

New Mills Local History Society

Newsletter 34



Spring 2005

SPRING PROGRAMME 2005

All meetings are held in Sett Valley House, starting at 7.45 pm.

Friday January 14	“Marching to Zion: non-conformist chapel architecture” Roger Holden
Friday February 11	“Lost Railways of New Mills” Dr. Derek Brumhead
Friday March 11	“Early Stockport Textile Mills 1732-1842” Dr. Peter Arrowsmith
Friday April 8	“Industrial Communities” David George
Friday May 13	A.G.M. “Strines Printworks” Dr. Rosemary Taylor

NEW MILLS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY COMMITTEE 2004-2005 (elected at the A.G.M.)

Chairman	BARBARA MATTHEWS (743935)
Vice-Chairman	GAYNOR ANDREW (743117)
Hon. Secretary	JOHN HUMPHREYS (743581)
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www.newmillshistory.org.uk

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A note for your three-year diary: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the Society falls on 24th May 2007.

To honour this event, the Committee proposes to publish a commemorative book whose theme will be the people of New Mills: those who have made a significant contribution to the development and character of the place; others who have lived here in past times; those of our contemporaries who have shared their reminiscences of life in New Mills with us, both orally and in writing. Thus, many of the articles that first appeared in our Newsletter will find a more permanent place in the jubilee volume.

My thanks to Derek Brumhead, Bill Barton and Peter Clowes for contributing such interesting items to Newsletter 34.

Derek's summaries of the forthcoming talks should whet all our appetites. I look forward to seeing you all at our meetings in the New Year.

Ron Weston, Hon. Editor

SPRING 2005 LECTURES TO THE SOCIETY

14 January 2005.

"Marching to Zion" Nonconformist chapel architecture.

Roger Holden.

This illustrated talk will look at the development of buildings for nonconformist worship from the 17th and 18th centuries, when they were often domestic in appearance and rightly termed "Meeting Houses", through to the end of the 19th century, when "ecclesiastical Gothic" was often adopted, even reaching some surprising places. The talk will emphasise how the form of nonconformist buildings has been influenced by ideas of worship which are very different from those embodied in high Anglican and Catholic buildings. Large numbers of chapels were built in the 19th century, particularly in Wales. Many are now redundant but form an important part of the landscape.

11 February 2005.

The lost railways of New Mills

Dr Derek Brumhead.

We all know that the railway to Hayfield is well and truly lost, but not many know that we nearly had two railways to Hayfield ! In a field just off High Hill Road an isolated grassy bank is all that remains of a projected railway of the 1860s, from Disley, that was never completed. This talk will trace the line of this railway together with several others long lost, such as a railway to Bugsworth (a cutting and bridge in the Goyt valley still remain from 1857), the reservoir railway to Kinder, and the Gowhole sidings. There is even a piece of lost canal at Newtown !

11 March 2005.

Early Stockport textile mills 1732-1842

Dr Peter Arrowsmith.

Stockport was a major early centre of the textile mill, used firstly for the silk industry and later for the cotton. This talk will outline this important role and describe the results of recent archaeological recording of some key mill sites in the town.

8 April 2005.

Industrial Communities

David George.

The first industrial communities in the late eighteenth century were grouped around the first water-powered cotton mills, and associated with them were often groups of weavers' cottages. In the nineteenth century, however, a strong element of paternalism and “welfareism” resulted in new model industrial villages as a means of improvement and as a bastion against chartism. Today, controversy surrounds the thousands of cotton workers' terraces in the towns. Do they have a future or is wholesale demolition the answer ?

13 May 2005.

The Strines Print Works

Dr Rosemary Taylor.

During the industrial revolution, the bleaching, dyeing and printing of cloth required plenty of clean water and substantial acres of flat land for the extensive works, both of which were available in the Goyt and Sett valleys. Strines printworks was established by William Wright of Strines Hall and his partners in 1792. The first buildings were clustered round the Hall and were devoted to block printing. After a few years, a second works was built on the right bank of the Goyt and roller printing installed. Weirs and reservoirs were constructed and the machinery powered firstly by water, and then by steam. In 1899 most of the calico printing firms in England and Scotland were joined in a consortium known as the Calico Printers Association, (CPA). A third works was built at Strines and work started in 1901, although not completed until 1930. These works produced high quality dress and furnishing fabrics, much of it for export. As new synthetic fabrics were introduced printing techniques were developed to deal with. them. The works were closed in 1982 and almost immediately reopened under the control of a group of former CPA managers. This business lasted until 2001 when the works finally closed after over two hundred years. The land and buildings are now in the hands of a property developer.

