

**NEW MILLS
LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**

THE VICTORIA HISTORY
OF THE COUNTIES OF
ENGLAND



Edition 20

Spring 1998

SPRING PROGRAMME 1998

Fri. 9th January

ROGER BRYANT

“John Potts”

Fri. 13th February

DENZIL HALLAM

“New Mills Footpath Survey: Improvements and Computer Survey”

Fri. 13th March

J.G. CLIFFORD

“A New Look at Eyam Plague”

Fri. 3rd April

JACK HANMER

“How Well Do You Know The Peak District & Beyond”

Fri. 8th May

A.G.M. (Speaker to be arranged)

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METHODISM IN THE HIGH PEAK: 12th September 1997, Alan Rose

Alan Rose began by confessing to knowing very little about Methodism in New Mills and then commenced to give us a very well-informed account of that very topic!

It was John Bennett of Chinley, rather than Wesley himself, who was the pioneer of Methodism in our local area. His brand of religion was very different from that of his contemporary, James Clegg. Whilst the latter's approach was that of the Calvinist intellectual, Bennett's was more emotional and evangelical. Bennett toured the district, meeting small groups of converts in their houses. One such group met at the Bongs (now the Banks) on Cobden Edge. This network of small groups formed a preaching circuit, a mode of organisation that has persisted in the Methodist movement. John Wesley preached at the Bongs several times.

Bennett and Wesley eventually parted company when Bennett married the widow to whom Wesley thought he had been engaged. After 1752, Bennett ceased to be a Methodist and embraced the Calvinist creed.

With the departure of Bennett, the New Mills area was placed for a time in the Manchester Circuit. Unfortunately there is very little in the way of historical information on this period as only the financial accounts have survived. These reveal that the Methodists of New Mills built a chapel there in 1766. No earlier Methodist chapel is known in Derbyshire or the Manchester Circuit. The chapel was situated in High Street and in 1810 became a Sunday school when a new chapel was constructed in St. George's Road.

Around 1820, another brand of Methodism, the Primitive Methodists, who wished to return to the charismatic roots of early Methodism, came into the area. Open-air meetings were frequently held and in 1828 they built a chapel on Spring Bank, followed by a number of others in the vicinity, including the one at Brook Bottom, which is still in use.

In the 1830's a split in Wesleyan Methodism led to the erection of a Free Methodist chapel at Mount Pleasant in 1838. This headed a circuit of Free Methodist chapels, including one at Rowarth and another at Furness Vale.

Alan Rose concluded his excellent talk with some startling figures drawn from the census of church attendance of 1851. Whilst Anglican attendance's were modest by the standards of the day, those of the Methodist chapels were enormous, showing the firm grasp of non-conformity on the folk of this burgeoning industrial town.

Church/Chapel Attendances, 1851 in New Mills:

	Morning	Evening
Anglican	150	250
Methodist	721	467
Roman Catholic	241	123

THE NATURE OF REGIONAL AND LOCAL HISTORY: 10th October 1997, Neville Kirk.

Neville Kirk is an academic historian whose talk embraced a wide subject, the principles that govern the writing of history. He began by stressing that before any historical project is undertaken it is imperative to know the rules of historical method, and this should apply to the amateur local historian and the professional academic alike.

Neville contrasted the approach of traditional historians with that of the post-modernists: whilst the former stressed that the adoption of a logical and rigorously objective approach based on all the evidence available was the best that could be done to achieve historical truth, the latter deny that any objective facts exist and that historical writing is inevitably subject to the systems of thought and language that bind all historians.

Whatever the case is for post-modernism in history, it cannot be denied that this approach undermines both the popularity and the accessibility of the subject. Most of us have our own reasons for studying history, and providing we make it clear what our motives are, then we can produce work that is valid and valuable, even though it may not, some would say can not, be objective.

Neville illustrated this point by referring to his own early life in Bollington, the formative experiences of his youth having strongly influenced his approach to history.

Whatever the topic undertaken for research, it is imperative to read as much as possible that is relevant to that subject. In particular it is necessary to be aware of current thinking, explanations and theories. Hypotheses should be framed which engage with the evidence: those propositions that cannot be squared with the facts should be modified or rejected. The historian should aim at explanation, analysis and synthesis, rather than mere description, and it should be recognised that not all facts are of equal significance and worthy of record.

