

New Mills Local History Society

NEWSLETTER 66



Spring 2021

A few words from the Honorary Secretary

I have been trying to put the year 2020 into perspective.

It has been such a strange year taken all round. The Local history Society had a strong start with great attendances at our first meetings, only to be swallowed up with the rest of society in the first wave of the pandemic. I believe that we were right to cancel the rest of the events for the period 2019/20 and sadly the proposed annual trip, though I am hoping to return to the trip on another occasion.

Then we had a brief respite and I had hopes that we might be able to return to our programme, but it was not to be. We have missed out on some truly great talks as a consequence, though again we should be able to rebook the majority of the speakers at some future time.

Sadly, we have lost some great characters, people that have been very influential in the Society and who will be greatly missed. First, John Humphreys passed away after a short stay at the Branksome Nursing Home following a period of worsening health. John's work as Secretary was thorough and detailed, and his work on the Co-operative Movement in New Mills forms the basis of a talk I hope to give at our next AGM. The annual trips that John organised were always a particular highlight of the season.

Latterly, we have lost John Crummett who died having been discharged from hospital a few days earlier. John held down the role of Deputy Chair with great good humour and proved a very steady influence, and I will always remember the first AGM that the Society held outside of New Mills, when John gave a talk about St Matthews followed by a tour of the church.

And so we look forward, and with the announcement of a vaccine for the virus, perhaps we should allow ourselves a glimmer of hope. I am hoping that we can hold the AGM next year, and follow that with a full programme of talks, though we will need a new organiser as Derek Brumhead has decided to step back from this role. We need a volunteer to take the role forward, though I am sure Derek will offer advice and training as necessary.

If we can have a visit next summer, I look forward to taking you over to Sheffield for visits to the National Emergency Services Museum and then on to Kelham Island Museum. We will have to wait on the Government's advice before arrangements can be firmed up though.

In the meantime, I hope you all stay safe and stay well. I hope you had the very best Christmas that you could and that a cracking new year followed after and may 2021 be a considerable improvement on 2020. I'll see you all at our next meeting at the latest.

Mike Daniels

John Crummett

I first met John Crummett ten years ago, when he came to me with a most generous offer. John explained that he had written a book entitled 'Abel Buckley Wimpenny, the life and times of a nineteenth century Hayfield mill manager, political activist and social reformer, 1844 -1905', and would the Society be interested? At first, I thought John was going to give me a draft copy to edit; but the book had already been printed (and a most handsome volume it was!). John was offering a free copy to each of our members!

That was the beginning of a fruitful relationship. John became a member of the Society, served on the Committee and became Vice-Chairperson from 2015. In 2012, he published another book, just as handsome as the first: 'The Reverend Ricketts Raymond Ricketts, Vicar of Hayfield, Derbyshire, 1877-1906', subtitled '*A Simple Body or a Professional Hypocrite?*' John was eager to offer free copies to the membership, as before, and it was with some difficulty that I managed to persuade him to put them on sale at the Heritage Centre and at our meetings.

Since that time, the Society has published three other volumes by John Crummett: '1885, The General Election in Derbyshire's High Peak', in 2015; 'Mothering Sunday 30th March 1851', subtitled '*A Window into Church-going in North Derbyshire*', in 2016; and in the following year, 'The Rebuilding Of St. Matthew's Church, Hayfield 1817-1819', subtitled '*A Bicentenary Celebration in the High Peak*'. Members will recall that we held our AGM in 2017 at Hayfield, when John gave a talk, which was followed by a tour around the church, including the vault, with its remains of the original medieval chapel.

For John, these volumes were a labour of love; but, for us and his wider readership, they have made a major contribution to the history of Hayfield.

Ron Weston.

In 2019 Derek Brumhead and I provided some information relating to New Mills for the Open University prison history website, www.prisonhistory.org. I have since discovered further things, so it seems a good time to write a summary.

