

THE PONTEFRACT AND DISTRICT
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

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

NEWS ITEMS

Womersley Finds.

Whilst the Wood Hall dig was in progress workmen widening Cow Lane close to Womersley School discovered two bronze plaques, part of a linking ring, and a late Roman coin. These were taken charge of by Simon Tomson on behalf of NYCC. Since the discovery of the corn-dryer in 1969, and the subsequent excavation by Doncaster Museum it has been clear that Womersley was the site of considerable settlement in the third and fourth centuries. The latest finds (cover picture) reinforce this.

Darrington Fibula.

A member recently reported the discovery of a RB trumpet-brooch in Darrington. This is of a type not normally found outside Britain, and is usually thought to have developed in the area just behind Hadrian's Wall. It is common in the North, and dates from the early second century.

Silver Coin.

Mr Graham Boothroyd recently asked the Editor to identify a coin which was found on his land close to the Roman Road 28b. It is of Antoninus Pius, who reigned from 138 to 161.

Local Battlefield.

Your Editor had a visit from Dr Sam Newton during June. Sam is an official of the Sutton Hoo Society, and was referred to EH by the Secretary. Readers may have heard of his books on Beowulf and Saxon society. He is currently researching Penda of Mercia, who was killed at the battle of the Winwaedfield in 654-5 AD. The Mercians were attempting to conquer Northumbria, but met their match in this battle, which is reputed to have been the bloodiest of the Saxon Era. Victorian historians place it on the river Cock in Seacroft, but later research has established that it took place at

Thorpe Audlin, where the present A639 crosses the Went. This society spent three Autumn seasons digging in the area, and Sam hoped that we may have found something from the battle. The Editor was able to provide copies of our reports, and duplicate photographs of the ancient features discovered. His visit took place in the hot weather, and a pleasant evening was spent in the Editor's garden discussing the Dark Ages, Robin Hood, and other aspects of the history of the River Went.

York church dig reveals 'tale of woe.'

The September issue of *British Archaeology* reveals the repairs to All Saints Pavement (near Coppergate) were planned without a proper preliminary archaeological evaluation. Archaeologists from MAP were only called in at a later stage, and much potentially valuable data was recorded in a hurry and in less than ideal conditions. Diggers on the site were contactually debarred from talking about the work. This reminds us of the work on our own All Saints almost thirty years ago, when no archaeologists were involved, and much data was lost. However, in the York case, there was legislation in place in the form of PPG16, which the Church apparently was allowed to interpret in its own way.

Peter Addyman Retires from Presidency of the CBA.

Peter Addyman, Director of the York Archaeological Trust, and a good friend to this Society has retired as President of the CBA, reports *British Archaeology*. Peter is a contemporary of the Editor, who has a picture of him as a very young amateur. He dug with our Past Chairman Doreen Roberts, and as Director of the Y.A.T. is certainly the most important digging archaeologist in the country.

Evidence for Left Handedness.

A new report on the skeletons from the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy suggests that the

normal level of left-handedness is about 16%. Apparently, the favoured limb grows a few millimetres longer than the other under the stimulation of manual work. Present levels are lower than 16%, but are expected to rise as the generation which was forced to conform to the 'norm' dies out. The report is in the 1995 issue of the *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, and is reported in the October issue of *British Archaeology*.

Aerial Photography.

Memories of 1976, which was the best year for archaeological flying since the 1920s, were brought back last summer. According to the Head of the Air Photography Unit at the RCHME, 1995 was equally as good, but organisation was much better, and so even more data was recorded. It is sad that Derrick Riley, our leading aerial archaeologist, did not live to fly this last summer.

Thames Bridges found.