Rosemary's talk will concentrate on the nineteenth century part of the story when the works were controlled by a group of partners, many of whom were related to each other. Several of them were outstanding men whose work will be described.

BARTON BRIDGES FALLING DOWN

10th September 2004 - Glen Atkinson

Glen Atkinson is probably the most well known and informed historian in the Barton, Eccles and Worsley area. He has written a number of books on various subjects including the subject of this talk, the story of the bridges and aqueducts at the ancient crossing point over the river Irwell at Barton, Lancashire. A stone road bridge, a stone canal aqueduct, a swing road bridge, an iron swing canal aqueduct, and finally a high level motorway bridge. Each in its own way was a formidable feat, yet each suffered major structural failure if not total collapse, and demolition.

In 1677, the first road bridge to be built across the river was swept away in a flood before it was completed and was not opened until 1684 - by this time it has cost £1,125. In 1745 with the advance southwards of 'Bonnie Prince Charlie', the bridge was demolished by soldiers of the Liverpool Blues regiment. A new bridge was built and this was widened in the 1830s. Meanwhile, a fantastic stone aqueduct had been built by James Brindley, and opened in 1761, to carry the Bridgewater Canal across the river just upstream of the

road bridge. 'Boats sailing in the sky' attracted visitors from all over the country and abroad.

This wonderful aqueduct was demolished in the 1890s when the river was widened and deepened for the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal. Down came the road bridge, too! Both were replaced by equally impressive structures still to be seen today - the Barton swing road bridge, and the Bridgewater Canal swing aqueduct. The swing road bridge opened without incident, but the swing aqueduct developed a severe leak, water rushed out of the canal and creating a large hole in the supporting brick arches. Several months delay ensued.

With so much traffic on the Ship Canal, the swing bridge at Barton remained a bottleneck for road transport. In 1957, work commenced on the Barton High Level Bridge to carry the M61 (now M60) motorway over the Ship Canal. There were all sorts of structural, administrative and labour problems. Unfortunately, in February and December 1959 two major collapses of steel girders being put in place occurred resulting in several deaths and injuries. In Octo-

ber 1960, 50,000 persons walked across the bridge immediately before its formal opening.

One of Glenn's books is on the underground canals of the Worsley coal

mines, and it is hoped that this subject will bring him to New Mills again next year.

Derek Brumhead

TEN SQUARE YARDS OF TINTWISTLE

8th October 2004 - Dr. Colin Rogers

This is not the story of the 28 workers, some of the builders of the Woodhead Tunnel, who in 1849 fell victims to cholera and were buried in the graveyard of Christ Church, Tintwistle; rather, it is a correction, one might say almost a negation, of it. Dr. Rogers, in his bizarre quest to purchase a graveyard plot for the disposal of his wife's body ("given the certainty of death though the time thereof most uncertain"), was led into a series of investigations that exposed a historical falsehood. His account is too convoluted to repeat here and in any case it is beyond my wit to do justice to his hilarious presentation of what might bear all the hallmarks of a sombre topic.

Suffice it to say that we were hugely entertained; but this went beyond

mere amusement, for Dr. Rogers' talk made two serious points. The first is that however plausible and authentic a historical account may seem, if there are puzzling aspects to it, it is wise to check before accepting it at face value. How often do we have the time or inclination to do so? Secondly, although several years have passed since Dr. Rogers established that the cholera victims were not interred in Tintwistle churchyard, and despite all the publicity that he has given to it through talks and articles, few in Tintwistle will accept his revised version of events. Most Tintwistlians still maintain that there are cholera victims buried in the churchyard and believe that they constitute an abiding health hazard. Such is the power of myth!

Ron Weston

THE LEEDS AND LIVERPOOL CANAL

12th November 2004 - Ian Moss

begun in 1770 but not opened in its entirety until 1816, the construction of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal spanned the major part of the Canal Age. This "wide boat" canal crosses the Pennines via the Aire Gap, but its highest point is a mere 487 feet above sea level.

Even so, there are some spectacular flights of locks along its length. A journey by boat between Liverpool and Leeds would take

about five days, a journey accomplished in fewer hours when the railways came along. But, as Ian Moss explained in his masterly talk, there was comparatively little trans-Pennine traffic. The Lancashire section of the canal was concerned chiefly with supplying the cotton towns with their raw materials and coal, while the Yorkshire stretch played a similar role in carrying wool,

coal and lime to the woolen and worsted centres. Although the last cargo of coal was delivered in 1972, the canal has continued to thrive as it is a popular route for leisure traffic and its attractive natural setting has encouraged waterside housing developments.

