Greater Manchester Archaeology Federation

Newsletter

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Update on Archaeology Advisory service for Greater Manchester
By Norman Redhead

I am pleased to report that the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service has been awarded a 3 year contract by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities to deliver advice to the ten Planning Authorities and to maintain the Historic Environment Record. The contract, which is with the University of Salford (who host GMAAS) commenced on 1st January. This follows the delivery of an interim service last year, after the closure of GMAU in March. The contract will be reviewed towards its end with a possible extension of 2 years allowed for. This gives security for archaeological planning advice and the HER during a period which will continue to be very challenging for local authority finances.

As part of the interim service agreement, GMAAS gave archaeology and planning workshops to all ten GM Planning Authorities. These training sessions acquainted planners with the role of GMAAS and explained how archaeology is dealt with in the planning process, especially in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework. It is hoped that these workshops have raised awareness of archaeology so that heritage sites are better protected.

Since the last newsletter, there have been some very interesting archaeological investigations taking place through the planning process.

SLR excavated the former Ashbury’s Rail Carriage Works and Iron Foundry in Gorton, which is being redeveloped by Network Rail. The site has produced well preserved archaeological remains spanning the period of 1841 to c 1920 when Ashbury’s closed and was demolished. Remains include a variety for iron furnaces, large slag deposits, flues, chimneys, steam engine and Nasmyth Hammer bases, and the site of a travelling crane, and a regenerative furnace and associated flue system. This project has been exemplary in its partnership working between the archaeology professionals, Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society, Network Rail (the developers) and Morgan Sindall (the ground works contractor). A Greater Manchester Past Revealed booklet will be produced on the results of the Ashburys excavation.

Federation members

The following groups are members of the Federation:

At Chapel Street in Salford, CfAA have undertaken a large-scale excavation of workers’ housing in an area described by Engels in the 1840s as on a par with the worst slum areas of Manchester. Well-preserved remains of some back-to-back cellar dwellings were recorded as well as a large area of larger houses fronting onto Chapel Street with various courtyards at the rear. This is the first development plot of the Salford Central regeneration scheme. The local primary school and a wider network of adult volunteers took part.

Assessment undertaken several years ago by UMAU ahead of a community stadium and road construction project near Barton Aerodrome, Salford, identified a slightly elevated triangular block of land in the midst of the local wetland floodplain. Evaluation trenching revealed a series of features cut into the sand/clay subsoil. Although finds were few, two worked flints and a part of quern stone indicative of prehistoric/ Roman activity were recovered. A strip, map and record exercise is now underway with CfAA undertaking the work. With approximately one third of the area stripped some of the same features have been re-exposed and excavated over a wider area. So far the only finds are some sherds of 1st to 2nd century AD pottery. However, it is thought the ‘busiest’ part of the site is yet to be stripped. Most of the features will be totally excavated to maximise our understanding of this fascinating site.

In November OAN undertook an open area excavation of the former greenhouse and yard area at the rear of Manchester Art Gallery, ahead of the extension of that building. Well-preserved remains of the 19th century yard and associated buildings were recorded. A number of adult volunteers took part in the dig, which follows on from a recent community archaeology project in the adjacent Whitworth Park.

OAN are currently excavating the site of a former Unitarian Free Church and its associated graveyard (built in 1855, and demolished in 1984). The graveyard is to be removed to facilitate an ASDA store development in Swinton. Over 300 burials are recorded and it is intended to undertake scientific analysis of around 100 burials dating to the 19th century to examine the impact of industrialisation.

The Greater Manchester Archaeology Day was able to go ahead in late November, at the Friends Meeting House in Manchester, despite the problems and uncertainty caused by GMAU’s closure.
Despite technical difficulties the day was a success, with a number of very interesting and stimulating talks being given and around 90 people attending. The event was used to launch the Buckton Castle book, which has been produced by Mike Nevell at Salford Centre for Applied Archaeology. It presents the results of recent excavations which established the castle as a mid-12th century stone enclosure castle erected by the Earl of Chester.

