

PONTEFRAC T & DISTRICT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Founded 1957

(AFFILIATED TO
THE COUNCIL FOR BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY, GROUP 4
AND
THE YORKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)

ANNUAL JOURNAL
and
REPORT

1965

Price - One Shilling and Sixpence

EDITORIAL

Readers of our previous Journals will immediately notice in this, our fifth Annual Journal, a considerable expansion in size and in the range of subject-matter. Such expansion seems appropriate in view of our rapidly-increasing membership and the great variety of specialised interests which has developed within the Society. The aim of this publication is, and has been, to report on the activities of members during the past year, and to provide a permanent record of the results of local archaeological and historical research. Since it reaches a wide readership outside the Society, this Journal is also a most useful instrument in attempting to arouse interest in local history and archaeology among the inhabitants of Pontefract.

We must, however, be careful to avoid creating or encouraging the impression that archaeologists are stubbornly devoted to the preservation of all that is ancient and are consequently "against progress." We should remember that the principal aim of archaeology is the study of human progress, and that this aim must be allowed to make its contribution to the development of our town as former generations have done. It is, nevertheless, important that buildings representative of each period of man's activity remain to preserve for each generation a sense of continuity with the past. It ought always to be possible to trace the history of Pontefract through its buildings so that its inhabitants will never forget that they owe their civilisation to many centuries of experiment and invention.

In conclusion, I would like, on behalf of the Society, to thank our contributors and all who have been concerned with the production of this Journal.

T. J. CARNEY.

SECRETARIAL REPORT

by E. HOULDER

In the last Secretarial Report, Mr. K. Gardiner remarked upon the apparent "stagnation" of the Society. Membership was down, and so also was attendance at lectures.

After the last Annual General Meeting, the new Committee settled down to try and remedy the situation. It was considered that the most important problem to be reviewed was the means of communication between the executive of the Society and the ordinary members. With this in mind the duplicator was despatched to Mr. Richards, who kindly put it in working order. The first News Letter of the new series appeared during August, and since then has appeared bi-monthly under the able direction of Mr. T. J. Carney.

Publicity of the right kind is essential to a Society such as ours, and we are grateful to the Borough Librarian (who has contributed to this report) for allowing us to display posters in the Library entrance. We are grateful too for the assistance received from the Staff of Castleford Library, especially from Miss I. Hill and later Miss Pyle.

An informative prospectus was compiled by Mr. T. J. Carney, copies of which are displayed in the Museum entrance and also sent to intending

members. This venture has met with some success, one of the first completed membership forms (included in the prospectus) being sent from Mrs. W. V. Walker of Wilmette, Illinois, U.S.A. To Mrs. Walker must go the distinction of being our first overseas member.

During the summer a regional newspaper reported that Roman remains had been found at Ferry Fryston. A member of the Society investigated and found evidence of Roman activity in the form of Ghost Walls and Roman pottery. The location was notified to the Archaeological Department of the Ordnance Survey.

Until now, the Society has had impact only on a very local level, but it was realised that steps should be taken to integrate our activities with other societies and organisations at least on a regional basis. We therefore arranged for the Society to be affiliated to Group 4 of The Council For British Archaeology. Our representative on this body is Mr. T. J. Carney.

In an attempt to give new members some instruction in the basic skills of archaeology, a series of beginners' talks has been initiated, which at the time of going to press is quite successful. On the same lines, the photographic enthusiasts, led by the Society Photographer, Mr. D. Thorpe, organised a members' night to illustrate the activities of the Society.

Various outings have been organised by the Excursions Secretary, Mr. F. Morris. Members visited excavations at Tickhill Castle and Sandal Castle, and also joined in a Y.A.S. excursion to Howden and Hemingbrough Churches.

The main activity this year has been in the Museum, although some members, notably Mr. D. Lodge, have been engaged in restoring steps in the Castle Keep and fitting a strong door at the top of the steps. The museum work is detailed in a separate report.

During 1964, members worked on the following sites:

Pontefract Priory; Pontefract Castle; The Scilly Isles; Scurff Hall Moat, Drax; and the Romano-British site at Drax.