Policing as we know it would not have been seen in New Mills until after the Police Act of 1856 which led to the formation of Derbyshire Constabulary in 1857. Before then the enforcement of law was a parish responsibility administered by a parish officer called the Constable. Trials could take place at local magistrates' courts (petty sessions) or at the Derbyshire Quarter Sessions. In the late 1820s and the first half of the 1830s courts of petty sessions were held at the Hare and Hounds in Low Leighton, with George W. Newton as one of the magistrates (for example, *Stockport Advertiser*, 19 Mar 1830). The Hare and Hounds was built by Newton about 1827. (The inn is mentioned in the *Stockport Advertiser*, 23 Mar 1827: see also 'Men of Property, the Bowers and the Newtons in New Mills' by Ron Weston, 2000, *New Mills History Notes* no. 28.) The building has a corridor of former cells which, presumably, date from the late 1820s and were used to hold those appearing before the magistrates.



The Hare & Hounds, early 1900s (n01409)



The corridor of former cells, as in 2015
(Derek Brumhead, n17277)

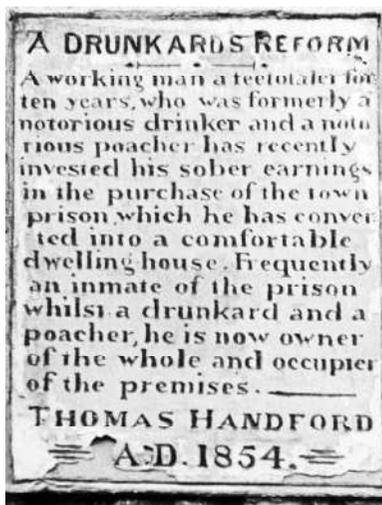
Another early New Mills building associated with law and order is the well-known 'Drunkard's Reform' cottage in Dyehouse Lane (117 Dyehouse Lane as now numbered). It is notable because of the plaque erected by Thomas Handford on the front of the building in 1854. The plaque says that he was

* I forgot to put my name to the Liberal Club article in the last newsletter!

formerly a drunkard and poacher and, consequently, a frequent inmate of the 'prison'. He had been a teetotaler for 10 years in 1854, so his experience as an inmate apparently refers to the period up to 1844.



Thomas Handford's widow at the door, about 1899 (J. P. Beverley, n03341)



The plaque on the building, as it was about 1970 (A. Clapham, n03567)

In the 1841 tithe apportionment the building was described as a 'Lock up' used by the Constable of the Township. As far as I know, that and the plaque provide the only surviving documentary evidence for this lock-up. It was no longer in use by 1846 because in October of that year a petition was presented to the Derbyshire magistrates at the Quarter Sessions for a new lock-up in New Mills (Derby Mercury, 21 Oct 1846):

LOCK-UP AT NEW MILLS.

W. EVANS, ESQ., M.P., presented a petition from New Mills, praying for the erection of a lock-up for that place. The grounds of the petition were, that the nearest lock-up was at Glossop, which was 8 miles distant, and the next nearest at Chapel-en-le-Frith, being a distance of 10 miles. It was also averred, that the county of Chester having an organised police, vagrants and other loose people of that county were driven into the petitioners' neighbourhood. Petition received.

It is probably this petition that is quoted on page 38 of 'New Mills 1894-1994', edited by Derek Brumhead, 1994. The same petition or a similar one, together with a supporting petition from Mellor, was considered at the Quarter Sessions

in January 1847, but the petition failed (Derby Mercury, 6 Jan 1847). In 1852 the London Evening Standard (10 Apr 1852) commented on the lack of a paid county police officer and lock-up in New Mills. Another petition for a lock-up, which also failed, was presented in 1855 (Derbyshire Courier, 6 Jan 1855).

There was progress in 1859, two years after the formation of the Derbyshire Constabulary. At the April Quarter Sessions the Chief Constable recommended that a house affording a 'strong room' be taken in New Mills at an annual cost of £6, and this was agreed (Derbyshire Times, 9 Apr 1859). Later the same year police constables Swallow and Madely were on the beat in New Mills (Glossop Record, 3 Sep 1859). The new police station or lock-up was in Market Street, as indicated by the census returns of 1861 and 1871 and the entry 'Police station, Market-street, New Mills' in an 1871 newspaper almanac (Glossop-dale Chronicle, 7 Jan 1871).



