

NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 48, Spring 2012



TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN
HONOUR OF THE MEN OF THIS CHURCH
WHO SERVED IN THE GREAT WAR. 1914-1918



Meetings

Meetings are held in the main hall of New Mills Town Hall, starting at 7:45pm. You may obtain easy access from the entrance on Aldersgate.

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Friday January 13 | David Frith | Churches and Chapels of the Peak |
| Friday February 10 | Kevin Dranfield | Goyt Valley Miner |
| Friday February 24 | Dr. Stephen Dearden | A History of New Mills Old Prize Band: 200 Years of Music Making |
| Friday March 9 | Glen Atkinson | Manchester Docks and the Ship Canal |
| Friday April 13 | James Dickinson | Maps of Derbyshire 1577 Onwards |
| Friday May 11 | A.G.M. then Roger Bryant | Exploring New Mills Archives: a pot pourri of New Mills History |

N.B. The meeting on February 24 is a special meeting hosted by New Mills Band, and includes a book launch.

Committee 2011-2012

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Chairperson | Barbara Done (742617) | |
| Vice-chairperson | Barbara Matthews (743935) | |
| Hon. Secretary | John Humphreys (743581) | |
| Hon. Treasurer | Maureen Hall (742837) | |
| Hon. Archivist | Roger Bryant (744227) | |
| Hon. Editor | Ron Weston (744838) | |
| Ordinary members | Gaynor Andrew | Catherine Bolton |
| | Olive Bowyer | Derek Brumhead |
| | Barry Dent | Pat Evans |

From the Editor

Dear Members,

Looking round at our audiences at the 2011 meetings, I couldn't help noticing all the new faces swelling our membership and the goodly numbers in constant attendance. The fact that our Society continues to flourish when so many similar groups are falling by the wayside, is cause for much self-congratulation – we must be doing something right!

A Happy New Year to one and all!

Ron Weston

Stockport Ancient and Modern

Morris Garrett

2nd September 2011

The Romans crossed the Mersey just below the confluence of two of its major tributaries, the rivers Tame and Goyt. The town of Stockport grew up on a sandstone bluff commanding this important river crossing on the southern (Cheshire) side. During the Anglo-Saxon period, the Mersey was for a time the frontier between Mercia and Northumbria, two great kingdoms. With the Norman Conquest, the Mersey became the northern boundary of the Palatine county of Cheshire, whose earls ruled virtually independently of the English crown. Thus, Stockport retained its role of fortified bridging point for several centuries. It is not known when Stockport castle was built. We do not know what it looked like, as no illustration of it has survived. After the Civil War it fell into disuse and ruin until in the late eighteenth century it was demolished to make room for an early cotton mill, Castle Mill.

Stockport developed as a small market town under the shadow of its castle, serving an extensive area of north-east Cheshire. It was a recognised borough before 1216 and received its market charter from the king in 1260, though, presumably, the charter only confirmed a pre-existing market.

Having outlined the origins of Stockport, our speaker then gave us an illustrated talk regarding the town's subsequent development, using pictures of old maps, paintings and drawings and photographs old and new. Inevitably, the most detailed treatment was given to the last two centuries, which saw Stockport transformed from a market town into an industrial one. Initially the town was dominated by its textile mills lining the rivers. In the mid-nineteenth century the railways came to Stockport – its great brick-built viaduct spanning the Mersey valley a justly celebrated engineering achievement. Meanwhile, the historic core surrounding the parish church and market place somehow survived and, though much modified, its principal buildings continued to serve as the town's central business district.

The social history of Stockport was not neglected, with its photographs of gentry houses, churches, hospitals, other public buildings and schools, including the pioneering Sunday Schools. Particular attention was paid to the war years when Stockport found an interesting solution to the need to provide air-raid shelters by utilising and extending the old tunnels in the sandstone hillsides under the town.

