

M. R. A. Wood

PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

News Letter

MAY 1959

EDITOR'S NOTES

We must begin by saying how sorry we are for the long delay since our last issue, as we are still at the experimental stage we must expect a few teething troubles, we owe this issue to the kindness of a Mr. X who kindly offered to pay for the printing, the cost of printing is, of course, one of our main difficulties, but by the time our next issue comes out (which won't be as long delayed as this one) we hope to have got over most of our problems. One way to do this is to include one or two adverts, and as those of you who attended the A.G.M. raised no objection, a charge of 3d. will be made in future. If ever we can do away with the charge to members we shall do so, but we must see how this arrangement works out. One thing we all seem to agree on is the fact that we MUST have a regular magazine, as this is the only way we can keep in touch with many of our members, every member can help to make this Magazine a success, first and foremost by helping us to sell as many copies as we can, this is most important as it brings down the cost a great deal. Secondly you can help by sending in material, any little 'tit bit' of news or views will be considered. No doubt some of you will be visiting places of interest during your holidays this year, well, tell us about it, someone is bound to be interested, and it will show us that you are taking an interest in your magazine.

Editor.

A. G. M. REPORT

A good many members attended the A.G.M. on the 24th April, and we got through quite a bit of work. Here are the main details:—

- (i) All the present officials were returned to office.
- (ii) Mr. Addis was elected to serve on the Committee.
- (iii) Mrs. Horner was elected Hon. Vice-President, in appreciation of her kindness and hospitality to workers at St. John's dig. Ever since the excavations first started Mrs. Horner's home has been a sort of open house, and the kettle has been working overtime. We feel that this is one way of saying "Thank you".
- (iv) A new rule concerning Junior Membership was brought into force. Junior membership may be granted as follows:— "Those members who are 18 on the 1st April will pay full membership fee of 15/-. In certain cases however, that of a full time student for example, a person may be admitted at the reduced rate of 7/6 at the discretion of the Committee."

ADVERTS

We have a few spaces available for tradesmen wishing to make use of our magazine, anyone interested please contact the Secretary, Mr. K. Gardiner, 38 Tanshelf Drive, Pontefract.

THORPE AUDLIN

Does any member know anything about the history of Thorpe Audlin? The Secretary contacted a local farmer after spotting an interesting stone in his front garden. It appears that from time to time bits of Roman Pottery have been unearthed, and even flints, along with the stone (which is in the form of a pointed arch). It would seem that this area

has been in occupation for quite a long time. Dates are out of the question at the moment of course, but the Secretary would be interested to hear of anyone who has information about this part of the district.

CASTLE GUIDES

We are hoping members will again come forward to act as guides to visitors to the Castle this season. If you are prepared to give one or more afternoons from July to the end of September (weekends preferably) will you let the Secretary have the dates as soon as possible, so that a rota may be arranged. Visitors told us what a good idea it was to do this sort of thing, and no doubt they will have told others about it, so we hope to be ready for them this year. Please remember you do not need to be an expert in History to be a guide, there is plenty to see at the Castle if you know where to look, the Secretary and Mr. Booth will be only too pleased to help you and take you round beforehand. If you cannot manage weekends but are able to give some weekday afternoon, the Secretary would still like to know, as we are often asked to take school children round during school hours, and we can't always find someone who is free during the week. Already this year we have been able to act as hosts to The Nelson Historical Society, who visited Pontefract on Saturday 9th May. Having had lunch at the Valley Cafe, they did a quick tour of the Castle and paid a visit to No. 5 Horsefair, they then went on to Nostel Priory. We must thank our Lancastrian visitors for the donation of £1 to our funds.

THE JUNIOR SECTION

Starting as it did, halfway through the usual night school season, we found we had to rush things a little. We were not able to arrange things quite as we would have liked, but even so the Junior class showed great promise of things to come. A few of the early starters dropped off of course, but we expected this and we have been pleasantly surprised how keen some of our younger members are. They were disappointed when the term came to an end, in spite of the fact that most of them are still at school. During the few weeks of class we were visited by Mr. Simpson who gave us a simplified version of his lecture on Cave Paintings, Mr. F. Singleton from W.E.A. gave us a talk on Map Reading, and Mr. J. Holmes showed us some of his slides of the various local sites and one or two shots of the visit to Skipton Castle. A more detailed course is now being prepared for next autumn and many members under 18 wishing to take this course should contact the Secretary — incidently we do allow adults in our class, providing they are "accompanied by a Junior".