58 Market Street in 2019. The 1859 police station was here or near here.
(Roger Bryant, n22302)

The census of 1861 lists Thomas Swallow, police officer, and family, living in Market Street with another officer, William Madeley, as lodger. Thomas Swallow (now sergeant) and family are also in Market Street in the 1871 census. The censuses do not give exact addresses but, from the order of listing, the police station could have been at or near 58 Market Street, now Bele Bakery. (But this cannot be confirmed in the absence of other evidence.)

In 1875 the Market Street landlord served notice to quit. At the midsummer Quarter Sessions, the Chief Constable stated that the need of New Mills for a police station was so great that £700 to provide one should be diverted from elsewhere (Derby Mercury, 30 Jun 1875):

In consequence of having received notice to deliver and quit the house now held by the county, and occupied as a police house and strong room, at New Mills, and owing to the great necessity for a lock-up at that place, I would recommend to your Court that the amount of 700*l.*, approved of by last Quarter Sessions, to be expended in the building of a house and three cells at Compstall, be appropriated for the purpose of building an Inspector's station at New Mills.

There was some delay in building the new police station. At the January Quarter Sessions in 1876 it was reported that the plans had been altered because the original plans were not approved by the Home Secretary (Derbyshire Times, 8 Jan 1876). But the building was finished and opened in May 1877 (North Cheshire Herald, Thu. 24 May 1877):

NEW MILLS. THE NEW POLICE CONSTABULARY.—The police constabulary buildings, just finished, were inspected on Monday, and on Tuesday were taken full possession of by the police authorities.

Boundary walls to the property were built in 1878 (Buxton Chronicle, 4 Jul 1878, and building account of 31 May 1878, Derbyshire Record Office, reference QAB 433 (copy D522 in NMLHS archives)). The constabulary was in Hall Street (7 Hall Street, now a house) and it is shown on the 25-inch OS map surveyed in 1879. The land was acquired by the county on 31 Dec 1878 in a conveyance from W. H. Turner and M. T. Cresswell to John Barber, Clerk of the Peace (information from a list of ground rents and chief rents, D404 in NMLHS archives).

The building has ‘CONSTABULARY.’ in its stonework and now carries a plaque to commemorate that it was used to hold 6 of the trespassers arrested during the 1932 Kinder Trespass. Benny Rothman, one of those held, unveiled the plaque in 1994.

In December 1993 New Mills Police Station moved from Hall Street to the former doctors’ surgery at Hurst Lea House. It continued there until 2017 when Hurst Lea House was put up for sale, later converted to apartments.



The Hall Street police station in 1987
(Barry Dent, n04293)



The police station sign and blue lamp at
Hurst Lea House in 2016
(Roger Bryant, n19993)

A Ghost Story for a dark winters night!

Excerpt from the "Glossop Advertiser", Jan. 30, 1914

"The Ollersett Ghost"

Blood-curdling Screams heard in a New Mills Coal Pit

Apparition of a Headless Woman

Strange happenings during the past few days have occurred at the Ollersett coal pit, New Mills, Derbyshire. The miners have been greatly disturbed by a "ghost," which has made an unwelcome intrusion at the bottom of the shaft, and has almost shattered the nerves of the men working on the night shift by its blood-curdling screams. The pit is situate about two miles from the town of New Mills, and nestles in a well-wooded hill bordering the lonely Ollersett moors. Last week two men on the night shift descended the shaft, and after attending to the pumping engines were making the return journey, creeping on all fours underneath the dripping rock roof. Simultaneously their eyes lighted on an object standing a feet away

LIFTING UP ITS ARMS AND UTTERING LOUD SCREAMS

After their momentary fright had passed the men proceeded to the spot with all haste, but the apparition at their approach vanished into thin air, and was not seen again that night. The men ascended the shaft much disturbed by their experience, and related the story to the engineman. His suggestion that what they had seen was a shadow found no favour with the men, who persisted it was the Ollersett ghost they had seen. Two nights passed without anything untoward occurring, and on the third night a miner descended the shaft for the purpose of oiling an engine. He had not been down many moments when his comrades on the bank heard the sounding rod, used as a signal to the engine-man to draw up the cage, hit with unusual force. When the cage reached the top the

MINER, WHITE-FACED AND NEARLY IN A STATE OF COLLAPSE.

