



No 37

MHG NEWSLETTER

Once upon a Time in Mountsorrel in February

Leicester Journal - Friday 26 February 1847

Mrs. Bramley, of Mountsorrel, was charged with assaulting her next-door neighbour. Complainant deposed that defendant swept some dirt and water on her, and lifted the besom, threatening to knock her down, but did not strike her. This was denied by defendant's daughter, who said Mrs. Hassall threw water on her mother. Defendant was ordered to pay costs, but her husband refused, and said he should appeal against the decision

21st February 1840 Leicester Journal

Elizabeth Whittle and Eliza Cooper, of Mountsorrel, were charged by Mr Maine of the same place, with neglecting to finish a lace-piece, given out to them to embroider on the 25th October last. The Bench ordered the piece to be finished in ten weeks, and pay the costs.

22nd February 1840 Leicester Mercury

William Johnson, Bricklayer, of Mountsorrell, was charged with assaulting Joseph Waterfield, framework-knitter, of that place, at the beer house of John Woolley [*The Cricket Players Arms, now the Perfect Wok*]. It appeared that the defendant by mistake drank out of the jug belonging to the complainant, in consequence of which words arose and from words they proceeded to blows, and the magistrates finding it difficult to decide which was the most in fault, dismissed the case by ordering the costs to be divided.

20th February 1841 Leicester Mercury

Elizabeth Burton and Elizabeth Rayner, both of whom were inmates of Mountsorrel Union House, were charged by Joshua Derry, the governor, with absconding from the house. In their defence they stated they left in consequence of the abuse they constantly received from the cook, and sometimes from Miss Derry. They were committed for 21 days hard labour.

7th February 1846 – Leicestershire Mercury

On Monday last, an inquest was held at the Nag's Head, on the body of Samuel Langham, an old man, who was for many years the manager of a stone-quarry, occupied by Mr Parsons, surveyor of the turnpike-roads. It appeared that the old man had "run bad" in his accounts, and been dismissed about a fortnight back, since which time he had been employed at another quarry; but not being able to earn so much as formerly, he committed suicide on Saturday morning last, by hanging himself in the kitchen. A verdict of *Felo de se* [*felon of him- or herself*] was returned.

Leicester Chronicle 1885

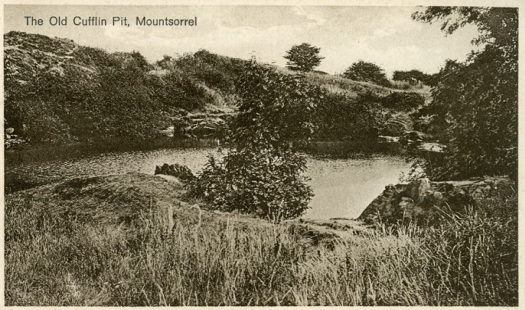
Accident on the Ice. —On Sunday morning some youths went on the ice in an old unused quarry, generally called "Cuffling's Pit," for the purpose of sliding, and whilst so engaged the ice broke and let two of them into the water, their names being Wardle and Staples. Both were got out without much injury. In the afternoon of the same day two young men named Hutton and Clarke were trying the strength of the ice in the same place by jumping on it, when it broke and let them both into the water. Clarke had a very narrow escape of being drowned. The bystanders tied their scarves and PC. Heggs's belt together, and obtained some rails, and with great difficulty Clarke was rescued.

Now and Then – Cufflin’s Pit Lane

The local lockdowns have meant that more people have been out and about walking in Mountsorrel, often along Cufflin’s Pit Lane, but where does its name come from? The footpath and bridleway that leads from the junction of Watling St and Crown



Google Earth 11th April 2020 (Cufflin’s Pit Lane marked in yellow)



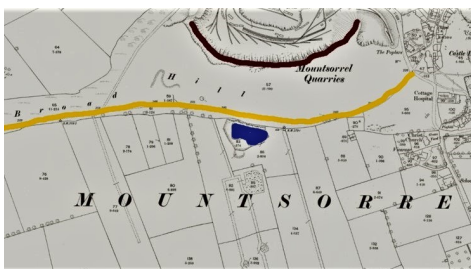
Lane through to Bond Lane around the southern edge of the old Broad Hill quarry site forms part of the Leicestershire Round.