Preserved timbers of a prehistoric footbridge have been found near Eton, reports the November issue of *British Archaeology*. The timbers, lying in pairs, crossed a former channel of the Thames and apparently date from the Bronze Age. reminder of the wealth of preserved timber still buried

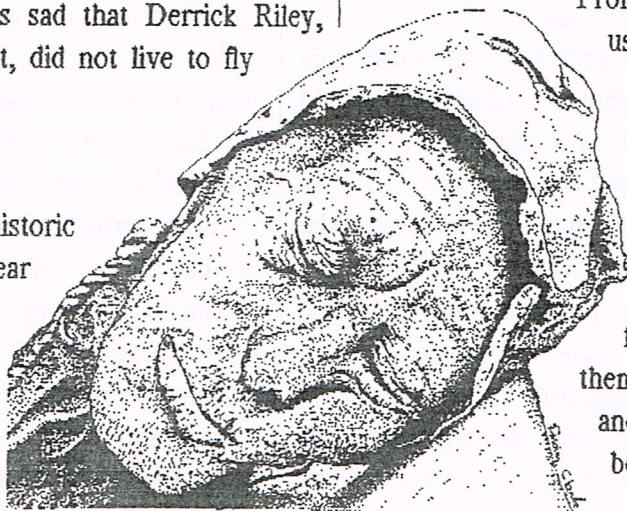
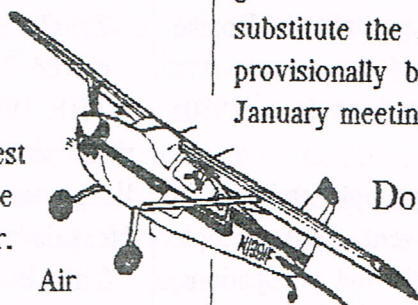
beneath our rivers and wetlands, as revealed at Wood Hall in the moat.

Professor Brothwell's Lecture.

Most members will be aware that Professor Brothwell was unable to fulfill his engagement to speak to the Society on October 20th. Fortunately, he was able to give us over a weeks notice, and we were able to substitute the January speaker. Professor Brothwell is provisionally booked in place of Mr Houlder for the January meeting. His subject is unchanged.

Domesday Pontefract, October 20th.

At short notice Mr Houlder delivered his lecture under the above title in place of Professor Brothwell. Rather than just use the lecture scheduled for January, the speaker elected to talk about the excavations in the Booths during the 1980s, illustrating the work with his slides. This was the first time, in fact, that the participants from the Society were able to see themselves at work on that coldest and wettest site. In addition, and because of the time that has passed, the speaker was able to use graphs to illustrate the mortality in Dark Age Pontefract.



Tollund Man, a reminder of Professor Brothwell's lecture.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: THE BADSWORTH SITE.

A short report on this important excavation appeared in our last issue. The current season of excavations will begin in January, timed to take place at the least inconvenience to the farmer. The aim of the current season will be to prove or disprove the existence of an outer bank to the circular earthwork.

The 1994-5 season was reported upon at the last CBA

Yorkshire and Humber Side Symposium in Leeds. Much interest was shown by the gathered archaeologists, though none could identify the 'Neolithic snooker-cue chalk.' Even Terry Manby confessed himself puzzled by it. Any identification will be reported upon here. Meanwhile, volunteer diggers please give your details to a member of Committee.

BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AWARDS

1994,

by Janet McNaught.

The bi-annual awards ceremony was moved from the City of London for the first time since its inauguration, and was conducted in the Tempest Anderson Hall of the Yorkshire Museum, York. Master of Ceremonies was David Breeze (Historic Scotland and specialist in Roman history and archaeology), presenter of the awards was Lord Montague of Beaulieu, who arrived in a 1930s open-topped Bentley for the occasion.

Upwards of one hundred and fifty people gathered in the auditorium for this prestigious event. These people came from many different backgrounds and occupations, as this was not just a back-slapping exercise for archaeology. Seventeen main awards were to be presented, and many certificates of merit.

To set the scene, we were seated in an auditorium facing a raised dais where recipients of awards would stand to receive the same and have photographs taken. At the back of this area a full sized screen was set up to show a slide of each project as the reason behind the award was stated and the prize presented.

There was an array of cups, plaques, glass-ware and sponsorship cheques.

We were there as the nominators of *The Counting House*, known to us as **Swales Yard**, which had won the *Ironbridge Award* for the adaption and re-use of an historic building. Not only had we entered this competition, we had also entered the *Pitt Rivers Award* competition, for a project of a voluntary nature using archaeological techniques, and *The Medieval Book Award*, for which we were highly commended. We did not win an award, mainly due to the stiff academic competition. This was not to say that we were also-rans. Twenty six books were submitted and we reached the final twelve. Bob Evison has a congratulatory letter addressed to the Society from the judging panel.

