

PONTEFRAC T & DISTRICT
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY
Founded 1957
(AFFILIATED TO THE YORKSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY)

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ANNUAL JOURNAL and REPORT

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1960-61

Price: One shilling

The Society Rules

1. The name of the Society shall be The Pontefract and District Archaeological Society.
2. The Officials shall consist of The President, Vice President, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and three committee members, and they shall stand for election at the Annual General Meeting.
3. The Committee shall meet at least once a month.
4. Any official absent from three consecutive meetings without apology shall be deemed to have resigned.
5. In the absence of a chairman, the committee shall elect a chairman from their number.
6. A quorum shall be four members.
7. Membership fees shall be 15/- per year in the case of senior members who are 18 and working on the first of April, in certain circumstances however, that of a full time student for example, a member may be admitted at the reduced rate of 7/6, at the discretion of the committee. Junior members shall pay 7/6 per year, but shall not be entitled to a vote. The Financial year shall begin and fees shall become due on the 1st April each year, and membership shall be deemed lapsed if the fee has not been paid within three months of that date.
8. No member shall be entitled to vote at any general meeting unless all monies presently payable by him to the Society have been paid.
9. All members shall be admitted to all normal Society functions free of charge.
10. The Annual General meeting shall be held within one month of the end of the Financial year.
11. Functions shall not take place under the Society's name without prior approval of the Committee.
12. The Society shall not be responsible for any loss or injury incurred whilst taking part in Society functions, excavating for example; members taking part in functions do so at their own risk.
13. Notice of any amendment to the rules should be given in writing to the Secretary, 14 days prior to the General meeting.

The Baghill Lane Site by K. Stubbs

During 1960 while work at the Castle was in progress some of us were able to examine two rows of condemned houses at the junction of Baghill Lane and South Baileygate. After obtaining permission from the owners, parts of the main building were examined. It appeared that there had been a large house or similar building with a barn on the East end and possibly some farm buildings in a row behind. The Barn had been converted, in two stages, into several cottages. One person was spoken to who remembered part being used to store coal by a local dealer. The bricks and chimneys seemed to indicate that the final conversion to "cottage" property had been carried out about the turn of the century, the earlier of the barn cottages having been formed possibly in the 1850s.

The main house was of three stories, plus cellar, and had been divided into three houses. It was in an L shape. The ground floor was originally made of lime mortar, but later was re-covered with tiles, then large flagstones, and in places boards on top of these.

The first floor was made by placing a layer of straw and laths over the beams then lime concrete on top with plaster on the underside. Floor boards were laid over the top. The second floor was of lime concrete. All the upper floors were of conventional oak beams (built into the chimneys) with smaller ($7\frac{1}{2}$ " x $4\frac{1}{2}$ ") oak beams to the outer walls.

On the second floor there was an extensive pigeon loft which must have had nest boxes for probably 1,000 pairs at one time. Examination of the roof timbers showed that part of the building had been re-roofed. It is possible that a gable end facing west on the main building had been removed, together with one side of the pigeon loft and the entrance for the birds. Access to the loft had originally been through a trap door which was so covered with dust that it could not have been opened for many years.

There were cellars under the whole house. The one at the East end had apparently been a soft water tank but had had a doorway broken in later. There was what could have been a further soft water tank in the yard.

The removal of five Victorian cast iron fireplaces and two Yorkist ranges revealed what had been nicely carved stone fireplaces (Similar fireplaces can be seen at Heath Hall (1550) and The New Hall, Pontefract (1580)). These fireplaces were in two designs, moulded and chamfered. The biggest moulded fireplace was on the ground floor. It measured 7 ft. 10 ins. wide, 4 ft. 6 ins. high, 3 ft. deep, with a stone lintol on top 9 ft. 6 ins long, 2 ft. wide, and 1 ft. thick. The biggest chamfered fireplace was 11 ft. 4 ins. wide, 3 ft. deep and 4 ft. 6 ins. high and had a wooden lintol which had been 14 ft. 6 ins. long, but had been cut to allow a Yorkist Range and set pot to be installed.

