

HOLCOMBE MOOR HERITAGE GROUP

Autumn Newsletter



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Stunning Discovery in the Holcombe Valley!

During our 2018 digging season, Holcombe Moor Heritage Group uncovered a rare iron smelting bloomery furnace, which was very well preserved. A piece of charcoal was recovered from inside the base of the tapping pit. This piece of charcoal was sent to Glasgow University to be radio carbon dated. The HMG team were astonished to discover that the charcoal dated to between 877-996 Calendar AD. This places the bloomery in the late Saxon period, making it a very rare discovery indeed and rewriting the history of the Holcombe valley and surrounding area! There are approximately a dozen known similar sites in the whole of the UK, and none of these are anywhere near this area. For further information please see our main article about the 2018 dig later in this newsletter.

Talk Report 1

Turton Tower's Ghosts and Orbs by Peter Farley

On 17th October 2018, Peter Farley gave a talk about his research into the paranormal happenings at Turton Tower. The tower was built in 1420, but has been added to and remodelled through the years. Peter told the story of two skulls which are in the collection at the tower, which have been associated with poltergeist activity in the past. In February 1954, a bus driver stopped to collect an elderly gentleman passenger at the bus stop outside the tower, only for the passenger to disappear before getting on the bus. Other ghosts, said to have been seen at the Tower, include a lady with a large, old fashioned hat and overcoat accompanied by a dog, a dog in the tearoom which was later seen on an old photograph in the tower and a man dressed in a ruff and green doublet who was seen looking out of the library window. Peter also mentioned a cradle that has been seen to rock by itself and a lady dressed in white who appeared to be walking in the ruins of a building in the grounds of the Tower, who subsequently disappeared. Peter also showed some photographs which contain orbs, which have been taken at the Tower. The talk was well received by the audience and generated much discussion afterwards. Thanks go to Peter, for taking the time to deliver the talk.



Walls and Boundaries project

Work on this project is still continuing. More of the features have been plotted on the map and the intention is to produce a booklet with information about the different walls and boundaries in the Holcombe Valley. As part of this project, we have developed links with The Friends of Pendle Heritage Centre, through a common interest in vaccary walls. We have received an invitation to visit to group as part of a reciprocal arrangement. Further details to follow when a visit is arranged.



A Walk Through the History of Holcombe Moor

On Sunday 9th September 2018 we held a walk and talk for members of Holcombe Moor Heritage Group. The group walked for about 5 miles, looking at many of the historical features on the moor, including Ellen Strange's Memorial Stone, the Old Grey Wall, Robin Hood's Well and the Breathing Ground. The walk was enjoyed by the members who attended and they were fascinated to find out more about the history of the area. Further information can be found on our website.



Diggers' Dinner

The annual Diggers' Dinner was held on the evening of Friday 16th November at Al Bosco Restaurant in Summerseat. HMHG members, who have been involved in the dig at Cinder Hill field, enjoyed delicious food and a chance to catch up with the latest news about the dig. The meal was attended by 14 members.



Talk Report 2

From Stone to Iron—Medieval Monastic Magic in the Holcombe Valley

On Wednesday 28th November, Neil Coldrick, Holcombe Moor Heritage group's dig director, gave a talk about the dig at Cinder Hill Field in 2018. Neil gave the historical context for the dig and explained the process of iron smelting and the raw materials needed to make iron. He told the audience how the site was discovered. He described the different trenches that were dug and the finds that were recovered. Then came news of a very exciting discovery on the site. A piece of charcoal, from the bottom of the tapping pit at the base of the bloomery furnace has been sent away to be radio-carbon dated. This piece of charcoal dates from 877-996 Calendar AD. This means that there is evidence that the site dates back to the late Saxon period, making it a very rare discovery. This will mean that the history of the Holcombe valley will have to be rewritten. Another piece of charcoal has also been dated to 1225-1289, which shows that there was a continuity of use in the valley. However we will need more dating evidence to confirm this discovery. The talk generated a lot of excitement and interest and much discussion over refreshments at the end. Many thanks to the members of the audience for their contributions towards our radio carbon dating fund.