The pathway has much older uses as it was the route connecting the village with Swithland and Woodhouse when it was known as the “Accommodation Road”, that is, a recognised route connecting two places that is not a public highway. The route also served to allow villagers access to the common land by what is now Wood Lane.

With the opening of the Leicester Navigation it provided a suitable route for both agricultural products from the Woodhouse area and slate from the Swithland quarries to be brought to the village wharves for transport by barge south through Leicester and beyond and north through Loughborough and then on to the river Trent.

That the route did not develop further is due to the closeness to what was then the main (No. 1) Mountsorrel Quarry which developed southwards ever closer to the route throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries eventually forcing the line of the path to be moved to the south and swallowing up an old much smaller quarry, known as Cufflin’s Pit.

That smaller quarry was operated in the mid 1800s by Joseph Cuffling hence the name. By 1885 it was described as an old unused quarry. Around 1900 the Granite Company constructed Halstead Road to replace Cufflin’s Pit Road on the understanding that it would be dedicated to the public and Cufflin’s Pit Road would be closed. However it remained open until 1950 when it was closed to vehicular traffic and became a footpath and bridleway.



1883



1901

-  Quarry Edge
-  Cufflins Pit Lane
-  Cufflins Pit



1927



1950

Joseph Cuffling

Joseph Cuffling was the son of William Cuffling, whose business interests in the village included being a baker, corn dealer, grocer, general dealer and who by 1851 was a farmer of 126 acres employing 10 labourers. William was born in Stanton under Bardon in 1790 but by 1830 was established in Mountsorrel. His two sons, William (born 1823) and Joseph (born 1827), had been in business partnership together although this was dissolved by mutual consent in 1850 after which William (Jnr) went to take on Hall Farm in Swithland where he remained. At the time of the ending of the partnership they are described as farmers, butchers and grocers.

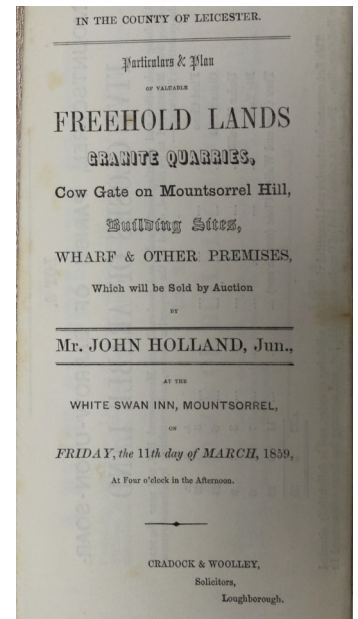
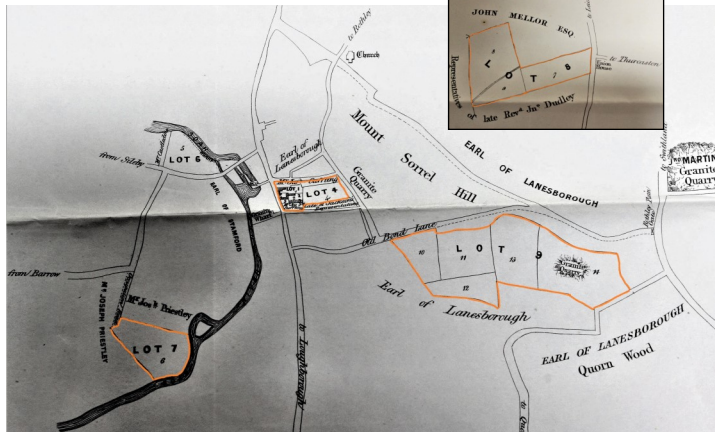
Joseph, like his father before him, had multiple business interests being variously a grocer and farmer of, in 1861, some 318 acres. In 1858 the Mountsorrel Granite Company began to appoint "Agents" to further develop the business. One of these was Joseph, who in the late 1850s was very active in the press advertising the company's products. Although described as an "Agent" and with a clear marketing role he also appears to have had a major managerial role and is noted in some newspaper reports as the "Superintendent" of the Granite Company quarries.

