

-:MEIR HEATH and ROUGH CLOSE:-

Meir Heath is a township about two miles north-west of Fulford. It is believed that Meir Heath, or Mare Heath as it was originally recorded, was once a large area of common land which stood on a ridge between the Trent and Blithe valleys in the Normacot township in Hilderstone quarter in Stone ancient parish. Rough Close is a residential area joining on to Meir Heath and was part of the Kibblestone quarter of Stone. The name Rough Close is a corruption of 'Rough Cote' meaning a rough hut for a shepherd.

All that there was at Rough Close in the 17th century was a farm but by the 1720's there was a small hamlet there. Meir Heath on the other hand was a more flourishing place and from the beginning of the 17th century until the late 18th century there was an iron furnace there, and the remains of a windmill still stand there. There were two tollgates at Meir Heath, one on Hilderstone Road and one at the crossroads.



The windmill at Meir Heath *

The windmill, which is 825 feet above sea level, was used by Yates as a triangulation point for his map of 1775, and a century later by the surveyors of the first Ordnance Survey map of 1884. According to local tradition a Richard Ash Broster, who was born in Dilhorne in 1845 and died in 1956 aged 111, built the mill, but as it appears on Yates map this suggests that it was built on the site of an earlier mill. He also ran the 'Dusty Miller' beerhouse (now the Chinese takeaway). The mill had 4 sails, a boat cap, a tail-pole and a cartwheel for luffing. Thomas Stredder took over the mill in 1851. Thomas Prince then worked the mill from 1888 until it went out of use in about 1900.

In 1908 a water tank was installed in it to supply water to the local people. The mill was then bought by Joules in 1928. In 1939 a Karl Wood painted the mill, at which time it still had it's cap and the remains of two sails, but these were removed by the home guard to make space for a watch tower during the 2nd World War. This was taken off in the 1960's. Another industry that flourished in Rough Close in the nineteenth century was the manufacture of silk lawn, used for pottery purposes.

The three-storey brickwork rises to about 35 feet. There are two opposite doorways on the ground floor and two of the three windows have been altered from rectangular to circular. There is another door on the second floor but this is thought to be a later addition.

There were a number of inns, public houses and beerhouses in the Rough Close and Meir Heath area, including the Swynnerton Arms and the George and the Dragon in Rough Close and the Windmill, the Dusty Miller, the Star and Garter, the Seven Stars, and the Wheatsheaf in Meir Heath. Amongst the landlords and landladies of those establishments were:-

The Swynnerton Arms, Rough Close

William Baines	1862
John Brassington	1872 to 1884
Henry Thorley	1892
James Dawson	1904
William Hughes	1921 to 1936
D. Roberts	? to the present



The Swynnerton Arms in 2006

The George and Dragon, Rough Close

Stephen Mear	1862
George Hand	1872 to 1876
Mrs. Harriet Hand	1880 to 1884
James Cliffe	1892
Charles Rogers	1904
Hannah Ball	1921
George Wilkes	1928 to 1936
Julie Ann Parry	? to about 2004
Iain Elliott	2006



George and Dragon in 2006

The Windmill, Meir Heath

John Shelley	1851
T. Hocknell	1860
Thomas Hockney	1863
John Bromley	1872
George Heapey	1876
John Plant	1880 to 1884
William Brook	1892
Albert Wardle	1904
Alfred Ernest Gimbert	1936 to 1940
Jonathan D. Peers	? to the present



The windmill and the Windmill Inn in 2006 *

The Dusty Miller Beerhouse at Meir Heath (thought now to be a Chinese take-away)

James Hemmings	1851
Edwin George Walker	1881
Richard Ash Broster	?

(The Dusty Miller appears to have closed at the end of the 19th century)



Hilltop Cottage, once The Dusty Miller, in 2006 *

The Seven Stars, Meir Heath

Richard Cordon	1834
Isaac Love	1851

(The Seven Stars does not appear to be recorded after 1851)

The Star and Garter, Meir Heath

Noah Ward	1834
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(The 'Star and Garter' does not appear to be recorded in 1860 or later)

The Wheatsheaf, Blacklake (renamed 'The Black Lake Inn in 2003)

John Wallis	1851
Thomas Nicklin	1860 to 1863
Thomas Kent	1872 to 1876
John Cheadle	1880 to 1894
Alfred Gimbert	1904
John Braggs	1928 to 1921
Jennie Turner (Mrs.)	1936
Charles Aucott	1940
Richard Kevin Graves	? to the present



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‘The Wheatsheaf’, now the ‘Blacklake Inn’, in 2002.

A man named Stoddard, who was wounded in the Peterboro Massacre in Manchester on 6th August 1819 lived in a cottage somewhere in Meir Heath. Towards the end of the 19th century the Lord of the Manor was Hubert John Broughton-Adderley Esq., and together with the Duke of Sutherland they were the principal landowners in the area.

At the time of the 1881 census there were just 11 households in Meir Heath housing 65 residents and 20 different surnames were recorded:-

Booth	Degg	Smith
Bott	Hall	Tait
Broome	Hodgkinson	Thorley
Brain	Key	Walker
Bridgewood	Large	Woodcock
Cheadle	Plant	
Davis	Rushton	

A small brick Chapel was erected at Rough Close in 1849 which had sittings for 80 people, and a Sunday School was held there.

In the 1890's a Mission Church was built at the corner of Lightwood Road and Common Lane, but it had to be abandoned in the 1950' because of mining subsidence and was rebuilt slightly to the east in 1961.

In 1896 a public elementary school was built to take about ninety children and attained an average attendance of seventy-six. The mistress was Miss Katie Helen Dale.

At Meir Heath the church of St. Francis of Assisi was consecrated in October 1940.

SUMMARY OF THE 1881 CENSUS RETURNS FOR MEIR HEATH:-

<u>HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>BORN</u>	<u>HEAD'S OCCUPATION</u>	<u>WIFE</u>	<u>IN HOUSE</u>
1 – Samuel Brain,	52	Stone	shoemaker	Mary	2
2 – Enoch Woodcock	44	Stone	gardener	widower	8
3 – Charles Booth	56	Stone	cow keeper	widower	1
4 – Henry Tait	44	Doveridge	farmer with 46 acres	Catherine	9
5 – Thomas Degg	50	Stone	wheelwright	Mary	2
6 – Elizabeth Bridgewood	62	Barlaston	cow keeper	widow	2
7 – John Large	50	Barlaston	general labourer	Elizabeth	5
8 – Edward Cheadle	73	Barlaston	butcher	Ellen	3
9 – John Plant	34	Longton	innkeeper ('Windmill')	Caroline	8
10 – Joseph Hodgkinson	67	Tittensor	farmer with 23 acres	Sarah	4
11 – George Walker	42	Stone	millers ('Dusty Miller')	widower	4
12 – William Rushton	26	Stone	brick maker ('Dusty Miller')	Harriet	3
13 – John Davis	38	Montgomery	ag. lab. ('Dusty Miller')	Emma	5
14 – William Broome	51	Worverley	ag. lab. ('Dusty Miller')	Sarah	5

One claim to fame that Rough Close has is that on 27th February 1886 a farm labourer from Rough Close named John Daniels shot his brother dead in a fit of passion at Dale Head Farm in Leaden Dale Road. He was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment.