



# MHG NEWSLETTER

No 39

## Once upon a time in Mountsorrel in April

### 30th April 1880 – Leicester Journal

George Baum was charged with assaulting Mary Ann Hall, at Mountsorrel, on April 18th. The complainant occupies a house next door to defendant, and stated that the latter came into their yard with a dead cat, which he accused her husband of killing. Several words ensued between them, and the defendant slung the cat around and hit her in the face. PC Smith was called as to the characters of the respective parties. The defendant, he said, was one of the most quiet men in Mountsorrel, while the complainant had given great provocation to him by exhibiting his effigy in the window with base insinuations as to his conduct. Under these circumstances, the Court at once dismissed the case, apparently under a strong conviction that the complainant had contributed to the death of the cat.

### 27th April 1861 - Leicester Chronicle

Benjamin Rudkin, labourer, of Mountsorrel, was charged with having, on the 21st of April, at Mountsorrel, unlawfully and wilfully assaulted his wife. It would appear that defendant's ill-using of his wife is of frequent occurrence, which was the reason of the present proceeding being instituted. In the present instance he had struck his wife with a chair and cut her head; but when both sides of the case were known, matters assumed a very different aspect. Plaintiff admitted that on the night in question, when her husband came home from his week's work, there was a disturbance between the two children, one of hers previous to her marriage to the defendant, and one since. Instead of making his home comfortable she began to jaw him, when he took up his hat and walked away. Having had some drink at the "Anchor" he returned home, when she recommenced her aggravation and continued it until he became so enraged he took up a chair and struck at her, when she fell on him and dragged him out of the house by the hair of his head. Defendant stated that the cause of the dispute was simply in reference to one of her children, a lad of 16 years of age, who although in regular work, would not contribute towards his own support, and wanted to live wholly upon the defendant. The defendant told him he must either contribute towards the support of the home or else leave it. The woman insisted that her son should remain at home and defendant insisted that he should not stay with them. They had frequent quarrels.

After severely reprimanding the complainant the Bench dismissed the case.

### Leicester Chronicle on Saturday, April 07, 1888

#### The New Town Pump

Some two or three years ago a well was sunk at the bottom of the Green and remained in abeyance up to the end of last week when a pump made of stone at the Granite Works was fixed. The sides and back are of granite blocks dressed at the corners but rough in the middle. The front of the pump is made of stout iron containing the date 1877 and the Griffin, the coat of arms of the lord of the manor Lord Lanesborough. The pump is affixed at the bottom of the Green on a raised concrete block surrounded by a pavement of granite and dressed edged kerb stones of two heights. Altogether the work looks of a durable and ornamental character and no doubt will be highly appreciated by the inhabitants

### **1st April 1831 Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties**

A disgraceful scene took place at Mountsorrel on Friday last. A gentleman residing near that place lost his only son by death on 28th of July 1828; this gentleman being then in connexion with the Wesleyan Methodists, and his son, about 17 years of age, accustomed to attend with his parents the Methodist ministry, expressed a wish upon his dying bed to be interred in the chapel or chapel-yard. The yard is small but the Trustees readily agreed to the request and he was there interred. Since that time the young man's father has separated himself from the society to which he was united, and became a reviler of the people he once esteemed.

Having left the chapel himself, he recently came to the resolution that the remains of his son should be removed from their place of internment. The Trustees of the chapel met on the occasion and protested about the disinternment of the corpse, and the spoliation of the burying ground. On Thursday night last, about 12 o'clock, the burial ground was entered by two men acting under the direction of the gentleman, and after much labour succeeded in raising the coffin, and carrying it away. The next day (Friday), all the form and pomp of a second funeral was performed! A clergyman! (yes, a clergyman lent himself to this disgraceful business) preceded the hearse in a carriage, then followed the hearse with the putrid remains, upper and under bearers, a mourning coach, containing the father and mother, who have gone afresh into mourning. The whole moved to Rothley church, where the service was again read, as though the young man had died but a few days before. The circumstance has created a very considerable sensation in the town, not very favourable either to the infatuated father, or to the (otherwise) respectable clergyman, who could be induced to lend his aid in so disreputable an affair.

