

THE PONTEFRACT AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 31, SUMMER 1995.

THE BADSWORTH 'HENGE' DIG



The Rock-cut ditch as excavated. See the Interim Report on page seven for full details of this site.

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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THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A FINDS OFFICER.

by BARBARA LOWE, Finds Officer, the Wood Hall Moated Manor Project.

Is it the tray that comes off the site with no context number, followed by what seems a five mile hike by yours truly asking, "Is this yours?", answered by much shrugging of shoulders and shaking of heads?

Or is it the disintegration of that piece of leather/glass/wood that you let dry out after promising yourself faithfully that you would put it into water twenty four hours ago?

Or that miniscule piece of coloured glass that was thought to be Roman, which you lost the minute you put it down?

And who's the one in the pub when a gold ring comes out of the moat?

Then there's the family of bats who have moved into the window shutter rent-free, so you can't open it, and can't see to mark the finds.

These are just a few of the run-of-the-mill problems sent to try the finds officer during the average digging season.

"Get into finds," I said. "It's not as physically demanding as throwing a mattock about on site - and a lot safer! - nor is it as hard on the hands as trowelling, as long as I remember to put the *Fairy Liquid* into the water when I wash the pot." Wash 'em, Mark 'em, nothing simpler, or so I thought. Who was I kidding?

You lie in bed at night worrying whether there's going to be enough storage space in a garage that was full last year. Getting a quart into a pint pot is easy when you're a finds officer.

Then there's the pottery dates - was it 12th/13th/14th century? Is it a jug, a flagon, or a dish? Who is this Moorhouse person anyhow?

It helps to keep you sane if you've a dog to walk/ birds to watch/ book or paper to read at lunch time. If that fails you can always kick your assistant - provided you have one, of course!

School visits are another highlight. When you are miraculously expected to change overnight into a teacher, and try to explain the mysteries of the finds system to a group of ten-year-olds - whose only interest is in how



many bodies you have dug up, are these dinosaur bones, and how much do you sell the gold for?

Luckily all this only takes place for a few months of the year, so a nervous breakdown is usually avoided. Come the end of September, schools colleges and universities claim back their budding Mortimer Wheelers, and off I go, hubby in tow, to some far-flung corner of the British Isles to recuperate.

Back from my holiday refreshed and batteries re-charged, it's into the comparative calm of 'the office' for a leisurely trawl through the finds.

Most finds are counted and listed, which brings us to the joys of bone. Now counting animal bone is really exciting. Of course, it would help if I knew what animal I was counting in the first place! My usual reaction to bone is to stash it somewhere I can't see it and put it off as long as I can whilst doing something more interesting. "I hate bone" - the worst thing you can do to a finds officer is to bring a tray off site with nothing but bone in it. That's when I stop kicking my assistant and kick the excavator instead!

The thing I do like is sticking pot. Maybe it's the fact that I'm as high as a kite from the glue and the acetone. But even here there are problems - like, why don't we ever find all the pieces? And when we find most of them, why does the last piece turn up weeks after all the others are joined, and won't fit in? Or, I get all the vessel complete except for one sherd which I can't find even after turning the office upside down half a dozen times, then some cleverdick passing through picks up a sherd saying, "That looks as if it fits there." (It does). Exit cleverdick hastily, followed by said vessel and a blood-curdling scream! Finds officers with murder in mind are not a pretty sight!

In the meantime all WET leather/wood/glass and anything else that needs conserving (provided it has survived the journey from site and my undivided attention) is packed for Cardiff University, the only problem being, can they come up for it or do we take it down? We always hope for the first option as a couple of dozen plastic boxes full of water, slopping about in the car boot, is not the best way to test your suspension.

Once that is out of the way I can start thinking about the next museum exhibition. I like doing these, it's the 'hands-on' part of it that worries me, and the modern exhibition must have one! The thought of someone dropping a pot that has taken me weeks to put together! - it doesn't bear thinking about. Okay, so it is only medieval pot, so it's only held together with glue and maybe some *Polyfilla*, but it's all my own work and I get very maternal.

Then come the day of the exhibition when all the chosen artefacts are packed, and off we go to the museum to set up the exhibition. Fingers are crossed hoping that what we take out will come back, and that no one drops THAT POT.

The exhibition opens - it's a success, you're praised from all sides for the quality of the finds, your skill in sticking all the pottery, the way they are set out and so on and so forth. So you start to relax and preen yourself, enjoying every minute. Then someone turns to you saying,

"IS IT NEXT WEEK THE DIGGING SEASON
STARTS?"

There follows a resounding thud as the finds officer hits the ground!

PROFESSIONAL JARGON - A USEFUL GLOSSARY

Every profession has its own jargon, and archaeology is no exception. Unkind outsiders may suggest that the jargon is a form of defence mechanism designed to baffle and exclude outsiders. Certainly the quantity and quality of archaeological jargon have both increased exponentially with the massive expansion of the subject

since the 1960s. Though the discipline has shrunk somewhat, the jargon hasn't.

