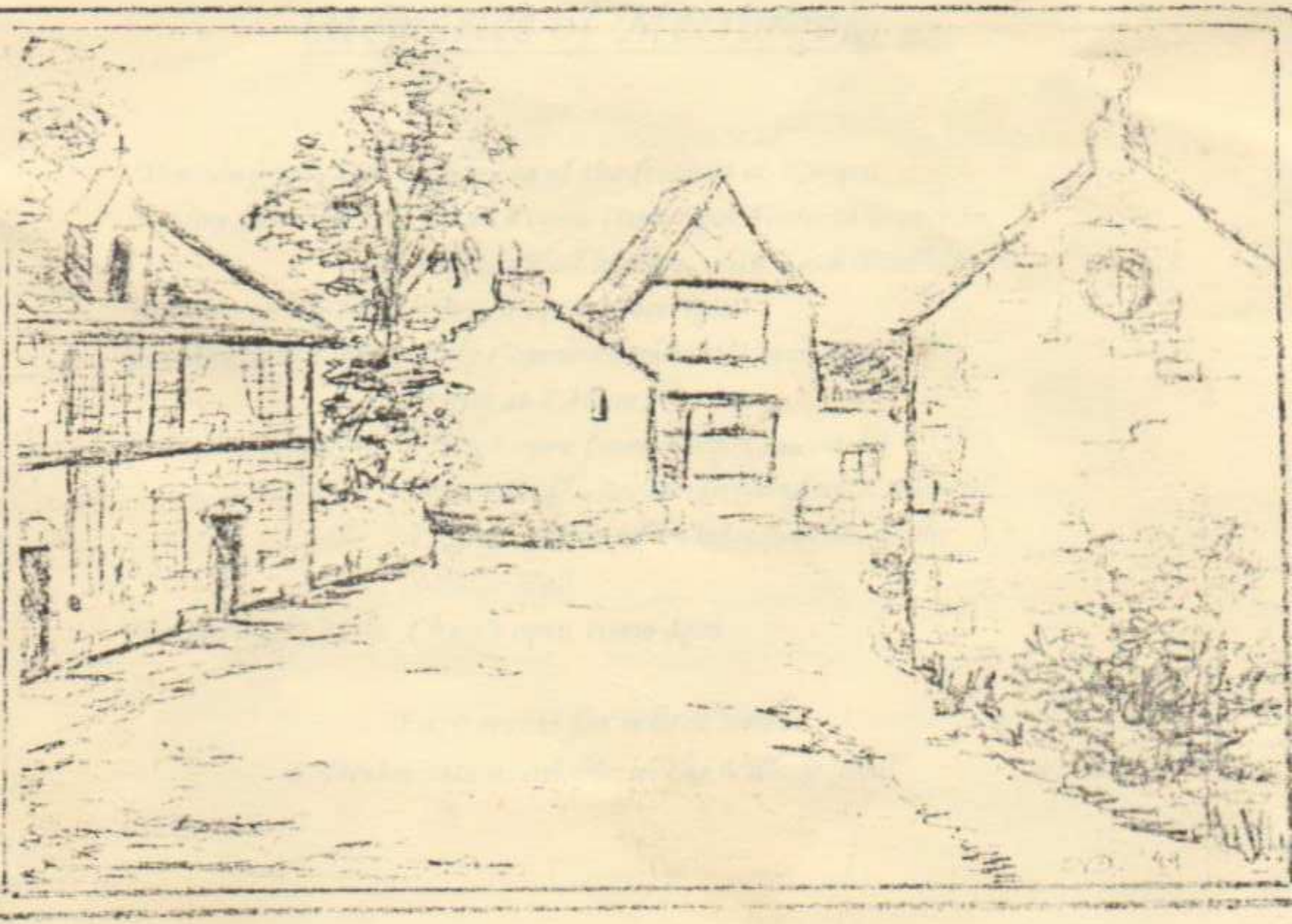
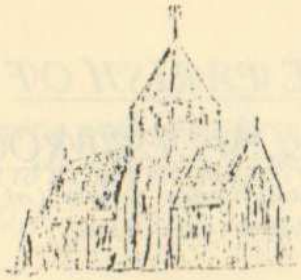
ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH
MEERBROOK.

1999 FLOWER FESTIVAL

MEMORIES OF MEERBROOK.





Flower Festival

Friday July 9th

to

Tuesday July 13th

Memories of Meerbrook.

Thursday July 8th:	Blessing of the festival at 7.30pm.
Friday July 9th:	Church open 10am-9pm Festival Dance in Village Hall at 8pm. with Kath Bradbury.
Saturday July 10th:	Church open 10am-9pm
Sunday July 11th:	Holy Communion at 11.15am. Songs of Praise at 7.30pm
Monday July 12th:	Church open from 10am. Concert by North Staffs Accordian Band at 7.30pm in Church, followed by refreshments in the Village Hall.
Tuesday July 13th:	Church open 10am-8pm.

Easy access for wheelchairs

Refreshments available in the Village Hall

THE PARISH OF
LEEK & MEERBROOK.

