

# NEWSLETTER

## THE PONTEFRACT AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NUMBER 27

SPRING 1994

### EDITORIAL

Readers may remember from our last Editorial (those who actually read the Editorial!) that our Editor was ill. In fact the illness lasted much longer than expected, and that is the reason that this newsletter is so late. It was most heartening to receive cards and telephone calls from friends not only in this area, but from all over Yorkshire and indeed in a couple of cases, from different parts of England. Thank you! Obviously, *PontArch* gets about a bit. We must also thank Barbara Stewart and Simon Tomson for unfailingly providing material so that publication could go on, albeit at reduced frequency.

This does, however, bring us to the next point. In order to avoid a repetition, your Editor has been told to alter his life-style a little, and this will mean a slightly longer gap between issues of *PontArch*. In compensation, each issue will be bigger, with more articles and news.

One of the ways in which the Society maintains its excellent, indeed unparalleled programme, is to effect economies in other directions. The biggest drain on the budget of any society today is postage. To send out this newsletter once per year would cost over £23 in postage along, and so we do ask you, the members, to try and collect not only your copy of *PontArch*, but also your Programme card. If you are unable to do this, please give Pauline a ring at the Museum, or ask a friend to collect them.

Another problem faced by any society such as ours is administration. As we approach the end of the financial year, subscriptions become due. Most people seem to prefer to pay their subscription in the Museum lobby before the AGM, but with well over a hundred members the actual mechanics of this is very time-consuming. Naturally we shall have blank forms available, but you will notice that there is a renewal form printed on the back pages of this issue.

You can by-pass the queue entirely by putting your sub. and this form in an envelope and handing it in on the day, or even better, by posting it to our Treasurer, Peter Lockett c/o Pontefract Museum (address below). Please do not forget your address, postcode, and 'phone number, which should be preceded by 'XD' if you wish to keep it confidential.

Finally, you may know that your Editor is associated with two professional bodies concerned with site photography. One of these, the Royal Photographic Society, is arranging two tutorials on site photography, one in York on April 16th, and one on site at Wood Hall in July. The Editor is involved in the teaching on both occasions. Members wishing to receive details should send a SAE to: John Adams, MA, ARPS, *Alfrin*, 2 Bell Lane, Fetcham, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 9NF., requesting details of whichever tutorial they are interested in.

An occasional newsletter published by the Pontefract & District  
Archaeological Society, The Museum, Salter Row, Pontefract, WF8 1BA.  
Editor, Eric Houlder, Past President.

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# WOOD HALL 1993: INTERIM REPORT.

*The Wood Hall Moated Manor Project, sponsored by National Power and undertaken by North Yorkshire County Council, is now in its sixth year.*

*The Project aims to undertake the total excavation of the moated site known as Wood Hall, Womersley (SE536 206) in advance of its destruction by the Gale Common Ash Disposal Facility; to survey and study in detail the landscape immediately surrounding it; and to put it into its national and regional context by a study of its hinterland, focused on the parish of Womersley.*

Excavations in 1993 have concentrated, in Area 20, on the investigation of the features that pre-date the Georgian farm complex and the detailed examination of the entrance to the moated site; and on completing the excavation of the pre-moat features on Area 21. A third Area, 26, was opened in the north central area of the moated platform, where it is expected that the main manorial complex is situated, as part of the Education Programme at the beginning of the excavation season.

## Area 20

The area where the Georgian farm buildings were situated contained few structures in the late medieval/early post-medieval period. A large portion of it appears to have been laid down as a garden at this time, with dark humic soils which also contained domestic rubbish (eg pottery, animal bone, shell) and coal ash. Sherds from a number of fifteenth century planting pots indicate an ornamental as well as practical use for the garden. A number of rectangular planting beds have been identified, and it is hoped that pollens and seeds will be recovered which will enable the identification of the plants which were grown in the garden.

Other features identified from this period include a stone-lined well, drains, and a number of pits. One pit complex in particular, situated almost on the edge of the moat to the west of the site entrance, might well have contained the remains of a single large meal. Finds included animal bone, oyster and whelk shells, a number of complete but broken pottery vessels, some clay tobacco pipes and a bone-handled knife, all dating to the end of the sixteenth century.

The entrance to the moated site has proved to be more

complex than expected, with four phases of bridge on two crossing alignments, the gatehouse being added relatively late in the sequence.

*Phase 1.* Three fragmentary timbers in line across the moat at 90 degrees are believed to represent the earliest bridge, dating from c. 1180/1200 when the moat was constructed.

