

THE PONTEFRACT AND DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 36, SPRING/SUMMER 1998



A Keel in Leeds Basin, about 1890. This old engraving shows a keel, with lee-boards removed and mainsail furled, being unloaded. This particular vessel must have passed the site being currently investigated (see inside for further information.)

THE 1998 AGM.

The forty-first AGM was held in the Micklegate Methodist Church Hall on Friday 17th of April. Dr Peter Addyman, Director of the York Archaeological Trust, was confirmed in office as President, with Mr W Booth, Founder Member, as Vice-President. The existing Committee members were returned to office unanimously, and two new committee members elected. These were Simon Tomson, Excavation Director of the Wood Hall Project, and Dan Ferguson, also of the Wood Hall Project.

The Treasurer, Peter Lockett, after explaining various points on the balance sheet, stated that the subscription would remain fixed for yet another year. This was very well received.

The Chairman, Bob Evison, announced that Field Director Eric Houlder had recently been elected Chairman of CBA Yorkshire. He commented that with this election, and last year's election of Peter

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

P
O
N
T
E
F
R
A
C
T
A
R
C
H
A
E
O
L
O
G
I
C
A
L
S
O
C
I
E
T
Y

1998 AGM continued.....

Addyman to the Presidency, the P&DAS now had two people in high places in regional (and national, in the case of Dr Addyman) archaeology.

The Field Director gave a brief verbal resume of progress on the St Aidan's riverboat excavation at Allerton Bywater, and asked for further volunteers.

Chairman Bob outlined the forthcoming programme of expeditions, outings, and lectures.

Finally, Steve Moorhouse, now an independent archaeologist, gave a fascinating account of his 'total' landscape studies in the Yorkshire Dales.

oOo

JACK BIRD

We regret to announce the death, on January 6th last, of Jack Bird. Jack was a valued Committee member, and an active member of the Society.

He was born at Newfield Farm, Normanton in 1918. After education at Normanton Grammar School, he went to Leeds University in 1936 where he graduated in Law. After a difficult period during the war, in which he assisted in running the farm, Jack qualified as a Solicitor in 1948. In 1951 he became interested in politics, standing for Parliament in 1955. Unfortunately, as a Conservative this came to nothing. However, he was a local councillor for many years.

Both before and after retirement, Jack was an active and prominent member of numerous local clubs

and societies. He was the sort of person who felt that as a member he had an obligation to take part, and to offer the use of his talents. He was involved with the Normanton Arts, Normanton Operatic, the Freemasons, Wakefield Historical, and of course, this Society. The writer only worked on a dig with Jack on one occasion. He was a meticulous worker, even in old age. Truly a polymath of the old school.

Jack had a reputation (which he carefully fostered) of being 'a cantankerous old bugger.' He was, but always in the interest of 'the right thing to do' in whatever context. He will be missed.

We acknowledge with thanks the help supplied by the Revd. R.Crecy in the preparation of this appreciation.

SAINT AIDAN'S 1998 Preliminary Documentary Search

by S J Webster

The Following account is based primarily on the work of Charles Hadfield (1972 and 1973), with additional evidence provided from early OS maps. It focuses on references to the St Aidans sites and is not intended to be a potted history of the navigation in general.

In 1699 an Act of Parliament was passed allowing for work to be undertaken to make the River Aire navigable from Leeds down to Castleford and on to Weeland. This was to make river traffic possible from the Humber right up to Leeds, where formally it had only been possible to the tidal limit of the river at Knottingley. This Act fell within the first period of

canal building between 1695 and 1701.

Following an initial survey by himself and Samuel Shelton, engineer John Hadley was employed to construct the new navigation. According to Hadfield (1972) twelve masonry locks with timber floors were probably built on the river Aire, including one at Methley which was built in 1700. These locks were intended to be 58-60 feet long and 14'6" to 15' wide, with some 3'6" of water over the sills. It was noted that the river depth was likely to be less than that over the lock sills.