The major part of Ian's presentation was a photographic journey along the canal from west to east using his extensive collection of the slides that he has taken over four decades.

Many of these slides are precious records, showing buildings as they appeared prior to being altered or demolished. His personal knowledge and experience of the canal and its many personalities are unrivalled and it was a privilege to hear this absorbing, lively and humorous talk.

Ron Weston



**WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN MINES:
THE CHILDREN'S EMPLOYMENT COMMISSION OF 1842
10th December 2004 - Alan Davies**

Alan Davies gave us an authoritative talk on the working conditions of women and children in coal mines in the 1830s by using extracts and illustrations drawn from the report of the Children's



Employment Commission of 1842. It is difficult to say which were more horrifying, the testimonies of the workers or the graphic representations captured by the artists accompanying the commissioners. It was largely due to the efforts of a greatly respected Parliamentarian, the Earl of Shaftsbury, that the government of the day was moved to set up a number of investigations into child labour, including working con-

ditions in the coal mines. The catalogue of deplorable abuses, the violence, cruelty and indifference of employers is well-known to all of us; but even so, we were shocked and appalled by the stark details expressed to the commissioners by individual women and children.

Our speaker's final thoughts were even more sobering: there are still many thousands of child workers in Third World countries today whose suffering is comparable. It was surely appropriate with Christmas time drawing near that we should think of such as these.

Ron Weston



The following article, contributed by its author Peter Clowes, first appeared in the Autumn 1962 issue of "The Millionian", the magazine of New Mills Grammar School, where Peter was a pupil. In his covering letter, Peter mentions that he wrote the article "at the request of Mr.W.H.Hoult who was then the schools much-respected English and History master".

THE HOPE VALLEY TRAIN, 1940

Whenever the Hope Valley train was late we walked into the Assembly Hall with a jaunty air. All heads swivelled round. The Headmaster would glare down from the platform. Some of us had mysterious smiles on our faces, hoping to give the impression that we had experienced some perilous adventure on the rail journey to New Mills.

This, mind you, was twenty years ago. Perhaps the morning train keeps better time nowadays!

My most vivid memories are of stamping numb feet on cold, snow-covered platforms as we warmed our red knuckles at the side of the braziers that wheezed and spluttered to keep the station water-towers free from ice.

In exceptionally severe winters the 7.15 from Sheffield would be delayed by frozen points at Hope or giant icicles dangling in two-mile-long Cowburn Tunnel. Sometimes in fact it meant no school for two days. The line would be completely blocked by drifts, and there was even less chance

of getting out of the Hope Valley by road.

In 1940 the weather was particularly atrocious. Troops were summoned to help to dig out two goods trains buried under huge drifts at Chinley. One engine had escaped, leaving its wagons behind. The other, its fire drawn for safety, had been abandoned by its crew. Icicles festooned its black boiler and tender. A sorry spectacle indeed!

One day, a couple of years later, a few scholars from Chapel-en-le Frith, Chinley and Buxworth managed to reach New Mills in the guard's van of a mail train that had forced its way through snowdrifts covering the line near Buxton. Crowded into the van with them were a dozen forlorn passengers who had been marooned all night in a train just outside Chinley Station. No one from the Hope Valley attended school that day.

The line through Grindleford, Hathersage, Bamford and Hope was opened to passenger traffic in 1894

and was one of the last links in the Midland Railway system. It is also one of the prettiest stretches of track in the country. Tragically British Railways are now proposing to close the line to passengers.

The fast down-hill section from Chinley junction to New Mills was most enjoyable. The speed of the train - usually a tank engine and four carriages - shook us out of early morning lethargy and prepared us for a spot of concentrated French or maths. If the driver were feeling particularly exuberant he would fail to reduce speed sufficiently at the Marsh Lane junction where the New Mills branch switches from the Manchester main-line. The vacuum brakes would go on with a hiss as we hurtled past Gowhole Sidings at 50 m.p.h.; then there would be a sudden

jerk and a squeal of protesting steel as the train rocked over the points.

Memories, too, of the evening train home from school. By the time it arrived at 4.52 the narrow up-platform at New Mills Central was a seething mass of blue-and-green caps, blazers and coats.

The locomotive in charge of the train was usually one of the Midland 4-4-0 2Ps, now obsolete after performing years of sturdy service on the L.M.S. The Hope Valley train sometimes offered a challenge. A fellow third former and I would try to race it. We would leave school at 4 p.m. and run along Marsh Lane and over the narrow farm-tracks above Buxworth in order to arrive on Platform One at Chinley before our schoolmates.

That was more than twenty years ago. I couldn't possibly do it now!



