

# The early history of Hobbs Café, Monsal Head

## 1859 – 1963

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### Introduction

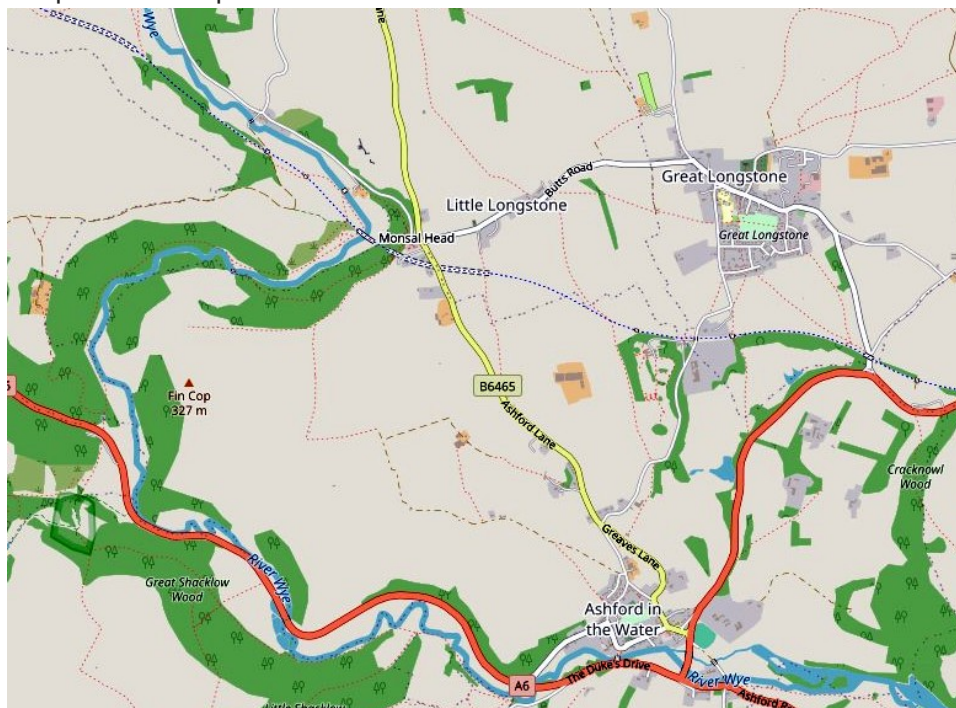
While deeply engrossed in the Fin Cop project 2009-10 I would take refreshments at Hobbs Café with groups of weary diggers. The tea and scones were excellent and we could sit in the sunny garden looking up to the excavation site and recover from all the excitement and hard graft of the day. During these visits I was drawn to the very interesting leaflet available to guests called "Hobb's, a little bit of history" written by Ray and Rose Lambe, the present owners. It was illustrated by an

intriguing photo of a half-timbered building. Being a keen family historian the whole story whetted my appetite making me want to know more.

Time has passed and at last I have had the time to follow all the leads from the Lambe's leaflet. This article is the result of searches in local Parish registers and census returns, available on Ancestry, as well as the online British Newspaper Archive and through visits to Derbyshire Record Office at Matlock. I have talked to several local people who have given me a much greater understanding of the past times at Monsal Head.

I have been able to add a great deal of extra information at the lives and times of past owners and occupiers and most of the new information is based on these records. There are still some areas of the story where I have had to give a best guess to the details. Please contact me if you know more about these matters and I shall add your comments to the article with acknowledgement.

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*Modern map showing Monsal Head with its connections to the River Wye, Monsal Trail (disused railway) passing from NW to E, Little Longstone and Great Longstone to the east, Ashford in the Water to the south east.*

## **1859 – 1863? Bunkhouse and possibly, Midland Railway contractor site office**

All the local people that I have spoken to believe that the building (SK18467153) was erected by the Midland Railway Company during the period when the section of rail line from Hassop to Buxton was under constructed. This is the time when the Headstone tunnel was being excavated and the Headstone (Monsal Dale) viaduct was built. The common consensus is that the building had two

functions; one was a site office for paying wages and other company activities. The other was a navy bunkhouse.