In closing this report, I would like to thank our President, the Committee, and all the members who have helped to make 1964 a year of progressive activity in the life of the Society. Membership is the highest yet, and attendance at lectures is good. Success would have been impossible without the co-operation that the committee has received from the members.

PONTEFRACT AND LIQUORICE

by N. LLOYD, A.L.A. (*Pontefract Borough Librarian*)

The word "Pontefract" has meaning to a great number of people, not only in the British Isles, but also in Europe and America. To the student of history it has the associations of the Castle and of the Civil War, and, to a lesser degree, it is the town where the first secret ballot was held in the United Kingdom. To those followers of the "Sport of Kings" it means the racecourse. To the vast majority, however, it is known because of the "Pontefract cake."

Liquorice — or, to give it its botanical name, "Glycyrrhiza" — has a long association with the town of Pontefract, though it is by no means a native of this country. It grows wild, and in great profusion, in an area where dwelt many ancient civilisations. This area, running approximately between the 30th and 45th parallels latitude north, includes Spain, Italy, Greece, Caucasian and Trans-Caucasian Russia, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and China.

It has a very long history, and to it have been attributed many powers. The famous Egyptian and Greek physicians extolled its virtues, and Theophrastus, who has been called "The Father of Botany," wrote this of it in the 3rd century B.C.: "Scythian root (liquorice) is also sweet; some, in fact, call it simply 'sweet root.' It is useful against asthma or dry cough and in general troubles of the chest, and is also administered in honey for wounds. It has the property of quenching thirst, if one holds it in the mouth; wherefore they say that the Scythians, with this and mare's milk cheese, can go for eleven or twelve days without drinking."

Brahma recommended liquorice as "a general tonic, beautifying agent and elixir of life." One of the first herbs used in China, it was, and probably still is, very highly regarded there — it acted in "a princely manner," was not poisonous, and could be taken in large quantities without ill-effect; it kept the body supple, increased endurance, and staved off old age.

The personal physicians of the Caesars prescribed it as a tonic, and it has been said that it formed an important part of the rations of Roman soldiers. The French soldiers, too, were supplied with a liquorice drink, and it was included in the rations of English soldiers during the reign of Elizabeth I.

The knowledge of liquorice was, then, widespread in the ancient world. During the "Dark Ages," which followed the decay of the Roman Empire, the knowledge of this plant was preserved, as was much learning and culture, in the monasteries. With the Renaissance, when learning was revived, and our civilisation began to develop, liquorice again became very popular as a "sweet medicine." There was so much demand for it that it could not be supplied by the wild product, and its cultivation began in Italy and Spain, to be followed soon by its cultivation in France and Southern Germany. It was brought to Southern Germany, from Spain and Italy, by Benedictine monks to a monastery near Bamberg. An interesting story, supporting the statements of modern growers about the care which must be exercised in harvesting, stems from Bamberg. Membership of the Craftsmen's guilds was considered as a great honour, and the supreme test for admission to the Agricultural Guild was for each candidate to dig from the ground a mature liquorice plant with all of its roots and runners intact.

When, and how, did liquorice come to Pontefract? Little is really known about its introduction to England. It was charged in the accounts of Henry III in 1264 at threepence per pound, and there are other references to it about this time. The first references to its cultivation in England, however, are during the 16th and 17th centuries. The first reference to Pontefract is in the 1600 edition of Camden's "Britannia," but it has been popularly held that it was brought by the monks to Pontefract in 1562. Existing side by side, these last two factors are

hard to accept — one may accept that it was brought by the monks or that it was brought in 1562. As the dissolution of the monasteries began in 1538, it is extremely unlikely that they would bring it here in 1562.

Describing the foundation of the Priory, Fox says "One part of the annual expenses of these houses consisted in presents made to the great, whose favour they wished to conciliate. Whatever was delicious to the taste or fashionable in dress, they purchased for this purpose . . . Here also the poor, the sick, the aged and infirm resorted, and their wants were regularly supplied." This being so it would seem reasonable to suppose that they would have a need of liquorice, for a variety of reasons. It was well-known as a breath purifier and as a pleasant drink. The medicinal properties had been known for centuries. These facts would be everyday knowledge to the monks, as would be the methods of cultivation.

