

# **New Mills Local History Society NEWSLETTER**

**Issue 56, Spring 2016**



**Mr. and Mrs. James Wharmby in their car, thought to be the first in New Mills.**



**This car was built by Mr W. Prince in his shop on Albion Road.**

**Car advertising Beverley's Shoes, outside J P Beverley's Popular Boot Stores, 15 Union Road.**



**Early motoring in New Mills**

## **From the Editor**

Dear Friends,

Members were saddened to learn of the death of David Frith. This popular speaker, so well-informed on local matters, was due to give us a talk in January 2016. He was a good friend to our Society and will be greatly missed.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year!

*Ron Weston*

## **Committee 2015-2016**

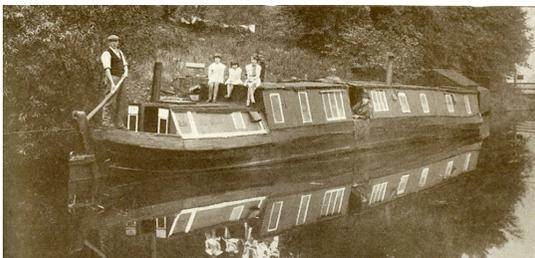
Chairperson	Gaynor Andrew (743117)
Vice-Chairperson	John Crummett (749530)
Hon. Secretary	John Humphreys (743581)
Hon. Treasurer	Maureen Hall (742837)
Hon. Archivist	Roger Bryant (744227)
Hon. Editor	Ron Weston (744838)
Hon. Website manager	Barry Dent (745837)
Ordinary members	Derek Brumhead, Nicki Burgess, Peter Done, Pat Evans, Chris Jones

## The Macclesfield Canal

### Ian and Christine Hamilton (4th September 2015)

The 2015 -16 programme of the Society got off to a strong and positive start: the microphone and communication system worked effectively and efficiently, thus enabling the talk to be heard clearly and consistently throughout. The commentary on the slides was provided by Christine, ably supported by Ian, the photographer.

We were taken on a journey along the canal done, on both water and towpath, by Christine and Ian. The canal is 28 miles long, leaving the Trent and Mersey at Kidsgrove. It proceeds northward to Marple where it joins the Peak Forest Canal.



It is punctuated by a series of twelve locks at Bosley, just south of Macclesfield. The canal came late into the network of internal waterways, being surveyed by Thomas Telford in 1825 and opened in 1831. The Potteries saw it as providing easier access to the Manchester region, but by this time commercial traffic on the canals was in decline, facing fierce competition from the railways.

The canal takes us through three urban communities, Congleton, Macclesfield and Bollington, where there is still evidence of these areas' industrial heritage, with factories, once palaces of the cotton industry, now converted into flats or retail outlets, together with such feats of design and engineering as the cast-iron and stone bridges and viaducts. There is also evidence in these areas of coal-mining and the working of limestone.

However, it is the countryside and physical features through which the canal passes that are familiar, for example, Mow Cop, Bosley Cloud, Tegg's Nose and White Nancy. All these features were pointed out and explained as we journeyed northwards under consistently blue skies! Many in the audience would no doubt be familiar with much of what was presented, which could only lead to the jogging of memories: "I've been there" or "Do you remember when...." an enjoyment of nostalgia which this talk allowed.

*John Crummett.*

## **New Mills Festival Lecture (21st September, 2015)**

### **The Water Supply of New Mills**

#### **Derek Brumhead**

The popularity and reputation of our speaker, Derek Brumhead, ensured a very large audience in the Town Hall on the occasion of the Society's annual Festival Lecture.

The first provision of a general water supply to New Mills came in the early 1830's when George William Newton, squire of Ollersett, obtained a private Act of Parliament to harness a spring on Ollersett Moor to a pipeline feeding water by gravity firstly to his farm properties and then to the town itself. Reservoirs at Laneside Road and Quarry Road in Low Leighton stored the water en route before it was fed across the Goyt valley into the burgeoning industrial settlement of New Mills.

Derek explained this development by showing us early maps, together with his own sketch maps and photographs.

The reservoirs lay open and with the passage of time the purity of the water became increasingly questionable. Thus, when in 1880 a copious spring of clear water appeared in the workings of the Lady Pit coal-mine near Gow Hole, a drainage tunnel was excavated down towards the river, the water then being piped to Goytside. Here a ram pump using river water was installed to pump the water from Lady Pit up to a reservoir at Bald Beard. The Ollersett Moor source was then closed down and New Mills received its water by gravity feed from Bald Beard. The ram pump was later replaced by a gas engine.