*Phase 2.* The second bridge alignment crosses the moat at an obtuse angle of approx. 110 degrees. This orientation gives an unimpeded view south down Cow Lane, then as now the only approach to Wood Hall from the village of Womersley. The phase 2 moat crossing itself contained 3 sub-phases, as the bridge and gateway were remodelled over time.

*Phase 2a.* For the first phase 2 crossing both banks of the moat were revetted. The north bank was supported by a short length of masonry wall; the south bank was revetted with vertical and cross-braced posts, jointed into a transverse base-plate. This in turn was jointed into two longitudinal base-plates, 7.5m long (min), which supported seven vertical two-post trestles held in place by mortise and tenon joints. These trestles would have supported the bridge decking. The longitudinal base-plates had both been shortened to make way for the gatehouse foundations of the next crossing phase; there is as yet no evidence to show whether the phase 2a bridge crossed the moat from bank to bank, or whether there was a drawbridge at the north end.

*Phase 2b.* The phase 2a bridge structure was stripped down to the longitudinal base-plates, leaving only these and the bank revetments in place. Two square stone towers were constructed forward into the moat from the north, butted against the phase 2a revetment wall. These were clad in large limestone ashlar blocks at the base, forming plinths as the bases for a fine stone-built gatehouse arch with a room above. The structure appears to have had at least one chimney.

The phase 2b bridge structure was placed directly on the shortened longitudinal base-plates remaining from phase 2a. It was of box-frame construction with longitudinal and transverse base plates connected by

halving joints. The longitudinal base plates were approx. 5m long by 30cm square. Mortised corner posts supported the bridge superstructure, forming two transverse trestles, and longitudinal reinforcement was provided by 45 degree cross-bracings mortised into the uprights. The timber revetment against the south bank was reinforced by an identical structure placed immediately in front of it.

A timber box-frame of similar construction supported the bridge decking between the gatehouse towers. It is assumed at present that the gap between the two (approx. 1.8m) was crossed by a drawbridge pivoted on two stone piers which project from the towers.

*Phase 2c.* The phase 2c bridge consisted of a number of modifications to the structure of the phase 2b box-frame, including the insertion of a third timber trestle at the south revetment end, and the moving of the transverse base-plates out of their halving joints, thus shortening the 'draw-bridge' gap by some 30cms.

The construction of the gatehouse and the phase 2b bridge is presently being dated to c. 1450 by related finds of pottery vessels. More accurate dating will be provided by dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) being undertaken for the Project by the Sheffield Environmental Facility by courtesy of a British Academy grant.

The gatehouse structure eventually became unstable, and was partially demolished c 1625, though the bridge remained in use. The final demolition of the gatehouse, and the replacement of the bridge with a causeway, took place c 1680.

The excavation, recording and conservation of the bridge timbers is being assisted by the generous sponsorship of Hickson Timber Products Ltd of Castleford.

Finds recovered from the entrance area include food debris, table knives, pottery, wooden bowls and glass drinking vessels - prompting the suggestion that the room above the gateway was used at least once as a banqueting hall, with a rowdy end to the festivities!

A pre-moat medieval ditch has been identified running north-south on Area 20. This ditch appears to be precisely aligned on the "modern" drainage dyke flanking

Cow Lane (the access track) on its western side. If this is confirmed by excavation in 1994, it will indicate that the Wood Hall moat was superimposed on a pre-existing drainage system dating to the twelfth century or earlier.

### Area 21

The earliest feature on Area 21 is a small north-south ditch, the fills of which contained eight sherds from two vessels of Iron Age pottery, dating to the first century BC/AD. A small fragment of glass, possibly of Romano-British date, some pot-boilers and some fragments of badly decayed animal bone were also recovered. This ditch could possibly represent a very early land clearance or land division.

The north-south ditch was sealed by a pre-moat soil which was itself cut by an east-west ditch. This later ditch contained sherds of medieval pottery including part of the base of a large vessel in a white fabric which can be paralleled from the pre-timber castle levels at Sandal Castle, Wakefield, implying an early twelfth century date.

To the north of the ditch a number of post-holes represented a small pre-moat building complex. The main structure was made up of twelve post-holes forming a building c 9.8 x 4.4ms, and was bow-sided in plan, aligned east-west. Adjacent to this structure to the west was a small, six-post structure which may have been a porch, a raised-floored storage area, or even a tower. Both structures were very clean internally, but to the south of them was a linear spread of charcoal, crushed burnt bone and fragments of pottery. Two pits to the south-east contained similar material.

To the east of the main structure a further twelve post-holes have been revealed, very close to the edge of the excavation. These cannot be interpreted at present.