Dig Greater Manchester’s first year was very successful with over a thousand school children and hundreds of adult volunteers taking in part in 4 excavations, at: Etherstone Hall, Leigh Sports Village (Wigan), Radcliffe, the 17th century Chadderton Hall, Oldham, and Wood Hall in Reddish Vale, Stockport. At the latter around 300 children and 150 adult volunteers took part. Well-preserved remains of the farmyard and associated buildings were found, along with part of the cellared hall. Several well-preserved fire-places were recorded, and a number of Minton floor tiles were discovered. The Radcliffe project, which excavated remains of a row of workers’ houses and Bealey’s mansion in Close Park, has been used to inform project development work for a larger scale HLF project which will focus on the Radcliffe Tower site. This will include consolidation of the Scheduled remains of the late medieval tower, investigation and presentation of associated buried archaeological remains to create a heritage park, and a range of community engagement activities. Last year’s Dig GM project led to the establishment of the Radcliffe Heritage Group. Members have been enjoying learning new skills through workshops run by the CfAA.

This year will be another busy one, with projects lined up in Bolton, Rochdale, Manchester and Salford. For 2013 the first two Dig Greater Manchester projects will be at Moss Bank Park, Bolton in March, and at Balderstone Hall site, Rochdale in late April. There will be a ‘half-way’ Dig Greater Manchester conference in November and it is hoped that this will be done jointly with the Greater Manchester Archaeology Day.

At Mellor, the Hearles formally handed over the Mellor Heritage Garden to Stockport Council on 30th September. The garden includes a section of Iron Age ditch, a roundhouse and other features marked out in gravel, information boards, a Roman herb garden and seating areas. This is a free facility for the people of Stockport and other visitors to the area. This is a fantastic legacy for the excavations and a testimony to the Hearle’s commitment to local heritage. Plans are being drawn up by Mellor Archaeological Trust and the Trust for Rivers and Waterways for a Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Fund application for the Oldknow’s Legacy project, which will explore, consolidate and present some of the 18th century entrepreneur’s most important sites:

Marple Aqueduct, Mellor Mill and Marple Lime Kilns.

The University of Salford have established the Salford Public Archaeology Resource Centre (SPARC) – a large laboratory space available to local and regional archaeology societies free of charge for processing their finds and undertaking research, attending workshops etc. This will be an important community resource.
Research using archaeology has seen TAS continuing with its own series of projects. Here are a few. Check our website: http://www.tas-archaeology.org.uk/ for a blog.

**Lunt Meadow, Sefton near Formby**

TAS has been involved in a Ron Cowell (Consultant for the environment agency, and Curator of Prehistory at Museums Liverpool) project initially using experienced volunteers (both amateurs and professionals) and geophysical assessment in a professional environment. Activities included guiding these large diggers to clear the peat and Marine clay protecting the archaeology. This research has been broadcast on BBC and throughout the professional literary field. The site appears to have 4 or 5 buildings which are at the centre of several sites from the Mesolithic period. There is excitement over the possibility, if proven, that many families were living together over a period of time in the Mesolithic phase and a chance to change how these people are viewed.

**Boar Flat, upland field survey.**
This project took two winter seasons to complete due to the number of features and surface finds discovered. A total of 551 hours were spent on site. The project involved a SSSI area and required permission both form English Nature and the land owners United Utilities. Practically surveying was difficult with variable terrain and weather conditions. Producing the report was also difficult (to reduce error) in transferring real data to CAD. A discussion with the land owners has changed how in the future the land will be managed. Normally the heather is cut with a tractor and cutting blades. In those areas identified for potential archaeology, the use of a buggy and a smaller adjustable height blade will be utilised in the future. At the time of this being written TAS is awaiting permission with the support of professional archaeologists to undertake as priority rescue archaeology of erosion sites with un-stratified finds from the Mesolithic period. The project has also produced a DBA, and the first stages of lithic examination of material discovered over the last 100 years now currently stored at Manchester Museum. Analysis of results from the museum to be undertaken in 2013.
Holden Clough, Ashton Under Lyne

A section of an early pathway has provided sealed contexts for research by excavation. Discoveries include remains of a sunken cobbled surface with wheel ruts and constructed with revetment and cutting of two hillsides to allow lower gradients, ford and a stone bridge remains. TAS members Steven Mine and Mike Lloyd recording the bridge.

