



No 49

MHG NEWSLETTER

Talk at the Mountsorrel Memorial Centre at 7.30.

Tuesday 8th February

A virtual walk around Quorn Churchyard, 29th March 2021

Sue Templeman takes us on a (virtual) trip around Quorn St Bartholomew's Churchyard, looking at a variety of gravestones, the characters that are buried there, the old families they belonged to and some of the interesting designs and imagery on the memorials. Find out why there are so many early Mountsorrel burials there too.

Once upon a time in Mountsorrel in February

28th February 1834 – Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties

Barfoot Richardson, of Mountsorrel, butcher, bound in recognizances of £20 to appear at the next sessions, to answer a charge of wilful and corrupt perjury, in his evidence in a beer-case at Quorndon against Moses Stephen Pegg, a common informer.

26 March 1834 Leicester Herald

I Barfoot Richardson, of Mountsorrel, butcher, do acknowledge, that on the 13th of February before the magistrates, I gave evidence on Thomas Hackett of Quorndon, beer seller, for selling beer at a later hour than is allowed by act of parliament which was untrue. And I further acknowledge, that I regret having given my evidence in such a loose and thoughtless manner, and offer this public acknowledgement of my sorrow. And I undertake to pay all expenses which have been incurred in the investigation of my conduct, and also the sum of two pounds to the Leicester Infirmary

Moses Pegg was an infamous informant in the early 1830's. He and his men would look for hawkers without a license, bakers selling underweight loaves, pubs serving ale after 10pm etc and report them to the magistrates. Pegg would present the case but needed a witness such as Richardson. In the above case it appears Richardson lied to the magistrates. He did pay £2 to the pauper lunatic asylum in Leicester

Pegg received a share of the penalties and it appears he also, on occasion, demanded money from offenders not to report them. On one occasion, in court, he said he had cautioned the defendant time after time. The defendant replied "but you say nothing of the seven or eight shillings you had from me time after time"

It was said if you were convicted, you had been 'Pegged.' In 1834 Moses Pegg was convicted of Perjury and he and his cohorts had to leave town.

Pegg was clearly well known and disliked and on more than one occasion was attacked

Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 17 March 1832

Outrageous Assault. - On Saturday last, two men were charged of assaulting Moses Pegg an inspector of hawkers' licenses, at Great Wigston. He tried to take into custody a person named Smith who had been hawking besoms without a license, when the accused and a great number of other persons prevented him doing so, assaulting him in the most outrageous manner by kicking him and throwing stones at him. They then threw him into a ditch and pelted him with sludge.

Leicester Evening Mail - Saturday 23 February 1957

25 YEARS AGO (From the files of The Evening Mail) An elastic webbing manufacturer from Germany, Herr A. Eicher, transported his whole manufacturing equipment to a factory site in Boundary-road. Mountsorrel.

16th February 1856 Leicestershire Mercury

More light at Mountsorrel – The polling for gas-light for the South End of Mountsorrel, took place on Friday and Saturday last, and ended in favour of it by a great majority. It is quite necessary that there was good light in the South End, for during the past week in the hours of darkness, some evil disposed persons have poisoned several of Mr. John Watts' fowls. We hope these foul practices will soon be put a stop to, as Mr. Watts has offered a reward of £5 for the discovery of the perpetrators.

19th February 1858 – Nottingham Journal

James Thornton of Loughborough was charged by the Midland Counties Institution for the Suppression of Climbing Boys, with having on the 20th of January, at Mountsorrel, allowed his son, John Thornton, a boy 14 years of age, to ascend a chimney, in the dwelling house of George Holmes, for the purpose of sweeping the same. Defendant's son was called as a witness for the prosecution, and stated that on the 19th of February his father told him he was going to go to Mountsorrel to sweep four or five chimneys, and to take the machine with him. On the following morning he started before his father was up, without the machine, and swept the chimneys himself. The bench, thinking the evidence insufficient, dismissed the case

Leicester Evening Mail - Tuesday 26 February 1952

FIRE HALTED 25 YARDS FROM H.E.

There might not have been much left of the village of Mountsorrel today. A creeping line of fire was only put out 25 yards from the Mountsorrel Granite Co. powder magazine, in which, it is understood, there were 4,500 lb. of high explosives and detonators. The fire started soon after 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon. A spark from a passing locomotive on the company's private lines set fire to bracken which was bone dry after several rainless weeks. A call to Loughborough fire station sent two engines, under Sub-Officer O. Faulkner to the spot. It took nearly three hours before the fire was put out, leaving the powder magazine untouched.