That the above dimensions were not always intended or achieved is suggested by the following

St Aidan's Documentary search, continued. . . .

facts. Shelton's original survey, on which the work was based, was made on the basis of fifteen ton boats. In addition, in 1700, the Leeds Canal Committee had a boat built for them at Selby which was 44 feet long by 13 feet wide, drew 2'6" of water, and carried 15 to 16 tons weight. Thus it is suggested that the 13'6" width of the presumed lock at site 2A is not out of keeping with the dimensions of this early period of canalisation. It should also be noted that the boat recorded at site 1A was 13' wide. Is it therefore one of these early eighteenth century keels, rather than a more recent nineteenth or twentieth century boat?

The first boat to use this new navigation reached Leeds on 17th November 1700. Following this, the early trade that developed was based on the transport of woolen goods, made in Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax and Bradford, which were taken downstream on small boats to Rawcliffe where they were transhipped and taken on to Hull. That coal was also carried during this period is evidenced by a number of recorded coal staites with associated tramways, including two near Methley in 1728.

The early navigation was marked by constant conflict between mill-owners and the Canal Committee over control of the water (the waterwheels often had to be stopped to allow boats through). In response, the Committee started buying out mill owners with the result that by 1774, they possessed 'a number' of the most important mills on the Aire. How the presumed mill at site 2A fared within this climate is as yet unknown; it is, however, still marked on Hadfield's map of the Navigation in 1805 (Hadfield 1972).

Increasing traffic, problems with the depth over the sills (still only 2'6" in many locks) and problems with shoaling below the locks resulted in John Smeaton being commissioned to produce plans to improve the navigation. An intended 3'6" to 14' of water was to allow craft of 30 to 45 tons to use the canal, and new cuts were proposed to by-pass trouble spots. The Bill was passed in 1774, and in 1775 William Jessop started work. The relevance of this to the current

excavations was that in 1779, Methley Cut was constructed; it was 3/8 mile long and included floodgates and a new lock to replace Methley Old Lock. A continuous towpath was also added along the length of this new navigation.

THE HUMBER KEEL

The Humber Keel was the basic trading vessel on the river from the 1790s onwards, its size depending on the waterway on which it operated. These craft could now travel all the way from Hull to Leeds (and on occasion out along the coast) with a stop at Selby to remove and store ashore the mast, sails and rigging. (Editor's Note: The leeboards were sometimes stored ashore as the lock-widths made them impossible to retain. Many Keels sailed inland, the Editor's late father recalling a trip from Knottingley, during which the mast was lowered to pass beneath bridges). In 1795 the Canal Committee is reported to have had twenty new keels built of which four were built at Methley. Were they built in the boatyard at site 2D? If so, this is the first reference to the yard, which may therefore have been built in the period 1779 to 1795, its connection to Methley Cut (visible on the 1840s OS Map) suggests that it is not earlier than that work.

Another event that may have affected the area of the site at this time was the great flood of 1795. It was reported that banks were damaged, sludge was carried on to towpaths, and new shoals were created.

Nineteenth century changes that may have had an impact on the site, centre upon the adoption of iron hulls and steam power. The first steam boat appeared on the Aire in 1813, and in 1818 an iron sloop was launched at Hunslet. The changes were such that by the 1820s the increased use of steam packets meant that the Canal Committee was selling its older sloops. Steam tugs appeared in 1831 and barge trains in 1865. Indeed, by 1855 two thirds of the Committee's own carrying mileage was steam-hauled. It should, however, be noted that even given these improvements, the last horse-drawn boat was in use until 1951.

St Aidan's Documentary Search, continued.....

Though Methley New Lock escaped the programme of widening in the 1820s, the locks from Castleford to Leeds were lengthened in the 1870s, presumably including Methley. In 1902 further widening and deepening took place, and at some point since, (Date not yet determined) new cuts were made to make the canal a single entity, distinct from the