One could feel the tension rise as would-be winners got closer to their part in the proceedings. Eminent archaeologists ie Patrick Ottoway (book prize), Tim Taylor (Time Team) the Education Award, then the

amateurs who reported significant finds in the course of their work:

- 1) The gravel digger from Scunthorpe who uncovered a complete set of Bronze Age tools,
- 2) The farmer from Gwent for the discovery of a carved Roman stone.

THE WOODHALL MOATED MANOR team were there as runners up in two sponsorship awards, *The Wedgewood Award* and *The Virgin Award*. "Congratulations! Next time we hope to see you win."

Then it was us! Malcolm Lister and his sons collected the *Ironbridge Award*, a cast iron plaque almost three feet in length, with, in relief upon it the building's name, the specific award, and year of presentation.

We the Society, in nominating the building can be justly proud of bringing the award to Pontefract. This is the first time since the inauguration of the award in 1971 that it has not gone to a civic building.

The Chairman of the Ironbridge Museum was fulsome in his praise of our surveying project and book production, having been to Pontefract, visited the museum and then inspected Swales Yard's exterior and interior, before making his final judgement.

I am sorry that more of us were not able to attend but a Wednesday afternoon at short notice is not a very convenient time for the majority of people.

The reception afterwards to which we were all invited was preceded by an invitation to view The Middle Jewel and Ring, then to food and drink. We were able to speak to many archaeologists of different disciplines, amateurs like ourselves, and sponsors of the awards. People moved freely about introducing themselves, wanting to know how?, where? and why?, we can be present, and then usually expounded their personal theories on their own favoured project.

It is to be hoped that this is only our first entry into these awards, as there are many on-going and future projects worthy of the same depth of research and reporting as Swales Yard.

A POST-MEDIEVAL INTAGLIO FROM FENWICK, SOUTH YORKSHIRE.

by Simon J N Tomson, Michael A Holdsworth, and Stephen Caswell.

On a visit to Fenwick moated site, NGR SE 41/51, 582152, in the Doncaster Metropolitan District of South Yorkshire in March 1993 an Intaglio or Engraved Gemstone was found in the ploughsoil, 10 metres south-east of the moat.

The gem is of a pale rather milky Chalcedony, oval in shape with a flat upper surface into which the design has been cut; the underside is slightly convex. The gem is 15 mm long, 13 mm wide and is 2.5 mm thick. There is a slightly ground bevel around the upper edge and a 45 degree bevel around the lower edge.

The design cut into the gem is of a heart set upright on a grassy horizontal surface. The heart has six flames issuing from its upper surface. The design is not dissimilar to the logo of the National Blood Transfusion Service.

According to Dr Martin Henig the gem is probably of 17th century date. It is considered almost certain that the gem was set into a ring bezel for use as a seal. Dr Henig feels the device may be an IMPRESA.

The significance of the Burning Heart motif is problematic. Such designs are found on Post-Medieval jewellery as tokens of affection eg gimmel rings or devotional gifts; another possibility is that it may have some sort of armorial significance, although none can be found in the local heraldry. The fourth possibility is that it had a religious significance. Saints Gertrude, Mary Alacoque, John Endes, Augustine of Hippo and Teresa of Avila have all been associated with sacred or flaming hearts.

Of all of them St Teresa of Avila, a 16th century Spanish Carmelite nun and catholic mystic, is perhaps

the most likely; she claimed to have been visited by an angel who pierced her heart with a flaming spear. An account of her life appeared in English in 1623 entitled "The Burning Heart; The Life of The Glorious Saint Teresa". St Teresa founded an austere sect of Carmelite nuns (Descalced Carmelite) who wore only sandals on their feet - perhaps the intaglio design may be an allegory - the heart set on grassy ground - uncushioned from the blows of life.

Whatever the significance of the design, how and why this intriguing object came to lose its ring and come to rest in a South Yorkshire field close to a medieval moated site with possible Templar connections remains a mystery.

The authors of this report wish to acknowledge the contributions made by Dr M Henig and Miss G Seidmann of the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, Dr Noel Fojout of Scottish Historic Buildings and Monuments, Canon S Hind of St Martin's in Womersley, the Guestmaster of Hazlewood Castle Carmelite retreat, Mrs J McNaught and Mr P McNaught of P.D.A.S. and the owner of the site Mr Duckett of Went Farm, Fenwick in Askern for the permission to enter the land and in whose possession the gem now rests.

