

PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1957

(AFFILIATED TO THE YORKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



ANNUAL JOURNAL
and
REPORT

1963



Price - One Shilling

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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 Members 21 and over. 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. From the age of 16 to 21, the Fee shall be 7/6 per year, and Members in this age group shall be entitled to a vote after two full years' membership. Fee for those under 16 shall be 5/- per year, but members in this age group shall not be entitled to a vote.

The Financial Year shall begin, and Fees shall become due, on the First of April each year. 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 a vote at any General Meeting unless all moneys 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, fourteen days prior to the General Meeting.

EDITORIAL

As many members will know, this is the first year that the Society has elected a Publications Secretary to sit on the Committee. In the past all compiling and editing of Society literature was done by other Committee members, especially by our General Secretary. We have always been proud of the high standards set by our Annual Journal, and I sincerely hope that this 1963 edition will maintain those standards.

As amateur archaeologists, we are inclined to mourn the passing of the material relics of our town's past. This is understandable, but we should not let such sentiments bar the path of progress. New flats and buildings are everywhere taking the place of the old, for the progressive modern town cannot live in a world that is dead and gone. We could wish, however, that the citizens of Pontefract would take more interest in the fascinating heritage that is theirs. It has always amazed me that so many local people know so little about the castle.

The fault is, in part, ours, for only by producing interesting and readable works can the Society hope to reach out and recruit followers. Every year new members join and help to carry the "word" to their immediate circle, but what is really needed is a system of publication and distribution that can only be achieved with a much larger membership. The moral is obvious; each member should attempt to sell as many Journals as possible, for at present this is our best recruiter.

As membership of our Society grows, so does the scope of our work and achievements. Readers will appreciate that it is impossible to record here all that members have done in the last year. Instead we report on the chief digs on which members have worked, and also try to include some information on various interesting local buildings or sites.

In closing, may I say that the Society would like to thank everyone who has had a hand in producing this Journal.
E.H.

SECRETARIAL REPORT

In 1956 the Pontefract and District Archaeological Society had never been heard of. Now, in 1963, we are known not only in England, but all over the world. One of my main aims as your Secretary has been to make this Society known as widely as possible (even if it means spending a few hours in the Dungeons). I am pleased to say that we have now reached the stage when we do not need "stunts" to bring us to the notice of the public, though this does not mean that I think that the episode in the Dungeon was just a stunt, for we have in fact received many requests to repeat something of the sort for the benefit of visitors to the Castle.

Now that we are as well-known as we are, one of my worries has been the problem of standard. Were we growing and moving forward, or were we standing still? It was such questions as these that prompted me to raise the matter at the A.G.M. Since then, I am pleased to say, we have grown and we have moved forward! Quite a number of new members

have joined us, and at the moment the membership stands at fifty. A reshuffle of the Committee appears to have had some effect. Mr. Houlder has undertaken to produce this Journal, a task previously carried out by myself. Miss Burling has been elected to serve as Minutes Secretary, and Mr. Thorpe has been appointed Official Society Projectionist. We hope by these moves that members will be better informed of Society functions. A lack of information going to our members was but one of our previous worries.

I am sure that there is no need for me to report on the splendid series of lectures we have enjoyed throughout the season, once again arranged by Mr. Booth, who tells me that already he has planned next season's lectures, with promise of interesting subjects. Whilst on the subject of lectures — the Committee has decided to ask all future speakers to lecture for one hour only, the idea being to allow more time for members to meet each other and have a "natter." This we feel is something that has been neglected and not allowed for under present arrangements. It will also give members a chance to raise matters of business. It has been said before that we on the Committee sometimes feel that members are left out of things a little too much.

Many activities have taken place during the year and are now too numerous to mention in detail. Mr. Morris has arranged several very interesting outings — some for the weaker and more infirm members by bus; and others, by foot, for the more energetic types. I have been able to speak to more people than ever before about our achievements and the work in the castle. I would like to thank all those organisations who have invited me to lecture, and trust that I have been able to maintain the interest shown by them in our work.

