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SPRING 1989

PONTARCH

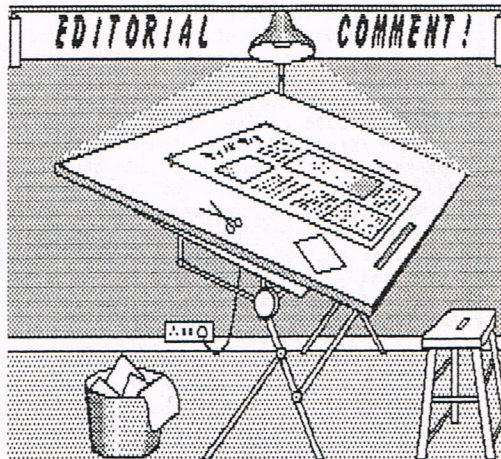
An Occasional Newsletter
for members of PONTEFRACT &
DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOC.

DOMINICAN PRIORY RE-DISCOVERED!



Readers must have noticed during the last couple of months the intense activity going on between the hospital and Bluebell steps. If they were ever in doubt, the *Pontefract and Castleford Express*, of February 23rd would have alerted them to the situation!

Apparently, during the new hospital extensions the contractors found stonework and human remains. They called in the County Unit which prepared to mount an immediate rescue dig. At the same time our Secretary obtained permission for a small team from this society to investigate the area. During the Saturday on which our members were on the site there was no sign of anyone else investigating the remains. We located one wall of the Priory Church of Saint Richard, cleaned a short stretch, and recorded it together with the section adjacent to it. We also recorded certain other walls protruding from under the Bluebell Steps footpath. Many photographs were taken. Members will, of course, receive a full report in due course, and it is hoped to give a short presentation of the photographs before a future lecture-meeting.



SAINT RICHARD'S PRIORY.

The recent re-discovery of Saint Richard's Dominican Priory, reported in another column, raises one or two interesting points which other societies may have to address at some time in the future. In fact, by beginning an investigation on a site which another group had already dug and reported on, and without consulting that other group first, the County Unit could be said to have acted unprofessionally.

I refer of course to the original dig undertaken by this society in 1963 with the full help and encouragement of the then Hospital Management Committee.
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St. Mary the Virgin, Garforth.

Churchyard Survey, 1986-1988. By J.J. Rushton

This survey was undertaken in 1986 as part of the celebrations to mark the tenth anniversary of the founding of Garforth Historical Society. It began with the simple aim of collecting all the existing inscriptions from memorial stones. This, we thought, would augment the earlier work of the President of the Society, Mr. Walter Pickles. In 1974, he, with the help of a local librarian and some willing youths, had surveyed the churchyard, but had simply recorded the names of the deceased and the date of death. This information was accompanied with a matrix-cum-plan which showed the approximate location of each grave.

This document was of great assistance to us when we began, in the winter of 1986, to pick our way about the churchyard, heedless of the snags and practical difficulties ahead. Walter Pickles had found graves which we, at first, could not find. We had found graves and deciphered inscriptions which had been classed as illegible in 1974. Many of the graves had been vandalised, a process which continued during the course of our survey, so that it became clear that a more fundamental approach was required.

We decided to adopt the Council for British Archaeology approach, as advocated by Jeremy Jones in *How to Record Churchyards*. That gentleman advised, "First survey your Churchyard," a maxim sufficient to give pause to most amateur societies. Lacking surveying expertise, we 'got round' the problem. Lurking at the northern end of the churchyard was an electricity sub-station. This surely meant that the electricity board had surveyed the scene; and so they had! We took advantage of this fact to acquire a large-scale map of the area; but even then, graves had to be located within it on an appropriate scale, and with a correct linear arrangement. Ron and Val Sudderdean wrestled with this perplexing problem, and they were to be seen on frosty mornings, festooned with measuring tapes, peering across the Carnac of memorial stones. Suffice it to say that they solved the problem, and discovered in the doing of it that the grave-alignments did not correspond with the West/East alignment of the present church. (The old church had been demolished in 1844)

Ron Sudderdean's map of the churchyard is remarkable, for it not only shows where graves are situated, but also, in the case of fallen stones, whether they have fallen backwards or on their faces! This latter happening was, potentially, a great problem, for how could such stones be read? Fortunately, in the winter of

1987, a Manpower Services Group arrived on the scene to 'tidy up' the churchyard. At first, they looked askance at the muffled figures who were poking about the graves, in weather which would drive anyone, not on a YTS scheme, indoors. Then they took an interest in our activities, they raised some stones and located several fallen, and subsequently buried, tombstones, so that several discrepancies with Walter Pickles' work were resolved.

