

HOLCOMBE MOOR HERITAGE GROUP

Autumn Newsletter



Exciting last minute find at Cinder Hill Field in the Holcombe Valley!



On the very last afternoon of this season's excavations in the Holcombe Valley, our diggers uncovered a second bloomery furnace! Unfortunately the team did not have time to excavate it this year, so it will be explored further in 2020. From what was revealed, it does not appear to be as well preserved as the first furnace, but, as can be seen in the photograph, there may be evidence that the furnace has been relined several times, indicating it may have been in use for a longer period of time than the first one. The digging team are excited to find out more when the digging season begins in the Spring.

Talk report 1

Cinder Hill Field—An Update by Neil Coldrick

On Wednesday 16th October, our dig director Neil Coldrick, presented a talk describing this year's excavations on Cinder Hill Field. He outlined the raw materials needed and explained the process involved in iron smelting. Neil then explained the positioning of this year's trenches and showed photographs of what archaeology was found in each trench and how it related to what had been found in 2018. The most exciting find was a hearth, which was most probably used as a primary smithing hearth. The bloom of iron would have been removed from the furnace and then worked by hammering to remove any remaining impurities and air pockets. Carbon 14 dating of some charcoal found in the hearth has shown that it dates from 1265-1303. A large post hole was found which probably held a wooden post which acted as an anvil. In addition, a feature was found in Trench 5, which may related to earlier phases of activity on the site and will be further investigated in 2020. Neil also described some of the artefacts uncovered this year. The talk was well attended, with lots of discussion during refreshments after the talk.



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



Holcombe Moor Heritage Group



@HolcombeMoor



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Publications



We have recently published three booklets, which are available to purchase from our website, Tottington Library or the Tourist Information Centre at the Fusilier Museum in Bury.

Stoops, Hogholes and Dry Stone Walls in the Holcombe Valley

This 20 page booklet is the result of our completed survey of the dry stone wall features in the valley. It includes photographs and descriptions of many of the different walls, wells, vaccary walls and stoops. There is also a suggested walk in the valley to look at examples of the different features, beginning in Holcombe Village. The booklet costs £2.50, plus 70p postage and packing if required.

Cinder Hill Engine House Report

This is the excavation report from our recent five year project, revealing a late 18th century textile spinning mill in the Holcombe Valley. The report includes a detailed description of the excavation, analysis of the finds from the dig and a conclusion showing the evolution of the site as it changed over time. The 80 page report costs £5, plus £2 postage and packing if required.

Holcombe Snippets

Holcombe Moor Heritage Group has been researching the history of Holcombe Moor and Holcombe valley since 2005. during that time the Group has uncovered many interesting facts, information and stories. Holcombe Snippets is a collection of some of these pieces of information. The booklet, which has 28 pages, costs £2.50, plus 70p postage and packing if required.

Talk Report 2

On Wednesday 27th November, Major Paul Knight gave an very interesting talk called "Lessons from the Mud—the 55th (West Lancashire) Division at the Third Battle of Ypres". The battles that Paul talked about took place between 31st July 1917 and 20th September 1917. The West Lancashire Division was originally a territorial force for home defence, but soon after the outbreak of war, when it became clear that the war wouldn't be over by Christmas, the commanders asked for volunteers from the Division to go overseas to fight. The general in charge of the Division was General Jeudwine, who was highly thought of by the soldiers in the Division. General Jeudwine asked for "after action reports", to be written after events during the battle. They were honest accounts, usually written by junior soldiers on pieces of notepaper. These unique reports have survived at Liverpool Records Office. The reports also included maps of the battlefields, and information about which tactics were successful and which were not, with recommendations for further actions. For example, it was noticed that officers were more likely to be targeted by the enemy, and this was thought to be because they were wearing officer's uniforms. To try to overcome this, some officers began to wear regular uniforms. However, this did not make any difference to the casualty rate and the conclusion was drawn, that what the officers were doing, rather than what they were wearing was making them a target for enemy fire. There is evidence in the reports, to show that some of the recommendations were acted upon. Paul has published a book containing many of the reports. The talk was attended by around 50 people, who also enjoyed refreshments after the talk. Thank you to Paul for travelling from Liverpool to present his talk and we wish him well for the future as he is starting a new job in Wiltshire very soon.

Winter Talks

There are two talks planned for the New Year.....

Creation of an Archive for the Lancashire Cotton Industry by Nicola Lloyd in association with Professors Richard Horrocks and Bob Snape (University of Bolton)
Wednesday 29th January 2020

Archaeological Investigation on Calf Hill by Catherine Rousseau-Jones of South Pennine Archaeology Group.
Wednesday 26th February 2020

All talks are held at Greenmount Cricket Club. Admission is £3 including refreshments. The bar is available and there will also be a raffle. Our publications will be available to purchase at both the talks.

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

North West Tour!

Our work in the Holcombe Valley is becoming more well known in the region. Our dig director, Neil Coldrick has been invited to give talks around the region, including at Littleborough Archaeology Society, Wigan Archaeological Society, Friends of Castleshaw Roman Forts, South Pennine Archaeology Group, Lancaster University and Bolton Museum.

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Diggers' Dinner

The annual Diggers' Dinner was held on the evening of Friday 22nd November at Al Bosco Restaurant in Summerseat. HMHG members, who have been involved in the dig at Cinder Hill field, enjoyed delicious food, good company and a chance to catch up with the latest news about the dig. The meal was attended by 14 members.

There will be another chance to join us in the new year at Al Bosco, for our Member's meal. The date for this is not yet confirmed.



Dig 2019

Our excavations at Cinder Hill Field in the Holcombe Valley have continued throughout the spring and summer. Further information about the dig can be found on the Cinder Hill Field project page on the website.



Moor Holcombe Memories

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