

A Mow Cop Diary, 1969

I have before me two tiny notebooks in which, many years ago, I made notes about local history and kept a diary of current events in the hilltop village of Mow Cop. At the risk of exposing my former self, aged fourteen and three-quarters when it begins, to not a little ridicule, I transcribe this curious diary below. It reflects, of course, events in only part of the large village that sprawls over the top of this prominent mountain on the Cheshire-Staffordshire border, chiefly the area around Primitive Street where I lived. I also kept a keen watching brief on the Castle Banks, the summit of the hill, where most Sundays during the summer I went to observe (and make notes about) the busy mixture of tourists visiting the scenic hilltop, owned by the National Trust, and religious revivalists holding open-air services there.

In some respects such a diary has no objective meaning – it is a snatch of routine existence where, through the combined effects of a youthful eye and the diarist's inevitable enlargement of the trivial, events of no historical importance whatever seem exaggerated into momentous or exciting happenings. But perhaps there are also insights into matters of more lasting interest. A Pentecostal religious revival was one of the characteristic features of Mow Cop during the 1960s, taking some of its inspiration and not a little of its gusto from the place's historic tradition as a centre of nonconformity and the birthplace of Primitive Methodism and the English camp meeting movement. The Mow Cop Pentecostal movement and its Sunday open-air meetings were in their heyday at the time of this diary; and pointless as the logging of how many were gathered and how many cars they'd come in (and where they were parked) and whether or not they used a loud speaker may seem, there is an underlying sense of something unusual and interesting going on, which it was.

Even the diary's seemingly sillier preoccupations, like counting the number of cars that invaded the narrow lanes and streets of the village on certain occasions, illuminate in their naive way broad trends in the social history of the times. It is easy to forget – in fact, I feel sure that we have already forgotten – the novelty of traffic and especially of parked cars in a world so relatively free of them. Even as recently as the close of the 1960s, only a handful of people in and around Primitive Street owned a car at all; the hillside roads were empty – or when they suddenly weren't, something noteworthy was happening. Nor did more than a few people have telephones. The news that someone came to a neighbour's house to use their telephone in a crisis, or that by virtue of having one my father represented the whole street, are snippets of an already extinct and forgotten lifestyle.

Electricity and weather are the other dominant themes. Whether or not they loomed as large in the life of Mow Cop as the diary implies, there

is no disguising my own fascination and excitement at power cuts and adverse weather conditions. In particular I adored snow. I can't really explain it. It was not the thrill of a small child, wishing to throw snowballs or build snowmen, but an awe at something that was still capable of reducing twentieth-century existence to a kind of primitive battle against the elements. It seemed somehow like a weighty historical event, whenever it snowed. I felt – I remember feeling – that even the slightest shower of the stuff should not go unrecorded, even if it happened while I slept (December 4th & 5th). It was also mesmerisingly beautiful; while snow-ploughs and gritting trucks were bold and exciting and yellow. They were like tanks coming to liberate us. Obviously, in a village on top of a steep mountain, snowfalls affected us more than our low-lying neighbours, and being cut off from the outside world for several days was not unusual – and an excellent excuse for not going to school, which (in spite of being superficially studious) I hated.

It will be evident that this is not the diary of Adrian Mole. I was in fact a notoriously intense and miserable teenager, but not the slightest hint of it intrudes. And that is perhaps the oddest thing about it: that it is not a personal diary in any sense. Of course it is full of youthful naiveties, and mirrors a world inevitably centred on home and parents and a small group of immediate, familiar neighbours – like Mrs Kirkham, the shopkeeper a few doors away, Mr Blood, the neighbouring farmer and milkman, and Mr and Mrs Hamill and others, family friends and parents of contemporary children. Plus occasional bulletins from Sandbach (some distance away, in mid-Cheshire, near Crewe), where I went to school. It all reads, many years on, like a slightly embarrassing but in its way disarmingly charming and objective child's-eye-view of the surrounding community and events – and of life and the world. It is commonplace to regard small children as filled with wonder at the world around them; but a more dispassionate fascinated unfamiliarity clearly survives into youth. If it isn't the diary of Adrian Mole, it might perhaps be the Martian's diary: the report of a poorly-briefed but conscientious visitor from another planet.

In that sense, in an odd and of course unintentional way, the diary is even psychologically interesting, precisely because it is not introspective. There is absolutely nothing personal, nothing about myself or my feelings, recorded in it at all. It is exactly the opposite to what would be expected of a fourteen or fifteen year-old's diary. For although it is really too inconsequential to merit the description, in fact it was meant to be a kind of historical log. The notes about local history that occur in the same notebooks do not represent a multiple use for the books: the diary was part and parcel of a broad historical picture of local life. So it documents, as I suspect a child's diary seldom will, or anyone's perhaps, the fascination of the unfamiliar in the immediately surrounding outside world, a fascination and unfamiliarity that makes a power cut or the passing of a gritter, the routines of the Sunday evangelists and the activities of electricity men

erecting telegraph poles, things that would surely just bore or irritate an adult, seem part of a rivetting soap-opera of living local history. That they are not, that they are not in fact, for the most part, with hindsight, of any historical relevance whatever, is itself a fact of great historical relevance.