*Notes: To read the sad end to this story see the previous Newsletter.*

### **28th April 1833 Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties**

An accident attended with very serious circumstances, occurred at a stone quarry at Mountsorrel, on Friday last. A man named Thomas Hughes, of Rothley, had been letting off a blast, and finding that it had done but little execution, not having extricated more than one ton of stone, he proceeded to fill a crack in the rock with powder from a tin, containing not less than eight or nine pounds of powder, and whilst so doing, an explosion took place, through some fire left in the rock from the first charge. He was blown a considerable distance in the air, and was found enveloped in flames, with his head and one hand separated from his body. The head was afterwards found in adjoining field, about ninety yards distant. Several other persons were seriously injured, but are now recovering. An inquest was held on the body the following day before Mr Gregory, coroner, and a verdict of "Accidental death" was recorded.

### **12th April 1845 Leicestershire Mercury**

Mountsorrel - An Impudent Thief. On Thursday, the above village was thrown into some degree of excitement by a report, that Benjamin Mee, only son of Mr B. Mee, tailor, Quorndon, had decamped with £25. 10s. 6d. belonging to Mr Glover, Cattle Dealer, Mountsorrel; upon enquiry, it proved too true. It appeared he was making Mr Glover some new clothes, and being left in the house alone, he broke open a cupboard, took out the cash, and walked off without being perceived by any one. He took train at Sibley Station for London, by the penny-a-mile train, and it is supposed he is gone to America.

### **28th April 1854 Leicester Journal**

Ann Hornbuckle, lodging house-keeper, Mountsorrel, pleaded guilty to a charge of allowing persons of opposite sexes to sleep in the same bed room, and was fined 11s. Including costs.

### **22nd April 1831 Leicester Journal**

Eligible and Central Freehold Property, Sixteen Warp Lace Machines, Warp Mills and other Machinery Complete, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire. To be sold by auction at the Crown Inn, Mountsorrel, Leicestershire on Tuesday 26th April 1831 at three o'clock in the afternoon.

All that valuable Estate, late the property of Mr Thomas Kaye, Lace Manufacturer, with an extensive frontage to the Leicester Road, and in the centre of Mountsorrel, comprising 4 spacious and well built dwelling houses, fronting the main street, with 8 others at the back thereof, with yards, gardens, and suitable out-offices; also a spacious warp lace factory, smiths' shops, joiners' shops and other buildings adjoin thereto, pumps etc., with two and half acres of land; also a common right. The machinery consists of 16 capital lace machines, the greater part of which are on the most recent improved plans, warp mills and all other machinery connected with the trade.

## Now and Then- Watling Street

Mountsorrel has a plethora of Closes, Way's, Roads and Lanes but only one Street – Watling Street. Recorded in the Inclosure Awards of 1781 it formed part of a “Public Carriage and Drift Way or Road - 40 feet wide. From the Market Cross, along Watling Street to the end and then S-W over Mountsorrel Hills to the allotment made to the surveyors of Highways and then W over the S side of Mountsorrel Hills to Rothley Plain towards Swithland”

The origin of the use of the name in Mountsorrel is lost but there is an intriguing possibility in its wider use to denote a boundary. The name is well known nationally as being that of the great Roman Road from Dover west-northwest to London and then on via St. Albans (Verulamium) to Wroxeter (Viroconium). In post Roman Britain it remained a major arterial road and part of it still today in the form of the A5. The name stems from that of Anglo-Saxon settlers whose name for Verulamium was Wætlingaceaster and by the 9th Century the local name Wæclinga stræt was used for the whole road which then formed the southwest boundary of the Danelaw. Even today it remains the boundary between Leicestershire and Warwickshire and also forms part of the boundary of four London Boroughs.

