

THE PONTEFRACT AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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NEW HALL EMERGES.

The exposing of New Hall's foundations by the West Yorkshire Archaeology Service

(the Unit!) this summer brought memories flooding back to a few of our older members.

New Hall was always called The Old Hall by real Pomfretians. It had been built in the sixteenth century out of the stones of the recently-dissolved St John's Priory, and was one of the first of the Elizabethan Great Houses.

Damaged in the Civil War, and again when the lead was removed from the roof during the Luddite riots of the early nineteenth century, the Hall was empty for

much of its History. (See *The New Hall*, by E Houlder and K Stubbs, *P.A.S. ANNUAL*

JOURNAL AND

REPORT,

1963, pp 6-9

for a useful

summary of

its history

and layout)

When

the Editor

was young,

the Hall

was already

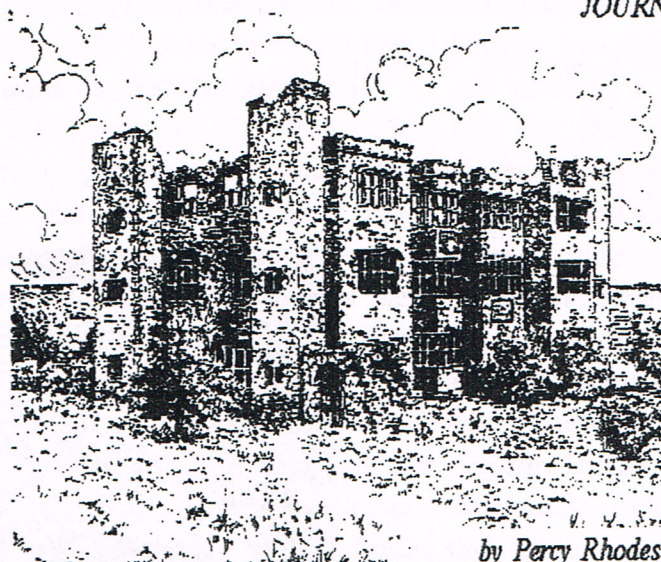
a dangerous

ruin at the

rear of the Co-

op farm, Nevison. In 1959 a small group of members consisting of the Editor, Kevin Stubbs, and Terence Carney obtained permission to enter the ruins and take some monochrome photographs. Sadly, the pictures and negatives have long since

continued on page 2....



by Percy Rhodes

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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A sunny early October day in 1959. New Hall viewed across the orchard.

disappeared. However, on obtaining his first colour film that autumn, the Editor used one of his first ever colour frames to take a picture of the hall across the orchard from the position of the present Solo garage. A year later, with another colour film loaded, we visited the hall again. Luckily more care was taken to keep the colour pictures safe, and all of them still survive.

Amongst the surviving mental images of the interior are the Talbot Dogs, plaster animals on the wall of the first floor ballroom, and re-used mullions in the cellars. Unfortunately, the colour films of the 1950s were not very sensitive to light, so interior shots required disposable flashbulbs which, at 10c each added considerably to the cost of the record.

A very few years later the Hall was demolished because it was unsafe. Its stones now form the sub-base of the Al(M). The substantial foundations still survive, but for how much longer?

WELL WELL WELL, IS IT A WELL?

The discovery by Council workmen during April of a deep hole in Swales Yard right outside *The Counting House* led to a hurried investigation by Museum staff and a couple of members who were on the spot. A considerable amount of post-medieval pottery was recovered, and some photographs were taken. Your Editor was unable to attend until after the hole had been filled and capped. However, the appended photograph shows at least four input drains, each nicely stratified. From this it seems clear that the hole was a later cess-pit.

Such discoveries are not uncommon in Pontefract, or indeed in any old town. The holes are often mistaken for wells, but this origin seems unlikely when it is considered that most of the town stands on magnesian limestone, a yellow sedimentary rock which looks like a sandstone to the uninitiated.

The hole in question (right), showing the inputs clearly.



THE A(ARCHAEOLOGICAL) R(ESOURCE) C(ENTRE).

by Janet McNaught.