A new venture was the Social Evening arranged by the young members when, between buns and more buns, Edward Archer showed us his slides of places of interest, and I did my *Michael Miles* act with a quiz. The first question was, "Who was the farmer who fought a king?" (answer, "Cromwell"); and the last question was, "What is a Sagar Maker's Bottom Knocker?" The answer to this one is much too long and complicated to print, but at the quiz the question was answered in brilliant style by Mr. Don Lodge. The only thing about the Social which to me at least did not seem quite right was that there were too many Senior Members present. How about it, Young Members? Why not plan, arrange, and run a function all on your own? I am sure you can.

May I end this report by saying "Thank You" to all those who have helped to make the Society such a success during the year. Space does not permit me to say more, but you have done a fine job. Keep it up.

K.G.

WORK IN PONTEFRAC CASTLE — SUMMER 1962

by K. Gardiner

It became apparent during this season that the Victorian Excavations were more extensive than was first thought. We had previously found

signs of their work below King's Tower and on the tower itself, apart from the more obvious areas such as the kitchens and bakehouse. When we cleared the outside of the King's Tower guardroom, two seasons ago, we were able to see through the drain-hole that the inside contained clean broken masonry. We thought therefore that the guardroom might have been undisturbed since the Demolition, but upon excavation this season we found that the Victorians had been there before us. This part of the work, then, yielded nothing except a few mason's marks.

The Swillington Tower proved more interesting, though here again we found evidence of Victorian disturbance. However, in spite of this we were able to record the ground plan of the remains of the Tower and of the connecting ramp or staircase up to the Bailey Wall. Some very interesting theories have been put forward regarding this tower, and more especially about the problem of getting in and out of it. The fact that the tower is some yards outside the Bailey, and over thirty feet below the general level of the Castle, presents an interesting problem, and we do not rule out the possibility of an underground passage leading from the tower to some subterranean chambers like the magazine. At the moment, however, we have no evidence whatever of any such thing.

During the latter stages of this part of the work we found a short flight of steps leading off the main stairway on the west side. The tantalising feature of these steps is that although they lead directly from the main stairway, they stop a few inches short of it, and there is no sign of any connection between the two, so their purpose is a mystery.

We were very glad to be able to carry out some repair work to the Bailey wall this year: its ruinous state has been the cause of great concern for some time. We were not able to do very much in one short season, of course, as this type of work is a long and drawn-out process, but at least we were able to prevent one part of it from collapsing, and no doubt the coming season will provide more time to continue this work. It was an interesting experience learning the trade from Mr. T. Burnley, who has been responsible for the fine work on the Keep. I am greatly indebted to him for his help and advice. The main difficulty was the removal of tree roots which had worked their way into the wall at several points. To get to the lower parts of the wall we had to put in trenches on the outside. In doing so we revealed three buttresses of Early-English style: as these were in such fine condition we decided to lower the level of the surrounding earth so as to leave their outline visible.

On the whole the season was an interesting one, and much good work was put in. It is impossible to acknowledge all the help we have received or to name individuals, but we do wish to thank everyone who has helped, and once again we are indebted to the Pontefract Corporation for allowing us to carry out the work.

REPORT ON THE EXCAVATION AT DRAX 1962

by Mr. K. Wilson

After the successful excavation at Drax in the summer of 1961, work was continued for the three weeks between August 1st and 21st, 1962.

As there was a root crop on the field it was not possible to dig in the area which was likely to prove most rewarding — namely, close to last year's trenches where it is known for certain that there are the foundations of more buildings. A site was therefore chosen about 200 feet to the N.W. of last year's excavation, and several trenches were opened. This site was traditionally supposed to be the area on which stood the chapel of St. Wilfred.

Although the trenches were so arranged that it would have been impossible to miss a building had there been one in the grid, no stone foundations were found. There were, however, traces of a wooden one superimposed on the clay foundations of an earlier building. The clay foundations — 4ft. 6in. to 5ft. wide, of Period I — ran roughly parallel with the stone foundations discovered last year, and just 200ft. to the N.W. Time did not allow for the opening of enough trenches to determine the exact size of the building. Period II had been a wooden building slightly offset from Period I and using the original clay foundations. A number of 1ft.-square post holes were found, spaced at irregular intervals. They had contained squared-off timbers.