That need for a boundary line also applies to the village which has, since its development, sat astride the dividing line between the lands of two of the great Norman baronies, that of the Earl of Chester to the north and the Earl of Leicester to the south. Logically Watling St was that boundary. Nichols in his History of the County of Leicester published in 1800 calls it Barn Lane and others have suggested this derives from Barons Lane, hence Barons Court opposite. But this cannot be right as it is called Watling Street in the Enclosure Awards of 1781 and in earlier documents dated 1732. He was probably mixing it up with Bond Lane, also in the past called Baron Lane

With the granting of the charter to the village in 1292 by Edward I it gained more significance as a route connecting the Charnwood Forest settlements to the Market Place, which was of some trading importance in the medieval and post-medieval period. The growing importance of the Market in the Medieval period led to the development of the village centred upon the Market Place down to the crossing point of the River Soar leading to Barrow upon Soar and Sibleby and along the north-south highway running parallel with the river. This development also spread to a lesser degree up Watling St. The importance of the Market declined after the 14th century but had a resurgence in the 17th when new houses were built around the Market Place and onto Watling St.



**Watling Street from the east c 2015**



**Watling St. and the Market Place 1816**



**Watling St looking west c1880 following the construction of St Peter's School**



**Watling St looking west c1870**

Much of the early development was of low thatched cottages that can still be seen in some of the earliest photographs of the village



More substantial were the four houses close to the Buttermarket which, although recorded as Watling St these are really part of the Market Place complex. These remain today and are Grade II listed buildings. 1 & 3 Watling St., started life in the 17th Century as one substantial cottage linked to the shops fronting the south end of Market Place. 5 & 7 Watling St were built c1840 and at one stage between the wars No. 5 was the village Fish and Chip shop.



**1-7 Watling St c1930 (Fish & Chip Saloon sign by the door of 5 Watling St)**

During the 18th and through to the mid 19th centuries the land and cottages were, in the main, owned by the Danvers family of Swithland Hall, who were Lords of the Manor of Mountsorrel. They leased the cottages out, in some cases on long leases, to working class tenants and for many years the residents were working class.

This changed to a degree with the full development of the quarries and the formation of the Mountsorrel Granite Company by the Martin family. The Martins had leased quarrying rights and land from the Danvers and as the quarries prospered through the 1870s they built houses for key managerial and office staff, notably The Poplars, but also the group of three houses half way up the street. The Poplars was occupied by the Quarry Manager Richard Diggle until his retirement when the members of the Martin family moved in, including William Francis Martin, the Company Secretary. Following WW1 his widow and children moved to join the wider Martin family at the Brand in Woodhouse and the house became the home of a retired army officer, Mr. Henderson. It remained in private hands until eventually becoming a care home, first called The Poplars but now Quarry Hill Grange.



**March 2021**

The Martins were also key supporters in the building of St Peter's School in 1874/5 and later the Constitutional Club in 1910



**The Poplars c1930 – then the home of Mr Henderson**



**The Poplars, now Quarry Hill Grange, March 2021**



**MGC Houses on Watling St., c1880 with the Broad Hill Quarry in the background**



**Former MGC Houses on Watling St. March 2021**

## Southern Side of Watling St



**13, 15 & 17 Watling St c1920**



**13, 15 & 17 Watling St c1950**

By the end of WW2 the cottages on the southern side of Watling St were in a very sorry state with the block of three (13, 15 & 17) hardly habitable but they were purchased by Reg Cooper in 1952 for his son in law, Lloyd Tomlyn to renovate as a first home on his marriage. Lloyd wrote, "It really was derelict. It was built of Mountsorrel granite, with a thatched roof and the internal walls were daub and wattle. The area at the back of the building was completely filled with rocks and clay, right up to the eaves of the roof. There were no facilities of any kind other than a lead water pipe leading into it and the remains of an old pan lavatory up on the bank at the back". Lloyd managed to get planning permission and despite the challenges of rationing and shortage of building supplies generally, started work on it in the evenings and weekends. His first task was to get the ancient thatch roof off....."After a few weeks we had barely made any inroads into the job at all, as, though the thatch appeared to be only about 18 inches thick, it was in fact, packed absolutely solid. It was probable that it had been re-covered many times over the years, with new layers of straw laid onto the old as it had compacted down. So in the weeks we had been working, I doubt if we had cleared more than about 10 feet of its length. It looked like taking forever."