November last year, I stepped inside the ARC, for the first time in five years. No hands-on archaeology in sight, the first of two winter special events were about to begin.

WINTER LIGHTS, This theme is woven around Advent, Dewali and Hanukkah, each a religious festival with a great emphasis on light.

Advent, with each of the four Sundays preceding Christmas marked by the lighting of a candle which will burn until Christmas day is celebrated.

Dewali, which tells of the moguls' sons and the ten armed deities involved in a fight between good and evil, and acted out using a shadow theatre with narrator.

Hanukkah, the Jewish rededication of the temple in Jerusalem, after the Jewish people rise up under the leadership of the Maccabees, and retake their lands from the Syrians, which is celebrated by the lighting of a special candelabra, rather than the menorah, this has an extra arm (candle holder) to represent the first light to burn within the temple.

Between Advent and Dewali, the children and adults, use lenses, fluorescent screens, concave and convex mirrors and fibre optics to find out how they interact with light and or heat. Followed by the "back to front glasses," which we were expected to wear to follow footsteps around a pillar, the only trouble being that your right foot appeared to need placing where the left one should be. This provided many laughs even though very few people succeeded. Primary colour light beams from which could be produced the colours of the rainbow or white light, lazer-lights which could be beamed back and forward by strategic placing of mirrors to allow the light to be reflected along corridors and back and forth to travel from one end of a box to the other end. Not forgetting the pin hole cameras which produced an upside down image, which many people found difficult at first to come to grips with, until it was

pointed out that once developed you just turned the picture the other way up.

STRUCTURES AND FORCES

This was the real reason for my initial visit to the ARC. We as a society, had been asked if we could mount an exhibition of the work involved in the production of the Swales Yard survey and book, which had come to the notice of the ARC in the autumn of 1994 when the book won a recommendation in the medieval book section of the British Archaeological Awards and the building won the Ironbridge award for the conservation and reuse of a medieval building. This was the first time that the prize had not been awarded to a civic building.

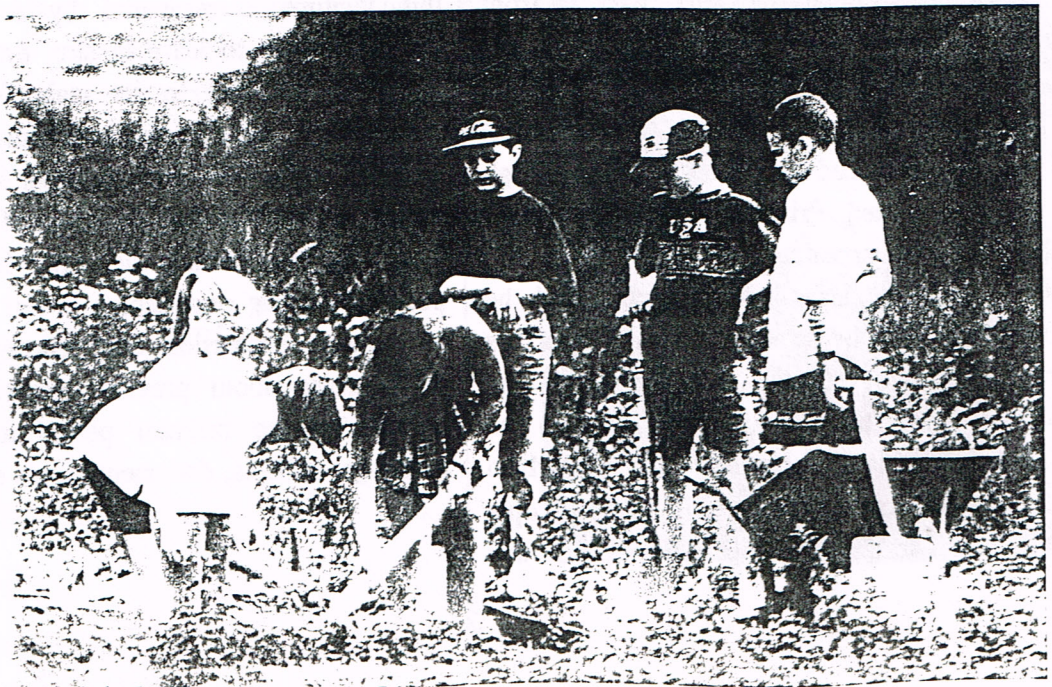
The request was to mount an exhibition of the survey, using drawings and photographs with as little wording as possible, as these had to be easily understood by an 8 year old, yet not be too simple as not to merit a glance by the adult visitors. We augmented the display with several large replica joints, as shown in exploded diagrams in the book, which could be assembled and disassembled by little hands with ease. The success of this venture is measured by a request from Dr. (BONE) Jones, to leave in situ, even though the ARC has now returned to its main feature of hands-on archaeology. So Roman sandal-making, spinning and weaving, along with such delights as soil sampling and pottery recognition, are the order of the day.