These monks owned land well suited to, and used more recently for, the growing of liquorice, and, according to Fox, they had "industry and perseverance." As these, and other monks, were in Pontefract from the late 11th century onwards, it seems strange to think that, with the knowledge that they had, they would wait until the 16th century to begin cultivation. Monks had taken the plant to Germany in the 12th century, as we have already seen, and also to France. This had shown that the plant could be cultivated other than in its native area. One could quite easily suppose that liquorice was grown in Pontefract in the 13th century, or even earlier, and kept within the bounds of probability. There is no written evidence to support this supposition, but then neither is there written evidence to support that the monks even brought it to England. For myself, I would accept the cultivation of liquorice in Pontefract in the 13th century on the basis of "circumstantial evidence."

Whatever the history of the liquorice plant, liquorice confectionery was almost certainly born here. Pontefract cakes — for medicinal purposes — were certainly made here in 1614, as a die stamp with that date is in existence. It is reputed that in 1760, George Dunhill added sugar to that recipe, and from this stems the modern liquorice confectionery which has made the name of Pontefract so famous.

RESTORATION WORK IN PONTEFRAC CASTLE, 1964

by K. GARDINER

We have, for some time now, been concerned about the state of many parts of the castle structure. As many members will know, the Corporation have carried out extensive restoration to the Keep, but it was obvious that, with limited funds, deterioration was overtaking the restoration. Many sections of the castle walls suffered serious harm before any action could be taken to prevent it, mainly on the Ovens, the Bailey Wall near King's Tower, and a large area near the Constable Tower.

We already have permission to carry out repair work on the Bailey Wall near King's Tower, but during the season a close inspection was

made on the Ovens and it was found that they were in far worse condition than was generally thought. It was also found that the Oven floor had, at some time, been taken up and relaid, but relaid on soil, apparently during the Victorian period. The soil, of course, provided an excellent crop of weeds which pushed their way up through the structure and made the whole floor uneven. During the season we removed the floor, noting where each stone had come from, and took out the soil from underneath. It was found that the soil went down to a depth of 3ft. or more. Under the soil was found the earlier Kitchen floor upon which the new bakehouse was built. This was in very poor condition and had been disturbed at the time of the rebuilding. A new foundation was provided for the Oven floor, after we had carried out some repairs to the Oven itself below floor level. The floor was then replaced in its original position as far as possible, but some of the stones were in such poor condition that we had to put new ones in. An obviously modern stone was placed in the floor to show that restoration had taken place. We then turned our attention to the walls of the Oven and removed a large amount of soil, rotted roofs and old cement from between the stonework before repointing. Some of the stones which had recently fallen were also replaced. There is still several years' work ahead before we can be sure that the Ovens are safe from further deterioration, and we hope to continue this work in the coming seasons.

More to obtain shelter from the bad weather than anything else, I spent one weekend inspecting the inside of the Keep. Once again it was found that the condition of the stonework was very bad indeed, and it was at once decided to carry out some first aid work in the Well Chamber. It was necessary to build a column at one point to provide support for the roof, which appeared to be hanging by cobwebs only in one part. This column was built in such a way that it is almost impossible to tell which is not original. Though it is usual to leave some indication that restoration has taken place I felt that such an indication would spoil the appearance of the chamber and decided against it. During this work I was visited by an inspector from the Ministry of Works (unofficially), and his advice proved valuable indeed, for it was he who pointed out that the "missing" stones from the walls were not in fact "missing" as we had long thought, but that they had been crushed and shattered by the pressure from above which he estimated to be some several hundred tons. It was noticed that, soon after making this estimation, he departed wishing me "All the best"! It is hoped that further restoration work will be carried out in this section, if not by our Society, then by someone else.

MASON'S MARKS AT PONTEFRACT CASTLE

by H. BATTYE, N.D.D., A.T.C.