In the earliest photograph taken in around 1918 it appears to be made of wooden panels on the front elevation, laid vertically, with the gable ends of the building made of gritstone. The substantial use of wood makes it similar to other early railway accommodation which was usually of a temporary nature and designed to be removed when the line was completed, for use at the next construction site. The stone in these buildings was to provide heat proof chimneys for safety within a wooden building. Michael Stuart (2002) records that the roof was originally of corrugated iron. The only remaining authenticated navy building is at Edmondthorpe and Wymondham Station, Leicestershire. It was constructed mainly in wood with some brick walling infill and chimneys. Another possible navy hut now re-erected at Settle had extensive use of wooden railway sleepers in its construction.



*Many thanks to Ian Cox for use of this early post card from his collection. The building appears to be two semidetached cottages with a wooden front wall and shuttered windows. A bench to the right of the building could be used as an informal refreshment area.*

The following evidence suggests that it was used as a railway bunkhouse.

At other sites there were often dormitories for single men with a housekeeper who cooked and washed for them. The 1861 census does not specify properties individually but there is only one record for Little Longstone at Edgestones Head (as Monsal Head was known then). It was a lodgings run by Elizabeth Rawnsley and her two daughters, with two of her brothers and three lodgers; all five men were railway contractor's workers (an engine driver, two railway labourers and two carpenters). All the occupants were English and from outside Derbyshire.



In previous censuses there was no record for properties at Edgestones Head in the Little Longstone census (Note 1), supporting the idea that it was built between 1851 and 1861. Also on the Book of Reference (site plans) of 1859 which show the course of the new railway, the only building at Monsal Head is the Bull's Head Inn, which narrows down the erection date to between 1859 and 1861.



1- Monsal Head – site of Hobbs Café and the Monsal Head Hotel (the Bulls Head Inn), 2 The Headstone (Monsal Head) Viaduct over the River Wye, 3 – site of Monsal Head Station and signal box, 4 – Ridings on the steep slopes of the Wye Valley, 5 – Possible site of the turf huts at Broadroads, 6 – Little Longstone Congregational Chapel.

OS map Derbyshire XXII 2 series Surveyed 1878. National Library of Scotland  
<https://maps.nls.uk/index.html>

So far I have not been unable to verify its use as an office in railway or other contemporary records. If there was also an office in the building it is not recorded in the census record of 1861. Glynn Waite (personal communication) has suggested that it was not very practical to have a site office at Monsal Head as it was well away from the actual railway line construction further down the hill side. On the other hand, it was close to the little encampment of turf huts at Broad Roods (Note 2) and had good communication links via the main road to routes that other railway workers in the district would have used to access their worksite. Michael Stuart records that there was a table by the door which was used when the workers were paid (2002).

Overall, this evidence supports the idea that it was indeed built by the Midland Railway on land owned by the Duke of Devonshire, after 1859 as lodgings for workers, with the likelihood that one half was used as a site office.

When the company had finished the work in 1863 it is interesting that it was not removed as happened to all the other temporary buildings such as the turf huts at Broad Roods a short distance down Ashford Lane. (2000, Stuart). Since it appears to have had full height stone gables to the side elevations, it would have been less easy for the contractor to dismantle the building for use at the next construction site. In this circumstance it was usual for the building to be auctioned off and this may have been its fate.



