

Pont Arc

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PONTEFRACT
& DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEW SERIES NUMBER 45

AUTUMN 2005

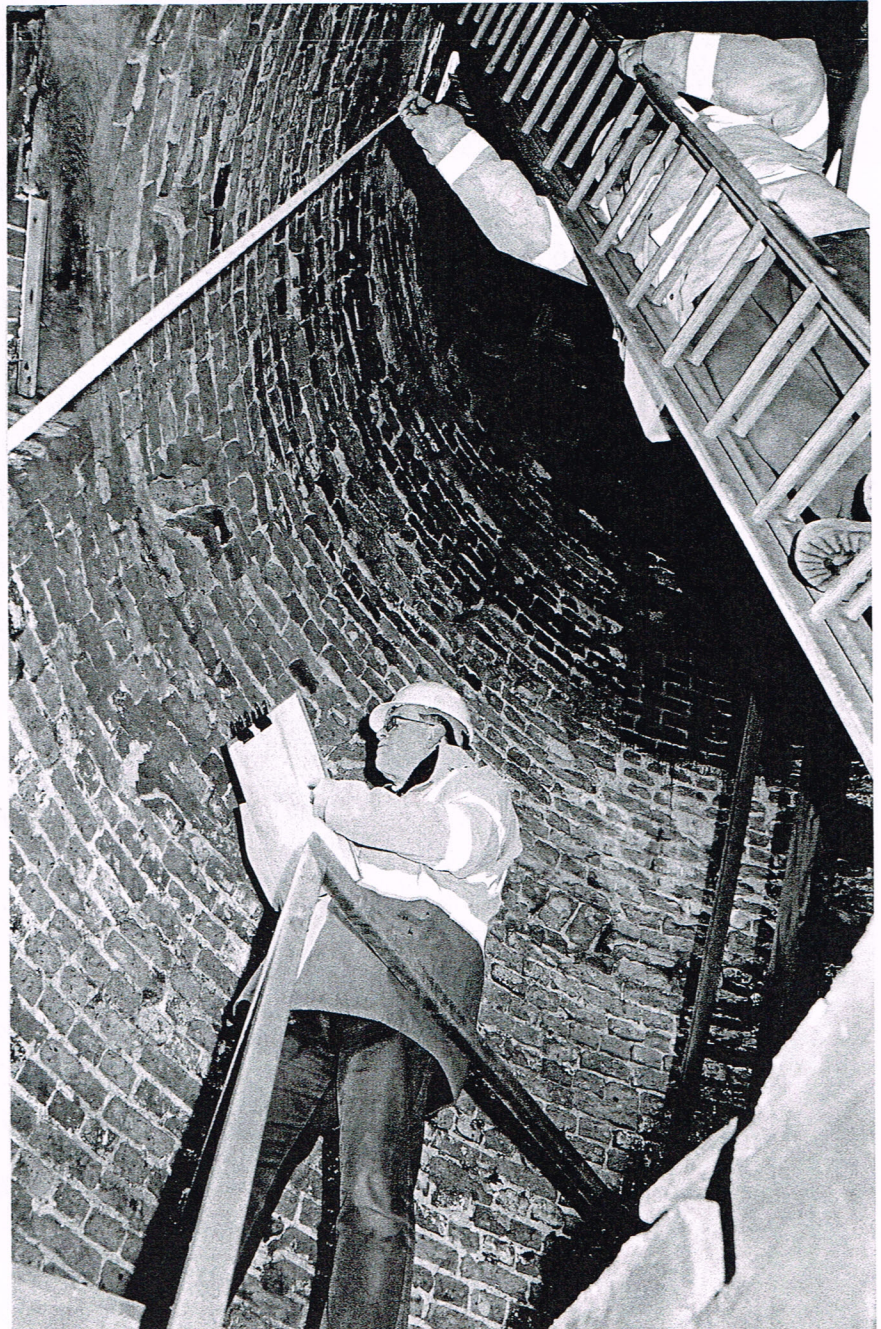
An annual collection of news, views, and information for members.

DARRINGTON WINDMILL

Our previous Field-Director's sudden departure meant that all field work in 2004 was curtailed. Luckily, Simon Tomson (lately of the Wood Hall Archaeological Trust) stepped in, and his position was confirmed at the last AGM. One of his first actions was to direct a survey and cleaning operation at Darrington Windmill, which the owners Mr & Mrs Alan Hufton had asked us to undertake.

