



Saddleworth White Rose Society

In the County of York

Newsletter No 27 Summer 2005

Submission by SWRS to the Boundary Committee for England

Because of population movement over recent years the government has found it necessary to make changes to the Parliamentary Constituency boundaries, before the next General Election. SWRS has therefore submitted an alternative proposal, to that suggested by the Boundary Commission, for the constituency which is to include Saddleworth. We have proposed a constituency made up of Saddleworth North, Saddleworth South, Saddleworth West & Lees, Colne Valley, Mossley, New Hey & Milnrow and Crompton & Shaw. This submission has been supported by over 170 signatures of SWRS members and others in the Saddleworth villages. Only four out of those asked, failed to sign

We feel our submission is more realistic than that proposed by the Commission as it puts the Oldham East wards of St James and Waterhead back into Oldham town, where they rightly belong, it also puts Alexandra and Medlock Vale Wards back from Tameside, into Oldham, where they wish to be. It retains Crompton & Shaw and Milnrow & New Hey with Saddleworth and links Saddleworth once again with Mossley and Colne Valley, places to which we have historical links and more similar geography than the towns of the OMB. Our last submission to the Boundary Committee in 2003, for the Ward boundaries was accepted by the Boundary Commission, resulting in the present Saddleworth Wards and respecting the integrity of Saddleworth's boundaries. We are hopeful that this one may have a similar outcome. Even if not accepted, on the grounds that it crosses the regional boundaries, although this is acceptable in some cases, it will at least demonstrate the wishes of the Saddleworth people.

The Jewel in the Crown!

When will OMB's dignitaries, and urban based councillors, stop quoting that patronising and rather offensive phrase "Saddleworth, the Jewel in Oldham's Crown"? Saddleworth is not Oldham's anything, jewel or otherwise. It is, against the wishes of the vast majority of Saddleworth's people, like Oldham, within the OMB administrative area, the Metropolitan Borough, which had the name of that town imposed upon it, as a prefix, without the direct consent of the populations of any of the seven districts or towns which collectively make up this administrative area, back in 1974 and which is, regardless of its title, not Oldham but OMB. Oldham is a part of the Borough, just as the other six parts are, the Borough is not part of Oldham. Interestingly, Saddleworth makes up over half the borough while Oldham makes up less than three sixteenth parts.

Yorkshire Day

Yorkshire Day will be celebrated on Sunday 31st July this year (one day early of the actual day, 01 Aug), commencing 11.00 am at the Saddleworth Museum with the ceremony of placing the garland of white roses, by Cllr Dr David Atherton (Chairman, Saddleworth Parish Council), on the statue of Ammon Wrigley. The Yorkshire declaration will then be read by Mr Martin Warburton at 11.30am, one minute later than last year, to commemorate 1130 years since the first recorded mention of our county. Invited guests include, Cllr Mrs Kay Knox, Mayor of OMB, representatives of YRS, FORL and SWRS. A brass band will be playing on the lawns near the statue followed by a procession, led by the massed bands of Fiezland and Uppermill and the Saddleworth Branch of the Royal British Legion, to King George V Playing Field where the rest of the celebrations will take place. There will be stands from local organizations including, Saddleworth Civic Trust, Marsden Moor Trust, Peak District National Park, Saddleworth White Rose, plus bus trips on two single deck buses, one 1948 Leyland PS1 and one exWest Yorkshire 1947 Bristol RELL6G. For further information please contact the organizers, Yorkshire Day Group, secretary Mrs Mary Clay 01457 873 555

A Follow up Meeting for the South Pennine Society

Stand Up For Saddleworth

A group of several hundred Saddleworth residents will be testing the Governments commitment to greater choice in Local Government when they launch a petition and lobby the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister shortly, calling for a review of local government in the South Pennine Area and the establishment of a South Pennines Local Authority.

City Regions Commission

One of the first steps the group will be taking will be to submit evidence to the City Regions Commission established by the New Local Government Network. This is a high powered Commission set up by a highly influential think tank close to Prime Minister Tony Blair. Its members include past and present leaders of Manchester City Council, Leaders and Chief Executives of Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield and Kent County Councils, senior academics and leading Trade Unionists in local government.

Saddleworth Parish Councillor Ken Hulme who is spokesman for the residents group said: Major changes in local government are very much on the political agenda following the General Election. There is a growing opinion which is reflected in NLGN's City Region Commission, that the future of local government lies in the development of City Regions based on cities like Manchester & Leeds. This could have profound effects on our area and it is important that we stand up and lobby for the semi-rural 'peripheral' areas of the South Pennines like Saddleworth which have lost out so badly under the 1974 local government reorganisation.

City Regions could offer the South Pennines Area the opportunity to move ahead. Instead of the neglect and decline areas such as Saddleworth experience as appendages of Metropolitan Boroughs like OMB. We could create a dynamic new South Pennines Authority. We now need to lobby hard to ensure that we are not forgotten or ignored in any new local government re-organisation.

The Saddleworth residents are planning a long campaign of petitions, lobbying and a travelling 'roadshow' in their efforts to win support from towns and villages throughout the South Pennine Area. They are also seeking to make common cause with other areas in OMB like Failsworth and Shaw where they believe many local residents would support a separation from the Borough.