Daily News (London) - Thursday 21 February 1952

When the omnipotent Marmelukes who control my destiny ordered me to go to Loughborough and write a piece about that eager and exciting little town they asked me to say nothing about the bells.

I came into the old town by way of Mountsorrel— which looks for all the world like a chunk of the Cairngorms that some prehistoric giant had flung into the middle of England, and the clean windbitten little town of Quorndon, which is in the very heart of hunting country. Foxopolis as you might say.

Leicester Daily Mercury - Tuesday 15 February 1955

A family lost all their clothes except those they stood up in this morning when fire broke out in airing room at the Hill Top Café. The outbreak started when a line snapped and dropped onto a paraffin stove in the airing room Within minute whole room was ablaze. Mr M Adcock smelled smoke, opened the door to the airing room and was driven back by flames Mechanics and workmen at the adjacent Hill Top garage helped tackle the blaze with a foam extinguishing unit until the Loughborough Fire Brigade arrived. "Every stitch we had was in that room" Mrs Adcock glumly "Coats trousers underwear nightwear- we keep them all in the airing room We haven't a change of clothing now" The cafe is in an isolated position on the main Leicester Road on the Rothley side of Mountsorrel. Mr and Mrs Adcock have no neighbours who could help them in their plight three hundred pounds wouldn't cover our loss" sighed Mrs Adcock "I don't know what we shall do I shall have to go shopping this afternoon that's certain"

Leicester Daily Mercury - Friday 04 February 1955

RAILWAY INN MOUNTSORREL- NON STOP DANCING- SUPER COLOURED LIGHTING

Saturday and Sunday evening

Leicester Evening Mail - Saturday 11 February 1956

£1660 needed at Mountsorrel

Mountsorrel Parish Council last night recommended estimates for the forthcoming year for the general account -£510, burial £400, lighting and watching £750, making a total of 1s. 1d. rate in the pound This is a reduction of 11d. on the preceding year, due to the fact that a penny rate in the parish now produces £129 18s 3d against the previous sum of £69 7s. 4d.

A Wartime Village Shop

The present-day chemist's shop, 99 Rothley Road, was from 1912 a thriving grocery and greengrocery. Frank Burton and his wife Phyllis took over the shop which also became their family home together with their daughter Margaret. When they moved in, the house had no electricity or central heating and was lit by gas-light.

The garden, which stretched down to the mobile home site off Linkfield Road, was ideal for growing fruit and vegetables sold in the shop. Frank also grew flowers and Margaret remembers workers from nearby factories calling in the shop to order flowers on a Friday lunchtime which they would then collect on the way home from work to take home to their wives.

As Frank was serving in the Army during the war, the hard work of running the shop fell to Phyllis. Back then there was no self-service – customers had to queue to be served by the shop assistant but this was not as frustrating as we might imagine as those waiting to be served often took this as an opportunity to exchange news and gossip!

Many items came in large containers and had to be weighed out according to the customers' requirements. Sugar was weighed out into 1lb or 2lb blue bags and lard and margarine were cut off large blocks and wrapped in paper. Vinegar was sold from a barrel and customers had to bring their own container. If you wanted golden syrup you brought your own jar to put it in. Cheese and bacon were cut by hand and wrapped in greaseproof paper. Dried peas, pearl barley and lentils were weighed out into paper bags. Flour was available in fabric bags but as these were quite soft, they could be washed out and used as handkerchiefs, this being the time before paper tissues were in widespread use.

Food shortages during the war meant rationing. Each time a customer bought rationed goods, a coupon was taken out of the book and then the shopkeeper had to count up all the coupons and make them tally with goods sold before more provisions could be obtained from the wholesaler. As there were no calculators or automated tills, items had to be added up by the shopkeeper and to help with this many had a "ready reckoner" which was a book of tables enabling calculations to be made.

The Burtons sold a range of Lyon's cakes – cup-cakes, fruit pies, Swiss rolls and slab cake, amongst others. Lemonade was available in glass bottles which you were charged 3 pence for. This was refunded if you brought back the empty bottle and many enterprising children would collect empty bottles to return to shops for a bit of extra pocket money.

Frank and Phyllis kept hens and sold the eggs in the shop. If there was a surplus of eggs, Phyllis would make a bucket of "water glass" – a clear liquid which after a while looked like wallpaper paste. Eggs would keep in this for 6 months or more and were sold in paper bags, before Frank switched to cardboard egg-boxes in the 1950s. Each Thursday night, Phyllis would put dried peas in a bowl of boiling water and sell them on Friday for people to eat with their fish and chips.

In a shop there was always the problem of mice and the ones in the Burtons' shop seemed to prefer eating unwrapped Lifebuoy soap and chocolate to cheese!

