



MHG NEWSLETTER

No 43

MHG News

We plan to restart our monthly talks in September. The local branch of Waitrose have kindly offered to donate a sum of money to the group in recognition of our work to improve the environment. You may remember that they gave us a donation prior to the pandemic and have expressed the a desire to work together in future. Our treasurer has invited Laura Barrett and some management and staff to our first talk on September 14th where they will present the cheque.

We will also be opening the museum in September with a new exhibition on Mountsorel Green

Houses on the Green

Houses on the North Side of The Green [2-32]

There was a grocer's shop on the corner of Leicester Road and The Green for over 100 years from at least 1841 until it was demolished in the 1960s.



Nos 16 to 22 built in 1905

This photo of the houses on the north side of the Green was taken sometime after 1879, when the new Baptist chapel, seen in the background, was built but before 1905. The four houses, (three buildings) seen next to Braybrook Cottage [yellow outline], going up the Green, were built around 1847, demolished in 1905 and replaced by Nos 16 to 22. On the other side of Braybrook Cottage, towards the main road, can be seen the entrance to Lockwood's Yard, a small house, a thatched cottage, a three storey building of two dwellings and the old Baptist chapel, built in 1710, now Brewards café. These houses were demolished and replaced by what we see today (Nos 2-10). No 2 was originally two dwellings. No 10, now occupied by Park Dental Surgery, was once a butcher's shop and then became 'Underwoods', a sweet shop and grocery.



Looking up The Green at the chapel and the pre 1905 buildings

The three buildings at the top of the photo are all still standing. No 32, an eighteenth-century cottage, was once the Pear Tree Inn. Next door is a three storey building, Nos 30 and 28, and then 'Dolls House Cottage', (24/26), which was originally two dwellings. On the other side of No 32 a hosiery factory built in 1898 is now the Scout hut.

The Noons lived at No 32 for well over 100 years probably much longer. In the 1719 poll book it is recorded that a John Noon lived in the village, in the 1775 book that he owned his own house in the village and in the 1832 book that a John Noon lived in a house on the Green. Sarah Noon was still living at No 32 when she died in 1959. Sarah's granddaughter, Beryl Ballard, records her memories of her grandmother in a booklet 'Duty and Honour' available in the museum.



Beryl outside No 32

During the years 1953 to 1955 the old quarry pit at the back of the scout hut was filled in with soil from the building of the White City estate. The land was about one acre and stretched right down to the back of Underwood's shop. This disturbed the wildlife and Mountsorrel was plagued with crickets. No 32 was close to the pit and they made so much noise that Sarah couldn't sleep and had to move out until the crickets vanished after the houses were given insecticidal powder to put down.

Several other houses on the Green were also occupied by Noons at various times. In 1841 John, William, Thomas and James Noon lived in the four houses on the west side of Braybrook Cottage. They were all stocking men and Thomas owned the 'shop' in Noon's Yard and sixteen stocking frames.

Houses at the Top of The Green [34-42]

There were once five houses here, 34-42. Nos 34, 36 and 38 were demolished and replaced by two bungalows numbered 44 and 48. Nos 40 and 42 were renumbered in the 1960s to 50 and 52 and later converted into a single dwelling, No 52. There were also once two wooden houses, one No 44 just beyond the pinfold, the other next to No 34



Nos 34,36,38, 40 and 42



No 44

For over 50 years the Billsons lived in Nos 40 and 42. The Billson name does not appear in the early poll books as they leased their homes from the Lanesborough family who owned some twenty cottages in Mountsorrel, including these five cottages. Billsons also lived in the old schoolhouse after it closed and before it was converted into a hospital. The schoolmaster at one time was Thomas Scarratt, who it is said was a martinet- and was greatly feared by the boys. A well-known ditty in those times ran:

Scarratty Nob, he is a fine man,
 He tries to learn you all he can,
 And when he does he makes you dance ,
 Out of England into France ,
 Out of France into Spain,
 Over the hills and back again



Wooden house next to No 34

Prior to the 1881 census the only house between these five houses and No 31(Gordon House) was No 71. The first recorded occupants were George and Thomas Billson aged twenty and fifteen. Both were cordwainers.

Houses on the South Side of The Green [1-79]

Dodson's bakery was on the corner of Leicester Road and The Green. It started life in 1639 as a framework knitter's cottage. It became a bakery around 1792 and was demolished in the 1960s.

Next to the bakery was a row of fifteen houses (1-29) where Sorrel Court now stands. They were built before 1841 and demolished in the 1960s.



A section of Nos 1-29



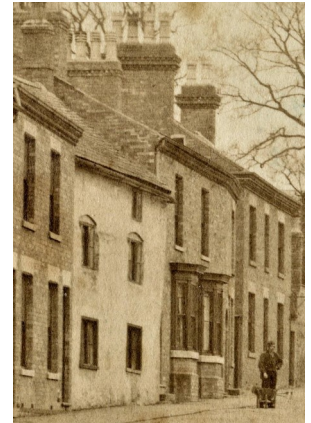
Gordon House

No 31 (Gordon House) and No 33 are both early eighteenth century listed buildings. From the early 1800s Gordon House was a farmhouse. The farmland was at the back, where the Blue Granite Mobile Home Park and the White City are now.

Beyond No 33, except for No 71, there were no houses before 1881 on this side of the Green



Photo taken between 1871 and 1881.



The photograph, taken after 1871, shows No 71 when it had no 'front door'

This photo taken between 1871 and 1881 shows, in the foreground, the wall around the garden of Twigg's Cottage, behind which is Gordon House (31/33). Adjacent are two buildings, now Nos 35-43. Next a wall and an unidentified building, now Nos 45-49 and 61-69. Next to the unidentified building is No 71, and then a wall, now Nos 73-77, and finally No 79.

Nos 51 to 59 were in Oram's Yard behind Nos 49-71. Each had only two rooms, one up and one down. They ceased to be inhabited between 1945 and 1947 and were later turned into garages. The upper stories were 'sliced off' and replaced by corrugated iron



Oram's Yard

At the bottom of the Green, on the site of the library, was Twigg's Cottage. John Twigg and family appear to have been the only occupants until John died in 1906 at the age of 93. He was a framework knitter and later in life a gardener. He was also the pinder. His death left the post of pinder vacant and Mr T Noon was appointed.

George Skelly lodged with John Twigg when he came down from Alnwick to work in the quarry. He married John's daughter Leah and moved into the cottage after John died, but only for a few years as the cottage belonged to the church and was demolished around 1910 and replaced by Church House.



Twigg's Cottage with George and Leah Skelly

Once Upon a time in Mountsorrel in August

Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 20 August 1814

Several stage coaches have been overturned within the last eight days, one this morning, in Mountsorrel, principally, as we understand, owing to the carelessness of the drivers.

Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 03 August 1822

A most brutal act of cruelty was perpetrated at Mountsorrel last week. Two potters having excited their dogs to fight each other till one of them became unable to contend with its opponent, the owner of the defeated animal, resolved being revenged upon the other's donkey. Accordingly, having discovered the ass quietly in lane adjoining the town, this monster in human shape, actually cut out its tongue. The poor animal, when found, appeared very weak from loss of blood, and was shortly afterwards shot, to put it out its misery.

Birmingham Chronicle - Thursday 29 August 1822

Peter Hudson, potter, has been convicted under the late Act of Parliament, of having wantonly and cruelly abused and ill-treated a male ass in Mountsorrel by setting his mastiff dog to worry it. The poor animal had its tongue pulled or cut out of its mouth, and was otherwise cruelly abused. But this part of the case could not be satisfactorily proved against Hudson, though there was every reason to believe that he was guilty of it. —Penalty to the King. 33s. —Costs. 22s.

Weekly Chronicle (London) - Saturday 27 August 1842

Leicester The town has remained tranquil since Saturday, and there is no appearance of any further disturbance taking place. Two troops (Lord Howe's and Colonel Keck's) were discharged from further duty last night, and the other troop will be dismissed tonight. The chief constable of the county, arrived here last night by train from Loughborough, with five men in custody. It appeared that a meeting had been held at the latter place in the afternoon, at the close of which a body of men, armed with short bludgeons, proceeded on their way to Mountsorrel, with the object of turning the framework knitters, etc out. A detachment of police, with a number of out-pensioners, armed with cutlasses, came up with them, and acting with determination, completely subdued the party, and took five men prisoners

Note In 1842 there were riots and strikes in the manufacturing districts of the midland and northern towns. They became known as the plug plots because boiler plugs were removed from steam engines to ensure production stopped. The strikes were essentially about the depression and reduced levels of pay, but as the strike spread it gained the attention of the chartist movement. Thomas Cooper, a Leicester journalist and chartist orator travelled to Manchester and noted "*As the City of Long Chimneys came in sight, every chimney was beheld smokeless*"

Leicester Journal 8 August 1845

In last month's newsletter there was a report of a 'great disturbance in Mountsorrel' The case came to court and was reported at length and in great detail. It is summarised below:

A dog fight at Sixhills, involving men from Nottingham and Leicester was broken up by the police, and the Leicester men moved off in 3 or 4 carts towards Loughborough and arrived at the White Swan (opposite the Buttermarket) in Mountsorrel. Someone boasted 'I can strike a blow as heavy as any man in England'. He was challenged by one of a band of travelling potters drinking in the pub. A woman intervened but she was assaulted. The landlord cleared the pub and when William Clark the parish constable arrived he was knocked to the ground and kicked. His staff thrown over Mr Atherly's wall. John Gill tried to assist the constable but he was assaulted and chased back to his house. Mr Atherly was the landlord of the White Swan and John Gill was landlord of the Griffin, now the Buttermarket Off License. There were upwards of 20 people involved in the riot. The defence of the man accused of assaulting William Clark was that even if he did, he did not know he was a constable.

