



MHG NEWSLETTER

No 45

Talk at the Mountsorrel Memorial Centre at 7.30.

Tuesday October 12

'Pat's Mountsorrel-Memories Re-visited'

By Pat Neal

Quiz Night Including a Buffet, Raffle and a Bar

Tuesday 14th December

Tickets £9-00 pp will be on sale at the November Meeting or by contacting

Pat Neal on 01162106717 or E Mail : patrick.neal7@ntlworld.com

No bookings taken after 30th November

Mountsorrel Village Museum Re-opens

Having been closed since the start of the COVID lock down Mountsorrel Heritage Group re-opened the village Museum on Saturday 25th October with an exhibition about the people, homes and businesses on Mountsorrel Green. The re-opening was led by Mrs Ella Whittington who was born at 49 The Green in 1928 and has lived in the village ever since. In re-opening the Museum Mrs Whittington spoke warmly of the work the Heritage Group have put in to both the Museum and in particular the present exhibition.



Ella Whittington opening 'The Green' exhibition

The Museum, which is situated on the first floor of Mountsorrel Library (to which there is a lift) is now open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays during Library opening hours.

The exhibition on The Green features 20 display panels, the production of which has been made possible by a grant from the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society .

Education in Mountsorrel before 1870

Until the 1830s education in England and Wales was very fragmented, with no government or state involvement. Education, such as it was, was run mostly by the Church authorities and stressed religious education. The rich educated their children by employing private tutors or sending them to boarding or grammar schools. Girls were usually taught at home by their mothers – mostly in subjects useful to their expected place in life, such as embroidery, music, housekeeping etc. There were women who were more widely educated but they were the exception rather than the rule.

The first recorded example of a Mountsorrel school dates from 1746 when Sir Joseph Danvers of Swithland Hall founded a free school at a site called Chapel Yard on Castle Hill. Sir Joseph wanted to provide an education for poor boys whose parents could not afford to pay for their education, so he provided land and a schoolmaster's



Danvers' school/ quarry hospital

house near the south end of Castle Hill. Rents from land known as Parson's Piece were used to pay the schoolmaster £4 per year (about £500 today). The master could be dismissed from his post if he "...should neglect his duties, misbehave or absent himself from the school".

The school educated 12 poor boys – 4 each from the south and north ends of Mountsorrel and from Swithland. These boys began school at 7 or 8 years old and remained for 3 years, during which time they would learn to read, write and perform basic arithmetic. Previously, a village charity called the Town Rents had occasionally paid a schoolmaster 20 shillings per year to teach poor boys and the agreement set down by Sir Joseph stated that the charity must continue to pay this in order for the Mountsorrel boys to be taught. If that wasn't agreed to, then the schoolmaster was only obliged to teach 4 Mountsorrel boys instead of 8. He could also supplement his income by taking in about 30 paying pupils.

The school flourished and was still in operation in 1844 when records show that the school was paid an extra 2 pence per week to teach the children of framework knitters how to seam and sew. We know that in 1846 it was known as the Michael Bunney Free School but by 1851 it was empty. Eventually it was leased to the Mountsorrel Granite Company and converted to a hospital for sick and injured quarrymen. It is now divided into two private houses.

In 1847 the Countess of Lanesborough provided an infant school on Leicester Road. This later became a club for "...the moral and intellectual improvement of the artisan class", known as the Mechanics Institute, before becoming a library and more recently, the Parish Room.

A brief article from the Leicester Mercury dated 31 August 1850 shows that school wasn't just a chance to learn but also to have fun:-

"On Friday 17 August a treat was given to the children of the National School, through the kindness of the inhabitants. Upwards of 80 scholars sat down to tea... upon Broad Hill, where every reasonable indulgence was granted...When tea was over racing, scrambles for nuts etc. and several other innocent games took place.

At dusk, a fire-balloon ascended to a great height, under the management of Mr. S.J.Kirk, the schoolmaster..."



One of the best-documented private schools in the village was Miss Jacques' Academy at 28 Market Place. Shown as one of three academies in Mountsorrel by White's Directory of 1846, it was begun by Lydia Jacques and carried on by several members of her family until 1914 when the house was sold.