CASTLE MUSEUM

At the moment we are at the stage where we are waiting for estimates for the construction of new showcases, these will then be submitted to the Council for approval. Mr. Evans has the matter of lighting in hand and this will include lighting within the cases themselves. There is to be an alteration in the Museum itself, we understand that the Council are to change the entrance room in the Museum, and the room at present used by the tenants of the lodge will become the new entrance hall. This will not make a great deal of difference as far as we are concerned, but it may be possible to increase the displaying area later on. If you have anything you are prepared to either give or loan to the Museum we should like to

hear from you as soon as possible, this will help us to form some idea of the final layout. All being well we should be placing the finds of the St. John's Dig in the Museum, some of them will be ready for display by the time the new cases are ready to receive them.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS

As most of the discoveries of archaeology are found by accident the scrolls are no exception. An Arab shepherd roaming the barren area of the north west shore of the Dead Sea (in 1947) accidentally stumbled upon the entrance to a cave. In it he found three inscribed leather rolls in pot jars and so started the most remarkable archaeological discovery of our time. The scrolls had been put there by a sect of unorthodox Jews called *Essenes* who lived and practised their peaceful rites some 1,900 years ago, but with the revolt against the Romans the monastery settlement was attacked and completely destroyed. The *Essenes* must have had warning of the attack for they collected their most precious possessions, the library of Holy works, wrapped them carefully in linen and placed them into jars, some were merely stacked on the cave floor.

The American School of Oriental Research, on examining over forty caves in the area, found many more scrolls, but also found 2 rolled up sheets of bronze on which a long text in either Hebrew or Aramaic had been hammered, but with them being oxidised it was impossible to unroll them.

When the scrolls eventually found their way into the hands of scholars they identified them as manuscripts of the Old Testament Books and were older by 1,000 year than were the ones they already had, which dated to the 10th Century A.D.

Excavations on the site of the Monastery were most satisfactory, it was clear that there had been three different occupations on the site but nothing to tell when it started. Many alterations were made to earlier buildings in the course of its life, which ended in an earthquake round about the first half of the first century A.D., 15-40 whole buildings were thrown down and the water cisterns cracked and made useless, ground on the East side of the Monastery sank half a metre. The inhabitants quickly rebuilt the settlement, a great tower at the North-east corner was reinforced with buttresses all round, new cisterns made, it was at this level which was destroyed by the Romans sometime about A.D. 70.

Going back to the oxidised scrolls I have just heard they have been opened and they tell of gold and silver treasure spread over an area of 50 miles (but some scholars doubt it). The other scrolls were made of leather written on by ink (three inkwells were found, their pens were presumably reeds that grew by the lake-shore).

A cemetery of a thousand graves was found. Nineteen of these were opened, the skeletons lie on their backs with heads to the South and their hands crossed on pelvis or stretched by their sides, no funeral objects were found which is unusual, only one grave contained a coffin.

Coins that were found are as follows:— First sequence commenced with Antiochus VII 136 B.C. to Hasmonean period which covers Jewish independence and extends to the accession of Herod the Great. Next group Herod's son Herod-Archelaus 4 B.C.-6 A.D. and extends to 68 A.D. thirteen coins of the Bar-Kochba's period, it was he who lead the final revolt against the Romans in 132-135. Odd Roman coins, three stamped

Judaea Capta 79 A.D. A few stamped with X, which would indicate the Tenth Legion was in the area at one time. Pottery experts date the jar in which the scrolls were, as pre-Herodian, end of last century B.C. Radio-carbon tests applied to linen wrappings ranged between 168 B.C. and 233 A.D.

DO YOU KNOW

Have you heard the saying (so that York may over look the town of York). Well if not this is the tale: the body of Richard, Duke of York, after his defeat by the Lancastrians at the battle of Wakefield on December 30th 1460 was decapitated. His head was set up on "York gate" Micklegate bar. The Duke's headless ghost traditionally haunted three willow trees (known as the Duke of York's trees) growing where he fell in the fight, later an octagonal stone monument was erected on the same site in Manygates lane, Sandal.

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Did you know that the March Hare of "Alice in Wonderland" fame was a medieval stone figure carrying a walking-stick and satchel and is on the archway of a doorway in St. Mary's Church, Beverley.