Of course to have been writing this at all, never mind in such an extraordinarily impersonal way, shows that I was not a normal fourteen-year-old. I must have been a great deal more peculiar than Adrian Mole. Although I mention youth clubs, religious (or church and chapel) activities, and a local teenage pop group, I actually had absolutely no involvement in these things myself. I stood, by that time, very much aloof from the world of youth and community activity that my sister and contemporaries were so much involved with; instead I documented them as an objective chronicler of what I perceived as living history. It was partly that, but I notice it was also a sort of journalism, and even sounds at times as if I thought of myself as 'our Mow Cop correspondent'. I had actually, briefly some years earlier, at the age of ten and three-quarters, produced a local newsletter called the *Mow Cop Star*; and although no such intention was in my mind in 1969, and I don't remember particularly wanting to be a journalist, the same hankering to record or report is in play.

And as with hack journalism, and soap-opera and Jane Austen and train-spotting, and talking about the weather, one can become so immersed in the trivial and the ultra-local that it acquires enormity and a compelling, microcosmic fascination. The utterly mundane is given historical grandeur by unfamiliarity and an obsession to record. The number of cars parked on the Castle Banks on a Sunday afternoon, or the number of gathered Pentecostals, can become so significant and so essential a thing to note that you feel guilty if one week (June 22nd) you don't go up and count them. If I'd kept a record for every Sunday of the season, just think what brilliant statistics and averages and diagrams and pie-charts I could produce now.

Or, another approach to such a diary, unreadable as it is, is perhaps to enjoy its sheer unreadableness, its sheer ridiculousness. Which paradoxically does bring us back to the world of Adrian Mole. Surely the record that at about 5.05 p.m. on November 23rd, 1969 the electricity was suddenly off for about two minutes, then flickered and came on again, could stand alongside the funniest things that Sue Townsend has ever written. And wouldn't she be proud to have penned the immortal words 'Mr. Smith couldn't get up Castle Rd. today' (December 16th). On June 4th there were several cars during the first thirty minutes of darkness (in a power cut, of course). And note that on November 17th I saw, from a service bus, as the snow-ploughs headed home, a council land-rover that was not yellow. As for going to Biddulph 'for Dad's teeth' and finding all roads all snowed up ... well, that will just have to remain a cliff-hanger, for on that fateful day, December 19th, 1969, the diary ends.

It was a pretty severe and memorable thunder storm that started it all, perhaps worth recording (May 27th); I have a photograph somewhere of the final replacement of the electricity transformer. And it was a pretty severe winter we were in the midst of when it ended – a very good year for snow. It was a sad year too. I'm surprised at several deaths that cluster at one point, each of which I remember, but my memory unaided wouldn't register how closely together they occurred. Meanwhile events in the wider world (or rather universe) intrude almost as seldom as anything personal. I do record (pithily), and of course I remember, something of moment in the history of humanity that happened on July 20th, 1969, at 9.17 p.m.; but my diary brings me down to earth by reminding me (for this I'm ashamed to say had quite slipped my mind) that that day was also Sermons Sunday at the chapel in Primitive Street, with 28 parked cars in the morning and 30 in the afternoon, spread slightly differently. That's a small step for man, as they say.

My great interest and hobby was the local history of Mow Cop, and like all local historians I started with the materials closest to hand. The same notebooks that contain the diary contain notes from gravestones in Newchapel and Mow Cop (St Thomas's) churchyards, and notes made while walking through The Rookery and Dales Green (two satellite villages on the slopes of Mow Cop). In the latter I note the names of shops and other business, a few of the older houses, and two 'V.R.' post-boxes (that is, very old ones, bearing Queen Victoria's monogram). Then there are lists of place-names and people, a couple of family trees, a drawing of an old village pump, notes of ancient and modern graffiti on the rocks, Castle, and public toilets, and – my only concession to the personal? – several poems (written by me). I remember some lines from one of them to this day. Though in fact even that's not personal either, really: it too seems to be trying in a different way to report and document, to express something about the feel of the place and its history. It's not all that bad for an unrevised draft dashed off by a teenager living on top of a rocky mountain.

Hill at evening
 Rocked in the clanging
 Silence of the gravel
 Sevenarmed hammering
 Echoes through the curtain

Ring on the top rock
 Fox Rocks crash down to death
 Quarries eaten in the mountain
 Sound and resounding

Splinter a thousand years
 Chipping the mason's time
 Stone cobbling

Rank and dark stand
High on the hillside
Bang on the ferned rock
Stare through the blind walls
Hard in the eras

Hard in the eras
Gone old grit
Stonehewers dead
Rocked in the clanging
Hill at evening.

Well, I did say I was peculiar. The diary part of the notebooks (I spare you the gravestones and graffiti, and most of the post-boxes) is transcribed as exactly as possible, with no alterations or corrections whatever, and no omissions, but now and then a few words of explanation added in [square brackets]. The paragraphing is rationalised and opened out, as the cramped space of the little notebooks often leaves it unclear. The title of the diary section is:



EVENTS 1969.

Sunday, May 25.

Pentecostals. / 6.30. / c.20. – Rock Side entrance.

Several speakers, & hymns or joyjoy songs sank [sang]. / 2 very little children. / Roy Ecclestone joined them late.

