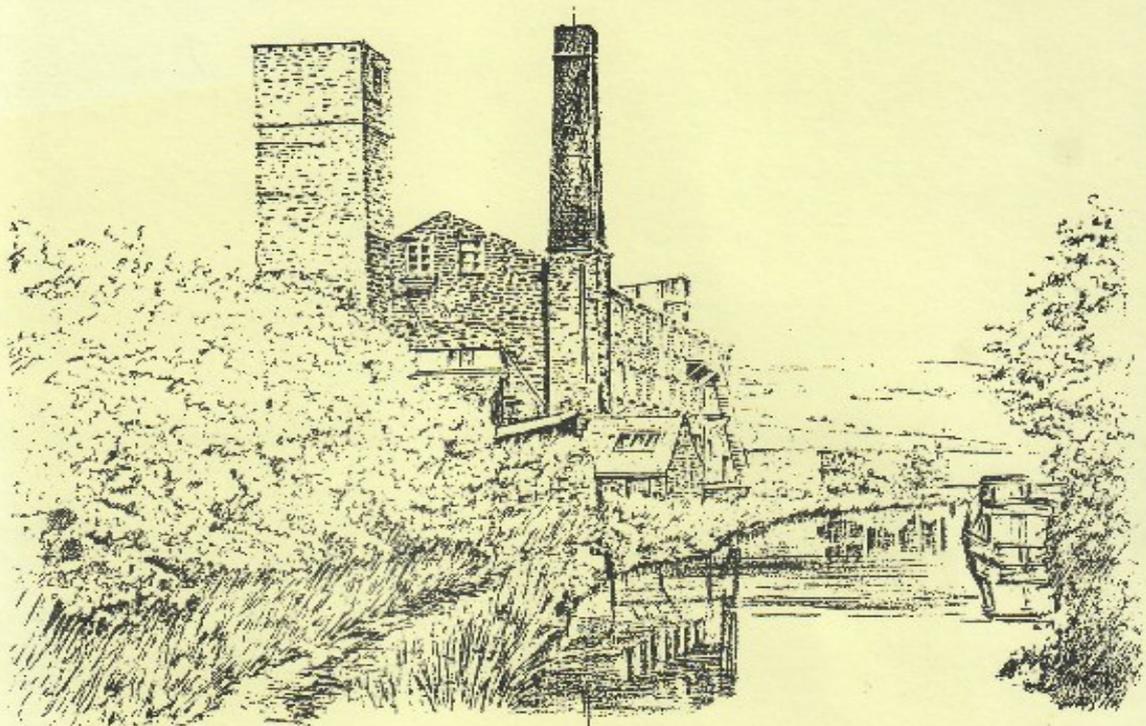


NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 67

NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



THE MILLS OF NEW MILLS

BY

JOHN.V.SYMONDS

Out of Print

Autumn 2021

Committee Members:

Chairman	Roger Bryant (744227)
Hon. Secretary	Michael Daniels (746449)
Hon. Treasurer	Maureen Hall (742837)
Hon. Archivist	Andrew Screen (742198)
Hon. Photo Archivist	Roger Bryant (744227)
Hon. Editor	Ron Weston (744838)
Ordinary Members	Nicki Burgess, Peter Done, Pat Evans

Website Manager Needed

After many years service, Barry Dent has decided to step down from managing our website. We will all be very sorry to see him go because of the excellent work he has done down the years.

However, this provides an opportunity for someone to take over the responsibility. Our website has long been the gateway to our books and archive as well as providing information about our talks and visits. As such, it is a critical element for the continued success of the Society.

Currently, we use Ionos platform to present our website which can be found at www.newmillshistory.org.uk.

Could you possibly help? If so, to find out more, talk to one of the committee members for more information. Alternatively, if you know anyone that is interested, (perhaps a family member, friend or neighbour,' ring Mike Daniels on 01663 746449.