The significance of Mason's Marks has been much discussed in the past, and they are now generally recognised by most authoritative scholars as

a mark of ownership. Pontefract Castle has a number of most unusual marks which may help to solve the mystery that has long shrouded the mark of the masons. The subject is too detailed to be explained in condensed form, and I hope to present it in the near future as a book based on new information collected in Yorkshire Abbeys and Castles. The following few notes describe some of the difficulties and problems of observing and recording marks at Pontefract.

The first essential is to have a working routine, otherwise areas may be covered twice or even overlooked. Personally I work in a clockwise direction, selecting an area by natural division such as a corner, buttress, or a window, and discreetly marking it by a chalk mark when finished. The absolute necessity in equipment is a good torch, which needs to be light in weight and not too bulky so that it can be held in the mouth. Binoculars help in locating marks high up the walls, but it is necessary to see them at eye level. Climbing on old ruins is not possible or advisable and here I was fortunate in being able to use scaffolding when the walls were repointed. Most Mason's Marks are derivatives of a straight vertical line, and by holding the torch close to the wall and moving slowly from top to bottom a shadow can be thrown into the nicks made by the chisel of the mason. The shadow helps observation by strengthening the line which otherwise may not have been seen amongst the rough markings to be found on the stone. When a mark is found, care must be taken to illuminate every angle, otherwise indecisive cuts can be overlooked. It must be pointed out that at certain angles the light can also obscure parts of the mark. This is because a beam of light along the trough, rather than across it, "flattens" out the line. All this seems fairly straight forward, but there are considerable problems to make the task much more difficult. Sandstone in particular decays in a southern or south-western aspect owing to changes in temperature in alternating periods of sunshine and rain, and owing to the angular grains which become drab and black through absorption of rainwater and impurities from the air. Without going into further technicalities, water on the wall surface, and frost, make observation difficult, and it is obvious that early or late oblique sun is best for observing the outside of a building, but as I have stated it is probable that all marks will have been obliterated from a southern aspect, as is the case with Pontefract.

The inside sheltered walls often have bad drainage, due to damage and decay. The Keep is very damp and has moss and fungi growing on the walls, not to mention modern scorchings! Above and beyond all, their early craftsmen themselves create one of the major difficulties by their methods of dressing the stone. The Rough Masons broached or dressed the stone by means of an axe which leaves all over the surface a series of diagonal "steps" that when illuminated throws shadows across the stone face and in doing so often obliterates the Mason's Mark. On a circular surface such as a pillar the marks are vertical rather than diagonal. About the second half of the 12th Century a flat chisel replaced the axe, and some fine examples of this working can be found on the stone brick arches in the Magazine.

A claw chisel, which leaves a series of comb-like parallel lines, was introduced in the 13th Century, and this too is found at Pontefract. It must be fairly evident that many marks can easily be overlooked or misrecorded by being obscured by the many distractions. When a clear

mark is found it is worthwhile to retrace one's steps, and review an indistinct recorded mark for comparison. Often faint lines can be discerned which previously had been overlooked. Experience and confidence can lead one to dismiss familiar marks with a cursory glance and I must admit to being guilty in this respect, but I found it necessary to retrace my steps when I discovered that certain marks differed in minor details.

Pontefract has many unusual marks; some are obviously measurements, others are position marks (that is to say, marks which indicate the position of a step or a window). Others have a deep symbolism, and yet others are still unexplainable. It has been stated by scholars that the Medieval Layers or Bricklayers had no mark, but in the Magazine there are marks scratched in the cement. In the Keep is possibly the answer to a question that has puzzled historians for many years, and that is — were the marks put on the stones before building, or after the walls were built? In a narrow gap between two stones in the roof can be seen a clear mark, impossible to cut after the stones were put in place. This in itself is of course no proof that the first theory is correct, but I have much further proof which verifies that this is so. I only mention it as an example that marks can be found in the most unusual places. Recording can be a matter of drawing the marks which are simple lines, but they should be in proportion. Squared graph paper and measurement in millimetres ensures that the recording is accurate. A magnifying glass can show the chisel mark in greater clarity, and one can also see that rarely more than two tools were used to mark the incision. Rubbings can also be taken but can be misleading because sometimes cracks or axe marks look like lines. I use a German Pelikan crayon, which is a hard wax and is able to show fine detail. It must be used across the line of the mark otherwise it will not show the line clearly, and the paper must be thin and of good quality, having a smooth surface which will be able to withstand friction.