Pottery associated both with these structures and with the construction of the moat appears to form a single group, mainly Doncaster Hallgate and Yorkshire Gritty Wares dated to the late twelfth/early thirteenth century. This may appear to conflict with the presence of a bow-sided building, generally considered to be a Saxon tradition. At Wood Hall this may represent the persistence of earlier traditions among a rural population.

The pre-moat ground surface was sealed by the material displaced by the digging of the moat, which appears to have been used as a levee along the edge of the platform.

The only other feature on Area 21 which can be positively assigned to the medieval period is a large pit (1.4m deep by 3m wide by 7m minimum long) which continues eastward under the edge of the excavation. This pit stood open, with an original rich peaty lower fill, and was re-cut twice and each time allowed to silt up. No clear indication of its function can be suggested. Finds recovered include a number of animal burials, and abraded sherds of pottery including some of Romano-British date. A date in the 14th/15th centuries seems most likely.

Following the final silting up of the large pit, Area 21 appears to have had little use apart from the burials of three horses and a cow, until an intensive pig-rearing unit was built in 1935. A large number of pig burials then occurred in the area.

One further unusual feature was excavated at the south of Area 21. This was a roughly oval feature, c 4m long x 1.4m wide x 0.4m deep, which contained 5 post-holes set close against its edges and leaning at an angle of 60 degrees into the interior. The feature had straight sides and was cut into soft sands; the absence of erosion

indicates that the feature was roofed or covered in some way, though there is no firm evidence for a superstructure. The feature contained no finds that could indicate either a date or a function, and can be dated stratigraphically to a period between the periglacial sands it cuts, and the 20th century pig burials it is cut by. Any suggestions as to its identity would be gratefully received!

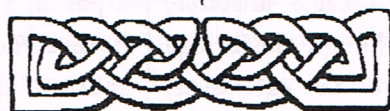
The excavation of Area 21 has contributed greatly to our understanding of the site at Wood Hall, giving indications of earlier prehistoric activity as well as potential Iron Age/Romano-British usage. The discovery of the pre-moat ground surface and associated structures, together with the relatively early date obtained for the construction of the moat, has been a major addition to the understanding of the development of settlement in this area.

Excavations in 1994 will concentrate on the completion of the entrance and bridge complex, including the lifting of the bridge timbers, and the extension of the excavated area along the north of the moated platform to investigate the area believed to contain the main manorial complex.

Vivienne M Metcalfe

Project Director

Wood Hall Moated Manor Project



## A NEW CBA HANDBOOK.

A new CBA *Practical Handbook* is in the process of being written. The Practical handbooks are a series of basic guides to different aspects of archaeology produced by the Council For British Archaeology, which is based in York, surely Britain's capital city of archaeology.

*Archaeological Photography* will be the title, and it is currently being written by your editor. Another member, Ron Wilson (responsible for

the occasional cartoons to be seen within these pages) is contributing some of his unforgettable artwork. With luck the handbook should go to press towards the end of this year.

Needless to say, it is a tribute to the work of your Society that two of its members should have been singled out in such a way.

# HADRIAN'S WALL, EASTERN END.

An interesting lecture by Mr Griffiths, an archaeologist from Wallsend, *Segedvnm*, Northumberland, was well attended by members of the Society on November 19th.

Wallsend takes its name from the fact that it is the place where Hadrian's Wall ends. Originally intended to end at Newcastle, it was decided to extend the Wall further towards the coast. The Wall, commissioned c122AD by the Emperor Hadrian, stretches eighty Roman miles from Boness on Solway on the west coast, to Wallsend on the banks of the Tyne. It was built just to the north of the east/west military line and one-time frontier the Stanegate, which was constructed by Agricola when he was Governor of Britain forty years before. Made of stone, the Wall was ten feet thick and fifteen to twenty feet high in the eastern and central sectors. In the western sector the Wall was originally built of turf, and though wider was probably lower in height. The reason for this was the absence of good building stone in the west. As work progressed towards the eastern end, the width was reduced to seven feet. At intervals of a (Roman) mile, small fortlets now called milecastles accomodating between twenty five and fifty men were erected. Between each milecastle were two turrets. To the north of the Wall a deep wide defensive ditch was dug, followed later by a very different one to the south. This southern ditch, known as the *vallvm*, could only be crossed at points connected with the forts, of which there were fourteen. The *vallvm* seems to have specifically intended to keep the civilian population away from the Wall. Before the shipyards were built it was possible to see, on a clear day, from Wallsend to the Roman fort of *Arbeia* at South Shields.