The last fifty years has seen dramatic changes to Stockport's townscape: the mills swept away or changed to other uses; the streets of working class houses much diminished; high-rise flats altering the skyline. The Merseyway shopping precinct, built over the river Mersey on a concrete raft, has displaced the commercial focus in the town centre, though the outdoor market is still flourishing and the quaint streets of old Stockport continue to attract the attention of local residents and visitors alike.

The long history of Stockport mirrors that of many an English town; but in an age in which every High Street looks the same it is well to emphasise the individual character of our towns, now only to be seen in the pictures and photographs of past times.

Ron Weston



New Mills Festival Lecture - Lost Railways of New Mills Derek Brumhead

16th September 2011

For some years, the contribution of the local history society to the New Mills festival has been the organisation of a public lecture on some aspect of the history of the town. With the exception of one year, when he fell ill, Derek has been called upon to perform this task. Each year he seems to reach a higher standard of presentation and excellence than the year before; each year his audience grows, as does its appreciation and enthusiasm. In short, Derek has transformed the New Mills Festival Lecture into an institution, an event to anticipate and treasure by a growing number of the town's residents and near-neighbours.

The 2011 event has been no exception: Derek was on superb form. His digital presentation of his own maps, together with photos ancient and modern, was a model of coherence, which he coordinated perfectly with his spoken delivery. Clearly, Derek had laboured hard and long to achieve this level of perfection.

I shall not attempt to summarise the factual content of his talk, except to say that over the last four decades or so Derek, having accurately researched and recorded the passing of our railway heritage, has now presented this to us. Buildings, indeed, whole landscapes, that we once knew and passed by without a second glance have been swept away and scarcely missed. Only now, when Derek, who has faithfully chronicled their demise, has brought them to our attention do we realise just how much has been irretrievably lost.



The Town Hall was packed out: consisting of the local populace swollen by a host of railway enthusiasts who, knowing Derek's reputation as an industrial archaeologist, would not miss one of his talks for the world. The volunteers gathered behind the bar to dispense free cheese and wine provided by the local Council must

have felt that they were feeding the five thousand! Judging by the scenes of animation and good humour afterwards, everyone enjoyed the evening.

One of the festival's aims is to foster a sense of community in our locality and Derek's talk has made a substantial contribution to this end.

Ron Weston

Read "Lost Railways of New Mills", by Derek Brumhead. New Mills Heritage Centre (or our web site). Price £3- 95.



The Black Prince's Cattle Enterprise In Macclesfield Forest

Dr. Paul Booth

14th October 2011

On the face of it, a talk based on some fourteenth century accounts translated from the medieval Latin doesn't seem to hold much prospect for an entertaining evening; not a bit of it! Dr. Booth, a medieval historian at Liverpool University, gave us an engrossing account of early farming in the Macclesfield area.

He quickly disposed of any idea we might have that his talk was about milk and Cheshire cheese; the cattle in question were being raised as plough oxen.