Brown Road Farm, Broadbottom

Two seasons of excavations completed in 2012 have produced sections of previous farm buildings. The site was documented to have dwellings in the 17th century. Post excavation analysis and report in 2013. These have followed previous activity since 2009: A Barn Building Survey, Brief Report on Buildings and a Metal Detecting Report. The excavation produced a firebox on the centre of an earlier building. Plans include having a look within the Barn for any earlier foundation changes in 2013.

Higher Hartshead, A deserted village.

Now in its ninth season, this excavation continues to produce surprises. This year a short season has seen several exploratory trenches to assess a further building platform. The best remains have been discovered of an enormous building. Photo indications entrance way into the building. 2013 will see the open plan excavation of the building.

Irontongue, an upland prehistory site
TAS members have been working at a site near Liverpool undertaking Flotation of samples from the excavations in preparations for environmental analysis and carbon dating. Lithic analysis, CAD drawing of site plans have been new skills learnt during the year with training provided by Ron Cowell. Analysis on the several types of hearths, postholes, lithic distribution may help produce a window into an upland Mesolithic site. Carbon Dating of the site is planned in 2013.
The Manchester Museum’s new Ancient Worlds galleries

The Manchester Museum’s new Ancient Worlds galleries opened on 25th October 2012. The date was specially chosen to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Museum’s first Egyptology gallery on 30th October 1912 (pl.1). Manchester textiles magnate, Jesse Haworth, had a passion for Egyptology and helped support the work of William Flinders Petrie. As was usual practice at the time, Haworth received a share of the finds in return for his financial support and he later gave this impressive collection to the Manchester Museum and generously funded a new Egyptology gallery. Strange as it may seem, William Boyd Dawkins the Museum’s first Curator, did not welcome the addition of Egyptology to the Museum’s repertoire of disciplines because it threatened to distract visitors from Dawkins’ overarching scheme for the displays. Thankfully his opposition did not influence the Museum’s committee and over the last century Egyptology has proved to be one of the most popular collections with visitors. Today the Manchester Museum and Egyptology are virtually synonymous because of the long history of research on ancient Egyptian mummies here, notably the pioneering work of Dr Margaret Murray and the research of the Manchester Mummy team led by Prof Rosalie David.

Despite the perennial appeal of the Egyptian displays, by about 2006 when I came to work at the Manchester Museum as Curator of Archaeology, it was felt that the displays had reached the end of their working life. Both the Egyptology galleries and the Mediterranean gallery with its very fine selection of Greco-Roman and other antiquities were almost 20 years old. Though still popular with the public it was clear that the displays had been developed with a different audience in mind. Redevelopment was necessary in the light of the University’s Widening Participation agenda, the need to engage with modern audiences, and the findings of more recent research on the collections. The catalyst for change was the appointment in 2006 of a new Director, Dr Nick Merriman. As a museum archaeologist and having worked previously at the Museum of London and University College London, the new director was very keen to redevelop the Archaeology and Egyptology galleries. Within a year of the ‘Lindow Man a Bog Body Exhibition’ a team had been created and consultation began with various communities and interest groups in Manchester. The Greater Manchester Archaeology Federation contributed to the consultation as part of the redevelopment of the new displays. It was telling that despite scoring the existing displays very highly, members of the Federation did not spend very much time in them. When asked to rate a number of different ancient cultures and civilisations in order of preference, Federation members rated local archaeology and particularly Roman Manchester more highly than ancient Greece, which was very prominent in the Mediterranean Gallery. These findings were echoed by consultation with other communities and special interest groups.

