

New Mills Local History Society

Newsletter



Spring 2007

Meetings - Spring 2007

Meetings are usually held in Sett Valley House on the second Friday of the month, starting at 7:45pm.

Friday January 12	David Frith	Roman Roads
Friday February 9	Tony Bonson	The Use of Water Power on the River Dane and its Tributaries
Friday March 9	John Barnatt	The Lead Mining Remains of the Peak District and Their Conservation
Friday April 13	Angus Walton	Cromford Mill
Friday May 11	Ron Weston	A.G.M. <i>Followed by</i> The Historic Landscapes of Mellor

Committee 2006-2007 (elected at the A.G.M.)

Chairperson	Gaynor Andrew (743117)
Vice-chairperson	Barbara Matthews (743935)
Hon. Secretary	John Humphreys (743581)
Hon. Treasurer	Joan Powell (742814)
Hon. Archivist	Roger Bryant (744227)
Hon. Editor	Ron Weston (744838)
Ordinary members	Olive Bowyer Pat Evans Richard Wood Barry Dent Derek Brumhead Barbara Done

www.newmillshistory.org.uk

From the Editor

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all a Happy New Year for 2007. This year is our silver jubilee. No doubt this anniversary, which falls in May, around our A.G.M. time, will not be allowed to pass without celebration. Arrangements are a little fluid at the moment; but all will be revealed in the coming months.

19TH CENTURY HAYFIELD 9 September 2006 - Joan Powell

Before the industrial revolution, Hayfield was primarily an agricultural village set in the royal forest of Peak, with dairy and sheep farms, domestic textiles of wool and linen, a duchy of Lancaster corn mill, and at least one woollen mill. Joan started her talk with a survey of this pre-industrial period starting with the Domesday Book and the many references to the region, but her main object was to describe the economic, industrial, and social development of the nineteenth century, when the population increased dramatically. This can be attributed to the arrival of cotton as a factory industry with the construction of mills, and the establishment of huge calico print works and paper mills, all making use of the plentiful water coming down from Kinder. This could not take place without proficient communications and Hayfield found itself on the route of a late nineteenth century turnpike between Chapel-en-le-Frith and Glossop and in the 1860s became the terminus of a major railway line to Manchester. Typical of new industrial settlements and towns of the time, Hayfield became a strong centre of non-conformism and several chapels were built. The talk was well illustrated with historic slides of the village and its buildings and churches in the nineteenth century.

Being the former Clerk to the Hayfield Parish Council, and the author of two previous books on the village, Joan was well qualified to give this talk. We are fortunate that she has been able to present her findings in another book recently published by New Mills Heritage Centre called "*Hayfield in the 19th century*". It is on sale at the Centre and at Society meetings

Derek Brumhead

The Cromford and High Peak Railway Friday 13th October 2006 - John R. Morten

Railways are always a popular topic with our members and this was no exception: a large audience welcomed John Morten who, after a lifelong study of this early tramway and railway, is undoubtedly the greatest authority on this line. The purpose of the original tramway was to connect two sections of canal, the High Peak at Whaley Bridge and the canal at Cromford, where Arkwright had his mill



The engineer in charge of the project, Josias Jessop, completed his task in 1831. It was a heroic accomplishment, to traverse the steep gradients, cross the many hollows with the construction of embankments and dissect the many intervening ridges with tunnels and cuttings. To follow the High Peak Trail today on foot or bicycle is to enjoy a dramatic view of the White Peak from a series of spectacular vantage points.

Using his collection of early slides, many taken in snowy weather rarely seen today, John Morten took us on a journey along the line from Whaley Bridge to Cromford, giving us his expert commentary, relating his own early experiences and showing us much that has since disappeared. Much of our attention was directed to the inclines, where stationary engines were used to haul the wagons. The one at Middleton Top at the Cromford end is the only substantial survival. Although much has disappeared from the Cromford and High Peak Railway, there is still sufficient remaining for our generation to appreciate it; but we need John Morten's expertise and unique experience to bring it back to life.



Ron Weston

Recent Researches at Nether Alderley Mill 10th November - Mike Redfern

Mike Redfern has spent many years as a National Trust guide at Nether Alderley mill. During that time he has undertaken a considerable amount of research into the history and archaeology of the premises, with the result that we now know the story of the mill from its medieval origins in considerable detail. For this, the National Trust owes Mike a debt of gratitude. In view of the fact that the mill is in urgent need of restoration and that Mike has worked with unflagging enthusiasm to raise funds, it is perhaps ungenerous of the Trust to delay and show reluctance to undertake this work

A corn mill has stood on this site since at least the thirteenth century, from whence the earliest records survive. For much of that time the mill was part of the considerable estate of the Stanley family. Mike began his talk by relating the mill site to the Old Hall where the Stanleys lived until 1938. The mill pool draws its water from a considerable catchment of small streams flowing off the surrounding sandstone, which also provides an attractive building stone for the mill



Much of Mike's research has involved the many interesting sets of initials to be found carved in the woodwork, left by former millers, owners and others connected in some way.

Mike's thorough and detailed knowledge of the structure of the mill and its working parts was presented to us with a series of excellent slides, which included interesting early views of the mill site. The result of his researches has enabled him to reconstruct the various stages in the alteration of and additions to the mill in a series of splendid line drawings in three-dimension.

Undoubtedly, to visit the mill would be an attractive day out; to time your visit to a quiet period when Mike is around, would be a tremendous bonus.