Peter Clowes was a career journalist who became northern editor of the Daily Mail. Since his retirement in 1987 he has written extensively about the Peak District. His latest book, published this year, is entitled "Footloose in the Peak". Its twenty-one chapters suggest walking possibilities rather than detailed hiking routes, but with each one there are stories and anecdotes, together with the wealth of personal reminiscence of one who has "walked along airy ridges and clambered through the dales for more years than I care to remember."

It is a handsome volume written with charm and shrewd perception and with the practised ease of the professional writer. There is a generous and delightful selection of photos and illustrations, many of which I have not seen in previous publications.

Some of the locations that Peter describes are well-known tourist attractions, but mostly they are out-of-the-way places usually overlooked. Consequently "Footloose in the Peak" appeals as much to local inhabitants as it does to visitors. Look at Chapter Two "The Village Cinema" if you doubt me.

Ron Weston

FOOTLOOSE IN THE PEAK by Peter Clowes, 2004

Churnet Valley Books

ISBN 1 904546 07 2

£7.95.

DERBYSHIRE INDUSTRIAL ARCHAEOLOGY. A CATALOGUE OF SITES. PART 1 BOROUGH OF THE HIGH PEAK

This is a revised edition of the first edition published in 1984 and it describes 158 sites in the civil parishes of the Borough of High Peak, arranged alphabetically in grid reference order. High Peak Borough covers a surprisingly extensive area, encompassing Bamford, Brough and Shatton, Buxton, Castleton, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Charlesworth, Chinley, Chisworth, Edale, Glossop, Green Fairfield, Hartington Upper Quarter, Hayfield, Hope, Hope Woodlands, New Mills, Thornhill, Tintwistle, Whaley Bridge, and Wormhill. The essential criterion for inclusion is that there must be some physical remains on the site (often altered), and where possible historical notes have been incorporated into the entry. There are thirteen photographic illustrations. Derek Brumhead has been largely responsible for updating and revising the information, and he also provided the photographs.

The gazetteer in A6 format is published by Derbyshire Archaeological Society (November 2004) and is available from New Mills Heritage Centre, Rock Mill Lane, SK22 3BN, price £3.75 plus 35p postage.

THE HOME GUARD FIREFIGHTERS

During the summer of 1942 we had a long dry windy spell of weather and suddenly the moorland on Kinder set on fire. For days a pall of smoke hung over the moors and occasional bursts of flame were seen.

The authorities were worried about this fire helping the German bombers to locate their targets, so several members of New Mills Home Guard were sent to Hayfield and I was one of them. We were based in a church hall and six men were sent under a gamekeeper guide to go up

Kinder at night to the shooting cabin high up on the moor. I was one of the six.

Armed with shovels to beat out any fires we toiled up through the heather when the gamekeeper suddenly stopped and grabbed a hare. After a moment he let it go free and some of

the men said what a good dinner it would have made.

We got to the cabin and were shown a small gully just past it with a small stream in the bottom. There was a



fire on our side and our job was to stop it crossing the stream. Although several fires started on the far side we managed to put them all out. By this time we were all hot and black with the smoke when we felt the first spots of welcome rain, the first for a long time, and then it came

down steadily. We were able to retreat into the shelter of the cabin and stayed there until all fire danger had passed, and in the early morning we made our way back down to Hayfield and then back to New Mills.

Bill Barton

NEW MILLS' ANSWER TO HITLER

After the fall of France in the dark days of summer 1940, the British government called for volunteers to form a citizens defence force to be called the Local Defence Volunteers. All over the country men flocked to join up and a meeting was held at the Town Hall in New Mills to recruit a local force.

Plenty of men came forward especially old soldiers of the 1914-18 war and then they called for runners who had to be fifteen years old. This was my chance and I joined up. Major Cochrane, the owner of Campbells engraving works on St George's Road

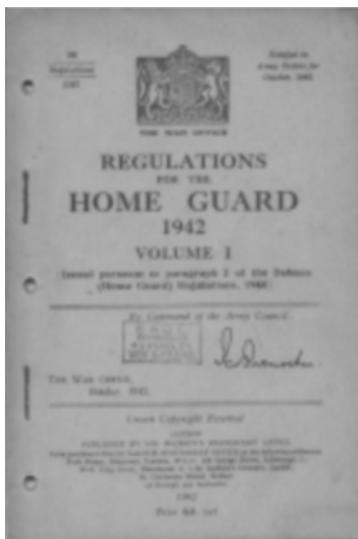
was in charge and several bosses who had been officers in the first war were selected to lead the new force. Although we had no equipment a march through the town was held the following Sunday, and we all mustered at the Town Hall. Led by New Mills Old Prize Band, who had all joined, we set off towards Thornsett watched by a crowd of people. Halfway down Bridge Street a lady shouted out "Where's your

guns ??" and one of the marching men replied "Aye missus we'll kick them to death". This was the mood at this time. The march continued to Birch Vale and back down Hayfield Road to the Town Hall.