*Detailed map showing the building now called Hobbs Café with associated outbuildings north of the word "Headstone". It shares the site with the Bull's Head Inn (Monsal Head Hotel) to the east. The complicated route of the parish boundary can be seen as a series of dots separating the Bull's Head Inn in Ashford from the Hobb's Café building in Little Longstone. See note 1.*

OS map Derbyshire XXII 2 series Surveyed 1878. National Library of Scotland  
<https://maps.nls.uk/index.html>

## **Elizabeth Rawnsley, bunkhouse keeper.**

In 1861 Elizabeth kept the bunkhouse at Monsal Head. She arrived from Bradford with her two daughters, Alice (Mary) 9 and Charlotte 4 and managed the house for her Hinchliffe brothers and three other labourers who were all working on the railway. She married Jenkin Jones in 1862 in Great Longstone church and an announcement was made in the Derbyshire Courier. They had two children, Mary in 1863, while living in Little Longstone and Robert in 1865, while living in Doveholes. Jenkin was a blacksmith and came from Monmouthshire. He was likely to have been part of the workforce on the railway, moving up the line towards Buxton via Doveholes as building progressed.

Probing a little into her background, it seems that rather than a widow as recorded on the census and marriage records, she was a bigamist. As Elizabeth Rachel Hinchcliffe (Hinchliff, Inchcliffe, Hinchliffe) she had married Benjamin Rawnsley in 1850 and had had four children, one of whom was born in Monmouthshire. It is a possibility that she met Jenkin Jones at this time. This makes the newspaper announcement rather curious, as it seems that they did not want to conceal the marriage, as might have been expected.

In the 1861 census her first husband was recorded living in Bradford with his two sons, Benjamin junior and George, and his "wife" Ann and two older children who may have been stepchildren. The

reason that caused both the husband and wife to live with new partners is not clear. Such occurrences in the 1800s were not uncommon and very rarely were miscreants charged in law. However the separation of the Rawnsley and Jones families was not complete because (Alice) Mary moved back to Bradford by 1871 to live with her father.

Following the census registers, it appears that Elizabeth Jones moved several times as her second husband was employed in some of the epic construction projects which were undertaken at the second half of the 1800s. She continued to be a boarding house keeper with lodgers recorded in each of the next three decades. One of the most significant was the construction of the Manchester Ship canal where she lived in one of the thirteen wooden huts on the bank of the ship canal with a total of 6 people in four rooms. One of the lodgers was a steam crane driver whose machine made the building task not entirely reliant on human power alone, as so much of excavation had been at Monsal Dale.

Elizabeth died in 1899 at Dover where both her husband and son, Robert were working on the construction of two piers of the west harbour, another epic project.

## **1864? – 1883 John Whalley Gamekeeper to the Duke of Devonshire**

The answer to why the railway building survived after completion of the line may possibly be explained as follows. The Duke of Devonshire has extensive land holdings on both sides of the River Wye between Litton Mill and Ashford. On the steep hill sides at this time there was a hatchery for rearing pheasants and woods with ridings where the young pheasants matured, waiting for the shooting parties to have their sport. The evidence for the ridings can be seen on the 1898 OS map. Also there were several warrens for rabbit rearing which were stated as being over 1000 acres in size in a later newspaper report and in an old postcard of the viaduct and Brushfield the view is described as "The Warren". These areas were attractive to poachers and were therefore closely guarded and managed by games keepers. Note 3. It would have been convenient to have a gamekeeper sited close to this area and it may be that the Duke of Devonshire, who owned the land where the house had been built, bought the building from the railway company for housing his gamekeeper.

Certainly in the next two censuses, 1871 (at Edgestones) and 1881 (the last entry for Little Longstone), John Whalley and his family were there with his occupation given as gamekeeper. Evidence from censuses point to the building still being divided into two. There was a railway porter living next to the Whalleys in 1871. In the 1881 census the other half of the building was occupied by Sarah Wardle, with a lodger. Sarah died in 1883 and this side of the cottage remained empty as indicated on the 1891 census.

John Whalley was born in 1831 in Cracoe near to Grassington in the Yorkshire Dales and his arrival in the area is confirmed by the birth of his daughter Ellen who was baptised in Great Longstone in 1864 (more of Ellen later). A little of his career is illustrated in local newspaper reports. In 1867 he brought a successful court case against three people "trespassing in pursuit of game" and in 1870 he caught a "monster trout" of 8lb 9oz in Monsal Dale. In 1880 he was named as one of the pall bearers at the funeral of Lord Cavendish and in 1883 his own death notice states that he died at Edgestone Head. His wife Elizabeth received a pension from the Devonshire Estate until she died in 1890.