This latter point raised some debate amongst the audience. Local historians have a duty to record information concerning their locality regardless of its seeming importance, otherwise those facts may be lost forever. Local and family historians amongst us know all too well how much history has been lost simply because information has gone unrecorded.

Neville's stimulating talk brought home to us the importance of approaching local history with intellectual rigour. Otherwise, the subject may not be given the respect it undoubtedly deserves.

PEOPLE OF BRAMALL HALL: 14th November 1997, J.P. Skvner

J.P. Skvner is a proficient and practised lecturer. thoroughly at home with his subject, the history of Bramall Hall, which he wittily explored, beginning with the granting of the Anglo-Saxon manor to Hamon De Massey by William the Conqueror to the present time.

From the late fourteenth to the early nineteenth century, the Davenport family built, altered and extended the hall to produce the architectural gem we see today. They were lords of the manor, county magnates, magistrates, and sometimes figured prominently in national affairs. Generations of Davenports suffered the vicissitudes that inevitably attend a family of such long-standing wealth and power; not least in the present century, for by the time it passed into public ownership in 1936 the hall lay denuded (not for the first time) of all its furniture and fittings.

Thanks to the untiring efforts of Reginald Dean, Chairman of Hazel Grove and Bramall U.D.C., many former treasures were located, purchased or reclaimed, a project now continued by The Friends of Bramall Hall. Many of the family portraits that we now see hanging there were returned to Bramall by the Davenport Handley family.

Our audience thoroughly enjoyed this lively and well-informed account.

TODDBROOK & COOMBS RESERVOIRS: 12th December 1997, David Frith

Our speaker began by outlining the development of two of the earliest canals in the North-West, the Bridgewater and Trent and Mersey canals and the debt that is owed to the pioneering work of the Derbyshire engineer James Brindley.

The Peak Forest Canal, in water as far as Marple locks by 1797, soon attracted its share of cotton mills. Raw cotton and coal, as well as lime from the Peak District were the principal commodities to be carried on this canal.

A steady supply of water for the canal was acquired by damming Randle Carr Brook at Coombs and running the water to its terminus at Bugsworth. The reservoir was built by scooping out an excavation, puddling the bottom with clay and using the spoil to create a dam. Great fluctuations in run-off are characteristic of the Coombs area and the railway embankment running alongside the reservoir also serves to protect the dam from the effects of a catastrophic flood. The Great Central Railway acquired ownership of the Peak Forest Canal and it remained in railway hands until it was eventually taken over by Inland Waterways.

In 1832 the Macclesfield Canal was begun, which ran from Hall Green via Macclesfield, Bollington and Poynton, where it served the coalfield, to join the Peak Forest Canal. This created some uncertainty in the water supply and in the mid-1830's a new reservoir was constructed at Toddbrook. The same method of construction was employed as was used at Coombs. Now water from Toddbrook runs around the greater part of the Cheshire Ring as well as supplementing the flow of the Peak Forest Canal itself.

David Firth is to be congratulated on his complete command of the facts in presenting this excellent talk, which prompted several questions and appreciative comments

A Search for my Roots and a New Mills Family, by Colin Hyatt.

The first part of Colin Hyatt's account ended with the funeral of his great-grandfather, William Dyer, in New Mills in 1911. The author reports that William had married a second time. In 1901, ten years before his death, William had married Mary Windsor, a thirty-nine year old spinster from Manchester who worked as a cook and domestic servant. The marriage took place at Hayfield Registry Office, 20th November 1901.

The story now continues.

Both William and his first wife, Annie, are buried in St. George's Road churchyard, New Mills. Annie on 8th May 1901, William on 24th July 1911. The grave, plot no. 3 row 11, has no headstone, but lies to the right of Joseph Broadbent's grave, which has a large Celtic cross at its head. William and Annie lie in the same grave as May Chadwick, first wife of Norman Dyer.

The children of William and Annie Dyer:

HARRIET EMMA	b. 3 11 1874	Newchurch Lancs.	d. 29 11 1875	1yr
WILLIAM HENRY	b. 4 9 1876	" "	d. 13 10 1955	79yr
GEORGE EDWIN	b. 4 9 1878	New Mills	d. 13 2 1955	76yr
ANDREW	b. 9 8 1880	Dartford Kent	d. 1 9 1911	31yr
JOHN FRANCIS	b.17 2 1883	New Mills	d. 4 9 1966	83yr
THOMAS ALEXANDER	b. 9 4 1885	" "	d. 17 3 1933	47yr
ANNIE ALDRIDGE	b.19 8 1887	" "	d. ? 1960	73yr
JENNIE AGNES	b. 5 2 1890	" "	d. 24 6 1956	66yr
JAMES NORMAN	b. 6 5 1892	" "	d. 20 2 1974	81yr
MARY HELEN	b.10 10 1894	" "	d. ? 8 1971	76yr
JOSEPH OMDURMAN	b. 9 1 1899	" "	d. 17 3 1899	

The eldest, Harriet, died in infancy of pneumonia.