Fr. Philip Gray All saints' Vicarage, Compton, Leek, ST13 5PT
Telephone : 01538 382588

May I welcome you on behalf of all at St. Matthew's Meerbrook to our 1999 Flower Festival. Our theme this year is " Memories of Meerbrook ".

In this flower of colour and grace from God's creation we share something of what it means to be co - creators with the one who gives us all life and beauty. Through the creativity and work of those who have freely given their time to make this event possible, we share in a unique way in that vitality and glory given to us by God. We are rightly thankful both to them and to him.

My own memories of Meerbrook are somewhat thin, in that this is only my third year in the village. However, one of the items which will catch your eye is the story of the Balloon which fell on Gun in May 1826, and caused local working men some fright!. When they finally had the courage to go to the Balloon they found nothing in it other than a bottle of wine, a few biscuits and a compass. However a week later the shaken owner did find the courage to reclaim his property bearing merely a dislocated shoulder.

The curious coincidence is that the Balloon set of from Beverley in Yorkshire, close to my own home, and where I attended school. You may be pleased to know that I didn't crash land in Meerbrook by Balloon, though at my very first wedding here I did arrive by helicopter!.

Do enjoy your time with us, take joy in rural Staffordshire, admire this fine Church built by Norman Shaw and decorated to it's finest, and indulge in the generous hospitality of the people of Meerbrook.

Yours faithfully

Philip C Gray.

FOUNTAIN INN.

One of the properties to be knocked down when the reservoir was built was The Fountain Inn. On the day John Naden was hanged on Gun, August 31st 1731, the public house sold out of beer, the Landlord remarking that " He wished a man was hung every day ". There was a great fire on Gun in 1855 where the gate post and stop post made from the gibbet were destroyed.

THE SUNDIAL

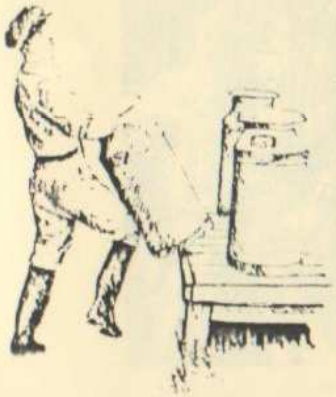
The original brass dial dated 1673 has long since disappeared. It was replaced in the 1990's.

THE VILLAGE HALL.

Originally the Public Room and opened in 1908 by public subscriptions of £1. each, it was a wooden construction. In 1931 it became known as the Primrose Room and as the Village Hall since 1953. It was rebuilt in stone in 1988 and has since been enlarged. Whist drives, Bingo, Dances, Meetings, Private Parties, Recreational classes, Antique Fairs and Auctions are all held there.

THE DAIRY.

An important past of every farm and small holding, with a cheese press, butter churn and separater, where the farmers wife or daughter made butter and cheese to take to market.



BLACKSMITH.

Another property to be lost to the village when the reservoir was built was the Blacksmith's Forge. The Blacksmith was in great demand when horses worked in the fields and took produce to weekly markets.

FARMHOUSE KITCHEN.

A coal burning grate to heat water and to cook meals; oil lamps; a scrubbed white wood table; rocking chair; dolly peg and tub; fender; clothes-maid and rack; pegged rugs and an old grand father clock. Some of the things in the Farmhouse living kitchen.

COBBLER.

In 1834 there were 3 Boot Makers and 4 in 1851. In several cottages could be found a cobbler. The most recent was at Lock Gate where clogs repaired and awaiting repair hung on the wall. Pieces of leather varying thickness, sharp knives, polish and stains and a last were the tools of his trade.

THE VILLAGE COBBLER

THE HAYFIELD.

Reminiscent of hot summer days and meadows full of wild flowers and tall grasses - poppies, cornflowers, corncockles, periwinkles, self heal, betony and many more, is the hayfield, when the hay was cut by scythes and gathered into stooks. When farm workers rested under hedgerows to eat their dinner brought to them by the farmers wife and daughters, homemade bread and cheese, pies jugs of tea and bottles of homemade brewed beer.

1745 BONNIE PRINCE CHARLIE ON GUN.

On Tuesday, December 3rd 1745, the young pretender and his troops came over Gun from Swythamley, over Hillswood and into Leek. Charles dressed in Tartan silk and red velvet, an imposing figure shared the hardships of the march with his men. Some of the things left behind in the area include a lockabar axe - head inlaid with brass, a huge knife and fork and a leather wallet. At New Grange, a Mr Mountfort buried 48 bottles full of homebrewed ale in a heap of manure in the farmyard to hide them from the insurgents. Made of stone and 8 inches high, they were inscribed " SACK" 1640.

EDWARD ASH.

One of the craftsmen employed in the alterations of St. Matthew's was Edward Ash, a local man. He carved the font and pulpit and several headstones in the Churchyard.
He was born on March 23rd 1848 at Titteswortb Farm and married Ester Jane Beswick from Flash He was a pupil and nephew of Richard Hassell. He and his son, William, were in business as Architectural and Monumental carvers in Leek Road Buxton.

NEW POOL.