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A canoe found in Giggleswick Tarn was dated from the Early Bronze Age 3,000 years ago, the canoe was hollowed out of a tree trunk and is eight feet long. Other similar canoes have been found in Yorkshire, one 17½ feet long was found in the Calder near Stanley Ferry, it was in such primitive craft that the early invaders travelled across the North Sea from Jutland and Schleswig.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

About 1,000,000,000 years ago life probably began in the sea with tiny masses of living jelly (Protoplasm). Chlorophyll later formed in their bodies which enabled them to convert the sunlight and Carbondioxide in the atmosphere into food, these were the first plants. Other life was made possible by these tiny plants giving off Oxygen, cells which were unable to convert sunlight or Carbondioxide fed on the green cells and so became the first animals. As the years roll by life advanced, we find multiple cell animals and plants, this was the age of Invertebrates (animals having no backbone). Sponge was one of the first many-celled animals, Worms were first with heads and tails, Trilobites often over 2ft. long resembled Woodlice, Sea Scorpions which were carnivorous feeders which fed on the Trilobites.

The Amphibians which followed about 300,000,000 years lived in primaeval forests full of rivers, pools and shallow lagoons in which they layed their eggs. These creatures had learnt to breathe air by means of lungs but their young still began life in the water where they had been layed as jelly-covered eggs. Early Reptiles were probably the first to lay eggs covered by a protective shell which enabled them to be laid out of the water. Winged insects now appeared as did Spiders and Centipedes. 100,000,000 years the earth was gradually getting warmer, water began to dry up and animals began to spend more time on dry land, reptiles like enormous lizards some towered 50 ft. or more (Brontosaurus was one of the largest, it was a vegetable feeder). Birds of a sort now appear, the Archeopteryx and the Pterodactyls which were large bat-like reptiles, also

on the scene came small hair covered creatures which too laid eggs but these were the first Mammals.

About this time volcanic upheavals were a regular happening but 60,000,000 years later the erupting had almost stopped and the world began to look very much as it does today. On the river banks life emerged even on the barren rocks, the animals now brought forth living young who depended on their mothers for nourishment, warmth, and protection until they were old enough to fend for themselves. Hipparion was the fore-runner of the horse, hedgehogs are one of the oldest of existing mammals. In the age of mammals (25,000,000) the earth underwent great extremes of temperature firstly it was warm and humid, then it became cooler.

Then once more earthquakes and volcanic disturbances tore the earth and it was probably at this time the Alps, Andes, and the Himalayas were thrust up to the sky, a great blanket of snow and ice covered the northern hemisphere and only the animals that could adapt themselves to extremes of temperature managed to survive. One was the Mammoth, another was the Aurochs which are the ancestors of the European cattle, another was the Sabre-tooth tiger of which odd remains have been found in England.

Man probably developed during the age of the Mammal they were able to adapt themselves to the climatic conditions. On the walls of caves in which they lived they painted pictures of themselves and animals that they hunted. Primitive weapons and other tools chipped from Flint show the abilities of our ancestors.

This was the beginning.

THE TALE OF SALT

Do you know why we throw Salt over our left shoulder? An old Arab custom could be to blame, when an Arab eats another man's Salt he makes a sacred pledge of friendship. In biblical times it was identified with bread as a symbol of high esteem, spilling it was always a bad omen. Aztecs had a goddess of salt, Romans offered it to Salus, goddess of health and prosperity. Caesar's soldiers had a *salarium* or salt allowance in payment (hence the word *salary*). A salted flour known as Mola salsa was made into a cake at a Roman Wedding, this was carried before the bride as she was led to the groom's house. Leonardo da Vinci depicted Judas Iscariot as having knocked over a salt cellar in his painting 'The Last Supper'. In Holland criminals used to be deprived of salt as a punishment for long periods — they soon fell victims to fatal ailments.

CASTLE ACRE PRIORY, NORFOLK

Castle Acre is another Cluniac Priory and it is usually believed that William de Warrenne founded it, (but as the official Guide book puts it) "It is practically certain that the actual founder was his son William the second Earl."

The Monastery was a daughter-house of the Priory of Lewes. Time of the foundation is not precisely known, but one entry in a Chronicle which is based on local knowledge puts the year 1090, also there is a letter of Herbert de Losinga (Bishop of Thetford 1091-1121) telling of the Monastery being under construction. The original site was too small and inconvenient so the monks moved to the site now occupied by the remains in the valley of the Nar.

