



MHG NEWSLETTER

June 2019

Newsflash

Loughborough Echo 26 June

“The next social event is a walk around Cufflins Pit and recently reclaimed areas around the quarry. The walk will start at 7.30 on The Green” **Mystery solved**

**July Meeting
Tuesday 9th July**

Mystery Walk

Why a mystery walk?

The two walk leaders, who shall remain nameless, have yet to make a decision and are currently on holiday in Norfolk and the Isle of Wight

Nevertheless Meet ~~7pm~~^{7.30} at the ~~Buttermarket~~^{The Green}

Mountsorrel Museum

This is still a ‘work in progress’ and we are on a steep learning curve, but we have put up the following displays:

- Two Mountsorrel Men and the Battle of Waterloo
- The Emigration of Quarry Workers
- St Peter’s War Shrine
- Three Mountsorrel Men and World War I & II
- Archaeological Finds in Market Place

A display to commemorate the 175th anniversary of Christchurch will replace The Battle of Waterloo on 20th July

Currently the museum is open during normal library opening hours Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Two Mountsorrel Men and the Napoleonic Wars

The two men were Benjamin Brown and John Dancer

Benjamin Brown was born in Mountsorrel in 1780. He enlisted on 21 January 1801 as a private in the 1st Foot Guards. Before he joined the army he was a carpenter's labourer.

From 1806 to 1809 he served in Sicily, Spain and Portugal. This expedition returned in January 1809, having lost 7000 men. After a few months at home Benjamin was dispatched, with 40,000 men, to fight an unsuccessful campaign in Walcheren in the Netherlands. The number of men lost in combat was 106, but 4000 died of 'Walcheren Fever' Benjamin was promoted to Corporal, and following the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 he was promoted to Sergeant.

After he retired in 1821 he returned to Mountsorrel and worked with his brother John who was landlord of the White Swan in Market Place. In November 1826 he married Elizabeth Hickling and by 1838 he was the village constable

He was called as a witness when Joseph Priestly of Mountsorrel brought a prosecution against Richard Fowkes of Rothley for allowing his wagon to pass through Mountsorrel without his name on the vehicle. Benjamin was asked to corroborate the fact that the name on the side of the wagon was smeared with manure. Joseph Priestly said that he brought the prosecution because Mr Fowkes had prosecuted him ten years earlier for 'sporting' on his ground.

John Dancer was born in Mountsorrel in 1783.

He joined the Royal Navy in 1805 (possibly press ganged)

He enlisted in the 95th Rifles in 1809 and by 1826 he was a Sergeant Major

When he retired he spent the rest of his years as a Yeoman Warder at the tower of London

Three Mountsorrel Men and World War I & II

This tells the story of three members of the Walters family who were:

Louis Henry Walters, born 1895, KIA 1917 , his brother

Willie Walters , born 1896, survived WWI and died in 1945 and Willie's son

Louis Edward Walters, born 1921, KIA 1943

Emigration of Quarry Workers

Our research so far has shown that over 200 men from the Mountsorrel quarry emigrated to work in quarries in Scotland, Wales and America. Generally they moved simply to find work, possibly for better wages, or maybe in the case of America, with a sense of adventure.

Wales

In 1850 under the headline in the Leicester Mercury, *Dissatisfaction among the Quarry Men of Mountsorrel*, it was reported that in the previous week sixteen men had left to work at a quarry in Wales. The reason was the partial and abusive treatment by the foreman resulting in men being unable to earn enough to maintain their families. It also stated that a letter received from those already in Wales said that fifty five more men were wanted.

Many of the men went to Nant Gwrtheryn on the Lleyn peninsula where the main output was granite setts, sent to Liverpool and Manchester by sea.



Workers at Nant Gwrtheryn

Setts in Dublin Street Liverpool (with Bob Dylan)



America

In 1889 the Leicester Chronicle reported ‘ On Saturday the second batch of quarrymen this season, about a dozen young men, left Liverpool in the ship Etruria for America, and in a few days another batch of about the same number will be going’.

The display in the museum focuses on the Kirchin family. Harry Kirchin emigrated to North Carolina in 1908 and found work as a paving cutter in a granite quarry in a town with the unimaginative name of Granite Quarry.



Harry Kirchin in America

Scotland and America

In 1873 there was a shortage of skilled quarry workers in the Dalbeattie quarries in Scotland, and some 60-80 men were recruited from Mountsorrel, Rothley and Hartshill. Quarrying in Dalbeattie started in 1780 and there is still a quarry there operated by Tarmac.

It was the first place in the world where granite was commercially polished with granite being imported from Rhode Island in America for shaping and polishing in the Dalbeattie workshops.

Many Mountsorrel men moved from Dalbeattie to work the quarries in Westerly, Rhode Island. Their names are to be found in the graveyards there- Baum, Billson, Preston, Toon and Marriott. Descendants of the latter ended up owning the Oneca quarry.



Christchurch, the Leicester Quarrymen's Church

Those that stayed in Dalbeattie decided to build their own church. Work on the new Church started in 1874, the quarrymen providing most of the workforce, which had to be done at the end of their ten-hour working shifts.

Wildlife

Navins Wildflower Meadow

The downpours of the last couple of weeks have helped the taller grasses thicken up and now the returning sun has brought out the ox-eye daisies, knapweed and ragged-robin as the follow on to the Cow Parsley. The Yellow Rattle is working well in knocking back the more invasive grasses and is slowly spreading towards the “Froggy”.



*Ox-eye Daisy, Ragged Robin and Knapweed 20th
June 2019*

It has effectively given us a central bowl of wildflowers surrounded by taller grasses and cow parsley around the meadow edge. This has the added benefit of providing some protection to the colour show from the wildflowers.

The County Council Highways team have done some recent work to the drains on the Navins which resulted in them putting in a new manhole just in front of the “Froggy”. This necessitated them bringing a digger onto the edge of the meadow but they minimised disturbance to an absolute minimum and have left a neat and tidy job. We are sure the area will recover well next year and probably completely mask the manhole.

We are getting some “visitors” to the meadow and there is a definite trail along the edge of the trees toward the large ivy clump by the “Froggy” caused by badgers. They have also left some evidential deposits on the edge of the Meadow opposite the side gate to Christ Church. This could indicate that this is the edge of their territory or indeed that a sett is nearby.



Badger Latrine Pit

Birdlife has been limited due to the weather but there was a family of 7 Great Tits, 2 adults and 5 young, feeding in a garden near the Green this week who, to their alarm, were joined on the feeder by a field mouse.

Peace Garden

The Armistice Trees and the new pyracantha hedge line have all benefited from the rain and are growing strongly. We had to cancel the June work party day to the adverse weather but we have another one planned for morning of Wednesday 10th July. With the weather there’s a good bit of weeding and edging to do so any help will be appreciated..