All this time, the water supply had remained in private hands and this remained the case until 1907 when New Mills Town Council purchased the whole of the waterworks from the then owner, Mr. Sumner, for £11,000. This was the golden age of municipal activity and the purchase of the waterworks and subsequently the installation of a comprehensive sewage disposal system were



undoubtedly the greatest achievements of our local authority prior to the First World War.

At this point in his talk, Derek paid tribute to one of our most able public servants, Philip Lancashire, who was appointed as Water Manager after successfully managing the town's gas supply. Lancashire introduced several improvements to the Bald Beard system, principally the filter house at Low Leighton, supplemented by further installations at Popples, Beard and Morland Road.

Derek has gleaned much of the detail of the above developments from an account book recording the financial affairs of G.W. Newton, together with the Capital Account ledger of New Mills Town Council, 1906 to 1919.

A drought in 1945 created an emergency situation in New Mills when the last dregs of water remaining at the bottom of the reservoirs had to be boiled before domestic use. This led to a decision to abandon local resources and tap into the Stockport supply from Kinder Reservoir. Bald Beard reservoir remained part of the system, feeding Kinder water by gravity into the town.



Finally, in the 1990's, a complete reorganisation of the nation's water supply took place, with large private companies supplying large regions based on major water catchments, our own being the Trent-Mersey system. There is now a water treatment works at Disley purifying water from several major reservoirs including our local ones at Errwood and Fernilee as well as Kinder.

Derek's talk was enthusiastically received and his vast audience left well-pleased, replete with the generous servings of cheese and wine supplied gratis by the Town Council.

*Ron Weston*

Derek's researches may be perused at leisure in the Local History Society's publication, "The Ollersett Waterworks 1831 -1907", price £3-75, available at the Heritage Centre and at the Society's meetings. A supplement to this volume containing information gathered from the Capital Account ledger, together with several photographs, is also available, price £3-00.

## The Restoration of Elizabeth Gaskell's House

### Janet Allan, 9th October 2015

The celebrated author, Elizabeth Gaskell, was born in 1810 and married William Gaskell, a Unitarian minister, in 1832. The couple lived first in Dover Street, Manchester, and then in Upper Runford Street before moving in 1850 to the house in Plymouth Grove, the residence with which the author is most strongly associated. Plymouth Grove was, in the mid to late nineteenth century, a fashionable, tree-lined street with impressive villas set in extensive grounds. But as the twentieth century wore on the fortunes of Plymouth Grove declined. Some of the grand houses were demolished to make way for more modest accommodation, while others were converted into flats. Elizabeth Gaskell's house became the property of Manchester University and became a students' residence for a time.



In 1994, it was decided by members of the Elizabeth Gaskell Society to rescue the house from its sorry state and restore, decorate and furnish it in the style favoured by Elizabeth Gaskell. Our speaker, Janet Allan, has played a leading role in completing this enormous task. Her illustrated talk was designed to show our audience how each room has been transformed. She described vividly the many tribulations that had to be endured on the way. The restoration of the interior involved the use of authentic materials and, as a listed

building, the house needed the expertise of craftsmen with rare, traditional skills, notably the re-plastering of the principal rooms. Much research has gone into the decor and in the furniture, some of which is antique while some has been specially made using the evidence of old photographs.

Part of the garden that Elizabeth Gaskell knew and loved (she writes of it extensively in letters and journals) has been lost to neighbouring properties, but what remains has been planted with flowers, herbs and shrubs, which research has shown were favoured by the author.

The house at Plymouth Grove was in Elizabeth Gaskell's day more than just a family home, it was place where many of the author's works were written. She entertained many celebrities, counting major literary figures such as Charlotte Bronte and Charles Dickens as her friends. She, together with her husband William, was actively engaged in many of the social, religious and political issues then current.

2015 sees the celebration of the first anniversary of the opening of the restored house, as well as commemorating 150 years since the death of Elizabeth Gaskell. Janet stuck to her brief, which was to describe the restoration of the house, which she performed brilliantly; but it was clear from the questions from the audience that there was a great deal of interest in learning more from Janet about Elizabeth Gaskell herself - a topic for the future perhaps?