The Petition requests that a review of the local government boundaries be undertaken in the South Pennine Area (Oldham, Rochdale, Kirklees, Calderdale Metropolitan Boroughs) The local government reorganisation of 1974 created new Metropolitan Boroughs in the South Pennines by merging rural and semi-rural areas like Saddleworth with old industrial towns like Oldham.

This arrangement, against the expressed wishes of residents in Saddleworth, has in varying degrees proved unsatisfactory for residents in the peripheral rural and semi-rural communities in the South Pennines. The new Metropolitan boroughs understandably gave priority to the problems faced by declining manufacturing in the large industrial towns. Unfortunately this has meant that village and small town communities have been neglected and the very real problems they face are ignored and given little or no priority.

In OMB this problem has been exacerbated by a 'we're all Oldhamers now' approach which has seen resources transferred from Saddleworth and its villages into the urban areas of the borough. The views of Saddleworth residents and their elected representatives on OMBC and Saddleworth Parish Council on important planning issues are routinely ignored. Community Cohesion between Saddleworth and OMBC has broken down. If local residents were given the choice denied to them in 1974, few doubt that a substantial majority would now choose to end the link with OMB. We believe that a South Pennine Local Authority is both viable and desirable and would be widely welcomed. The area has sufficient population and tax base to support such an authority. Local people have the talents and skills to provide a dynamic local economy, rich cultural life and a vibrant local democracy.

Councillor Ken Hume 01457 872 859

Vandalism in a Saddleworth Garden

It was reported, in a local media publication, that around mid-May a developer's equipment had been vandalised, on a site at Grasscroft where, after cutting down several large trees, the developer is building flats in a garden. Apparently a truck worth £10,000 had been used to destroy three walls and the vehicle now needed a new engine and a security firm has had to be hired at a cost of £20,000 over the next six months to guard the site. Vandalism in Saddleworth is unacceptable, both illegal and legal, but it prompts the question, doesn't each deserve the other?!

Yorkshire Country Womens Association. Saddleworth Branch

The Saddleworth Branch of the YCA held their monthly meeting on Wednesday the 25th of May. A demonstration of making hanging baskets and tubs was given by Mrs Jeanette Cockayne, after which a raffle was held, prizes being a hanging basket donated by Mrs Cockayne and a bottle of wine by Mrs Sheila Baxter. The next meeting, on 29th Jun, will be held as usual at the Methodist School Room, Uppermill when the ladies of the Cragg Vale and Oxenhope branches are invited to a summer supper and display of flower arranging by Uppermill florist Mrs Brenda Cockayne.

The Delph Donkey Walk

Members will be aware that the society undertook a walk on 30 Apr last from Glodwick, Oldham to Delph, Saddleworth, to commemorate the anniversary of 50 years to the day of the closure of the Delph Donkey passenger line. We were not very chuffed about this, in it's heyday it proved to be a vital transport link for Saddleworth folk.

Geoffrey Bayley Chairman of SWRS had done the route planning and admirably lead the way, and myself Malcolm Mills of Moorside (in the fair County of Lancashire) explained the historical links, using a large collection of old photographs. Geoffrey had copies of maps. The weather was drizzly all morning and he had plastic laminate covers, for the maps that is, not Geoffrey himself. Eleven souls set off with a warning that at the walks end they would be tested for what they had learnt. All failed!

Oldham's interesting pre grouping 1923 railway history was explained. Whilst the train originally started at Clegg Street, because of redevelopment we started from Glodwick Station and then walked the track bed, which is now a linear path. At Lees the site of the station and engine shed was shown, with Geoffrey giving family stories of his early days in the area.

Grotton and Springhead Station came next, the platforms and station house still being there. Lydgate tunnel having disappeared under a jungle. Malcolm explained the bridge weight and tunnel clearance restrictions and near accidents in the area. Crossing via the White Hart pub, we tried to find the four air shafts. There had been two either side of the hill but had been removed.

On to Moorgate Halt at Uppermill, standing near the signal box and tablet station. Again photos out of the Royal Train coming off the branch line with Queen Mum. We checked the locomans working timetable for this York-Chester train. Listening carefully one could almost hear the cheering and see the hanky waving all those years ago.



Standard class No.84015 at Grasscroft Station on the last passenger run to Delph

Walking on we found Dobcross station and the site of the crash at Tamebridge Mill, near Wall Hill Road. The real Donkey joined us here, he was train spotting also. He did not say much.

Approaching the Delph Station throat, we examined photos of the derailment taken in 1900. Here Mr and Mrs Nigel Brooke generously welcomed us into the station buildings, now their home, with glasses of champagne. It was interesting to see how the various station rooms had been converted into a house. He explained that the current builders constructing the dwellings on the site had unearthed a public underpass linking the coal staiths on the Dobcross Road up to the Oldham Road. He had been inside, the first person for perhaps 100 years. The path is shown on the 6" maps leading up to Dowston Castle, Delph.

Sadly, upon enquiring we discovered that there was no train due for several centuries. This being the case we retired to the Bell Inn for liquid refreshment. The Donkey being tee total, declined the offer and went home.

All day we had excellent company, and all seemed to enjoy themselves. What were the memories for me? A few tears when I found soot still clinging to the underside of the bridge.
Malcolm Mills

Footnote:

Malcolm is a full time professional model engineer, building, amongst others the locomotives that worked the Delph line. He is a lifelong railway enthusiast/ historian and manufacturer of the blue polymeric White Rose wall plaques. Available through SWRS.