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THE WOOD HALL MOATED MANOR PROJECT

INTERIM REPORT ON THE 1995 EXCAVATIONS.

The Wood Hall Moated Manor Project, sponsored by National Power and undertaken by North Yorkshire County Council, is now in its eighth year. The Project aims to undertake the total excavation of the moated site known as Wood Hall, Womersley (SE536206) in advance of its destruction by the Gale Common Ash Disposal Facility; to survey and study in detail the landscape immediately surrounding it; to put it into its national and regional context by a study of its hinterland, focused on the parish of Womersley.

Excavations in 1995 have concentrated mainly on Area 20, investigating primarily the formal gardens of the Tudor period at Wood Hall, and underlying earlier features. Excavation in the moat was this year limited to a small area at the eastern side of the entrance. Work in Areas 14 and 26 concentrated on identifying the evidence for late medieval and early post-medieval horticulture within the moated platform. In addition, limited trial work (Area 27) was undertaken with the aid of a mechanical excavator at the east side of the platform, in the twentieth century orchard.

AREA 20.

The Moat. The very hot, dry conditions at the beginning of the summer led to the decision not to undertake further excavation work in the moat, for fear that pumping the moat dry would badly affect the remaining bridge timbers. In the event, the moat dried out naturally, and excavation was undertaken at the eastern side of the bridge. This area has now been excavated to moat bottom, and the complete sequence of fills exposed and recorded in section.

The eastern gatehouse tower was constructed on an offset stone plinth which rested directly on the clean clay of the moat bed. This indicates that all the pre-gatehouse fills were removed from this area of the moat prior to the construction work. All the existing fills close to the bridge can therefore be dated post-1493 (the dendrochronological date for the gatehouse

construction) and pre-c1700, the approximate date for the causeway construction, which effectively sealed the bridge sequence.

Environmental samples, (animal, plant and insect remains) from the moat fills have been assessed by scientists from the University of Sheffield ARCUS, by courtesy of a grant from the British Academy. The reported exceptional preservation of biological material and some unexpected results: peacock bones, seeds from imported fruits, unusual plants and an absence of cereal remains. Funding will now be sought to undertake a full analysis of this material, in order to understand as much as possible about landscape, crops and animal husbandry at Wood Hall.

Scientists at the Dendrochronological Laboratories Sheffield University have studied samples of timber timbers from Bridges Z and A (the earlier two) in order to date them from the tree-ring sequence. One date was obtained from Bridge A - a felling-date of 1457/8. The trees used in Bridge Z, the earliest bridge, had such an unusual growth pattern, with wide-spaced rings, that it proved impossible to date them. This work was also funded by a grant from the British Academy.

The excavations in the moat have confirmed that the eastern dyke flanking Cow Lane connects directly into the moat. This demonstrates that the moat formed an integral part of the medieval land drainage system. The dyke at the west side of Cow Lane, found to be earlier than the moat during the 1993 season of excavation, has this year been traced running approximately north/south across the moated platform. It appears to have been constructed by digging closely-spaced individual pits and then breaking through the 'walls' between them. The ditch, which possibly represents an early medieval land division, was back-filled with material including animal bone and pottery dating to the mid/late twelfth century.

The Gardens. During the sixteenth century

almost the whole of Area 20 was laid down as gardens. At the north of the area were a number of linear 'bedding' trenches, aligned north/south, east/west, and northwest/southeast. These were flanked to the south by a wall, aligned east/west. To the south of this, and apparently originally extending to the edge of the moat, was an area of dense organic soil which was probably the base of a lawn. It contained quantities of medieval finds, including demolition material from earlier buildings. A large area of the lawn soil was removed or damaged by the insertion of the late eighteenth century farm buildings; its true extent may never be known.