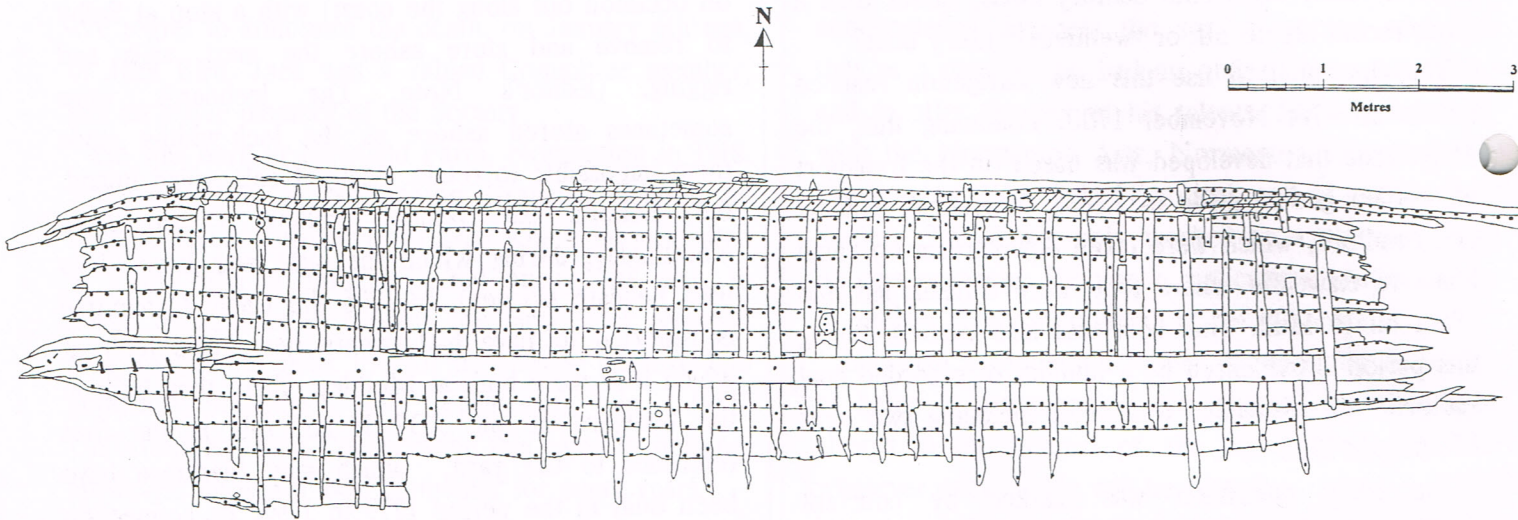
river.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Hadfield, Charles. 1972. *The Canals of Yorkshire and North East England*. Vol.1.

Hadfield, Charles. 1973. *The Canals of Yorkshire and North East England*. Vol.2.

