

Number 19 January 1992

THE MUSEUM, SALTER ROW, PONTEFRACT WF8 1BA. ☎ 702995 (home)

PONTARCH

Pontefract & District Archaeological Society.

Editor: Eric Houlder, Past-President.



The Pontefract Union Workhouse, by Barbara Stewart.

In April 1871 tenders were invited for the erection of a new Hospital and lunatic Ward for the Pontefract Union at Paradise Gardens. The Workhouse had been built in 1867 to accommodate the increasing number of vagrants.

At this period seven ounces of bread and three gills of porridge were allowed per head. For this allowance, the male vagrants were required to work in the quarry for a specified time. Females had to assist in cleaning the floors. The house was divided into separate, central wards, each ward accommodating ten males or ten females. Wooden platforms raised about twelve inches from the floor served as beds. The mens' ward was provided with rugs, the womens' with rugs and straw mattresses. No doubt the wooden platforms were considered sufficiently comfortable for the males! A visit to the police office was the first step for each vagrant applying for admission. After an examination by the police, they were taken to the Union where they were searched before admittance. During 1870, 2035 vagrants had been admitted to the Union.

At the April meeting it was

considered by the Board of Guardians that it should be within their power to administer some form of punishment as a deterrent to the number of vagrants applying for admission.

There was a school in the Union house with an average of twenty seven scholars attending.

An estimate of the quantity of provisions required for two weeks consumption in the Union House was as follows:

Beef Mutton and Suet	420 lbs.
Flour (seconds)	80 stone.
Oatmeal	50 lbs.
Rice	30 lbs.
Peas	2 stones.
Potatoes	32 stones.
New milk	250 quarts.
Sugar	10 lbs.
Tea	40 lbs.
Butter	2 stones.
Soap	2 stones.
Coals	5 tons.

The churning of butter was one regular task with ten pounds per fortnight being the average churned.

The inmates over the years would be many and varied, from all walks of life and in all sorts of conditions. On 8th April 1871 one local eccentric died in the Union House aged 71 years. He was Robert Naylor, better known as *Eye Naylor*. He was a pig doctor, formerly of Ferrybridge. Robert

was well-known in almost every town in the West Riding. When attending markets at Pontefract he would ride his horse through the streets whilst standing on its back. On other occasions he would dance his way through the town.

One Guardian, occasionally two, from each township in the Union, was elected to serve on the Board of Guardians. There were thirty four townships in the Union:

Ackton; Balne; Beaghall; Birkin; Byram-cum-Poole; Burton Salmon; Brotherton; Castleford; Carleton; Cridling Stubbs; Darrington; East Hardwick; Eggborough; Featherstone; Ferry Fryston; Fairburn; Glasshoughton; Heck; Hensall; Kellington; Knottingley; Methley; Monkhill; Monk Fryston; Pontefract; Pontefract Park; Purston Jaglin; Sutton; Snydale; Stapleton; Tanshelf; Whitwood; Whitley, and Womersley.

In 1988 I was passing the site of *Headlands Hospital*, a name which had superseded the earlier *Northgate Lodge* in 1948 when the National Health Service took over the administration, and saw that the demolition men were busy. The sight prompted me to write the poem which can be seen elsewhere in this issue of *PontArch*.

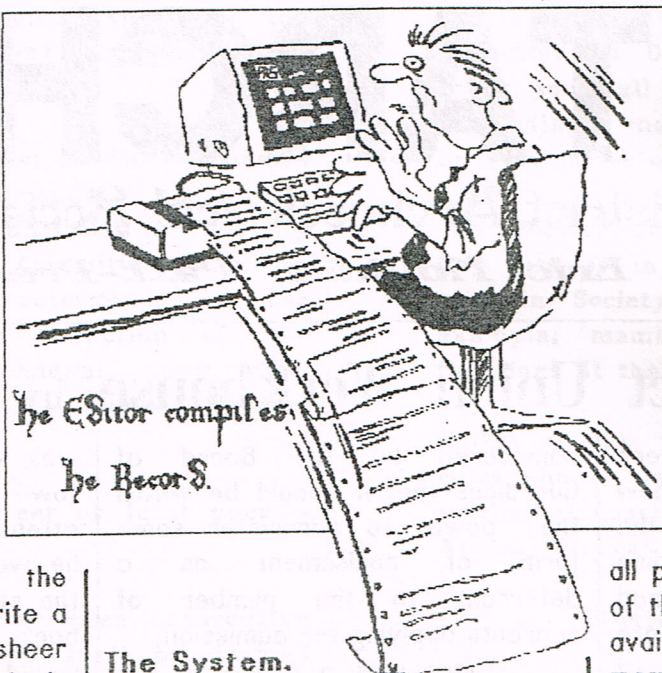
The Society Records: we enter the Computer Age.