When Swan Hunter extended their shipyard in 1903 in order to build the passenger ship *S.S. Mauretania*, a portion of the Wall was discovered. The stones were removed and rebuilt in a park at Wallsend. In 1991 these stones, which

had been unmarked on excavation, were matched as best as could be managed and rebuilt on the original line of the Wall. A plaque requests the inhabitants of Wallsend to respect and protect this portion of the Wall which gave their town its name. The site of the fort at *Segedvnm* was excavated between 1975 and 1985 and is now laid out for public view. It consists mainly of grass, with the lines of the walls picked out in modern tiling. From the fort the ground slopes down to the River Tyne. A road ran from the fort to Newcastle. Temples have been excavated in the area, and a bath-house was found under the Ship Inn public house.

Between the *vicus* (civilian settlement) and the Wall it was apparently considered necessary to keep a clear space. A road was laid which separated the two. The modern roadway, Buddle Street, bisects the site of the fort. In gullies to the north of the Wall, third century pottery has been unearthed, belying the theory that all activities took place south of the Wall. In 1988 excavation revealed sections of the foundations of this great Wall in situ. No doubt most other portions of it were long since utilised as a ready-made quarry. A shallow ditch close to the Wall was probably dug for drainage purposes. Much of archaeology is 'probable'! A series of ditches running south from the Wall are thought to be defences enclosing the *Vicvs*. To the north of the Wall a series of shallow pits could have been used to contain sharpened stakes to trap attackers, or possibly could have held posts which may have formed a fence.

Looking at a slide showing a typical mist-shrouded scene of the Wall, it was not difficult to imagine oneself back in the second century AD with men patrolling along the top of the Wall and keeping us in our place - the *vicus*.

Barbara Stewart.

# HOW TO GIVE A LECTURE.

*The public speaker is the most unselfish of men; he denies himself sleep in order to bring it to others.....*

If this is you, then the following advice from a speaker with over thirty years experience should prove useful. Before outlining the basic principles of public speaking, however, here are some facts which the tyro speaker should constantly bear in mind:

1. The average non-university audience will contain individuals with IQs ranging from 140 (near-genius) to 70 (Sun reader, or bright alsatian).
2. No-one, not even a genius can absorb more than three new facts per session.
3. If you need to write down facts in order to remember them, it is unlikely that your audience will remember them either.

With these points in mind, a lecture should be kept simple. Allow yourself one postcard for notes, and ensure that all important points are repeated at least twice.

Few speakers can manage without some form of illustration. Though video has made enormous strides it has neither the sharpness, the brightness nor the fidelity of a colour slide. As the slide is cheaper and easier to produce/reproduce, it is hardly surprising that it is still the supreme form of illustration in academic circles.

However, poor slides are worse than no slides, so do make sure that if you cannot make competent pictures yourself that you find someone who can, or buy them in from one of the many companies that specialise in producing them. Though most cameras will take reversal film, the standard slide for many years now has been the 2"x2" or 5cm square. Projectors for larger sizes are rare and expensive so do ensure that your slides are taken on 35mm film for standard 2"x2" mounts.

Slide films are usually available in amateur and professional versions. Though many amateur versions of films are good, they all have one disadvantage in that the film is process-paid. Such films have an envelope in the packaging so that the exposed film may be sent to the manufacturer's laboratory. This may seem an advantage, but in fact it is not, as the