A large slag heap, about three feet thick, was found piled against the inner wall of the Period I building. This contained iron slag, an iron pan and a number of pieces of iron; also several pieces of 2nd Century Roman pottery.

The only mediaeval pottery discovered was in the topsoil and disturbed by the plough. All the stratified pottery, from Periods I and II, was Roman. Unfortunately the site was one mass of nineteenth-century field drains, which made work very difficult.

The Pontefract and District Archaeological Society was well represented throughout the dig, and there were about thirty volunteers in all. The work was difficult and, for the most part, unrewarding — and, out of twenty-one days, there was heavy rain on seven, and many very wet nights.

The enthusiasm of the volunteers is emphasised by the fact that, after cold wet nights in their tents, they were able to turn out cheerfully and bale out the water-filled clay trenches.

THE NEW HALL

by E. Houlder and K. Stubbs

On May 11th, 1553, the lands of the Priory of Saint John were granted to Lord George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, for £23/17/8 p.a. In 1549 he had been made High Steward of the Honour of Pontefract, and Constable of Pontefract Castle. He used the stone from the Priory to build himself a mansion. He died in 1590, probably before the actual completion of the Hall. He had four sons by his first wife, of whom he outlived three, the fourth (Henry) inheriting his title. Henry died in 1596, leaving no male heirs. The title then passed to George's step-son, the Earl of New-castle, but the Priory lands and New Hall were by now in the hands of

Robert Pierrepont (also spelt Pierrepont), who inherited them through his marriage to one of the co-heirs of Henry.

Robert probably completed the Hall, as his crest is on the S.S.E. front. He was later made Lord Pierrepont, Viscount Newark and Earl of Kingston. The property remained in the hands of this family until about the beginning of the 18th century, when the widow of William Pierrepont of Nottingham, a sister of Sir William Dawes, bought it from the Duke of Kingston and bequeathed it to her nephew, Sir D'Arcy Dawes, afterwards successively Bishop of Chester and Archbishop of York. He had an only child, Elizabeth, who married Edwin Lascelles in 1746. Thus the Hall, Priory lands, Pontefract Rectorial Tithes, and the Glasshoughton Rectorial Tithes came into the possession of the Right Honourable the Earl of Harewood.

STYLE

The Hall was built between 1553 and 1591 (this latter date was on the coat of arms which was on the E.N.E. front) in a style more popular during the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII — distinguished, with a typical Gothic stringcourse.

BUILDING MATERIALS

All the stone used for the outer and inner walls was old weathered sandstone taken from the Priory, with the exception of the following: the lower portion of the south corner of the E.N.E. front was built of Sherburn Freestone; on the W.N.W. front was some Pontefract Magnesian Limestone; and the window mullions were of fine newly-dressed stone. Most of the oak floor and roof timbers appear to be re-used material, as there are many old mortice holes in them. At the moment this timber is being examined, along with some of the re-used stone, in the hope of proving that it has come from the Priory.

NOTABLE EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE HALL

During the Civil War, Pontefract Castle (three musket shots from the Hall) was besieged four times. The first two sieges are insignificant; indeed, few have heard of the first siege of Autumn 1644; and during the second, which lasted until March 1st, 1644/5 (generally referred to as the First Siege) the armies of the Parliament never completely invested the castle. Later in March 1644/5, the siege was renewed with vigour, and the New Hall was occupied without resistance. It was within range of the artillery mounted on King's Tower, and was hit several times by shot. The Round-heads constructed several works near the Hall, including one to guard the road to Ferrybridge. Later, the castle surrendered, and the Parliamentarians withdrew from their positions and, for the most part, went away.