## **1871 Samuel Pitty, railway porter**

Samuel Pitty lived beside the Whalley family according to the 1871 census working as a railway porter at Monsal Dale station. Further research revealed that he was a man with a history. A Chelsea Pensioner by the age of 28, he had served in the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the 16<sup>th</sup> regiment of Foot from 1861 attaining the rank of corporal. His battalion served in Halifax, Nova Scotia from 1861 to 1866 during the unsettled times of American Civil War. He was in Barbados between 1866 and 1869 and then returned to Dublin. It is possible to read the notes from the Regimental Board which led to his discharge with a pension. He had been a good soldier with only one early incident of drunkenness. Unfortunately he suffered from chronic rheumatism after catching gonorrhoea, a well-established consequence of the infection, which was debilitating enough to end his career.

Railway employee records show that he worked at Monsal Dale station for the Midland Railway. In 1872 he transferred to Hyde station and after two other appointments he eventually resigned from railway work in 1873. I have been unable to find any birth, marriage, death or other census records for him which makes me wonder if there may be more to his story .....

## **? – 1883? Sarah Wardle, lodging house keeper**

Born in Wardlow in 1819, Sarah Bamford was the daughter of a buddler. This is an occupation typical of the area around the village where there were several lead mines. Her father would have separated the heavier lead ore from the other excavated material using a buddle constructed in a stream of water.

She worked as a servant in Nottingham before marrying Charles Wardle in 1855. Unfortunately she lost both her baby and husband in 1857 and returned to live closer to home with her brother in Sheffield where she was described as a charwoman on the 1861 census. The next record of her that I can find is when she was living next to the Whalleys with a boarder, John Johnson in the 1881 census. She died in 1883 and was buried in Great Longstone churchyard.

I have not been able to trace any more information about John Johnson who was working as a general labourer with no record of railway employment. As is the case here, a common name is always a hindrance to being sure of following the correct personal history.

## **1884 – 1897? William Lupton Gamekeeper to the Duke of Devonshire**

William Lupton was born in Grassington to a gamekeeper father who moved to Lathkill Dale by 1871 and William took up his father's occupation. In 1884 he was reported as being a gamekeeper in Monsal Dale in a notorious court case after trying to apprehend a group of poachers who had entered the rabbit warren. Extensive reporting in local newspapers describes the confrontation. In the fight William was knocked out by rocks thrown by the poachers. They had been recognised by the gamekeeper and two policemen because they had struck a light in order to free their nets entangled in thorn bushes around the warren used to deter predators. The leader of the poachers was himself a gamekeeper! In one of the reports it appears that William was living at Edgestones Head so it is likely that he took over John Whalley's position and resided in one half of the building.

In 1890 he married Ellen Whalley, mentioned above, and they were recorded at Edgestones Head in the 1891 census. Likewise the baptism registration of his four children in 1891 to 1896 give the address as Edgestones Head. In 1897 Ellen died and by 1900 William Lupton had moved into Monsal Dale with his new wife. He was also a river bailiff by the 1901 census and river keeper in the 1911 census and his duties would have been made easier by living closer to the River Wye. There are national insurance documents for William in the fisheries department in the Chatsworth Estate employee records from 1912 to 1929.

It is interesting to note that his son Raymond Lupton and his grandson, also Raymond Lupton, became gamekeeper/water bailiffs meaning that at least four generations of this family had the same occupation and three generations lived in Monsal Dale. A retired Chatsworth gamekeeper, Ralph Lord, remembers Raymond and his son carrying 3 coops (crates) each containing 21 pheasants and a broody hen from the rearing pens up the steep hillside for release into the wood ridings, no mean feat.

Several members of the Lupton family were buried at the Little Longstone Congregational Chapel.