The jury found the four men accused guilty but for some reason recommended two of them to mercy. The judge sentenced them to four months imprisonment to hard labour.

Leicester Herald - Wednesday 11 August 1830

Thomas Marshall was found guilty and sentenced to 12 months hard labour for stealing coals from Mr Mitchell of Mountsorrel
Thomas Heath found guilty of stealing a blanket from Sarah Shipley of Mountsorrel. 2 months hard labour.

Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 11 August 1838

NEGLECT OF FAMILY James Baum, charged with absconding and leaving his family chargeable to Mountsorrel parish, was committed to hard labour for three months

Nottingham Journal - Friday 27 August 1841

George Wilmer a boy of Mountsorrel was convicted on the evidence of Ferdinand Forman of stealing a quantity of nuts and sent to prison for one month The boys mother was very much affected during the examination and on hearing the result was seized by a violent hysterical fit and had to be carried from the room

Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 31 August 1839

James Pearson, of Mountsorrel, was charged with indecently assaulting Elizabeth Wood Antill, a girl about 13 years of age, on the road between Quorndon and Mountsorrel; his conduct towards the complainant was most indecent, and the magistrates fined him and costs. *[compare the sentence with the above]*

Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties - Friday 02 August 1833

Joseph Willmer, of Mountsorrel, ordered to pay costs, and allow his wife 3s. 6d. a week to prevent her becoming chargeable to that parish

Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 01 August 1840

Frances Chapman, of Mountsorrel, was charged with assaulting Eliza Bishop. It appeared that Eliza was walking with another girl named Eliza Twigg when they met Frances, who had said she would slap Eliza Twigg in the face when she saw her. In consequence of this threat Eliza Twigg, on meeting Frances, asked her what she meant by it, and told her to do it if she dare. This of course led to an altercation in which Frances took part, parties mutually upbraiding each other with the crimes of their fathers with insinuations such as " My father didn't steal rabbits,"-" My father hasn't been transported for sheep stealing," etc. The magistrates were of opinion that one party was bad as the other, and dismissed the case, ordered the costs to be divided

Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 01 August 1840

Mary Blower, of Mountsorrel, was charged with assaulting her near neighbour, and sister in-law, June Blower. June, it appeared, threatened to beat the child of Mary, which led to words, and then June tore Mary's cap off her head and nearly bit off one of her fingers. After a long hearing and the examination of three or four witnesses on each side—none whom could state which struck the first blow, though they all agreed that Mary had afterwards thrown the June's clean linen into the dirt, which was on her gooseberry bush to dry. The magistrates consulted together and told the parties that they ought to have known better than bring such case before them, and that as they considered Mary appeared to have received the greatest injury, they determined to dismiss the complaint, and to direct the costs to be paid between them.

Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 07 August 1841

John Whittle, Mountsorrel, was convicted in the penalty of 2s 6d and the costs for playing water from the fire-engine upon Wm. Wright, an invalid.

Loughborough Monitor - Thursday 23 August 1866

At a Vestry Meeting held at Mountsorrel, South end, much dissatisfaction was expressed at the price of the Quorndon and Mountsorrel Gas Company were charging for Gas, and a resolution was passed that unless the Company reduce the price, the lamps be not lighted during the ensuing year.

Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 01 August 1868

The drive from Leicester is alike interesting and beautiful..... and in the village of Mountsorrel, with its old-fashioned cottages, and its quaint pillared butter market, which looks vastly more like the ruin of some old Mosque than a place for pretty country damsels to stand with baskets.

22nd August 1849 Derby Mercury

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 which once frowned from those steeps over the valley of the Soar – can scarcely fail to afford matter of delight and surprise to anyone 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 an act of great labour, namely, the opening of an ancient subterranean passage, which probably was a secret outlet from the fortress. They have cleared out more than 40 feet of a perpendicular shaft, just under the ancient donjon, and probably communicating with the town by a horizontal passage commencing at the base of the shaft. Carved stones of very antique pattern, oak timbers, bones, pottery, etc. are constantly thrown out, fragments thrown out of the shaft. The discoveries on Broadhill, which contains, eight curious tumuli, give additional interest to the spot, and happy groups of strangers, besides enjoying the results 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.