A thin wash of ink or water colour washed over the wax will show the mark clearly if the wash is lighter or darker than the wax. Another method is to draw round the lines with a fine ball-point pen.

A more permanent record can be made by taking casts using fine Dental Plaster. A good flexible medium is Poly-Vinyl-Acetate, which can be brushed on to the wall and is easy to peel off when dry. Kraft paper, which is a thin fine quality brown paper, can be stippled into the mark by using a cold water white paste, which soaks into the paper and makes it more flexible. When dried, it is light, firm and ideal for displaying on a museum wall. All the above methods need practice, and advice should be taken before using the Dental Plaster, which is a rapid setting medium. The casts are of course in reverse but can be used as a mould if a release agent of Vaseline or French Polish is used. I leave the most common method of recording to the last, which is simply to paint in the mark on the wall with a water-soluble paint, such as poster or powder paint, and photograph the mark. (Copyright).

The following is an attempt to explain the plate of selected marks to be found at Pontefract Castle.

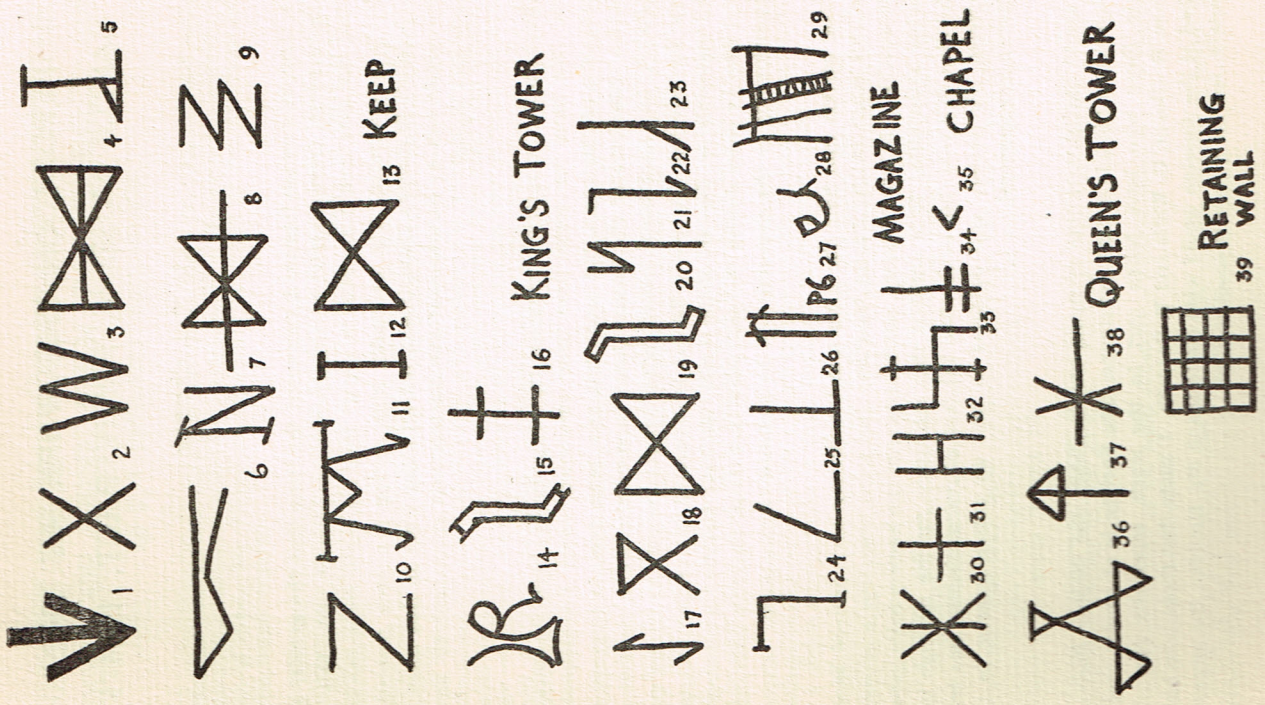
M.N.K. indicates that the meaning is not yet known.