Winter Talks

There are two talks planned for the New Year.

**The Flax Mills of James Kay (of Turton Tower) by
Professor Richard Horrocks 30th January 2018**

**Excavating Early Steam Engines around Manchester by Dr
Mike Nevell (Head of Archaeology, Salford University)
27th February 2018**

**All talks are held at Greenmount Cricket Club. Admission is
£3 including refreshments. The bar is available and there
will also be a raffle.**

Members Meal

We have arranged a members dinner for Friday 8th March 2019 , to take place at Al Bosco Italian Restaurant in Summerseat. Further details will be sent by email in the New Year. We hope as many members as possible will be able to join us for the meal.

Greater Manchester Archaeology Federation Archaeology Day

On Saturday 24th November, our dig Director, Neil Coldrick was invited to give a talk at the above event. The talk was well received by the people who attended the day and raised the group's profile with other archaeologists in the area.





Sharing our findings

We have attended two events to share our work with members of the public. On Monday 3rd September we had a stand at the Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor One Community Neighbourhood Event in Ramsbottom Civic Hall. This event was to show opportunities for volunteers in the local area. This was followed by another stand at the Tottington and District Horticultural Society September show, where lots of people showed an interest in our work and our old photographs of the area brought back memories for several people.

History Group

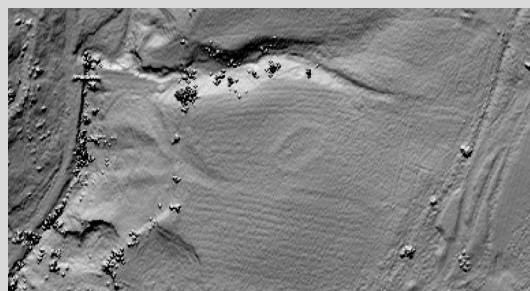
The HMHG History Group have recently been working together with the Ranulf Higden Society, who are a Medieval document research group, transcribing and translating medieval Latin documents. This group have kindly agreed to transcribe some documents relating to the Holcombe Valley, including some charters which have already proved very useful to the History Group. For further information about the society, please see their website www.ranulfhigden.org.uk.

Get Involved!

There are several ways you can get involved in the work we are doing in the Holcombe Valley. We are looking for more researchers to join the History Group to look at the documentary evidence for activity in the Valley. We are also inviting diggers to join us at Cinder Hill Field for the next season. We offer free taster weekends to non-members to take part in the dig. Please contact us via the contacts page on our website for further details. www.holcombemoorheritagegroup.org

Dig 2018

The original plan for 2018 was to explore the Holcombe Valley by putting in a series of small test pits in a variety of locations to see what archaeology exists there, with a view to finding evidence of iron working. However, this plan was amended due to many of the planned locations being out of bounds because of buried ordnance, making it unsafe for us to dig there. The site at Cinder Hill field was identified through LIDAR images, showing an interesting enclosure. When the Explosive Ordnance Clearance team looked at the site, their detector found the top of the bloomery furnace that the team excavated and which turned out to date from the late Saxon period. This was Trench 1. In Trench 2 we uncovered a possible storage area for the raw materials for iron working, including charcoal and roasted iron ore. There were some exceptionally large and well preserved pieces of medieval Pennine Gritty Ware also in this trench. Trench 3 was put in to examine the enclosure, the banks of which turned out to be made of slag and a drain was found just outside the bank of the enclosure. The purpose of this enclosure is still unclear. An unusually constructed drain was found in Trench 4. Other trenches were put in but failed to reveal any substantial archaeology. Next year we plan to continue with the work in this field, hopefully to reveal more evidence of iron working. For further information please see the Dig Diary on the projects page on the website.



Moor Holcombe Memories

We are continuing with our project to gather memories about life in the Holcombe and Hawkshaw area in the past. If you would like to share a memory please see our website project page for information on how you can contribute to the project.

We are on social media. Keep up to date with the latest news on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.



Holcombe Moor Heritage Group



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