*Ron Weston.*

## **An evacuated Guernsey School in Stockport in World War Two Gillian Mawson 13th November 2015.**

With the fall of France in 1940 imminent, the fate of the Channel Islands was sealed. It was decided that defending the islands would be futile; instead, they would be demilitarised, leaving the Germans to occupy them at their leisure. In the short breathing space before that event inevitably occurred, the Channel Islanders were offered the chance to move to the British mainland for the duration. This led to controversy: "Don't be yellow, don't leave", was the advice of many, while others feared for the welfare of their children and womenfolk if they remained. Altogether, about 70,000 opted to depart.



Amongst them was Percy Martel, Head of the Forest School in Guernsey. He arranged for the pupils, teachers and some of the mothers to sail to England. His aim was to preserve the school community in the comparative safety of England. Percy Martel's diary, which he kept throughout the wartime and immediate post-war

years, was one of the main sources of information employed by our speaker, Gillian Mawson, in her researches on the subsequent fate of those evacuees.

Having sailed to Weymouth, some 1200 of the children, including the contingent from Forest School, were put on a train to an arbitrary destination - Stockport. Despite the town having received little notice of their arrival, the evacuees were swiftly accommodated in the Guildhall. Fortunately for them, the warm-hearted people of Stockport opened their doors and took these homesick and bewildered youngsters to their hearts, raising them as part of

their own families. One cannot help wondering whether the hasty arrival of a similar number of Syrian refugee children on Edgeley Station today would evoke the same response.

Percy Martel saw to it that his school stayed together and the pupils were billeted en masse at Cheadle Hulme, where the parish hall was made available as a school room. Martel is the real hero of Gillian Mawson's story: despite his own anxiety regarding his wife and child, left behind in Guernsey, waiting for a boat that never came, he devoted all his efforts to the welfare of the children, wisely striking a balance between their adjusting to life in Cheadle Hulme and preserving the cultural integrity of this community of Channel Islanders in exile.

It is an uplifting and moving story; but, as Gillian Mawson discovered in the many first-hand accounts she has recorded, there was also a dark side. Many of those who returned after the war suffered the antagonism of those who had stayed behind, those who had endured the privations and terrors of occupation. Others, who had put down their roots in Stockport, felt ill-at-ease on their return, regarding their foster families as their own. Some opted to stay in England to forge a life that offered wider opportunities than those available in Guernsey .

Nevertheless, despite these negativities, a warm relationship has existed and still exists between the Stockport hosts and their grateful guests from Guernsey; and that, surely, makes the world a better place.

*Ron Weston.*

## **Curious Cheshire Donald Reid, 11th December 2015.**

Sub-titled, "Sites, tales and legends", Donald Reid's wide-ranging talk was a rich tapestry of Cheshire curiosities, beginning with the Cheshire Cat, made famous by Lewis Carroll in 1866, but going back much earlier. Donald showed



us a photo of a carving of the grinning cat taken at Grappenhall, near Warrington, which Carroll, who lived at nearby Daresbury, probably knew.

Our next visit was to the magnificently restored Little Moreton Hall, whose long history from medieval times reflects the vicissitudes of generations of its owners, the De Moreton family, who finally, in 1938, put this architectural treasure in the hands of the National Trust.

It would be inappropriate for me to attempt to summarise here the wealth of information that Donald gave us on the several churches, bridges, industrial premises, pubs and monuments in and around the county, but here are some of what I regard were the highlights.

The city of Chester has a bewildering variety of famous sites, beginning with the Roman period through to the nineteenth century. The Roodee, once the site of the Roman port of Chester, which, having silted up, eventually became the site of the race-course, the oldest in the country; the Roman amphitheatre, the medieval walls built on Roman foundations, the medieval shops and innumerable old houses and pubs, many reputed to be haunted, make Chester a place to visit again and again.

The gradual silting up of the Dee Estuary over the centuries, having denied Chester its function as a port, then gave rise to a succession of new quays and harbour facilities stretching down towards the coast, each one eventually suffering a similar fate to Chester itself. Donald has researched these defunct ports and recorded what little remains. It is incredible to think that the wide, green meadows along the Dee that Donald showed us in his photos were once under water.