Ron Weston

Medieval Macclesfield

8th December 2006 - Dr. Jane Laughton

The development of Macclesfield in the early 13th century, Jane Laughton explained in her authoritative talk, should be seen as part of the general expansion of population and urban life in England at that time. Like many other medieval boroughs, Macclesfield had an Anglo-Saxon foundation, on a lowland site along Park Lane, where the manor of Macclesfield continued to have its focus; but the market place that came into existence around 1220, was situated on a flat hilltop. Here the burgess tenements were laid out, spreading down the important thoroughfares, Chestergate, Jordangate and Wellgate, with the fine and substantial chapel of All Saints, later dedicated to St. Michael, subsidiary to the mother church of the parish of Presthury, presiding over the burgeoning town. The location of Macclesfield at the junction of two very different agricultural areas, the pastoral uplands of east Cheshire and the arable districts in the west of the county, promoted product exchanges at the market. Macclesfield lay at an important crossroads where the route from London and the West Midlands, using the Cheshire Gap to connect with the north and so on to Scotland, intersected with the trans-Pennine route from Derbyshire, proceeding westwards towards Chester and the Irish Sea. Add to this the fact that the borough had administrative functions as the centre of Macclesfield Hundred and Macclesfield Manor with their respective courts held there, and one can well understand how the town developed as a central place serving East Cheshire.

Using the evidence of local court records, together with lively illustrations taken from medieval manuscripts, including the “calendars” of market towns in other parts of England and western Europe, Jane painted a vivid picture of everyday life in and around a market town in that period.

Finally, Jane related the town to its surrounding countryside. The pastures of Macclesfield Forest were tenanted to inhabitants of the borough for grazing their animals. Even in the towns at that time the agricultural interest was never far away. Danes Moss had a vital resource of peat for fuel and was the subject of a dispute between the manor of Gawsworth and Macclesfield. Kerridge quarries provided stone for building, harder than the red sandstones nearer at hand. For the nobility, the forest was a place for hunting, as was the park, while the Black Prince had a stud farm for the production of oxen at Harrop.

Thus, not only did Jane Laughton bring medieval Macclesfield to life, but also she gave us cogent reasons why the medieval borough was created and continued to flourish.

Ron Weston

Wartime Memories

During 1940 I used to enjoy going with Alf, a local lorry driver, in my spare time. His job was to collect milk from local farms and deliver it to a dairy in Manchester, and for this job he had a new Ford lorry. The lorry was really up to date, engine in the cab, comfy seats and arms rests and - the latest gadget - a cigarette lighter. Alf was a smoker and very fond of this lighter and, as no-one had seen one, when we stopped anywhere workmen would come for a light.

This particular day we had unloaded all the full milk churns, and then went to Castle Brewery, in Pin Mill Brow in Manchester, to load spent hops to take back to the farms for cattle food. The spent hops came out into a large iron tank just under the roof and we had to stand in this and shovel the hops into the lorry below. The spent hops were just coming down the pipe into the tank steaming hot and we loaded the lorry and came back to New Mills. When I got home I started to feel queer and very dizzy and went to bed but felt worse and so the doctor was sent for. But he could not find the cause until he learnt about the hops, when he said that I was intoxicated with the fumes and was drunk. I was ill for the next day and then was all right again, but the memory of this stayed with me all the years and I have never been drunk since.

Near the end of 1944 I was in a new little ship named "Expire Patriot" in Southampton waiting to take cargo to France when we were told to wait a day longer. The next day three army Bedford lorries came to the dock and we loaded some large wooden boxes into the hold. Then an American army transport officer arrived to sail with us. These boxes contained the new French banknotes to replace the German occupation notes then in circulation. We were diverted to Antwerp and the Transport Officer was there to deliver this money safely. The crew tormented him with tales as to how they could get into the hold and take some money and what a good time they would have with it. For three days he believed them and kept his revolver handy until he realised he was having his leg pulled.

At Antwerp a convoy of American lorries arrived with armoured cars and despatch riders and took the crates away. We never found out how much money we had had on board although we heard various amounts from 3 million up to 33 million. I would have liked to know the real amount.

In early 1944 my chief and I were radio operators in a little Danish ship named "Inger Toft". She was only a small ship and in peacetime ran from Denmark to Tyneside for coal. All the rest of the crew were Danish and the captain's name was Brink. He was only small but very fat and weighed 20 stone. On one occasion we were in Blyth and he had to go to a captain's conference and as he did not speak much English I was told to see he got there. Afterwards he would make his own way back to the ship. We were rowed ashore and we had to climb

up an iron ladder as the tide was out. I went first but the ladder was just short of the quayside which had quite an overhang. I got ashore but the captain could not get his stomach over the edge and I had to try and pull him over. I pulled as hard as I could and was wondering what punishment I would get if I dropped him in the dock, when with a mighty effort I pulled him onto the edge and over the top and we went on our way.

As a sequel to this, years after the war I was back in the Co-op when a man came to see me, he was Mr Robinson who had been Second Officer on the "Inger Toft". He had married an English girl and settled down in Liverpool and when he came to New Mills with his job he looked me up. My chief and I had been sent on another ship but he told me that the "Inger Toft" was returning from Iceland and was off the west coast of Scotland when she was torpedoed by a U-boat. All the crew were saved. Three days later the U-boat was sunk but all its crew were lost.

Bill Barton

HAYFIELD IN THE 19TH CENTURY

A 60 page A5 book on Hayfield in the nineteenth century has just been published by New Mills Heritage Centre. The author is Joan Powell, former Clerk of Hayfield Parish Council and Treasurer of the Society. With an attractive laminated cover, it is illustrated with 16 photographs and seven maps and covers a wide range of subjects including chapters on industry, religion, transport, education, and eight other chapters plus a bibliography. The text explains what happened between 1801 and 1901 to account for the village's growth and industrial importance. The book costs £4.95 and is on sale at Society meetings, New Mills Heritage Centre and at the newsagent in Hayfield.