The message which the ARC is giving the young people by using our display is not to see archaeology as being a profession only encompassing excavation, but learning about previous generations through any remains of the relevant period in history, be they buildings, artifacts, documents tools etc.

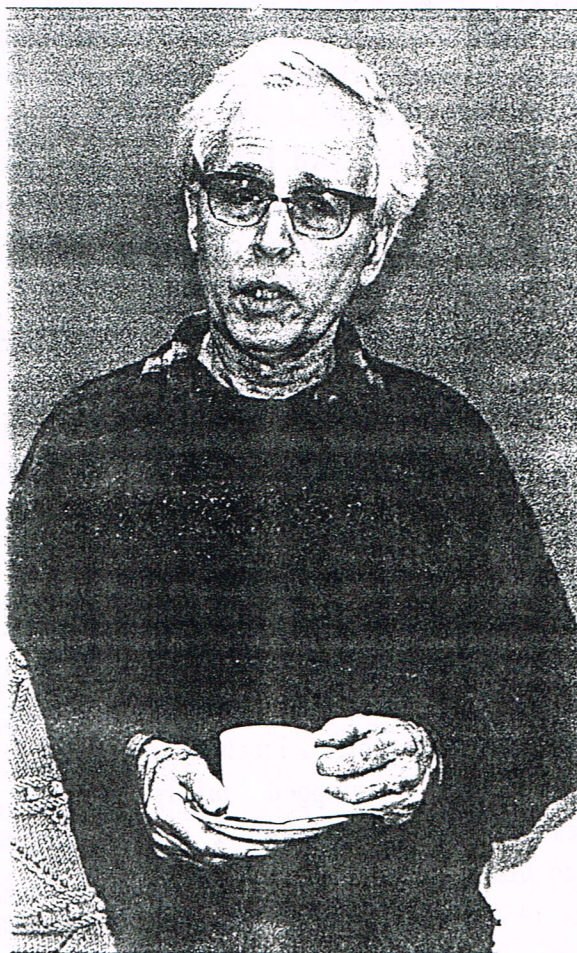
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NOTES, NEWS AND PICTURES.

Our Pontefract branch of The Young Archaeologists' Club is going from strength to strength, chiefly owing to efforts of Past Secretary Jennie Barker, pictured here at Wood Hall in August with a group of the stalwart older As. The lower picture shows some of the younger Y.As. with Amanda Asquith, a member of the Wood Hall s (demonstrating the use of the pick).



Edward (Ed) Archer, one of the stalwart Juniors of the 1950s and 60s, payed a quick visit to Pontefract on June 1st. Ed lives in Lanark, Scotland, and is an important figure in regional archaeology, being a Council Member of the C.I.A. After lunch in the *Counting House* with the Editor he joined other members of the YAS party that he was with to visit the Hermitage, where he also met Bill Booth, the only other current member who remembered him!



Professor Brothwell who delivered the Don Lodge Memorial Lecture to the Society on January 19th.

WHEELING AROUND TYNEDALE

by Bill Houlder.