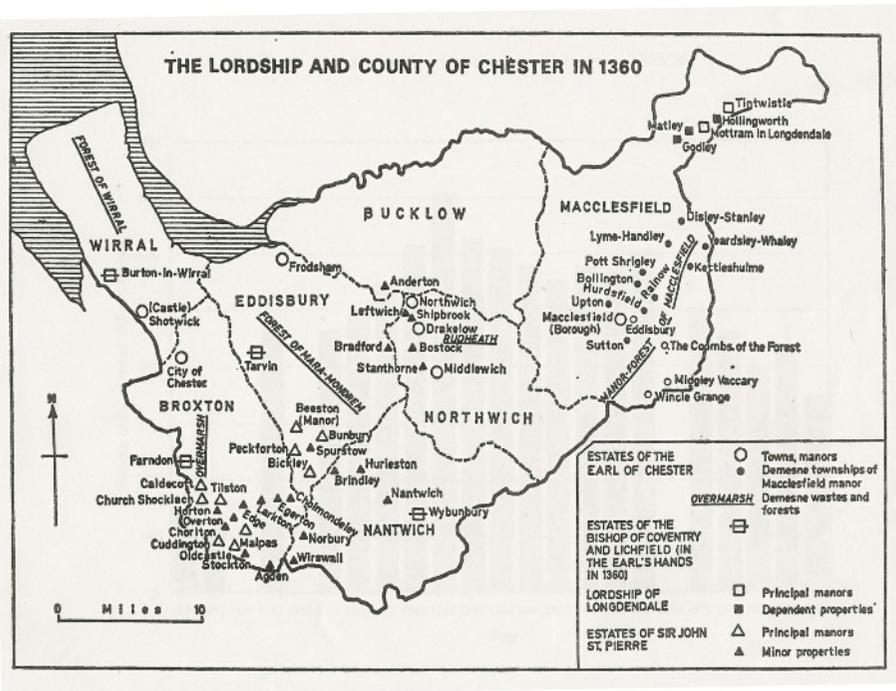
The Black Death of 1348 and 1349, which reduced the population of Britain by half, was not the only major calamity to overtake the country at that time. The climate took a turn for the worse, resulting in famine throughout Britain and western Europe in 1317 to 1319. England was at war with France, chiefly over the disputed possession of Aquitaine. Prior to the Black Death, the king's eldest son, the Black Prince, was heavily, and gallantly involved in the French wars, where the English had notable victories at Crecy (1346) and Poitiers (1356). But wars are expensive and the disruption of economic life as a result of the Black Death and a worsening climate made it difficult to finance further campaigns in France. The Black Prince, as Earl of Chester, had relied heavily on money from Cheshire taxes as well as recruits, particularly archers, to further royal ambitions on the Continent. Thus, the proposal of the Prince's Council to gain income by raising cattle on a large scale in the Prince's manor of Macclesfield, utilising the open upland pastures of east Cheshire for summer grazing, seemed economically sound and potentially profitable. Money was in short supply, however, and the scheme, originally introduced in 1354, was not properly financed until after 1361, when the Black Prince married his cousin, Joan of Kent, who brought him a rich dowry.

The annual accounts, studied by Dr. Booth in the National Archives at Kew, tell the sad story of this enterprise. A large number of cattle were brought in from Ashford-in-the-Water, which, supplemented by cattle imported from several of the Prince's Cheshire manors, amounted to some 700 beasts in total. The series of graphs (covering the years 1353/76) that Dr. Booth distributed amongst the audience enabled us to ponder the problem at first hand. Why did this enterprise fail so miserably? We did our best to find answers, but even the farmers in the audience were at a loss. Dr. Booth gave us his explanation, which seemed to fit the facts as we understood them.

The greatest mortality was amongst the calves in their second winter, having spent the winter months indoors. In east Cheshire, the cattle could be grazed on the upland pastures in summer and autumn, but winters were too severe, given the downturn in the climate, to keep them outdoors. The cattle were over-wintered indoors in lowland locations and fed on hay until the spring grass again became available. While the new-born yearling calves maintained their immunity to disease by suckling their mothers' milk, this great benefit was denied the "twinters" in the herd, who succumbed in large numbers, year after year, to the inevitable "murrains".

Dr. Booth had involved us in a practical problem and, in so doing, had taught us a great deal about the life and times of east Cheshire in the mid-fourteenth century in a vivid and memorable presentation which left us begging for more, hopefully, in the not too-distant future.

Ron Weston



Tramcars to Buses and Supertrams

Andrew Firth

11th November 2011

Andrew Firth, an enthusiastic collector of old photos of the public road vehicles of a bygone age, as well as being a photographer of buses and trams that have appeared and disappeared in his own lifetime, took us on a light-hearted, nostalgic but well-informed journey, beginning with the first horse-drawn trams of Sheffield and Chesterfield in the 1890s. How grim and grimy the main shopping streets of Sheffield were then in the late Victorian era; how formally and respectably dressed the people, young and old, rich and poor alike! Those early trams were open to the elements; and the first electric trams that came to Sheffield around 1900 were no better. Trams remained noisy, clanking, draughty affairs until their demise in the 1960s. By then, most cities had installed them. Only when municipal authorities started to get rid of them did some people regret their passing, while others said, "Good riddance"!