Since its inception in 1957, The Society has held its membership records in various ledgers. Thus, whenever a member renewed his / her subscription, the Treasurer had to look up the relevant name alphabetically in the book, and then laboriously note the details in handwriting.

If The Society needed to contact a member between meetings, the only method was to look up the address in the ledger and write a letter or telephone. The sheer expense and time involved in doing this for even a proportion of the membership meant that in reality, The Society restricted its contact with members to meeting-nights, or via *PontArch*.

Now, however, the Committee has at last taken the step of computerising the records. This enables the Secretary or Treasurer to instantly access any member's file by name or telephone number, or even postcode! There is no searching pages or cards, the details appear on the screen seconds after the name is keyed-in. Even more useful, the computer can produce a set of sticky labels or even individual letters to all or selected members.

Needless to say, with the high cost of postage The Society will continue to use *PontArch* or announcements at meetings as the chief means of communication, but the new system will give us the **capability** to do these things.



The System.

In developing a system for the Society, your Editor who was entrusted with the task, had to bear in mind not only current requirements but future possibilities too. Software had to be compatible with both the current operating systems ie CP/M and MS Dos. After much deliberation, it was decided to base the record on *Locomotive Software's* LocoFile Database, using LocoMail to prepare mailshots as necessary. These will run on both CP/M machines like the Editorial Amstrad PCW (often erroneously called a wordprocessor) and also on IBM compatible PCs. As a result, the disc with our records on it (plus one back-up copy) will not be subject to obsolete hardware problems.

Constructing the Record.

Needless to say, we already have most of the information that we require. In order to complete the addresses we really need your postcode,

and we have added a couple of *skills* fields, so that members' relevant skills can be recorded. We can then contact you if there is a requirement for your skill (if you wish). If your telephone number is ex-directory and you still wish to supply it, please add the letters XD after it so that we can keep it confidential. In order to update our record before the next AGM we would like

all paid-up members to fill-in one of the pink forms which should be available with this issue. Non-members wishing to join should fill in a pink form and pass it with remittance to the Treasurer, who will then forward it to the Editor.

The Data Protection Act, 1984.

The Society is exempt from the provisions of The Act under *Exemption 5: Unincorporated members' clubs*, as long as the following conditions are observed:

1. All members of The Society must be asked whether they object to the personal data relating to them being held by the Society. If any Member does so object then the personal data will be removed from the magnetic discs. Please note that in these circumstances, though The Society will make every effort to maintain the said Member's records, no responsibility will be accepted if the said member is not notified of a Society event or function.
2. Personal data about Members will only be disclosed in very limited circumstances.

RECENT INVESTIGATIONS IN PONTEFRACT.

THE LOWER PORTIONS OF THE CASTLE GUARDHOUSE.

On November 24th, four Society members spent a very fruitful Sunday morning examining a property in Castle Chain, the residence of a Committee Member. They discovered that what appeared to be a Seventeenth Century building was in origin a late 13th/early 14th Century structure with a 17th Century rebuilding above the first floor. The earlier building had not been recognised because only the 17th Century material is actually visible from Castle Chain.

Because the ground slopes steeply southwards, (which is itself artificial) a

complete medieval ground floor survives preserving four blocked windows (visible), the original walls to a height of 3.5m and a rock-cut floor, as well as internal buttresses, and a complete original door structure.

A cursory but exciting examination of the garden revealed a wealth of architectural fragments from the castle, including window tracery, column segments, and carvings. Many of the fragments appear to be Norman (magnesian limestone) as well as later medieval work (sandstone). It is possible that the Norman remains come from a high-status building possibly

a chapel, or prestigious apartments.

The participating members wish to place on record their thanks to the occupiers, and with their permission suggest that a thorough examination and recording project could be undertaken and form the basis of the Society's winter archaeological project.