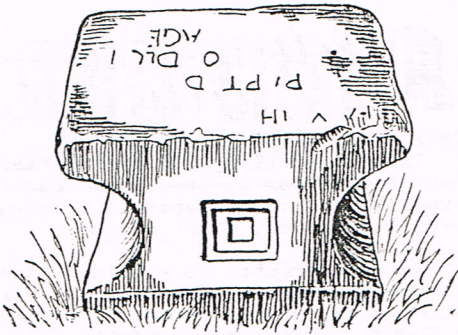
In the 1930s, Walter Kirk in *The Parish Church of Garforth*, had noted that the churchyard had twice been extended and so we went to the Leeds City Archive at Sheepscar. There, in the *Garforth Parish Papers* we found: a sexton's notebook recording the graves dug and their dispositions; a churchwarden's Minute Book, in which was recorded a dispute in 1873, as to whether the churchyard should be extended or a public cemetery established. Finally there was the Deed of Consecration, signed by the Bishop of Ripon in 1873, which created the churchyard as we now see it. (On this, the present Church Lane is named Town Street.)

All of these documents were of great interest and value. The sexton's notebook enabled us to check the accuracy of our map, and added to the extent of our survey by naming deceased who had no memorials. Informants had told us about the local custom of "sodding the graves." Poor families had their graves edged with fine grass sods, cut from areas where gypsies grazed their horses. These sods were joined at the corners with willow twigs, in time the graves simply merged into the undulations of the churchyard. Again, how many of these anonymous graves were those of Nonconformists?

One of the objections raised against the churchyard extension in 1873 was the growing strength of Nonconformity in the area, for whom a new public cemetery would have been more appropriate. Another was the fear that the bodies in the proposed extension would pollute local well-water; and it constitutes an apt reminder of both the reliance on well-water at the time, and also the incidence of fevers in the area.

Finally, there is the reference to Town Street on the Deed of Consecration. Town Street, or Church Lane runs east/west; Garforth main street now runs north/south.

continued on page 4.....



UNUSUAL ANVIL SHAPE
- INSCRIPTION ILLEGIBLE
54cm WIDE, 28cm THICK, 44cm HIGH.

HEAR LIETH THE BODY
OF THOMAS WETHERILL
OF HORSFORTH
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE
THE 31 DAY OF DECEMBER
IN DOM 91 AGE 79

INSCRIPTION REVEALED BY
RUBBING

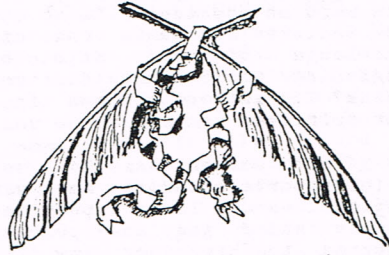
HERE LIETH THE
BODY OF WILLIAM
ROBISON SON OF
WILLIAM ROBISON
OF HORSFORTH
WHO DEPARTED
THIS LIFE 19 DAY
OF DECEMBER 1674
AGE 22
W R
HERE IN THE BODY
THERE DID DWELL
A SON HEAVENLY
RICH AND GOOD
HE LOVED HOLIN
AND FOLLOWED @
THAT WHICH W
GOOD

A VERY FINE
EARLY STONE,
REMARKABLY
CRISP DESPITE
EXPOSURE TO
WEATHER.
58cm WIDE
166cm LONG

R. Susserstein 1986



A COMMON CENTRAL MOTIF



UNIQUE MOTIF ON A STONE
COMMEMORATING THE DROWNING
OF A 21 YR OLD IN RIVER WISCONSIN

continued from page 2.....

Here lies a first clue to a change in polarity of the village. Maps of the late Eighteenth Century and early Nineteenth Century show that Main Street simply did not exist. Increasingly, it appears that the Gascoignes took the opportunity provided by the Enclosure Act of 1812 to re-fashion the area, including the establishment of Main Street and, ultimately, the demolition and re-building of the Church in 1844.

So it is, that though there are clues to Garforth's earlier existence, such as Ninelands Lane, or Firth Field, the composition of Medieval Garforth has largely been forgotten. Recently, I showed an Eighteenth Century Glebe Terrier to one or two old inhabitants, but the field names recorded there were largely lost upon them.

Comment continued....

During that excavation, which several surviving members participated in, not only were several buildings found, but the main south wall of the Priory Church, surviving still, and in use as a retaining wall to hold up the lawn of the hospital garden.

The excavation was published in our own Pontefract Archaeological Journal, and received brief notes in regional Journals of various kinds.

Remembering this, one would perhaps expect anyone entrusted with new work on the same site to contact the Society and make use of its knowledge of the site before beginning work? What do readers think? Our letters column is open for opinions.

Your editor has had several brief reports to write for various regional and local publications lately, and during the process it occurred to him just how high a profile this society has maintained during the last couple of years. Now that Michael Holdsworth has also begun writing, with a recent article in *British Archaeology*, hardly a month goes by without a mention of the P&DAS. All publicity is good publicity? Again, letters welcome.

Editorial: 31, Fairview, Carleton,
PONTFRRACT, WF8 3NT.