William remained a gents' hairdresser all his life. He moved from New Mills to an unknown location, where he had his own shop, but later returned to take over the shop of his brother, Thomas, at 74, Market St. Thomas served in the army, but William was medically unfit. William used to send the local paper to sergeant Thomas Jackson, serving in Belgium, who used to write back describing his life in the trenches. The shop was eventually sold to Mark Ardon, who had been Thomas' apprentice (I have a copy of his indentures). Mark also worked under Henry. After Mr. Ardon's retirement the shop passed on to Alfred Smith, who was still working there in the 1960's. This is the shop next to The Crescent Inn.

William's next shop was at 16 Market St.. Chapel-en-le-Frith, where he remained until his retirement in 1974.

William introduced his brothers James, John and, most likely, Thomas to the hair-dressing trade.

He was a bandsman, who played tenor horn, euphonium and the concertina, an in-

strument in which he was an acknowledged expert.

He married Mary Emma Waterhouse of Chinley and had two sons, Colin and Alex. Alex died aged only fifteen, from influenza in 1918, a fact recorded in *The Reporter*, 27th July 1918. Colin married Florence Hunt. Their son, Alan, is now a professor at Manchester University.

William, Mary and their son, Alex Dyer, are all buried in St. George's Road churchyard, New Mills.

George Edwin Dyer first worked in the shop as a lather boy. He experimented with early hair dyes and succeeded in dyeing his hair green. George was also a brass bandsman and an active member of New Mills Band. He left home following a furious row with his father over his trumpet practice in the house. George's father threw the trumpet out of the window in his rage, breaking the instrument in two. George departed to Wales, where he became a coalminer. He married Rosalind Phillips from Morrision, Swansea, in 1909. They lived in Maesteg and had five children: Dilys, Fredrick, John, Jean and Edwin. Edwin jnr. married Nancy Furlong and in 1951 they emigrated with their family to Australia, where there is now quite a large Dyer family group. Frederick started the search for the Dyer family roots in 1991. William, having retrieved his brother's broken trumpet, had it repaired and in 1953 visited George at Maesteg and returned it to him.

Little is known of Andrew except that he probably worked as a barber until joining the Royal Scots Fusiliers with his brother John. Andrew was a corporal when he and John served in the Boer War. He died of enteric fever and lies buried at Kimberley.

After spending some time in South Africa during the Boer War. John Francis ("Jack") was later invalided out of the army. On returning to New Mills, he was awarded a medallion by the townsfolk for his services in the war. He resumed the hairdressing trade, probably under William's tutelage, and later had hairdressing shops of his own, first at Lytham near Blackpool, then at Miles Platting and Openshaw in Manchester. He married Mary Ellen Haughton ("Dolly") 5th February 1907. They had two daughters, Edith b. 23. 3. 1908 and Dorothea Muriel b. 28. 7. 1914. Edith, who now lives in Hampshire, married Arthur William Grant, 14. 6. 1935. They had two children, Joan, who has her grandfather's campaign medal, and Ian Peter. Dorothea lives in Warwickshire. She married Norman Raynor and they had two children, Margaret and David. Dorothea has the medallion presented to her father in New Mills.

Thomas Alexander (my grandfather) was a gents' hairdresser and afterwards a publican. He married Alice Bisby of Wadsley near Sheffield when she worked as a nurse in the New Mills workhouse. Thomas and Alice were married 31. 10. 1905 at Wadsley. It was suggested that they met when Thomas went to the workhouse to shave the men. They first lived at 1, Jodrell St. and then at 21, Hurst Lee Road, Newtown, where their only daughter Alice Doreen was born, 10. 7. 1911. Thomas had the barber's shop at 72 Market St. and in 1912 took on the licence of beer seller at The

Crescent, next door, replacing Joseph Royle. When Thomas went into the army, 11 January 1917, Alice took over the licence and his brother William the barber's shop. According to information found in "The Reporter" 14. 2. 1917, Alice was one of the first in the area to be fined for selling drinks outside the new licencing hours. Alice relinquished the licence of the Crescent to John Booth 31. 10. 1917.