stated he had seen the ghost, and his version tallied minutely with that of the other miners, although he had neither seen nor heard of their adventure. All stoutly declare their experience is not a hallucination, but is of the Ollersett ghost itself. The pit has only been

re-opened about six weeks, the men employed numbering about 40 all told. The shaft was first sunk about a hundred years ago, but as there was a tremendous amount of rock the working of it was almost impracticable with the machinery in vogue in those days, and several firms who tried to reach the large seams of coal known to be there had to abandon the undertaking. It was some years later that a

WOMAN, WELL-KNOWN IN THE LOCALITY, WAS BRUTALLY MURDERED

in the vicinity of the pit, the sordid nature of the crime causing a profound sensation in the district. The poor creature's head had been severed from the body and when the atrocious deed was discovered it was lying several yards from the trunk. Later, a further attempt to work the pit was made, and miners descending the shaft for the first time for many years, found at the bottom a gold locket attached to a chain, containing human hair, and shreds of a woman's wearing apparel. There was, however, no trace of a skeleton. Naturally the men were disturbed by their find but operations to reach the coal were proceeded with. It was customary for two men to keep the fires going through the night. One stormy night the men had raked their fires and were enjoying a pipe at the door of the boiler-house when they beheld a sight in the moonlight which

FROZE THEIR BLOOD IN THEIR VEINS AND SET THEM OFF PELL MELL

into the village. Not more than fifty yards from where they stood there had appeared an apparition in the form of a woman without head. The ghost, in the full light of the moon and raising its arms, uttered a long-drawn-out, unearthly scream, and promptly disappeared. Other men afterwards took on the job of stoking, and were equally terrified one night when the visitant again appeared, this time practically at the engine-house door. Again the stillness of the night was rent by a fearful yell. One of the men, having a wide reputation as a local preacher, waited for the return of the ghost: on another occasion, boldly walked to within a few yards of it, and began to pray. This apparently "laid, the ghost." for it was never seen again until the miners now at work at the pit had the experience above related.

See overleaf

Not a Headless Woman After All.
GHOST PROVES TO BE A WHITE BADGER.

**ITS WEIRD WAILS,
RESENTS MOLESTATION OF "ITS ANCIENT SOLITARY
REIGN."**

The mystery of the "headless woman ghost" at the Ollersett pit, New Mills, Derbyshire, has been solved, and has been found to be a pure white badger, one it is surmised, of many of that species abounding in the vicinity.

The intruder had always made its appearance in the night, and several theories, are advanced as to how it gained an entrance to the pit.

The most feasible it that it has made its way up what is used now an airshaft to the mine, but which was formerly a road for the trucks of coal. This subway is many yards in length and emerges on the turnpike road from Hayfield to New Mills, and runs along the fringe of the Ollersett moors.

Evidently the animal has made the pit its lair, and has found it afforded a safe retreat after indulging its depredations.

Now it resents in no uncertain manner the disturbance of its solitude for when the men have approached it, it has shown signs of fight and on one occasion made as if to leap at a miner.

In self-defence he struck at it with his pick-axe and it turned tail. The ferocity of badgers is well-known, but white ones are, on good authority, stated to hold the sway in this direction.

The screams, which struck terror to the heart of the miners last week, were, in all likelihood, uttered by the male badger calling to its mate, and to anyone who has heard the weird cry of the animal it will be recognised that the sound is an awe-inspiring one, indeed.

The miners have now commenced to set traps at various places in the roads, in the hope that the badgers will fall a prey to the bait set for them.

Interviewed on Saturday Mr. James Ramsbottom the manager of the colliery, said he was surprised that anyone should believe such rubbish about a headless woman ghost these days.

