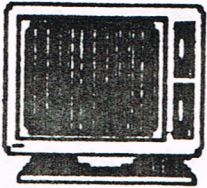


# PontArch

An Occasional Newsletter  
for Members of the  
PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

Number Four

Spring 1988



## From The Editor's Desk

Since our last *PontArch*, the Society has benefitted from two pieces of free publicity. The first was the welcome appearance (at last) of Tony Willett's report on the Tanner's Row and Booths excavations in *Current Archaeology*. This particular magazine is well-loved by many archaeologists, well-hated by as many others, but valued by all as the only organ which sees British Archaeology from the inside. Its approach is scholarly, but clear enough for the amateur. The Society has subscribed to it from its inception in 1969, and all back-numbers are available to members upon request.

The other item of publicity was the appearance in *Antiquity* of a short technical paper by a member (your editor in fact!) on an aspect of Photo-planning archaeological sites using simple equipment. A copy of this has been deposited in the Society archives, with another in Pontefract Library reference section.

It seems to have been quite an Autumn for local archaeology and local history, for a few days after the appearance of *Antiquity*, your editor was

present, with other members, at the launching of Mrs. Fontinan's beautiful edition of Fox's FULL history of Pontefract, part one. Those members who have only seen the 1827 version of Fox have no idea just how much more detailed, better illustrated, and better laid-out this volume is.

Someone present said that the launch marked the biggest advance in the study of local history since the original, shortened version was published. This is perhaps true of the later periods, but the publication of Tony's short report in *Current Archaeology*, must surely be the quantum leap-forward in our local history, extending it back to at least 690AD, revealing the Saxon Church and cemetery, and making available for study two hundred deposits of human bones of the Saxon period! The full report is eagerly awaited.

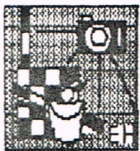
For the benefit of members who were unable to visit the *LINDOU MAN* exhibition in Manchester, a short report is included in this issue of *PontArch*. It seems a shame that this northern discovery cannot stay in Manchester, close to the

find-spot at Wilmslow. Incidentally, do you know that the excellent *MEADSTON* series by Alan Garner, is out around Lindou Moss? These books for older children have something of the Tolkien spirit in them, and make good reading for the adult who has enjoyed Tolkien.

Following the lecture *THIRTY YEARS HARD LABOUR*, outlining the history of the Society, someone asked the editor why he had not written a book based on the Society's work. This gave me an idea born fruit, and the said book, entitled, *DIGGING INTO HISTORY IN PONTEFRACT*, is written, illustrated, and visiting various local history publishers as this is written. More information later.

Finally, some happy and some sad news. Donald Naigh, known to many Society members as a keen Roman Road digger, but also in charge of teaching archaeology at Bradford Grammar School, is retiring. We wish him a long and happy retirement. Sadly, as yet there seems to be no-one to fill his place, and it looks as if the subject will no longer be offered at Sir Mortimer Wheeler's old school. E.J.

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**Eric HouldayLRPS  
Continues  
his series,  
PART 2**

SITE PHOTOGRAPHY,

SCALES,

Archaeological photographs are taken as a part of the permanent record of the excavation. As such, the pictures must contain some indication of scale, and though for general subjects a human figure is more than adequate to indicate comparative size, something more precise is required for scientific records.

Over the years, the accuracy requirements have become more stringent. For example, in 1974 Sir Mortimer Wheeler was asked what scale he would use to photograph an adult human skeleton. He replied, "I never use a scale for skeletons!" (overheard). Today, a scale is essential. This is because a modern computer program can digitise a photograph, and re-orientate it as a plan. If a scale is included, the most accurate measurements can be extrapolated. Thus, if fifty years ago a group of (say) skeletons was excavated and photographed *with scales*, but the plans had become lost, every important dimension could be reconstructed today.

When viewed in this light, proper photography will be seen as the most important excavation record provided that clear and accurate scales are used.

**So what scales are needed?**

To begin with, only three sizes are necessary. Undoubtedly the most important is the one-metre scale, divided into ten alternate bands of black and white. This scale is also the easiest to make, using a metre-stick as a basis.

