



Saddleworth White Rose Society

In the County of York

Newsletter No 31 Summer 2006

Aamon Wrigley



Man of Saddleworth



Yorkshireman



AMMON WRIGLEY – 1861-1946

**An Appreciation by Peter Fox
Curator Saddleworth Museum**

To those passing through Uppermill village a statue greets them whilst for those who venture to more remote regions of Saddleworth on the hills above Standedge a rock decorated with plaques. The statue of Ammon Wrigley tells us that this man was a poet and historian the plaque a more personal site where his ashes were scattered and we are left with a poignant poem that will leave all with a lump in the throat and maybe a temporary incarnation with 'Ammon' This year is 60 years since the death of Ammon Wrigley who passed away on 31st August 1946, his name even after all this time is still recognised by many, the answer in the street maybe, yes he wrote dialect; was he a historian, an amateur archaeologist, poet or artist, he was all these and so much more.

He was born on October 10th 1861 in a house, now demolished at Oxhey, in Denshaw so his introduction to life really was in the moorland hills. It is easy to romanticize history and it must be remembered that he was born into the 'real' world his father working in the local mills a path he himself was to follow. The family was completed with the birth of a younger brother, Charles. The Wrigley family would have been typical of many in the area and life was hard and full of insecurities. Ammon wrote of his childhood, "One of the blackest memories of my early years is of a Christmas time. Work at the mill had been bad for over a month, and we were never more poverty stricken. We had no paraffin for our lamp and barely a barrowful of coal. If a neighbour woman had come into our house on the Christmas Eve, she would have seen a father, mother and two little lads sitting in silence and gloom as they watched a few red cinders die down in the grate.

The family moved to Millcroft in the Castleshaw valley, another building long demolished. However, whilst growing up in the Castleshaw Valley he was absorbing a passion for the Castleshaw area and its surroundings and this was to be reflected in poems and works he wrote later in his life.

He attended Castleshaw School, no doubt learning the three 'R's, reading, writing and arithmetic. Childhood soon dissolved into manhood when at the age of nine he began to work as a half timer in a local mill eventually settling at Linfitts Mill in Delph, whatever his fame he was to spend his working life in the local woollen mills. His comment on work was "When I began to work half time, I went to school in the village, till I became a full time worker, --- trailing wearily about a mulegate all day took the sunshine out of my young life ----- there seemed to be something wrong in the scheme of things, that made 'Gods' children' toil in stuffy mill rooms all day, while cows could lie in the sunny fields".

The ability for Ammon to write had been with him since boyhood when he wrote regularly, on one occasion earning the sum of three pennies from his father for some poems. In 1910 at the age of 49 he received his first real monetary reward from writing. In 1912 he published a second book, financed by public subscription. The publication of this brought public recognition, with a dinner for him being held at the Globe Inn, Uppermill and presentation of a cheque for 100 guineas, with a watch for his wife! This was to become a pattern. His output of writing was phenomenal, with titles such as 'Songs of a Moorland Parish', 'Old Saddleworth Days', 'The Wind Among the Heather' and 'Raking Up' to name just a few.

His works are all now out of print but much sought after and collectable. Saddleworth Museum does contain an extensive archive of all his works, personal letters and drawings. The museum is participating in the 60 year commemoration with a special exhibition devoted to Aamon and his work, in addition to the permanent display case in the museum.

Ammon shied away from publicity throughout his life and was always modest about his work, presumably enjoying the quite pleasure of seeing other people enjoying and sharing in his writing. He was essentially a quite man and was reluctant to attend formal occasions, seemingly embarrassed by his shabby appearance, his preference was "a white cotton scarf round my neck and a cap in my hand".

His following was such that in 1931 the Ammon Wrigley Fellowship Society was formed with the purpose of ensuring he be honoured in his own lifetime and after with meetings being held until 1982. The material from the fellowship is also deposited in the archives at Saddleworth Museum.