Joseph was active as a lay preacher in the Wesleyan Methodist community both in the village and the local area and in 1845 had married Eleanor Heafford from a Loughbrough Methodist family. At the same time he was active in the social life of the village being a leading member of the Mechanic's Institute Committee and a temperance man.

On 11th March 1859 there was an auction held at the White Lion to sell an estate consisting of eleven lots of houses, land and quarries. Most of it was being leased by Joseph, but he had been given notice to quit. It even included his farm on Loughborough Road where he was living (lots 1-4). The farmhouse, now 19 Loughborough Road, and the adjoining land was purchased by Joseph. The rest of the land that he was leasing was sold off. This-



included Cow Gate on Mountsorrel Hill, a meadow of 6 acres next to the river (lot 7), 20 acres by the turnpike road (lot 8), and 30 acres between Bond Lane and Wood Lane, including a granite quarry (lot 9).



With the rationalisation of his property holdings and involvement in the then booming quarry business and his active membership of local societies such as the Mechanics Institute Joseph had reason to be feeling comfortable with life. However, in the winter of 1859/60 tragedy struck with the death of his wife. This left him a widower with 5 young children and a plethora of business interests to run. In April 1861 he re-married, to Ann Sculthorpe Freeman the daughter of a Quorn Grocer and shortly afterwards a 6th child arrived. Despite being well set up in his family, business and social life, disease in the mid 1800s was no respecter of men and on 29th July 1864 Joseph suddenly died of typhoid fever. His status within the local community can be gauged by the newspaper report of the event:

"Mountsorrel. Death of Mr Cuffling – We regret to announce the death of Mr. Joseph Cuffling, the Resident Manager of the Mountsorrel Granite Quarries, which occurred on the 29th ult. His remains were laid in the tomb on Monday last in the presence of about 1000 persons".



Cuffling Family Grave Mountsorrel Cemetery 2020

Joseph's executors, Elijah Jacques and John Mitchell, sold his property to ensure the trusts stipulated in his will for the benefit of his wife and children were set up. The initial sale in October 1864 was of livestock, farm implements and crops, including;

- 275 sheep
- 14 beast
- 8 prime fat pigs
- 14 excellent working horses
- 4 cart colts and fillies

This was followed a week later by a major sale of crops both stacked and yet to be harvested.

The next year came the sale of his properties including his farmhouse and adjoining land. They were sold in four lots.

Lot 1 "A commodious dwelling house, with Yard, Garden well stocked with fruit trees, and other premises, having a frontage of 26 yards to the town street and containing 2217 square yards or thereabouts.

This is the farmhouse occupied by Joseph and his father William before him for at least twenty years, today it is 19 Loughborough Road. Advertised cautiously as "having a frontage of 26 yards or thereabouts" it actually paces out at 24.

Lot 2 A piece of building ground, containing 1224 square yards, adjoining northwardly on Lot 1 with Barn, Cowhouses, Stabling, Slaughterhouse, Shed, and other Buildings with a frontage of 18 yards or thereabouts to the town street.

Lot 3 A piece of building ground, containing 1768 square yards, adjoining northwardly on Lot 2, and having a frontage of 25 yards or thereabouts to the town street, and with the Cart-shed, Piggeries, and other buildings standing on the ground.

The land adjacent to the farmhouse, Lots 2 & 3 is now numbers 21 to 63 Loughborough Road. In 1861 there were no houses between No19 and what was Pleasant Row (later called the Rookery).

Lot 4 A piece of old pasture land, situate at the back of and adjoining Lots 1, 2, and 3, and containing by recent admeasurement 2 acres 26 perches being the same more or less.

This pasture land lay behind the farm.



