



Saddleworth White Rose Society

in the County of York

Newsletter 38

Spring 2008

Christmas Carol Service at York Minster



Five members of the Saddleworth Branch YCWA travelled to the Annual Carol Service at York Minster on Friday 7th December. Leaving Saddleworth on a pouring wet day and arriving in York to a lovely sunny day, which was a good start to the proceedings. Cannon Glynn Webster conducted the service in the truly impressive surroundings of York Minster. As a Welshman who lived for 23 years in Lancashire he approached the day with a certain amount of apprehension in facing several hundred Yorkshire women and a few intrepid husbands (I saw five!). However he proceeded to conduct a thoroughly enjoyable service giving a partly humorous partly serious address on the theme of Christmas again. The whole service on the usual carol service lines – with a mixture of carols, readings and contributions from the Associations choir – who were in very good voice – was a really pleasant and uplifting experience. We're already thinking about going again next year.

Miss P Hall

The Hemisphere Report

We are appalled by the "Hemisphere Report". It appears to be yet another waste of £100,000 worth of ratepayers money. It tells us nothing we didn't already know, makes some ridiculous suggestions and omits to mention much of the obvious. It reads like the dictum of the more biased elements of the Borough Council itself, who I suspect controlled, adjusted and manipulated it for their own purpose. It is only four years since the £300,000 Urbed Report took place. Now making a total cost of £400,000. We cannot perceive how this report, supposedly by 'Hemisphere' can express such bias without outside influence. It is like a report of the 'town of Oldham' to which it frequently refers (in error) rather than a report on the 'Borough' which it rarely mentions, and to which it appears to give little if any consideration. It refers to the communities of the townships as 'Oldhamers' which they are not. Such a narrow view is far more likely to inspire indignation in those who support community cohesion, than to promote unity in this Borough of seven townships. Contrary to what the report implies, unity is something which Saddleworth White Rose Society and other groups, have tried for many years to promote, by asking for recognition of and explaining why, it is important to recognise and acknowledge the identity of all of the seven townships and the two Counties, which make up the Borough. They are parts of the administrative Borough, not of Oldham, a name simply used as a prefix for the Borough. However, it rapidly became obvious that the Report, like the Borough Council wishes to promote only 'Oldham the town' rather than the whole administrative area, which it appears to consider an extension or enlargement of the town of Oldham.

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Oldham no longer has a Council of its own, this was abolished in 1974. The Borough Council is a joint Council shared with all seven townships which make up the administrative area. There is no logical reason why the name of one of these townships should be imposed upon the whole Borough. For 35 years the Borough Council has failed in its attempt to achieve any significant degree of community cohesion between the various populations of the seven townships. Failure to deal with this identity problem is a glaring omission by the report.

The report is riddled with ignorance and misconceptions verging on untruths. For example 50% of 'Oldham' is not countryside. 50% of the 'Borough' is countryside and the vast bulk of this is in Saddleworth, not Oldham.

A further obvious input by the Borough Council, is the reference to their claim that the '*the town in the country*' campaign was a success. It was in fact a laughing stock, a joke, but it did serve to illustrate the Borough Council's narrow attitude of promoting the 'town of Oldham', rather than the 'Borough'. Oldham is one of several townships on the periphery of Saddleworth and bordering the countryside.

The Borough boundary does not run up to the Yorkshire boundary. 53% of the Borough i.e. Saddleworth is in Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Boundary is still where it has been for the past 1000 years, at County End. There has never been any legislation abolishing the county boundaries, as the British Government made clear and the Duchy of Lancaster Office and Saddleworth MP Phil Woolas can confirm. The popular misconception that this happened, is a result of local authorities and the media presenting misleading information. The Borough boundary runs up to the Kirklees Borough at Stanedge which is also the boundary of the now defunct former administrative counties of Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire but these so called counties were created solely for the purpose of administration and did not replace the Traditional Counties.