24th August 1849 Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties

Through the kindness of Mr. Statham, the overlooker of the quarry, in lending them the proper sinking tackle, and everything necessary for the work eight young enterprising quarry-men have dug out the shaft to a depth of fifty feet. The shaft is cut of solid granite and is twelve feet by eleven feet wide. The men work at it after they have finished their usual day's work; they sometimes work until eleven o'clock, so desirous are they to see it completed. They have been at it now more than a month. The men work with great energy, although they have nothing for their labour but what is given them by the visitors, and they have not been few, as it is creating great interest in the neighbourhood. I have no doubt they have got two hundred tons of old building materials out of the shaft. There is a large quantity of freestone, cut and designed for different parts of a building, a large quantity of oak timber (some of the beams are seventeen feet long, and very stout); they have found a stag's horn and a quantity of bones of different animals, nails and bricks of the quarry form and other relics. The opinion of some parties is, that it is a secret escape from the castle, and the opinion is strengthened by the discovery of a tunnel in a backyard of one of the houses on the side of the street nearest the hill; it has all the appearance of a very ancient piece of workmanship and appears to lead towards the shaft.

Derby Mercury - Wednesday 25 August 1880

Harriett Northfield was charged with assaulting Mary Ann Murphy, at Mountsorrel, on the 9th inst.-Mr. Hugh Deane appeared for the complainant and stated that on the day in question the defendant came to her in the Market-place, Mountsorrel, accused her with being too intimate with her husband, and struck and knocked her down. She was 22 years of age and married, but her husband left her a month after their marriage.- Fined 30s., including costs, or fourteen days.

Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 16 August 1879

Mountsorrel

The granite quarries have recently been brought under the Factory Act, which has made some difference in the hours of working, especially to boys under 14, who are now compelled to attend school regularly as half-timers. As the Granite Company find regular employment, at good wages, for 600 to 700 men and boys, the quarries are of great value to the working class of this village, and about as much so to the workers of Rothley and Quorndon.

Leicester Mail - Saturday 15 January 1870

Bridget, the wife of Daniel Baum, was charged with stealing 7lbs. bacon, the property of Mary Ann Snow, Mountsorrel. The case having been fully proved, prisoner was committed to the House of Correction with hard labour for 14 days.

Mountsorrel Infant Welfare Centre

This was set up on 7 January 1920 by a committee of twenty ladies. They met every Tuesday in the Granite Company's Reading Room. There were typically 66 mothers, 27 babies and 45 toddlers. On sale were 'Glaxo' at 2/3 a lb and 'Viriol' at 1/6 per lb. Other items for sale were Cow & Gate food at 1/6 per packet and Aberdeen Emulsion recommended by Nurse Wright.

Each summer there was an outing for the mothers, but only for those with an attendance record of at least 50%:

- A drive round the forest
- A Plain Tea at Mr Kirk's in Woodhouse
- An invitation from Mrs Martin for a visit to The Brand and later Kinchley House

At Christmas there were prizes of stockings, bags or socks for mothers with the best attendance and presents for the children

Every January there was an anniversary tea and concert with birthday cake, fancy cakes and salmon sandwiches plus music and singing. In 1921 it included 6lb iced cake, 4lb currant cake, 4lb of plain cake and 56 fancy cakes.

The Mountsorrel Infant Welfare minute book 1920-1933 is in the museum

Wildlife

Wildflower Meadow

The main flush of flowers and grasses is now ending and seed setting is beginning, but despite that there is still good colour to be seen. On the hot days we've recently enjoyed there has been a wide selection of pollinating insects and butterflies/moths to be seen although we have not been as fortunate as Beacon Hill where there have been excellent sightings of the elusive Purple Emperor



Navins Wildflower Meadow 22nd July 2021

Birds

Recently several people have asked "Where have all the birds gone from my garden"? Well having finished (more or less) the breeding season and subsequent moulting they should now be reappearing. At least if my own garden is typical where the last couple of early evenings we've had groups of Blue Tits, Great Tits, Coal Tits, Long-Tailed Tits reappear along with Dunnocks, Robins and Goldcrests and of course the ubiquitous Woodpigeons and Magpies.

The Swifts, although fewer in number than in the past, appear to have had a good breeding season with flights of 20+ plus birds screaming overhead as they teach their young how to feed in flight and prepare for their migration south.

Peace Garden

Thank you to all those who came along and helped with the Peace Garden Work Party in July, our efforts were followed by those of the Council's grass cutting contractor and the two together has meant the Peace Garden looks a real picture for the late summer period.

Next work party day is planned for Wednesday 1st September.

Whilst working in the Peace Garden on 21st July one of the Group found this caterpillar, which after consultation with the Butterflies and Moths of Leicestershire & Rutland Facebook Group, turns out to be an Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar.



John Doyle