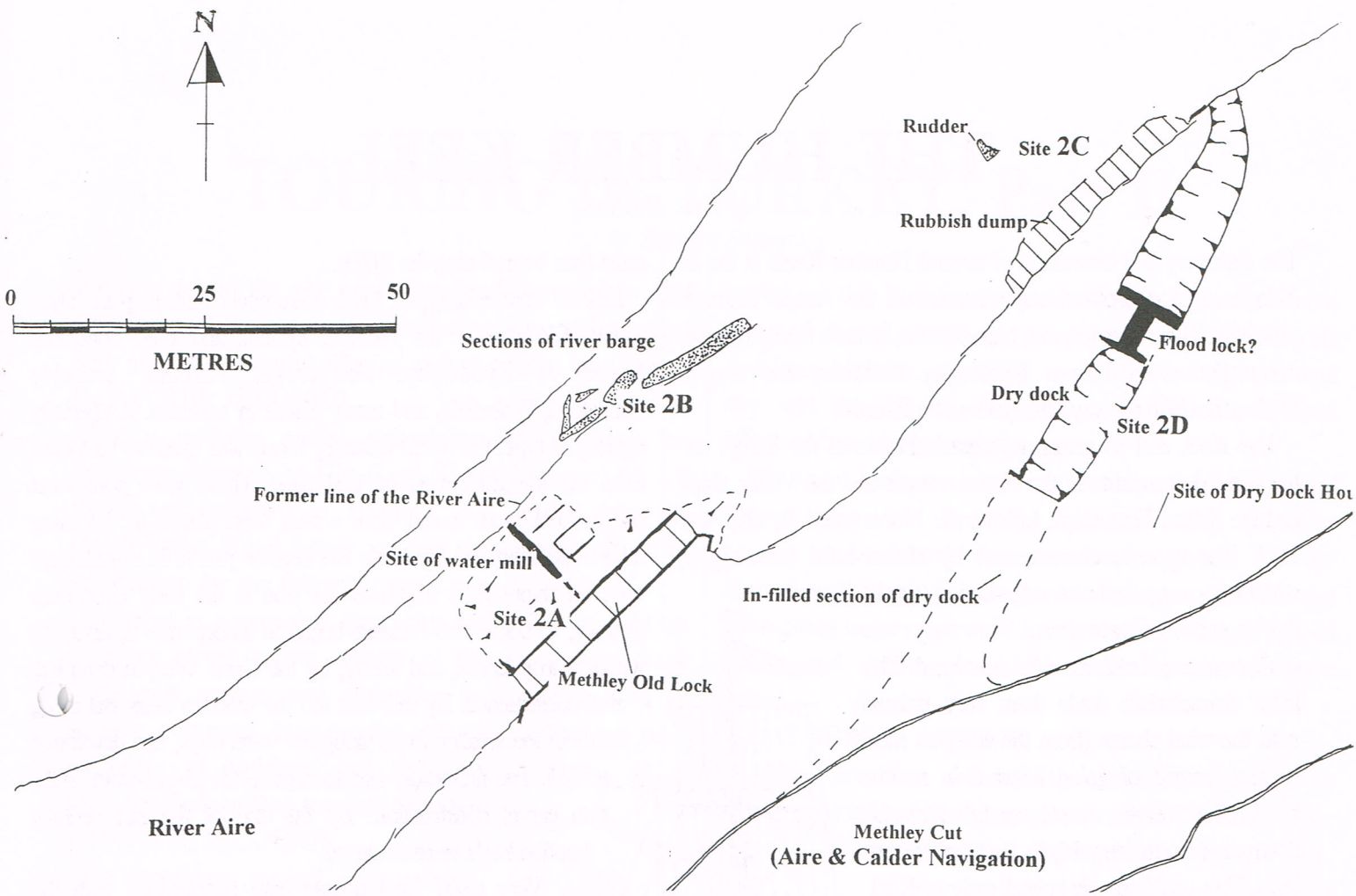
SITE 1A. PLAN OF THE VESSEL



PLANNING THE SITE 1A SHIP

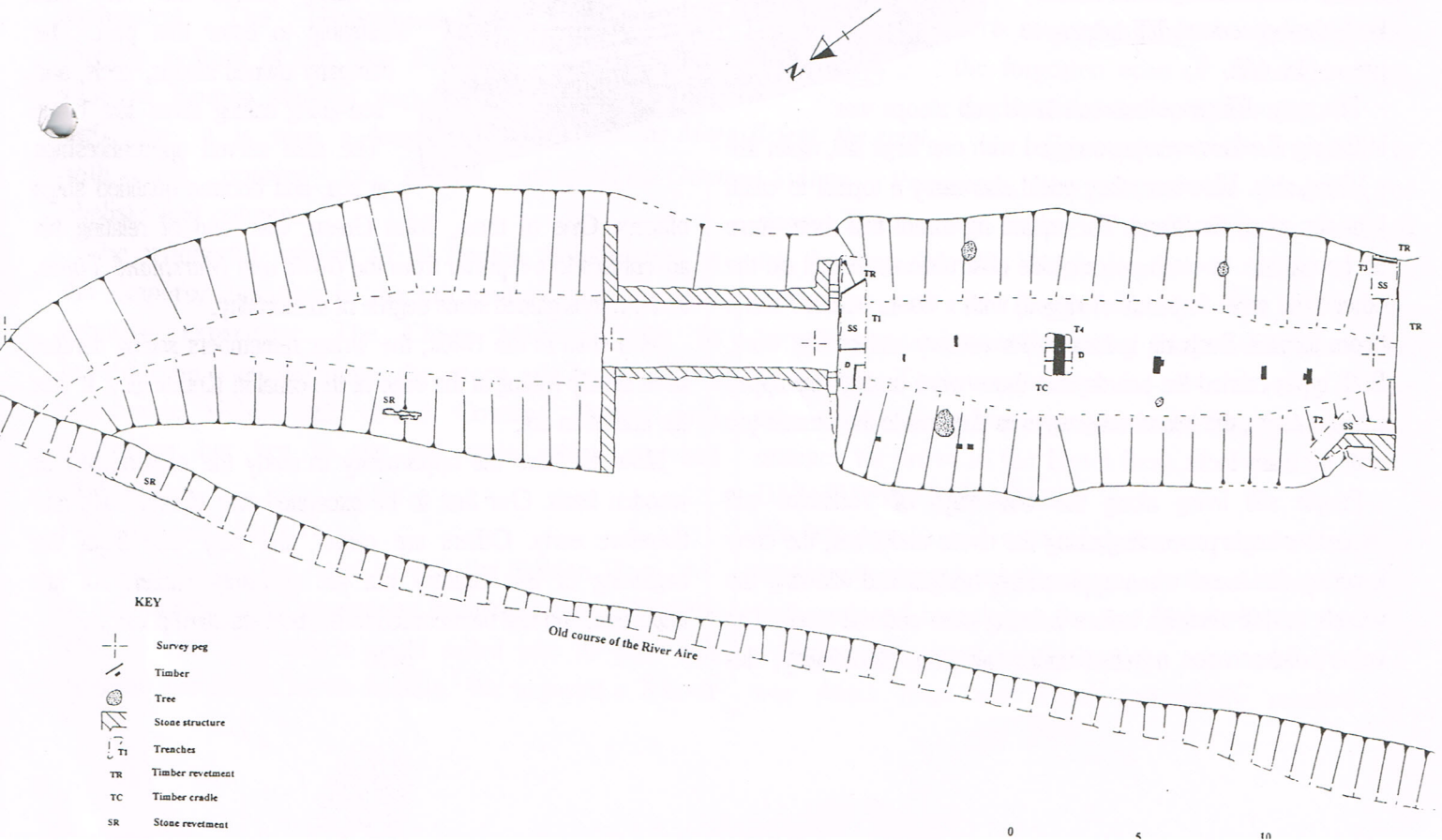
Picture, Eric Houlder LRPS, first published P&C Express, 05/02/1998










PLAN OF St AIDAN'S SITE TWO

PLAN OF SITE 2D.



KEY

-  Survey peg
-  Timber
-  Tree
-  Stone structure
-  Trenches
- TR** Timber revetment
- TC** Timber cradle
- SR** Stone revetment

THE HUMBER KEEL

by Eric Houlder.

The discovery and excavation of several Humber Keels at the St Aidan's site has aroused some interest in the vessels amongst members. This short account, based on the writer's family history, information gleaned from Knottingley historians, and several books, should in no way be considered exhaustive.

The Keel, and its estuarine/coastal sister-craft the Sloop, are the lineal descendants of the Norse vessels like the Viking ships and the Sutton Hoo ships. Indeed, the Norse word for ship was 'keel.' The type is characterised by clinker-build (overlapping strakes as opposed to edge-butted strakes) and double-ended construction. For easy use in shallow water, Keels were flat-bottomed. This latter characteristic made them very unhandy with the wind abeam (from the side), so much so that instead of going forward in such a wind, the vessel would crab sideways downwind or to leeward, to use the correct term. This problem was solved early in Keel history by the addition of 'lee-boards,' hinged vertical wooden plates which were let down on the lee or downwind side. Lee-boards were not actually flat, but had a primitive aerofoil section so that besides acting as an auxiliary keel, they generated 'lift' helping to prevent lee drift.

The only difference between keels and sloops was in the rig. Keels were square-rigged with one large sail, again like a Viking ship. However, they could also carry a topsail to catch light airs when far inland. The square rig meant that there were no booms etc. to catch on canalside obstructions. Sloops on the other hand were fore-and-aft rigged, with a boom mainsail and a boom foresail. Such rig is handier for estuary and coastal work. Both types carried lee-boards, but these were usually unshipped when entering the inland waterways as they made the vessels too wide for many locks.

People still living along the waterways of Yorkshire will remember keels proceeding along the rivers under sail, the crew lowering the masts when approaching bridges and allowing the vessels to drift through before hoisting mast and sail again. The writer's father once travelled under sail from Knottingley; this

must have been during the 1920s.