A vivid description of life at the school was given by Miss Dorothy Jacques in a Mountsorrel Newsletter article in 1983. She describes the school as comprising a single room with a platform at one end and a small grate for heating at the other. The room had windows down one side but no other lighting at all. Pupils sat on benches at two long desks whilst the teacher sat at a table near the fire. Any water required had to be fetched from a pump in the yard, where there was also an earth closet for the children's use. The yard also served as the playground.

Dorothy Jacques was three when she started at the school and received a good education in the "three Rs" – learning such subjects as times tables, spelling, dictation and composition. Children under 5 paid 6 pence per week and older ones paid 9 pence. A cane stood near the fire-place but this was probably a deterrent rather than a punishment as Miss Jacques couldn't remember it ever being used! On two afternoons a week the pupils went into a small room in the main house for sewing lessons and the singing of traditional songs and hymns. Those who wished could also learn the piano for 6 pence a lesson. The pupils were the children of doctors, clergymen, Granite Company officials and other professional people. Though only a small establishment, it accommodated about 30 boys and girls at any one time. In the photo the school mistress, Miss Sarah Jacques, on the left, was



Jacque's Academy from 30 Market Place, 1970s



Pupils of Jacque's Academy in the garden at 28 Market Place c 1897

assisted by her sister Annie. Prominent Mountsorrel names among the pupils were Ball, Dennis, Harrington, Proudfoot, Scott and Wass

Another sister, Emma was the mistress in a similar school in the village hall in Quorn



Miss Emma Caroline Jacques and pupils-Quorn

In 1811 the grandly-named “Anglican National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in England and Wales” was set up to provide National Schools which were intended to give a basic education to those unable to pay for schooling. Many were situated near the parish Church and were eventually absorbed into the state system in 1944, but still maintained a link with the Church.

It’s not certain when the National School in the village was set up but it was certainly in existence by 1828 when the schoolmaster was William Hubbard. In 1832 there were 60 to 80 children and was still open in 1889. It was situated on Leicester Road, almost opposite the Parish Room, and was demolished in the 1960s.



National school with it’s strange ‘bent wall’

Education in the nineteenth century was a complicated business and Mountsorrel was no exception. At the same time as National Schools were being devised, many small schools were set up locally, as an advert from the Leicester Journal in 1810 shows: “*Mr.J.Goodacre proposes to open a day school in a convenient house near the Market Place for the education of young ladies/gentlemen. Parents and guardians ...may rely on Mr.Goodacre’s best endeavours to guard morals and promote the improvement of young persons committed to his care*”.

The Abstract of Education Returns in 1833 shows that in Mountsorrel there were two daily schools – one with 7 pupils of each sex and the other comprising 23 girls – and all fees were paid by parents. It is not clear which schools these were. There were also two Sunday Schools – one Wesleyan with 82 boys and 104 girls and one Baptist with 33 boys and 29 girls. These were paid for by contributions. Whilst the emphasis in Sunday Schools was on religious studies, they also taught reading, writing and basic arithmetic. They were obviously popular and provided a form of schooling which would otherwise be beyond the reach of many families.

By the second half of the 19th century, serious thought was given by the government to educational improvements. For example, in 1861 it was announced that grants for schools would only be given if pupils reached a required standard in the “3 Rs”. This was intended to stamp out inefficient and inadequate teaching.

The most important parliamentary act in education in this country was the 1870 Elementary Education Act. Government research had shown that two million children had no access to any schooling, so to rectify this, Board Schools were set up and run by elected bodies. These schools were fee-paying but poor parents were exempt from charges. School Boards could make byelaws making school attendance compulsory for 5 to 13 year olds but exempting children over 10 who had reached the expected standard.

An Act of 1876 legally required parents to educate their children. Whilst most people now see the benefits of education, in the 19th century many poorer parents saw it as an unnecessary obstacle to their children getting a job and supplementing the family income. As a compromise, the government allowed children to work as long as they provided their employer with a certificate proving that they had been educated to a specific standard.

The 1870 Education Act initiated the building of Christ Church School on Rothley Road and St.Peter's School on Watling Street – indeed the date 1871 can still be seen on the old St.Peter's School building which has now been converted into flats.

The Acts of 1870 and 1876 finally brought about a standard requirement and opportunity for the education of every child in the country and set in motion the development of education for all, right up to the present day.