As well as the findings of the consultation the Museum wanted to bring the two disciplines of archaeology and Egyptology closer together, to show more objects from the reserve collections, to improve the standard of presentation and interpretation. In addition the running order of the displays was changed so that archaeology moved down from the second floor to where ‘Daily Life
in Ancient Egypt’ had been; ancient Egypt occupied what used to be the ‘Death and the Afterlife’
gallery; and what had been the Mediterranean Gallery became ‘Exploring Objects’.
One of the challenges in the redevelopment project was to agree the content or subject matter of
the first gallery. The Museum has such a diverse archaeology collection that restricting the new
displays to any one culture or region of the world or period of time would have been impossible.
Working with exhibition designers Opera, and drawing upon the recent Lindow Man exhibition it
was decided to group material from the archaeology collection around a number of guides or
characters. Typically they were prominent people closely associated with the history of the
collection such as William Boyd Dawkins (1837-1929) and William Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) but
they also included current practitioners, such as Ian Panter, a conservator at York Archaeological
Trust, Dr Chantal Conneller of the University of Manchester Archaeology Department and other
specialists and researchers. Each guide or character was specially chosen to engage the visitor and
there are a number of short audio-visual presentations in which archaeologists talk about their
work (pl.2).

The first table of the Discovering Archaeology gallery explores the work of some of the first
collectors, including the inspirational Thomas Barritt (1743-1820), who, though a humble saddler
by trade, was highly regarded as an antiquary in Georgian Manchester. Boyd Dawkins’ work at
Creswell Crags is celebrated with a selection of Neanderthal stone choppers, animal fossils and
flints deposited in the caves by ‘anatomically modern’ humans. One of the most significant
exhibits is an intact Font Robert point which dates from about 29,000 BC, when the last Ice Age
was approaching its maximum. The hunter-gatherers who left the artefact behind must have
visited Creswell from the Continent during a very brief warm spell.

Flinders Petrie is another example of the scientific collecting that took place in the later 19th
century. A series of ancient Egyptian Predynastic pots explains Petrie’s Seriation or Sequence
Dating. By arranging the burials according to the presence or absence of certain kinds of pots and
other artefacts Petrie could deduce which burials were earlier and which later as an indication of
relative dating. In stark contrast to these approaches is a section focusing on tomb robbing and
opportunistic collecting. One of the star exhibits is the Riqqeh pectoral excavated by Flinders
Petrie in 1912. When the tomb was excavated the body of what appears to have been a tomb
robber was found with the mummy. The robbers died when the ceiling of the tomb collapsed.
There are also bronze artefacts from Luristan in the Middle East and pots collected by the Cesnola
brothers in Cyprus.

The next table in the gallery explores some of the techniques used to find out about the past.
Professor Jamie Woodward of the Department of Geography discusses his work in the northern
Sudan. A sequence of distribution maps showing the changing course of the channels of the River
Nile helps to explain why this part of Africa was prosperous when the ancient Egyptian civilisation
further north was in decline. Ian Panter’s section on conservation features restored pots,
preserved medieval leather kindly lent by Manchester Cathedral and a fine Roman sword from a
site in Egypt. We wanted to visitors to be aware of some of the ethical debate that goes on when
objects are treated. To what extent should objects be cleaned and restored? A Samian bowl from
a wreck off the Kentish coast at Whitstable has an oyster shell on its surface. This is a very
important part of the history of the object and has not been removed. The base of an ancient
Greek vessel with a picture of a naked male athlete has been trimmed to make it more presentable for the art market. Sonia O’Connor’s section deals with the investigation of materials. Sonia works at the University of Bradford and has a special interest in ivory so it was important to her to show the Museum’s beautiful carved ivories from Nineveh. Another example of research is the Corinthian Greek helmet which appears to have been dedicated as an offering in a Greek temple before being slighted and discarded (Jackson 2004). Following the replacement of its missing noseguard and with its cheek pieces bent back in position the helmet was acquired by the Museum. Only detailed analysis of the helmet revealed the earlier episodes in the helmet’s object biography. Finally Dr Robert Connolly of the University of Liverpool talks about the importance of human remains in archaeology. Drawing upon research in this area at the Museum there is a display of facial reconstructions featuring Worsley Man and Philip of Macedon as well as the recently identified casualties of the early medieval battle of Chester.