Firstly, paint the whole stick white, using three coats of extra-white gloss. Then divide it into ten centimetre bands with masking tape; paint these bands black, removing the tape when the final coat is tacky-dry. Finally, stencil *one metre* on one of the white bands. This scale is useful for graves and most medium-sized features.

The twenty and ten centimetre scales are best made from fornicia in a label-making machine, again, ensuring

that the actual dimension is included. To keep scales in a pristine condition, they should have some sort of protective cover.

Scales should be placed in position after a feature is cleaned and preferably by a supervisor. Horizontal ones must be parallel to the top and bottom frame-edge, whilst vertical ones should be plumbed true.

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(to be continued...)

**A Visit to See...  
LINDOW MAN...**

On Wednesday October 14th, in company with three colleagues and fifty pupils from the King's School I visited Manchester Museum to see the remains of Lindow Man. Since its discovery by a peat-shredder in 1984, the partially-preserved body of this Celtic sacrificial victim has been the subject of more investigation than any other corpse found in Britain. So much so that it would be foolish to try and summarise all the research in these columns.

Though it was discovered in the north-west, the British Museum now owns the body as it is considered to be of national rather than regional importance. Though flattering for the finders, this means that local people must undertake a long journey in order to see it. Luckily through the sponsorship of PILKINGTON GLASS the body has been brought north for a few months showing in Manchester Museum.

The museum is situated in Oxford Road close to the University buildings. There is little parking nearby and the nearest spot is behind the Northern College of Music about 100 yards along the road. The exhibition is accompanied by a display including a reconstructed Iron Age hut, and an excellent audio-visual sequence which is worth seeing on its own account.

All the skills of modern museum display are used to build up a picture of Celtic religious ritual, after which the actual body comes as something of an anti-climax. True it is spectacular enough in itself, as even the stubble of the beard is clearly visible.



What spoiled it for me was the sheet of glass over it, which I suppose is necessary to prevent 20th century hands from desecrating it.

Do not let this little niggle prevent you from seeing it, either in Manchester or down at the BH in New Year. This is the first bog body to receive the full modern scientific investigation and conservation programme. The Q.E.D. programmes on the TV were good, but no substitute for seeing the body live, or rather dead!

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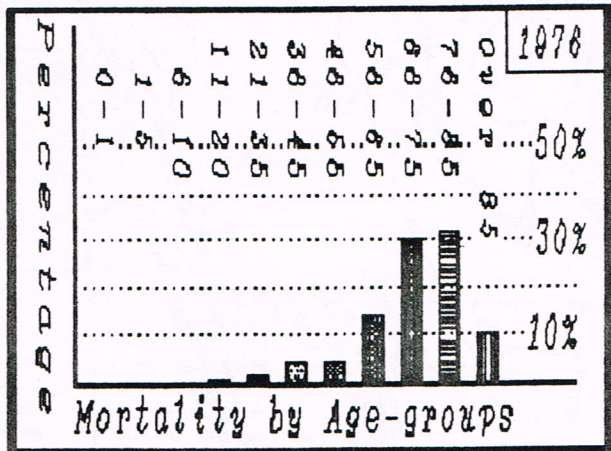
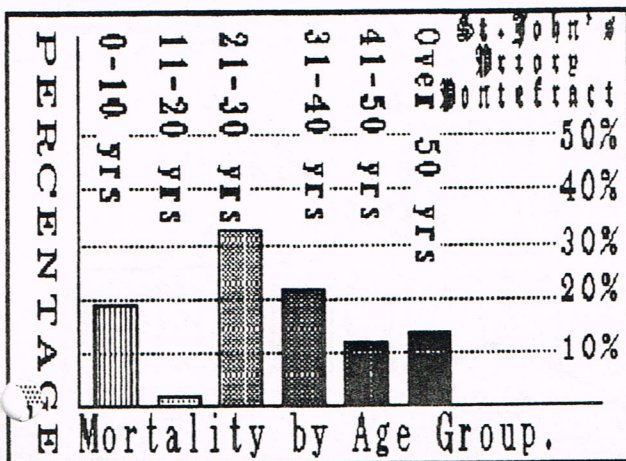
**Saint John's  
Priory: some new  
Research.**