All the outer walls were of squared sand stone and had had stone mullioned windows most of which had been bricked up. Wooden windows had been put in new openings or after the removal of the

stone transoms. Some glazing bars were recovered and a wrought iron window with fragments of lead and glass still in it. There was a Jacobean oak staircase in the South wing but this does not appear to be an original feature, as the floor joists had been cut to allow the staircase to be built (The banister of this was recovered, but no treads as they were too decayed). In the attic another small piece of oak railing was found, which after the removal of many layers of paint and white-wash has been polished up. It is thought that this railing was re-used. Two wrought iron cockhead hinges were recovered along with one of the internal oak panelled doors. At one time part of the house was wainscotted, but the only remains of this period were the oak panelled doors.

The smallest and best preserved fireplace (in the attic) was removed by the Corporation with the idea of erecting it in the Castle Museum. Unfortunately the lintol, which had under the plaster a mark "1662" and also a mark consisting of interlocking circles was broken. There were several mason's marks on the fireplaces and windows which have been recorded in the hope of finding similar marks on other buildings.

The "Hearth Tax of 1662," printed in Fox, lists three houses with seven fireplaces owned by Robert Stradley, William Oates (Alderman) and Christopher Longe.

A coin of Charles I (1625-1649) was found in a wall, the hinges have been dated as c1650, and buildings in this position are shown on some of the siege maps.

Lectures to other Associations, etc.

From time to time, our Secretary is invited to speak on the work of our Society to other groups and societies of all sorts, ranging from Women's meetings to youth clubs. Arising from these visits we have been able to act as hosts to several associations when they have visited the castle. The list is now too long to print here, but recently the Secretary has lectured to Ackworth School Archaeological Society, The Pontefract and Castleford Branch of the Youth Hostels Association, The Doncaster Branch of the Y.A.S., Featherstone Secondary Modern School and one or two Churches in the district, not forgetting the local branch of the Women's Social Service Association who were kind enough to lend us their crockery for our Social evening. It was a pleasure to see the effect of these talks on those people who have always thought that Archaeology was a dry subject, and some of the younger audience seemed surprised when they saw a young looking lecturer when they expected a bearded old gent with glasses on the end of his nose, which seems to be the general idea of what an Archaeologist looks like.

In The Beginning

As this is the first annual journal we have produced, it may be a good opportunity to say a few words about how we came into being.

Mr. A. S. Ward and Mr. K. Gardiner were interested in archaeology for a number of years prior to 1957, especially Mr. Ward, who, being a member of The Workers' Educational Association, was finally able to bring about the formation of an evening

class in Archaeology under the instruction of a tutor from the dept. of Adult Education and Extra Mural Studies of the University of Leeds, Mr. C. V. Bellamy. During the first "dig" arranged by the class, at St. John's Priory, the vicar of the nearby All Saints' Church came across and asked if some of us could have a look at the foundations of the church, and it was during this work that four of us, Mr. Ward, Mr. Gardiner, Mr. Booth and Miss Millward, decided to make a determined effort to form a Society in Pontefract.

A meeting was called with some success and the foundations were laid, various officials being elected and the future plans made. When the second term of the evening class was held, only two of the original local members attended. Fortunately, we were able to continue the class as we had new members coming in from the newly formed society.

From these humble beginnings we have grown into a reasonably strong society of some forty members, with a dozen or so Junior members. We were fortunate in having a site like St. John's, where we could gain valuable training and experience under the guidance of Mr. Bellamy and Mr. Simpson, but it soon became clear that it rested with the society to do something about other local sites, particularly the Castle and very soon after we were formed, we contacted the Pontefract Corporation regarding several points (see Castle Report).

When the new bus station and clinic were being built in Horse-fair, some human remains were discovered, and some of our members were able to do an emergency excavation. Several objects of interest were recovered from the site which appeared to have been a graveyard with church and house foundations. Because of the hurried nature of the dig, we were unable to prepare a detailed plan of the site, but samples of the finds can be seen in the Castle Museum. Two wells or cesspits were discovered but we did not have time to excavate them as the builders were wanting to get on with their job, but even during the building of the clinic the contractors were very co-operative. They placed on one side any bits of pottery which they found and marked on a site plan the position of human remains, foundations, etc.

By this time our membership was growing, and we found we were able to form teams of "Experts," one member being a photographer, another a draughtsman and so on. A very important "expert" of course is the Tea Brewer, and down on St. John's we were mothered by Mrs. Horner, who by now must hold the world's record having brewed gallons and gallons of tea each season.