Here are some useful phrases, guaranteed to exclude all none-archaeologists. Naturally, readers of this august publication will not need the translations, which are appended solely for the benefit of the typesetter.

1. Re-hydration area.
2. Facilitatoral artefact storage area.
3. Alimentary evacuation zone.
4. Linear negative water-filled feature.
5. Linear lithic feature with mural characteristics.
6. Linear mobile zone.
7. Defunct hominidic corporeal depositional area.
8. Bioturbatory negative feature.
9. Canine-originated coprolitic deposit.
10. Spoil re-location unit.

The tea hut.
 Tool shed.
 The elsan.
 Moat.
 Wall.
 Road/path.
 Cemetery.
 Rabbit-hole.
 Dog muck.
 Barrow.

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A WEEKEND IN MONMOUTH

Many of us in the Society often feel as though we are working in isolation. We hear about the work of other societies from speakers, we see it in *British Archaeology* and *Current Archaeology*; those of us who regularly attend the CBA Regional Group Symposium in Leeds occasionally see what other groups are doing, but the sad fact is that quite often the magazines and the symposiae are dominated by the work of the professional units.

Another contributor in this issue describes the CIA Conference at Sheffield. The Confederation of Independent Archaeologists is a grouping of amateurs and societies; naturally P&DAS is a member. Janet McNaught represented us at this event, and gave a brief summary of the work of the Society since its foundation, laying special emphasis on our relations with the professional groups.

The following weekend your Editor and Mrs Houlder travelled to Monmouth in Gwent where Eric was to teach a dayschool on site photography (on behalf of The Archaeological Site Photographers' Association, ASPA) for the Dean Archaeological Group, an amalgam of local societies in that area of Wales and the Forest of Dean. Many people do not realise how convenient the motorway system has become, for in well under three hours we were checking into our accomodation in

Goodrich, and by ten in the morning we had found the site in Monmouth where the dayschool was to take place.

Monmouth is an historic town, birthplace of Henry V, and the location of one of only two fortified bridges in Britain, the other being at Warkworth. The organiser was Alf Webb, well known in regional archaeological circles, who greeted Eric with compliments on the P&DAS's work, and Janet's delivery at the CIA Conference the previous weekend.

The Monmouth Archaeological Society is currently digging on a shop site fronting on to the main street which leads from the castle to the river. The site is open to the public and has semi-permanent displays of photographs and finds, as well as the excavations themselves. Never since the 1960s has your Editor seen a section so long and so informative, helped by the fact that the River Monnow has periodically flooded, and punctuated the section with a layer of sterile silt. Thus the section is deep, and the layers are easily distinguished from the Roman military ditch at the base to the modern concrete at the top.

The dayschool went well, the weather held bright and sunny, and I managed to obtain some photographs of the famous bridge, as well as providing a talking point for the citizens of Monmouth who carried on

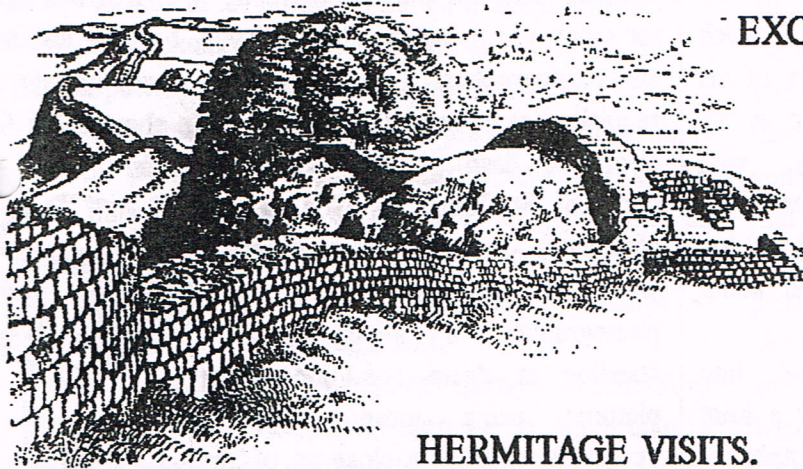
visiting the site whilst I demonstrated the use of the leaf and the spray below them.

On the following day we visited Goodrich Castle, and called in at Tintern Abbey on the way to London where we were due at lunchtime. Altogether it had been a most instructive weekend, visiting sites heard of,

but too long unvisited. The area is filled with history, and there is the link with Pontefract - Henry V may have been born at Monmouth, but he brought his Queen, Catherine of France, to Pontefract on their honeymoon!

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PROGRAMME DETAILS - MAY 1995 UNTIL APRIL 1996.



EXCURSIONS 1995.