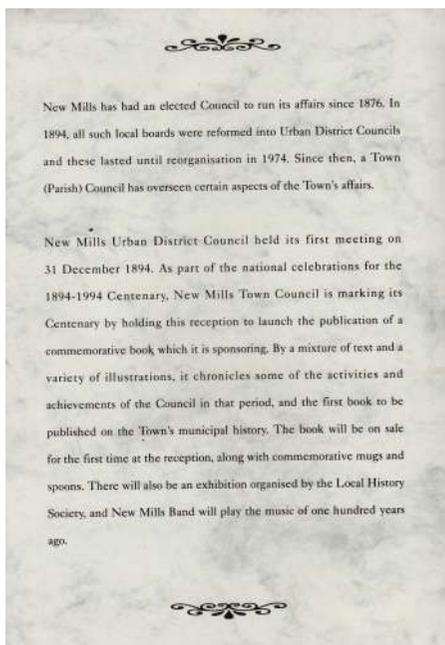
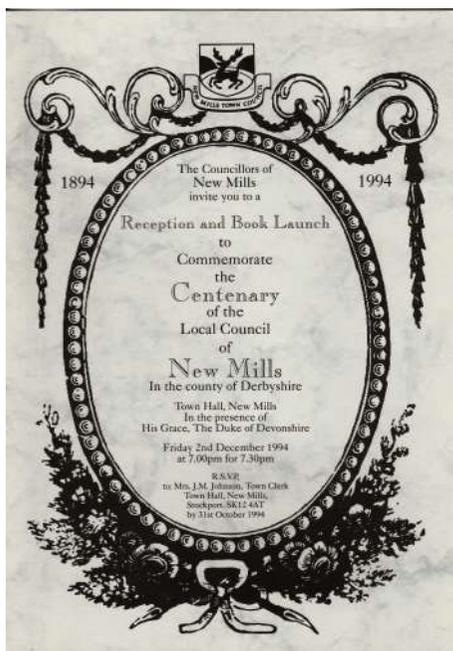
Mr. Ramsbottom admitted that two or three men had stated they had seen something in the pit and had heard noises, and this had been stirred into a ghost.

There was certainly “a funny noise” in the shaft, but it was caused by air currents. It was a whistling sound, and, no doubt sounded dismal. But it was nothing whatever but the pump. It was a wet shaft, and where water fell down the inside from one ring to another it set up a funny noise, and echoed through the pit as if it was someone talking.

“To say it is anything more is ridiculous. I have been there 23 years, and have never seen or heard anything but what I have told you, although I have gone through the place hundreds of times, both alone and with company at all hours of the night.”

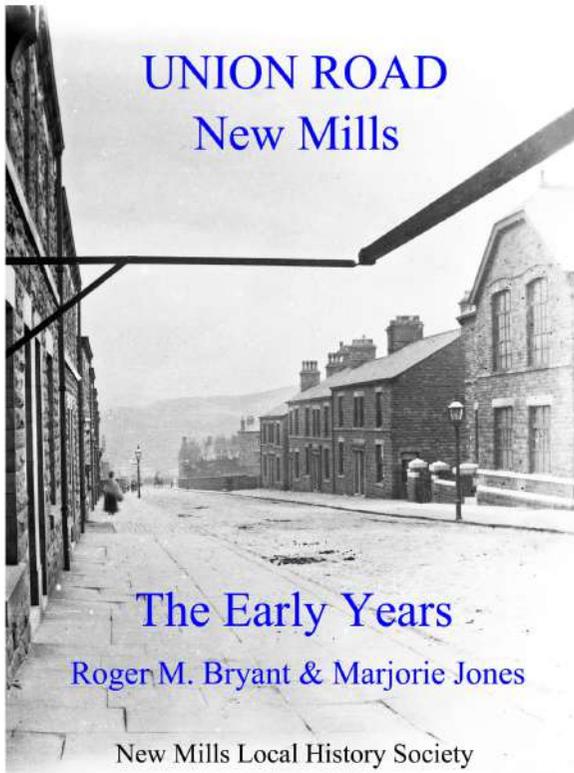
Asked how he accounted for the stories told by the two men, the manager sad he could attribute them to nothing except imagination.

Launch of the New Mills Town Council publication “New Mills 1894-1994”, Dec. 2,1994.



**NEW PUBLICATION:
UNION ROAD, NEW MILLS, THE EARLY YEARS**

Hot off the press! Roger and Marjorie have described the development of Union Road after it was built in 1884 - exciting years in the life of the town. The book is packed with details and pictures of the shops, houses and businesses up to about 1920, and there is information about people like John Thomas Wharmby and Seth Evans who built the first buildings. And did you know about the big fire of 1915?



Now available to buy on the Society's website (www.newmillshistory.org.uk/publications) it contains 35 black and white images, 21 colour images and 45 copies of of shop adverts.