The third table in the ‘Discovering Archaeology’ gallery explores more recent archaeology. In contrast to the first table, where the guides and characters are all men, the guides and characters selected for this table reflect the increasing role played by women archaeologists. Dr Chantal Conneller of the University’s Department of Archaeology talks about her work on stone axes and other tools. A selection of seldom seen material from the store such as Danish axes and native British lithics illustrates this section. Two very fine axes from New Guinea from the Museum’s Living Cultures collection show some of the deeper meanings that axes may have had for people in prehistory. Vanessa Oakden, who is a Finds Liaison Officer for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, draws on the Museum’s collection of Treasure objects to illustrate her work with the public. It is a great pleasure to acknowledge the support of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Archaeological Acquisitions Fund, without which the Museum could not have acquired and displayed a gold signet ring that once belonged to the Prestwich family of Hulme. It was discovered by metal-detectorists in a field in North Yorkshire. Another star exhibit is the Medieval gold brooch set with garnets and sapphires that was found in the centre of Manchester in 1971 (Morris 1983: 77-8). It was kindly lent by the Manchester Art Gallery.

The two male guides and characters on this table are writer Alan Garner and the late Barri Jones, Professor of Archaeology at the University of Manchester. Alan’s interest in the landscape and archaeology around Alderley Edge is a source of creative inspiration in his work. The Bronze Age mines at Alderley Edge are the setting for some of the chapters in Alan Garner’s first novel The Weirdstone of Brisingamen (1960). Alan’s section includes axe-hammers from the mines and the famous Alderley Edge shovel. Barri Jones’ campaign to make proper provision for sites in advance of development has had a major impact on archaeological work in the region. His excavations of Roman Manchester rekindled interest in the city’s early history and archaeology. Manchester Art Gallery lent important earlier discoveries from the Roman fort and the Salford Museum and Art Gallery lent stone sculpture from a Temple of Mithras found at Hulme in 1821. Many of these exhibits have not been seen by the public for decades.

Lack of space precludes a more detailed description of the Ancient Egypt gallery (see Price 2013) save to say that it is organised chronologically and makes use of ancient and modern guides or characters. The third and final gallery of Ancient Worlds explores the subject of collecting and shows large numbers of objects such as Egyptian shabtis, jewellery and stone vessels, Roman glass vessels, fragmentary objects and Bronze Age metalwork. The displays in this gallery are a visual treat but they also explain why the Museum has so many similar objects. Other cases explore the difference between fakes and forgeries, replicas and facsimiles. One group of fake flint arrowheads was made by the notorious Edward Simpson alias ‘Flint Jack’, ‘Old Bones’, ‘Shirtless’ and ‘Fossil Willy’! There is also a display of an onomasticon or summary of ancient knowledge and remarkable display by artist Richard Wentworth, which serves as a counterpoint to the surrounding displays. This gallery too is supported by AV presentations and other digital media. Visitors can read the Ancient Worlds Blog (http://ancientworldsmanchester.wordpress.com/) and there is a pioneering new development called the Haptic which enables visually impaired and
other visitors to experience objects in a tactile way. This is the result of cutting edge research by
the University of Loughborough working with the Museum’s Senior Conservator Sam Sportun, and
Chris Dean of TAD, or Touch And Discover. Another innovative interactive on the gallery is a digital
touch prototype (in collaboration with Loughborough University) using a facsimile of a stela from
the Egyptology collection, which has a complex story. When visitors touch the various carvings and
hieroglyphic inscriptions on the stela they can access contextual information about the individuals
and translations of the hieroglyphs on an adjacent monitor. They also hear the words spoken
aloud by the Museum’s Visitor Services Supervisor, Karen Brackenridge.

The Ancient Worlds galleries were supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery
Niarchos Foundation, The Foundation for Sport and the Arts, The Barker Foundation, The
Charlotte Bonham-Carter Charitable Trust, Manchester Ancient Egypt Society and by the
exhibition ‘Tutankhamun-His Tomb And His Treasures’.