Shook hands, chatted, & dispersed.

Prims, – no camp. [Primitive Methodist camp meeting, traditionally the last Sunday in May]

2.30. & 6.0. services in Chapel. Singing & shouting round, c.10.30.

Tuesday, May 27.

Afternoon:- short but severe thunderstorm. Bad rain in morn; started again around 3 p.m. The lightening, very close & very bright. Made sparks fly from Dad's drill. Then loudest clap of thunder I've ever heard. Whole house ACTUALLY shook. Then again; & again not so bad; & again even less. It had passed over. After 1st. flash 2 workmen laying carpet in sitting room saw big puff of smoke from Blood's bottom field. The 2 electricity pilon things down there were afire. A terrible blaze, said Mrs. Kirkham. After second, a light buld [bulb] in

our hall (which was switched on) blew up & smashed to pieces all over the hall. All the windows of May Wright's & Barbara Wright's house were blown out, & she came to ring their dad to come home from work. Old Mr. Dale's (from Station Rd.) chair was picked up, so they say, & thrown across the room. Primitive Street & surrounding districts without electricity, or at least with a meagre supply. Mrs. Kirkham, Podmores, & Hamills had none; we had a little bit, – enough to give a candle-like light from the lights, but not enough to work the electric fires. / Mrs. Kirkham rang MANWEB. [the regional electricity board (as they were then called); references to pilons are not to gigantic metal pylons but to telegraph poles carrying electricity transformers]

As soon as the rain started Bloods cows went straight into the shippin.

Mr. Hamill comments: there was no storm at Tunstall.

Tommie Harding's wife (Wood Street) was in the shop buying candles, as was Phillis Podmore.

5.0. – pilon still alight. Electric man was at Wood St., having seen everybody on Station Bank & Wood St. saying “no electric now; none tonight; lucky if we get it going by morning.”

Lot of damage done by lightening in Wood Street.

The reason we've got a little supply is that some of the wire blown down nr. Halls Rd. where the pilons are, are blowing about in the wind & keep touching each other, & therefore we get a faint, fluctuating, supply.

Big wagon to do the pilons are on their way.

5.25. – Mrs. Kirkham's electric back on; ours still the same. 2 men in MANWEB car in our corner fiddling with the Blood's-field-pilon.

9.25. – New transformer now in position in “Jackie Blood's” pilon, which 2 men, fiddling with it, sent up in flames at about 5.45. 9 cars (one a big MANWEB van – & one a windowcleaner after work!) in Primitive St. MANWEB tractor & trailer in Bloods field, with 8 men (2 laymen, – Cyril Blood & someone).

Houses damaged:-

- Billy Dale's (he's been dead for a long time), all side & back windows smashed + part of house roof & side wall & all kitchen-extension roof blown clean off.
- Wright's, (May Hackney, her dtr. & husband,) all front windows blown out, now covered with plastic paper.
- Window of porch of house below Dales, – Mr. Swinnerton's, broken. (Mr. Hamill sent down for candles.)

- Harry Mellor's window broken.
- May Hackney's curtains & 3 piece suit [suite] set alight.

9.30. – boss getting angry because it's going dark & they haven't finished yet. Mrs. Harding: "He's getting fisty cuffs!"

Friday, May 30th., 1969.

When Mow has rain, it's the people of the valleys & plains who get the water, – ours & theirs too. The unusually heavy rains of Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday sent water like a river flowing down to the low region of Drumber Lane, where the whole road was filled with fast flowing torrents & the houses' inhabitants stood trembling at their gates, hearing news of flooding at Crewe & other less important local centres, & hoping that the next news won't have to say "... and the Drumber Lane region of Kent Green, at the foot of Mow Cop, in Cheshire", or words to that effect. The people peer over their gates at the river on the other side; the many regular visitors of the Globe Inn stand outside & stair in amazement at an unusually severe usual occurrence. As always, in a community in distress, – as on Mow Cop when the lightening had taken its toll – the community gathers, unites, & idly chats. People chat in the middle of the road, & passing cars share in the excited panic by stopping, wondering "shall we make it", chatting to locals, & going on, if, that is, they can get past the ever increasing congregation at Mrs. Cartledge-Lea's "Globe Inn."

Coming down is all right, you float with the stream, but going up is always difficult, especially when they are swimming against the stream.

9.50. – Cellar of "Globe Inn" flooded; fire brigad, maybe, on its way to start pumping. "Old Tomie's house", – old one next door to inn, – also flooded. Crew station's been flooded (c.3ft.) for several hrs., & trains are being held up. Road parallel to Mow railway line also flooded further down, probably at Red Bull & nr. there.

Sunday, June 1, 1969. [separate entry at other end of notebook]

Sunday School Festival, St. Thomas's, Mow Cop.

Communion, – 8 am.) The Vicar.

Matins, – 11 am.)

2 pm. – procession of Witness.) Rev. A. G. Baker, (ODD.)

3.15 pm. – Afternoon Service.)

6.15 pm. – Evening Service.)

Notices printed by Alfred Venables & Co. Ltd., 56, Wesley St., Tunstall.

[preceding evidently transcribed in advance from the notice]

St. Thos post box, – G^{VI}R.