Possessions of the Priory increase after the move. Earl William II added more to his grants by including 15 acres and two thousand eels in Methwold, 5/- rent and one garden as well as two acres for the building of the Church. The Earl was not the only benefactor, Kings Henry I and II granted charters of freedom from toll and in 1291 the total annual value of the temporalities of the Priory as assessed for taxation was £261.9.10½. In 1259 Prior of Lewes was ordered by the Chapter-General to punish the Prior of Acre because, having been summoned to the Chapter he did not arrive nor send an excuse. 1283 records tell of more trouble. William of Shoreham fortified the Monastery against the Prior of Lewes, and with the help of Earl of Warrenne, William defied all efforts to dislodge him. It all started over Lewes appointing Benedict of Cluny to be Prior of Acre. Monks had so diminished in 1294 that the Prior of Lewes ordered that the house be restored to an "Ancient and accustomed number." When a quarrel broke out in 1295 between Edward I and France, Edward took action against the "Alien Priories." He seized their temporalities, but later allowed them back to enjoy the proceeds again in consideration of payment to the Exchequer. The King in 1351 ordered his Serjeant-at-arms to arrest the monks of Castle Acre who had "spurned the habit of their order and were vagabonds in England in secular habit." They were to be delivered to the Prior for chastisement. Twenty-six monks was the complement of Acre in the middle of the Fifteenth Century, but there had been as many as thirty or more.

Thomas Malling, the last Prior surrendered the Priory, with the Manor of Castle Acre Priory to Henry VIII, on November 22nd, 1537. The Priory was then granted to Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk.

ACKWORTH MANOR

Saxon origin and consisted of nearly whole of present parish of Ackworth including Church, Park and Manor House. Erdulf and Osulf were first Saxon proprietors of Ackworth. At Conquest part of possessions of Lacy family, Lords of Honour of Pontefract. Domesday Survey—One Manor in Ackworth. Erdulf and Osulf had six caracates of land to be taxed, where there might be five ploughs. Humphrey now holds it of Ilbert. Humphrey himself has there one plough and a half, and 14 villains (persons of servile condition) and 2 boors (persons who were allowed cottage and small piece of land on condition that they supply the Lord with poultry and eggs for his table). There is a Church there, and a priest, one mill of sixteen pence, value in King Edward's time, 4 pounds, now 3 pounds. Domesday Book 107. The land of Ilbert de Lacy 1311. Manor reverted from de Lacys to House of Lancaster and on execution of Thomas of Lancaster forfeited to crown. On accession of Edward III back to Lancaster. 15th year of Edward III Manor House is called 'capital Messuage' with a garden adjacent and 104 acres of land. 1327 Henry, Duke of Lancaster, became King, became possession of Crown. 1603 Lordship of Ackworth as parcel of The Honour of Pontefract was granted by James I to his Queen with power to grant leases for 21 years, reserving the old rents etc. 1619 Queen died. 1628 Charles first sold Lordship to Commissioners for City of London, and Manor House sold by them to T. Harlaken. 1673 sold to Dr. Edward Watkinson. 1690 Manor House purchased by Robert Lowther from Lambe. 1770 Ancient gateway of House still standing, but became property of Mr. S. Sykes who pulled it down to build cottages from materials.

WILL NEVISON, HIGHWAYMAN

An interesting article in Yorkshire Dialect has been passed on to me, it concerns the famous, or infamous, Will Nevison. We are all aware of the legend of his leap, whether he leaped across the gap at present in 'Nevison's Leap' or not, is not for us to say (we must get our Secretary to try it). "Nevison" according to the article, "wor born at Pontefract (whear t'Pomfret cakes come throo) i 1639 and his childhood mun hev been spent during t'days o' t'civil war and we know what an evil influence this sort o' life could hev on his after years. And yet Ah think Nevison hez been badly ewsed by t'historians and sich-like. After all, he nobbut wanted to mak' brass baht warkin for it, an thats noan soa unusual even today!" The article goes on to defend Nevison further by saying—"An his slogan 'STAND AND DELIVER' wor noa ruder nor more threatenin' nor a corporation demand note for t'rates"

(Acknowledgements to *Clock Almanack*)