John Symonds

John Symonds, who died earlier this year, was a founder member of our Society, launched in 1983, and became its first Chairman. His interest in the history of New Mills and its environs pre-dated the founding of the Local History Society. As early as 1971, having completed the analysis of the 1851 Census for Hayfield, the New Mills and Hayfield branch of the W.E.A. decided to continue their studies of local history by turning their attention to New Mills. Once the analysis of the 1851 Census for Beard, Ollersett, Thornsett and Whitle had been completed, it was decided to continue with the research into the history of New Mills and attempt to produce an outline of the history of the parish.

This resulted in the publication in 1977 of the first comprehensive history of the town: "New Mills - A Short History", edited by J.H. Smith and J.V. Symonds. Thus, when the Local History Society was formed, we had a member already well-versed in our local history: John Symonds.

We soon began to reap the benefits of John's knowledge and expertise. In 1983, John produced one of our most important publications, "The Mills of New Mills". A second edition appeared in 1991, incorporating John's collation of new information on this fundamental topic in the History of New Mills.

The Society soon acquired a sizeable collection of old photographs lent or donated by local people. In 1987, "New Mills and District - A Look Back" was produced, edited by Roger Bryant and John Symonds, which became an immediate "best seller" in the town. This was the first of several other books of old and contemporary photos.

John, himself, was a keen photographer and encouraged members to record all aspects of the town and parish on film. In 1987, John made a cine-film of everyday life in New Mills, which was later digitized to produce a video film lasting thirty minutes and put on sale. What was contemporary then is now a valuable historical record.

John, who was Head of Humanities and Environmental Studies at New Mills School, took early retirement in the 1990's owing to ill-health. He lived in Hazel Grove and, no longer able to drive, found it increasingly difficult to attend meeting of the Society. He continued to serve as a committee

member and helped by supplying booksellers in Stockport with our publications.

John's contribution to New Mills Local History Society in its early years was immense. Above all, he helped to form the character of the Society, established to create an awareness of our local heritage by encouraging the publication of original research and the active participation of local people to that end.

Ron Weston

35 Jubilee Gardens
New Mills
SK22 4PL
Telephone: 01663746449
Email: secretary@nmlhs.gmail.com

Good Morning Everyone,

As I write, I am optimistic that a return to near normal may happen as soon as June 21st, Indian variant of Covid 19 permitting. With that in mind, I thought it pertinent to bring you all up to date with our current position.

These last twelve months have been difficult for everyone and I hope you have all managed the various lockdowns without too much difficulty. I know that the Society has lost some valued members over the period; John Humphreys, John Crummett and John Symonds have all left us. I will miss them greatly, though I know that they would encourage us all to look to the future.

The Society remains in a healthy position financially, despite lockdown and the year's holiday from subscriptions that we have all had.

Derek has decided to step down from organising our talks. After many years dedicated service, he thinks it is time to train up someone younger

to take on the task. Chris Jones has decided to step down from the Committee as well, though she will continue to help out with the teas at our meetings. Barry Dent has also decided to step down after many years as Website Manager, Newsletter production and distribution as well as various other tasks.

The loss of our Deputy Chairman, John Crummett, our Website Manager, Barry Dent, Derek Brumhead and Chris Jones means that our committee is beginning to look very depleted. Roger has been Chairman for some time and, though he is willing to continue, he would prefer it if someone would take over the position so that he can dedicate himself to the work of Photographic Archivist, as there are now approaching 25000 photographs on Picture New Mills.

We need new blood on the Committee. We need a new Chairman, a new Deputy Chairman and a new Website Manager. At the same time, we have taken the decision to co-opt Judith Lanham who will now be responsible for organising our talks, a very welcome addition to our numbers.

However, if these positions are not filled, it places the whole Society in a very difficult position. So please consider very carefully if you can help out. I am available to talk though these responsibilities with anyone that is interested. If you would like, come along to our next Committee meeting to observe us in action, and you will see just how satisfying the work is.

As lockdown eases, we hope to resume our talks in September, though the schedule looks a little light at the moment. We will decide at the meeting when to hold our AGM, but this will be as early as possible, given the technicalities involved.