Linda Tyman

Mountsorrel Townswomen's Guild

2020 was the 75th Anniversary of the formation of the Mountsorrel Section, but the plan to plant a tree in the peace garden was put on hold due to Covid until this year. Two of our members Jeff Scott and Pat Neal planted the tree a Cotoneaster earlier this month and the official unveiling of the plaque took place on the first of October and was performed by Mrs Connie Nunn the National Trustee of the Guild and was followed by a small reception in the Parish rooms

The first Townswomen's Guild was formed in 1929 in Hayward's Heath, quickly followed by Burnt Oak, Moulsecoomb and Romsey - by the end of the year 26 Guilds had been formed.

Within 12 months federations had been established to enable Guilds in close proximity to know and help each other. The organisation changed its name to the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds (NUTG) and adopted the NUWSS (National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies) colours - red for courage, white for faith and green for hope.

Guilds continued to meet during the war, staging shows and concerts to boost morale. Married women within the NUTG, ineligible for National Service, were encouraged to work in offices, shops and local industries to release men and women for munitions and services. After the war, the NUTG received a grant from the Ministry of Education to develop the movement and strengthen its educational base.

In 1945 the Mountsorrel Branch of the TWG was formed and became one of the largest social groups in the village not only having monthly meetings but forming a drama group in with ladies like Mrs Shuttlewood , Maude Lovett Mrs Leckerbush and Elsie Neal

In 1969 Her Majesty the Queen became Townswomen's Guilds patron for its Jubilee Year followed by HRH The Princess Royal who attended the Golden Anniversary Lunch held at the Savoy. At this time the Mountsorrel Branch was thriving with over 40 members and were very much involved in village activities

Wildlife

Navins Wildflower Meadow

The major job for the year (each year actually!), the scything and hay clearance has been completed and the meadow can now settle down to the coming winter and hopefully cheer us all with a good show of wildflowers in spring 2022. It has clearly been a good year for wildlife on the meadow this year as during scything we found 35 shrew and vole nests and saw a pair of short-tailed voles – unfortunately they were a bit too quick on their feet for us to get a photo! The other thing of note is that the badgers are still using the meadow as there was a badger latrine in the middle.



Ready to scythe



A final rake and hay clearance



Hay drying to allow seed drop

There is one last job we need to complete and that's the sowing of some fresh wildflower seed and planting some corms and a couple of seedlings that we've acquired to add to the growing diversity of the meadow.

There is one more piece of news about the meadow; we have placed a small information board at the bottom corner. We have discussed this over the last few years and always shied away from it; however during the COVID lockdown so many people stopped and asked about it when they saw us working there that we changed our mind. TARMAC very kindly delivered a piece of granite to act as a base. The pupils at Christ Church and St Peter's School did some wildlife illustrations to give the board a bit more "life" and TARMAC provided the board.



Stone being delivered



Stone in place



Board

Once Upon a time in Mountsorrel in October

26th October 1822 Leicester Chronicle

Last week, a heifer three years and a half old, was killed by Mr. Snow, butcher of Mountsorrel, which on being opened, proved to contain five kidneys (two being the usual number, one of which weighed ninety-one pounds, while the hind quarter weighed twenty stone. It was exhibited for public inspection in a stable at the Bull's Head in this town, on Saturday, and was considered a great curiosity.

21st October 1829 Leicester Herald

Early on Sunday morning week, an out house belonging to Mr. Thomas Brierly, of Mountsorrel, was entered and four couple of rabbits were stolen. The owner having suspicion of some well known characters in that town, proceeded to their place of retreat, and found them making the necessary preliminaries for cooking his rabbits, three of which were then bereft of their coats of fur. In consequence of his interruption, Mr Brierly was severely beaten by the thieves. Two of them, named Bishop and Blower, have been committed to the Sessions

31st October 1829 Northampton Mercury

Leicestershire Quarter Sessions: Samuel Bishop, 29 and John Blower, 21, of Mountsorrel, for stealing eight rabbits; Bishop seven years transportation; Blower, four months' imprisonment

Leicestershire Mercury 05 October 1839

George Twigg, William Blower, John Pole and George Chamberlain, four youths of Mountsorrel, were charged with indecently assaulting Eliza Bishop a girl of 14 years of age. The magistrates recommended to arrange the affair without entering into the case and asked the complainant if she would be satisfied if the defendants each paid her a shilling, to which she readily assented

13th October 1832 Leicester Chronicle

Catherine Polkey committed for one month to hard labour, for not finishing some lace veils belonging to Mr. Harris, of Mountsorrel.