When Ammon sadly passed away on 31st August 1946 at the age of 84 he left Saddleworth a legacy that will never be forgotten. His life had witnessed many changes in Saddleworth and throughout the world, not least as a result the two world wars. On September 14th 1946 a wild and stormy Saddleworth day, the Ammon Wrigley Fellowship scattered Aamon's ashes from the Dinnerstone at Standedge, in accordance with his wishes.

It is appropriate to finish this with the poignant words on the plaque that now marks the spot at the Dinner Stone, Standedge.

THE ASHES OF
AMMON WRIGLEY
BELOVED WRITER OF SADDLEWORTH
FOLK-LORE, PROSE AND POEMS,
WERE SCATTERED FROM THIS SPOT
ON THE 14th SEPTEMBER
1946
HIS WAS THE SWEET AND GENEROUS SOUL
THAT LOVED NOT SELF ALONE
BUT TO OUR POORER NATURES GAVE
THE FRAGRANCE OF HIS OWN
WINDS OF THE PENNINES FRESH AND FREE
YOU WERE EVER GOOD FRIENDS TO ME
OUT ON THE MOORS FROM MORN TILL EVE
HAPPY WITH YOU AND LOATH TO LEAVE
SO OVER THE HILLS I'LL TAKE MY WAY
AND MATE WITH THE WILD AND FREE
TILL MY DUST IS FLUNG TO THE WINDS
IN MY HILL COUNTRY

Footnote: How many are remembered with so much respect after having passed away 60 years ago and fondly referred to by their Christian name, even by those born after his death.

Peak District National Park

When the Peak District National Park was formed by the post war Attlee Government, the boundary was drawn around the major areas of population. The reason for this was that those towns and villages, such as Saddleworth, were significant industrial areas. The Peak was formed to protect the countryside for the benefit of those who lived there and more importantly for the millions of urban dwellers who visit. Of course, there are still significant numbers of businesses in Saddleworth as the Business Association are often telling me, but there aren't any longer the smoke stacked factories that just couldn't have been allowed in the Peak.

The time is now right, in my opinion, to extend the boundaries of the Peak in order to lock in protection of the environment in Saddleworth in its widest definition. That's why I have asked the Parish Council to consider a local consultation on the principle and the practicalities of the proposal. Where the boundaries should be redrawn is an important question which given the implication for businesses and households is not something that politicians alone should decide.

I believe that the powers that have been given to Parishes and the extra powers that my White Paper on Local Government will bring in, need to be used in Saddleworth. We all agree that despite the protection of the greenbelt, there is over-development in Saddleworth. The Oldham MB Housing Market renewal fund – new homes in Oldham MB– will take some of the pressure off the countryside. After all, central Manchester has seen an increase in urban dwelling, why not Oldham?

On its own this will not be enough – that's why I want to promote the extension of the National Park.

The upside of the proposal is that we could lock in protection not just of the greenery in and around Saddleworth but also of the architecture, building use and the wider historic environment. I'm not pretending there isn't a downside; National Park status imposes very tight restrictions on what people can do to their property and even with the zero VAT it still can be cumbersome.

That's another reason why the public must have their say. If we can find a consensus, we would then have to change the law to allow the boundary to move down the hill. I will do what I can to champion this through Parliament, if that is what the good people of Saddleworth want.

In the next few weeks I will be meeting with the Parish Council and the National Park to discuss the idea. If you want to give me your views, you can write to me at the House of Commons. Let me know what you think, if you do support the idea and if so, where should we redraw the boundary.

Supporters of the White Rose Society want to preserve the beauty and distinctiveness of Saddleworth. I believe that National Park status would be a boost to that campaign.

Phil Woolas MP
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

We trust our members and other Saddleworth people will support these proposals which if successful, will in no way detract from our wish to see a South Pennines Authority established, in fact the two are perfectly compatible and we recommend our members to support and make a written input to this consultation.