* indicates that the mark is to be commonly found in more than six other sites in Yorkshire, and that the sources are numerous.

THE KEEP

1. Possibly t, l, d*. This mark is cut much deeper than any other, and is prominently placed at the head of the lower flight of stairs which leads to a small chamber. Such definite marks I term "Major Marks" and as yet it is not known why they have special emphasis. Perhaps they are the mark of the master mason because they are always to be found in a prominent position, such as the outer wall on a keep or gateway. Similar marks not of the same design are to be found in seven other Yorkshire buildings.
 2. g, 10, 22. Most probably crossed gauges, which signifies a mason*.
 3. A pair of double compasses, which was a jointing instrument for marking measurements and describing circles. This was an exceptionally significant symbol and was one of the three great lights in the Fraternity. Because of its accuracy and precision it symbolised impartial justice*.
 4. M.N.K. or mille.
 5. M.N.K.
 6. r.
 7. 13 or 50.
 8. See 4.
 - 9 and 10. Z very common. Double Z rare. Symbol of Zeubbabel — a prince of Judah who led efforts to build temple at Jerusalem. The first principal in the English Royal Arch chapter 7.
 11. A, 1, or earth — a Pythagorean symbol of divinity.
 12. M.N.K.
 13. See 4 and 8 above.
- ### INNER WALL KING'S TOWER
14. This is a most unusual mark and is one of the few marks cut by a gauge rather than a chisel. I have the authority of a modern Grand Master of Freemasonry that this mark signifies a hand grip of a Stone Hauler. This is possibly because the main area to the left is a LEWIS, which is a mechanical means of raising a stone. Also the symbol of the son of a mason.
 15. Possibly a Gothic letter*. Similar to 16C and 17C marks.
 16. M.N.K.*
- ### THE MAGAZINE
17. e*
 18. M.N.K.*
 19. See 4, 8 and 13 above*.

20. See 15*
21. M.N.K.*
22. M.N.K.*
23. M.N.K.*
- 24 & 25. A right angle — Pythagorism, meaning unceasing changes of nature. The correct way in which a mason should lead his life. (25) Symbol of a master or past master — meaning a square — a diagram of Euclid's 47th proposition, 5.
26. M.N.K.*
27. A scratch mark on the solid rock of the magazine.
28. M.N.K. scratched.
29. Not a Mason's Mark but I could not resist including such an interesting graffito. A 17th century prisoner possibly forecasting his fate, for it represents the Gallows on Baghill during the Civil War.
- ST. CLEMENT'S CHAPEL**
- 30 & 38. A Mithraic religious symbol of the sun wheel, later adopted by Constantine to be one of the various forms of the Christian Symbol.
31. 5.*
32. m, 6, 8, 20.*
33. A Fylfot (Swastika) and Cross. A symbol of the movement of the sun wheel and also adopted by the Christians — meaning, regeneration and prosperity. A most suitable symbol for a new chapel.
34. See 16.
35. Very small. See 25.
- GARDEROBE NORTH SIDE QUEEN'S TOWER**
36. Equilateral triangles are the symbol of the Trinity, and they also represent fire and water.
37. Partly scratched.
38. See 30.
- RETAINING WALL**
39. This is a Freemasonry symbol to be found on their regalia. M.N.K. Possibly unique to Pontefract, part of another similar mark on a broken stone in the magazine spiral staircase. Also "a magic square indicates 16. The sum of the first four odd numbers (that is, 1 + 3 + 5 + 7) which gives the square number whose side is 4. To select a number at hazard, the sum of the first two hundred odd numbers would give a square number 200×200 , that is 40,000." Therefore a system of measurement? (Taken from "Men of Mathematics").



