

# PONTARCH

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

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## EDITORIAL.

Well, the rush to record and excavate in the Swales Yard complex of buildings should be over when you read this, and the mammoth task of getting it all into print will have begun. Hopefully, the members involved will be looking forward to the digging season, with trowels ready and high hopes. We know of at least two sites that our people will be working on this summer; Wood Hall and Birdoswald. If you are digging elsewhere (or on the two sites mentioned), please let us have a short report for *PontArch*.

Readers may notice a difference in this issue. Yes, the Editor has invested in some hardware & software which will enable him to include more graphics in the sheet. Best results are from bold black and white images with few tiny details, maximum size 6"x 8". We require cartoons, drawings, simple photographs, all connected with members, the Society, and Archaeology. Contributors must hold the copyright of material sent in.

Previous issues have mentioned the high publishing profile

Letters etc. should be sent to the Editor c/o  
PONTEFRACT MUSEUM.

maintained by our people, and this has not slackened in recent months. The latest item, and we venture to modestly suggest the most important locally, is the Editor's recent paper on the location of Pontefract's *Ponte-Fractus*, or Broken Bridge. Of previous historians, Richard Holmes came closest to confirming the site of the bridge on the Washbeck along Knottingley Road.

In a recent paper in *Old West Riding*, (Vol.9., pp. 16-19. ISBN. 0268-6554) the Editor sets out for the first time the archaeological and environmental evidence for the abandonment of the bridge, and postulates 1315 as the most likely date. The paper is illustrated with photographs, maps, charts, and quotes from early visitors to the town. One or two offprints are available from the Editor. A popular account of how the research was shared between the Editor & Harry Battye will shortly appear in *Local History Magazine*.

E.H. February, 1990



# Expedition to Ferrybridge.

The Greyhound, once patronised by  
Charles Dickens.



One Sunday in the early summer of 1964, a group of young members led by Fred Morris set off to record the changing face of Ferrybridge before the new works for the A1(M) changed it forever. The members of the expedition were: Kevin Stubbs, Terry Carney, and The Editor.

Ferrybridge is almost exactly halfway between Edinburgh and London on the Great North Road, and for a few heady years during the stage-coach era (1786-c1840) was the busiest place along that road. Details of the inns and personalities are recorded in Tom Bradley's excellent book, *Old Coaching Days in Yorkshire*, which has been reprinted twice during the last twenty years. However, on that sunny Sunday of a quarter century ago, the book was too rare to be allowed outside the few libraries which had copies, and though two of the expedition had read it, the excellent engravings of the inns had to be held in memory, for there were no photocopiers either!

After photographing the stables of *The Angel*, we proceeded past the *Greyhound*, which was unthreatened, and recorded the Square, largely empty, as it had been since the road was diverted around it between the Wars. *The Angel*, the largest and most important inn during the coaching era now demanded our attention. It had certainly gone downhill since then and was now derelict, having been divided into sub-properties, one of which had recently been a fish & chip shop.

We then crossed the square to picture the lovely bridge, which would soon be dwarfed by the concrete replacement. Luckily one of Harker's barges obliged at this juncture, and helped us to record it with a vessel passing through.

Fred then led us along the lonely path through the marshes to the old churchyard, from which the church had been moved in the fifties. After much searching around we found the grave of Matthew

Hanson, a stagecoach driver whose unfortunate death is recorded as follows:

HERE LIES THE BODY OF M. HANSON,  
OF FERRYBRIDGE, COACHMAN  
WHO WAS UNFORTUNATELY  
KILLED BY THE OVERTURNING OF THE  
GLASGOW MAIL, FEB 21st, 1811  
AGED 48 YEARS.

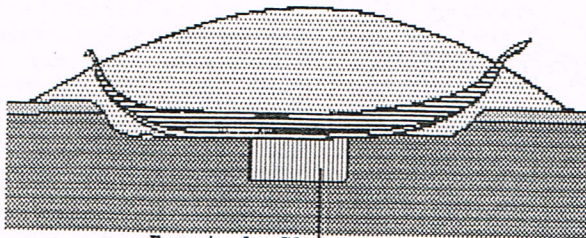
All you that behold my stone,  
Oh think how quickly I was gone,  
Death doth not a warning give,  
Therefore be careful how you live.

Since that day, the photographs taken have become historical monuments in their own right, and some of them are familiar in books and articles on coaching.



THE ANGEL, FERRYBRIDGE.

See *Sutton Hoo Update*. A conjectural section by The Editor of the probable appearance of Mound 2 before C19th robbing and before Basil Brown opened it. His boat-shaped pit was really the burial chamber.



Burial Chamber  
SUTTON HOO MOUND TWO.



# SUTTON HOO

## UPDATE

Since our Society visit to Sutton Hoo two years ago, there has been considerable work done on the site, and many new discoveries.

Most interesting of these was the final interpretation of mound 2, in which Basil Brown, in 1938, found what appeared to be a boat-shaped impression. Mound 2 was open whilst we were on site, but the information needed to reconstruct the burial was only accumulated slowly, by excavation, by chemical tests on the residues, by careful excavation of the mound and its surroundings, and by going back to Basil Brown's original notes, plans, and photographs. Apparently, the grave originally consisted of a plank-built underground chamber, in which was placed the dead man, surrounded by sword, helmet, shield, a gold buckle, drinking horns, a tub, bucket, cauldron, bronze bowl, a beautiful blue glass jar, a silver-mounted box, a silver-mounted cup, five knives, and textiles.

Surprisingly, the chamber had been covered by a clinker-built ship about 60 feet long, standing the correct way up, and covered by a mound. No wonder Brown was puzzled, and believed that he had found a small flat-ended, flat-bottomed, boat. He had actually entered the burial chamber by the robber's steps! Luckily, his work stopped at what he thought was the base of the boat, leaving the chemical traces of the body and grave-goods intact.

Mounds 5, 6, and 18 had all been badly damaged both by the Army

in the war, by agriculture, by rabbits, and by robbers. Nevertheless, it was possible to state that each had contained a cremation wrapped in cloth in a bronze bowl, whilst some did contain rich grave-furniture in smaller quantities than in the two known ship-burials.

More gruesome are the flat graves, some of which we saw on

site. These are apparently human sacrifices, and without exception, have no grave goods with them. Though it is difficult to state categorically, all appeared to be young and male, and many have evidence of hanging, decapitation, broken necks, and/or binding of the limbs. One appeared to have been buried alive in a ploughing position, together with the plough! This brings to mind the discovery of plough-marks on the pre-barrow soil made whilst the writer was supervisor on the North side of the mound over twenty years ago. Did the victim have to ritually plough the area of the burial, and then suffer death, before the ceremonies could begin?

Martin Carver, the current Director, believes that the Sutton Hoo cemetery is a statement of extreme pagan beliefs. The outward expression of a pagan society which is beginning to see the march of Christianity into England from the Continent and from Ireland. Perhaps they were foreseeing the end of their world? We may never know!