On the day:-

3.0. – Bus load of people & white-robed choir boys arrive at church; many people & cars rolling up; bell ringing, main door ACTUALLY OPEN.

6.10. – Almost time for evening service; Mr. & Mrs. Gilbert arrive; 25 cars (6.15.) parked around church; people arriving from Mow Cop Rd., Church Lane, & Congleton Rd., (as at 3.0.)

After afternoon service, Rev. A. G. Baker, of Odd Rode, went to Gilberts, Primitive St. [neighbours] (Mr. Gilb. is organist at Lukes & Mrs. Gilb. is caretaker.) At 5.15. he returned to the church (St. Thos.), – all the time in his long black robes. Rev. Baker preached at 3.15. & 6.15. at St. Thomas's & there were no services at St. Luke's.

Sunday, June 1st., 1969.

Before teatime, – 29 cars on or around the Castle Banks, & literally hundreds of visitors during the day.

c.3 pm. – Pentecostals arrive at Castle Banks for an open air meeting. Some standing around doing nothing; some handing out tracts & trying to convert people, (especially me!); others assembling the loud speaker equipment.

The Camp Meeting has begun; the speaker stands IN FRONT OF the Methodist Memorial Stone. Singing & rejoicing, etc.

Before tea, – 29 cars on or around Castle Banks, including the JoyJoy cars.

25 people assembled around the speaker at Pentecostal open-air Meeting. Among the speakers have been Roy Ecclestone & Fred Howell, the Pastors of Mow Cop & Kidsgrove. They spoke through a mike connected to a loud-speaker a few feet in front of him, being held by another bloke. When Fred Howell was speaking, Roy Ecclestone took his turn at holding the speaker, amidst shouts of praise to heaven, – providing a lovely background rhythm of mumbling to Fred Howell's eloquence.

“Amen. Oh Lord my God.”

“Praises unto the Lord.”

“Alleluja”, etc. etc.

Wednesday, June 4th., 1969.

10.30 p.m. – Electricity fades, flickers, & goes off. All of Mow, except the coal-fire-folk, seems to be in darkness. Before a few seconds Mrs. Kirkham is on the foot-path investigating the dilemma. All the streets, –

including street lights, – are in darkness, – Woodcock Lane; Primitive St.; High St.; Westfield Rd.; Bourne St.; etc.

10.45. – It's now really dark; strangely enough the Street-light at St. Luke's Chrch. is on, but electricity still off.

One by one small, weak lights started going on, on Woodcock Lane e.g. – Hancocks; 7, Woodcock Lane; etc. (Either candle(s) or fire(s).)

I can just imagine the drivers of the cars, (several during the first 30 mins. of darkness), which pass over Mow Cop, – "What a miserable place; I suppose all the folk go to bed at 9 p.m.!" etc. etc.

11.0. – All the dim, weak lights, & the street-light outside the chrch., have now gone out on Woodcock Lane.

11.40. – Electricity came back on.

Electricity also off at Brake Village & Old House Green.

Thursday, June 5th., 1969.

Between 5 p.m. on June 4 & 5 p.m. on June 5 the old "Primitive St." sign from Chadwicks' house, (2, Primitive St.), has disappeared or been taken down for some reason, leaving a black patch where it's been. It was the oldest road-sign on Mow Cop.

Thursday, June 5th., – (Cont'd.)

Today Mr. & Mrs. Hamill demolished the old, stone shed, (already falling down), which stood at the south-eastern corner of their property. They are having many alterations done, including a garage on that spot, a new drive, & other interior alterations. Quite a lot of the stones have been sold off, (i.e. – by Sun., June 15), since they advertised in the Evening Sentinel.

A special team of demolition men came to perform the task. Mr. Hamill's shipp-building hut is also to be demolished, & a fountain placed some-where near there, in their garden. [shipp is deliberate: he made model boats of fibreglass, and one of his middle names was Shipp]

Saturday, June 7th.

2.30 a.m. – 3.40 a.m. – Electricity off; Dad had to come to bed.

10.50 a.m. – 11.5 a.m. – Electricity off again, half way through mum making cups of tea. Gilberts' & Kirkhams' also off, though Hamills' seems to have been on all morning, – definitely since 10 a.m.

Trip to Macclesfield from Pentecostal Chrch.; Roy Ecclestone going; hired coach; Joel had me make arrangements for him to go, but when it came to it he never went. [Joel was a cripple who lived opposite]

Sunday, June 8th., 1969.

3.30 p.m. – c.33 cars on & around Castle Banks; very hot & sunny; many people.

4.0 p.m. – Pentecostal service in session in front of Methodist Stone at Castle. 16 of them, in semi-circle. By this time more cars, more folk, & more heat.

4.10. – 20 pentecostals, and over 40 cars. The men are taking it in turns to preach “from their hearts.” In between some preachings is a hymn, or song, where $\frac{1}{3}$ rd. sing, $\frac{1}{3}$ rd. shout “Alleluja” etc., & $\frac{1}{3}$ rd. just wail. What a thing to hear! What, indeed, a thing to see! What, moreover, must the visitors to Mow think?