You can find out more about the Manchester Museum’s Archaeology and Egyptology collections
by reading the first chapters of D.Logunov and N.Merriman (eds.) The Manchester Museum:

References:
Michael Morris (1983) Medieval Manchester a Regional Survey, Greater Manchester
Archaeological Unit (University of Manchester)
Campbell Price (2013) ‘One hundred years of displaying Egypt at the Manchester Museum’,
Ancient Egypt 13(3), 32-37.

Bryan Sitch, Deputy Head of Collections, The Manchester Museum

Elizabeth Gaskell Follow up Evaluation Sunday 2nd December 2012

SMART (South Manchester Archaeological Research Team) were invited to return to Elizabeth
Gaskell house to reopen trench 1 from the previous evaluation carried out 22nd January 2011. The
project was to open an area of 4m x 3m on the site of the original trench to allow for a deeper
evaluation of the greenhouse. The initial dig established the plan of the greenhouse and showed
clearly the two phases of the building depicted in photographs sourced from the Friends of
Elizabeth Gaskell team. There is little documentary evidence to suggest the two phases of the
glasshouse/conservatory, although from the two photographs we have acquired from the Friend
of Elizabeth Gaskell it would appear that one was primarily used for entertaining as it has a more familiar formal construction. The second phase is more functional and consistent design with the design of a lean to type more commonly found to be used for growing.

The two phases of the glasshouse/greenhouse are shown in Fig 1 and Fig 2 below. The first stage was shown in ordnance survey maps as a semi octo-linear building 1848c, the second phase was a rectangular in design 1892c:-

Fig 1 shows what we have been advised is the earlier of the two photographs and designed more to be an integral part of the house to serve as a conservatory and entertaining feature of the property.

Fig 2 shows the second phase of the glasshouse which we suspect was used for a more functional purpose for possibly growing or cultivating more exotic fruit trees or palms. Unfortunately there is little to substantiate the purpose of the glasshouse, although we did discover many shards of plant pots which is possibly indicative of its later use.

Due to the limited time allocated for this project it was established the best way forward was to completely reopen the original trench, and extend where necessary should further evidence be discovered. Once we had reached the extent of the previous dig it became clear that there was evidence of phased development of the site. Given the time-scales it was decided to further excavate two areas of interest these were located at the east end of the trench where we discovered evidence of a threshold, although this did not tie in with the photograph in Fig 2 which clearly shows a door abutting the east façade of the glasshouse, and was located at the north eastern corner of the property. The suggested threshold was actually located approximately 3' from the wall of the house as shown in Fig 3 below:-

Fig 3 overview of the extent of the trench facing west
The second area of interest was located to the centre of the trench, where it was revealed that there were two north south orientated brick walls that had not been keyed into the external walls and appeared to be a later phase of building conducive the second phase of the building itself. Both walls were two courses wide and continued down to at least five courses, unfortunately the time did not allow for further investigation. As you can see from Fig 4 the depth of 75cm reached does not clearly show a foundation or a natural surface, and again would warrant further investigation to establish a true depth of the trench. The fill at this stage was friable sand, soil and clay mix. This is where we had to finish the evaluation as we had reached a second phase of fill which was a more substantial sandy clay and time had run out.

Fig 4:- showing the extent of the trench and the two possible brick joists, aligned north/south, one of which is highlighted by the ranging pole.

In order to demonstrate the two phases of the evaluation I have put the photographs of the two stages side by side.

Fig 5:- Trench 1 looking west

This trench was located to the south and rear of the house, and was excavated to a depth of approximately 20cm, and was opened to show what if any remains there were of the original greenhouse circa 1848 were still remaining. In addition it was known there were at least two phases of the greenhouse and trench one established there were still significant remains showing the relationship of the octo-linear design and more recent rectangular design that still remained. We were able to establish how the two were linked together and the relationship these had with the evidence of the footpath that served them both, which we excavated in trench two. During the course of trying to make the link between the two trenches it was necessary to join the two trenches as you can see in Fig 1 & 2. Finds included plant pot shards, Victorian drains, internal brick structures and raised beds and the neck of a beer bottle. The further investigation during phase two now shows the rubble debris that had been redeposited as shown in the left hand image, has been removed to reveal the two brick joists running north south and centrally located as seen in the right hand image.
Fig 6:- Trench 1 looking west:- The trench in the foreground shows the return of the octo linear glasshouse and how it relates to the more recent rectangular design of the glasshouse. The large stone seen to the bottom left of the image at first was thought to be part of the threshold of the glasshouse and showed considerable wear, although a later view was that it was how the footpath related to the building. In addition and as shown in the image (Fig 2) the door to the second phase was located closer to the wall of the house and therefore would substantiate the latter theory that the worn stone was indeed part of the footpath leading to the glasshouse.

