

New Mills Local History Society

NEWSLETTER 64



Spring 2020

Committee 2019-2020

Chairperson	Roger Bryant (744227)
Vice-Chairperson	John Crummett (749530)
Hon. Secretary	Mike Daniels (746449)
Hon. Treasurer	Maureen Hall (742837)
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Hon. Photo Archivist	Roger Bryant (744227)
Hon. Editor	Ron Weston (744838)
Hon. Website manager	Barry Dent (745837)
Ordinary members	Gaynor Andrew, Derek Brumhead, Nicki Burgess, Peter Done, Pat Evans, Chris Jones

From The Editor

Dear friends,

We have now said goodbye to our much-loved Chairperson Gaynor Andrew, who has guided our Committee so conscientiously and effectively and presided over the Society meetings with such charm and courtesy. Gaynor has now left the area to be closer to her family. As a small token of our appreciation the Committee has awarded Gaynor life membership of the Society and Barry has designed a certificate to that effect, which our Secretary Mike Daniels has presented to Gaynor, together with a bouquet

The Committee was concerned as to how Gaynor might be replaced as Chairperson and is grateful to Roger Bryant for taking up the post.

Apart from writing more books than anyone else on his researches into New Mills, Derek still finds time to pursue other historical topics. His latest work, entitled "Glossop Easter Books," appears in Derbyshire Miscellany Volume 22: Part 2, Autumn 2019. It will be in New Mills library.

It just remains for me to wish you all a Happy New Year and hope to see you in 2020.

The History of Ecton Copper Mine: Bronze Age to 1859

Dr Pete Webb, 13 September 2019

Ecton Hill, Staffordshire is a historic mining area unusual for the Peak District in producing predominantly copper rather than lead and zinc which predominate elsewhere. The whole area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and the Ecton mine itself is an underground SSSI. It is located in the Staffordshire Moorlands area, where the valley of the River Manifold cuts through Lower Carboniferous limestones which were subjected to folding and faulting during the Hercynian earth movements about 240 million years ago, which built such mountain ranges as the Ural Mountains, the Pennines and Welsh Highlands in Britain, the Harz Mountains in Germany, the Appalachians in America as well as the high plateaux of Siberia and China. It was the fractures and faults caused at this time that were later filled with the mineral fluids.

The latter half of the eighteenth century was the heyday of this famous Peak District mine, with a peak production of over 4000 tons in 1786. From then onwards, however, it declined. The vast deposit of high grade copper ore was on the Duke of Devonshire's land. The ore yielded as much as 60% copper, which is a very high grade, many copper ores that are mined today yield only 2 - 3%. It was the source of money used to build Buxton's Crescent and Stable Block (the Dome). In the middle of the 18C mining was stimulated by the innovation of copper bottoming ships, used to protect the underwater hull from the corrosive effects of salt water and the teredo worm, which has a small shell with two valves which are specialised at boring through wood.

Pete is a well known geologist and it was natural that he should start with an explanation of the geological background to the formation of these mineral deposits. He explained that the Carboniferous Limestone of the Peak District in which the copper ore occurs was formed 330-360 million years ago, when the area now known as the Peak District, was part of an ancient continent situated on the equator. Since that time the shifting ancient continents, propelled by plate tectonics, have brought us to today's geographical position.

The limestone was fractured by the earth movements in many places and it was these fractures that were later filled with mineral fluids, particularly the copper ores of which there were two, chalcopyrite and malachite. Chalcopyrite is a copper iron sulphide mineral, brassy to

golden yellow in colour. Malachite is an opaque green-banded mineral, a copper carbonate hydroxide mineral and was particularly mined during the Bronze Age. Tools such as hammer stones and deer antlers of this period have been found by archaeologists. Copper seems not to have been mined by the Romans, who came to the Peak District particularly for the lead, but by the medieval period mining for copper was well advanced at Ecton. The mine was the first in the country to use drilling and black powder to release the ore.



