

Talks

The February talk is 'Quorn Camp- A POW camp and the Americans' by Sue Templeman. One of the episodes of the BBC2 series 'WW2 Treasure Hunt' was based on the Quorn camp and the producers were ably assisted by Sue and Noel . The POW camp housed German prisoners and the Americans were the 82nd Airborne

Commemoration of the Centenary of the 1918 Armistice

Brian Stanton, chairman of the Mountsorrel Heritage Group organised a meeting this month with other village groups to raise interest in Mountsorrel commemorating the centenary of the ending of the First World War.

At the meeting were representatives of the Parish Council, Christchurch & St Peters, the Methodist Church, the Townswomens' Guild, the Boys' Brigade, the Mountsorrel Community Team, the Royal British Legion and the Womens' Institute. Apologies were received from the Baptist Church and the school.

Ideas suggested included

- Reviving the Dickens Cup-a cricket club competition
- A WWI themed tea dance in the Memorial Centre
- Poetry Reading from the period
- A Peace Lunch on the Green
- A Torchlit Procession followed by lighting the beacon
- An exhibition in the foyer of the Memorial Centre with the launch of (hopefully,if we can raise the cost of publishing) a book researched by members of the Heritage Group about the Great War and its effects on the village and the people of Mountsorrel

Mountsorrel in the Great War



A View of the Village and its People 1914 -1919

Blast from the Past

As I write this 'the floods are up' as they were back in March 1881, much to the surprise of a group of rambles

"Our walk from Sileby to Mountsorrel was suddenly dashed by an unexpected and awkward phenomenon. The district being unexplored ground one important thing had been overlooked — the possibility of floods. Leaving the train at Sileby, the bold outlines of Broad Hill and the Mountsorrel cliffs stood out prominent in the distance, with the village nestling at their base. A few paces more through Sileby, we were suddenly confronted by a vast expanse of water. The whole of the Soar valley, stretching from Sileby across to Mountsorrel, a distance of over a mile, had become transformed into a broad inland lake. There was no alternative but to wait by the brink until a vehicle could be procured. In some parts the flood was nearly two feet deep, and being behind an animal that was neither quiet nor sure-footed, was not entirely without its discomforts and its dangers."

Wonderful Mountsorrel-an article published in the Leicester Advertiser in 1849

One of the most wonderful places in our wonderful neighbourhood is, doubtless, Mountsorrel. The appearance of the town itself, so often compared by tourists to Gibraltar-the rocky steeps that overhang it and the remains of the ancient Norman Castle can scarcely fail to afford a matter of delight and surprise to any one who visits this singular locality for the first time. At present, the place is daily the resort of visitors. A party of enterprising quarry-men have recently begun the opening of an ancient subterranean passage, which probably was a secret outlet from the fortress. Their labours have cleared out more than 40 feet of a perpendicular shaft, just under the ancient donjon, and probably a communicating with the town by a horizontal passage. Carved stones of very antique pattern, oak timbers, bones, pottery, &c. are constantly thrown out. and it is not unlikely it that more important discoveries will yet reward their toil. The discoveries on Broad Hill, which contains eight curious tumuli give additional interest to the spot, and happy groups of strangers, besides enjoying the result of the recent discoveries, enjoy the beautifully diversified prospect which the hills afford, so that Mountsorrel has, at times, the appearance of a fashionable watering place.

New Acquisitions

The photographs below were sent by Pete Johnson, whose father Neville was manager of the quarry from 1956 to 1965. Pete's grandfather was Harry Johnson who married Flora Kirchin, the sister of Harry Kirchin who was featured in the December newsletter.

Harry Johnson was a notable sportsman

In the picture of the Mountsorrel Castle Cricket Club Harry is in the back row, second from the left, as he is in the picture of a Mountsorrel football team. He was awarded the cricket ball in 1895.

Can anyone identify any of the others or where the photo of the football team was taken?



Website

New posts about two Mountsorrel benefactors, Richard Nidd and Thomas Statham, were added to the website in January.

The website, to date, has had 372 likes. It has also received 175,482 blocked spam comments (lots from Russia) and 101,839 blocked malicious login attempts !