## **1897 – 1932 George McCrindle Gamekeeper to George Marples Thornbridge Hall**

George McCrindle is reported to have arrived at Thornbridge Hall from Scotland in 1896 with George Marples and his housekeeper called Annie Wilson. During the extensive remodelling of the house Marples planned a special round farm house with dog kennels and pheasant hatcheries for his gamekeeper. (This is a very distinctive listed building now called Wyedale House in the Thornbridge Activities complex).

Some of this is true but records suggest that the story is more complicated. In fact George Marples was born in Sheffield to local parents and lived at Brincliffe Tower, Eccleshall. His connection to Scotland was limited to being the tenant, with his brother Benjamin, of a shooting lodge called Quarter in Peeblesshire with shootings moors nearby. It is very likely that George McCrindle was his Scottish game keeper as the Scottish census of 1891 show him living nearby. (Annie Wilson, the housekeeper, had been working for the family in Sheffield since at least 1871 and came from Lincolnshire, not Scotland).





*Shooting party at Thornbridge Hall 1911. George McCrindle, extreme right?*

From Picture the Past website <https://picturethepast.org.uk/>

As to whether George ever lived at the house built for him at Thornbridge it is difficult to say. However certainly by the 1901 census he and his family were living at Edgestones Head. It is likely that George Marples was a tenant of the Duke of Devonshire, shooting over land on the Wye hillsides. Part of the arrangement is likely to have been that George McCrindle took up residence at Monsal Head, rearing and protecting the pheasants and rabbits. There is no record of George living at any of the quarters at Thornbridge Hall. In the 1911 census his house at Edgestones Head was recorded as having 8 rooms suggesting that by this time his family occupied both parts of the house. (In the 1911 census his son John, also a gamekeeper, was living in West Cottage, part of the rather grand Longstone station complex, built by Marples as an impressive entrance to the Hall and accommodation for the servants. In the 1901 census his daughter Elizabeth (Bessie) was working for Marples at the Hall as a kitchen maid. More about Elizabeth McCrindle later)

George McCrindle worshipped at the Congregational Chapel in Little Longstone and recently a family grave stone has been erected with useful details for a local historian like me. However he is described as a founder member of the chapel, which seems unlikely as he was born in 1853 and the chapel was built in 1844. The Adamsons who hold the records for the Chapel can verify that he is not named as such. However there is no doubt that his family were an important force in chapel affairs after he arrived from Scotland in about 1897. For example a newspaper report of 1914 says that after a special celebration of the preacher's long service, refreshments were taken at the house of Mr and Mrs McCrindle of Edgestones Head.



*Photo from Ian Cox's family album. Elizabeth and George McCrindle taken at Monsal Head.*



*The McCrindle family memorial in the grave yard of the Little Longstone Congregational Chapel*



Members of the Nuttall family cared for George until his death in 1932. His granddaughters Freda and Marjorie lived at Monsal View with him as recorded in the 1925 electoral roll and by 1930 his daughter Elizabeth (Bessie), and her husband Fred Nuttall, had come to live with him.

During the whole of George McCrindle's life at Edgestones Head, his son, also named George, lived with him. More information about George junior has come to light via the censuses, electoral registers and an old Chapel photograph. He was born in Glenholm, Scotland in 1889 and moved with the family to Edgestones Head in 1896. In the census of 1901 he is described as incapacitated at birth, although no mention of this disability was recorded in 1911 census when he was a labourer at a spar mine. (This is likely to have been part of the Putwell Hill mine complex by Monsal Dale station because he is reported to have managed his timekeeping by the trains passing on the line.) The photograph which gives a clue to his birth disability was taken in 1906 and shows the members of the Little Longstone Congregational Sunday School. One of the pupils has the distinctive features of Down's syndrome (DS) and appears to be the correct age, leading to the likely identification of George McCrindle junior. At that time the average life expectancy for people with DS was 5 years and sufferers were usually institutionalised so it is quite unusual to come across a person who lived into adulthood. It is a credit to the McCrindle and Nuttall families that he lived until the age of 52, cared for at home and integrated into the community. However it is maybe a reflection of those times that no record of his condition had passed to the surviving members of the families that I have spoken to. He was buried in the graveyard of the Chapel in 1941 and shares the new gravestone with his mother and father.