Ecton engine house

The main ore bodies were irregular near-vertical structures, such as the Deep Ecton Pipe and the Clayton Pipe. As the mining went deeper and deeper (a maximum of 415 metres) it eventually reached the top of the water table. In order to go deeper a Boulton and Watt steam engine was installed in 1788 to pump the water up to the new Deep

Ecton Level, which intersected the ore pipe at a depth of 98 metre. It was a tunnel 400 metres long and took 30 years to build. Along this tunnel the ore was trammed out in tubs into the River Manifold, and smelted at Wiston. Pumping stopped in 1855 and gradually water filled up the workings. Over the years probably about 100,000 tons of rock and ore were mined. The engine house and powder house have been preserved and there is a rich limestone flora.

Pete is a National Trust guide conducting parties around the underground workings, and clearly has considerable knowledge about the mine and its history, which we were privileged to learn about.

NEW MILLS FESTIVAL LECTURE

The Origin and Evolution of the Brass Band, with a reference to New Mills Old Prize Band.

Dr Stephen Dearden, 16th September 2019.

In 1812, the year that Napoleon's army suffered its ill-fated retreat from Moscow, New Mills Old Prize Band was formed. It is probably the oldest surviving brass band in the country, but, as Stephen explained, the original band pre-dated brass bands as we know them and the instruments being played then varied little from those that had been played since medieval times. In this well-illustrated and annotated presentation Stephen explained the influences on the development of brass bands and brass band music over the last two hundred years.

It was not until the 1840s that the brass instruments designed by the Belgian Adolphe Sax began to appear in Britain and brass bands began to emerge. The present composition of 'The British Brass Band' was settled in 1873 by John Gladney, known as 'the father of the brass band movement'.

With the expansion of the British army in the latter half of the nineteenth century, military bands became common and the quasi-military uniforms of civilian bandmen reflect this influence, as does the popularity of marches in their repertoire. But, as Stephen emphasized, the brass bands that emerged were the product of the industrial revolution and created by working class people for a predominantly artisan audience, even though many of these bands were sponsored by employers.

In the larger towns, bands associated with churches, the Salvation Army and the temperance movement greatly expanded the popularity of brass band music and created opportunities for aspiring working class musicians..

The development of local and then national brass band competitions greatly increased the popularity and standard of brass bands. The most accomplished bands were located in the industrial districts of the North, but by the end of the 19C bands played regularly in parks and on seaside piers throughout the country and were firmly rooted in the culture of an increasingly affluent working class.

By this time also, the repertoire of brass bands had broadened considerably, stimulated by the need to include technically-

demanding test pieces in competitions. Church music remained important, together with marches, while operatic overtures and oratorios increased in popularity. In the early years of the twentieth century the repertoire was widened still further with inclusion of the works of the great romantic composers Chopin, Schumann and Schubert. Contemporary composers, such as Percy Fletcher, Elgar, Holst and Ireland, contributed specially commissioned works.

The advent of the First World War was in many ways a cultural watershed. Certainly, it brought the Golden Age of brass band music to an end. The post-war years brought a steady decline, a result of changing tastes and economic depression. Perhaps surprisingly, there has been a revival in the popularity of brass bands in later decades, stimulated by the rise of youth bands. Although many of the great brass bands of the past have disappeared, those bands that survive maintain a traditional repertoire and a vital link with the past. New Mills Old Prize Band is an example.

Stephen devoted the latter part of his talk to the history of New Mills Prize Band up to 1914. The Band was founded by Timothy Beard in 1812 when New Mills was expanding rapidly as a centre of textile production and calico printing. Since then the Beard family, resident in the district for some 600 years, have figured prominently in the affairs of the band as instrumentalists, conductors, choirmasters, composers and vocalists. The Beards were Methodists and the words of Charles Wesley were put to music by Timothy, or his brother Stephen, Beard in the hymn 'Ransom'. John, Timothy's great-grandson, was to lead the Band during its most successful competitive era before the First World War.

While the Band and the town owe a great debt to the Beard family, we should also remember with gratitude the generations of bandsmen who despite working long and arduous hours in the mills devoted their energy and scarce leisure time to the creation of music for the entertainment of their fellow workers and neighbours.

Stephen's excellent talk was concluded with music played by members of the Band, including a rendition of the hymn 'Ransom'.