North-east Cheshire, the part of the county neighbouring our own neck of the woods, is not without its curiosities. There is the John Turner memorial, near Rainow, for example. John Turner was a packhorse man who lost his life in 1735 in a blizzard. A more sinister event is commemorated by the "Murder Stone" on the high road between Disley and Whaley Bridge. In 1825, William Wood, a weaver, journeying home from Stockport with a large sum of money, was waylaid, robbed and murdered by three men, only one of whom was caught and sentenced for the offence.

These two events, together with the story associated with the carving of the Wizard on the red sandstone outcrop at Alderley Edge, have featured in the stories of local author Alan Garner, who has woven these and other local happenings into his enticing stories.

Donald has obviously been long fascinated by the curiosities of his Cheshire homeland and has scrupulously researched and photographed all that remains. We are grateful that he has shared them with us.

*Ron Weston.*

## A High Peak Election Anniversary: 3rd December 1885-2015.

Exactly 130 years ago at 8.00 am on Thursday, December 3rd 1885, the polling stations in the new Derbyshire constituency of the High Peak opened to allow those males on a new electoral roll to cast their votes in a most significant national general election.

Since the previous election in 1880 two major political changes had occurred. In 1884 the franchise was extended nationally to rural male householders which trebled the electorate but which provided no clue as to their voting attitudes; in June 1885 parliamentary seats had been redistributed- the High Peak division for example had been carved out of Derbyshire North- and the principle of one MP per constituency was established instead of two as formerly.

The 1885 High Peak candidates were John Frederick Cheetham for the Liberals, a wealthy Stalybridge industrialist, and Captain William Sidebottom of Broadbottom for the Conservatives, the "local" candidate who came from a wealthy Glossop industrial background and with civic experience in that town. Both had stood in 1880 for Derbyshire North, Cheetham a winner with Lord Edward Cavendish, and Sidebottom a loser.

Campaigning was fierce but it was clear that the result would probably be decided by the rival electorates in Buxton and Glossop, the latter having one third of the potential voters. Local newspapers took up their respective causes- the Ashton Reporter and the High Peak and Buxton Advertisers for the Liberals, and the Buxton Herald and Glossop Dale Chronicle for the Conservatives. A victory for the Liberals was expected and it was anticipated that the new voters would support them in gratitude for their franchise.

The turn-out on polling day was high, 89.4% across the constituency. The result was announced in heavy rain at Chapel Town Hall early on Friday afternoon, December 4th with a shock victory for Sidebottom. The total vote was 8416 and Sidebottom's majority was nine! He was the only Conservative to be returned for Derbyshire constituencies in this election and the first time this area had been so represented. Over-confidence and the failure of the Liberals to recognise the significance of the Glossop vote were given as major excuses and explanations for the Liberal defeat. Nationally, Gladstone and the Liberals formed a



minority government, but a new election would soon follow. Sidebottom continued to represent the High Peak until retiring in 1900.

*John Crummett*

( Further details of the election can be found in John Crummett,s "1885- the general Election in Derbyshire's High Peak", published by New Mills Local History Society and obtainable from New Mills Heritage Centre for £3.)

## **The Local Historian**

Vol. 45 No. 3 (July 2015) has been placed in New Mills Library.

David Dymond, 'Surviving the Reformation in a Suffolk Parish [Clare]'.

Lawrence Robinson, 'Consumerism in late seventeenth-century Cumbria; comparing Workington and Whitehaven 1676-1686'.

A D Harvey, 'Working-class poets and working-class literacy in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries'.

Keith Lawrence, 'How accurate are nineteenth-century British censuses ? Using parliamentary reports as an external standard'.

Phillip Gardiner, 'Railways, coal and Barnsley'.

Christopher French, 'The variety of local history: a London-based review article'.

Heather Falvey, 'review article: two Scottish record volumes'.

Book reviews include: The churches of medieval Exeter: Methodism in Bedfordshire: Pleasure boating on the Thames: Salter Bros. 1858-present: Family and community history in Wales: Hoddleston [near Darwen] and its satellite villages.

## New Mills Local History Society - Meetings - Spring 2016

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 Jan. 8	Violence in New Mills in the 1830's.	Ron Weston
Friday Feb. 12	A virtual tour of Marple Hall.	Neil Mullineux
Friday Mar. 11	Hollins Mill: The heart of Marple for over 100 years.	Ann Hearle
Friday Apr. 8	Early days of motoring.	David George
Friday May 13	<b>A.G.M.</b> <i>followed by</i> Pictures from New Mills' past.	Derek Brumhead

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