



No 51

# MHG NEWSLETTER

Talk at the Mountsorrel Memorial Centre at 7.30.

Tuesday 12th April

## 'Loughborough Carillon Tower'

by

Mel Gould

Mel is Chair of the trust that manages the building, he will explain its uniqueness, its provenance and its history

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## Wildlife

### Navins Wildflower Meadow

Spring flowers on the meadow are starting to really pick up despite the rough weather at the end of March. Although the Snowdrops have gone over and the Celandines are nearly finished, the Primroses and Cowslips are putting on a good show with what looks like a lot more to come. A group of three Fritillaries have also recently appeared

We are planning to scythe back the Cow Parsley on the south-west corner as it is starting to become a bit invasive.



### Birds

The Chiffchaffs are back on Broad Hill and were in full-throat last week, hopefully the other spring Warblers will be following them. Further afield the Ospreys are back at Rutland Water, the first bird arriving on 15th March and the first egg of the season was laid on 1st April.

There's regular coverage on the dedicated Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/RutlandOspreyProject/>

## Broad Hill

As you walk past 'Albert' stop for a moment, lean on the fence, look over what was once Broad Hill and wonder what it might have told you about Mountsorrel's past. It was quarried away in the eighteen and nineteen hundreds, used as a landfill and then topped with overburden from the Buddon Wood quarry.

But during the eighteen hundreds several discoveries give us a glimpse of what might have been on Broad Hill in the centuries before the existence of Mountsorrel



**Broad Hill**



**Albert**

In 1990 R. F. Hartley produced some notes suggesting a small museum could be created in Mountsorrel to display the artefacts [below] that were discovered as Broad Hill was quarried away.

April 1859	An "Incense cup" or Pygmy cup
1874	A "Javelin head"
1874	The Windmill removed
1879	A stone burial chamber found
June 1881	A second chamber, plastered and painted inside
1882	Lower stone of a rotary quern
July 1887	Another Pygmy cup, with lugs
February 1892	A Well, containing pottery, bones, and two buckets
Summer 1892	Tiles, Roman pottery and a shale counter dug up by Brother Lyons of Ratcliffe College
1892	Four pottery loom-weights
March 1894	A very large Collared Urn

## Roman and Bronze Age Burials on Broad Hill

### THE COLLARED URN

In the early to mid part of the Bronze Age [ *three and a half to four and a half thousand years ago*] the dead were often cremated and placed in collared urns, many having been found buried upside-down. They were usually placed in a small pit, which was then covered with a mound, or barrow. In the case of the Mountsorrel urn, there is no evidence either for the contents of the urn, or for any pit or barrow associated with it.

They are found widely spread across the British Isles. Twenty five [in 1990] were known from Leicestershire and Rutland, the Mountsorrel example being the largest. While the pot was still soft, it was decorated by pressing objects into the surface. In this case the potter used a twisted cord, and the end of a stick or bone. When the pot had dried naturally for a few hours, and was "leather hard" the surface was polished or "burnished" to make it smooth. The pot was then fired in a bonfire.



Collared Urn [ discovered March 1894]

### THE PYGMY CUPS

These vessels are generally called pygmy cups simply because of their small size. They have also been called biconical cups because of their shape, incense cups because of what they may have been used for and Aldbourne cups after one which was found in a bronze age burial barrow in Aldbourne. They are often found in Bronze Age burials and so maybe they were used as incense burners in the burial ceremony.

The one found on the summit of Broad Hill in April 1859 dates from the same period as the collared urn, is well made and finely decorated. If you look closely at the image you can see it has two small holes drilled through the side of the pot. These would have admitted air- if it was an incense burner.

The decoration on the pot was done before it was fired. The geometrical pattern was made by pressing cord into the soft clay, and the dots may have been made with the point of a feather. The two holes which penetrate the pot are hidden in the pattern of dots around the widest part of the pot.



Pygmy Cup [discovered April 1859]

A second small Early Bronze Age vessel was discovered on the Hill in 1882. It is rather crudely made, and has clearly cracked during firing and differs greatly from the first. There are no perforations in the body of the pot, but it has four small pierced lugs [difficult to see in the images]. Similar vessels with lugs, again found in Bronze Age burials, are known as Yorkshire Vases. Such vases are part of a group of pots known as " Food Vessels " because their shape seems well suited to holding solid foods.



Pygmy Cup discovered 1879



### THE BURIAL CHAMBER

This small chamber was discovered in 1879. It was a rectangular structure whose sides, end, and top were composed of large flat stone slabs. The width was three feet, the height about two feet and the length about 6-8 feet. The stones are not Mount Sorrel granite, nor the local Swithland slate, but appear to be limestone or sandstone. The structure contained bones, and was clearly a burial chamber. It has been generally assumed to be Roman, because of the other Roman finds nearby, but could well date from another period.