Lots 1 – 4 outlined on the Ordnance Survey 1883 map – Note the development of the quarry



Lots 1 – 4 outlined on Ordnance Survey 2020 Satellite imagery

The rest of his property for sale at the auction were:

A cottage, now 83 Loughborough Road

Ten back to back cottages. These were called Pleasant Row, possibly because of their location away from the road on land attached to the farm. After the farm was sold a row of houses were built in front of Pleasant Row and the name changed to The Rookery a name with a less pleasant association with slums. The nesting habits of the rook being perceived as similar to a slum.

Six cottages fronting the Town Street, now the houses between the Spice Cube and Crown Lane. Also three cottages in the yard at the back adjoining Crown Lane (once Neal's Yard), now demolished.

Three cottages adjoining Crown Lane, now the cottages at right angles to Crown lane. These do not sell and were eventually auctioned in 1873.

With the completion of the auctions and settlement of the Trusts, Joseph's widow Ann moved back to live in Quorn where she died in 1913

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT IN MOUNTSORREL

Thomas Cook's first excursion was a return rail journey from Leicester to a temperance meeting in Loughborough. Joseph Cuffling was an active temperance man from Mountsorrel who worked with Thomas Cook, and opened a temperance hotel in Loughborough where visitors could put up their horses without having recourse to licensed premises. Thomas Cook used to go to Mountsorrel and deliver addresses at open-air meetings. In 1863 a great temperance demonstration took place in Mountsorrel. 2,500 passengers travelled by train to Sileby, for Mountsorrel, where there was a temperance festival on the rocks and in homestead of Mr Cuffling, where the immense masses were supplied with tea.

Early temperance work in Mountsorrel was carried out by a Band of Hope together with the Wesleyan Methodists. Later it was formed into a general Band of Hope for the whole village, and included members from all denominations. The Band of Hope part of a national organisation was aimed at children....

A Good Templars' Lodge (a temperance movement which originated in America) was later set up in the village and January 30th, 1880, saw the birth of the Granite Rock Lodge of Good Templars. The Lodge organised annual demonstrations and their first open-air demonstration on the Castle Hill took place in 1890.

Public meetings were sometimes disturbed by the throwing of turf and other missiles while some of the speakers in the Sunday Schools were even threatened by the publicans. Nevertheless the movement continued to grow and the Temperance Hall was built at a cost of £860. On Whit Monday 1899 the ceremony of laying the memorial stone was performed.



The Independent Order of Good Templars gather on the site of the castle in Mountsorrel. c. 1910.

Part of the work of the temperance movement was to oppose the licensing of public houses, but the fight was a very uphill one for the movement, as the village was recognised as being one of the worst places for drinking in the county. There were 22 public-houses in the village, which had a population of 2,500, and it was a centre for the imbibing populace of Sileby and other surrounding places. The fair week in particular was considered a "regular boozing time." However by 1916 with the help of the Good Templar Lodge, about ten pubs had been closed, and the Robin Hood Inn had been converted into the Free Church Institute Room. It was claimed that the village was transformed from one of the most recognised drunken places of the county into one of the most sober. The influence of the movement made itself felt in the surrounding villages and the lodge at Mountsorrel was the primary means of opening lodges at Sileby, Rothley, Quorn and Barrow.



Wildlife

We have carried out some quiet, socially distanced, work at the Wildflower Meadow in between the rain and snow. The bird boxes have been cleaned out with two of the three small boxes showing successful use probably by Blue Tits. The large box gave us a bit of a surprise. As Jeff went up to clean out the box he tapped on the side first (Safety first!) which brought out a Kestrel which was clearly un-amused by our presence. Examining the insides of the box revealed a large nest which we suspect was used by the Sparrowhawk that fledged young in the copse area this last spring/early summer. We think the Kestrel was re-using the box and nest as a roost in the wintery weather.

Other work has included lopping some of the overhanging scrub trees and cutting through the ivy on the larger trees to try and prevent them being brought down by the extra weight. The first of the flowers have just started to appear on the Meadow in the form of a small clump of celandines and snowdrops near the "Froggy".