Mike Daniels
Hon. Secretary

Treasurer's Report for the year ending 31.03.2021

NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY					
RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2021					
	2020/2021	2019/2020		2020/2021	2019/2020
	£	£		£	£
Opening Balances			Expenses		
Current A/C	1313.24	820.65	Speakers	0.00	277.00
Invest A/C	1449.45	1437.95	Newsletter	60.00	75.00
2nd A/C	301.38	300.22	Room Hire	38.88	424.92
Pay Pal A/C	1.75	53.22	Archive materials	0.00	69.90
			Printing/Publications	150.00	130.00
Receipts			BALH Subscription	75.00	75.00
Donations	0.00	64.45	Expenses	118.05	198.86
Visitors	0.00	204.00	Outings	0.00	427.00
Gift Aid received	116.64	105.41	Refreshments	0.00	25.50
Subscriptions	11.06	603.22	Hosting Picture NM	150.00	150.00
Sales of Publications	244.38	490.36			
Sales of Refreshments	0.00	11.60			
Outings	0.00	430.00			
Sale of High Resolution Prints	19.22	40.26	Total Expenses	591.93	
Interest 2nd A/C	0.29	1.16			
Interest Invest A/C	10.44	11.50	Closing Balances		
Dig photos Torr Vale Mill	0.00	125.00	Current A/C	1114.36	
Donations sale of books	0.00	220.00	Invest A/C	1459.89	
			2nd A/C	301.67	
			Pay Pal A/C	0.00	2875.92
Total receipts	402.03				
			Total	£ 3467.85	
Total	£ 3467.85				
Publications in hand	£ 3000.00				
The accounts of the Society have been audited in accordance					
with the books, vouchers and explanations given to me,					
and in my opinion, represent the affairs of the Society,					
as at 31/3/2021					
		+			

NEW MILLS IN 1812 AND THE PAUL MASON STORY

Roger Bryant

The population of New Mills grew from 1,878 in 1801 to 2,801 in 1811, along with the development of local textile mills. A new Methodist church was built on St George's Road in 1810 and New Mills Band was formed in 1812. We might think that New Mills was a comfortable little town in 1812.

However, that would be a mistake. Times were extraordinarily hard. Food prices soared in 1812, partly as a result of the effect of the Napoleonic Wars, and unemployment in the textile industry was high. These factors led to widespread rioting by the 'Luddites' and their supporters. I don't know of any evidence for such rioting in New Mills in 1812 but there was certainly extreme poverty.

An Association for the Relief and Benefit of the Manufacturing and Labouring Poor was set up in London in 1812 and collected information about poverty from around the country, particularly from the north of England. Here is some of the information received by the Association.¹

New Mills, Derbyshire, June 25, 1812. Distressed state of the industrious poor indescribable. Many families have not one shilling per head per week. No relief given where they had 2s. 6d., as the funds would not admit it. Few persons of independence; and those in business, through badness of trade, much embarrassed.

Disley, July 27, 1812. Necessities of the poor urgent and extreme: the writer had not heard of any place inclosing more indigence and perishing want; many families have sought sustenance from boiled nettles and wild greens, without salt.

Hayfield, August 7, 1812. The sufferings of the poor cannot easily be conceived, except by those who have witnessed them.

¹ Details extracted from articles in *The Philanthropist*, 2 (1812), 309–338, 3 (1813), 130–147, 3 (1813), 374–378, and *The Universal Magazine*, 19 (1813), 179–185, all available online.

It turned out that New Mills was one of the places with greatest need, countrywide. By March 1813 the Association had remitted funds 'to promote or assist local institutions' and these included the following sums: Stockport £100; New Mills £200; Mellor £50; Hayfield £20; Marple £20. The extent of poverty in New Mills is highlighted by the fact that the donation there was twice the amount that went to Stockport.