More details will be published after the necessary permissions and agreements have been finalised. We anticipate that both the proposed Documentary Research Group and the Field Section will be involved. ST/MH/EH

THE CELLARS OF NUMBER SEVENTEEN, BEASTFAIR.

On Monday November 25th, three members visited the cellars of 17, Beastfair, Pontefract. The visit was of a preliminary nature to ascertain what lay below ground and whether it was worth fully recording.

What survived was almost entirely Post-Medieval. Most of the cellars were of mid 19th century date with extremely high quality brick arches and wide vaulting. The bricklayers responsible had done a splendid job; such were the engineering skills of our Victorian forefathers.

The cellars within which the brick vaults had been constructed were, however, of considerable antiquity. Tool marks noted on the sandstone

surface in the north-western chamber were High Medieval in character.

Elsewhere, nineteenth century brickwork concealed any other evidence, except on the access stair where blistered plaster allowed a glimpse of sandstone to be seen. Interestingly, an earlier blocked door was noted in the north-western chamber. The blocking bricks were hand-made, and the workmanship much rougher than the remainder presumably there is an earlier chamber or passage below the pavement on Beastfair. The northern wall of the north-eastern chamber showed signs of more recent blocking too; this may be connected with the use of the cellars as an air raid shelter during the last war.

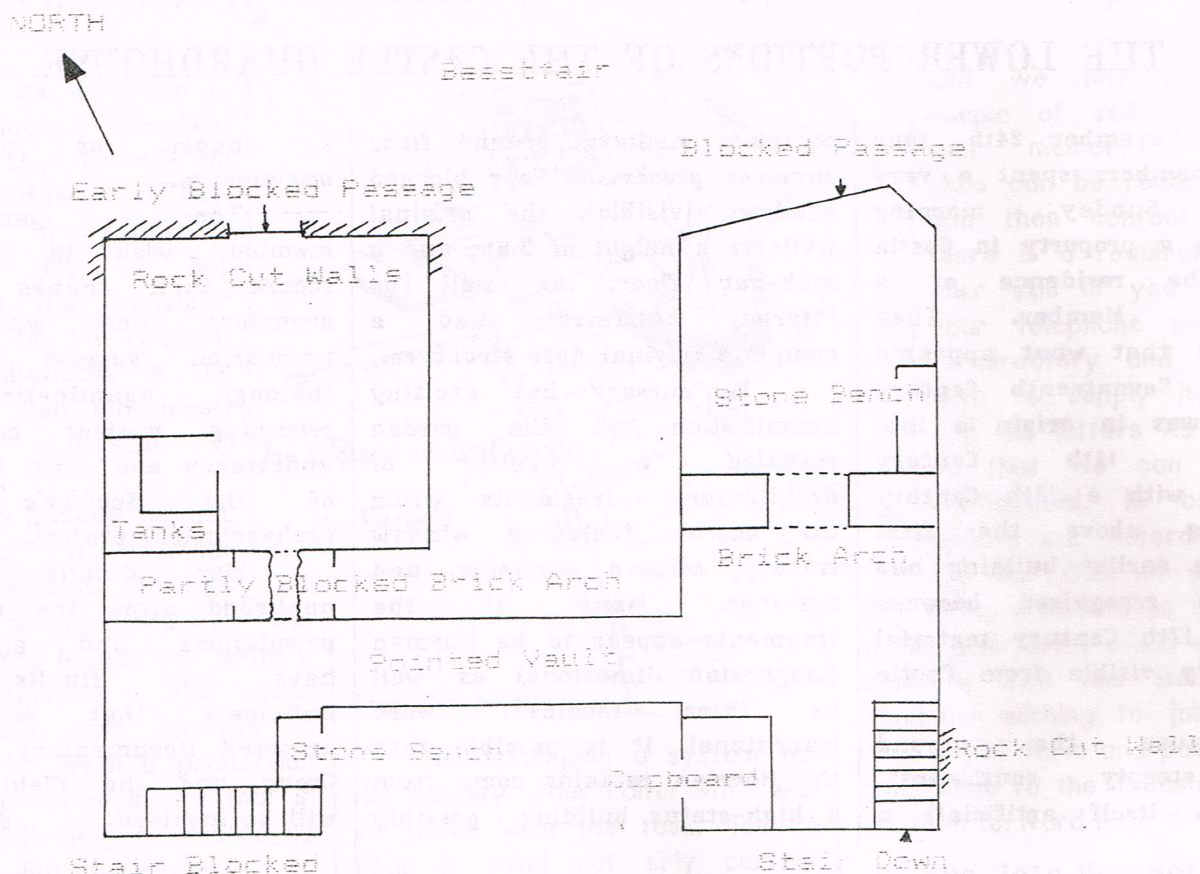
It appears that the present frontage of the premises incorporates at least two earlier Burgage Plots both of which were cellared. When the two plots were amalgamated in the mid 19th century the two cellars were combined via a pointed-arch cross passage, re-lined in brick, and arched across, resulting in the current plan.

