

Early Inhabitants of Irlam and Cadishead

One of the first traces of the presence of inhabitants in Irlam and Cadishead was found early in the 1930's when excavations were being made for the foundation of a power house on the Steel works site. A flat, disc shaped water worn implement was found. An expert believed that the implement belonged to the Neolithic age, indicating that the find belongs to the earliest phase of the occupation of Lancashire by Neolithic man.

These early inhabitants seldom ventured away from the river and lived principally on fishing and hunting. One of the best preserved examples of an ancient dug-out canoe was found between Barton and Irlam during the cutting of the Manchester Ship canal. It is displayed in Ordsall Hall.

One of the most significant archaeological finds in the area was found near Great Woollen Hall Farm in 1987. It was the site of the first late prehistoric/ Romano-British rural settlement to be identified within Greater Manchester.

Only around 10% of the site has been excavated but three phases of activity were identified. The earliest consisting of two rectangular pits in which a stone saddle quern was found. This is a simple concave stone used for grinding cereals. Three circular structures, two 13-15meters and one 5 meters in diameter were also identified inside the settlement.

A large quantity of Cheshire Stony very coarse pottery was recovered. This was in production between the 5th century B.C. and the first century A.D. This pottery was made into vessels used as salt containers distributing salt from the Cheshire salt planes. This archaeological dig was carried out on private land.

By the time of the Roman occupation most of the river dwellers had moved into forests which then occupied Chat Moss. Evidence of Roman presence in the area is given by some Roman coins found on Barton Moss which had the head of General Carausius (287-294AD).

By the dark ages a few Viking and Danish settlers came to stay in the area in around AD900. The Vikings would have travelled up the Rivers Mersey and Glaze and the Danes coming overland from the East.

No relics of their occupation now exist, but the best indication of their presence lies in some of the place names in the district. Mytholme Avenue in Cadishead – Mytholme is a Danish word that means waters meeting and The Carrs as in Carr Road in Irlam comes from a Norse work meaning Meadows.

The Norman conquerors also came to own lands in this area their influence is felt most in names of people in the district such as Blundell and de Trafford which is the Normanised form of the Danish name Tra Fordd.