*"L. Longstone Congregational S.S. Sept.06." The person, third from the left in the back row, is believed to be George McCrindle junior. Many thanks to Keith Adamson and Ian Cox, for permission to use this photograph, from Keith's family album.*

## 1930? – 1963 Fred and Elizabeth (Bessie) Nuttall with café in west side of building



*Fred senior and Bessie Nuttall seated centre, with Joe, Freda, Marjory (Madge) and Fred junior standing and Betty (Ian Cox's mother) with dog. Family photograph circa 1925 from Ian Cox's collection.*

Fred Nuttall's father Joseph was born in 1856 at Darwen, Lancashire but by the time he was five Joseph lived with his grandmother Martha Holmes who ran the Bull's Head Inn at Edgestones Head (now called the Monsal Head Hotel). Joseph became a carpenter like his father and continued to live there until his marriage in 1882. In the 1891 census he lived at Sunnyside in the village of Little Longstone with his family including Fred (Frederick Holmes Nuttall) who had been born in 1883.

On leaving school Fred became a well-respected clerk for Goodwin and Cockerton, Solicitor, in Bakewell. In 1914 he was appointed as the accountant for the Bakewell Urban District Council though employed by the solicitors. In 1926 he became a full time officer and worked for the Council until his retirement in 1949. In 1907 Fred married George McCrindle's daughter, Elizabeth (Bessie), and by the 1911 census he was living next door to his father Joseph in Little Longstone, with Bessie and three children, one of whom was called Marjorie (more later). In 1914 there is a newspaper report which says that he was secretary of the Congregational Chapel and helped with preaching. He was also Clerk to the Little Longstone Village Meeting for over 50 years.



## When was the front rebuilt in stone?

By the time of the first dated photograph the corrugated roof have been replaced by a slate roof and a single storey extension had been added at the back. This rear extension can be seen in OS maps surveyed in 1878/9 along with the barns to the east and west suggesting some improvements were made after the building had been sold by the Midland Railway in 1863.

It seems that the house was sold to Fred Nuttall in the early 1900s. Examination of the deeds may prove that the house was sold during one of the Duke of Devonshire land sales around this period. Alternatively the house may have become available when George Marple's estate was sold off after his death in 1929.



*Undated photograph supplied by Ian Cox. The wooden front wall has been replaced with stone, the upper storey windows have been heightened and the roof raised. A sign is present on the east gable (left of photograph) saying "Teas and Refreshments". This appears to be the same sign on the earlier photographs suggesting that it has been a café from around the turn of the twentieth century.*

Ian Cox has made photographs from his postcard collection available for me to study and they have been invaluable. It is in the family memory that while living there, Fred further upgraded the house. The architect was Ernest Longsdon who lived at The Hollow, Little Longstone. Comparing the older photographs with the newer one it is possible to identify Fred's improvements. He replaced the wooden frontage with gritstone and increased the height of the first floor bedroom windows. Evidence of an old roof line in the east elevation suggest that he also had the roof heightened and the window shutters were removed at this time too.

## When were teas served at Hobb's Café?

From pre railway time, scenery around Monsal Dale was well known for its splendour. As early as 1812 Monsal Dale scenery was being used in the theatre as a backdrop (for example during a performance by Grimaldi at Sadler's Wells) and by the 1850s Monsal Dale was suggested as a rewarding excursion from Buxton. As soon as the railway arrived in 1863 cheap excursions were advertised and in about 1886 the stables at the Bull's head were extended to provide accommodation for the horses and wagons which met the trains and took the crowds up the hill to view the wonderful sights at Monsal Head. It is quite possible that there have been informal refreshments provided to excursionists by successive boarding house keepers from the very earliest days.