After a previous tour had been cancelled out from under me I booked into Acomb youth hostel in Tynedale for four mid-week nights. Arriving early on a showery day I stashed my panniers in the hostel's washroom (which functions as a foul weather shelter for early arrivals) and headed up to the Military Road. Shortly after I stopped by the information board at Heavenfield the rain resumed, so I took shelter in St Oswald's Church. This was built in the eighteenth century, the latest in a succession since the original 630s AD structure built in thanks for the victory here. As the rain eased, I remounted my mountain bike and enjoyed an exhilarating descent of Brunton Bank to join the A-road back to Acomb.

Next day the sun came out, and knowing the fickleness of local weather I headed first for the Chesters Bridge Abutment. Being on a bike is great on that path from Chollerford Bridge, but mind the step three quarters of the way along! After shooting several pics of the remains, and some of Chesters Bath House across the river, I went to Chesters for elevenses and a toilet stop. If you are going to this sort of historical area you really need to be, as I am, a member of English Heritage, or the National Trust, or both; then cafes and toilets are readily to hand at most supervised sites.

From here, a series of turns took me onto the Stanegate at Fourstones, and up and over to pass Chesterholm to Twice Brewed information Centre. This place has expanded considerably since I last came twenty-odd years back; still it provided a shelter from the strong westerly whilst I lunched, and toilets. On the Military Road I stopped briefly at over-busy Housesteads. At Carrawburgh I avoided Coventina's Well so that I couldn't be followed there by the steady stream of ooh and aah-ers to the Mithraeum. In contrast, Limestone corner was deserted. Tea at Chesters effectively ended the day's tour.

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A coolish day allowed me to puff off to the birthplace of Wylam Dilly's creator beside a former colliery tramway. Neither George (Stephenson) or the N.T. were at home so I cut across the river. Disney would love Prudhoe Castle's entrance; it looks just like a fairytale castle should. This is no fantasy fort though, for in the troubled early medieval period it held Scots armies at bay. Returning towards Corbridge I stopped in Bywell village to try to photograph the castle which is in private grounds and difficult to get an angle on. After doing some shopping in Corbridge I struggled to Aydon Castle on the bridleway. While Prudhoe is a castle converted to a mansion, Aydon is a mansion adapted to the needs of defence that the troubles of medieval Northumbria made necessary.

My final day took me back to Chesters by a different route to the Military Road and Chollerford Bridge. Day one's route was re-traced until a left took me towards the South Tyne by Warden Church. Did they have trouble with resurrectionists here? Three 1860s graves have wrought iron grills over them. (*Ed. too late for this!*) A little lane betwixt the Tyne and Britain's oldest coast to coast railway took me to Hexham, which seems to have lost its character in a bid to attract tourist dosh. The ultimate experience of my mini-tour was an audio tour of Corbridge Roman site. They've also done up the site museum brilliantly, with a replica of the tombstone in Hexham Abbey.

If you are on a tight budget and want to visit historic sites around the world you could do worse than join the YHA. Acomb Hostel is one of the smallest and cheapest in the network, which covers everything from stable-blocks (Acomb) to grand mansions. Being a small rural place almost everything the hostel offers is outside from the way to bed to the toilets, shower, kitchen and dining/common room. At less than £6 per night do not expect silver service, unless you do it yourself, for it is a self-catering place. However, there is an excellent pub up the road.

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Prudhoe Castle, photographed by Bill Houlder.



THE CHINA TRIP - NOVEMBER 1995

by Barbara Stewart.

At 5.30pm on the 9 November our plane left the runway for the nine and a half hour flight to Beijing.

DAY 2 Friday

The Friendship Hotel was very comfortable and well equipped in every way. It is a large complex which was built originally to house the thousands of Russian technicians who gave aid to China in the early 1950's and had obviously been completely re-modelled since those days.

DAY 3 Saturday

After breakfast we set out in the coach for a tour of the Forbidden City. Tiananmen Square, which is situated in the centre of Beijing, is named after the Tiananmen Gate, which means 'Gate of Heavenly Peace'.

The area covered by the Forbidden City comprises about two hundred and fifty acres.

After lunch we drove to the Red Walls and walked for what seemed miles along the wide avenues between the audience chambers and mini palaces and sacrificial grounds. The sun shone brilliantly and bare arms were the order of the day. After an early evening meal the group was taken to a theatre to watch a performance of Chinese Opera.

