

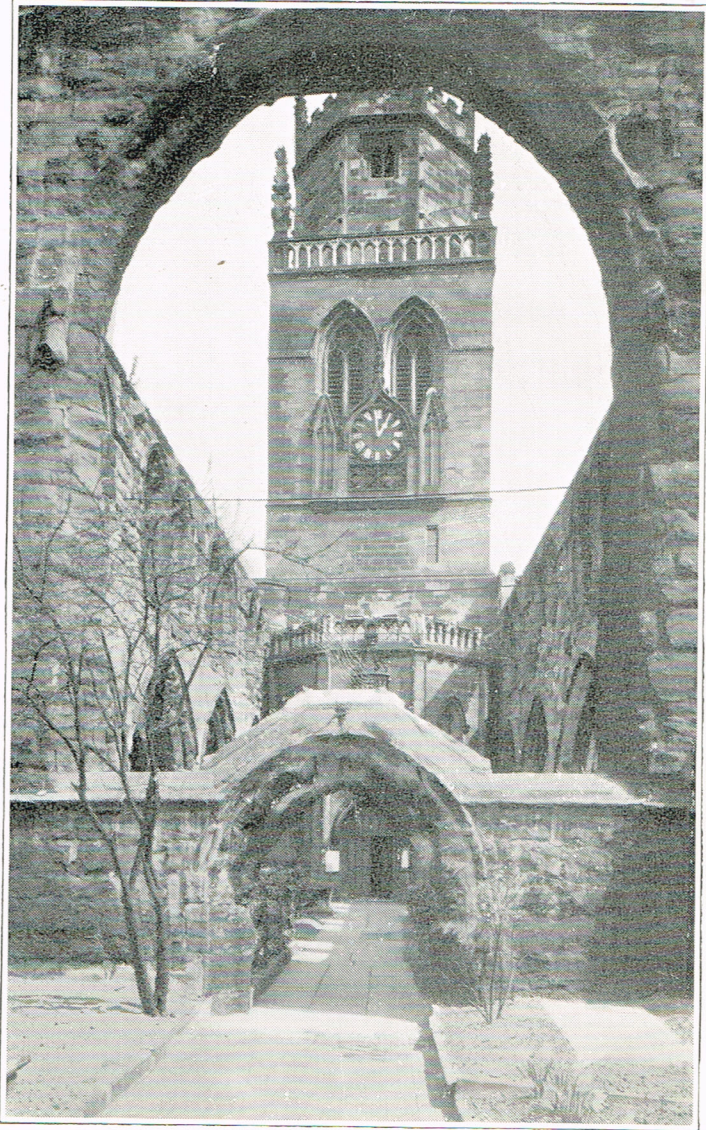
PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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# NEWS LETTER

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DECEMBER, 1959



### Editor's Notes

I have had many comments, mostly favourable, on the last News Letter, and the inclusion of a little humour has been welcomed by many of our readers. We should point out, however, that in the article on St. John's, Mr. Bellamy's activities should read "barrowing" and not "Borrowing". Our apologies to Mr. Bellamy—and thanks to the contributors.

Our News Letter is now going far and wide, the Secretary having received requests for it from all over—Bradford, Barnsley, and even Scarborough. We still need more sellers, though, and we should be pleased to hear from any member who is willing to take half a dozen each time. The charge to non-members is anything from three pence to three pounds. Season's Greetings to all our members.

Quite a large number of members, including several new faces enjoyed the lecture by Mr. G. Forster on Pontefract in The Civil War on November 21st. The Pontefract and Castleford Express were kind enough to give this quite a good "write up" and to this we refer readers for details.

Draft Society Rules have now been prepared and will be circulated to members prior to a General Meeting.

We understand that digging is to take place again on The Priory site in 1960, probably commencing a little before Easter, which is late this year. Volunteer excavators will be very welcome. Mr. Bellamy is to give his lecture in January and all those interested should make a point of attending.