Letters to the Editor.....

Dear Editor,

Through your pages, may I thank Dave Hedges for an excellent Sunday expedition to Cresswell Crags, arranged at very short notice.

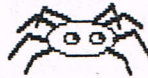
We were treated to a guided tour of various cave-systems, by a very able guide, who answered our most probing questions fully and accurately.

The prehistory of the site is impressive, and the finds have been abundant in both quantity and quality. Much knowledge has been gleaned by careful analysis, and it has attracted international scrutiny.

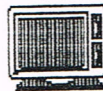
I was particularly impressed by their excavation techniques for prehistoric sedimentary deposition. The working-practices employed, and subsequent data-analysis were admirable.

A must for all prehistory buffs!

P.S. Cave spiders are very big,



D. Lacy.



Postscript

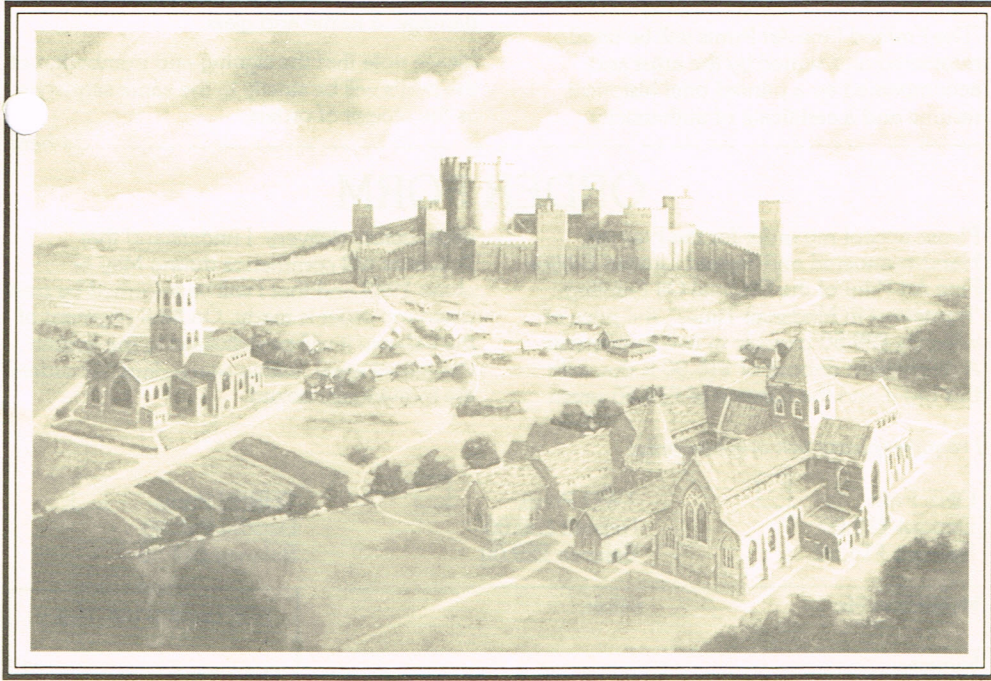
Can I thank all contributors to this newsletter. Without your work, it would be impossible to produce. Thanks to you, we have a number of interesting stories and articles in the pipeline. I hope that you all appreciate that everything sent in will be published, but that we have to wait until a gap of the right length occurs, so that sometimes it seems like years before you see your work in print.

Particular thanks this issue to John Rushton, and his friends in the Garforth LHS, for the centre-spread. I hope that it inspires you to get involved in churchyard recording.

Watch out for in next issue of *Old West Riding*, for a paper on a Pontefract graveyard.

'Pontefract' IN MEDIEVAL TIMES'

A Limited Edition
Framed Fine Art Print



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From this Original Oil Painting by Alan Bracken MCSD
HAND-NUMBERED AND SIGNED

This Oil Painting is the artist's reconstruction of Pontefract in the late 14th Century, depicting Pontefract Castle, the Cluniac Priory of St. John the Evangelist, St. Nicholas' Hospital, and All Saints Church with its Vicarage, in a general landscape of the East side of Pontefract as it is thought to have been in medieval times.

This Original Oil Painting 37" x 54" (94cm x 137cm) is
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EACH of the 750 Limited Edition Fine Art Prints of the Original Oil Painting will be printed by the lithographic full colour process onto the highest quality heavyweight acid-free paper (neutral ph) to meet requirements of the Fine Art Trade Guild. Lightfast, fade-resistant inks will be used to ensure a maximum life of the reproduction. The highest standards of printing also guarantees close tolerances of both colour and tone to the Original Painting.

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Deliveries by hand will be made in the Pontefract area. However, for customers outside this area arrangements can be made for them to collect. It is not possible to send orders by post owing to the likelihood of damage to frame and glass.

Please note that the signing and numbering of the prints will be strictly in the same sequence as the receipt of orders.

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