A collection of photographs of various sites and local features is slowly being built up. Many local buildings have recently been demolished and we have been able to get some of them on record. The Adam fireplaces and moulded ceiling of Micklegate House, for example, and many views of the town which have now vanished from sight.

Mr. W. Booth has had the job of arranging a programme of

lectures each winter, and a very fine job he has made of it. We have had some excellent speakers, and some very interesting subjects. This past season we started with a lecture on "Pontefract Castle," given by our secretary. This was followed by our first social evening held in Pomfret House in October, 1960, when members showed their collections of slides and we had a fish and chip supper.

In November we were in the difficult situation of finding ourselves without a speaker, but Mr. E. Houlder came to the rescue at very short notice with an obviously well studied lecture on "The Battle of Towton." We had Mr. Doyle-Davidson in December with a lecture on "Illuminated Manuscripts," and we were sorry there were so few of us to hear him. A chain of events beyond our control almost spoilt the lecture in January, given by Mr. G. C. F. Forster. First of all we were locked out of the room, and when we finally got in, the place was flooded. We feel we owe Mr. Forster a special vote of thanks for giving us such an interesting lecture on "The Reformation and the English Parish Church," under such difficult conditions.

Our old friend Mr. K. Wilson came to us again in February, taking us on a journey along Hadrian's Wall with his slides and casual manner, and we were pleased to see such a good attendance.

The last lecture of the season was given by another old friend, Mr. Bellamy, who spoke to us on last season's work at St. John's Priory.

May we, at this point just say a word of thanks to all those who helped to make these lectures a success, the ladies who served us refreshments, and those who set out the chairs, and swept up, not forgetting Mr. Holmes and Mr. Evans who have on numerous occasions lent us their projectors and screens.

Our members have also enjoyed one or two trips to places of interest. We went to Fountains Abbey and Kirkstall, when our guide was Mr. Bellamy. Mr. Wilson showed us Skipton Castle and the Skipton Museum, and we were shown round York by Dr. Gee.

The Society is still only young and we feel that there is much that we can do in the study of local sites and records, etc. Here are a few of our activities in which you may find an interest. Most of our study sections need developing and may we invite you to help us.

The recording of old buildings, before and during demolition

A collection of Photographs and Slides of local subjects.

The mapping of the Roman roads and recording of Roman finds in the district.

The publication of a modern guide book to the castle.

The development of the guide service, not only to the castle, but to other places of interest also.

A collection and record of ancient documents and deeds.

The improvements in the Museum.

The study of local industry and its history.

The publication of information obtained from our excavations and researches for use by schools and other interested bodies.

A brief Report on the excavations at St. John's Priory during 1960

By C. Vincent Bellamy, B.Sc., M.I.Biol.

The 1960 excavations were primarily intended to determine the outline of the original twelfth century church and to learn more of the range of buildings on the south side of the lesser cloister. A number of other points were also resolved. The Nave has been completely traced, and most of the pillars located. The four corners of the north transept were examined. Further East, the apsidal end of the South Choir aisle was re-examined and some doubts and difficulties removed. The main apse of the choir was located and planned, and the apse of the north choir aisle was also established.

The excavations confirmed that the entire eastern end of the first church was demolished to floor level, a larger east end added, and floors taken over the stumps of the earlier apses. There is as yet no evidence of the date of these alterations. The site of the original High Altar has not been recognised, and it may be further west than the 1960 trenches.

From the overburden in the church area sufficient carved stone has been found to offer hopes that a diagrammatic reconstruction of the nave arcades may be possible.

Work in the south-east corner of the lesser cloister has confirmed that such a cloister did exist, though probably sacrificed when the polygonal chapter-house was built. A complex of buildings on the southern side of this cloister is still under investigation and again reflects the changing needs of the monastery. Further east, a major drain, in good condition, helps to explain the curious "sunken Chamber" discovered two years previously, and also provides a possible destination for a few of the lesser drains in this locality.

There was again a considerable haul of pottery, much of it of great interest and importance, and we are rapidly reaching the position where Pontefract will have the largest collection of stratified pottery in the north. Sundry other small finds are of interest and note but cannot be dealt with in this brief report.

Mr. Bellamy wishes to thank all who have helped with the work at St. John's.