Built in 1858, the picturesque, half timbered keepers cottage was demolished along with the dam in the 1960's when the reservoir was extended. The pool was constructed to enable mill owners in the Leek area to extract water from the Churnet for their silk dying.

VILLAGE WELL.

Other than bore holes and wells of the farms, the well was the only means of drinking water for the villages until mains water was laid on in the 1970's. Situated by the side of the road, through a door and down stone steps, it was unsuitable for a well dressing ceremony.

METHODIST CHAPEL.

Meerbrook Chapel was built in 1862 being an outgrowth of the Methodist Society which met for worship from 1848 at Roch Grange, the home of Mr William's H. Lomas. Largely through the influence and generosity of Mr Lomas the Chapel was built, and the services were held there in the evening and continued at the Grange in the afternoon. The Methodist Society at Meerbrook continued to be healthy and active due largely to Mr Lomas's son (also Williams), Mr Alfred Hine and Mr T. Buxton and their sons, who also became local preachers.

DIEU-LE-CRES AND ST. MATTHEW'S.

Situated by the Churnet on the Leek side of Hillswood, the Abbey was founded by the Earl of Chester in 1214. The Church in Meerbrook was built about 1537 as an outlying chapel to the Abbey. Lay brothers worked three farms in the area, New Grange, Roche Grange, and Swythamley Grange. The Church was altered over the years and in 1873 was enlarged and almost rebuilt. The original square tower at the west end was removed only after the new tower was built. It was closed for about six months and re-opened on November 8th 1873. The architect was Richard Norman Shaw. Among the benefactors was Miss Elizabeth Condlyffe of Leek, the Chancel and Tower being built as a family memorial. Her grave is to the left of the church porch, a stone monument with a draped urn.

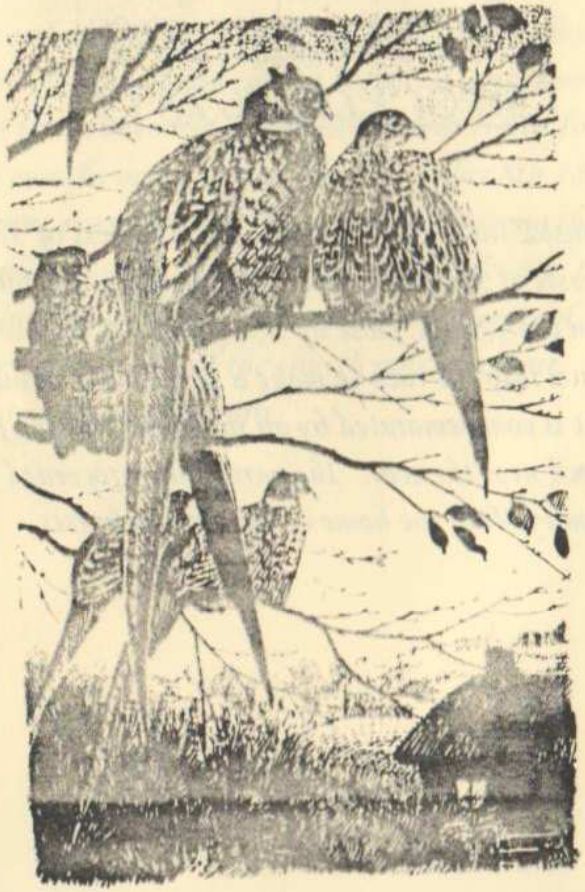
SCHOOL ROOM.

The Village School was built in 1790 and opened in 1795 as an endowed School. It was enlarged in 1872. In 1836 it was a free School for 90 children with an average attendance of 63. On summer days the scholars carried their desks across the road and had their lessons under the trees. It was closed when the reservoir was built.

ROCHES AND THE BROCKLEHURSTS.

On August 23rd 1872, the Duke and Duchess of Teck, were guests of Mr Philip Brocklehurst (later sir) for a picnic on the Roches, close by Rock Hall. A hollow had been hewn into the rock to make a seat for the Princess The visit is commemorated by an inscription in the face of the rock near the seat. The party then proceeded to Swythamley Hall, the home of the Brocklehursts.

Lieutenant Courtney Brockflehurst kept a private zoo at Roches House including Bison and Wallabies. On the outbreak of World War One, he released them to roam over the Roches. A fleeting glimpse of a Wallaby may still be seen.
Richard Hassell, a talented sculptor was born in 1831 at Pheasants Clough Farm, just below the Roches. In the Churchyard is the headstone " The Recording Angel " which he carved for his fathers grave.



POST OFFICE.

The post office opened in 1908 in the cottage opposite the school. It was there for many years, then transferred to Lea Cottage. During the war it was in the School House which is the reason for the Post Box being located there. Then back to its original site until its closure.

WATERHOUSE FARM.

Another farm to be demolished was Waterhouse which was situated on the north side of the viaduct. It housed a water- mill where many years ago farmers brought their corn to be ground. The farmyard is now under a feet of water.

THE BALLOON ON GUN.

For details of this see the account in the foreword written by Father Philip Gray.

words by Mary Breeze.

Thankyou for coming to
our Flower Festival

We hope you have had an
enjoyable visit here at St. Matthews.
&
Thankyou for your support.