Today they are preaching through a hand-speaker, not, as last week, a mike & speaker, \therefore [therefore symbol] it’s not so loud. Roy Ecclestone is there, – hopping from foot to foot & clapping during the hymns & shouting “Amen”, “Praise”, etc. during the preaching.

By 5.10 p.m. they had finished, & Roy Ecclestone, brother, & friends were exulting “Amens” from his rock-top bungalow.

Friday, June 13th., 1969.

After 13 days of very hot, dry, sunny weather Mow Cop is withered & dried. Water still runs from some of the old wells & springs, but if Mow had still been in the days of wells & droughts, it would be a tough period, – on the people & the wells. [Unlucky for some!] [square brackets in original]

Saturday, June 14th., 1969.

Late evening, – RAIN!! (And a thunder storm) ↓ [arrow from RAIN]
Quite a lot of rain, too, – very hard, – very bad storm.

Sunday, June 15th., 1969.

4.10. – 19 Pentecostals on Castle Banks, today using the mike & separate speaker. Gordon Myatt among them for a change.

c.30 cars on & around Castle Banks.

c.4.7. – single decker ’bus arrives, unloads, & tries to reverse, but a little van is parked right in its path.

After drowning some of the pentecostals with its horn, it decides to throw itself diagonally accross the road, & at last manages with some help to turn round, – just missing the van.

This van, by the way, was parked right in front of a police “no-parking” notice. This had been transferred by the ’bus driver’s helper, (a man in the street), from the opposite side of the road to behind the van.

4.10.

[a map of the exciting incident, showing among other interesting details the positions of castle, pentecostals, 16 parked cars, van, notice, and diagonal bus]

4.10. – The first time I’ve ever heard a woman pentecostal preaching, – she did it quite well too. The pentecostals, (or some of them), put their cars in Ecclestone’s drive (there are 3 there now.) But Roy isn’t at the meeting.

Today is windier, duller, & colder than the other Sundays of the C.Ms. [camp meetings] for 1969.

4.20. – 21 pentecostals. More cars arrived, but c. the same number gone, from the Castle Banks. 2 girls with horses, – a grey (silver) & brown one, adding to the scene as they gallop over the bumpy Bank. More than 12 motor-bikes too!

Sunday, June 15th., 1969, (Cont’d.)

After 7 p.m. – Thunder storm, – not here, but still pretty bad. Very hard, heavy, & quantitive rain.

Monday, 16th. June, 1969.

8 bungalows in the Mow Cop Road estates are lived in, – all those along the main roadside. Behind these, in the field, 4 are almost complete, & 2 are in their first stages. Among the suppliers of materials etc., (taking [taken] from their lorries), :-
Acme Marls Ltd., Clough St., Hanley.
[refers to a new housing development near the bottom of Chapel Bank]

Friday, 20th. June, 1969.

1.5 a.m. – 7.10 a.m. – Electricity off on Mow Cop, and at Kent Green & the estate at Cinder Hill, Kent Green – Scholar Green. (c.8.5. – Manwed [Manweb] & ording [?ordinary] council cars seen scooting about in these areas) Off again 7.45 – 8.5 a.m. on Mow Cop. At Scholar Green it was off from 1.5 – 8.5 without a break.

Sunday, 22nd. June.

A cold and rainy day. I didn't go up to the Castle today; I don't know about anybody else.

Thursday, 26th. June, 1969.

c.4.35. E.R.F. (Foden) lorry coming down Station Bank to test its brakes, and then down Station Rd., leaving thick black marks where it's braked or skidded. [Station Bank is a 1-in-3 gradient] Then it went along Birch Tree Lane, again testing its brakes, but leaving no marks.

During today, too, a 'bus-waiting-in-place at Bank has been marked out :- not for the normal 'bus stop, but for the 'buses that wait in & turn round there. [refers to painted road markings]

Sunday, 29th. June

4.20. – Over 48 cars on & around the Castle Banks. A very hot, sweaty day, with hundreds of people around. Once more the 'bus (single decker) is unable to turn.

Over 26 pentecostals, & Angela joyjoy preaching, saying "Friends" every 2 seconds.

'Bus has now parked itself further up the road where the traffic can pass it.

No. of cars & people continually increasing.

4.22. 'Bus having a try at turning round now that some of the cars have gone from its place. Succeeds

Fred Howell & Roy Ecclestone among the pentecostals, + the separte loud-speaker, + the van, + the usuall accordion & 2 very sour, out-of-tune female singers.

Many of the cars advertise things with window notices, e.g. – (30 pentecostals!!)

Devane Group tools.

Crewe Speedway.

Pentecostalism.

Castors Crowd; Noah; etc. – on the group's van.

"City of Westminster. LADIES." (!)

Today, at this time, also, →

Harry Mellor's window being mended.

Also 7 young men in colourful shirts & with instruments, – A POP GROUP (!) Having their photos taken on the high(est) rocks.

A new N.T. [National Trust] notice, "The Old Man of Mow", has blossomed round the corner of Wood Fm. Seemingly Brand new. 2 young men nearly at top of Man, & 4 at bottom having, or about to, climb it.

2 people & their children arrive to see the pinnacle.