Presentation “Saddleworth” rose at CTI Meeting

At the “Campaign for True Identity” meeting held in Saddleworth on the 08 Apr 06, Mr Geoff Hoyle, retiring Chairman was presented with two “Saddleworth” rose plants, in recognition of his untiring work as Chairman. He was a tremendous help, with advice and assistance in forming and running SWRS. It was thanks to an advertisement he placed in the local media in 1998 inviting us to form a group that SWRS was formed. We wish him well in his retirement and trust he will continue to be involved in some capacity with the CTI.

Roland Colin Holt

West Riding of Yorkshire

1944 -2006



It was with great sadness that we heard of the sudden and unexpected death of Mr Colin Holt, Chairman of the Yorkshire Ridings Society. The funeral service was held at St Mary's Church, Kirk Bramwith, Nr Doncaster and the interment at nearby St John's church yard at Fenwick, the village where he lived. The beautiful, small, Saxon, church at Kirk Bramwith could not hold the very large number of mourners and probably two thirds of these remained outside the church where the service was relayed to them via speakers. Colin was born at Harehills, Leeds and educated at Leeds Grammar School. An Oxford graduate he lectured in liberal studies at Doncaster College, until a few months ago, when he retired. He was also a Parish Councillor and a founder member of the Yorkshire Ridings Society of which he was Chairman. He initiated the Yorkshire Day celebrations which now take place all over the real county, the focal point being York where the Yorkshire Declaration of Integrity is recited at the four bars or gates, in Old Norse, Latin, Anglo-Saxon and Modern English. Colin was a staunch supporter of the Ridings and at one time refused to have a telephone from the G.P.O. before privatisation, because they would not send his bill to the true geographical address and on another occasion threw a court into disarray by refusing to acknowledge the administrative address given on the charge sheet, relating to a television licence for which he was willing to pay in principal but refused, in practice, until either his true address was accepted or they came to collect the fee in person.

He was a firm supporter of the Saddleworth White Rose Society and without failure always attended our events unless otherwise engaged with YRS commitments, he never let us down. His speeches at our events were always knowledgeable, informative and interesting, with just a nice balance of cynicism and humour. His hobby was a passion for old cars, of which he had a fleet of around thirty, mainly Morris Minor 1000's

He will be sadly missed by so many and our condolences go to Hilary, his widow who was always at his side, supportive and a wonderful ambassador for his cause.

Yorkshire Day in Saddleworth

The Yorkshire Day celebrations, which are always held the Sunday before the actual day in Saddleworth, begin at 11.00 am 30 July at Saddleworth Museum, when the Chairman of Saddleworth Parish Council welcomes everyone to the event. A garland of white roses is placed on the statue of the famous Saddleworth poet Ammon Wrigley, the 60th anniversary of whose death it is on 31 of Aug this year, and at precisely 11.31 a.m. 2006 the "Yorkshire Declaration of Integrity" is read. This precise time represents the number of years since the first written record of Yorkshire (originally a Viking Kingdom) and it's three Ridings, one minute is added to the reading time each year. Following speeches by local dignitaries and leaders of similar organisations there is a parade, led by the dignitaries, leaders of the organisations and the Saddleworth Branch of the Royal British Legion (West Riding) to the park and King George V Playing Field (locally known as back meadow), where there are various entertainments and stands representing local businesses, societies and local fayre, plus a sheep shearing demonstration. We are very much looking forward this year to sharing our County Day with the Saddleworth Folk Festival and welcome everyone to our beautiful Yorkshire, Saddleworth hills and valley's.

August the 1st Yorkshire Day was chosen, by the Yorkshire Ridings Society as our County Day because on this day in 1759 soldiers of the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiments, who took part in the Battle of Minden in Germany, collected white or red roses as appropriate and wore them on their uniforms in memory of their fallen comrades. A custom continued to this day by many Yorkshire Regiments. We trust you will give your support this year and show pride in your county be it your place of birth, your residence, or curiosity, all are welcome.