



Welcome to our third round-up of news from the Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers Project. This time we can reveal our plans for this year's archaeology dig, some intriguing goings on about payments for use of the important road from Dukesfield to Blaydon that are being unveiled through our Reading the Past project and lots of snippets about recent and forthcoming activities. Read on to find out more.

We've opened up the view

The view, right, shows the arches in summer 2008, with vegetation damaging the masonry and trees hemming in the view and seeding the top of the arches.

Last year's consolidation work has eradicated these problems and over the winter some very selective tree felling has been carried out. This was done to prevent re-seeding of the important areas close to the arches.

In addition it has opened up this view, right, of the arches (March 2014) and the excavated chimney area from the mill leat above the track where, subject to suitable access and safety arrangements, we plan a viewing platform for the site.



Smelters and Carriers Research

FIGHTING FOR THE LEAD WAY

In the 1680s Sir William Blackett relied heavily upon the carriage of lead from Dukesfield and his other mills along the Lead Road through Greenside down to the staithes at Stella and Blaydon. The local landowner, Sir Thomas Tempest of Stella Hall, was alleged by Blackett to have been imposing his own tolls on this lucrative passing trade – and the carriage of other goods. It's lucky for us that Blackett brought a case against Tempest in the Exchequer Court in London because it gave rise to the recording of statements from a large number of witnesses (or 'deponents') in 1690, most of whom were ordinary people working as carriers with their horses along the Lead Road. As part of our 'Reading the Past' activity, the case papers (The National Archives) are being transcribed by project volunteer Michael Murphy of Crawcrook. They are starting to reveal fascinating detail of the transport of goods by local people. Here is an early example from Michael's work.

Roger Newton of Mickley in the County of Northumberland yeoman aged twenty nine yeares or thereabouts Sworne & Examed.:

To the tenth Interogatory [question] this deponent saith that about nine or ten yeares since this deponent comeing with a load or fother of wood downe the peth or peth head was stopped at the said peth foot and hindered to goe with his said Carriage over Bladon burne to the Low Leadhill by One Christopher Tayler a Servant to the Defendant [ie. Sir Thomas Tempest] untill this Deponent made an Agreement for the said way whereupon this Deponent agreed to pay the yearly sume of two

Shillings six pence to the Defendant for liberty to passe with his Carriage through the said peth or through Stella Eastfeild to the said Low Leadhill which said Sume this Deponent paid accordingly one yeare.

Tempest was alleged to have blocked the road in the Peth Head area, not far from the present Path Head watermill at Stella, but there is conflicting evidence: What was the exact route followed by the road? Was it a highway for carts & carriages or merely a bridleway? Who was responsible for its maintenance? Was traffic really being stopped and charged, and if so by whom?

Blackett held the view that the road from Hedley to Blaydon was a public highway with free access to everyone, and questioned who was responsible for its upkeep. This affected his lead trade down what we now as the Lead Road.

Tempest claimed that the ground from Ryton Woodside (Greenside) to Blaydon, particularly the last few hundred yards of it from Path Head down a track then called the Peth (now Summer Hill) was his own land and that he was entitled to charge for way leave. Although the extant papers do not give the outcome of the case, later evidence suggests that Tempest won. The surviving Blackett account books, starting in 1729, record an annual payment of £1-5s-0d to Lord Widdrington for "wayleave through Stella freehold" chargeable to the lead mills. The 4th Baron Widdrington had acquired the Stella Hall estate through his marriage to Sir Thomas Tempest's grand daughter.



Extract from a newly discovered map of the area, made in 1766, showing the sections of road in dispute (private collection)

Archaeology in 2014

Budding archaeologists, and those who have already taken part in our previous digs, should watch out for an announcement soon about the next phase of our archaeology programme. This season, attention will focus on three questions -

- what was there between the truncated end of the existing arches and the modern track ?
- what more can be learned about the leat ?
- are there any remains of the large building, possibly a peat store, shown running between with the track and the burn east of the arches, in the 18th century plan ? This is believed to be one of the earliest buildings on site.

The photo below shows last year's volunteer diggers taking a well-earned break (photo: Peter Jackson)



Photography

We are establishing a panel of enthusiastic volunteer photographers to create a photographic record of events through the Smelters and Carriers project.

On March 7th, Karen Melvin's beautiful studio in Slaley was filled to capacity for a workshop on practical photography skills conducted by Karen and Iain Duncan.

Participants with interests as diverse as archaeology and cloud appreciation spent a busy day improving their visualisation and reportage skills.

In the picture below , Karen shows her work to the volunteers (photo: Ian Hancock)



If you are interested in taking part in this year's archaeology, you can see dates and times, and booking information, in the Diary Dates section on page 4 of this Bulletin. Whether you have taken part in our or other digs, opr are a complete beginner, you will be most welcome.

Getting Involved

What's been happening ?

Lead Road Shows

We've been out on the road, spreading the word about the project and recruiting new volunteers. In January we published our 'Get Involved' booklet with an overview of all the project activities. These were handed out at our Lead Road Shows at Blaydon & Hexham libraries and The Allendale Tearooms. Thanks to the Road Shows lots more people at these strategic points of the lead route now know more about the project.

A big thank you from us to staff at both libraries for being so welcoming and interested in the project, and a special thank you to Wendy Pearson at Allendale Tea Rooms for being such a great host.

Volunteer Activity

Spare a thought for volunteers working on Dukesfield walking and cycle routes. They have been researching routes in the winter months just so everyone else can test and enjoy these new leaflets as the weather improves! Look out for invitations to join in.

Other volunteers have been planning our Spring events. Find out below if there is anything coming up that suits you or that you would like to know more about. To book, or for more information, email us at Dukesfield@outlook.com, contact Mandy at **07513413935**, or write to the address below.

Diary Dates

Take part in the Community Play Read through with David Nixon

Week beginning March 10th, date & venue to be announced.

Printing Workshop 3. Drypoint & Press with Jan Baxandall

Saturday April 5th, Slaley Commemoration Hall. 10am-4.30pm. Free workshop, *Booking Essential*

Dowsing with professional dowser Eleanor Burke

introduction, and practice at Dukesfield Arches, Saturday, April 12th, 10.30 am - 4pm

Heritage Cook Off. A day of discovering, remembering and tasting forgotten foods.

Saturday April 19th, Slaley Commemoration Hall. 10am start. Free Drop-in Event

Archaeological Dig alongside professional archaeologist.

10am - 4pm daily, Saturday May 10th to Tuesday, May 27th, excluding Wednesdays and Thursdays. *Booking Essential*

And there's more ! Camera obscura workshop, guided walks and pony trekking along the carriers' ways, Slaley Show competitions, public talks, a touring exhibition andbeer !

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