M. – "I suppose it's round here."

W. – "Quiet isn't it."

M. / reading N.T. sign. / "The Old Man of Mow [as in HOE] ... or Mow [AS COW] ... The Old Man of Mow [COW] or Mow [HOE]. I suppose its Mow [HOE.]" (!!!)

[square brackets in preceding quotation are in original; Mow rhymes with cow of course]

At the Pinnacle, too, the Trig. Stat. on top of the rocks has been painted nice, fresh white since I last came here, – (seemingly recent, too!)

5.10. – temp. 84° F. (& there's a breeze!) ↓ [arrow from 84] outside. Only c.68° inside.

Thursday, July 3rd., 1969.

Yesterday we heard that Joel was ill, & Dad fetched a prescription for him. Today He was taken to hospital in an ambulance, (without his socks on.)

Friday, July 4th., 1969.

Joel died this morning. Cause, – unknown. Albert [his brother] informed by the police, & taken to the hospital by Mr. Kirkham. A post mortem is to be carried out on him.

Today, also, the old Prim. St. sign reappeared, – shuvved menacingly on Mr. Chadwick's outside, low, stone garden-wall. It was painted white, including some of, & part of, the letters so that it's not very readable. Dad thinks it's nice!

Last Y.C. tonight; broke up for summer. [youth club, presumably, at the chapel; I never went so I'm not sure why it seemed relevant – though there was a period when I had to meet my sister returning to make sure she didn't molest any youths on her way home]

Tuesday, July 8th., 1969.

Post mortem on Joel reveals that he died of Bronichal-pneumonia.

Wednesday, 9th. July, 1969.

Mr. Chadwick painted the letters of Primitive St. black today. Well done!!

A digger which appeared in Mr. Blood's bottom field & scared everyone to death yesterday. Today I discovered it was laying drains from Hall's Rd. (along the bottom of his lower fields, across Halls Rd., & down the fields || [parallel symbol] to churchyard, down to the Clare St. estate. [the digger was scary because the blight of new building seemed unstoppable at the time]

Friday, July 11th., 1969.

Funeral of Joel, in the grave of his parents at St. Thos., (no stone). He was born at the Sands, HARRISEAHEAD, and came to live on Mow Cop with his brother Albert when his parents died. They say he had a "lovely send-off," with lots of people. A large cross of red roses & red carnations almost covered the grave, & 7 wreaths placed at the sides.

Saturday, 11th. [correctly 12th]

Baptising at Pentecost; 34 cars; packed with folk. [presumably means at the Pentecostal Church]

Sunday, 12th. July, 1969. [correctly 13th]

Pentecostal meeting at Castle in afternoon; v. hot & sunny sunny. Sermons at 6 p.m.

Sunday, July 20th., 1969.

Sermons (2.30. & 6.0.) at Prims. 28 cars at afternoon do. Many people, with colourful coats & hats on the women.

30 cars in evening, spread, as before, on Prim. St., by mill, etc., but more on Woodcock & less on Prim. St.

Service, 6.0. Community singing, c.5.30. Also folk listening from outside the front door.

9.17. – MAN ON THE MOON.

Sunday, August 10th.

4.35. 23 pentecostals at Castle, + car & wired, detached speaker, making a terrible mess of "Happy Day," the ('pop-hymn')

over 25 cars on & around Castle Banks. 4 cars in Eccleston's drive; 4 by it, on road.

Friday, August 29th., 1969.

Council cleared all the grit, tar, & rubbish from the top ½ of our F/P / “alley.” Windowcleaners came. (They’re regular, every 2 weeks!) [our F/P or alley refer to a public footpath alongside our house, leading to the fields; window cleaners often touted for business but usually proved unreliable in this windy hilltop village]

Wednesday, September 3rd.

30th. anniv. of “The Day War Broke Out.”

Albert Wallmsley is cutting down the 6 ft. high hedge of Sycamores & privets which completely block the view round the bottom corner of Prim. St. for motorists.

Eddie Hackney, yesterday & today, clearing Prim. St’s. gutters etc. for first time since before Xmas. He says he’s been on a job down Smallwood for months. [he was the local council street cleaner etc.]

Gran Lowe’s on at him for not coming down Station Rd. He says these old women expect him to cut their hedges, do their rds. & F/Ps. He hasn’t time.

Friday, September 5th., 1969.

Transformer put in the poles opp. Mr. Hooke’s on Woodcock Lane. (I wonder what the Capt’s. saying?)

Electric folk have been working round The Close [an old name for the adjacent fields] all week. 1st. at the post [pole] outside 7, Woodcock Lane, then at the one at the TOP of our F/P.

There is a post lying at the bottom of the top field, and another by our transformer. I wonder where they’re going to put them?

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 1969.

Bert Mountford died. Complained of tight chest & pains in morning, wf. went to work, at Co-op, & left him in bed. When she came home for dinner she found him dead.

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 1969.

“Apollo” performed at the ‘Gaeity Theatre,’ Hanley today. Mr. Mountford had got them the booking, & this was the big & exciting chance they were all waiting for. David Mountford was there; his Dad would have wanted it that way. [this was Mow Cop’s own home-grown teenage pop group]

Monday, Sept. 22nd., 1969.