## ROMAN BUILDINGS

### THE PLASTERED CHAMBER

On the 15th of June 1881, workmen clearing away surface soil to lay bare the granite, found a small chamber just below the turf. It was 50 yards from the top of the hill and about 12 yards away from the burial chamber.

As with the well found some years later, there are two published descriptions of this chamber, and they differ in some details. One description is by Baron Von Hugel, but he is reporting it at second hand from Mr. W H Macaulay, of Kings College, Cambridge. The other description is anonymous and appears in the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological & Historical Society. Both accounts agree that it was a roughly rectangular chamber, about 8ft by 7 ft. with walls of granite 3ft. thick and plastered on the inside with a painted decoration. The walls survived up to a height of 4 ft., suggesting that the floor was 4 or 5 ft. below the Victorian ground surface. On the floor of the chamber were Swithland slates, bones, parts of stag's antlers, broken pottery, tiles, pieces of plaster from the walls and a small iron arrowhead.

The descriptions of the painted decoration on the wall plaster are detailed but conflicting, but appears to have been horizontal band of red and black and a design in red described as looking like the arms of an octopus.

The chamber may have been the basement or cellar room of a Roman building. It was clearly too small to have been a living room, but might have served as a store room, or might possibly have had some religious purpose. Samples of pottery, flue tile, plaster, and diamond-shaped slates associated with this site were donated to the Leicestershire Museums Service in 1978 by Lord Lanesborough.



Roman Samian Ware

## MOUNTSORRELBUCKET

The bronze-mounted bucket found in the well is no ordinary bucket.

Although it is Roman in date, its decorations can be traced back to the pre-Roman Iron Age. The bull's head mounts which join the bucket to the handle is of particular interest. In recent years, with increased 'metal detecting' many similar mounts of Roman or Iron Age date have been found. The majority are bovine forms.



Similar buckets found in Britain are usually associated with rich burials. But the Mountsorrel Bucket was found in a well together with another basic wooden bucket. Could such elaborate object be used simply for drawing water or was it connected with the other burial artefacts found close by?

Also found in the well were a number of animal bones including cattle skulls all of which bore marks of being pole axed.

The bucket is stave-built, being made of carefully shaped planks closed tightly together by the three bronze bands. The original timbers were thought by Von Hugel to be pine but since these were too badly decayed to be saved when the bucket was found, it had to be rebuilt. The present reconstruction was made in 1978, using modern pine. The principle of construction is similar to that of a wooden beer-barrel. In use, the wooden staves swell slightly with the moisture and form a perfect seal as long as they are not allowed to become too dry.



The bronze mountings could tell a story in themselves. Bronze is made by carefully melting together copper and tin, or arsenic, sometimes with a little lead added. None of these ingredients was likely to have been found in Leicestershire. Cornwall was the main area in Britain where the ores of tin and arsenic were mined, so either the raw materials or the finished product must have travelled at least that far.

## THE OAK BUCKET

A second bucket was found at the bottom of the well, but the construction of this one was different. It was made by carving out the inside of a section of tree-trunk, in a way similar to making a dug-out canoe. This required a wood which was strong and would not crack, so oak was used.

## THE QUERN STONE

This is the bottom stone of a rotary corn grinder, and is apparently made from Millstone Grit from Derbyshire. The form of the quern suggests the early Roman period.

Querns are useful finds for archaeologists, since they point directly to past domestic activities, and their weight means they are unlikely to have moved far from where they were used.

## THE POTTERY LOOMWEIGHTS

Four loomweights were presented to Leicester Museum in 1898 having been found on Broad Hill. They add a further interest to the archaeological story, since they appear on the basis of their shape to date from the Anglo-Saxon period. They were used on a vertical weaving loom to hold the vertical threads taut. A circular weight is normally associated with Anglo-Saxon settlement sites. Based on their shape, two of the Mountsorrel loom weights have been dated to the 7th and 8th Centuries, while the other two to the 9th Century or later. Unfortunately there is no information about the circumstances of finding these objects, or whether they were found together.



So we are left with the possibility of Saxon occupation on the Hill, although these appear to be the only finds from this period.

Mountsorrel did not come into existence until the twelfth century. The first recorded mention is around 1248 in a charter between the Earls of Leicester and Chester, and there is no mention of Mountsorrel in the Domesday Book of 1086.