### Junior Class

A class in archaeology for under 21s is now being held every Monday evening. For particulars contact the Secretary, K. Gardiner, 38 Tanshelf Drive.

### Note for unpaid Members.

The Treasurer's address is Miss F. Ridsdale, 52 King's Mead, Pontefract.

The picture opposite shows All Saints' Church looking through the West Window. We print this as a reminder to readers that there is more than just the Castle for visitors to look at when they come to Pontefract. This illustration was first published in "The Pontefract Almanac."

### Found in China

In the course of prospecting for oil in Tsairam Basin a warrior was discovered, believed to be 600 years old (which would make him live during the Yuan Dynasty). The body was excavated from a small earth mound wrapped in a woollen blanket and fur coat, also light armour fixtures. He had a fur hat with red feather, also with him lay a horse's tail, a saddle, and a bow made from horn, with 11 arrows whose delicately shaped arrow-heads were still sharp. Probably the good state of preservation was due to the region's climate, which has a hot and dry summer and intensely cold winter. Round the neck was a silk bandage which covered a wound. He was probably a Mongolian warrior.



### Prehistoric Elephants.

In recent months three remains of prehistoric elephants have been discovered. Near Madrid, in the Manzanares Valley, one which was probably drowned 80,000 years ago, had tusks about nine feet in length. Another was unearthed two miles from Rome (Vatican City) by a bulldozer. One of its teeth was seven inches long. Such animals as this roamed 100,000 years ago on the site where London is now built.



### Visits to the Castle

Quite a number of people were able to visit the Magazine, accompanied by guides in costume, during the third and fourth of October, and though we were not too happy about the state of the costumes the weekend seemed to meet with general approval, and brought requests that we should do this sort of thing more often and on a larger scale. Quite a few people expressed regret when they found the magazine unoccupied. We were considering placing a prisoner in one of the cells but decided against this as it had already been done, though the public did not get the chance to see the 1958 prisoner for themselves. We even had a suggestion that we should rig up a sort of chamber of horrors. Well, as is already known, our Secretary and colleagues are willing to have a go at anything, but it should be remembered that we are an Archaeological Society and not a wax works. However, all suggestions will be considered.

## Future Lecture Programme

December 12th, at 7-15 p.m.

Mr. W. A. O. Dyle-Davidson (Senior Lecturer in English, Leeds University). "The Sutton-Hoo Ship Burial" (with slides).

January 16th, 7-15 p.m.

Mr. C. V. Bellamy, B.Sc., "St. John's Priory Excavations, 1959" (with slides).

February 13th, 7-15 p.m.

Mr. K. Wilson (of Skipton) "Excavations on St. Tidwald's Island."

March 12th, 7-15 p.m.

Mr. Montague Puckle "Old Wakefield."

All Lectures are held in the Public Library. Please note times.

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### The Rosetta Stone

The mystery of the strange picture writing called Hieroglyphics was solved through the Rosetta Stone, which was found one day in August, 1789, by a French soldier digging near a ruined wall on the outskirts of a village called Rosetta, a few miles from Alexandria. He unearthed a large black stone covered with neat lines of carvings. The officer in charge, after studying it closely, thought it might be something of value, and Napoleon, hearing of this discovery, had it sent to Cairo for further examination. Famous archaeologists studied it but none as yet appreciated the importance of the discovery. They were baffled once again by the picture writing which was at the top of the stone. The middle section was written in Demotic, the language of the ancients, and the last one was in Greek. The stone was taken as a spoil of war by the British after they had captured Alexandria, and was despatched to England in 1802 to be studied once more by learned men from all over Europe. They discovered that the stone was written in three languages, each the same message. This meant that two unknown languages carved on the stone could be translated from the carvings of the known Greek. There was still much work to be done and a young English doctor, Thomas Young, started to decipher the hieroglyphics and his work was later carried to completion by Champollion in France. This was the key to thousands of years of history. The carvings on the statues could now be read. The volumes of ancient "Papyri" could also be translated, and as a result all the mysteries of the past were unveiled. To-day this irregular piece of black rock may be seen in the British Museum, where it has been kept for the past 100 years.