**15 Watling St March 2021**

Lloyd now had a bit of luck although on first hearing it may not appear so..... "we were working in the laundry around 3.00 in the afternoon, when a group of boys about 10 years old came running in, to say that the cottages were on fire." Sometime later the Fire Brigade arrived "....the brigade had just started to connect up the hoses to the hydrant that stands right opposite No.15, and had begun to play the jets onto the roof. The result was absolutely amazing. It was like a bomb going off. As the water jet hit the straw, it simply loosened it all up, and this encouraged the fire to burn even more vigorously. In about 30 minutes the whole roof had gone. The daub and wattle interior walls had collapsed and basically all that was left, were the reduced outside walls and a chimney poking up into the sky. The fire brigade didn't think this looked too safe and simply fastened a rope round it, and then pulled it down. Whilst devastating this at least cleared the old roof in one go and allowed Lloyd to do new build on the site.



## Mountsorrel Band Practice Rooms.



**Band Club Hut c 1948-50**



**The site of the Band Hut March 2021**

Shortly after WW2 the village band acquired a second-hand hut and reconstructed it on Watling St to serve as band practice and also a meeting room for the Royal British Legion Branch. This was later replaced by bungalows c1970.



**Watling St by the path to Castle Hill c1910**



**Watling St by the path to Castle Hill March 2021**



## The Primitive Methodist Chapel

Erected in 1848 the Primitive Methodist Chapel served the Methodist community until 1897 when they moved to a new building on Loughborough Rd. The move, due to the increase in their congregation numbers, the building having a capacity of only about 50, had been planned for some twenty years whilst they raised the funds. The building was later used as a further teaching space for St Peter's School and is now a private House.



The Primitive Methodist Chapel – now a private house, 1976 and March 2021

## St Peter's School

The 1870 Education Act made education compulsory for all children until they passed certain minimum standards. It came though at a cost to families, for the eldest child it was 2d per week and for other children in the family, 1d. Schooling started at about 3 years of age and continued until the "standards" were met, possibly as early as 9 years of age. Schools were based upon Church of England Parishes who were expected to provide premises and staff with support from the parish precepts. Payment for education continued until the early 1890's when local government started and responsibility for education was devolved to it and became free. With two parishes in Mountsorrel schools were started at both St Peter's and at Christ Church. Opening on 2nd August 1875, St Peter's School's first Head-teacher was Ethel Goodacre. On her first morning work on the building was not quite complete but she still had 94 children present including some under the age of three. By 1881 the school was serving 300 children. .



St Peter's School from the north c1880





**Miss Farmer's Class c1905**

In 1919 the shortage of trained male staff caused by the Great War led to difficulties finding a Headteacher for Christ Church and the education structure in the village was changed. Children aged 4/5 years up to the end of the school year in which they were 9 years of age went to Christ Church and then moved onto St Peter's until leaving school at 13/14 years.



**1937**



**Miss Chambers Class 1960**

Post WW2 and further changes in education provision within the county St Peter's School was closed and eventually sold for private housing



**Former St Peter's School March 2021**



## The Constitutional Club

The Constitutional Club built in 1910/12 was effectively the village Conservative Club at its foundation with membership led by members of the Martin family and others, mostly but far from entirely, drawn from the managerial and professional classes. It in its heyday prior to WW2 its membership was somewhat wider and it served as a social centre fielding indoor sports teams in the local whist and snooker leagues. After its closure as a club, the building served as a County Council Day Centre and is now a privately owned Nursery – Castle View