Within a percentage point or two half the Borough is in industrial East Lancashire and half in a rural part of geographical West Yorkshire. Probably a majority of people on each side of the County boundary are quite rightly proud of their origins, their respective townships and their counties.

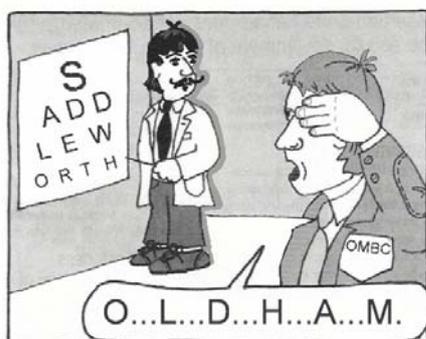
In the interest of Tourism the geographical location of the Borough should be exploited as the asset which it clearly is rather than subdued. It should be recognised in a proper "cote of arms". It is an important "Tourist attraction" for the whole Borough. Tourists visit the counties of their ancestral origins not 'administrative regions' whose boundaries are unstable and which today frequently move at the whim of government. Neither does the comment that 'the more vociferous groups of the Borough are in a minority' stand up to scrutiny. Saddleworth White Rose Society speaks for very many people, way beyond its membership, as do the groups from Chadderton, Failsworth, Royton and Crompton & Shaw

The report accuses the groups of looking backwards. This is nonsense, our history is important to all of us. Our future is built on the experiences of our past. If anyone is looking backwards it is OMB Council and Hemisphere. This issue is not about Oldham it is about a Borough of seven townships, not one. A good start and a forward looking approach would be a suitable, truly representative and acceptable title for the whole Borough.

The name Oldham does not conjure up a true picture of the Borough. It does not convey a vision of the other towns within the Borough, or the green valleys and rugged moorland of Saddleworth, which make up over half of the Borough. Equal recognition needs to be given to the diversity of the seven townships and the historical significance of the two counties, the boundary of which runs almost through the centre of the Borough.

Trying to impose the Will of the Council on the people will not work. The Council is there to carry out the Will of the people. Everyone

needs to feel that they and their township are part of the Borough. Until a success is made of this, community cohesion and pride in the Borough cannot exist.



SWRS Vision of a South Pennine Borough

The South Pennines with an electorate in excess of 110,000 has more than enough residents for a viable financially independent Borough. With the inclusion of Crompton & Shaw and Mossley, this would of course be considerably increased.

The policies of a new Borough would be decided by Councillors of the South Pennines, not as is the case now, by the urban orientated Metropolitan Borough Councillors. The latter have in any case enough and very different inner urban problems of their own, to cope with.

The formation of such a borough would involve taking over responsibility for the services required for the Borough's function and administration. Planning would of course be one important function. However, reorganisation need not create a great upheaval that would affect the public on a day to day basis. Although much reorganisation would be required, many services which are already in existence, i.e. Police, Fire and NHS could continue unchanged. We already pay our fair contribution to all of these and would continue to do so as now through rates and National Health Insurance payments. There would be no question of fire engines or ambulances for example needing to travel long distances from far off areas. This has never been the case. As NHS patients we would continue to receive treatment at the nearest

hospital or, hospital of our choice. The services currently provided by existing Municipal Authorities or private contractors, such as waste disposal, street cleaning, refuse collection etc. could continue unchanged if the South Pennines Council wished. Providing satisfactory contracts could be agreed with these providers. The responsibility of negotiating with, employing, hiring or firing of these service providers would be transferred to a South Pennine Borough Authority and paid for as now from a proportion of our rates. The big difference being, South Pennine Councillors would make the decisions. There is no logical reason why the existing service providers should not continue to provide these services if their services are up to the required standard. There would be no point in duplicating them, providing they are efficient and satisfactory. Contracts could be negotiated with the same companies that currently provide bus and rail services for example and providing suitable agreement was reached to provide these services they would be more likely to provide a more suitable and efficient service for rural and semi-rural areas.