In conclusion SMART has negotiated a further weekend dig to complete the evaluation of the greenhouse/glasshouse following the findings from December 2\textsuperscript{nd}. We would hope to find out if there is indeed a floor surface and what relationship if any the two brick floor joists have to the bricked up window slot to the rear of the house. This has been set for February 23\textsuperscript{rd}/24\textsuperscript{th} 2013, a further report to follow with the findings.

Report by Andy Coutts, Chair of SMART

**Mellor Mill and Revealing Samuel Oldknow’s Legacy**

There has been significant progress at Mellor Mill with volunteers continuing to work at weekends over the winter months. Following the success, at stage one, of a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for our project entitled ‘Revealing Oldknow’s Legacy – Mellor Mill and the Peak Forest Canal in Marple’ the programme of work has shifted to identifying all buildings on the site to inform a full survey. The survey, which will include recommendations for footpaths, landscaping and interpretation boards, will be used to produce an accurate and dimensioned plan of the site.

In true “Time Team” fashion we have been busy digging trenches across (using our best informed guesses!) where corners of buildings should be! Most of the time this has worked out well. The site is not easy to work on as 120 years of ‘mother nature’ at work has seen much of it covered with mature trees and undergrowth with their attendant roots to deal with.
Perhaps one of the most exciting areas worked on, to date, has been the front centre projection of the mill and its interpretation at ground level (see drawing above). We are now as confident as we can be that the room below the first storey entrance hall was built as a stable for two horses. This facility would probably have allowed visitor’s horses to be stabled, fed and watered whilst their owners went about their business in the mill.

Looking into the coal cellar and boiler room. A later addition to the mill probably between 1867 and 1872. Some 30 tons of spoil were removed by buckets to reveal this feature.

Further information about our activities at Mellor Mill can be found at: www.mellorarchaeology-2000-2010.org.uk

Bob Humphrey-Taylor - MAT Trustee and Site Director
Emerging from woodland on the outskirts of Worsley village are the remains of one of Manchester’s great lost Victorian county houses. A maze of 20 rooms and three corridors stands to head height with fireplaces, brick floors, windows and worn steps still in place; it’s as if Roman Pompeii has come to Salford. The ruins are those of Worsley New Hall, a mid-19th century country mansion built by Lord Francis Egerton, 1st Earl of Ellesmere, between 1839 and 1846. The hall was described in *A Guide to Worsley: Historical and Topographical* (1870) as ‘comparable with any of the mansions of the nobility in the north of England; it is an ornament to the county in which it stands.’

This was no exaggeration and certainly not merely local pride. The New Hall was designed by the noted Victorian architect Edward Blore (1787-1879), who worked on a large number of country houses and royal palaces (including Crewe Hall, Kingston Hall, Merton Hall, and Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle). After its completion in 1846 a series of terraced, formal, gardens were built to designs by William Andrews Nesfield (1794-1881). At the time, Nesfield was the most sought after landscape designer in the country. By 1857 there were six terraces, separated by stone balustrades and accessed by series of steps and gravel paths. The two upper terraces were designed in Nesfield’s trademark parterre de broderie, intricate patterns based on 17th-century French embroidery designs created using coloured gravels and plantings. Queen Victoria visited the house and it was even featured in an addition of the magazine *Country Life.*

Francis Egerton was heir to the Bridgewater estate and the Gothic-style mansion and its formal gardens reflected the wealth generated for the estate by the digging of coal in the nearby Worsley mines. Nor was this the first hall on the site; rather it was the third and the second building to be built with the profits of coal. The late medieval and early modern timber-framed old hall still stands on the hill to the north. The New Hall at Worsley replaced the Brick Hall built in the 1760s as the official residence of the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater, of canal fame. This Georgian-style building was located north of what is now Leigh Road, and was pulled down in 1844-5 as the New Hall neared completion. Leigh Road was subsequently moved north and now runs over the site of the Brick Hall.

