

2. Community Involvement

In 1999 the Mellor Archaeological Trust was set up to:-

Promote the investigation, interpretation and preservation of the archaeology of the area surrounding Mellor Church and of other parts of Mellor, Stockport, in the Greater Manchester.

Organise displays, educational activities, or other means of bringing information on the history and archaeology to the notice of the public.

The Trust has had great success in raising funds from Heritage Lottery grants and from revenue raised on open days and other events held during the year.

All excavation is carried out by volunteers who in 2004 and 2005 were guided by three professional archaeologists from the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit and Donald Reid a highly experienced archaeologist and member of the Mellor Archaeological Trust. During the 2004 and 2005 seasons over 100 individuals volunteered their time to help with the excavations and open weekends. Over the six weeks of excavation in 2004, and, despite the terrible August weather, there were on average 20 people per day volunteering on the site. During the 2005 season this had risen to an average of 25 people a day.

The annual open weekends started in 1999 as a single day, which attracted over 800 visitors. It has now expanded to cover a whole weekend towards the end of the excavations. To date over 6,500 visitors have attended the open weekends, which includes an updated colour booklet about the site, guided site tours and various displays, and activities organised and run by the Mellor Archaeological Trust and staffed by members of the local community and the Friends Of The Mellor Archaeological Trust. One of the highlights is the replica Iron Age round house built by students of the Ridge Danyers College as part of the European Community Culture Programme, the Mnesonyme Project. In recent years we have been fortunate enough to have been provided with the services of a professional visitor's survey. This showed that in 2004 1,309 people attended the Open Weekend and 1420 in 2005. As well as providing evidence that there was good support from people living in Greater Manchester it also showed that the event attracted tourists from the Midlands, Yorkshire and Cumbria (see figures 2 and 3).

The open weekend attracts great media interest and regularly appears on regional television news programmes. As well as the publicity and community involvement, the success of this event is vital to the funding of the project. The Trust has commissioned a professional company to make a film record of the excavations called *Ancient Mellor Revealed*. In 2003 the excavation was the subject of a BBC Radio 4 programme and also appeared in the December issue of *Current Archaeology*, the country's most popular archaeology magazine. One of the highlights of 2004 was the recognition the project at Mellor received through its success in the prestigious British Archaeology Awards. The awards are run through the Council for British Archaeology and the list of sponsors illustrates the huge range of organisations and companies involved in archaeology including English Heritage, Tarmac Group, The Institute of Field Archaeologists and Transco. There are 15 categories of awards covering all aspects of archaeology and heritage which attract hundreds of entries from all over the country. The entrants in each category are assessed by judges and a short list of finalists in each category is announced. Mellor entered in two categories – The Channel 4 Award for non broadcast video and The Pitt Rivers Award for best amateur project and reached the final in both categories. That year the awards ceremony was held at the University of Belfast, as well as the 100 or so

finalists it was attended by its President Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and many representatives from television archaeology.

Although Mellor did not win the awards it entered for to come runner up in both categories is an achievement that everyone involved with the excavation can take a great deal of pride in.

The Mellor archaeological project is also publicised through numerous lectures and talks given by members of the Trust, UMAU and GMAU. In 2003 Mellor Archaeological Trust organised a Study Day on the Iron Age and Romano-British period in the region. This was held in the Parish Centre and attended by some of the leading archaeologists and specialists in the field. In 2005 the Mellor Archaeological Trust, UMAU and GMAU collectively published the inaugural Manchester Archaeological Monograph Volume containing the research papers given at this event titled : "Mellor: Living on the Edge, A Regional Study of an Iron Age and Romano-British Upland Settlement." In 2004 the Parish Centre was used to hold the Council for British Archaeology's regional annual conference which was hosted by the Mellor Archaeology Trust.

The excavation is a key part of UMAU's commitment to community archaeology in Greater Manchester. In 2003 and 2004 this included working with Access Heritage and Stockport Parks on excavations on Strines Farmhouse at Brinnington in Reddish Vale. Each year the excavation allowed over 200 local school pupils to participate in an archaeological dig during the week. On the Saturday a 'Drop In' day attracted over 40 volunteers.

Mellor Archaeological Trust and UMAU are working closely with Stockport Museum Services. The finds recovered from the excavation are being analysed and where appropriate professionally conserved. They will be stored at Stockport museum with many of them forming part of the 'Stockport Story' display, which will open to the public in 2006