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Cover Picture: Bob McNaught and Bob Evison at work inside Darrington Windmill. Because of decayed floors, the work was hazardous, so full protective head covering and flash jackets were obligatory at all times inside the structure.
Picture: Eric Houlder



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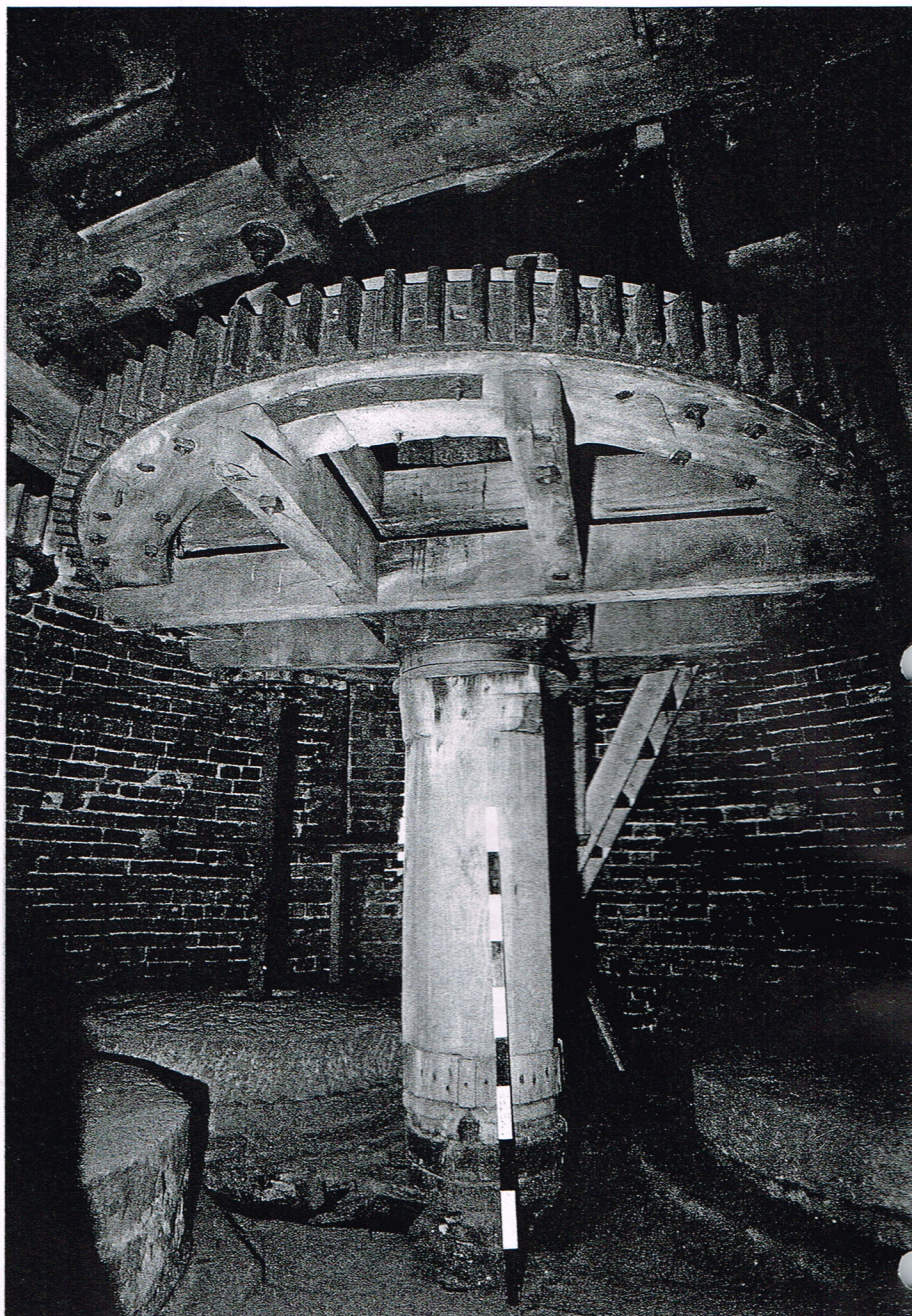
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Our first problem was access, for it has been impossible to proceed above the first floor since the 1960s. The mill was working at the end of Victoria's reign, and became derelict about the time of the Great War. During the next great conflict the Home Guard used it as an observation post and built new steps up to the roof, which forms an ideal lookout, as we discovered when at last, with the help of Bob Evison (who restored stairways, strengthened floors, and made new doors) we finally reached it. The views are stunning in good weather, with York Minster visible on the NNE horizon, Emley Moor TV transmitter on the western skyline, and even the windfarm near Penistone showing between shower clouds to the SW.