The increasing number of human skeletons found in Pontefract will be of inestimable value in providing data about our ancestors in the town. Amongst the most important will be the four-hundred plus excavated at Saint John's Priory beginning in 1957. Though the full palaeopathological report has not yet appeared, sufficient information from the first five seasons exists for me to construct a tentative chart illustrating the mortality figures of the Medieval period. This is appended below. When the figures for the Saxon burial-ground in the Booths become available, these too will be presented in the form of a graph.

In order to make valid comparisons, a similar graph showing modern mortality figures has been included. Notice how the medieval people had little chance of surviving beyond the age of forty. Indeed, fifty-five percent of the population died in their twenties and thirties.

In comparison, the modern graph shows that the majority of people now survive into their sixties.

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all



## Books...

**THE BOB MAN AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF PEOPLE.** Don Brothwell. BNP. 0-7141-1384-0. £5-95.

The author is renowned as one of the discoverers of the Piltdown Hoax, and as author of *Digging up Bones*, the 'Bible' for cemetery excavators, and still in print. This new paperback is extremely well-written, and places the Lindou discovery in context, both from an archaeological and an anthropological viewpoint. Particularly noteworthy are the illustrations, many in colour. Unlike the definitive book, it is suitable for the general reader rather than the

specialist. Highly recommended.

**COMPUTER ARCHAEOLOGY.** Gary Lock and John Wilcock. Shire Archaeology. No. 51. 0-85263-877-9. £2-50.

As archaeology progressed from 'finding things' to data-recovery in the 1920s, it began to assume an increasing complexity. This progress continued into the present era, so that it is no surprise to discover that modern archaeologists make increasing use of computers. Until recently, this trend was restricted to professionals, but in the last few years, amateurs have been starting to take use of the enormous powers of analysis, text-processing, and data storage/recovery of the micro-computer. Indeed, this very newsletter is laid-out and typeset on a computer. It is a society report's

have all been produced on the same micro. It was only a matter of time, therefore, before Shire added a volume on Computer applications in archaeology to their excellent Shire Archaeology series. This present volume maintains their standard well being clear, concise, and as up-to-date as any book on such a fast-changing field can be.

Chapter Headings. About Computers; About Data; Different Archaeological Situations; Descriptive Statistics and Graphics; More Complex Statistics, Conclusions.

Recommended for the keen amateur, the potential student of archaeology, and the computer-buff.

If there is a particular archaeological book which you would like reviewing, please contact the Editor, who will do his best to oblige.

## Magazines.

Apologies to members who are familiar with the regular publications in our field, but just now and then it is useful to list them for the benefit of never members.

**ANTIQUITY.** Quarterly. £20 p.a. Antiquity Publications, Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP. This is the highbrow journal, respected on a World scale. Only recommended for the really expert and dedicated member.

**CURRENT ARCHAEOLOGY.** Bi-monthly, £8 p.a. 9, Massington Road, London, NW3 2TX.

The only magazine read by all professional and amateur archaeologists in Britain. Somewhat ideosyncratic, but excellent value. See Editorial in this issue.

**ARCHAEOLOGY TODAY.** Monthly, £1-50. 28, Woodcock Industrial Estate, Warminster, Wilts. BA12 9DY.

The only archaeological magazine available through newsagents, though you must order it as few carry it on the shelves. Interesting and useful (it has featured our digs on several occasions, and your editor once wrote a series in it.), but uses a lot of space on 'fringe' topics, and World Interest.

**LOCAL HISTORY.** Bi-monthly. £9-60 p.a. Robert & Susan Howard, 3, Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham, NG7 2DS.

The local history magazine of most value

to the keen, interested amateur. Local history is inseparable from archaeology, and the two are complimentary. The exponent of either who neglects the other does so at great risk to his/her integrity as a historian.  
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# Society Personalities, Number One, Bob Evison



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