The tramway museum at Crich has a magnificent collection of these trams rescued from oblivion and the scrap heap where we may relive those jostling journeys of our youth and give our grandchildren a taste of living history.

Buses, of course, had supplemented public transport in towns and cities since the end of the First World War. In the countryside, buses were the only means of public road transport and Andrew showed us a succession of photos of buses that once served the villages and small towns of the Peak District.

Andrew's photos of more recent buses serving our own area brought cries of recognition from our audience. Even models that had been in service no more than a decade ago seemed oddly antiquated – how quickly we adapt to change these days.

Now the trams are back in some of our cities; but Andrew's photos of the Metrolink and other supertrams didn't evoke the same response as the colourful old trams that patrol the sea front at Blackpool.

Ron Weston

Sarah Newton 1787 - 1850: A Stockport Girl Makes Good **Ron Weston**

2nd December 2011

Finding out why Sarah Newton was taken as a babe in arms to live in France just months before the beginning of the French Revolution opened up a much wider and intriguing story involving industrial espionage on a grand scale.

Sarah's maternal grandfather, John Milne, was one of Stockport's industrial pioneers. In 1778 he became the first occupant of Castle Mill, which he and his sons filled with pirated (and improved) versions of Arkwright's water frames. When, in the following year, they were approached by an industrial spy in the pay of the French government to build textile machines patented in Britain illicitly in France, they agreed. One by one the members of the Milne family, four sons and two sons-in-law, left Stockport for France. John Milne himself went to live in Muette en Passy just outside Paris in 1782 and set up his cotton mill there. John, a shrewd operator, deliberately chose this location because the American ambassador, none other than Benjamin Franklin, was in residence there. It was probably the long-term aim of the Milnes to settle in America (the newly-independent republic was an enemy of Britain but a friend of France). Nothing came of this ambition to emigrate, but the Milnes soon established themselves in France, erecting many flourishing cotton mills with the backing of the powerful Duke of Orleans.

John Milne's son-in-law, William Newton, left Stockport in 1788 with his wife Betty (Milne) and two young daughters, Frances and Sarah, and settled in the small town of Dreux, where he probably managed one of the Milne textile enterprises. William died in 1792 and the following year Betty went with her two children to Paris to live with her brother Robert, who had established himself as both a successful mill owner and a lecturer in textile technology at the college of industry in the capital. This (1793) was the year of The Terror, when the king and queen, hundreds of aristocrats and even the former leaders of the revolution were executed. Although many enemy aliens living in France were interned, the Milnes were exempted because they were such a valuable asset to the French economy. Even so, they must have had powerful protectors to escape the blind fury of the Paris Mob.

After Napoleon had succeeded in removing the threat of invasion and set about making France the Mistress of Europe, the revolutionary phase came to an end and Paris took on a more prosperous and cosmopolitan air. Sarah

was brought up in her uncle Robert's house in a fashionable district of Paris and must have had a genteel upbringing. She was an intelligent and attractive girl with an intellectual bent. She was also bilingual. This last attribute attracted the attention of one of the most influential women in Paris, Madame de Coigny, who took Sarah into her household to be a companion to her daughter, Fanny, exactly the same age as Sarah, so that she might become fluent in English.

Despite their difference in social status, Sarah and Fanny became close and loving companions. It was through Madame de Coigny that Sarah married Major, later to become General, Letort, one of Napoleon's favourite cavalry commanders, who eventually became the emperor's aide-de-camp. Letort was killed in action a few days before Waterloo, but later a grateful emperor left the General's daughter a generous sum of money in his will.

Sarah's marriage to Letort was not a love match, as far as she was concerned. Twelve months after her husband's death, she married a viscount, Victor de Tracy, a valiant soldier like Letort, but also a man of intellectual tastes and political ambitions.

Victor's father, Antoine, was a notable philosopher and had written an important book, "The Principles of Ideology".