Our first task was to photograph the interior. For this we used conventional film for its archival stability. However, some excellent digital pictures were also shot by David Hedges and Jim Goodwin, for more immediate use. For reasons which we do not understand, the only floor with intact machinery is the second. Even the floorboards are missing above this, the surviving machinery being supported at the top by the joists.

The mill has been used for storage of broken and obsolete items for nearly a century. Consequently, our first weekend was devoted entirely to removing this, sorting the items into useful, to keep, and bonfire fuel, and then recording each floor in monochrome pictures with a few slides for reporting back purposes. During this work we noticed that two of the stone-nuts (small cast-iron cogs with wooden teeth) had fallen from their positions. There were several dangerous gaps in the floor, so we covered them with old doors (plenty of these) and our two Bobs began to make their survey.

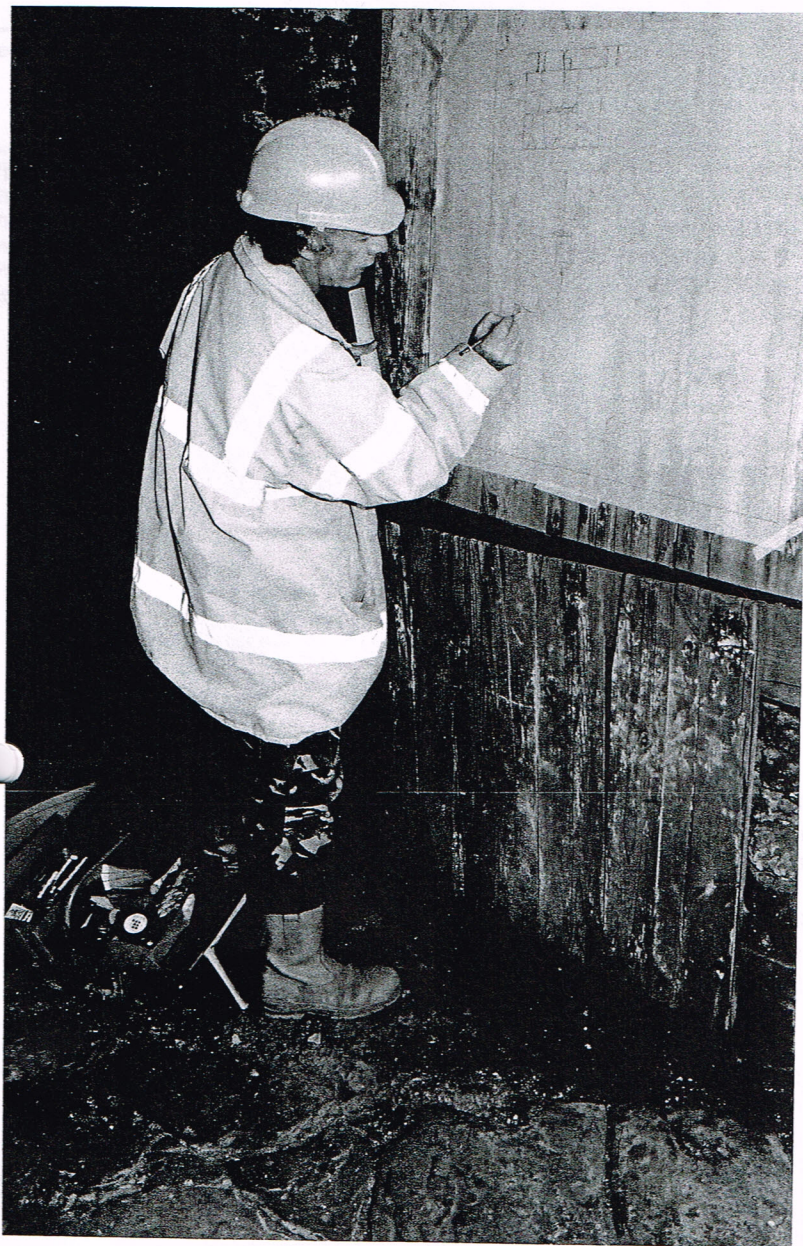
Meanwhile, Project Director Simon began to direct an excavation of the basement which revealed a beautiful floor, partly paved with worn millstones. A major feature of this was a



millstone with iron banding around its circumference. On closer inspection it was found that the actual stone had worn very thin in use, so the iron band had been put in place to hold in a layer of cement which increased the weight and thickness.