In the spring of 1812 there were serious disturbances in the Manchester and Stockport areas (as well as elsewhere) by the Luddites and their supporters. The Luddites have become notorious for the breaking of machinery seen as a threat to employment. But the rising price of bread and other food was also a major factor in the disturbances. In March and April there was rioting, arson and the breaking of power looms in Stockport. Food riots took place in several towns, including Manchester. At least 5,000 people took part in a riot in Macclesfield on 13th April (Macclesfield Courier, 18 Apr. 1812). They protested about the high price of potatoes and some of them broke into shops and looted food. The committed Luddites took an oath swearing themselves to secrecy in a 'twisting in' ceremony and they organised themselves with military precision. During some of their attacks they blackened their faces for disguise and referred to each other only by numbers.

In the night of 16th April 1812 there was a terrifying burglary at a farmhouse in Bugsworth (now Buxworth) and, according to some newspapers, the perpetrators were Luddites. The event led to the hanging of Paul Mason of New Mills and some other men in April 1813. Many details of the story are given on pages 95–97 of 'New Mills Wesleyanism' by Seth Evans, 1912 (pages 79–81 of the 2008 Country Books reprint). There the farm-house is identified as Green Head (on Dolly Lane not far from Bridgemont). However, Seth Evans plays down the seriousness of the burglary. He says it was done at New Mills Wakes by a number of men bent on having a lark who, when they found no money, damaged the furniture and destroyed the milk and butter. I don't think that New Mills Wakes could have been in April: this holiday was in September (or possibly October) until it was moved to mid-summer during the 20th century. Also, the newspaper details show that the incident was much more serious than a 'lark'. The robbers were armed and acted in a very threatening way. Also, many items were stolen.

Here is the report of the burglary in the Derby Mercury (30 Apr. 1812):

A most wanton and wicked outrage was committed in the night of Thursday last, on the property of Mr. John Drinkwater, a respectable farmer, of Bugsworth, in the parish of Glossop, in this county. His wife, who occasionally acts as a midwife, was called up at midnight, to attend

a woman who was named to her; but she had no sooner opened the door than she was beset by a number of ruffians who presented pistols and demanded a hundred pounds of her. She said there was very little money in the house, but what there was they might take. Upon this they rushed in having their faces disfigured, and she opened to them all the drawers and cupboards, from which they took what they liked, including, twenty pounds in money, ten cheeses, twenty pair of sheets, blankets, pillow-cases, &c. for six beds, besides all her husband's and children's cloaths. The ale and liquors in the cellars they drank or spilled on the place, broke pickle and preserve pots, scattering and trampling their contents, together with a quantity of butter, cream and other provisions on the floor. All this time a fellow stood over the husband as he lay in bed, brandishing a sword, and threatening him with instant death if he stirred. The honest man lay still, and he had a good reason for so doing, besides the sword that glittered over his head, for under it was a case containing two hundred pounds in money, and the writings of his little freehold. These the robbers did not find. When they had done their work, one who seemed to be the Captain called over their number from 1 to 16, and all having answered, they went away, carrying with them, or destroying property to the amount of nearly 150*l*. During the robbery two of the gang kept guard at the door of a small cottage adjacent, being the only habitation near Mr. Drinkwater's.

Several suspected culprits were detained on 25th September 1812. According to The Star (London) newspaper (13 Oct. 1812), Mr Nadin, deputy constable of Manchester, having obtained some information, arrested ten men in New Mills with the assistance of a party of the Scotch Greys. The Star stated

The robbery had been committed upon the Luddite system, by a kind of felonious levy en masse; and the robbers had been observed entering Drinkwater's house by a person whose son having deserted from a recruiting party, was anxiously watching at an untimely hour.