The community excavations were being funded by the land owners, Peel Investments North West. The first step was desk based assessment in 2011 then an archaeological evaluation which took place in October 2011 to find out how much of the Hall was preserved below ground level. It revealed that rooms and chambers in the basement of the Hall remained almost fully intact. A community-based excavation of the New Hall remains was agreed and in May and June 2012 local schools and community groups were invited to come and take part in the excavation of the site.
The Worsley New Hall Open Weekend, which took place on Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 June, was an opportunity for the public to view the excavated site. Access was free, and tours of the site ran every 30 minutes. There was also an exhibition of archives and artefacts in the New Hall Garden Centre Tea Room. Feed back from locals and community groups was encouraged and the following were received from two local amateur archaeologists:

1) Discovery of Machinery Room Equipment for a Passenger Lift

The appearance of an “A” frame mounted wheel protruding from the demolition rubble strongly suggested that there had been a lift in the hall. The likelihood was strengthened when a pair of lattice-work gates of a type used in early lifts was uncovered nearby.

Progressive clearance of rubble revealed a motor room drive assembly which apart from rusting was relatively undamaged. The assembly comprised:-

1. A Direct Current Electric Motor.
2. A Brake Drum complete with friction band, associated operating solenoid and spring mechanism.
3. A Worm and Wheel Transfer Gearbox.
4. A Cable Drum with several turns of Wire Cable wound on.
5. Various items of electrical equipment including what appears to be the main Circuit Breaker.

The earliest records for the introduction of electrically powered lifts anywhere are 1878 {Germany} and 1887 {USA}. The Hall was built in 1840 and hence the Worsley lift has to be a later addition.

From the construction of the motor it was estimated the installation was dated circa 1920 or earlier. An internet search was conducted in an attempt to establish the maker and verify the date estimate.

A video on U-tube headed “1920 Otis Manual Elevator at 124 E Fulton Street, Grand Rapids” showed Motor Room equipment essentially identical to the Worsley find.

Further research established that the American company Otis Elevator first entered the UK market in 1890 and the first electric elevator was installed on the London Underground in 1892. However it was not until 1906/1907 that Otis became fully established in the UK.

This gives a 14 year time window for the installation of the lift at Worsley with the assumed possibility that it was installed during the First World War when the hall was used as a hospital for wounded military personnel. The floor of a room adjacent to the drive equipment has been altered to form a well to accommodate the bottom of the passenger car and this provided approximate dimensions for the car indicating it was of sufficient size to accommodate two stretchers side by side thus supporting the above theory.

Ron Bragg, Member of STAG, Former Electrical Manufacturing Superintendent, Otis Elevator Liverpool Works.

2) ’Hi. I would like to tell you about the dig I did at Worsley New Hall. I enjoyed myself very much, and did four days. I found lots of things, including a Horlicks bottle, unbroken, and also metal items, nails and pottery. I also shifted about a ton of bricks! I did some research into the Hall, reading a very good book called ’Halls of the Manor of Worsley. by C. Elsie Mullineaux. On the 30th December 1839 the first sod was cut for the foundations, and the first stone laid in April 1840. The building was completed in 1846 in the same year Lord Francis Egerton was created 1st Earl of Ellesmere. The Victorian mock Tudor style hall designed, by the architect Sir Edward Blore, was impressive and its position overlooking gardens, with lawns, a lake and fountain made it look all the more imposing. Seen from the top of a bus on Leigh Road the turrets and tall chimney's gave it the appearance of a 'fairy tale palace'. I hope every one else on the site enjoyed it as much as I did.

Rosalind Cook (S.M.A.R.T) July 2012

More information about the project and the Bridgewater Estate archives can be found at http://www.salford.ac.uk/library/about/worsley.