Looking through old newspapers reports, the earliest mention of teas taken at Monsal Head were during the 1910s when workers' annual charabanc trips are described as stopping for tea at Monsal Head. Sometimes it is clear that the refreshments were taken in a room at the Monsal Head Hotel but in other reports the specific venue is not given.

In the 1920s, advertisements for trips to Monsal Head increased greatly and often a tea stop was included. Unfortunately again the actual venue is not given. Monsal Dale railway station had always been an important destination for "excursionists". Also, the hill provided an attractive challenge to cyclists who were no doubt relieved to find refreshments at the top.

In 1921 the Great Longstone church leaflet published an article bemoaning the "fair at Monsal Head" on Sundays. "What with a photographer, an ice cream stall, fruit stall and suchlike the quiet beauty of Monsal Dale is ruined." This suggests that providing teas would definitely have been a tempting commercial proposition at this time. In those times "teas" could mean a formal sit down meal or just a pot of tea with cups on a tray. Talking to living family members it sounds as if Hobb's Café (Monsal View) in those times was more likely to have been providing an informal tea tray.

The fact that Elizabeth McCrindle senior was providing refreshments for a large Church meeting in 1914 suggests that she may have been used to catering for large numbers, and was in fact providing this service for the many visitors to come to take in the exceptional view. A postcard dated 1918 exists which shows the house with a sign on the east gable in the same position as a later postcard after Fred Nuttall's improvement. In the later photograph the sign can be read as "Teas and Refreshments" This indicates that teas were available by 1918 provided by Elizabeth McCrindle. However no memory of this has survived in the family living today. One of the earlier undated photographs shows a bench providing seating to the west end of the building – another indicator of the informal refreshment business similar to that which is recorded at other cottages in the area in the early 1900s (Rowdale toll bar, Hassop and Cupola Bar, Baslow).

Female members of the Nuttall family moved into the house at Monsal Head around 1922, to look after George McCrindle and George, junior and the building was called Monsal View. Later Bessie Nuttall (Elizabeth McCrindle junior) moved back into her family home around 1930 and it is known that teas were provided by her in living memory until her retirement in 1945.

Most of the memories of the café at Monsal Head come from more recent times when Aunty Madge (Marjorie Griffith nee Nuttall) was in charge.

## **1945 – 1955? Marjorie and Michael Griffith, Monsal View Café at 2 Monsal View**

Marjorie (Madge) Griffith was Fred and Bessie Nuttall's daughter, She was a Pupil Teacher at Great Longstone School and later taught at the primary school in Dronfield, before she married Ernest Griffith in 1938. Ernest (Ernie) worked as a signaller in the box at Monsal Dale Station beyond the northern end of the Viaduct. He was from a Stockport family of 13 and they met while he was lodging in Little Longstone. Their married home was South View in Great Longstone and it was there that Michael Griffith their son was born. Ernie used to cycle to and from Great Longstone via Monsal Head to the box at the far end of the platform.

It is sad to relate that on a rainy day in 1944, rather than cycle, Ernie had taken the bus to Monsal Head and then walked down the steep path to the tunnel mouth and along the line over the viaduct to the signal box. At the end of his shift he started the return journey across the viaduct in the dark using his cycle lamp. He was hit as two trains passed by each other at the tunnel entrance. It is believed that the noise of the wind along with the usual difficulty of hearing a train within the tunnel and that one of the trains was rescheduled, were the reasons that Ernie did not recognise the danger. (Rowsley Railway Miscellany)

At some time around 1945 Madge and Michael moved to Monsal View from Great Longstone and the house was divided into two with Madge running the café in the west side. The little lean-to on the east end was added as a downstairs toilet for Fred and Bessie when Madge moved into the west end, remembers Ian Cox.

Madge served teas for nearly 20 years as well as participated fully in village activities, including being a member of the highly successful Longstone Choral Society, and writing scripts for plays put on by the Womens' Institute. Michael says his mother was devoted to Ernie, was deeply shocked at his sudden death and never remarried. Fittingly they are now buried in the same grave at Great Longstone.

