

The first "Lanky Neet" of the Society's was held on Friday 23rd of November 2007 at Downey House and around 100 people, including children, attended the full house event. The evening's entertainment was provided by David and Gwen who gave renditions of the Blackpool Belle, The Lion and Albert and many other Lancashire favourites.

The audience were encouraged to come in fancy dress with lots of people entering into the spirit of the occasion. Sue Neilson won the Ladies prize for her uniform portraying a Victorian Schoolmistress, with Michael Higgins taking the men's prize for turning out in a Lanky Morris Mens outfit, both worthy winners. All the children were awarded a small gift of sweets as they certainly played their part. Some dressed as Chimney Sweeps and some in Edwardian garb with their Mums and Dads looking very proud of their children.

Supper was served during the course of the evening which consisted of potato pie or cheese and onion pie with beetroot, red cabbage and brown sauce. Good Lancashire fare. All in all everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and said that it was a "reet gradely do".

On Lancashire Day, Tuesday the 27th of November 2007, after I had welcomed the Mayor and members of the public at Royton Library, we stood outside on the Library steps to hear our Town Crier, Michael Woolly, read out the Queen's Proclamation. He had confided to me earlier that he had a "bad chest and voice to match". I needn't have worried, for I feel quite sure that Michael could have been heard in his native Shaw! He certainly did us proud.

The Proclamation was heard again at 9pm at the Haggate Inn when Michael treated us to a slightly less noisy rendition. The evening's entertainment was provided by Stuart, a talented guitarist, who sang lots of Lanky songs well known to us all. I also chipped in with a few poems, emails and monologues – nothing new there then! There wasn't a lot of people there but all enjoyed the evening. Good Lancashire food was provided by Hosts Lynne and Eddie at no cost to the public, they also provided prizes for best dressed man and woman.

Doug Ashmore, Chairman



The Chairman and committee of Royton Local History Society would like to wish everyone

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS and A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR



Memories of RLTA - Project 2

Here is what happened during this year's dig. Although it only happened 3 months ago I'm sure it will stay long in the memory of all those who took part, especially the children judging by some of their comments printed below!

The excavation began on 10th September 2007 with the arrival of an excavator and dumper truck to undertake the preliminary work of removing the spoil and infill covering the west wing, the north east porch area and a small area in what had once been the gardens of the Hall. Adam Thompson of the University of Manchester Archaeology Unit oversaw this work which took one week to complete. While this was happening teacher/archaeologist Rob Isherwood visited each school to talk about archaeology and what the children would be doing when they went to the site the following week.

It had been planned that the north west portion of the Hall would be the ideal place for the children to excavate but the expected foundations were not found. As this area was not cellared underneath, the foundations would not have been very substantial and had obviously been removed at the time of the Hall's demolition in 1939. Instead, the north east porch area was enlarged and this provided extensive shallow foundations which were suitable for the children.

Schools week began on 17th September with twelve schools taking part. Kingfisher School, Chadderton (for special needs children) were invited to attend. This school is 'paired' with Thorp Primary School in Royton so children from Thorp year 6 were 'buddied' on a one to one basis with the children from Kingfisher.

Each school involved in the excavation sent a class for either a morning or afternoon session. On arrival at the site the class was divided up into three - each group having a turn at excavating, washing and recording finds, and taking part in a heritage trail which included a visit to Royton Library to look at artefacts found during previous digs. As twelve schools wished to participate, schools continued to be on site the following Monday (24th). In all, 323 children and 45 teachers took part in schools week, some getting very muddy indeed but all thoroughly enjoying the experience!

September 25th saw the commencement of the adult excavation, which lasted until the end of the following week. The main focus for the adult volunteers was the west wing, with a small group continuing where the children had left off in the northern porch and garden areas. There were 42 volunteer adult diggers who received training in trowelling, recording etc. and 21 other volunteers who acted as supervisors, tour guides, meeters and greeters etc. One volunteer, who lives locally, was a student studying archaeology at university. She came along to gain some experience and told us that students and other volunteers who wish to take part in archaeological digs usually have to pay for the privilege! Needless to say this made us quite proud that we, as a community dig, did not charge.

The dig was open to the public during the excavation (except on days when the excavator was on site) and those who took an interest included residents of Brook House (sheltered accommodation for those with learning difficulties and mental health problems) and Highbarn Day Care Centre (for those with memory problems). Guided tours were provided for all visitors by the volunteers.

Two VIPs also came to visit the excavation site. Local MP Michael Meacher and, on a separate occasion, the Mayor of Oldham Cllr Anne Wingate called in to watch the children's excavation.

On October 6th & 7th, the RLTA group hosted a Public Open Weekend. This was a free event and included guided tours of the site, which proved to be very popular, and a display of the finds of pottery etc. found during the present and past excavations. There were also stands representing Royton Local History Society, Oldham Local Studies and Archives, Tameside Family History Society, Rochdale Canal Society and Oldham Amateur Radio Club who ran a local radio station from the site. A number of children visiting the site over the weekend were able to receive tuition from the archaeologists and have 'hands-on' experience of digging.