But two genuine comments in response to the post titled 'Yards in the North End of Mountsorrel' are given below.

Malc Anderson posted this in January this year

My parents bought the first cottage in the row in Grundy's Yard (number 43) in 1950 and raised 3 children there. Myself, born 1951, sister born 1953 and brother born 1955, we lived there until moving to Thurmaston in 1962.

Our cottage was the first in the yard to have a proper flushing toilet installed by my late father who was a plumber. I remember as a youngster the toilet block at the top of the yard being emptied into a lorry that reversed up the yard to do so.

Mountsorrel quarry came right up to the top of the yard, easy access for exploring the site when the men had gone home ! I knew that quarry like the back of my hand. Many times I've been down the inspection pit under a cooling down loco, dodging leaking hot water !!

Still live in Thurmaston....but 'Sorrel will always be my spiritual home.



John Roberts posted this in July 2017

Wow! I've just found out the history of these yards, I used to live in the old White Swan when it was no longer a pub, around 1956 when I was 8. We had a lot of out buildings and I think 8 acres of land that used to flood. My father use to keep 150 pigs and horses: people used to hold their noses walking by our house. Sometimes the pigs escaped on to the main road. I'd jump on a horse bare back and go round 'em up, must have looked hilarious- the butcher across the road, the bike shop owner next door, the barber, and the local bobby everyone chasing squealing pigs.

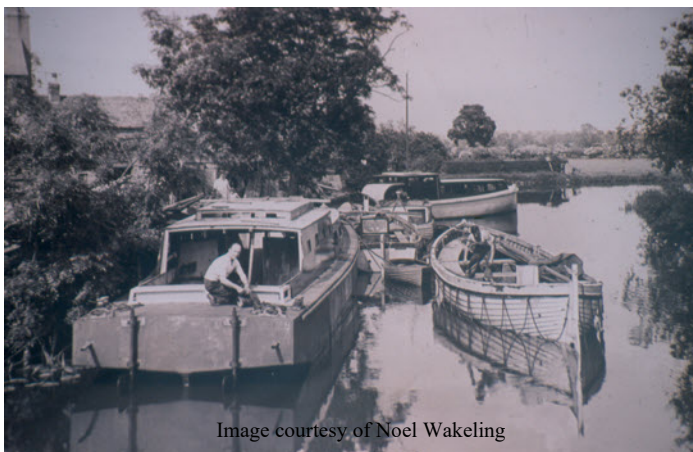


Image courtesy of Noel Wakeling

I remember I was near Mr Boon's boat yard when the river was in full flood, some boaters were waiting to enter the locks and there was a very elderly lady standing in front of their cruiser, she lost her balance, went over the side and disappeared under river. Nobody but Mr Boon and I noticed it. He moved so fast, jumped on the boat, put his hand below the water line moving along the boat with the current, just as he came to the end of the boat he got her hair and yanked her out. In a few more seconds she would've been lost. He saved that woman's life that day, and the first her family knew of it was when he landed her back on the boat.

Eric Boon doing one of his boat conversions

The Peace Garden 2017

We held a series of very successful work days in the Peace Garden in 2017 led by Chris Berry. These saw improvements and additions to the planting in particular in the area around the monument. Lower down we have cut back the heavily overgrown river bank and started to add structure to the southern wall area.



An unexpected find whilst working near the river was a very young Grass Snake which was returned to the river bank.

Peace Garden 6th November 2017 - Young Grass Snake

Mountsorrel in the Great War

Since the Group's very successful WW1 Exhibition in 2014 the WW1 Studies Sub-Group has been working towards producing a book to mark the Centenary of the Armistice in 1918. That work is now almost complete and we are currently investigating publishing options and costs.

The book, with the working title of "Mountsorrel in the Great War", runs to some 200 (A4) pages with 160 illustrations and maps. Chapters include; a description of the village and village life at the time of the War, the mobilisation of the Territorials and Yeomanry, the women of the Voluntary Aid Detachment, and the Belgian Refugees. There are pen pictures of the 410 men from the village who served during the war and the more detailed stories of four of them.

We hope to have the book available for purchase by early autumn to coincide with the start of the commemorations of the Armistice Centenary.