An existing above-ground stone wall stump at the rear (north side) of the premise perpetuates the Burgage Plot boundary.

The premises are currently owned by the Co-op, and we are indebted to Mr M Holdsworth for arranging our visit.

ST/JMc/MH.

SKETCH-PLAN OF THE CELLARS OF 17 BEASTFAIR.



Pontefract Workhouse, a poem by Barbara Stewart.

I passed it in the bus today
 Its walls had tumbled down,
 There were lorry loads of rubble
 They were moving it from town.
 While in the street life still went on
 The traffic passed it by,
 The very place was leaden
 Beneath a lowering sky
 of workhouse grey.

The laundry building's standing yet
 Its chimney not yet broke,
 How many desperate, weary sighs
 Went up it with the smoke?
 With hungry pangs and raw chapped hands,
 Enveloped all in steam,
 Those lowly paupers toiled all day
 Too tired to even dream.
 And all the while surrounded by
 A world of workhouse grey.

Some were shiftless, Who's to say?
 Some searching hard for work,
 And some were just unfortunate
 They'd simply lost their way.
 But, never mind the reason,
 They all wore workhouse grey.

Victims of misfortune,
 And some just not beloved.
 And those poor girls
 Who 'twixt the walls
 Held bastard babies,
 Wrapped in shawls
 Of workhouse grey.

In nineteen forty eight or so
 It changed its *status quo*,
 The coming of the Health Service
 Dealt it a bitter blow.
 But coats of paint and decor bright
 Could not erase from old folk's sight,
 The shades of workhouse grey.

Workhouse, Union, Hospital,
 Call it what you will,
 It was a fear in all their minds
 They dreaded to be ill.
 To them it would always be
 'that place up on the Hill.'
 'Twas coloured in their memory
 In shades of workhouse grey

When it had its face-lift
 Its wards they looked quite bright,
 With busy nurses bustling round
 Dressed in crisp blue and white.
 Its former occupants would be
 Astounded at the way
 The colours lightened up the place
 From its former workhouse grey.

Don't think you never would have been
 Inside that cheerless hall.
 Circumstances alter things,
 You're lucky, that is all.
 Fortunes go, and minds derange,
 Nothing's so certain that won't change.
 No one exists who may not fall
 And find themselves behind the wall
 Of workhouse grey.

Some said, "let's keep it up,"
 Some said, "Take it away."
 I know that those old inmates would,
 If they could have their say,
 Be dancing on its ashes
 In their garb of workhouse grey.

TOURISTS IN YORKSHIRE, 1803.

Extracts from *A Diary of 1803*, an article by R M Anthony, which first appeared in *History Today*, July 1966.

This very interesting article describes the journey of a middle aged widow and her three youngish daughters from London to the north west Highlands and back. They travelled in a two-horse landau accompanied by two post-boys, whom the article writer supposes were contracted to manage the vehicle. The tour lasted three months, during which time two young male cousins put in occasional appearances on horseback. The whole article makes very interesting reading and it is unfortunate that we do not have the time to transcribe it all.

"Sheffield was a town against which the diarist (Hannah Solly, aged thirty one and the ancestor of the article's author) placed a very black mark - 'All the people we met were black; the houses were black and gave us a high opinion of the cleanliness which we were to meet with in the town - which was quite enveloped in smoke - we did not reach the Tontine Inn till near 9, found it large but very dirty.' At Rotherham they were particularly struck by the former College,, founded by 'John of Rotherham,' and, at the time of their visit, 'appropriated to various uses...A Jail, an Assembly room, a place

for Soldiers to keep their stores, a public house and various other uses.'