As many people made their own clothes and soft furnishings, the shop stocked buttons, thread, elastic, press-studs and many other haberdashery items.

The shop was open from 9 till 6 Monday to Saturday, with half-day closing on Wednesday, though some customers ignored the official opening times and went through the side-gate to knock on the kitchen door if they needed something! Shopping was also delivered and this was done by a carrier bicycle with a large basket on the front. The word "Mountsorrel" on the bike was blocked out in case the Germans invaded and wanted to know which village they were in!

Sweets were rationed during the war and were the last item to come off rationing but when this happened, so many sweets were bought that there was again a shortage and rationing had to be re-introduced.

Frank and Phyllis sold the shop in 1961.

Linda Tyman (With thanks to Margaret Manning, nee Burton for providing the material for this article).



Mountsorrel Schools

Prior to 1870, when the Forster Education Act was introduced, there were a number of schools in Mountsorrel. The earliest we know of was on Castle Hill where the headmaster James Freeman was supported with twenty shillings a year from a charity called the Mountsorrel Town Rents. This school was taken over in 1746 by Joseph Danvers and was known as the free school or the endowed school. Other schools were the National school and the Infants school on Leicester Road and Jacques Academy in Market Place. In the 1840's there was a boarding school run by William Welby and a school for young ladies run by Miss Welby. Several other private schools appeared briefly during the first half of the 1800s. For example in 1833 there were two schools, one with 14 pupils the other with 23. In contrast the Wesleyan Sunday school had 186 pupils and the Baptist Sunday school 62 pupils.

Except for Jacques Academy they had all gone by around 1870 to be replaced by Saint Peter's, in the north end, and Christ Church in the south end.

Christ Church school was opened on January 16th 1871 in what was a Sunday School building dating back to 1840's. St Peter's school didn't open until 2nd August 1875 as a new school had to be built in Watling Street [although the date tablet on the school says 1871]

Mountsorrel (South) Church of England School known locally as Christchurch

Initially Christchurch seems to have been a family affair. The headmaster was John Glanville. His wife Caroline was in charge of girls' needlework and his son Frank assisted but was not engaged. The school was governed by a committee of twelve, the chairman was the Rev Edward Gillsonville. Ninety children were enrolled on the first day

Examples of what was recorded during 1871 in the logbook are given below:

Jan 18 Only 7 children with copy books for the writing lesson

Jan 28 The Granite Co agreed to pay 1d per week for each child of their employees

March 18 3 boys punished, 1 strike

April 3 126 names on the register, several missing as children engaged in outside work or extra work in winding

May 15 Several boys cow keeping

May 23 Only 61% am as regiment of soldiers passed through the town

June 19 Several children absent because crier warned inhabitants of a mad dog

June 30 Thin attendance children working in hay field

Aug 18 School to be closed 3 weeks during the harvest

Sept 11 School reopened 67 in attendance, still harvesting

Nov 6 Average attendance since commencement 88

Dec 7 Amos Freer punished 2 stripes on hand

Dec 22 School closed

Grammar, numeration, music, geography, ornamental writing, dictation-initially on paper and slates, later all on paper, metric system, bible, notation, arithmetic and reading were lessons recorded in the log book

In 1917 the two schools were amalgamated. Christchurch became the junior school and St Peter's the senior school.



Staff and Pupil Teachers Christ Church School
1895



Christchurch School c 1914

Wildlife

Avian Flu

I suspect we have all received the letter from DEFRA about the Avian Flu outbreak in the local area and having now seen a swan suffering with it at Watermead (and it does seem to particularly attack waterfowl) we thought it worthwhile to repeat the DEFRA advice:

“If you find dead wild waterfowl (swans, geese or ducks) or other dead wild birds, such as gulls or birds of prey, you should report them to the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77). Do not touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds that you find.”

Birdlife

It has been particularly quiet this winter for birds and with the mild days this last week some seem to think it's time to make a start on nesting with the Crows and Magpies flying in with nesting twigs ready for an early start. We are still low on numbers of winter migrants in the village although there are reports of good numbers of Redwings, Fieldfares and Bramblings elsewhere locally.

Down on Swithland Reservoir the Bewick Swans have again Passed through but don't hang around there are though reports of Scaup (think of a beefier Tufted Duck without the tuft), a red-listed duck that overwinters around Britain in small numbers having flown in from Scandinavia and northern Russia.



Scaup

Wildflower Meadow

The Meadow is slowly coming out of winter hibernation with the first Winter Aconites starting to flower and two small lonely Snowdrops



Lonely Snowdrop



Wildflower Meadow 31st Jan 2021 – Winter Aconites