REPORT ON THE WORK AT THE CASTLE MUSEUM, PONTEFRACT, 1964-5

by T. J. CARNEY

In the last Annual Journal I expressed the hope that the greater part of the museum project would be completed before Easter 1964. This was in fact the case, and I am able to report that the main room has been entirely re-decorated. The unusually high ceiling has been painted by the Borough Engineer's Department, but all other work in this room has been carried out by members of this Society and supervised by Mr. F. Morris and myself.

The main area of activity during the 1964-5 season has been the entrance room. We have for some time been concerned about the uninviting appearance of this room, but much has now been done to improve the situation. Members of the Society have papered the walls, painted the woodwork, and have made several other improvements. As in the main room, the Borough Engineer's Department painted the ceiling and provided materials for the rest of the work. We have acquired a number of useful display cases during the past year, and these, together with other cases belonging to the museum, will be installed in this room.

I feel certain that both the town and the Society have derived benefit from this work in the Castle Museum; the town now has a museum more worthy of its great history, and members of the Society have gained valuable experience. It is unlikely that our plans for the museum will be fulfilled this year, but even when the task of reorganisation has been completed the Society will continue to take an active interest in the museum's development.

I would particularly like to thank Mr. Eveleigh, the Deputy Borough Engineer, for his advice and assistance. The Society is of course grateful to those who have taken part in the work, especially Mrs. M. Horner, R. Glover, C. Wells and T. Peacock. I know that those who have worked at the museum would wish me to thank Mr. Houlder, the museum attendant, for his generous co-operation.

REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS ON THE PRIORY OF SAINT JOHN, PONTEFRACT, 1964

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

Excavations in 1964 were planned to advance the study of the eastern arms of the second and third churches, and of the buildings immediately south of them. Mr. Nicholson continued his study of the buildings south of the lesser cloister.

In 1963 we had located the altar of the third church and seen some walling which probably marked the line of the east front of this building. We had not located the altar of the second church or determined the limits of this.

Trenches were opened within the confines of the third church to examine the area west of the altar back to the foundations of the first presbytery apse. These gave us a better view of the mutual relationships of the three eastern arms than hitherto, and exposed the bases of the two pillars needed to complete the bays of the choir arcade. The floor area before the altar was filled with interments of various ages and at differing depths. Many of these had been in position before the altar foundations were introduced, and some graves had been damaged by the setting of those foundations.

One group of interments seemed to be closely related, and had been accommodated in a shallow communal vault under the floor of the chancel. All were in sectional stone coffins, lying side by side on a common level. The burial chamber had been vaulted — giving about four feet headroom. Later the roof of this chamber had been removed, or had collapsed, and the vault filled with stony clay to carry the floor of the later church. At an even later date other burials had been inserted into this fill.

Under the leads of the choir aisles (i.e., outside choir arcade), the footings of the walls of the second church (walls 74 and 168) were found at a depth comparable to their positions in the 1963 trenches.

Trenches one bay east of the High Altar confirmed the line of the east front of the third church, showing massive square buttresses at the angles of the building and two others opposite the lines of the pillars of the choir arcade. The eastern arm of the third church was therefore five bays long, and the overall length of the church from the west door to the east front approx. 230 feet.

Further trenches were excavated outside this wall and revealed at greater depth foundations appertaining to the second church and contemporary with walls 74 and 168.

Some further wall foundations were seen running eastwards from the south-east corner of the church. These have not been further explored, but it seems we have not yet completed the work on this part of the site. Work at the foot of the bank revealed a further complex of walls which require more excavation.

Work at the southern side of the lesser cloister showed a major drain which may now lead to the location of the reredorter.

THE ROMANO-BRITISH SITE AT DRAX

by K. WILSON

During the summer of 1964 the excavations at Drax were brought to a successful conclusion after four seasons' work. This was made possible by the long spell of fine weather, when no time was lost through rain; the regular attendance of faithful volunteers at weekends; and financial help from the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works.

