of effort to seek out.

Future availability of the images 24 hours a day on the internet will include all the people who live locally but are not free to visit the heritage centre or library during current opening hours, plus all the people, family historians and others world wide, who at present cannot access our image collections at all. If prints are required, the House of Images will provide the service.

To date, about half the images have been digitised and have been placed on a computer in a room in the Town Hall. Volunteers, (perhaps working in pairs) are now required to view these images and add descriptive text from their own knowledge to the data base. Please contact me. Instruction will be provided ! This voluntary work is an essential part of our contribution to the project.

When the project is completed, perhaps in two years time, it will be officially launched and then available to the public as described above.

Derek Brumhead

Excerpt from the 1881 Census

Whilst browsing through the 1881 census I came upon this entry for a John Topsell, born in Plymouth, and described as a “Licensed Hawker of Baskets and Rugs”. And where was he living? - in 2 caravans on Stockport Road, Newtown. His wife, Rebecca, described as an assistant, and his eldest daughter, Amy, (also an assistant) were also born in Plymouth. However his other three children (again described as assistants) were apparently born on their travels around the country selling baskets and rugs. Alice was born in Whitney, Oxford, Rebecca in Cardiff and the youngest, Margaret (only 6 but still an assistant), in Pontypridd.

Barry Dent

Retirement from Birch Vale Railway Station

The picture below was taken on the retirement of Timothy Sherratt (front row, 4th. From right) from Birch Vale Station in about 1937. Can anybody help with any other details ?



BOOK REVIEW

By Derek Brumhead

Michael Nevell and Norman Redhead .

Mellor: Living on the Edge: A Regional Study of an Iron Age and Romano-British Upland Settlement.

Manchester Archaeological Monographs Volume 1.

The University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit, and the Mellor Archaeological Trust,.

A4, pp.126, 105 illustrations, 2005, ISBN 0-9527813-6-0, £10.

Mellor is a straggling village on the western gritstone fringe of the Peak District. Up to 1936 it was in Derbyshire before being transferred in that year to Cheshire. John and Ann Hearle live in the old vicarage adjacent to the parish church. The house and church are sited on a wonderful eminence from which there is a stunning view over the Manchester region and Cheshire plain. On a fine days, the mountains of north Wales are in view. In the dry summer of 1995 they noticed brown and green patches on the lawn and a green arc running across an adjacent field. When Dr Peter Arrowsmith of the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit, studied the photographs and inspected the site he remarked 'This is old; I know it's old', and how right he was !

A resistivity survey was carried out in the spring 1998, and in the summer digging commenced. Immediately, Roman and Iron Age pottery fragments were found and then, in the 'surreal situation' of the old vicarage lawn, part of an Iron Age ditch cut into the local Coal Measure sandstone, the Woodhead Hill Rock. In the following years this superb ditch was proved to be 4m wide and 2.1m deep. Since then excavations have revealed that there are two enclosure ditches, inner and outer, dating from Late Bronze Age to Iron Age. A round house was discovered within the inner ditch and other roundhouses between the two ditches. Full scale archaeology has continued each year and has shown that there has been a remarkable continuity of occupance back to the Early Mesolithic period, c. 8000-10000 years ago, when there was a knap site or seasonal camp occupied by hunter gatherers. Among the very many artefacts found are a polished Late Neolithic flint chisel, a group of bronze brooches, a nearly complete Iron Age vessel (known as the Mellor pot) and in 2004 a very fine rare (for the region) Early Bronze Age flint dagger. Analysis of artefacts indicate a substantial and prolonged settlement during the 1st to 4th centuries AD, although little structural evidence has yet been found. Quern stones fragments, spindle whorls and loom weights suggest a predominantly civilian Roman domestic settlement.

What is exceptional about this project is the role played by the local community and land owners in association with the professional archaeologists. In 1999, the Mellor Archaeological Trust was formed and, later, Friends of the Trust. In 2001-2 an award of £25,000 was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and in 2003-5 a further £50,000. With an annual grant of £5,000 from Stockport MBC, the Trust has been able to fund an important programme of radiocarbon dating of deposits and features and employ three archaeologists from UMAU, who are needed to train and supervise the volunteers of which there are over 60. Each September an Open Weekend is arranged for members of the public to learn from the professional and volunteer guides the story of the site and its recent excavations. A fortunate coincidence was the conversion in 2000 of the old Mellor school adjacent to the church into a parish centre which can be used for displays and talks. Overall, the pattern of this project set over the last ten years is one which, where appropriate, can be recommended for community archaeology.