May 20th
June 10th
July 15th
Sept.9th
Nov.9th

Duxford.
Ironbridge.
Beamish & Durham.
Corbridge & Chesters.
China. (more than one day)

HERMITAGE VISITS.

June 17th,
July 22nd,
August 19th,
Sept.16th.



LECTURES.

1995

October 20th	Professor Don Brothwell	The Archaeology of Disease.
November 17th	Mr Leigh	Parish Churches.
December 15th	Roy Young	Desert Island Antiques.
1996		
January 19th	Eric Houlder	Local History Camera, <i>Recording Local History.</i>
February 16th	Jane Lilley	The North Bridge Site, Doncaster.
March 15th	Peter Cardwell	The Brompton St Giles site.
April 12th	Mr R M Kirby	The History of Beverley.
plus AGM.		

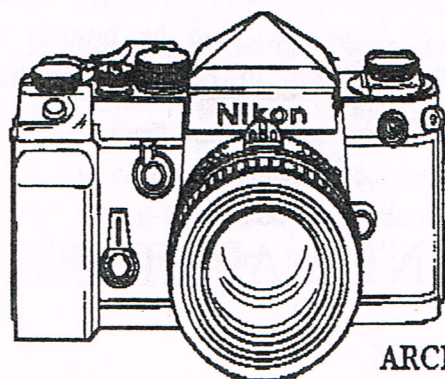
Paid-up members receive a printed programme with details of excursion booking and lecture times.



We have some of the best projection facilities of any local society. Not a bit like this really!

IMAGES OF ARCHAEOLOGY,

The Don Lodge Memorial Lecture, 20th January 1995.



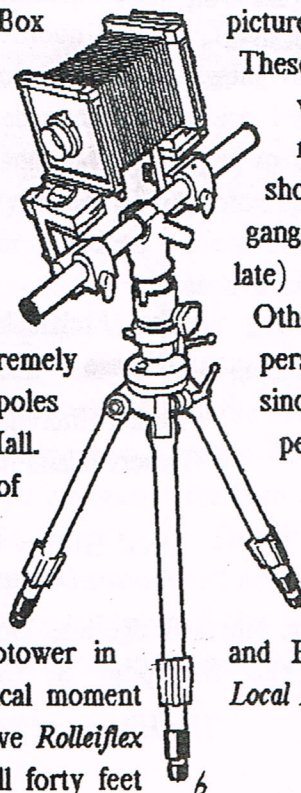
The Don Lodge Memorial Lecture was again delivered to the society by Eric Houlder. His subject was IMAGES OF

ARCHAEOLOGY, which

he described as a series of his best archaeological photographs. The speaker is an acknowledged expert on site photography, with numerous papers, articles, and published pictures to his name, as well as a CBA *Practical Handbook* on Archaeological Photography in preparation, and about to appear as this issue reaches you.

The lecture was conveniently sub-divided into sections, each demarcated by a title-slide. After a brief history of the discipline illustrated by photographs of Maurice Cookson, Rick (Sir Mortimer) Wheeler's photographer (who died in the 50s) on top of a rickety tower, and Basil Brown (the discoverer of the Sutton Hoo Treasure) brandishing an early Kodak Box Brownie, Eric went on to describe how features are prepared for photography. Apparently this is the most important skill involved, and necessitates the removal of all irrelevant material; many people familiar to members were shown in this activity.

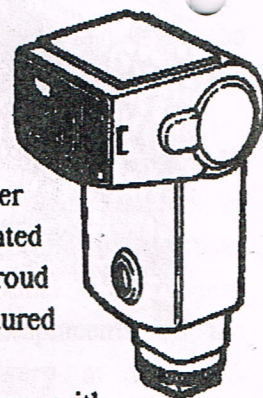
Tower work received a whole section, with every kind of erection from the extremely makeshift one of a ladder and two scaffold-poles to the proper thing used by Wood Hall. Amongst Eric's anecdotes was his story of Marius Cooke, of Leicester University who a quarter-century ago on a Roman site under the present M4, tried to imitate the British Museum's Swedish Fototower in cheaper materials. Unfortunately, at the critical moment the centre-cradle failed, and Marius' expensive *Rolleiflex* camera together with its supporting pole, fell forty feet



to punch a hole in the roof of his vintage Lagonda!

Being based in Pontefract, Eric has been photographing skeletons since 1957. He illustrated his first at St John's Priory, and described old and new methods of cleaning burials for photography, including the technique of photographing them wet, which he invented and first published.

Using flash for site photography was frowned upon for many years, largely, Eric believed, because directors and photographers in the early days could not do the requisite calculations for exposure. He showed his first electronic flash picture, of a burial in boots at St John's in 1964. The equipment ran off three ninety volt batteries, and gave the photographer a shock when standing in damp conditions. Later pictures using more sophisticated apparatus included a close-up of shroud fabric enlarged 120 times linear, pictured in the Booths Saxon cemetery.