Report on the recent work in Pontefract Castle by K. Gardiner

The work is divided into three main groups. The tidying up of certain areas, Archaeological research, and the improvements in the Museum. The greater part of the first section's work has been carried out on the outer banks of the bailey between the King's and Swillington towers, elderberry bushes and trees have been felled and tons of rubble and earth have been moved in an effort to make the site look more interesting to the public passing along North Baileygate. A terrace has been created along the face of the rock foundations and a gentle slope from the terrace down to the outer border of the castle is now taking shape. This section of the work is being supervised by Mr. F. Morris, who hopes to eventually join up the two towers with the terrace and s'lope. We have found that the piles of earth and rubble which have been up against the

King's Tower, are spoil from the 1882 excavations, and we have been able to rescue a fairly large collection of pottery and other small items from this spoil (a reflection on the not so careful diggers of those days).

The King's Tower has had careful attention in the form of an "archaeological hair-do." Masses of tree roots which were slowly splitting the tower apart have been removed, and grass and earth have been taken from the masonry to prevent further growth. The garderobe on the East end of the tower has revealed four or five interesting mason's marks, a feature all the more interesting because of the surprising lack of marks in the castle generally.

A quick test trench was put in at the bottom of the banks to see if there was any evidence of a moat, and of course to bury some of the rubbish we had collected from the site, but this was not taken very deep and although an interesting layer of red silt was seen, because of the bad weather we decided to leave this part of the work for next season.

One of the questions which we would like to solve is the connection between the Swillington tower and the main castle. The tower being some fifty yards outside the bailey wall with no visible join up, we did put a small test trench in and found some structure which may lead us to the answer.

A new showcase has been built by our members in the museum. The case is 11 feet long with plenty of scope for display, and the whole museum has been in a state of upheaval for some months. We apologise to visitors for this but feel sure that this temporary upset will have been worth while when the complete reorganising is finished. Mr. Holmes and Mr. Addis are supervising here and we should like to thank them for the work they have put in, and also all the helpers at the Castle and the Corporation for providing materials and allowing us to do this work.

Society Outings.

From time to time we have tried to arrange trips to places of interest, but these have not been quite so successful as we would have liked. However we have had one or two outings and those of us who were able to go found them most interesting and enjoyable. One of the most important requirements for a good outing is a good guide, and in this we have been very fortunate. First of all we went to Skipton where we spent a most interesting afternoon looking round the castle. The owners have a well organized routine which makes all the difference to a conducted tour. After the castle we were privileged to have our old friend Mr. K. Wilson as our guide, and he showed us the museum, where new extensions had recently been made. Here we saw how a few sheets of hardboard and a little initiative can turn an old disused cellar into a well laid out display. It was this particular visit which inspired us to do something about our own museum.

Kirkstall Abbey was the next on our list, and once again we had someone "in the know" to show us round—Mr. Bellamy—who has had great practical experience in the abbey. Here we saw the

recent excavations and were able to compare both the difference in the layout of the abbey and the different technique applied with St. John's Priory. Kirkstall is closely linked with Pontefract in that it was founded in 1147 by Henry de Lacy (The de Lacy family being Lords of Pontefract). Here again we were able to visit Abbey House, and see how a museum should be laid out. Though much smaller than the Castle Museum at York, Abbey House, too, had its streets with shops and even a pub (some of our members were a little upset to find the latter closed).

On two occasions we were able to visit York, an archaeologist's paradise, where we were shown round by a member of the Ministry of Works, Dr. Gee. This trip was certainly not one for the infirm or aged members as it required lots of walking, and the blisters some of us had when we got home were proof of our route march, in and out of the Minster and almost every other church in York, some of which we never knew existed, and would no doubt have spent many hours looking for them without Dr. Gee. We certainly know a lot more about this ancient city than we ever knew before.

Report on Junior Society

As we go to print, the junior members are in the middle of their study group, which this year comprises six lectures on elementary archaeology and a close study of the castle. This is the third year running that we have been able to find enough teenagers interested to form such a group. In the past two years, one of our main problems has been where to meet, the education authorities were unable to help last year so we had to use a room at the home of Mrs. Gardiner in Horsefair, a room which although it offered the right atmosphere for a study of ancient things, was not very convenient for holding class in. However, this year we have a splendid room at the Assembly Rooms, and already the blackboard (not available last year) has been put to good use.

During the summer our members played a big part in the work at the Castle (see Castle Report) and some assisted at St. John's Priory.