Like all traditional types, keels were never built to plan. They were made all over the Humber system, and small boatyards existed at Knottingley, Ferrybridge, Fairburn, probably Castleford, Wakefield, and many places in between. A specially developed type, the 'West Country Keel,' was made to be towed from the towpaths west of Wakefield. These were somewhat shorter, but were towed from a stub mast placed in the same relative position and fixed into the keelson just as in a traditional keel. As shipbuilders began to use iron in the early nineteenth century, so some keel builders began to incorporate it, firstly as wrought iron knees, and finally, by the Great War, in complete iron construction. By this time too the wooden keels still being made in the smaller yards along the waterways, had developed as well. The first stage was to replace the above-water sides with carvel construction. By the end of the last century wooden keels were all carvel.

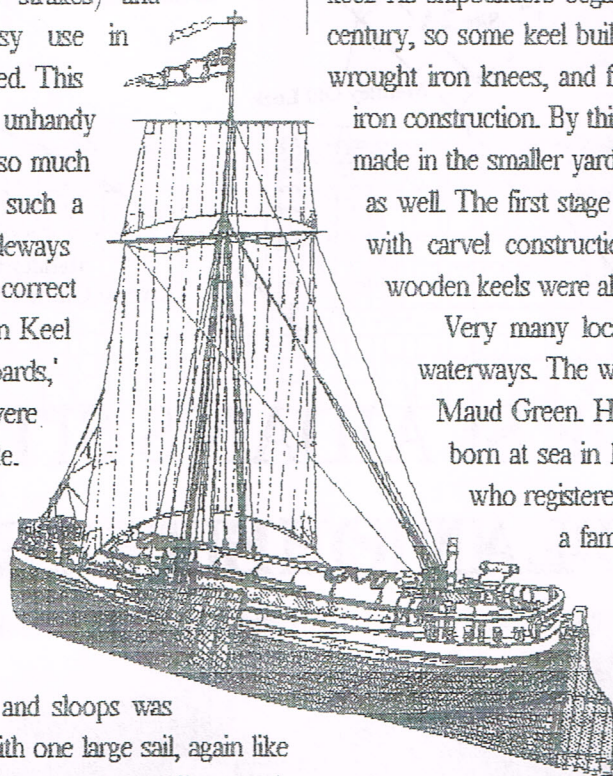
Very many local people have connections with the waterways. The writer's paternal grandmother was born Maud Green. Her father was Abner Green, who was born at sea in 1862. Green & Co. were ship owners who registered their many vessels at Goole; indeed, a family tradition asserts that a member of the family piloted the very first steamship to enter that port. The company owned sloops, keels, and sea-going sailing ships like boats. The men served apprenticeships at sea, and became qualified ships

officers. One of them, John Green, was fond of relating his adventures to a reporter from the *Goole and Marshland Times*, and has thus gained some degree of immortality.

As a child in the 1940s, the writer remembers seeing derelict keels slowly rotting at the edge of the canal in Knottingley. It was the end of an era.

Now we have the opportunity to study the construction of wooden keels. Our first to be excavated was clinker-built, and therefore early. Others are carvel, and may date from the beginning of this century but are probably earlier. All are important, and will be recorded to the best standard possible.

oOo



TOURING IN TURKEY, Part II.

by Barbara Stewart.

Bursa is famed for silk production and was on the Old Silk Road. The many stalls and shops were festooned with glorious coloured silks as well as tourist souvenirs.

DAY FOUR; ISTANBUL

After a morning spend sightseeing and visiting the Polydome Mosque of Ulu Cami (Great Mosque) we left Bursa and travelled to Istanbul. We settled into the Grand Yavuz Hotel where we had dinner and relaxed in preparation for the following day's tour of Istanbul.

Istanbul is a crowded dirty city with piles of rubbish at every street corner. Many of the streets are very deep and narrow and slum-like in appearance. This squalor contracts dramatically with the splendour of its historical buildings and the glorious view from the Bosphorous towards the shore.