The castle was left with a small garrison in charge until it was surprised by Colonel Morris in 1648. As well as preparing the castle for a siege, the Royalists fortified the town and garrisoned the New Hall. Gradually the siege tightened, and the defenders had to withdraw to the castle and the hall. Cromwell himself visited the town early in November 1648, and a few days later, on the 10th, the garrison of the Hall, deciding that it was now undefendable, started a fire and evacuated it. The Parliamentarians acted quickly, put out the blaze and re-garrisoned the

place. Apparently the fire caused little damage, for there is no mention of any great repairs being effected.

On 14th December 1648 the soldiers of the Parliament completed the defences of the Hall, consisting of a ditch with the earth thrown up in front and behind to form a double breastwork divided by the ditch. Thus isolated from the castle, the Hall remained in Roundhead hands until the Royalist collapse.

Nothing further of importance involved the Hall until the Luddite riots of 1811. The riots started at a time when Trade Unions were illegal. Many factory owners were introducing the new machines to effect economies and speed up production, and consequently workers became unemployed. Trouble started in March of that year in Nottingham. The followers of "Captain Lud" (a village idiot who started a craze for smashing machines) quickly spread, and in this district it was feared that the rioters would use firearms if they could obtain ammunition. Accordingly the authorities ordered the lead on the roof of the New Hall to be stripped off to prevent the Luddites casting it into bullets.

The next time we hear of the Hall is on the 19th January 1828. On that day the north tower and main entrance collapsed. Following this the whole of the E.N.E. front was removed and the material used to construct a farmhouse. Since then, roofless and exposed to the elements, it has decayed swiftly. At the time of writing it is in the course of being demolished, the stone finding its last resting place as ballast under our new roads.

THE HALL AND ITS GROUNDS

Until its latter days, the main entrance to the Hall was from the E.N.E. The grounds comprised two gardens — one to the S.S.E. and the other to the W.N.W. The former was 112 by 105 feet; the latter 310 by 170 feet; the gardens were joined by a Gothic arch. The south and east corners of the former garden had towers 20ft 6in. by 19ft 6in. Water for the Hall was obtained from a well on the N.N.W. corner, now filled. The Hall consisted of a basement, ground floor, and first and second storeys. The basement contained cellars, various small rooms, and a kitchen with a small oven in one corner. This, however, was not the only oven in the building, for there were two set in the garden wall on the west side. These were beehive ovens, as in the castle, one being nine feet in diameter, and the other four feet in diameter. At each corner of the Hall was a tower, measuring 13ft. 3in. by 10ft. 6in., the one in the south corner containing an oak staircase leading to the roof.

Above the basement was the ground floor, consisting of Entrance Hall, Audience Room, Servicing Room, Withdrawing Room, Parlour, a private room, and the Grand Staircase, which was six feet wide. At this level the outside dimensions were 150 feet on the S.S.E. side, and 58ft. 8in. on the W.S.W. side, measured above the plinth. State apartments and bedrooms took up the first floor, the room above the Audience Room having a very fine fireplace opposite the bay window which faced onto the present Ferrybridge Road. On the second floor the whole of the length of one wing was occupied by a large ballroom 90 feet wide. This was divided into three parts by two pairs of folding doors, 14ft. 6in. wide. Ceilings were divided into panels, the main floor beams forming the larger divisions of the panelling.

COATS OF ARMS

A large coat of arms was over the main entrance to the Hall, but when the N.N.E. front fell in 1828 it was removed and eventually found its way into the hands of Lord Harewood. Twenty-eight quarterings indicated that the Talbots had intermarried with the families of Mandeville, De Gourney, Butler, Beauchamp, etc. As supporters the shield had a horse and a Talbot. Over it there was an Earl's coronet and the Motto: "Preste d'accouplir."

On the S.S.E. front of the Hall there was a coat of arms in the centre of the bay, and a crest at each side. On the one in the centre, the quarterings are nearly obliterated but appear to be those of the Pierrepont, Stapleton of Carlton, Pembroke, Neville and Talbot families. Over the shield is a "Barred Helmet" and a Talbot.

The crest on the right-hand side of the front is a Talbot Passant, and that on the left, a horned bull, Rampant. This latter, the crest of the Dukes of Kingstons, can now be seen in the Castle Museum.