The Derby Mercury (1 Oct. 1812) stated that the men arrested were committed to Derby Gaol:

... Paul Mason, Thomas Frith, Joseph Stafford, Henry Mason, William Armfield, Henry Bagshaw, James Harrison, Robert Harrison, William Rigley, and John Mason, charged with having on the 17th of April last,

between the hours of twelve and one o'clock in the night, feloniously and burglariously broken and entered the dwelling house of John Drinkwater, at Bugsworth, in the parish of Glossop, and stealing thereout and carrying away, a blue coat, a shift, two pair of breeches, a light coloured printed gown, a sky blue silk quilt, two black silk cloaks, a quantity of shawls and cotton handkerchiefs and six silk handkerchiefs, six yards of cloth, a pair of shoes, a waistcoat, a bed cover, a quantity of cheese, a number of mens' & boys' shirts, one striped cotton bed gown, a check and blue apron, a brown top coat, half a dozen tea spoons, pocket knife, and some pen knives, and various other articles, the property of the said John Drinkwater.

From details given at the subsequent trial there was a hearing before the magistrates in Chapel-en-le-Frith in September. Also, other men appeared at the trial so there must have been further arrests. The trial took place at the Lent Assizes at Derby in the second half of March 2013. As far as I can see, the Derby Mercury only reported the verdicts but, luckily, several other newspapers outside Derbyshire gave details of the trial itself in almost identical accounts.¹ The extracts that follow are from the Staffordshire Advertiser (17 Apr. 1813), but I have used the other papers to decipher a few illegible words.

At the trial fourteen men stood indicted. They were Paul Mason (aged 34), Thomas Frith (22), Henry Mason (23), Henry Bagshaw (22), James Harrison (30), Robert Harrison (25), William Rigley (30), John Mason (20), William Simpkins (26), Joseph Goddard (23), Richard Hibbert (24), Joseph Hibbert (26), William Daniels (28) and Peter Henshaw (40). Four other men had also been imprisoned on suspicion, but 'the grand jury did not find bills against them': they were Joseph Stafford (22), John Stafford (24), William Armfield (42), George Home (35). The fourteen men were charged with burglary at John Drinkwater's house on the night of 16th April 1812. Their plea was 'not guilty'. First to give evidence was John Drinkwater's wife:

Mary Drinkwater, wife of the prosecutor, deposed, that her family consisted of herself, her husband, and three children, not very young; that she well remembered them all going to bed on the night of the 16th of April; that when she had been in bed some time, she was awoken by a noise at the door, which induced her to get up to inquire the cause; that she was informed by a man at the door that Hannah Walker was ill, and that she must go immediately to her aid. Witness sometimes acted in the capacity of a midwife and doctress, therefore she was not

¹ *Staffordshire Advertiser*, 17 Apr. 1813, *The Statesman* (London), 20 Apr. 1813, *St. James's Chronicle*, 22 Apr. 1813, *Kentish Gazette*, 27 Apr. 1813.

surprised at being fetched to Hannah Walker, though she knew the latter was not with child. Witness then went back into the parlour to inform her husband, and to dress herself for the purpose of going. She opened the inner door and unbolted the porch door, when a great number of men rushed in, who upbraided her with being so long—she thought there were not twenty— had a candle in her hand, which was taken from her—one clenched his fist and said, "make no noise!" Pray don't kill me!—we won't if you'll give us a hundred pounds.—She called to her Son Billy (a boy about fifteen) to come down and bolt the inner door.—The boy obeyed, when one of the robbers put a pistol through an old key-hole, and threatened to shoot Billy if he did not open the door. One of them said, "let off." She then said to her son, let them in. They then rushed in, in a body, into the parlour, when she exclaimed, "pray ye don't kill my husband!" Witness then went on to describe the general ransack which took place: her husband was guarded by one with a pistol, while another with a sword, led the way into different parts of the house. They lighted candles—went into her daughter's room—pulled all the clothes off the bed, but did not touch her—broke open a chest of drawers in the "house-place," from which they took a variety of articles, among which were six yards of huckaback. They demanded her husband's watch; he has none, was the reply—damn you, you are a liar. One of the men then called his companions by numbers; she distinctly heard the number twelve—they went off; ...

