



# Saddleworth White Rose Society

## In the County of York

Newsletter No 25 Autumn/Winter 2004/2005

### Happy New Year from the Chairman.

I hope that everyone had a most enjoyable and safe Christmas and has now fully recovered. May I take this opportunity on behalf of myself and your committee, to wish all our members and readers

'Best Wishes for 2005'.  
Geoffrey Bayley.

### Saddleworth and Oldham – A Failed Marriage?

As a cultural organisation, whose prime aim is the promotion of Saddleworth's identity as a Pennine parish in the West Riding of Yorkshire, this Society, in principle, has no view on which administrative authority should empty our dustbins, sweep the streets, or pay the police, fire service, school teachers or social workers. Someone has to spend our rates!

### Should Town govern Country?

But, many Saddleworth people are increasingly resentful of being administered by a council composed of predominantly urban-orientated members with no knowledge, or apparent desire for knowledge, of rural affairs or the preferences of the people who live here.

The administration frequently demonstrates its total lack and understanding of rural management and the Pennine environment. The road gritting saga and the attempts to axe local libraries are recent cases in point as is the sustained failure to provide adequate public toilets throughout the district. O M B Council shows little understanding of the needs of our rural communities and appears to be hell-bent in promoting the sub-urbanisation and character destruction of our villages. Much of this in the name of "regeneration".

As if this were not enough to foster resentment, there is the subtle attempt to foist upon us an alien "greater Oldham identity" as instanced by regular references to "Oldham" and "the Town" when Saddleworth is intended. Our children are taught that they attend an Oldham School and that they live in Greater Manchester. The White Rose has been relegated, at best, to a symbol of the past, or worse still, abolished in terms of a more politically correct and inclusive tudor rose – after all we wouldn't wish to offend anyone from Lancashire by a brazen display of our Yorkshire identity would we?

Saddleworth is a distinct place, it should not be allowed to become merely a rural fringe, a term much favoured by OMBC planners, or "the country" that "the town" happens to be in, to quote an Oldham-Town-centric view of the Borough adopted as an advertising slogan shortly after the administration changes of 1974.

### A Failed Relationship?

So this poses the question "Is there any logic in Saddleworth being a constituent part of Oldham Metropolitan Borough?"

There is certainly very little in common between the urban area of the borough and the rural area of Saddleworth. From the experience of the last 30 years it is obvious that having an urban dominated council administer a rural area like Saddleworth has not worked, either in terms of efficiency or in appreciating the best interests of the people of Saddleworth.

Little or no attempt has, for example, been made to encourage industry to replace the jobs for local people previously provided, both directly and indirectly, by the woollen industry. Instead, the Council has allowed the district to develop as a dormitory area, resulting in Saddleworth people having to commute to work outside Saddleworth.

This daily depopulation of the local community has led to an inevitable decline in the once self-sufficient village communities and the consequent loss of local shops and local amenities. But what does that matter when they can shop in Spindles or borrow books from Oldham Library?

Insufficient consideration has also been given to affordable housing for the local population, many of whom, and particularly their children, have been priced out of the Saddleworth property market. This has resulted in the situation where manual workers have had to be shipped in to supply labour for the relatively few manual jobs still available in the area. This trend works against self-sufficiency and a sustainable and vibrant Community.

By comparison, Littleborough, once part of the same parliamentary constituency as Saddleworth, geographically similar and with a comparable sized population has a mix of places of employment available for its people.

### **A Saddleworth District Council?**

Would it not be far better for Saddleworth to run its own affairs, free of the constraints of an urban overlord? A Saddleworth District Council would then have the freedom to make best use of its own rates and resources, and most importantly, have control over education and local planning matters, matters which ultimately shape the structure of the community and the environment in which we live.

As Saddleworth is surrounded by Metropolitan Boroughs, would it not be practical and cost effective to hire services such as refuse collection, street cleaning, social services and libraries as required? These services could surely be contracted out to one or more of the surrounding MBC's or private companies, preferably in competition with one another, but under the direction and control of a small local administration. This way the "economies of scale" arguments advanced in favour of large Unitary Authorities become secondary or non-existent considerations. This would really bring "democracy to the people" or to quote a popular government phrase. "Your Area Your Choice".

Surprisingly enough this general approach of local authorities contracting out services is very much favoured at present by central government. But rather than Oldham contracting-out services in Saddleworth could not the same be done to better effect by Saddleworth doing this?

Perhaps a Saddleworth District Council is not such an unachievable goal after all.

### **Unveiling Ceremony at Sawley**

The Lancashire / Yorkshire border in the area administered by the present Lancashire County Council has been marked at various points where it is crossed by main roads. The last of a series of these plinths each of which carries a plate bearing the true historic county name were unveiled on Saturday 23rd October 2004.

Over fifty people gathered in appalling wet conditions at the bridge where the A59 road crosses Swanside Beck which forms the actual boundary at Sawley.



**Cllr Valerie Langtree and town crier Ms Liz Woolnough**

Present were members of Yorkshire Ridings Society, Friends of Real Lancashire, and Unite Craven Society. Saddleworth White Rose Soc. was represented by Geoff Bayley and Tim Butterworth, (Tim also represents the Association of British Counties). There were several local dignitaries including the Member of Parliament Nigel Evans who is fortunate to represent both sides of the boundary at this point.

The Yorkshire marker, which consists of a White Rose and the words "Historic West Riding of YORKSHIRE" was unveiled by Councillor Mrs Valery Langtree the Chair of Barnoldswick Council, who was introduced by the Town Crier of Barnoldswick Liz Woolnough. 'Ilkley Moor' was played on a cornet.



Mr Nigel Evans MP and town crier Mr Roland Hailwood

The Lancashire marker which has a Red Rose followed by "LANCASHIRE The Historic County Palatine" was unveiled by Nigel Evans M.P. for Ribble Valley, who was introduced by the Town Crier of Clitheroe Mr. Roland Hailwood. Trumpet music was 'Lassie from Lancashire'.

Lancashire County Council which is the administrative authority for the area had co-operated in the site(s), and advised on the design and materials for the plinth(s). An example of Council co-operation for community cohesion. Perhaps Saddleworth's boundaries with Mossley, Lees and Oldham should be similarly marked?

## **SWRS AGM**

Held again this year as last, at the excellent venue of the Swan Inn, Dobcross by kind permission of the landlord Mr Richard Holborn, who also supplied a most thoroughly enjoyable Potato Pie Supper, the meeting was well attended. AGM's are not normally the best attended of meetings but this one exceeded expectations, and an interesting discussion took place embracing several points of interest and ideas put forward for consideration. We thank all those who made the effort and took the opportunity to put their views forward and suggest changes. Mike Buckley stood down as Chairman after doing an excellent job during his three years in office and this job is now in the very capable hands of Geoff Bayley of Delph, the existing committee was re-elected without change. The formal part of the meeting ended at 8.45 pm. After the supper there was a most interesting and absorbing talk and slide show depicting Saddleworth scenes of real interest by our retiring Chairman Mike Buckley.

## **Pre-Lancashire Day**

Phil. Davenport once more organised an excellent pre-Lancashire Day meeting at the Kings Arms Inn, Delph Rd., Grains, on 20th November. The Kings Arms is adjacent to the point where the town of Oldham, and the districts of Crompton and Saddleworth meet, and this is also part of the true historic border of Lancashire and Yorkshire.

Lancashire Day is actually the 27th November, but Friends of real Lancashire have their own celebration on that date.