This fine volume of ten chapters, seventeen authors, 105 photographs, line drawings, graphs and tables, and a valuable bibliography of over 250 sources, reviews the history of the excavations, the finds and their significance to the regional context of north west England and the broader conceptual understanding of what Robina McNeil describes as 'an exceptional archaeological phenomenon'. It is the first volume in the new Manchester Archaeological Monographs series. The standard set here makes one look forward to the next two volumes which will provide an overview of the excavations on Roman Manchester since 2000, and a report of the proceedings of a major conference on the archaeology of the Lancashire textile industry held in 2004.

www.mellorarchaeology.org.uk

THE LOCAL HISTORIAN

The latest issues (November 2005, February 2006 and May 2006) have been placed in New Mills Library and include the following articles:

November 2005

Bryan Jerrard, "Crime in Gloucester 1805-1833".

Helen Johnston, "Discovering the local prison: Shrewsbury Gaol in the nineteenth century".

Peter Bramham, "Policing an industrial town: Keighley 1800-1856".

George Beale, "Poor Law and famine relief in south-east Ulster 1846-1848".

Ian Mitchell, "'Whether you can get me one at second-hand cheap', researching the second-hand book trade c. 1700-1840".

Sally Sokoloff, "Review article: a Norfolk diary of the Second World War".

Book reviews include: A.L.Rowse and Cornwall: Capital and innovation. How Britain became the first industrial nation. A study of the Warrington, Knutsford, Northwich and Frodsham area 1500-1780: Palaeography for family and local historian: The industrial windmill in Britain: Frank Sutcliff, photographer of Whitby.

February 2006

Eamon Duffy, "Hearing voices on writing the history of Reformation Morebath (Devon)".

Christopher French, "Taking up the 'challenge of micro-history': social conditions in Kingston upon Thames in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries".

Jane de Gruchy, "The Catholic Apostolic Church in Bradford 1872-1882".

Andrew J H Jackson, "Opinion: published parish and community histories - starting point in adult learning and the retheorising of local history".

Evelyn Jackson, Review article: "new books on towns and cities".

Book reviews include: Historical atlas of Kent:: Historic town plans of Lincoln: Swing unmasked - the agricultural riots of 1830-32: The motorway achievement - the north west of England: Beverley: Lancashire's historic halls: Sandlands - the Suffolk coast and heaths: Living back to back: Local history since 1945:

May 2006

Henry Summerson, "People, places and shifting perspectives in the Dictionary of National Biography".

Joan Dils, "The books of the clergy in Elizabethan and early Stuart Berkshire".

Roger Dalton, "Aspects of farming and land management in southern Derbyshire in the early nineteenth century".

Colin Cohen, "The 1942 Barford [Oxfordshire] census and 'war books': a unique record?".

Christopher Dyer, "Maurice Beresford and local history".

Books reviews include: How to write and publish local and family history: Somerset towns changing fortunes 800-1800: Blackshirts on sea; a pictorial history of the Mosley Summer Camps: Gold and gilt, pots and pans; possessions and people in medieval Britain.

FURNESS VALE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY Programme September-December 2006

Tuesday 5 September.	Keith Holford.	History of Bugsworth/Buxworth.
Tuesday 3 October.	Ann Metcalfe.	A pocket full of posies; Derbyshire folklore.
Tuesday 7 November.	Derek Brumhead.	Railways of the Goyt and Sett valleys.
Tuesday 5 December.	Mr and Dr Hamilton.	Church furnishings and fittings.

Meetings are held at Furness Vale Social Club on Yeadsley Lane at 7.30 pm.
Non-members £1.

Secretary: Nicole Parry, Hillcroft, Dolly Lane, Bugsworth, High Peak, SK23
7QG. Tel: 01663 749733.

Annual Membership: £5.