The next six years are unknown, apart from a string of addresses: at Hayfield: Turner St. and Stalybridge Rd. in Ashton-under-Lyne: a barber's shop in Ashton New Road, Clayton, Manchester, where I suspect they stayed with Tom's brother John. From 5th December 1923 until 1st September 1926 Thomas took up the licence of The Junction Inn, Mossley Rd. Ashton-under-Lyne. Then he was licensee at The Sir Humphrey Cheetham Hotel. Manchester Road in Clayton until he died of cancer 17. 1. 1933. Alice moved on to a smaller pub, The Morning Star Inn, 99 Manchester Road, Droylsden. and remained the licensee until its closure on 7th January 1936. It is now a radio shop to the left of the police station.

It was at the Star Inn that Alice Doreen met my father, Herbert Hyatt, who worked at the family's forge and blacksmith's workshop just round the corner in Mellor Street and backed onto the yard of the police station (the building still exists, despite change over the years and fire damage). Bert would go round for a drink after work, and that is how they met. Alice Doreen worked as a ladies hairdresser, in dyeing. They married 18th. August 1935 at St. Mary's Church, Droylsden. Doreen's Uncle John gave her away and her bridesmaids were her cousin Dorothea Muriel Dyer and Joan Jackson, Herbert's niece. Doreen and Herbert had one son, Colin, born 26. 8. 36. After the pub closed in 1936, Alice went to live with Doreen and Herbert at 1, Birchfarm St. (now Beech Ave.) until her death 28. 2. 1939.

Thomas Alexander and Alice Dyer are both buried in Droylsden Cemetery, grave no. R110.

Annie Aldridge Dyer married John Waar and had two children, John jnr. and William. They moved to Bedfordshire. Son John married Lillian ? Nothing more is known. except that Annie died around 1960.

Jennie Agnes worked for the Buxton Lime Works (now I.C.I.) and played in the works brass band. It was there that she met Ernest Stairs, a Canadian soldier stationed at Millers Dale. After they married (date unknown) Jennie and Ernest returned to Canada. They had a daughter, Marjorie. Nothing further is known. Jennie died in Canada in 1956.

James Norman most likely began as a barber with William Henry, like his brothers. In 1912 he started his own business at a house in Bredbury. Around 1923 the house front was converted to a barber's shop which is today occupied by his grandson. Graham Dyer.

One day, Norman and William Henry cycled to New Mills from Bredbury to visit their brother, Tom. On the return journey Norman had an accident, his brakes failed in Union Road and he collided with the wall at the bottom. He was knocked uncon-

scious, but after being treated for cuts and bruises at his brother's house, he was able to return home by train. This was in "The Reporter" 4. 5. 1912.

Norman served in The Royal Field Artillery as a gunner in W.W.I and was badly gassed in France, according to "The Reporter" 26. 5. 1917.

Norman married three times. His first wife, May D. Chadwick of 11 Picton St. Bolton, whom he married on 12. 8. 1912, bore him a daughter, Irene. May died in 1915 and was buried in the grave of William and Annie Dyer. Nothing is known of Irene, Norman's second wife. Clara Bilton. was a gents' hairdresser from Ripon in Yorkshire. She sang in the choir of Ripon Cathedral and the pair were married there on 1st. January 1920. They had two sons, James Alec and William Kenneth. Alec played the violin and was in the Stockport Philharmonic Orchestra. He worked as a hairdresser with his father, married Lillian Harness and had a son, Graham, who still works in the shop today. Kenneth, an electrician. worked for the Electricity Board.

Some six years after Clara's death in 1941, Norman married a third time. Flo Hampson came from Co. Cork (nothing more known).

James Norman died in 1974 in Stepping Hill Hospital.

Mary Helen ("Polly"! like her sister Jennie, worked at Buxton Lime Works and played in the brass band. She too met and married a Canadian soldier stationed at Millers Dale, one Joe Bromiley. They lived in Canada and had two sons, Gerald and Clayton, and three daughters, Jean, Retta and Phyllis. Gerald, who visited his Uncle George in Wales in 1944, but was unable to visit his Cheshire relatives, was killed in Normandy that same year. Retta lives part of the year in Florida and part in Canada. Nothing is known of the other children.

Mary died in Canada in 1971.