CONCLUSION

It is surprising that the Hall was never occupied for more than a few months by the Talbots. Little real damage was done to the structure during the Civil War, and indeed, until 1811, it would have been possible with a small outlay to make it habitable. Why nobody did this we do not know. Perhaps, as has been suggested to the authors, there were rumours of a curse because the building materials came from the Priory. Whatever the cause, it remained empty of human habitation from 1649 until its demolition last year. Even then work was interrupted, and it appears that the few remaining walls will excite interest for years to come.

Whilst carrying out research for this work, we found that very few representations of the Hall are in existence. If any of our readers are in possession of engravings, old photographs, or plans, they would be doing the Society a great favour by communicating with the Publications Secretary enclosing details.

ROCHE ABBEY

by the "Happy Wanderer"

Roche Abbey is situated in the Deanery of Doncaster and the Archdeanery of the West Riding.

On July 12th, 1147, Stephen Richard De Builli granted to God and St. Mary and to the monks of Roche all the land between Hooton and Malby on condition that they built an Abbey there. Further land was also given by a certain Richard De Buisby.

Among the benefactors of the Abbey we find the names of Edmund De Lacy, Constable of Chester, and William, Earl of Warrene.

Pope Urban III confirmed the estate and exempted them from paying tithes on their own land. The Bull (Papal Lead Seal) is dated 1186.

The first Abbot of Roche was Durandus, who governed for twelve years.

In 1186 the annual revenue of the Abbey was assessed at £224/2/5.

We find very little reference to Roche in records during the first hundred years of its existence — although in A.D. 1285 we note that the Abbey and Convent of Roche disposed of their claim to the Manor and advowson of the Church of Monk Bretton (Nr. Barnsley) to the Prior of the same for the sum of 20/-.

The monks of the Cistercian Order lived a cloistered life, and were mainly concerned with agriculture and domestic activities. Travellers were allowed to stay three days and three nights and were then expected to move on.

Sir William Dugdale, the historian, informs us that there would be no fewer than 300 monks at Roche Abbey. Of these 300, only 30 or 40 would be priests or clerics. The remainder would be lay-brothers, labourers, etc.

Stone for the building of the Abbey was quarried locally. The fine gate-house is dated late 13th century. The ground plan of the Abbey follows the standard pattern (Cistercian), and examples are to be found at Rievaulx, and at Buildwas in Shropshire.

The chief remains of the Church are the eastern chapels of the two transepts. The lovely arcades which divided these four chapels from their transepts have pointed arches on clustered shafts. Over them are the pointed arches of the Triforium, and higher still the round windows of the Clerestory. There are also traces of the Piscina and Sedilia.

In the nave of the church there are several interesting tomb slabs. One slab has a sacred monogram carved 600 years ago. Another has a cross and a sword. A third has an inscription to Peryn of Doncaster and to Ysbel, his wife; and a fourth tomb slab shows the wife of one John Braithwaite, her hands clasped at prayer.

ST. JOHN'S PRIORY EXCAVATIONS, 1962

by C. V. Bellamy, B.Sc., M.I.Biol.

Excavation this year was largely confined to the areas north and east of the first church, and the south-east corner of the lesser cloister.

Four squares were opened about seventy feet east of the south transept, and these showed three walls running out even further to the east. The southernmost of these was continuing the line of the wall which started

from the north-east angle of the decagonal Chapter House, the middle one was in line with the wall coming from the south side of the "D"-shaped chapel, and the northernmost fell almost between the two walls which run eastwards from the south side of the choir aisle. Obviously we have not yet reached the eastern limits of the later East End of the Church. These trenches produced a lot of window mullion and other carved stones, contained a number of burials, and revealed some broken pieces of an inscribed grave slab. As in a previous case the inscription was incomplete and lacked the part which might have identified the person buried, but the surviving legend reads: "et sancti iohannis apostoli et evangelii honore emit et i albas capas ac perq(uisitit)" — so we have for the first time a specific reference to St. John the Apostle and Evangelist on the site. It is possible that more fragments of this slab may turn up in future trenches.