In all a total of 1098 people, including 323 school children, visited the site throughout the duration of the dig. These people were asked to record their comments, some of which were:-

"Quite amazing, very enjoyable. Thank you."

"Wonderful work, much appreciated!"

"Very interesting, it would be great if you could get the site preserved for future history/generations."

"Fascinating! We really enjoyed looking round. It's wonderful that Royton's history is being uncovered. Well done!"

And from the children:-

"Very very very very very GREAT. I absolutely loved it thanks."

"Thank you Ruth for helping me learn to be an arc-----Olivia XXX"

"Thank you for letting me dig. I've enjoyed myself. I came Saturday and Sunday. It woz very interesting. Thank you."

"I thought that it was great to learn facts about history. I enjoyed digging! Great!"

After the Open Weekend the dig was extended by two days because of the significant archaeological finds made, prior to the recording and back filling of the site.

The basic four week excavation was funded by the National Lottery 'Awards for All' scheme and the children's week was funded by Asda and Royton Community Council. Additional funds were raised by the committee.

The following sponsors provided free of charge :-

The fencing (along with 2 men to erect it) and 3 portacabins by Kier North West.

Seven days use of an excavator, a dumper and 2 men to operate them by Oldham Parks and Countryside Dept.

Scissor platform, from which to take photos, by Oldham Hire Centre.

Printing of the Junior Heritage Trail leaflets by Royton & Crompton School.

Tables and chairs by Trinity Methodist Church.

And last, but not least, Hall Street residents who provided water and collected our rubbish to take to the tip.

Thanks are also due to Sgt. R. Magnall, Royton Police station, who checked our site security and asked the local community police officers to include Hall Street in their walks round Royton and drive pasts. We were fortunate that we had no vandalism to the site.

Press coverage was given by the Oldham Chronicle, Oldham Advertiser, Rochdale Observer and Royton Community Council while GM Radio interviewed Adam Thompson and Frances Stott. During the excavation volunteer Geoff Oliver recorded various aspects of the dig and is to produce a DVD record.

The RLTA Project 2 Committee would like to thank all the members of Royton Local History Society for their fantastic help and support before and during the dig. The archaeologists say that this year's dig has revealed the most significant archaeology to date. What was it? We'll just have to wait for their report on the dig, which will be available some time next year, to find out. Watch this space.....

Jess Wild, Secretary

Report

Michael Higgins took up the invitation from Saddleworth Historical Society to attend their South Pennine Local History Forum in September. Printed below is his report on what went on during his day there. It is interesting to see what other historical groups are doing (or have done) to record the history of their area - perhaps a few ideas for us to think about?

Editor

South Pennine Local History Forum

On Saturday 23 September I attended the South Pennine History Forum, hosted by Saddleworth Historical Society. The event was held in Saddleworth Museum and began with tea and biscuits. I was introduced to Mike Buckley, the society chairman, who had heard of the 'famous Royton Dig' and had many questions to ask about it.

Hebden Bridge Local History History Society started proceedings at 10:00 a.m. with a talk on how to keep an archive. They have their own society librarian who is a professional librarian in civilian life. He explained that archiving is a totally different thing requiring appropriate storage and cataloguing. The Midgley History Group speaker related how he organised an embryo group to record the village's history, eventually getting Lottery funding to publish a book. Huddersfield Family History Society next explained the role of the family historian and provided some intriguing comparisons of cross-migration of families between Saddleworth and Huddersfield and vice versa in Victorian times.

After a buffet lunch (which I declined in favour of stretching my legs for 45 minutes walking around Uppermill) the symposium continued with the Marsden History Group speaker explaining how they set up their photographic archive. They acquired a scanner, advertised for anyone with old photographs to bring them to a public meeting (extended to further open days) and eventually amassed a digital database of hundreds of photos.

Michael Lawson of Chadderton Historical Society next spoke on keeping local history active across the generations. He said he was glad to be in the West Riding again and gave a brief history of the Manor of Chadderton and Foxdenton, stressing it was a Lancashire town despite what the Redcliffe Maude reforms of 1974 said. He also stressed that Chadderton and Saddleworth were ideally placed at either end of Oldham to keep it in check. This was punctuated with "hear! hears!" from the audience. Michael then related their programme of activities with local schools. The last speaker was Alan Petford, who explained why Saddleworth Historical Society was modernising an earlier publication of Saddleworth maps. He then showed various maps from the late 18th century to illustrate how they can be used as a tool for studying the changing use of the land and landscape.

All in all it was a very informative, but intensive, afternoon. Mike Buckley thanked everyone who attended and said he hoped the symposium would be useful for societies to keep in touch and share experiences and information.

Then it was tea and biscuits, a glance at the exhibition stalls set up by the various groups, and time to go. It was 5:00pm and time really had flown by. As I had foregone lunch I was more than ready for my tea.

Michael Higgins