(I suppose that Ernest Stairs and Joe Bromiley were army mates who met and married two sisters.)

Joseph Omdurman died in infancy, aged 67 days. and is buried in St. George's Road churchyard.

Much of this account is documented, some has been passed to me by word of mouth. Please excuse any mistakes or omissions. Any additions or corrections would be most welcome.

Started in 1990/91 by Kenneth and Fredrick Dyer, grandsons of William Dyer. Updated and corrected in 1993/4 by Alan Dyer and Colin Hyatt, great- grandsons of William Dyer.

With grateful thanks to Marjorie Jones for her help with local searches.

Colin Hyatt, Southampton SO31 7BZ 1996.

THE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF ENGLAND

The VCH (as it has always been called for short) was founded in 1899 as a project to equip every county in England with a standard county history providing a comprehensive description of the history, geography and natural history of both the county and each parish within it. In its early years good progress was made and for Derbyshire two general volumes were published in 1905 and 1907. But financial problems were then encountered and in Derbyshire, like many counties, no further volumes were produced.

After 1945, the VCH was restarted in several counties through partnerships between the University of London and local communities. These were mainly funded by county councils with some support from other local authorities, universities and individuals. This arrangement has become increasingly difficult to sustain in recent years and a new pattern has emerged whereby the staff are employed by local universities where they do a limited amount of teaching in return for which the host institution contributes to their salaries. The latest development (starting in Northamptonshire) has been the creation of independent county trusts to fund the VGH.

Recently, the terms of reference for the National Heritage Lottery Fund have been amended so as to include major reference works such as the VCH and a unified bid for the whole project nationally is currently in preparation. Derbyshire is one of the counties in which the VCH could restart with the help of Lottery funding. However,

as with all Lottery bids, there has to be an element of 'matched funding' raised locally. Neither the county council or other public bodies are able to help with this task, which must be tackled therefore by voluntary effort. A steering committee has been set up which is appealing to all local and family historians with an interest in Derbyshire to help raise the money to restart the VCH in this county.

The steering committee has to guarantee £15,000 a year for five years to attract Lottery funding of £45,000 a year. This will make it possible to employ a county editor and assistant editor for that period who it is hoped will be based at one of the universities in the region. They will work on two new volumes for Derbyshire, (1) a general volume of the history of transport, communications, and modern industry throughout the county and, (2) a topographical volume covering the parishes of the eastern third of the Scarsdale Hundred (i.e. the Bolsover area).

A number of fund-raising ideas will be pursued but in an effort to secure small, regular contributions from a large number of people, one particular venture is being

STOCKPORT CONFERENCE 1998

Stockport Historical Society organises a conference every two years to which members of other local history societies in the surrounding area are invited. The next conference will take place on Saturday 7 March 1998 at Tiviot Dale Methodist Church, Stockport. The theme will be 'Crime and Punishment' and the day will consist of four lectures exploring various aspects of this theme. Speakers already engaged include Dr J H Smith (President of the Society) and Mrs Hilary Chambers, a free-lance archivist who will be speaking on 'Quarter Session records'. Details of the full programme and an application form will be issued in the New Year. The cost will be about £5.

DERBYSHIRE RECORD OFFICE:

PROGRAMME OF TALKS AND WORKSHOPS

- Thu. 11 December 1997: "Crime and protest: sources in Derbyshire archives."
(2 - 2.30 pm)
- Thu. 15 January 1998: "Archives 1997: New acquisitions" (2 - 2.30pm)
- Thu. 12 February 1998: "Family History Surgery: Consultation and advice sessions for beginners and experienced researchers."
(10 - 12 or 2 - 4, small fee, booking essential)
- Wed. 18 February 1998: "Taxation records for the community and family historian." (2 - 2.30 pm)
- Wed. 4 March 1998: "Family History Surgery." (2 - 4 pm or 5.30 - 7.30pm, small fee, booking essential)
- Thu. 2 April 1998: "Understanding title deeds. Archive skills workshop."
(2 - 4 pm, cost £8 per person to include small information pack and light refreshments, booking essential).

All events are free except where stated. Venue is in Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock. Please check by telephone before attending: 01629 580000 ext 35201/35207.

NEW MILLS



A Look Back at its Industrial Heritage

This book is the second book published of old photographs of New Mills. It consists of almost 100 old photographs, the theme being the town's industrial heritage. It is the latest in a series of books on New Mills published by New Mills Local History Society.