At Ferry Bridge on the following day, 'we changed horses. Our Host presented us with Flowers, Fruit and Sandwiches gratis,' whereas shortly afterwards at Kirkstall, 'a tolerable good country inn was so taken up in supplying Tea to a large party of the Neighbouring Gentry that our patience was nearly exhausted in waiting for our dinner.'

At York, having enjoyed the ever-popular pastime of visiting ruins, the ladies were 'entertained with delightful martial music.' They also bought some 'York tan gloves and had an instance of the Yorkshire "Bite" being asked 2/2d: but Mr D. [a local friend] having told us they were sold at 1/10p, we said so, and they let us have them at that price.' "

It would be useful to know which of the Ferrybridge inns the party used on that day; alas, there were three very active inns, *The Angel*, *The Swann*, and *The Grayhound* all horsing coaches and private carriages, whilst the *Golden Lion* horsed the slightly down-market stage-waggon. At Kirkstall the inn was almost certainly the *Vesper Gate*, just up the road from the Abbey, and known to those of us who dug there in the 1950s.



The *Angel*, Ferrybridge, about 1830.

The Broken Bridge of Pontefract.

The confirmation of the site of the Broken Bridge of Pontefract has appeared in articles and serious papers, but never in PontArch! This article, hopefully, will put the balance straight.

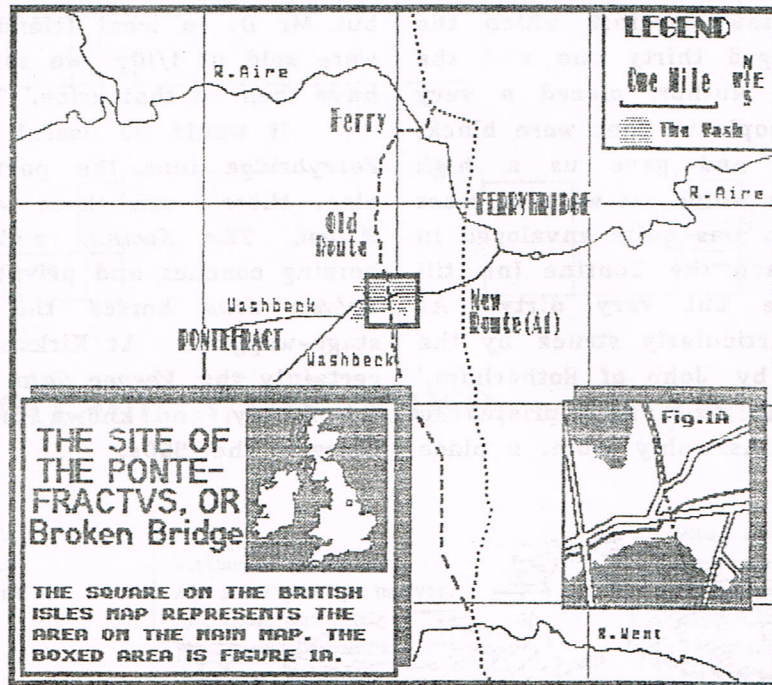
There can be few readers who have not heard of Pontefract, if only in connection with its famous liquorice confectionery. In fact the town is much older than Pomfret Cakes, for in *Domesday Book*, (1086) Pontefract under its original name of Tateshale, is the second most populous place in Yorkshire. Recent excavations have revealed traces of this early town, clustered around a tiny chapel near the foot of the slope to the east of the present castle. Shortly after the building of the castle (say about 1090) a new market grew up on the hill to the west; this is the present Market-Place. Over the years the newer settlement took on the name Pontefract whilst the area of the original town gradually declined in status and became known as Old Church because of the proximity of All Saints, the church built by the Normans to replace the Saxon chapel.

Holmes' conclusions. The search for this evidence formed a twenty-year research project undertaken by my friend, the late Harry Battye, and myself.