However the finds on Broad Hill tell us there was a presence here some four thousand years before that, from the Bronze Age through to the Saxon period.



## Once upon a Time in Mountsorrel in March

**Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 29 April 1950**

There was a man sat all forlorn,  
Because he had been born at Quorn,  
Said I to him, "Don't quarrel,  
It might have been a d—n sight worse,  
It might have been Mountsorrel

Mountsorrel is a stormy place, pretty Quorn is sandy  
Sibley is the devil's hole, and Barrow is dandy

**Leicester Evening Mail - Wednesday 10 January 1951**

A hundred feet above Mountsorrel almost hanging over the houses stands a memorial for the 1914 -18 dead made in local granite. Mountsorrel was once a busy market town but nowadays its wares are the red and grey granite that lies in the slopes **Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 12 April 1845**

On Thursday, the above village was thrown into some degree of excitement. It was reported 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 inquiry, 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 anyone. He took the train at Sibley Station for London, by the penny-a-mile train, and it is supposed he is gone to America.



**Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 13 April 1844**

John Antill, charged William Smith, both of Loughborough, with committing an indecent assault upon the wife of the former, raising her petticoats on the road from Mountsorrel. Fined 20s. and costs, or two months' imprisonment.

**Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 29 April 1843**

Fatal Accident. —On Friday last, serious accident occurred at a stone quarry, near Mountsorrel. man named Thomas Hughes, of Rothley, had been letting off a blast which, it appears did not blow up the stone as it was intended to do, he therefore went and proceeded to fill a crevice in the rock with the gunpowder, from a large canister which he held in his hand, containing not less than eight or nine pounds, when an explosion took place, and he was blown considerable height the air, his body was found enveloped in flames, his head and one arm being separated from it. His head was afterwards found by Mr. C. Harrold, in an adjoining field, about ninety yards from the quarry. Four other men were seriously injured, some of them being blown to greater distance than Hughes, but not high. We understand they are now recovering. An inquest was held the following day on the body of Hughes, before J. Gregory, Esq., when a verdict of " Accidental death" was returned.

**Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 04 April 1846**

James Jarvis, aged 75, was charged with refusing to work at employment "suited to his age and capacity," in the Barrow- upon Soar Union House. From the evidence of the Porter, it appeared the old man was ordered to work at pumping water, and he refused, for which he was put on a refractory diet, but still refused to pump. Mr. Acworth, who is one of the Guardians, said the case was laid before the Board, and he and the other Guardians thought it was a case which should be brought to the Bench. A certificate from the medical officer, to the effect that Jarvis was able to pump water, and do other light work, was put in. The old man said the work had done him harm. Committed for 21 days' hard labour.

**Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties - Friday 07 April 1846**

We learn, upon good authority, that Mr Thomas Shuttlewood has resigned the office of porter to the union workhouse at Mountsorrell, on consequence of his being unable, conscientiously, to perform the duties required of him in that situation, especially that part requiring him to put the working men upon refractory diet (bread and water), for not performing the task appointed them by the board, which many of them are unable to do, account of infirmity and want of a sufficient quantity of strengthening food

**Leicester Chronicle - Saturday 04 April 1953**

MOUNTSORREL parish meeting was told by a parishioner that the local policeman was knocked from his bicycle by a rat as big as a rabbit. The meeting heard other complaints of the rat menace at Mountsorrel.

**Leicester Evening Mail - Tuesday 18 April 1944**

Rothley Bed Fund A dance arranged by the Rothley Infirmary Committee was held in the village hall in aid of the bed fund. The annual waltz competition for the Infirmary Cup was won by Mr. B. Mee and Miss Ella Dodge of Mountsorrel.

**Leicester Evening Mail - Saturday 20 April 1940**

MISS GEORGINA COOKSON was the judge in the Mountsorrel carnival queen competition at the Working Men's Club last night. She is seen in the centre of the picture, with the new queen, Miss Esman Underwood (right) and Miss Elsie Lovett, the retiring queen



**Carnival Queens**

**Settmakers' and Stoneworkers' Journal - Sunday 01 April 1900**

A society, to be known as "The Mountsorrel Settmakers' Friendly Society," has been formed here, and a large number of members have been enrolled. The entrance fee is 1s., and the weekly contribution for sick benefit is 4d. Sick members receive 8s. per week for the first ten weeks, and 4s. per week for the next ten weeks. After the end of each year the surplus money, except 1s. per member, will be divided amongst the members. One of the rules is that members must be in good standing with the Union before they can receive benefit. Stephen Baum, Samuel Holmes, Arthur Baum, jun., and Herbert Snow, settmakers, have joined this Branch.