This work was a formative influence on one of France's most celebrated novelists, Stendhal, who became a regular visitor to the glittering salons presided over by Sarah in Paris, where many of the rich, talented and famous congregated. Such salons were places where illicit love affairs might be initiated and, according to Stendhal's biographers, Sarah may not have been immune to the advances of the great writer. She was able to use her influence to gain Stendhal a government post, Consul at Trieste, which gave the author a secure income and the leisure to continue his writing in a congenial location.

Sarah and her husband were dedicated monarchists and flourished under the reign of King Louis-Philippe. Victor became Minister for the Navy and the Colonies at this time. After the death of his father, Victor spent a great deal of time on his family estate at Paray in the Allier district of France. Sarah declared in her journals that she preferred life in the country to that of Paris. Certainly, in later life she revelled in country pursuits – bird-watching, sketching from nature and other rural pastimes. She devoted more and more time to entertaining her two daughters and her grandchildren and became an increasingly devout Catholic. Apart from writing extensively in her journals, Sarah translated several books in English into French and wrote extensively on the early Popes.

Following her death at Paray in 1850, the achievements of this talented and well-regarded woman were much praised in obituaries.

Her descendants live on in Paray. The estate has long been given over to commercial wine production and the appellation "Chateau de Tracy" is still current.

It is ironical that of all the branches of the ambitious Milne clan that settled in France, the one that might be least expected to succeed, the family of William Newton, was the one which fared best and in a way that could not have been forecast. The story of Sarah Newton underlines a fundamental truth: the way to make good is a propitious marriage.

"Sarah Newton 1787 –1850, A Stockport Girl Makes Good", by Sheila Richardson and Ron Weston, is available at meetings, price £2.

Garside Scrapbooks

In the Society's archives there are 12 scrapbooks compiled by Luke, James and Sam Garside of Hayfield over a period of many years. These are full of newspaper cuttings and other items concerning Hayfield, New Mills and district. The items range in date from 1863 to 1974 and there are about 1400 pages altogether! This is a treasure trove for the local and family historian.

Some of the scrapbooks are in poor condition and not suitable for repeated browsing. We have been trying to find a way of making the material accessible and have decided to have the scrapbooks scanned. This will mean that copies become available (as pdf files) on the Society's website and can be viewed by everybody. Not only that, it will be possible to search very easily for items of interest. If you are interested in 'Bradbury' or 'Church Street' or 'Primitive Methodist' or anything else you will be able to run a search for the phrase you want. This is much more efficient than thumbing through 1400 pages of scrapbooks.

We took collections at the two meetings on 14th October and 11th November 2011 which raised £112.76. Also 5 people (or couples) came forward with sponsorship of individual volumes at £35 each, and Hayfield Civic Trust has promised £132. Thank you everyone for your generosity. We think that we now have enough for the scanning to go ahead, and we hope that you will all be able to see the scrapbooks online in the spring or summer of 2012.

Thanks again.

Roger Bryant.

New Mills Library: Local History Material (non-book) For Reference

The material in these folders and boxes has been brought together and meticulously collated and labelled by Cath Bolton.

(The items on the left side of the room were in the last Newsletter (or see the web site).

RIGHT SIDE OF ROOM

Folders: Mellor baptisms 1874-1931

St George's Road, Methodist chapel. Gravestones inscriptions

St George's church monumental inscriptions, books 1-4

St George's church burials 5 Mar 1895-4 Aug 1949

Providence United Reformed church. Garden of Rest details

Mt Pleasant Free Methodist chapel. Grave Book

Folder: White Knowle church, Chinley. Memorial inscriptions

Bugsworth Old Primitive Methodist chapel. Monumental inscriptions.

Low Leighton Quaker Meeting House. Monumental inscriptions

Folders in a Box:

Hayfield St Matthews. Burials and some marriages – copied from Owen manuscripts

Bethel chapel, Hayfield. Baptisms 1842-1955.