Geoffrey Whittaker, son of the owners of the Mow Cop Inn, killed today on his motorbike on the A34. He was 17. The bike was new; he hadn't had one before. The news was told on Radio Sot's 6 p.m. bulletin. [BBC Radio Stoke] A police spokesman "said the chappie was not wearing a crash helmet." His sister is Janie. Janis [my sister] says he was the nicest-looking & quietist of their crowd.

Bert Mountford service today at P. M. Chapel. Burnt.

Sunday, Nov. 9, 1969.

Hail – rain – snow – fog – sleet – wet – dry – warm – cold – sunny – dull. [Winter's here → EARLY!] Funny weather! [square brackets in original]

Snow c.3 p.m., for about 10 mins. Non stuck.

Thursday, Nov. 13, 1969.

Roads v. frosty this morning for 1st. time this year.

Friday, Nov. 14, 1969.

Roads gritted by motor sometime today.

Many heaps of grit have appeared up our "notorious" Station Bank.

(Apollo 12 up!)

Saturday, Nov. 15, 1969.

Hail – rain – snow – sleet – fog – warm – cold – sunny – wet – dry – dark – light.

Snowed c.11.30 a.m. for about 15 minutes; non stuck.

Freezing cold today as it has been all week.

Some folk have had it worse. It's on its way here.

Would have been Bert Mount-ford's 44th. birthday today.

Work on Myatt's hs. progress-ing after first week. Windows out; chimney off for a few days; back gable tilted. Mum says they're having the whole roof turned round, as well as bathroom etc. added. (I bet they're warm in their caravan & wooden hut !!!!!!!)

Wednesday, Nov. 12, 1969.

Terrible rain – all last night & all today & all tonight. All Mow roads streaming with it. Grt. gushing river pouring down Church St., M.P. [Mount Pleasant], of dirty, clayy, water.

V. cold, too.

Sunday, Nov. 16, 1969.

2.20. – Snow, for a few mins.

2.30. – Big Snow. V. big flakes, & coming v. hard. Dad – “I’ve never seen such big flakes in my life!” One landed in his eye & filled it!! After about ¼ hr. very hard, it’s lighter & smaller now. Some has stuck, & the sky looks as if it’s got a lot more in store for us.

Snows all rest of day. V. hard again c.4.50 p.m., for c.10 mins.

5.20. – quite a thin layer of white has stuck in places, but on cold smooth tops, like yards, it has melted. There is a lot of rain & sleet mixed with it. What an early Winter!! All the time the snow’s coming heavy & fast, but mostly it’s so fine that it seems lighter.

5.30. – 1" layer of slush all up & down. Seems to be beginning to stick now.

8.30. – Still snowing, but v. fine & mixed with sleet. V. little sticking. Roads still passable.

10.30. – Snow now completely turned to rain. DAY ENDS.

Monday, Nov. 17.

c7.30. – started snowing. This time it was sticking – covered rd. We were 1st. down Stat. Bank, which was totally white. [Station Bank is a 1-in-3 gradient]

Snowing v. hard. At Bank, the rds. are clear – none is sticking. – 5 mins. later – rd. covered – all sticking.

Bus has to go down Spring Bank with clutch on, & dead slow – like we went down Station Bank.

Stopped snowing after an even harder spell when 4" & above blocked Mow Cop roads, c.10.30 a.m.

Mr. Blood brought milk in green van c.3 p.m. – his tractor had been stuck in the field. Finally got out between 4 & 5 p.m. by council landrover. 1st. snowplows & grit motors around Prim. St. at 12.10 p.m. today. Messing about up here until nearly 5.0. On service bus on way home saw 2 snowplows going home & one council landrover (not

yellow!!) Conditions on Mow Cop worse, colder, snow-deeper, etc. than anywhere in Cheshire.

John Cordeaux announced on Sat. [BBC Radio Stoke] at 6.0. that all roads were now clear, but the A.A. had had one of the most "hectic" days during the day's "chaos." (A.A. over 400 calls, – i.e. – Sat. dept. [Stoke-on-Trent department])

Now [No] snow in Sandbach at 8.30 a.m., but very bad snowing c.10.10. When stopped at 10.30, sun came & stayed.

Sunday, Nov. 23.

c.5.5 p.m. – electric suddenly off for about 2 mins., then flickering, then on again.

Monday, Nov. 24.

There is a thick frost over the whole plain today. Even though the sun is bright, it lasts until a while after 11 a.m. Very cold.

Tuesday, Nov. 25.

As yesterday; frost probably worse; lasts till after 11 a.m.

The Mow roads have been gritted today – we must be expecting another good coating on Wed. Elsewhere in the Pennines it is still snowing, & I saw a lorry driving thro' Sand. [Sandbach] today with 1" of it.

Friday, Nov. 28.

c.7.10. – started snowing pretty bad up Mowle [an old spelling of Mow]. Didn't think we'd be able to go, but since the boys had got exams we had to try. [the two younger boys who had a lift to the bus-stop with us, Jamie Hamill and Peter Andjelcovic] We had seen 2/3 cars going up Woodcock Lane, & heard a few on our corner. The postvan was parked at the top of Prim. St. We passed it and went slowly down Station Bank. Then, just before Gran. Lowe's house, we skidded & had to run into the kerb. So, we couldn't do it; we'd got to get back. Had trouble reversing, skidding etc. Thought we wouldn't do it. But slowly we did, & then we started off – slowly reversing back up, & then turned forwards down Prim. St. The postvan was still there; told him it was impossible.

b [by] 8.45. – A few ins. deep.

c.8.45. – Stopped snowing; by now light; fog cleared; still looks grim. No, – wait on! It's still snowing a bit → "spotting."

by 9.15. – the traffic round the corner has worn paths in the snow in the road.