## Out and About—A Country Ramble

I cannot say how long it is since I first walked from Tadcaster to York, via Wighill, Healaugh, Askham Richard and Askham Bryan; or even the number of times it has been my privilege to enjoy striding through this section of the Lower Wharfe Valley and on through the Plain of York. On this occasion, however, I was accompanied by three members of the Pontefract Archaeological Society.

The weather was all that could be desired as we boarded the Tadcaster Bus at Pontefract for the first part of our journey. Arriving at Tadcaster on this delightful June morning we were soon threading our way over the bridge across the river and up the hill towards York. Modern traffic was moving at a brisk pace and it was most pleasing for us when we arrived at the summit of the hill and turned left on to Wighill Lane thus leaving the noise and the nauseating smell of petrol fumes on the main road.

We strode along at a comfortable pace and I was pleased to observe that my colleagues had much to talk about. After all, walking isn't everybody's cup of tea in this age of speeds. I must confess that I had been a little more than apprehensive before starting out on this journey. However, all was well.

Wighill Lane, which extends for a matter of 2½ miles, is a quiet lane, and to me it always has a friendly look, as I have had the privilege of walking along it at all times of the year and in all kinds of weather.

Our first point of interest was, of course, Easdyke, the site of a villa, or private house. This had been the ancestral home of the Stapleton family, who resided there and controlled the interests of the Manor of Wighill for nearly four hundred years. Easdyke lies one and a half miles from Tadcaster and occupies a most commanding position overlooking the lower Wharfe Valley. In the distance can be seen Newton Kyme, Boston Spa and Clifford.

To view the site at Easdyke it is necessary to climb over a three barred wooden fence, and it was here (sad to relate) that one member of our party decided to fall over the fence as opposed to the orthodox method of climbing over. I am pleased to report that no bones were broken, although I have wondered since whether our member had been reading Newton's Theory on Gravitation.

Proceeding on our way, we arrived at Wighill Church. A church here is mentioned in the Domesday Survey, but the present building dates from the twelfth century. The tower, which has gargoyles at the corner, is perpendicular. The porch keeps the beautiful Norman doorway as a surprise. This is of three orders, with a hood, mould,

of chevron. The outer order has break-heads, and the inner roll-moulding. The middle order has figures, among which are an Eagle, a dog and a boar fighting, a monkey's head, and a woman with a goose on her shoulder.

The Stapleton Arms are above the doorway, and Stapleton memorials dominate the simple interior, for eleven generations of the Stapleton family are interred within the church. At the West end of the North Aisle in an altar-tomb lies Sir Robert Stapleton, who died 11 March, 1635. Sir Robert married Mary Fairfax, daughter of the famous general of that name, and died at the very early age of thirty-three years, leaving a widow and six young children.

One could linger for quite a time in this delightful and interesting church, but we had still much ground to cover, and quite a lot more to see before the end of the day.

The road from the church runs down to the village, turning sharply to the right at the entrance to Wighill Park. We halted at the local hostelry for lunch and between sandwiches discussed the events of the morning.

It's good to be out on the Open Road

(so said the poet), and such was our mood as we departed from Wighill in the direction of Healaugh. We were now on the Plain of York and in the midst of some delightful country. The road hereabouts twists and turns a little, all adding to the interest.

(To be continued)

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#### Ye Olde Wine Recipe

5 lbs. Beetroot, 3½ lbs. Sugar, Juice of 1½ Lemons, 8 Cloves.  
1 Gallon cold water.

Wash, top and tail, cut up quickly the Beetroot. Boil for 20 minutes. Then strain, add sugar, lemon juice and cloves. Stand in earthenware jar for twenty-one days. Strain and bottle. Repeat straining until clear. Cork bottles lightly. May be drunk after six months, but is better for keeping. A tot of rum may be added to each bottle to improve the flavour ('Hic').

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