DAY FIVE; ISTANBUL

After breakfast we set out to visit some of the many attractions of this ancient city. The Blue Mosque with its 6 minarets and 260 stained-glass windows was built early in the C17. The intricately patterned carpets feel soft to bare feet as one wanders round the huge monument. The Hippodrome is directly in front of the Blue Mosque.

Once a Roman stadium with 100,000 seats it is now a long park with the remains of several obelisks and columns.

The wonderful basilica of St Sophia, constructed by the Emperor Justinian in the 6th century, was an awe-inspiring experience. The Chora Museum with its beautiful mosaics depicting the story of Jesus was a memorable sight. The Grand Covered Bazaar was interesting but not in the old style which we had expected.

DAY SIX; ISTANBUL

At 9.0am we left the hotel to visit the Golden Horn, so-called because of its prosperity in ancient times. Traders from all over the known world sailed into its port and the land was noted for its fertility. We enjoyed a 2 hour

cruise on the Bosphorous marvelling at the magnificent view of the city with its many mosques and minarets and busy harbour. The vivid blue of the sea and sky and the blazing sunshine intensified the overall effect of bewildering colour.

We spent an interesting time at the crowded Topkapi Palace with its Treasury crammed with priceless objects and viewed the now-empty rooms of the Harem with varying degrees of imagination. We did not have time to see even a fraction of the hundreds of rooms and courtyards which make up this fantastic palace.

DAY SEVEN; AYVALIK

After breakfast we left the hotel to journey to Ayvalik. On the way we visited Canakkale (the Dardanelles) and the legendary city of Troy.

There is little left to see at Troy but the imagination goes into overdrive when one stands on the hilltop and gazes out across the plain. Do hordes of ancient Greeks mill around the space between the ruins and the vivid blue line which marks the distant sea? The hot herb scented silence is underlain with the forgotten echo of unknown voices, frightened, hostile, threatening.

From Troy we travelled to Pergamum, the site of the invention of paper. The sun was setting as we climbed the steep hill to the top of the large impressive ruins of the Acropolis with its famous library. The view was breathtaking and once again my imagination was given free reign. The ruins extend for several miles in the area. After a refreshing glass of freshly squeezed oranges we drove to the Hotel Berk.

DAY EIGHT; KUSADASI

We left Ayvalik and continued our journey to Kusadasi where we spent a week relaxing at the Akdeniz Inn, a well equipped complex at the end of the resort.

During this week we visited the town centre which was 4kms from our hotel and easily reached by



*Suleiman the Magnificent, the great
est of all the Ottoman Sultans.*

travelling on the dolmus. These small buses run frequently to all places of interest surrounding the town enabling us to visit Miletus, Didyma, Selcuk, and Ephesus.

Selcuk with its 6th century Basilica of St John was particularly impressive. The apostle's grave lies at the centre of this great ruin and it was a thought-provoking experience to stand beside his last resting place. Close to the basilica is the Ephesus Museum which is packed with interesting artefacts.

The Temple of Athena crowns the steep hill of Prienne. Once a busy port now the city lies 8kms from the sea. Close by is Miletus, the first Greek city to use coinage for money and centre of philosophers and

mathematicians. From Miletus, 32kms along the Sacred Way is the Temple of Didyma. The oracles at this temple were as famous as the ones at Delphi.

The two pools at the hotel and the spacious lobby provided a chance for relaxation after the sightseeing and bargaining of our busy days in the sunshine.

DAY 15: IZMIR AIRPORT

We left our hotel at 4.0am for the 2 hour drive to Izmir Airport. An uneventful flight took us to Manchester Airport where we discovered that some of our luggage had been left behind in Turkey. After some form-filling we were able to continue our journey back to Pontefract arriving home at 1.30pm.

oOo

SOCIETY MEETINGS AND ADDRESS: IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Because the museum is likely to be out of use for a considerable time, members are asked to contact a member of Committee if they are unsure about the venue for forthcoming meetings. For the same reason,

those who use the form below to renew their subscriptions should **not** send it with their remittance to the museum.

1998/9 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:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Record Update Initials:	<input type="checkbox"/>

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, Mr RP Lockett, 7, Greenfield Road, Hemsworth, Pontefract.