Stephen has written an account entitled "A History of New Mills Old Prize Band: two hundred years of music making" for sale at New Mills Heritage Centre at £5.

Ron Weston.

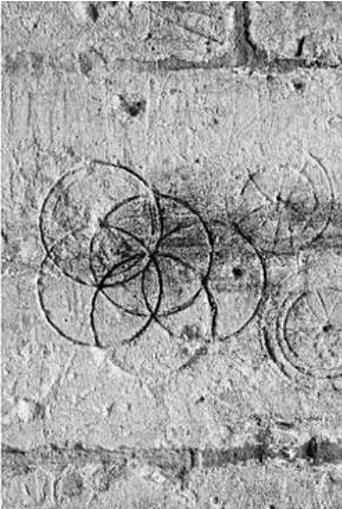
Scribbles, Scorch Marks and Scribed Symbols

Andy Bentham, 11th October 2019

It seems that what we dismiss as idle doodling found on the woodwork and stone of ancient buildings deserves closer inspection, as it may include marks and symbols of significance. Andy Bentham has undertaken an unusual line of historical research in finding these marks and seeking their meaning. To this end, he has spent much time in churches, old houses and mills in Derbyshire recording and classifying these symbols.

Some of these marks had a practical purpose. Carpenters often assembled a wooden building offsite before reconstructing it in its intended location. Each of the timbers was marked to indicate its place in the structure. Stone-masons adopted a similar practice.

Other marks have been interpreted as symbols guarding against misfortune or as a defence against demons or the Devil. These, of course, are likely to be found in churches, but also occur in houses and farm buildings. One may imagine, for example, a superstitious farmer carving a symbol in his shippon to ward off sickness among his livestock. Guarding against the Evil Eye or warding off witches was a familiar preoccupation in more superstitious times and no doubt some of these symbols have this function. The daisy wheel, made with a pair of compasses, seems to be a symbol of this kind.



Andy mentioned an enigmatic mark frequently found, that of a carved foot.

Though obviously deeply symbolic, its true meaning is unknown. I remember climbing Dunadd, the hill in the Kilmartin Valley in Scotland, where the kings of Dalriada were invested. Carved into the living rock at the summit was a human footprint where, presumably the king would place his foot during the ceremony.

The danger of fire in an age where buildings were constructed mainly of wood attracted a set of marks which may include burn or scorch marks applied to the timbers of buildings with a candle or other source

of heat. Some of these may be accidental, of course, but Andy has found that their frequency indicates that they may have been intentional.

Andy, with his enthusiastic approach to his subject, convinced his audience that he is pursuing a serious field of study. I, for one, will look more closely at the graffiti I come across next time I enter an ancient building.

Ron Weston

The Bombing of New Mills, 3 July 1942 Frank Pleszak, 8 November 2019.

New Mills History Notes No 22 on the New Mills Air Raid was published in 1990, and Frank has substantially increased our knowledge of the event. The aircraft bombed New Mills, where the Methodist chapel at Low Leighton was destroyed and two persons killed. The aircraft went on to Hayfield, where houses were destroyed and six persons killed including, ironically, a child evacuated from Manchester. After attacking Stoney Middleton and Chatsworth House, the German aircraft were shot down over Lincolnshire by Spitfires from a Polish Squadron (303), and Frank who is Polish obviously had a particular interest in the event. His talk was the result of new research he has done on the raid and the Polish Spitfire pilots, which has resulted in his writing a substantial new A4 volume of 74 pages and over 50 beautiful illustrations called “The Bombing of New Mills” and published by the Society. There is a lot of new information and illustrations compared with the early publication, particularly about the route and intention of the German aircraft, the German crew and the Polish pilots who shot them down. A substantial number of Frank’s book have been sold, to the great benefit of the Society thanks to Frank’s generosity. Frank made a particular attempt to contact persons in New Mills and Hayfield who had had a personal experience of the raid (one, Arthur Huddleston was on the New Mills cricket field when it was machined gunned as the German aircraft passed over), and other persons who attended the talk spoke of their experience. There were also interviews that Frank had recorded and broadcast to the meeting. Frank is a very competent researcher, writer and speaker and the record attendance of over 60 people experienced a very interesting evening.