The 1964 excavations were mostly devoted to the courtyard area, and to the two wings to the S.W. and N.E. of the courtyard. The discovery and tracing of the courtyard wall and entrance completed the plan. The whole excavated site is enclosed within an area of about 580 sq. yards. This comprises a building of six rooms with a corridor to the S.E. which runs the whole length of the building and turns along the S.W. side. In front of the building is an enclosed courtyard measuring 87 x 21 feet.

As the full report of the excavation will probably be published in the Yorkshire Archaeological Journal in January 1966, it is proposed here to give a few interesting statistics which will not appear in the final report.

Between August 18th, 1961, and October 18th, 1964, eighty-seven days were spent in actual digging*. Of these, ten complete days were lost through rain, plus many odd hours when work had to stop for the same reason. Fifty-five volunteers have been employed at various times, the highest number working at any one time being eighteen. Most of the volunteers were members of the Pontefract Archaeological Society; others came from London, Sunderland, Blackpool, Leeds, Skipton and Munich. As many as twelve at a time have camped on the site, and it is estimated that altogether over 2,500 meals have been cooked in the caravan. About fifty people visited the site but did not take part in actual digging.

Publicity has been given to the excavation at various times in the Daily Telegraph, Manchester Guardian, Yorkshire Evening Post, Yorkshire Evening News, Selby Times, Selby Gazette, Goole Times and Pontefract & Castleford Express. Interim reports on the excavation have been sent to Hull, Leeds, Durham and Newcastle Universities, The Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, Ordnance Survey and the Institute of Archaeology.

It would be unfair to mention any individual names for valuable work done on the site as all the volunteers have been of great value; but great credit must be given to members of the Pontefract Archaeological Society for their work in surveying the farm and in photographing, and also for the actual amount of hard digging and back-filling.

It will be a great satisfaction to see Drax marked in future editions of the Ordnance Survey Map of Roman Britain.

* This does not include the time spent excavating the moat at Scurff Hall.

EXCAVATIONS THROUGH THE INNER MOAT AT SCURFF HALL, DRAX

by K. WILSON

A survey of the area around Scurff Hall showed that it had been surrounded by a double moat. The outer moat enclosed an area of about 22 acres and followed the line of Willow Row Drain to the East, Rusholme Lane to the South, the Parish Boundary to the West, and the North side of the Goose Croft to the North. The inner moat enclosed about 2.7 acres, and encompasses Scurff Hall and the garden.

During the last week of July and first week of August 1964, two trenches were dug through the inner moat, (a) on the West side, and (b) on the North side. As the number of volunteers who can be absorbed in two trenches is small, only five worked on the site for the full fortnight, though three more came for odd days. The "open day," when a large number of visitors came for the afternoon, was a great success.

Trench A proved by far the most interesting in revealing by stratification the full history of the digging of the moat, the silting up and re-digging, and the eventual filling in. Trench B, being at the back of the Hall and very convenient for the disposal of refuse, proved the more valuable for actual dating evidence.

Space does not allow for a full report on the stratification. The conclusions reached are as follows:

Phase I:

The digging of the moat, probably in the latter half of the 14th Century. It was probably dug in the autumn and at short notice as (a) hazel nuts were found at the lowest level below the primary silting up, and (b) shallow plough marks were discovered below the upcast from the ditch. The owner of the property at that time would not have bothered to plough the land if he intended having a moat dug through it immediately afterwards.

Phase II:

The primary silting which took place within a short time of the original digging, probably in the first three or four years. This was contemporary with the depositing of decayed vegetation.

Phase III:

The re-digging of the moat and further silting up in the 15th Century.

Phase IV:

The part filling in during the 17th Century when the North side was used as a deposit for kitchen refuse.

Phase V:

The re-digging on the North side of a length of the moat, probably for drainage, in the 18th Century.

Phase VI:

The final filling in, using the upcast from drainage ditches in the vicinity.

The moat was thirty feet across and five to six feet deep. Excavation took place in rather hot weather. No time was lost through rain, but almost a whole day was wasted when the volunteers were driven from the site by a plague of flies which made work almost impossible.

A full report of the excavation is expected to be in the Yorkshire Archaeological Journal to be published in January 1966.

TJ

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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 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 is not as old as All Saints! It 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.