Mary identified three of the men as Henry Mason, Paul Mason and Richard Hibbert though she had not known them before the burglary. Under crossexamination she said 'I believe they are the men', but admitted she had not sworn to them when she was before the magistrates at Chapel. Then her husband and further witnesses were called:

John Drinkwater, the prosecutor, was next sworn; and, taking all circumstances together, he was the most remarkable witness we ever heard on a trial. He was so deaf, that it required the utmost exertion of a man's voice, with his mouth applied to witness's ear, to make him understand a single word which was said to him. The oath was twice administered to him, under an idea, that he had not distinctly heard every word the first time; he was very passionate; and his left side seemed to have been affected by a paralytic stroke. Witness stated, that he remembered his wife telling him how somebody told her that Hannah Walker was ill; that she *doned* her clothes—that he knew the

man with a long chin (pointing at Joseph Hibbert.) He knew Paul Mason and Peter Henshaw. He with the white head is Dick Hibbert. The four men just mentioned stood close to his bed; one held a pistol, and was a very small faced one, but don't know him. Witness knew Paul Mason from child little—was sure they was the men—they had four or five candles lighted; they stamp on some—he was afraid of them shooting him; and durst hardly look at them.

William Drinkwater, son of the prosecutor, corroborated the foregoing part of his mother's testimony. He said, "a matter of three were armed;" that one said, "my lad, where is the money?" "We have none," he replied—"d-n me if we won't have some," one rejoined. Witness pointed out Richard Hibbert and Daniels, but did not know them before; nor did he point them out before the justices—did not know the reason why; but named them to his mother as they went home.

John Swindel, stated himself to be a resident at New Mills, near the prosecutor; that on the 16th of April he saw seventeen or eighteen men on Wax Moor, about eleven o'clock at night; that he walked on the canal side and watched them to Drinkwater's house; that he concealed himself against the prosecutor's *shipping* door; (cowhouse door;) heard one of them call to Mary Drinkwater, and inform her that Hannah Walker was ill; saw them go into the porch as he stood within six yards of them. He particularly stated his perfect knowledge that Paul, John, and Henry Mason, Richard Harrison, William Simpkins, Henry Bagshaw, Joseph Goddard, and Thomas Frith, were there. He further stated, that the *gang* remained two hours in prosecutor's house; that he watched them away; that they called over by numbers; that he distinctly heard the number twelve called; and that a pistol was discharged when they went away.

On cross-examination John Swindell gave his trade as mill-wright and said that he had been in Chesterfield House of Correction for three months for fear of being killed. He admitted that he had not been consistent in the names of the men he had given and not given any names until September after he heard that there were forty pounds for each conviction. He thought Peter Henshaw was there and was sure it was Paul Mason that talked about Hannah Walker.

It seems probable that it was the information from John Swindell that led to the arrest of the ten men in September and perhaps also to the further arrests. He was presumably the man watching out for his son 'at an untimely hour' mentioned in the report from *The Star* previously quoted. The trial continued with two further testimonies.

James Dean deposed, that he resided at New Mills; that the night of the robbery he had been at Henry Mason's, where there was a meeting; and saw seven or eight of them in a *court-road* near Mason's door.

Joseph Garrat lived near New Mills—did not remember the time of the robbery—remembered Joseph Stafford coming for him; that he saw James and Robert Harrison, Joseph Goddard, Henry Mason, and Henry Bagshaw; that they asked him to go a *bit* of a journey; that he was tired, and did not go; and that his master had afterwards said to him, "Joe, it was a mercy that you went to bed that night."

I wonder if the group of robbers set off from Newtown to get to Bugsworth. According to Dean's statement there had been a 'meeting' at Henry Mason's house, and it is possible that Henry Mason lived in Newtown. At any rate he (or his namesake) lived there at the time of the 1841 census: a cotton spinner, aged 50, with address given as Grove Mills. One of his neighbours in 1841 was Thomas Frith, cotton spinner, aged 45, quite possibly the Thomas Frith who was also accused. The 'Wax Moor' in the written record of Swindell's testimony could well be a mis-hearing of Wirksmoor in Newtown. Swindell described 17 or 18 men walking from there along the canal-side to the farm-house at Bugsworth. This was presumably the 'bit of a journey' referred to by Garrat.