Derek Brumhead

Rudyard Lake Past and Present 1797 - 2017

Ray Perry, 13th December 2019

Cumbria has Windermere, Scotland Loch Lomond, while Europe's fashionable and famous grace the shores of Lake Como; but Stoke-on-Trent has Rudyard Lake, "The Blackpool of the Potteries".

Ray Perry, Chairman of Rudyard Lake Trust, has researched the history of the canal reservoir thoroughly, making use of a huge archive of early records, picture postcards and memorabilia. His talk makes imaginative use of this material, which is enhanced by the inclusion of archive film footage.

Some two-and-a-half miles long and covering 168 acres, the lake was created as a canal reservoir in 1797 and still supplies the Trent and Mersey Canal system. Originally, the canal served the transport needs of the local ceramics industry and it was not surprising to learn that Josiah Wedgwood was the moving force behind its construction.

Later, a branch of the North Staffs Railway ran along the shore and eventually two stations were established to serve the burgeoning settlement of Rudyard. It was the coming of the railway that led to the growth of tourism there. In a less-sophisticated age, thousands flocked on excursion trains to go boating, fishing, dining and dancing, to view the entertainments or simply leave the smoke of Stoke-on-Trent behind and enjoy the country air. The more affluent played golf or perhaps built themselves a country retreat.

Ray Perry had some interesting stories to tell. Rudyard Lake is where Rudyard Kipling's parents first met (hence his name), where Captain Webb, the first to swim the Channel, came to demonstrate his prowess and where Carlos Trower ("The African Blondin") came on several occasions to amaze vast crowds with his tightrope-walking skills.

Many local people, especially landowners and farmers, were opposed to the commercialisation of the area so vigorously promoted by the rail company and did what they could to stem the tide. Prominent among these was Fanny Bostock, a wealthy widow resident at Cliffe Park Hall, who took out injunctions and fought the developers through the courts; but ultimately in vain.

Times have changed. The post-war Beeching cuts led to the closure of the local line, while new attractions elsewhere replaced the boating and the lakeside walks.

“The Blackpool of the Potteries” is no more; but, even so, Rudyard’s wooded hills still attract large numbers of visitors throughout the year and the volunteers of the Rudyard Lake Trust strive to make them welcome with a visitor centre, boat trips on their vessel ‘Honey’ and the narrow gauge steam railway.

Ron Weston.

The Local Historian

Volume 49 No 4, October 2019 has been placed in New Mills Library. Articles include:

Paul Cleave, ‘Gooseberries for the Fleet: the Home Front kitchen in Devon in World War 1’.

Jayne Carroll and Susan Kilby, ‘Preparing the ground: finding minor landscape names in medieval documents’.

Anne Casement, ‘Henry Jones’ 1751 plan of Dromana and its place in the cartographic history of Ireland’.

Marion R Hardy, ‘The importance of Midsummer Day 1700’.

Margaret Henley, ‘Saint Eadgyth of Polesworth: exploring the reality of an Anglo-Saxon saint’.

Reviews

Dissenters; meeting house certificates for Bristol and Gloucester.

Making their mark: learning to read and write in 19th century Cumberland.

The Cumbrian counties and the East Indies 1680-1829.

The Shropshire Union Canal.

Female railway workers in World War Two.

A new dictionary of English field-names.

Sedgeford Aerodrome and the aerial conflict over north west Norfolk in World War Two.

New Mills Local History Society - Meetings - Spring 2020

Meetings are held in the main hall of New Mills Town Hall, starting at 7:45pm. Members free, visitors £1-50, with free tea/coffee/biscuits after the meeting. You may obtain easy access from the entrance on Aldersgate.

Friday Jan. 10	John Dalton	Dr Diana Leitch
Friday Feb. 14	The Development of Airfields around Manchester, 1910-1960	David George
Friday Mar. 13	Studying Egyptian Mummies in Manchester: a decade of Egyptological investigation	Dr Lydija McKnight
Friday Apr. 3	Britain's Bloodiest Day – the Battle of Towton 1461 (War of the Roses)	David Skillen
Friday May 1	AGM Title to be confirmed	Roger Bryant