Harding [neighbour] has gritted the corner from the pile in our alley. No help has yet come to the snowbound hill. Under the snow our yard is like glass. It is very cold & freezing. The road, when it has been slushed up and compressed, is very icy & more treacherous than ever.

9.55. – Big grit motor round Prim. St. twice. Yellow grit tractor up woodcock [Woodcock Lane]; backdown at 10.40.

10.50/55. – land rover of grit + man behind throwing it out, down Woodcock.

Afternoon. – Prim. St. about best rd. on Mow. High St. & Chapel Bank not quite so good; Mow Cop – Cong. [Congleton] Rds. not v. good, with only occasional patches gritted. Castle Rd. un-gritted, uncleared, unused, & bad – we had to reverse down before reaching the corner. Cong. Rd. outside Mow Cop Inn & further along is neither gritted nor ploughed – like an ice rink – completely covered with treacherous snow & ice. Tower Hill Rd. only a bit better than this, & No Bidd. [Biddulph] Rd. better than Prim. St.

Saturday, 29th. Nov.

Freezing – dog's water solid.

Though sunny, no snow is melting & all water is freezing.

Sunday, Nov. 30.

11.5. a.m. – Top wire coming from electric pole on our corner has sagged & is touching the next one down. When it touched, there was an explosion & sparks are now flying all over the place. Leader [dog] was scared stiff. The electric, of course, went off, with only a tiny flicker now & then. Dad, as representing the whole St., phoned MANWEB, Stoke.

before 10 to 12, – electric man (1) arrives in civilian car. Wires no longer touching.

c.12.3. – electric man, after hanging around & going to chapel, goes. Wires touching again – sparks flying like mad.

Electric man a [at] Chapel for c¹/₄hr. – the cause has been found – the chapel (all electric) is overloading the wires, causing the top one to expand with heat, touch the next, & fuse our circuits. Electric man's cut some off at the Chapel to give us ours.

12.20. – On!!!

Monday, Dec. 1.

Rain in the night & morning has washed away all but slight patches of snow from the whole area.

Afternoon – electric men up Mrs. Harding's pole doing smthng. about the regular fading of lights etc. last wk. which dad reported to MANWEB man who came yesterday.

First day of strike at Mary Hill & one other Kidsgrove Schl., & one Alsager Schl. (not the 2ndry.)

Thursday, Dec. 4.

Heavy frost, & probably a little snow last night. In shaded areas, frost remained all day.

Friday, Dec. 5.

Snow forecast for today. Looked like snow all day. Tiny shower at c.10.10 p.m., & maybe a little more later in the night.

Tuesday, Dec. 9th.

2 wires slung between new post [pole] on our corner, one in Mr. Blood's top field, & one on Woodcock Lane.

Wednesday, Dec. 10th.

More work going on by Manweb down bottom of our alley.

Thurs., Dec. 11th.

2 more wires slung up today, & more work going on.

Monday, Dec. 15.

Snow in Pennines :- Buxton, Leek, & Macclesfield in chaos, havoc, turmoil, etc.

Monday, Dec. 15. (Cont'd.)

Rain all day in Sandbach – blizzards of snow with sleet & rain between raging on Mow & in the Potteries – foggy – not bad in Biddulph.

Tuesday, Dec. 16.

Terrible frost; all Mow roads treacherous in early morning & some all day. Only just maged [managed] it down to the bus. Macclesfield-Leek road blocked, & nearly 1ft. of snow in that area.

Tuesday, Dec. 16. (Cont'd.)

Mr. Smith couldn't get up Castle Rd. today, & many other rds. on Mow very bad & icy & frosty.

Wednes., Dec. 17.

V. windy – snow in night – blowing & drifting – an inch or so in places; didn't go to school.

Snowing all day, & blowing v. bad so that it's not sticking in places but is drifting bad elsewhere. All Mow roads bad. 1st. yellow thing was at c.10.10 a.m., – a gritter, which came up Woodcock & down Prim. St. & reversed down Station Bank.

Stopped in afternoon; roads now good; but very cold & nasty.

Friday, Dec. 19.

Snow forecast for today.

c.9.30. – Snowing lightly in Sandbach. Harder by 9.50. a.m. Continued all day until c.6 p.m. At home, (12.30), Mnt. Plez. Rd. [Mount Pleasant Road], Spring Bank, & Birch Tree Lane have just been sprinkled with grit here & there. Prim. St. is all white.

2.0. – 1st. gritter round Prim. St. & Woodcock. Just after this it comes on real hard, & the road, by 3.0, is all white.

Go to Bidd. [Biddulph] for Dad's teeth. – all rds. exept Tunstall / Congleton Rds., Bidd., are all snowed up & bad.

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