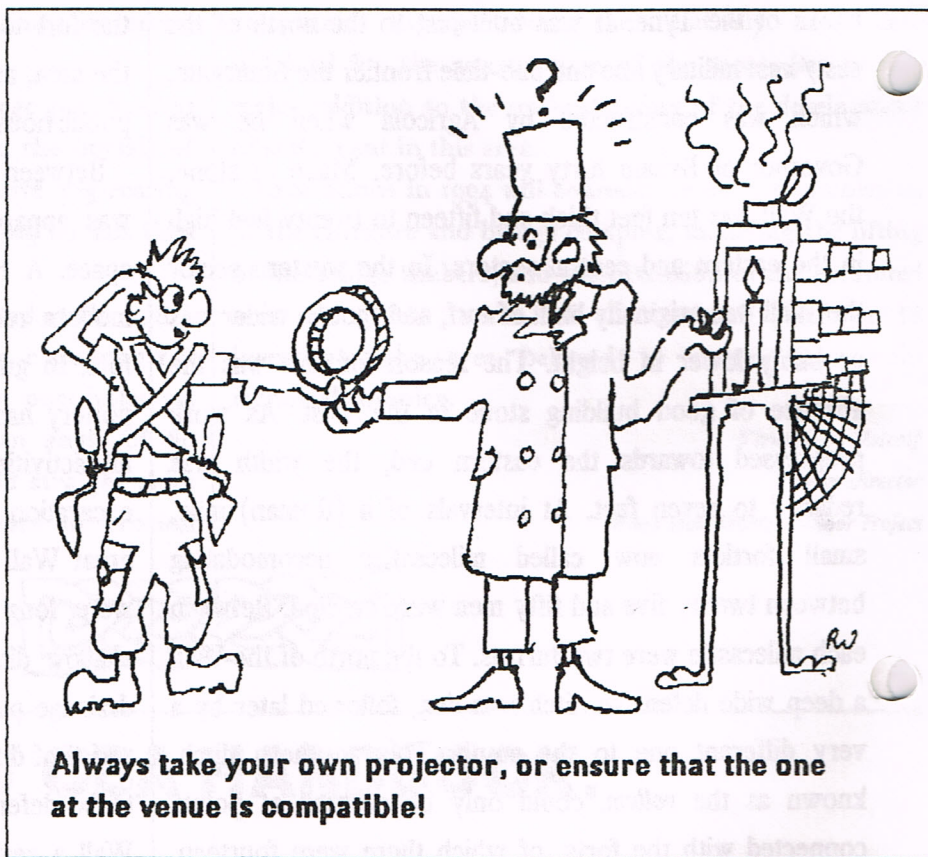
slides are inevitably returned in very thin plastic or card mounts. It cannot be emphasised enough that such mounts are not intended to be permanent; slides so mounted should be checked for sharpness, correct exposure, etc. and then re-mounted in proper Ge-Pe, Bonum, or Quickpoint mounts. The reason is simple: readymounts are too thin for most projectors, and tend to jam in Carousels or come apart inside, which may lead to overheating and damage to the machine. On the other hand, use of a professional film will enable you to have it processed at a professional laboratory, and mount it yourself in proper mounts to begin with, cutting out the waste and expense of the useless readymounts.

If you intend to do a fair amount of lecturing with the slides they should be sealed in glass mounts. Glass is more expensive but has two very important advantages: 1. The slide is protected from fingermarks, dust and

scratches. 2. It is held flat so that it will focus properly in the projector.

There are two ways of using slides. Either as illustrations to the spoken word, or as an integrated and equal component of the lecture. The former method is somewhat old-fashioned whilst the latter, though more difficult, is more rewarding. A useful bonus effect of the integrated approach is that notes are rarely necessary as each slide acts as a prompt. However, never assume that in this approach each picture requires a commentary; quite often several slides may be shown in sequence with no word spoken, the pictures speaking for themselves.

Too many speakers realise that they need a pointer after the start of the talk. This should be ready before, and the only way to ensure it, is to keep one with you. A telescopic car aerial is useful, an electric arrow pointer is



better, and a laser pointer is best.

Finally, the technicalities. It goes without saying that the hall should be dark, and the slides correctly marked so that they can be inserted in the tray the proper way up. Do make sure that someone competent sets up the projector, as only a small error in centring it will result in half of each picture being blurred. Projectors with zoom lenses should be put as far back as the lens allows for two reasons: 1. zoom lenses distort less at their longest focal length, and 2. distortion due to tilting is minimised by distance.

Speak to the back row, not the screen, and try to speak more slowly than a normal conversational tone, exaggerating your inflections very slightly. Avoid pacing about, and remember the speakers' motto:

**STAND UP: SPEAK UP: SHUT UP.**

# Pontefract and District Archaeological Society. 1994/5

New Members; Renewal of Membership; Change of Address Form

PLEASE TICK ONE OF THE BOXES BELOW

I wish to join the Society:

I wish to renew my subscription:

I wish to notify a change of address:

Please do not write in this Box.

Treasurer's Initials:

Record Update Initials:

My membership status is:

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OAP

Adult

Family

I CONSENT TO THE SOCIETY KEEPING MY MEMBERSHIP DETAILS IN COMPUTERISED FORM

Personal details will remain confidential under the terms of the DATA PROTECTION ACT. A 'no' return will entail losing some of the benefits of membership.

If you are renewing, we only require your name, initial(s), and postcode.

Title (Mr/Mrs/etc) ..... Initials ..... Surname .....

Address .....

Town ..... POSTCODE ..... ☎ .....

Signature ..... Date .....

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Please forward with your remittance (cheques made out to THE PONTEFRAC T & DIST. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY) to The Treasurer, P&DAS, c/o Pontefract Museum, Salter Row, PONTEFRAC T, WF8 1BA.

