

HOLCOMBE MOOR HERITAGE GROUP



Winter Newsletter

In this newsletter

- Upcoming Events
- Excavation plans for 2018
- Annual General Meeting
- Members Meal
- Website
- Talk Reports
- Membership Benefits

Excavation Plans for 2018

In 2018 we plan to run a series of two day weekend digs, mainly on the MOD land in Holcombe, to investigate areas of interest in the valley. We will be digging test pits in each area, to investigate the underlying archaeology. The results of the digs will help us to plan our next long term excavation project. One of the areas we hope to look at is the 'Old Grey Wall' which is on National Trust land. We have already been given provisional permission to work in this area, which is quite a privilege. We would like to see as many members as possible joining in with these digs in the warmer weather. This will be an ideal opportunity to experience a dig and learn some of the techniques involved. Access to the MOD area has to be prearranged, but members are free to leave the dig when they wish. For further details, please keep an eye on our website and social media links.

Talk Report 1

On Wednesday 29th November Professor Richard Horrocks, of the University of Bolton, gave a talk entitled "James Kay of Turton Tower—the Samuel Crompton of the Flax Industry." The talk was well attended by more than 50 people. Richard talked about the life of James Kay (1774—1857), who purchased Turton Tower in 1835 at a cost of £28000, the



equivalent of between 3 and 4 million pounds in today's money. James Kay was born a farmer's son, on a small farm in Entwistle. At the age of 16 he left home and travelled to find work in Preston, to learn cotton spinning. James was able to apply his knowledge of cotton spinning to the flax spinning process. Flax is used to make linen, which is a very ancient fabric used to wrap mummies in Ancient Egypt and make sails for large sailing boats. Flax can be grown in Britain and is a crop that grows about 1 metre high and has beautiful blue flowers. Flax is difficult and expensive to process, but has a high return as the fabric is valuable. James Kay dedicated his life to improving the flax spinning process. The first flax spinning machine invented had widely spaced rollers which were inefficient. James invented a wet spinning process which could be powered by both water and steam. The flax fibres were soaked prior to spinning, with the result that the spinning rollers could be moved closer together, about 2.5 inches apart. The resulting spun fibres could be made into finer yarns and finer fabric. James Kay's invention reinvigorated the Irish flax spinning industry. He had commercial interests in 4 mills, including a mill at Penny Bridge near Ulverston. At the age of 61, James had made enough money to buy Turton Tower, when he retired and passed the business onto his sons. The wet spinning process is still used to spin flax today, but as Richard explained, James Kay is largely forgotten by the history books, except for in Ireland. Thank you to Richard for his very interesting talk.

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM will be held on Tuesday 6th March 2018 at the Shoulder of Mutton, Lumb Carr Road, Holcombe Village, BL8 4LZ at 7.30pm. All members welcome.

Website

Our new website is now live. Check it out at
www.holcombemoorheritagegroup.org

Our Final Winter Talk

Excavating Early Steam Engines around Manchester by Dr Mike Nevell (Head of Archaeology, Salford University) 28th February 2018.

The talk will be held at Greenmount Cricket Club and begins at 7.30pm.

Talk Report 2

On 31st January and 7th February, Neil Coldrick (HMHG Dig Director) gave a talk about the excavations at Cinder Hill Engine House. 2017 has been the final year at the site and Neil's talk explained what has been discovered. The dig in 2017 concentrated on three areas, the pond bank at the north of the engine house, a feature in the far west and the features at the far south of the site. The 'shaft' feature in the pond bank was excavated and cleaned and has led to the discovery that it was initially the rear wall of the wheel pit. At some point, the water wheel was moved or replaced 1.5 metres further south. A possible reason for this is that stresses of the wheel caused the eastern wall to bend out of shape, which led to the wheel catching on the rear wall. At the west of the engine house the team investigated a strange feature the purpose of which remains a mystery. There was a couple of tiny 'rooms' separated by a vertical flagstone with an underlying feature of a flagged stone surface. The weather was very bad, with water pouring off the hillside and into the trenches, particularly during July and August and dig days usually began with bailing out the trench! At the far south of the site a boundary wall was uncovered, with a post hole for a gate post and another mystery feature close to where Red Brook would have been. The feature is associated with water, but again, its purpose is unknown.



The 'shaft' in the pond bank.



The mystery feature at the far south of the site.



The features at the west of the engine house.



A typical start to the days digging! Trenches often needed bailing out before work could start.



The engine house with the floors replaced on the last day of the dig in 2017.

Neil then went on to outline the story of Cinder Hill Engine House from being built between 1780-90 until its decline in around 1870. The possible uses of the Engine House were mentioned, along with the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the mill. The talks were enjoyed by all who attended them.

Members Meal

Our members only meal will be held on Friday 9th March at Al Bosco restaurant in Summerseat. 7.00pm for 7.30. Please contact Rick via email (rikbragg@gmail.com) before 23rd February, to book your place. Unfortunately members must pay for their own food and drinks. Looking forward to seeing as many members as possible there!

Membership Benefits

What are the benefits of being a member of HMHG?

- ◆ Invitations to talks
- ◆ Free places on 'Walk n Talks'.
- ◆ Able to partake in dig days
- ◆ Being able to visit archives with other group members
- ◆ Able to attend member's meetings
- ◆ Able to attend Member/s meal
- ◆ Able to attend AGM
- ◆ Access to HMHG archive
- ◆ Newsletters
- ◆ Dig updates
- ◆ Accompanied access to MOD land
- ◆ Support with own research

To join us please contact our membership secretary by email

hmhg_membership@btinternet.com

Dry stone Wall Project

Our survey of the various types of dry stone wall in the Holcombe Valley is now complete. We are in the process of plotting our findings on a map. The intention is to arrange a day's walk in the valley for members to join a member of the Dry Stone Wall association to look at the walls and learn more about them. More details to follow!

Investigation Walk

The group intend to carry out a walk to have a closer look at some of the walls and other items of interest which were sited during the wall survey last year, and which may be worth while investigating as areas of archaeological interest later in the year. The area we are interested in is roughly following Red Brook from Cinder Hill to the head of the valley and within the constraints of Moorbottom Road.

If you are interested in joining the walk on the 15th February please let Rick know (rikbragg@gmail.com) by **09:00hrs Friday 9th February 2018**. This will allow time to advise HMTC the names of those members who will be on site. We need to have details of everyone attending in the form of names and car details - make, colour and, most important, the registration number.

The intention is to congregate at the army camp at **10:00hrs** before driving to the car park above the dig site, then proceeding from there on foot. Please advise what time you will be arriving if it is to be a few minutes later than 10:00hrs. (Please refer note below) If you are unsure of the arrangements, please let me know and I will try to answer any of your queries. We will leave the army training ground by 16:00hrs. Also please ensure you are suitably equipped i.e., suitable footwear, warm waterproof clothing, food and drink. The walk will obviously be weather dependent. A decision will be made on the morning whether to proceed with the walk or postpone it until a later date. **Please note: Due to army requirements we now have to lock the metal gate behind us when going on to their land. If you are going to arrive a few minutes late please let me know your approximate time of arrival so we can wait for you. Unfortunately, the arrangement whereby we have to lock the gates does mean that it will not be possible to leave early as it will entail someone returning with you to unlock the gates.**

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



Holcombe Moor Heritage Group



@HolcombeMoor



holcombemoorheritagegroup