St Matthews, Hayfield. Memorials

St James Taxal. Baptisms 1610-1904, burials 1610-1875

Fernilee Methodist chapel. Memorial inscriptions

St Mary's church, New Mills. Baptisms March 1856-Dec 1876

Confirmations Nov 1865-Nov 1925

Marriages Nov 1856-Dec 1923

Deaths Nov 1851-Sept 1883

Folders:

St Thomas a Becket church, Chapel en le Frith. Marriages 1621-1837

Charlesworth Independent chapel. Baptisms 23 Jan 1948-15 July 1998.

Pew Register, Collection Book 1917-1929.

St Matthews Hayfield. Memorials New Cemetery, and copy of Owen ms.

Box:

Church records:

St Matthews, Hayfield. Marriages 1837-1935

St Thomas a Becket, Chapel. Marriages 1621-1837

Mellor Marriages 1678-1775

St Mary's Disley. Graveyard survey

St George's, New Mills. Burials March 1962- 2 Aug 1991

St Georges Methodist. Graveyard record. Copied from Owen manuscripts

Folders:

Chinley Independent chapel. Memorial inscriptions
Roll of Honour
Selected baptisms

Bugsworth church. Memorial inscriptions
Graveyard survey and index

All Saints, Glossop. Marriages 1848-1878
Derbyshire: Return of owners of land 1873
Local and family history resources
Shaw Farm: a passage of time.

Marjorie Jones census transcriptions 1901-2002

Folders: Market Street Vols 1 and 2
Hall Street and South View
Church Road
Kinder View
New Mills public houses
Union Road
Albion Road
Longlands Road
St Mary's Road
Golf Club

Hannah Thompson. New Mills air raid 3 July 1942

Folders in a Box:

New Mills newspaper extracts 1822-29
Annual report of Thornsett Sunday School to 1 January 1797
Halker Lea House, High Lea Road. Abstract of Title, 1949
(J Sumner Pollitt, deceased).
Stafford Wills
Various trade directories

Folders:

Abel Heywood's Penny guide to Disley, New Mills, Lyme Hall and neighbourhood
Providence Congregational church and Sunday School. Japanese Floral Bazaar 1909
New Mills Polling District 30 November 1860-1 Dec 1861. Register of people
entitled to vote.

Boxes:

Taxal parish registers. Baptisms 1610-1912
Burials 1610-1875
Marriages 1611-1867

Local Pub Signs with a Railway Theme.

Derek Brumhead's article in the last Newsletter reminds me of other curios with pub signs, especially railway signs.

The current sign at the Railway just along the road at Whaley Bridge is almost as inappropriate as the Flying Scotsman at the North Western at Newtown. Robinson's have produced a fine picture of a pre-Second World War L.M.S. streamlined 'Princess Coronation' class pacific locomotive. I noted at the time in 'Opening Times,' the local C.A.M.R.A. newsletter, 'not on this line where much more mundane passenger and freight locomotives were the norm.'

Previous signs had shown

- i. an early Trevithick locomotive, probably from Coalbrookdale, Shropshire and there equally inappropriate, and
- ii. a L.M.S. 4-4-0 compound, one of the mundane locomotives.

The Peaks in New Mills, now Pride of the Peaks, was formerly the Railway. Does any reader have a record of a railway sign?

The Crossings at Furness Vale has an illustration of a level crossing and signal box, but what of its former life as the Station Hotel?

Other fairly local signs have been lost as pubs have closed. The Railway at Dove Holes closed in 1994, and with it went the Midland railway style locomotive on the sign. The pub was actually almost alongside the L.N.W.R. line to Buxton, much nearer than the former Midland main line through Dove Holes Tunnel.

A more recent 21st century closure is the Midland at Peak Dale. It carried pictures of two different L.M.S. locomotives, at different times in its later years.

Apart from digging into my own collection of pub sign photographs, I have also drawn on information from *Railway Inn Signs, Book 1, Derbyshire* by Bryan Veitch, published by Meridian Books in 2000, and picked up as a remainder not too long ago. A good source of specialist information.

Robin Wignall