Education is extremely important and of course a priority for many families. Several schools such as Saddleworth have successfully operated their own Sixth Form until quite recently, and these could no doubt be restored following consultation with local authorities and parents, and Sixth Form facilities provided within easy reach of all the South Pennines communities again.

Is our Green Belt safe in this Borough?

Very many firmly believe that as long as Saddleworth remains in the Oldham Metropolitan Borough it's green fields and Green Belt will remain under constant threat. Saddleworth appears to be viewed by the OMBC as a building site and rate earner. We have already seen the Green Belt invaded and eroded at Stoneswood, Delph followed by a further threat at Dovestone, Greenfield. This green field intrusion was followed by an assurance from OMB Council in a recent Saddleworth and Lees Area Committee leaflet,

that it is a “popular myth” that Saddleworth’s Green Belt would be safer if it were incorporated into the Peak Park and that this is unnecessary because protection is already afforded by the OMB Council. We have been informed by a representative of OMB Council at the Diggle meeting of the Area Committee that OMB Council won’t start thinking about ‘rolling back the Green Belt’ until 2011. Do they mean protection afforded only until 2011? This is only 3 years away.

A Threat to the Greenfield Sites

Did you know that Govt. Policy is to build 263,900 new houses on GREENFIELD sites over the next five years, yet there are 27,600 hectares of Brownfield sites available.. [enough for over 1Million houses.] This is on top of retail parks, business parks, wind turbines etc. The countryside environment is under threat as never before. The CPRE are building up a protest campaign to fight many of these ludicrous schemes by attending Planning meetings, lobbying Ministers etc.....They have already been successful in several areas e.g. Stopping 1000 houses at Granchester Meadows, or saving a wildlife oasis in New Mills. I think their work is worth supporting whether you are a member or not. If you agree, then may I suggest you contact them at 128, Southwark St. London SE1 0SW. Tel.020 7981 2870. or e-mail to supporterservices@cpre.org.uk and they will send you information. David Makin. Chair. Saddleworth Civic Trust.

The Yorkshire Countrywomen’s Association

The 27th April 1983 saw the new £1 coin issued for the first time. Also on that day the first meeting of the newly formed Yorkshire Countrywomen’s Association (YCW) was held. The annual subscription was set at £1 and remains at £1 to this day, surely some kind of record? Many things have happened during the intervening years, one of the most notable being the announcement in the New Year Honours List 2004 that our Life President Mrs Audrey Totly was to be

awarded the MBE for her work with women in rural communities. Audrey was the driving force behind our Association and without her tireless efforts the YCA would not have grown as quickly as it did. We now have 123 branches with about 4500 members.

Our Silver Anniversary year begins with a Service of Thanksgiving at York Minster on 7th April when the Minster will be decorated with flower arrangements done by our team of flower arrangers led by Mrs Jill Wilson. The 21st April will see us at York Racecourse for a celebration lunch. The three Ridings which are our administrative areas have each planned special events as have many branches. So a very busy year is ahead of us.

In addition to the celebrations we shall be attending many of the Agricultural Shows around the County, from Otley in May through to Nidderdale in September. We are also present at the Crafts for Christmas and the Knitting and Stitching Shows at Harrogate in November. These shows provide us with a showcase to promote our Association and we meet many people who are interested in our County so if you should see us please do come and say Hello.

Glenys Rowe (Miss) County Chairman YCA

Please note Saddleworth White Rose Society subscriptions for 2007/08 were due from 01 Nov 07. Some members have still to pay. £3 single £5 family.

Tony Crossland

Former Secretary of State for Education & Science.

Some think a politician’s role is above all to be seen to act. He thought it criminal to take decisions without the case for them being made intellectually. ‘I dare say thinking is a minority occupation amongst Ministers, though I’ve always found it helpful’.

Two years earlier (1974) Minister of the Environment Peter Walker had reorganised local government, destroying communities sense of identity and loyalty, the worst domestic decision in many years. He had not foreseen how the results of his policy would affect one another.