The Judge in his summing up said that there was some doubt about the credibility of Swindell, and that Mrs Drinkwater only identified the men 'to the best of her opinion'. He suggested that most weight should be given to the identifications made by John and Billy Drinkwater.

The jury, after an awful suspense of about ten minutes, returned with a verdict of *guilty* against Paul Mason, Richard Hibbert, Jos. Hibbert, William Daniels, and Peter Henshaw, on whom his Lordship passed sentence of *death*. The rest were all liberated.

Joseph Hibbert and William Daniels were reprieved soon after the trial (Derby Mercury, 1 Apr. 1813) but the execution of Paul Mason, Richard Hibbert and Peter Henshaw was set for 12 o'clock on Friday 9th April 'on the new drop in the front of the county gaol' (Derby Mercury, 8 Apr. 1813). The execution took place 'before an immense croud of spectators' (Derby Mercury, 15 Apr. 1813):

These unfortunate men having protested their innocence of the crime for which they suffered from the period of their condemnation to the last moment of their existence, and Henshaw having upon the scaffold

declared, that they might as well take any three persons from the croud which he spoke to, and hang them, as the three who were about to suffer, we feel it to be our duty ... to observe, that ... Mr. Drinkwater and his son selected the five men above named, out of the fourteen, without the least hesitation, and they gave a very clear account of the remembrance they had of their persons from having repeatedly spoken to them during their stay in the house, which was more than an hour; and from the circumstance of the prisoners carrying about with them four or five lighted candles. ... Added to the above particulars, these unfortunate criminals were a part of that misguided and wicked set of men who call themselves *Luddites*, and had been *twisted in*. ... After hanging the usual time their bodies were taken down and given to their friends for interment. They appeared to die almost without a struggle.

Seth Evans includes in his account of the story the text of a very sad letter from Paul Mason to his wife, Margaret, written from Derby Gaol on 5th April 1813, four days before the execution. The condemned man stated his innocence and asked for his body to be buried in New Mills. He was duly buried in the Wesleyan graveyard, and his gravestone can still be seen there. Seth Evans says that when it arrived at New Mills the body was found to be warm and several 'gurgling sounds' came from its throat, indicating perhaps that the executed man was not yet dead. For a few further details see Seth Evans's book or the extracts from it on Steve Lewis's website (in the Wesleyan Cemetery section).



The top half of Paul Mason's gravestone, which lies flat in the New Mills Wesleyan graveyard.

The lower half (not shown) records the death of Hannah, daughter of Paul and Margaret Mason, December 13th, 1821, aged 18 years.

From a photo by Alan Jennings taken about 1983 (n00714)

I have not been able to establish details of the background of the executed men. Paul Mason may have been the son of Paul and Hannah Mason, baptised at Mellor in 1778, and may have been the Paul Mason who married Peggy Bagshaw at Glossop in 1797. His father was possibly the Paul Mason, grocer of New Mills, who went bankrupt in 1817. I know nothing about Richard Hibbert and Peter Henshaw, though the latter may have been the son of Peter and Betty Henshaw, baptised at Macclesfield in 1774.

Available Positions On The Committee

Chairman

Deputy Chairman

Hon. Website Manager

Ordinary Member.

If you are interested , please contact Mike Daniels for further information on telephone number 01663 746449

Programme of Events

September to December 2021

Where and When	Title of Talk	Speaker
2.00pm Tuesday, 14 th Sept Spring Bank Arts	Small Talk	A series of short talks and films from various speakers
7.30pm Wednesday, 22 nd Sept. Town Hall	Maps of New Mills Through the Centuries	Roger Bryant
7.45pm Friday, 8 th Oct. Town Hall	Friends and Comrades, Quaker Relief in Russia	Sergei Nikitin
7.45 Friday, 12 th Nov. Town Hall	Annual General Meeting followed by The Story of Buxton Opera House	Trevor Gilman
7.45 Friday, 10 th Dec. Town Hall	Air Raids of the Peak District	Frank Pleszak