In order to fully understand the evidence, it is important to realise that at the time we are talking of, (1066 to 1600AD) a road did not follow a fixed track, but sought the most convenient route inside a broad

will find that a parallel route following minor roads and lanes from Wentbridge as far as Ferry Fryston is still visible on the maps. This, with one or two minor deviations, was once the greatest highway in the kingdom! Ancient parish boundaries are often good clues to the line of a lost road, and it is noticeable that the eastern boundary of Pontefract follows this route! Significantly, this

line meets the obstacle of *Washbeck*, (known locally as t'beck) at the point where the road to Knottingley crosses it. This is the spot identified as the site of the broken Bridge. It is also a spot that has constantly been subject to flooding whenever there are heavy rains. Indeed, the writer's own parents remember disastrous flooding in Bondgate - between Old Church and the bridge - during the early nineteenth-thirties. Evidence from peat-bogs and pollen profiles tells us that such flooding was even more



Article & maps c. EH 1969.

The actual name *Pontefract*, came into use from the middle of the twelfth century, and originates from the old French *Ponte Fracte* or broken bridge. The precise site of this bridge was long sought by antiquarians, who, without the benefit of archaeological and environmental evidence looked for it in the present town area, on top of a waterless hill! Though the site was identified a century ago by respected local historian Richard Holmes, it is only during the last twenty years that sufficient evidence has been accumulated to verify

corridor to avoid problems like seasonal flooding, etc. Thus the Great North Road can be shown by aerial photographs to deviate several hundred yards either side of its direct line at certain places. Moreover, as will be shown, when a seasonal obstacle became impossible to surmount, the travellers simply beat another track.

Several local historians including Harry, established that until about 1315 the Great North Road actually passed through Pontefract, having left the present line at Wentbridge. Readers wishing to check this

prevalent in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as the climate deteriorated following a long optimum phase of warmer, drier, weather. Such conditions would make the road impassable for long periods of time, and it is no wonder that travellers eventually gave up and cut through direct to Ferrybridge via Darrington. It appears that the inhabitants of Ferrybridge set out to deliberately attract travellers after the construction of their bridge some time before 1300.

In contrast to all this cartographic and environmental

evidence, there are two accounts of visits to the town in the sixteenth century, though nearly half a century apart. Leland, who came in the time of Henry VIII wrote:-

Some old people constantly affirm that the bridge of Watling Streets was the first of the Park of Pontefract. As far as I can gather this is the same called Ingultra. After it was called Brubwith, because of such a bridge put up somewhat half a mile Eastward of old Pontefract; but I cannot surely say that this bridge stands in an Watling Streets.

Leland's Itinerary, pg 40.

Camden, later in the century said much the same, though he added more detail. By the late 1960s the writer and Harry Battye had analysed the

evidence discussed so far, and were beginning to look for corroborative physical evidence.

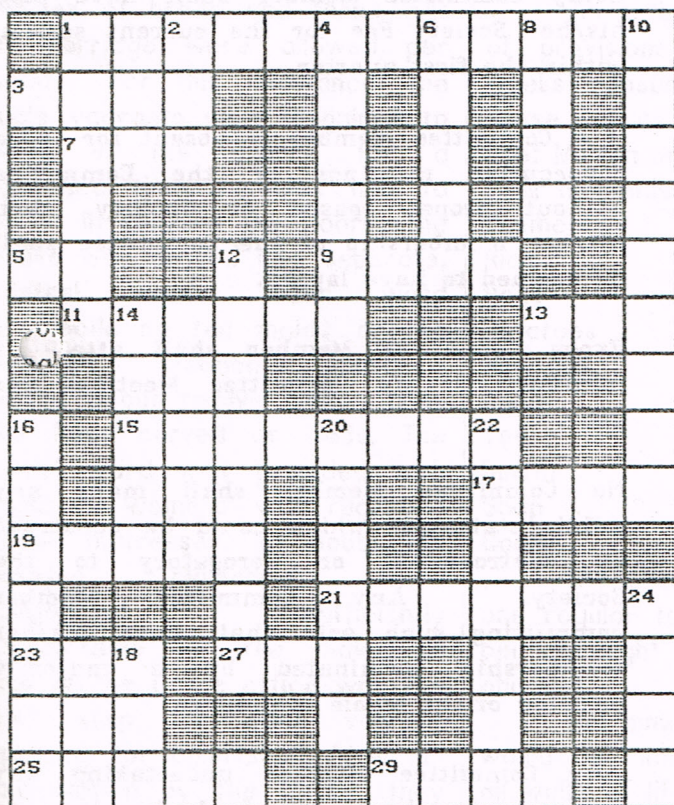
Then luck played a part. The time was early summer 1969, and a new sewage pumping station was being built a few yards to the north of where the bridge was presumed to have been. Visiting the area, Harry and the writer were lucky enough to see and photograph a built-up roadway visible in cross-section in both the north and the south edges of the excavated hole. When sighting lines were tried along it, it aligned almost exactly on the site of the bridge, and on the modern lanes which preserve the old line! Various other items now began to confirm the theory, including a beautiful romanesque cross-shaft discovered ten years before in the wall of the ruined Bubwith House Farm, right next