Soon platoons were formed and I was placed in Strines section, so called because all the men worked at Strines Printworks. Guard Posts were selected and Strines section was on guard at the Town Hall, one Post at Moor Lodge, one at the Castle above the golf course, and one in a railway camping coach in Gowhole sidings. One night every week we were on

duty all night. In the Town Hall bunks were made up for the men, two of whom were on sentry duty at the front of the Town Hall.

The Town Hall was an ideal centre as it had telephone connections and the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) post was just across the road in Hall Street, where the "Stables" house is now. Thursday night was training night and it says a lot for these men when having worked long hours during the



day they turned up for guard duty and training. Mr Churchill then decided that the LDV ('Look, Duck and Vanish' as it was called) should be known as the Home Guard.

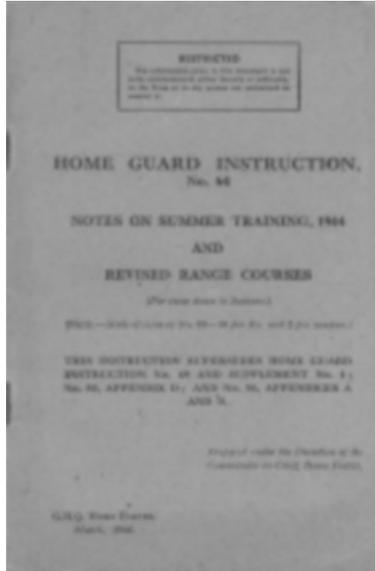
About this time Strines section received ten uniforms, ten steel helmets and ten rifles. The rifles were Canadian Ross make from the first war and only held ten rounds, but they were very welcome. Before dark on our duty night we paraded at the old wooden drill hall on Longlands Road just below the South View footpath A house is on the site now. We

put our uniforms on and marched to the Town Hall where we paraded, and the first pair of sentries were posted. For quite some time people came to watch this ceremony. The same thing was happening in the other observation posts round New Mills, where a watch was kept during all the hours of darkness.

My duties as a runner were not very hard and as the men could not leave

the Town Hall, I was sent for chips and when we were on duty on Saturday night it was chips and a bottle of beer. If a red air raid alert came through on the telephone I had to run down and tell the platoon of regular soldiers who were based in what is now Barton's furnishing shop, as there was no telephone there. These soldiers were there to guard the railway tunnels and bridges and were here for several months.

In later months the Home Guard became much better equipped and eventually formed squads of signallers, despatch riders and even had a staff car, a c.1936 Morris which had been given. The men camouflaged it. One thing the Home Guard did was to give a good basic training to the younger members who would be going into the services when their time came to be called up. The old soldiers saw to this and the spirit of the times was marvellous.



Bill Barton

History Fairs

Some of these fairs and dates are tentative, based on past years.

Family History Society of Cheshire Open Day, 26 February 2005, Northwich Memorial Hall, Chester Way, Northwich, Cheshire

Wirral Family History Fair, 13 March 2005, Hulme Hall, Port Sunlight, Wirral

Pudsey Family History Fair, 19 March 2005, Pudsey, Civic Hall, Pudsey, Leeds

Cumbria Family and Local History Fair, Sunday, 20 March 2005, Shepherd's Inn, Rosehill, Carlisle.

Cheshire Archaeology Day, 2 April 2005, Memorial Hall, Chester Way, Northwich, Cheshire

Stockport Family History Fair, 3 April 2005, Stockport Town Hall, Wellington Road, Stockport

Yorkshire Family History Day, 25 June 2005, Knavesmire Stand, York Race Course, York

North Wales Family History Fair, 3 September 2005, North Wales Conference Centre, Promenade, Llandudno

The Great North Fair, 10 September 2005, Gateshead International Stadium, Gateshead.

Aintree Family History Fair, 11 September 2005, Princess Royal Exhibition Suite, Aintree Racecourse, Liverpool

North-West Family History Fair, 1 October 2005, Velodrome, Manchester

Cheshire Local History Day, 29 October 2005, Memorial Hall, Chester Way, Northwich, Cheshire

Salford Local History Fair, 20 November 2005, Salford Art Gallery, Salford

There are many other history fairs around the country. See www.genuki.org.uk/geneva or *Local and Family History Handbook 2004 edition*.

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