



THE FRIENDS of SADDLEWORTH ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST

Newsletter

No 1

Winter 2006

Retrospect, 2006

In the four years that the 'Friends' have been in existence, the past year will probably prove to be the most successful to-date. Seven evening lectures were held during the year, starting with the Annual General Meeting in January and finishing with David Chadderton's 'The Prehistory of Saddleworth' in December. During the year we changed our meeting room to Greenfield Conservative Club, where we have a comfortable room and have been made to feel very welcome by the Officials of the Club. Attendance at meetings has been satisfactory, but we would welcome more members to support our speakers who sometimes travel some distance to be with us.

Membership has increased during the year and now stands at 70, although we shall lose one or two next year because of members leaving the district. We need to increase membership, so please try to recruit friends who may be interested in supporting archaeology in Saddleworth.

During the year we had two special lectures and a one-day school, all were well supported.

The first of the special annual lectures was given in March, the 'John Buckley Lecture'. John was a member of the Trust and the event is held in his memory. This was the first of these occasions and was given by Dr Mike Nevell who is the Director of the Field Archaeology Unit at Manchester University. The title of the lecture was 'Aspects of Industrial Archaeology'. A fitting subject, John had a lifelong interest in this field of archaeology and it will be the topic of future lectures in this series.

The second of the special lectures was the 'Stonehouse Lecture'. This was the fifth year of the lectures and an audience of approx. 70 people were kept enthralled by Professor Rosalie David (see photo) of Manchester University who gave an illustrated talk entitled 'Ancient Egyptian Mummies; a resource for studying disease and lifestyle'.



Each year The Council for British Archaeology organises a ‘National Archaeology Week’ during the month of July . In order to support this event, Saddleworth Archaeological Trust organised a ‘One Day School’ in conjunction with Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit. The One Day School was based at the Castleshaw Centre in Delph and was entitled ‘Exploration and Excavation at Castleshaw Roman Forts; 1751 to 1996’. The morning session, attended by 51 delegates, heard two illustrated lectures given by Ken Booth and Norman Redhead. In the afternoon one party accompanied Norman Redhead and Ken Booth onto the site of the nearby forts whilst a second party, led by David Chadderton, visited several locations where the line of the Roman road could be seen. The event was very successful with many of the delegates who attended, travelling from outside Saddleworth.



Norman Redhead explaining to the delegates the excavations he supervised within the fortlet

It is planned to support ‘National Archaeology Week’ again in 2007 by organising a similar ‘One Day School’ based at the Castleshaw Centre, the subject being Industrial Archaeology. The Castleshaw Valley is rich in Industrial Archaeology and the format for the day will be lectures in the morning and a tour around the valley in the afternoon.

This year has seen a number of ‘firsts’; the Newsletter in a new format, a Programme of Lectures printed in a handy card form covering the full twelve months, also a change of venue, and the organising of a ‘One Day School’. A tremendous amount of hard work goes into the running of the ‘Friends’ and it falls onto the shoulders of a ‘few’. As membership grows and our plans grow more ambitious and the ‘few’ grow older, we need more people to come forward to help. The ‘few’ enjoy what they do, but it could be done so much better with a little more help. If you feel that you could spare some of your time and expertise to help, please let us know.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATTERS

One of the new features of the Newsletter will be to bring to members notice a wide range of news that we feel may be of interest.

A flint find from just outside Saddleworth

During the year, a rather fine Early Bronze Age (2000-1600BC) Plano-Convex flint knife (Slug Knife) was found on Saddleworth Moor by Dr Laurance Donnelly. He has requested that we do not divulge the location of the find for the time being.



The Plano Convex Knife

Dr Donnelly is giving a talk to the Friends on Wednesday 11th April 2007 when we have no doubt he will tell us more of his magnificent find.

An un-recorded find from Saddleworth

Many years ago one of our members, George Dockery, when a young boy, found on Lockwood Hey, between Delph and Denshaw, a magnificent Bronze Age arrowhead. It is finely worked and demonstrates the skill of the Bronze Age flint knapper in his ability to produce such a beautiful item.

It measures 45mm long x 32mm over the tangs.



Ceremonial Flint Daggers

In 1924 a Ceremonial Flint Dagger was found at Ragstones, on Denshaw Moor.

It is illustrated on the front cover of 'The Prehistory of Saddleworth & Adjacent Areas' (published by the Trust in 2001) The dagger measures 140mm long x 50mm wide. A similar Dagger has been found in the last year or so on the site of the Iron



Age Fort at Mellor in Cheshire (see photo). The example measures 133mm long x 40mm wide.

This type of dagger often accompanies Beaker Burials in the Peak District but in Gritstone areas, such as Saddleworth, they are rare.

Roman Altar at Castleshaw

Recently Saddleworth Historical Society has re-printed James Butterworth's 'History of Saddleworth' 1828. In the excellent introduction to the re-print, Dr Robert Poole warns the reader that Butterworth '*pastes in quotations taken by Bottomley* from two sources; John Whitaker's ponderous History of Manchester (1770-3) and the 1775 History of Halifax by the Stockport antiquarian, the Revd John Watson.*

Butterworth, on page.25, states that a Roman altar has been discovered on the site of Castlehill, it is of a square form with many plain ornaments etc. He then states on page. 26 that the Rev Mr. Whitaker speaks of the altar found at Castlehill, in Saddleworth.

No altar is known from Castleshaw and Butterworth must have confused the information placed before him.

The story of the altar begins in 1757 when Watson, whilst tracing the course of the Roman road close to the present site of the Roman fort at Slack, near Huddersfield, stumbled upon the altar in a farm-yard. He persuaded the farmer to show him the spot where it was found which turned out to be on the western side of the bath-house outside the fort at Slack. Watson kept the altar in his possession for several years and eventually presented it to Whitaker along with another inscribed stone.

Whitaker, (on page 130 of his 'History of Manchester,') whilst exploring the 'Eald' (old) fields in the township of Longwood came upon the foundations of a building. The site turned out to be that of the Roman fort at Slack and the building was that of the bath-house where the altar was found.. When translated the inscription on the altar reads; *Caius Antonius Modestus Centurion of the Sixth Victorious Pious and Faithful Legion, consecrated this altar to Fortune and with pleasure discharged the vow he owed.*



The Roman fort at Slack would be under the command of the Legionary Fortress at York. About the year 120AD the Sixth *Victrix* legion replaced the Ninth *Hispana* legion. Modestus, the man who dedicated the altar, was a centurion in the Sixth Legion. He was probably in command of a detachment of legionaries who had come to Slack to carry out necessary building work.

The myth of a Roman Altar at Castleshaw raises its head again in 1871 in 'Saddleworth Sketches' by Joseph Bradbury. In the section entitled 'Roman Remains' on page 141, Bradbury repeats the state-

ment made by Butterworth. As sources of information, books written in the 18th and 19th century do provide a certain amount of useful facts, but in the light of modern knowledge and research, and bearing in mind the sources of information the authors had available to them, we must exercise great care when quoting from them.

* Samuel Bottomley- A 'History of Saddleworth', a 55 page pamphlet included with his poem 'Greenfield. 1816