The speaker concluded his lecture with pictures which he described as 'publicity material.' These were unashamed people-pictures, many of which had been published in colour and monochrome. One of the most familiar showed Don Lodge standing on the gangway of the Sutton Hoo ship speaking to (the late) Dr Bruce-Mitford of the British Museum. Others illustrated some of the archaeological personalities whom Eric has worked with or met since the 1950s. His anecdotes of some of these personalities are probably as well staying out of print.

In proposing the vote of thanks, Chairman Bob asked Eric if he had anything else to present to the society, and Eric in reply promised his parallel lecture, *Local History Camera*, for next January.

THE BADSWORTH SITE: FIRST INTERIM REPORT.

by John McIlwaine, Director.

The site is a circular enclosure in the parish of Badsworth which has a strong link with the Society as Eric Houlder discovered it whilst taking aerial photographs with the late Derrick Riley in 1979. In the winter of 1980, Barbara Lowe (now a Committee Member) in association with a number of enthusiasts of the South Elmsall Archaeological Group, with some assistance from the West Yorkshire Unit, carried out a small excavation on the southern portion of the ditch in order to obtain a profile. The excavation produced a number of artefacts which included flint, animal bones, Roman pottery and a polished Langdale axe.

The site was exceptionally well-drained with a sandy in soil overlying sandstone bedrock and was at this time under cultivation. The aim of the current excavation was to establish exactly how much damage had been done by the ploughing and to attempt to determine a date for the monument.

Prior to excavation, *Geophysical Surveys* of Bradford were approached, and kindly agreed to undertake a magnetometer survey of the site. It is most heartening that the country's leading commercial archaeological geophysics company was so willing to assist an amateur society in its work, and comes as a marked contrast to some professional units who seem to regard amateurs as a source of irritation rather than a much under-utilised resource. The outline of the ditch was clearly visible on the survey. Several points of interest were also readily apparent with distinct 'zones' perceptible inside the circle, and a possible second (northerly) entrance, close to which were a number of strong ferrous responses. It was decided to investigate this area.

The high stone content of the topsoil had caused the farmer to abandon attempts at cultivation in previous years, with the field now being used for grass. The excavation began in late October 1994 and continued on Sundays, weather permitting, until March 1995. The de-turfing soon bore out the farmer's view, with a topsoil which was thin and contained a large amount of stone. The turf was removed, and the remainder of the topsoil

by trowel, in an attempt to discover whether any artefacts had retained a position in the soil which might have been a feature. A number of sherds of pottery were recovered but these did not seem to form any significant pattern. Below the topsoil there was considerable variation in the subsoil; areas of large stones, some patches of solid rock and patches of decayed sandstone and soil, some of which appeared to have been heat-affected. At this level a number of sherds of Roman pottery were recovered with a particular cluster occurring in the south east corner of the excavation area. Directly to the south of this was discovered a line of clay and stone. This line may be some sort of footing for a wall and it was interesting that a large piece of Roman roof tile was also recovered from this area. Unfortunately, due to the clay line's proximity to the edge of the trench it was extremely difficult to make much sense out of it, but it together with the presence of the roof tile and the pottery may suggest the possibility of a structure close to the edge of the ditch.

The position of the ditch was clearly visible after de-turfing, as a band of soil which contained very few stones and was easily discernible to the eye; this was in marked contrast to the previous excavation which had extreme difficulty in identifying the upper levels, as it was indistinguishable from the very stony soil which surrounded it. The ditch contained four fills; the basal being a mixture of sand and some quite large stone, while above it was a darker brown layer which contained considerably more stone. The upper fills contained a mixture of soil, sand and stones. The ditch produced Roman pottery and animal bone similar to that produced on the previous excavation, but nothing in the way of Prehistoric material. Based upon the artefact evidence it would therefore be logical to date the monument to the Roman period. However, the dating of ditches by their sediments is a notoriously difficult task and we may just as plausibly be looking at a Prehistoric site which is being re-used in the Roman period.

The site was back-filled in March and post-excavation work is under way. The landowner has expressed the desire to see the work continue next winter, and so this is very much an interim statement.

Acknowledgments

The Society would like to thank *Geophysical Surveys* of

Bradford for their expertise and help with this project, and John and Jackie Crowther, the owners of Upton Moor Top Farm, without whose permission and support none of this would have been possible.

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Members wishing to participate in the next seasons work should contact Eric Houlder, Field Director, by letter giving an address and telephone number. Work will take place on weekends.

The amounts shown on the form below are the current rates. If you do not wish to deface this copy of *PontArc*, and you have not yet renewed your subscription, please feel free to photocopy this form.

1995-6

Pontefract and District Archaeological Society.

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:

Student

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

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