Four trenches immediately east of the north transept chapel confirmed the alterations which turned the "D"-shaped chapel into a more square room. Several burials were found here — one in a vault, some in coffins, some in simple graves, and many of them were of earlier date than the rebuilding. The most interesting discovery was of a small rectangular oven in this new room. This must be a Eucharistic oven used for the baking of wafers for Mass, and the only other comparable ovens I know are to be seen at Castle Acre and Thetford.

On the south side of the Lesser Cloister two squares were excavated in the southern range, and two in the area which we have provisionally called the Infirmary Area. In the southern range, foundations of walls were found where they were expected, and the line of the small drain (38) was exposed for a further length. Throughout our work in this locality we have consistently had traces of sundry small fires or fire-hearths, patches of charcoal and burnt clay. This year we see an explanation of these with the realisation that this range was at one time used as the metal-working shop of the priory. A large clay crucible used for the smelting of copper or bronze, and a slightly smaller one used for silver or white metal, point to this usage. Unfortunately no tools of the metal-smith have so far been found.

Two trenches further east were expected to show more evidence of the large filled drain trench which had been seen two years ago. Instead, after penetrating the last occupation floor levels, we found a plethora of walls almost completely filling the trenches in a chess-board pattern. More of these must be uncovered to permit an interpretation of them.

In the more easterly of these two squares, a loose fill had been encountered at an early stage, but the cramped conditions made it impossible to excavate to the bottom of it until some of the wall foundations could be removed. This was eventually done, and the fill removed. It proved to be a well cut through bed rock to a depth of fifteen feet. It had been lined with ashlar to give a shaft about four feet square, and the fill suggested a late date for its abandonment. Pottery in the packing between the lining and the cut rock face indicated that the well was probably dug in the fifteenth century.

Everything seen this year indicates that there is still a lot of work to do, and holds promise of many more interesting developments in future trenches. I would like to again express my sincere thanks to all those who helped with the excavations, and hope we shall see them all again in 1963.

INFORMATION FOR VISITORS

We should like to draw the attention of visitors and intending visitors to the service offered by our Society. For some years now we have been able to act as guides to the various sites in the town, especially the Castle. Normally you will find one or more of our members at the Castle during the summer weekends, but to be on the safe side, drop a S.A.E. to our secretary and he will do all he can to help you.

With regard to visits to the Castle — the dungeons are not normally open to the public, but arrangements can be made, and intending visitors should write to the town clerk for permission to view them. However, it should be understood that he will only grant such permission on the understanding that all persons enter the dungeons at their own risk and are accompanied by a recognised guide. When making your plans for your outing, please allow at least three hours for a visit to the Castle, as to see the ruins, museum and dungeons takes quite a time (that is, if you wish to see everything).

The Castle is not the only place of interest, of course — there is also the Hermitage, an underground chamber cut out by Peter the Hermit, consisting of a spiral staircase leading to a small, now unfortunately blocked up, living room, with a second stairway leading to the Oratory with a stone altar. The Hermitage is underneath the Pontefract General Infirmary and therefore is not open to the public, but arrangements can be made by permission of the Matron (provided the time of the visit is convenient).

The site of the Priory of St. John is well worth a visit, too, when excavations are in progress, but not otherwise as the site is all underground and at the moment there is little hope of its being opened up permanently.

The church of All Saints has many interesting features and is quite near the Castle. Partly ruined during the sieges, the Church has the unusual feature of having the Transepts and Choir only in use, the Nave and Aisles being in ruins.

St. Giles's Church, with its well-known landmark, the tower, can be seen for miles around, and although it is not as old as All Saints, it is a very interesting church and stands in the market place near yet another local oddity — the Butter Cross with its pump, the pump being given to the town by Elizabeth the First.

Hon. Secretary of the Society : K. Gardiner, 38 Tanshelf Drive, Pontefract
Publications Secretary : E. Houlder, 11 Bondgate, Pontefract