By around 1963 Fred and Bessie Nuttall and Madge and Michael Griffith had moved on and the building stood empty until it was bought by the Sutcliffees in 1964.

## **Memories of the Monsal View Tea Rooms 1945-60s**

I have been able to record the memories of Michael Griffith (Madge's son), and Ian Cox and Keith Adamson who were Michael's cousins, all grandchildren of Fred and Bessie Nuttall, as well as Susan Cooper who worked at the café at this time.

Michael helped his mother with serving in the café. Keith and Susan used to help out at the café too and Ian often visited his grandparents living in the east side of the building next to the café.

Michael remembers that there was a small tearoom to the left of the front door with the family sitting room to the right. The kitchen and a long tea room were along the rear of the property in the extension.

The life at the café was all part of the family enterprise in the building. Fred was a "hobby farmer" and had a small holding. He owned the field where the large carpark and toilets are today, behind the Stable Bar, and also used the barn and pig sties which are attached to the west end cottage (next



to the little café garden today). His cows grazed in the field at the back and at milking time they knew their own way to the cow shed at the front (maybe not a route to be trusted to cows on their own in the 21st century). On one occasion a mad red cow refused to cooperate and Madge and Michael were recruited to help – not unsurprisingly Madge ran away! The cows were hand milked in those days. Michael gave Fred help with milking, calf rearing and hay making in the field which contains the reservoir today.

Many of Michael's memories recall a business in some ways very similar to Hobb's Cafe today. Summer weekends were always the busiest when Madge had to bring in extra help. This is when Keith and Susan used to be employed with clearing and washing up. Many customers were regular locals but hordes of visitors came in cars, motor cycles and pushbikes as well as walkers coming from Sheffield and Manchester by train. The hill climb attracted many club cyclists and Michael recalls having to stoke a large boiler in the laundry at the back to provide the vast quantities of hot water which were required for all the weekend tea making. I watched Ray and Rose on one of the first weekends after the 2020 lockdown was lifted, very busy serving take-away hot drinks and other refreshments from the ice cream van and I saw Ray carrying hot water from the kitchen, much as Michael used to do.

Unlike Hobb's Café today, Madge did not serve homemade food or ice creams, relying on wrapped snacks and sweets biscuits. Ian has fond memories of the pop from Tordale in Matlock Bath (see ref. AndrewsGen). Also Michael recalls collecting all the trays which had been left on the grass at the top of the hill (now the Parish car park looking over the view) at the end of the busy days. Another sign of different times is the fact that neither Fred nor Madge paid income tax. On one occasion, when a man from the Inland Revenue called on Madge for evidence of café takings, he was summarily sent packing by a very irate Bessie in high Scottish dudgeon saying "clear off and stop bullying a poor widow".



*Another photograph from Ian Cox's collection showing the café in more recent times.*



## Recent owners of Hobbs Cafe

1964 – 1979 Warren and Isobel Sutcliffe

1980 – 1987 Brian and Dorothy Nightingale

1980s J R Taylor +

1988 – 2006 Alan and Liz Nicholas, Monsal View Tearooms

2006 – present Ray and Rose Lambe, Hobb's Cafe

## Notes

1. The area around Monsal Head is in two parishes and the parish boundary is used for the census enumerations. Hobbs Café building is in the parish of Little Longstone and Brushfield. Confusingly the Monsal Head Hotel building and stables are in the Ashford parish. Using the records from the two parish censuses the only building at Monsal Head until 1861 was the Inn, at that time called the Bull's Head.

2. The navy accommodation at Broad Roods were described as turf huts in the 1861 census. Robert Thornhill described the demolition of them in January 1863 in his diary. They must have been more substantial than this description implies because Robert bought the (dirty) wood and roof slates. Marian Barker 2020 describes the mud huts in Bakewell at this time.

3. David Windle drew my attention to a field surrounded by an unusually high stone wall on the southern slope of the Wye to the north west of Ashford. This may have been one of the areas used for protecting pregnant does and kits.

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