Leicester Herald 09 October 1833

Leicester Corporation Commissioners -On Monday the Revising Barristers determined that the distance should in future be measured by the statute mile on the Turnpike Road and not as the crow flies. By this decision Sileby, (a strong hold of radical freemen), Desford, Mountsorrel, and some other towns, will now be cut off from voting for the Borough of Leicester.

Leicester Chronicle 12 October 1839

I'll thank you for my handkerchief – Sarah Barker and Frederick Wells were charged by Diana Corah, all of Mountsorrel, with assaulting her. Diana was in company with the defendants last week in a public house, and having occasion for her pocket handkerchief, to wipe her brow after a hearty meal of beef steaks and porter, asked a lady who sat on that article, to hand it to her, whereat Sarah Barker took umbrage, and told complainant, who was still pushing hard for the steaks, that she was a rumbunctious fractious growler, and ought to be ashamed of herself. This was a signal for a general melee. Diana's cap, with ringlets attached, and two side combs, suffered; as did also, according to his own showing, the nose and mouth of defendant. The important fact of whether the fair Diana recovered her handkerchief in the onslaught, did not transpire. Amid a mass of conflicting evidence, grumbling, and cross looks, the Bench had some difficulty to ascertain who drew the first blood – that is struck the first blow, and recommended the parties to be less truculent after beef steaks, and pay their respective costs.

Leicestershire Mercury 02 October 1841

George Antill, of Mountsorrel, was admonished and ordered to pay the costs, for insulting, with abusive language, Harriet Parsons, his neighbour. The above George Antill was afterwards charged with behaving in a disorderly manner towards Jane Barrs of Mountsorrel. It appeared that the defendant, when leaving the room after the above conviction, made use of threatening language towards the complainant, who is an acquaintance of the previous complainant, and put his fist in her face. He was convicted and ordered to pay the costs.

Leicester Chronicle 21 October 1843

Mountsorrel Dorcas Society – This useful and benevolent society has been established about six years, during which time it has dealt out to destitute females upwards of eleven hundred articles of wearing apparel

NB A Dorcas society is a local group of people, usually based in a church, with a mission of providing clothing to the poor. Dorcas societies are named after Dorcas (also called Tabitha), a person described in the Acts of the Apostles

16th October 1858 Leicestershire Mercury

Mesmerism – Miss Riley, of Leicester, has been entertaining the inhabitants of Mountsorrel for the six nights ending Oct. 9th with her surprising experiments in mesmerism and electro-biology, in a large room at the Black Swan Inn. On Saturday evening, numbers of persons were refused admittance, the room being crowded to suffocation. The most amusing demonstrations of the evening were the mesmeric tea and supper parties, and the attitudes of the subjects under the influence of music. Mr. John Kirk, also gave some curious experiments in animal magnetism. We are informed they intend visiting Mountsorrel again in a short time.

Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 12 October 1833

Wm Neal of Mountsorrel was fined 5s and costs for not assisting Mr Prior, the constable, when charged so to do

Settmakers and Stoneworkers Journal 01 October 1924

On Saturday the Mountsorrel Granite Co. entertained their employees to a garden fete at Kinchley House, the residence of Capt. C.H. Martin.

The company placed at the men's disposal two engines and eight trucks to run from the Town Bridge over Bond



Lane, along by Rothley Plain, between Kinchley Spinney and Bob Hall, by Capt. Martin's ground and onto the Swithland junction.

With the Mountsorrel Town Band in attendance the sports began at 3pm sharp. There were 21 events in all. All the heats and several finals were run before tea, which was served in a large marquee, when between 1500 and 1600 sat down.

Afterwards sports were resumed, which included the married ladies' egg and spoon race. The tug of war was won by J Neal's team, which was invited over from Stoney Stanton. It ended with a victory for Stanton who said, if it had not been for Croft Hill they would have pulled Mountsorrel home, thus saving the bus fare!

Settmakers and Stoneworkers Journal 01 October 1895

Quarryman's National Union – Branch Secretaries

Mountsorrel Branch – W Baum, 17 Concrete Buildings, Mountsorrel

Stamford Mercury 19 October 1832

About fifty children have fallen victim to the smallpox, in the village on Mountsorrel, Leicestershire, within the last two months