DAY 4 Sunday

We left the hotel to drive the forty miles to the Great Wall stopping on the way to visit a cloisonné factory where we watched skilled workers creating beautiful objects. In the factory shop we purchased souvenirs before continuing our journey to the Ming Tombs. First we visited a display of artefacts retrieved from the tombs, amongst them wonderful silk robes and gem-encrusted crowns of intricate design. Coins and jewellery, furniture and tools were just some of the objects on display. After a ten minute drive we arrived at the Sacred Road which is long and straight and lined on each side with large stone statues of court officials, generals and royal animals such as horses, elephants, camels, lions and mythical beasts. A drive of thirty minutes took us through black rocky mountainous territory to the section of the Great Wall at the famous pass known as Ba Da Ling. Building of the wall commenced during the fifth century B.C. and was a tremendous achievement by any standard.

DAY 5 Monday

Up at 5am for an early start from Beijing railway station to Chengde where we were to stay for two

nights. It was very sunny but the distance was shrouded in mist, as it was the whole time we were in China. At 2.30pm we left the Yun Shan hotel for a Visit to the Imperial Summer Villa where we visited both the palace and the scenic areas.

DAY 6 Tuesday

At 9.0am we visited a paper cutting shop which was next to our hotel. The delicate cutouts were executed in bright colours and were a popular purchase for gifts. We visited two of the famous 'Outer Temples'. The Putuo Temple which is a replica of a Tibetan temple and the only working Buddhist temple in Northern China, is funded by the Chinese Government, all the lamas are Tibetan.

DAY 7 Wednesday

We made an early start for the four hour coach drive to Beijing Airport followed by a one and a half hour flight to Xian. Xian is in Shaanxi Province and is known as the bread basket of China. There are over eight hundred ancient tombs from the Han and Tang dynasties in this area.

DAY 8 Thursday

We left the hotel at 8.30am to visit the prehistoric village of Ban Po. The small museum is very well appointed and houses some of the ten thousand artefacts which were excavated from the site which was discovered in 1953. The excavated village dates back to the Neolithic Age, some six thousand years ago. In the museum shop we bought coloured tiles and terracotta figures. From Ban Po we went on to the Hua Qing Springs. The mist from the lake which was fed by the hot springs rose delicately in

the cold morning air creating a hazy effect over the brightly coloured palace buildings. After lunch we visited the site of the Terracotta Army. The Exhibition Centre is very modern and beautifully appointed. First we were shown a short film in a circular cinema. From the cinema we visited the excavation itself. Rows of lifesize warriors each with a different facial expression and stance. The mausoleum was built for the first Qin emperor in two hundred B.C. At least six thousand life-size terracotta warriors were buried each representing individuals in the Imperial Guard. Weapons, horses, chariots and other objects were faithfully reproduced. After dinner at the Tang Dynasty Theatre Restaurant we watched a very colourful operatic show in the Theatre.

DAY 9 Friday

At 8.0 am we left our hotel for a short visit to the Wild Goose Pagoda where we watched people practicing their Tai Qi exercises. Our next call was to a Jade Factory where we saw exquisite objects being made. Animals, figures, flower arrangements and many other lovely things were on display.

DAY 10 Saturday

A two hour drive took us to the Summer Palace with its impressive three story stage theatre. From there we made our way to the Beijing Zoo to see the pandas followed by a visit to the Silk Road and the Friendship Store.

DAY 11 Sunday

Breakfast at 7.30am then en route to Beijing airport for the long flight home.

NEW DIRECTIONS IN LOCAL HISTORY,

at NEW COLLEGE, Pontefract, on Saturday 30th November

1996, from 9-30 am until 3-30 pm.

A full day with Eric Houlder, leading local archaeologist as he explores the ways in which our knowledge of local history has been altered or amended by archaeological discoveries. As usual his topics will be superbly illustrated.

Further details from Chris. Embling, NEW COLLEGE, Park Lane, Pontefract.