Constitutional Club c 1970 and Castle View Day Nursery March 2021

## Watling Street Employment

The employment recorded in the Census documents reflects the changing patterns of key industries for the village over the 19th and 20th centuries but it does not show that many of the hosiery and other workers will have been working from home

	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1939*
Agricultural Labourers	6			1	1		1	2	
General Labourers	1	4	1		6	1	1	4	4
Quarrymen	8	15	10	12	23	12	22	8	2
Boot & Shoe Hands			1			1	1	11	6
Factory Hands					3	2	1		3
Building Trades	2							3	2
Transport workers	1		1			1			1
Chimney Sweep			1						
Seamstress			1	1	13	3			
Blacksmith								1	
Basket Maker					1	1			
Market Gardner							1		
Quarry Tool Smith									1
Domestic Staff				2	11	9	6	5	
Hosiery workers	34	36	15	10	12	4	8	6	5
Glovers		4							
Shop Staff	2				1		2	1	
Teacher					1	1	1	2	1
Managerial & Office Staff					3	2	3	4	4
Nursing Staff					2	3		1	

\* Incomplete data

## Wildlife

The spring wildflowers on the Navins Wildflower Meadow are now starting bulk out with what looks like a good show of primroses and cowslips developing whilst down in the Peace Garden the daffodils were in good form in mid March.

The occasional warm afternoon in mid March saw the first spring butterflies on the wing with Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell seen in the Peace Garden and later in the month there were more Brimsotones along Cufflin Pit Lane. For those of you who are keen on butterflies and moths there is a county group who have a Facebook page at [Butterflies and Moths of Leicestershire & Rutland | Facebook](#)

Having seen the first frogs of the year on 21st February, a month later and they are in full spawning mode in a garden pond on Rothley Road, another sure sign that spring is really established.



## Birdlife

The winter birds, Redwings and Fieldfares appear to have departed for their summer homes and the first of our regular summer visitors – the ChiffChaff, arrived on Broad Hill on 21st March. Over at Rutland Water an early arrival was a Sand Martin which appeared at the end of February, well ahead of schedule. Arrivals that were almost on schedule were the first two Ospreys that arrived on 19th March. As usual the Rutland Osprey nests are covered by live-streaming on YouTube so if you want a wildlife “fix” before Springwatch starts again go to [\(74\) LRWT Rutland Osprey Project Live Webcam - YouTube](#)



**Large Bee-Fly (*Bombylius major*)  
feeding on the primroses.**

### **Peace Garden work party on Wednesday 14th April 10-12 am**

COVID Regs do not stipulate a max number for voluntary work but the tasks mean we'll be socially distancing in any case – tasks for the day are post winter weeding and pruning and general sharpening up for the coming better weather (the pint pot is always at least half full!). I've requested a couple of brown bins from CBC and informed MPC. John

## New project

Moving minds is a two-part project that will engage the whole community in hopes to relieve isolation and help with mental health.

### Part 1:

A weekly walk and talk group that is open to anyone within Mountsorrel. The object is to get people out of the house to take part in a physical activity, in this case walking. This is the “Moving” part. The “Minds” part is that when out on the group walk people can speak to others which will help with feelings of isolation, loneliness, depression but will also help to build positive attitudes and relationships between the different members of the community. I will take part in each walk along with another worker who will be on hand if anyone needs to have a chat about anything that is affecting them, and they may need support with.

The thought process behind it is that a healthy body supports a healthy mind and walking is something that most people can do. Dogs are also welcome and with the current issues around dog fouling a group walk out with responsible dog owners may have a positive impact on others within the village.

### Part 2: (1 hour)

For the young people.

This is going to an active session of movement, mindfulness, relaxation and fun. It is going to focus on using music and movement to express yourself, your feelings and your emotions. It will be a 45-minute session of activity with a 15-minute wind down session at the end. It is going to be open to different age groups so would probably be a couple of sessions a week. (Still planning this part). I am hoping to look at access to the memorial hall for these sessions.



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Leicestershire & Rutland Youth  
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