to the site.

Harry died in 1979, but not before we had both set down our tentative conclusions. Since then, in the Spring of 1989 to be precise, the actual arch of a stone bridge was seen (but unfortunately not photographed) deep beneath the road at the same spot during yet more engineering works to alleviate flooding.

So, thanks in part to Sixteenth century antiquaries, a Nineteenth century historian, and Twentieth century research techniques, the *Broken Bridge* of Pontefract is at last located. The only problems now remaining are the province of the documentary historian; the date and reason for the breakage of the bridge. I fear that these will remain enigmatic for many years to come.

PONTCROSS NUMBER ONE set by... CLOCI.



Down.

1. Tapestry (6)
2. Unpleasant individual, Essex Man (3)
4. They came, they saw, they built a few roads, but none can be found in Featherstone.(6)
6. The Baltic's answer to gold (5)

8. Holy Island (4)
10. Period belonging to first farmers (9)
12. The only way to discover the Earth's secrets (8)
14. The Holdsworth Blues (5)
16. Buried city in the Bay of Naples (7)
18. Archaeologists' liquid (3)
20. You need the clue, like a hole in the head (6)
22. Elevation; archaeological drawing (7)
24. Local River (4)

Across.

1. All agents of archaeological disturbance, biological (12)
3. Egyptian sun god (2)
5. Twelfth letter of the Greek alphabet (2)
7. Shaggy friend from the Himalayas (3)
9. Imperial Rome's answer to Nigel Kennedy (4)
11. Persian King, invader of Greece. (6)
13. Egyptian God of Evil (3)
15. The Classical 'hardmen' of the Peloponese (8)
17. Pontefract's legendary lensman (4)
19. Heavenly bread (5)
21. Empire in the Near East, to Crassus' regret (7)
23. Abbreviation for first part of the Bronze period (3)
25. Boudicca's people (5)
27. Period of time (3)
29. _____ Dwrini (4)

Pontefract and District Archaeological Society.

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, Auditor, Publication & Publicity Secretary, and several Committee Members, their number to be determined by the A.G.M., and with the exception of The President and Vice-President, 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 The Chairman, the Committee shall elect a chairman from their number.
6. A quorum shall be six members.
7. Membership fees shall be determined each year at the Annual General Meeting. 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 the A.G.M.
8. No member shall be entitled to a vote at any general meeting unless all moneys presently payable by him/her to the Society shall 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 the month of April each year.
11. Functions shall not take place under the Society's name without prior approval of the Committee. Members working on Society projects shall at all times remain

within the direction of the person appointed as Director. Any member not doing so shall be subject to disciplinary proceedings, and if the offence be repeated, to termination of membership.

12. The Society shall not be responsible for any loss or injury incurred whilst taking part in Society functions, excavation for example; members participate in Society functions at their own risk.
13. Notice of any proposed amendment to the rules should be given to the Secretary in writing at least fourteen days prior to the Annual General Meeting.

COMMITTEE RULES.

1. Every Committee Member shall have paid his/her Society Fee for the current session within the first quarter.
2. If a Committee Member is absent for three consecutive meetings of the Committee without proper reason or apology, then his/her membership of the Committee shall be deemed to have lapsed.
3. Every Committee Member shall attend a minimum of six Committee Meetings per year.
4. No Committee Member shall make any public statement which could be construed as controversial or derogatory to the Society. Any Committee Member committing such acts shall have his/her membership terminated by a majority decision of the whole Committee.
5. Any Committee Member undertaking any research in the field of Archaeology or History should, as an act of courtesy report to the Committee on a regular basis.