Earlier Features. Within the garden area, though probably pre-dating it, lay a large circular pit, 3.3m in diameter by 1.3m deep. The pit had been lined with timber stakes and clay, and may have been a tank or cistern for holding water. It contained a number of wooden fragments, debris from the conversion of tree-logs to usable timber. It had also been used as a dump for brash from clearance or pruning of shrubs - immediately identifiable species included rose, holly, birch, and hawthorn or blackthorn. Artefacts found in the pit included a tooled leather knife scabbard with a pattern of waves and fishes, a brass mirror case, and two fine lathe-turned wooden bowls.

AREA 26.

Work has continued on the medieval field furrows first identified in 1994. These are much narrower than conventional plough-formed ridge-and-furrow, as if spade-dug to give a similar corduroy effect. It is suggested that they were used to grow horticultural crops - eg peas and beans, which were a staple of the medieval diet.

AREA 14.

Area 14, in the north-east corner of the platform, has been extended in an attempt to define the full extent of the 17th/18th century bedding trenches. Unlike the earlier beds, these east/west linear trenches were dug out of the natural sand and back-filled with imported soil, which contained burnt limestone and brick fragments. These very different beds may represent a kitchen garden, or even personal allotment plots, tucked away behind the decaying manor complex.

AREA 27.

One of the problems at Wood Hall has been that seven years of excavations have not yet revealed the manor house and its associated buildings. In the spring of 1995 a trial area (Area 27) was opened in the modern orchard on the east side of the moated platform, with the intention of assessing what damage the tree roots had caused to the archaeology, and locating the remains of any buildings that may once have been in the area.

The removal of approximately 0.5m of topsoil by mechanical excavator revealed two robbed-out walls, at right angles to each other, forming part of a building on a north/south axis. Both walls had been removed to foundation level in order to re-use the good building stone, and the 'robs' back-filled with rubble debris. This included fragments of wall-plaster, indicating a high status building.

Finds associated with the robbing are of eighteenth century date, suggesting that the building was 'quarried' as a source of stone for the new 'model farm' complex begun at Wood Hall in the 1760s. Material used in the construction of the eighteenth century farmhouse, barns, and well-lining, which had been robbed from a late medieval building, tends to confirm this; re-used fragments included a fireplace architrave, window tracery, a window voussoir, a threshold stone and door-pivot block, pillar fragments and bonded masonry.

In 1996 Area 27 will be extended in an attempt to locate the whole of the supposed manorial building complex, which will then be excavated.

1995 has been a very successful excavation season, during which a number of problems have been resolved. It is now possible broadly to relate the archaeology to the historical sequence at Wood Hall, which as been derived from documentary sources.

In the early twelfth century the manor of Womersley was held by Otes de Tilley, and it was presumably under his orders that Cow Lane was pushed one mile north of the village to the site now known as Wood Hall, where a small dwelling site (Area 21) was established as the surrounding land was cleared and drained.

In 1183 Womersley changed hands, when de Tilley's heiress was married into the de Newmarch family, who held extensive lands around Askern and Doncaster. Shortly after this, in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, a moat was dug at Wood Hall and a small manor established.

In 1403 the last male de Newmarch died at the battle of Shrewsbury, and his heiress Elizabeth married John Neville, a member of the rich and powerful Neville family whose members included the Earl of Warwick. They had extensive land-holdings in the north east and midlands. During the Neville ownership, a new bridge, Bridge A, was built at Wood Hall (1457/8). Evidence from the finds suggests that at this time cattle were the main 'crop' at Wood Hall - many cattle bones have been recovered, and many pottery vessels that could have been used in dairying. Environmental evidence from the moat indicates that grain was not grown in the area at this time.

In 1482 John Neville died, having outlived his de Newmarch wife. Wood Hall became the property of his daughter, Joan, and through her of her husband Sir William Gascoigne. The Gascoignes quickly changed the status of Wood Hall. They demolished some of the buildings, and laid out the centre of the moated platform with formal gardens and a large lawn, complete with peacocks! In 1493 oak trees were felled to make the drawbridge to go with the brand new gatehouse. Wood hall continued to be used for leisure and pleasure until the early seventeenth century, when the collapse of the gatehouse signalled the end of this phase of the site's history.

From 1603 Wood Hall passed through the hands of the Stanley, Jackson, and Twistleton families before becoming the property of the Harveys (later Harvey Hawke) and Parsons. It remained as the chief farm of the Womersley Estate until it was sold in 1930.

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