Another activity this past summer was walking. Quite a few miles were covered by the feet of the juniors following the larger and more experienced feet of Mr. Morris who led the "Safari." We are very grateful to Mr. Morris for the interest he has shown in the Juniors in both the walks and the Castle.

One of our juniors has done a very good job of rescue and recording on the houses, now demolished, at the bottom of Baghill Lane. Kevin Stubbs, assisted by Terence Carney has been able to save several interesting items such as door hinges, etc., and has drawn out plans of the site.

It should be mentioned here that one of our members has been acting as Secretary to the Secretary. Mr. Gardiner finds that the job of Secretary to a growing Society means growing piles of work and would like to acknowledge the help given him by Miss Elizabeth Desbrough, who has spent many hours taking shorthand notes and typing reports in her spare time.

The Chantry or Church of St. Thomas

Another local site which has been partially examined by our members is the site of the Church erected on the site of the execution of Thomas Earl of Lancaster. There is no part of the church remaining above ground, and part of it is under the Mill, which is shortly to be demolished. The site is at the top of Mill Lane at its junction with Orchard Head Lane. Though only a small excavation took place we were able to recover some very beautiful carved stone which shows the church must have been highly decorated inside and out. Masons' marks were found like some on St. John's and the castle, and we were able to fit three stones to form part of a roof vaulting. We hope to have a closer look at this site when the mill has been removed. If the owners are willing of course.

The Guide Service

If you are a visitor to Pontefract, or are intending a visit, may we suggest that you contact our secretary and allow us to act as your guides. We have been doing this sort of thing for three years now, and we know that people do appreciate our help. We do not do this for money, we like to show people our famous castle, and other sites. If you have ever tried to show yourself round the castle you will at once realise the value of such a service, as there are lots of interesting details tucked away in odd corners which are never noticed by the public. We should say here however, that if you wish to visit the inside of the Keep and Dungeons, you must first obtain permission from the Pontefract Corporation, who though they are normally co-operative in these matters, must after all, retain the right to refuse if they think necessary.

During the summer months you will normally find one or more of our members at the castle, but if you want to be sure of a guide, drop a line to our secretary and he will do everything he can to make your visit an interesting one. A full tour of the castle and museum can take up to three hours if you wish to see everything, so bear this in mind when you are planning your outing, though we can always arrange the tour to suit your wishes.

St. John's Priory, Cliffs Skeleton

Just above the Priory field is a small range of cliffs about twenty to thirty feet high, and it was on top of these that we found the skeleton of a man, aged forty to fifty. As the burial had partly slipped over the cliff edge, the skeleton was disturbed. It was also extremely difficult to excavate. The diggers had to hang on to tree roots with one hand whilst digging with the other. The finding of an arrow head between the fifth and sixth ribs caused quite a stir. Though in poor condition it has been dated about the twelfth century. The skull and arrow are now in the castle museum.

President: Mr. C. V. BELLAMY. Chairman: Mr. W. BOOTH
Vice-Presidents: Mr. K. WILSON, Mr. WARD, Mr. J. COX and Mrs. HORNER

Secretary: Mr. K. GARDINER, 38 Tanshelf Drive, Pontefract
Treasurer: Miss. M. MILLWARD

Committee: Mr. D. Hookham, Mr. Thorpe, Mr. F. Morris, Miss D. Roberts and Miss Johns.

Statement of Accounts for Year ending 31st March, 1961

	£	s.	d.
RECEIPTS			
Balance Brought Forward:—			1 3 2
Cash at Bank	1 2 4
Cash in Hand	22 2 6
Subscriptions:— at 15/- or 7/6, 1960/61			
Donations:—			
For News Letters and at Castle	5 2 6
From Juniors	1 0 0
Sale of Post Cards	0 8 8
Interest at Bank	0 4 8
			£31 3 10
PAYMENTS			
Lecturers' expenses	3 7 6
Lecture Rooms	3 0 0
Subscription to Y.A.S.	1 0 6
Secretary's expenses	1 12 6
Stationery:—			
For News Letters	0 18 0
Others	0 1 3
Postage	0 7 5
Crockery and Spoons	4 2 0
Expenses of Social	1 15 8
Lock	0 4 3
Photographs	1 2 6
			17 11 7
Balance Carried Forward:—			13 4 8
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Cash in hand	£31 3 10

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