Below this stone was a deep well with what could be the mounting for a pump.

Finally, the original entrance track, buried in the 1960s by debris from the building of *Manassah*, opposite, was tipped there. All work was done to the best archaeological standards, and we look forward to the publication of the final full report. Our grateful thanks are extended to Mr & Mrs A Hufton for allowing, encouraging, and assisting with this project, and to the members who braved freezing conditions.



Far Left: Machinery on the Stone-Floor.

Left: Director Simon uses the lower entrance door as a handy drawing-board.

Above: Sunday lunchtime group. Flash-jackets & helmets were obligatory, of course. The Chairman, without either, was visiting the site on this occasion. Picture: Jim Goodwin. Uncredited pictures by the Chairman.

MORE WORK ON ROAD 28b,

by Simon Tomson, Field Director.

The field section of the Society has been busy over the weekends of August and September 2005, the air punctuated by the thud of mattocks, the scraping of trowels and Simon's profanities! The hunt for the elusive Roman road, Margary 28b from Doncaster to Castleford at Ackworth is over; we have found it. The Society (or some of its members) have for many years (longer than Eric cares to remember) looked, flown, dug, delved and researched the route of one of the principal roads of Roman Britain at its closest point to Pontefract.

The road was found and excavated by us some twenty years ago at Thorpe Audlin, excavated by the county unit at Castleford and later by the *Time Team* too. The section in between has, however, been more elusive. An attempt at finding the road in Ackworth was

made two years ago by Dan Ferguson and the field team. Despite opening a large area no road surface, foundation, ditches or clue to its whereabouts were found. The disappointment was however tempered by the recovery and subsequent display of the Ackworth Roman Milestone. But now the long and sometimes frustrating search for the actual road in Ackworth is over.

Badgered by Eric and David Hedges and armed with a geophysical survey carried out by David *et al*, Simon deployed his troops in a new field at Castle Syke Farm, this time to the west of the railway track. Employing Mick Aston's technique, a network of one meter square test pits was dug over the target area. Some came up 'dry' but informed by them, the possible areas were narrowed down until it was realized that the

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terrace along the northern edge of the field and the accompanying field ditch was where the road was hiding. Indeed the 'modern' ditch is the Roman roadside ditch! It took two weekends but the penny finally dropped. That humble field ditch was dug in the 1st century AD as the roadside drain, and is today parish boundary between, respectively Ackworth and East Hardwick.

The Road itself is founded on slabs of cream coloured Magnesian Limestone lain directly on cleared siltstone bedrock; above is a 3cm thick layer of heavily compacted, flesh-coloured silty sand, itself covered by up to 10cm of crushed local sandstone. Sandstone cobbles from the actual road surface above remain in-situ in some places. The road is about 4m wide and up to 30cm thick. So how did we miss it until now?

The site chosen for the previous excavation was on an exposed flank of the hill-slope; the present area of exploration lies in a silted hollow along a pronounced terrace where silt has been accumulating in and over the terrace sealing in the road remains since at least the 12th century AD. Elsewhere the road's limestone footing has probably been dug out by

past farmers, burnt to lime and been re-spread to de-acidify the local acidic soils.

Modern ploughing has been eliminated in the new area as it has been designated as stewardship land preserved for nature conservation; this in turn has implications for our access period. The picture is further



Left: The broadest transect excavated this season. At the bottom is the present ditch, out of which the metalling rises dramatically. Picture: E.H



Above: The transect under excavation. Picture: D J Hedges.

clouded as the land has recently been sold. However, the new landowner, Mr Birdsall,



Left: An old friend, David Wandless, who dug with the Society in the sixties, shows how it is done! Picture: DJH

The visit of the 3D Group from Ripon/Harrogate fills the site with visitors and excavators.
 Picture: DJ Hedges.



Right: Discussion group! Ron Wilson, (centre), our Chairman (left) and the Field Director discuss the results of the dig.
 Picture: DJ Hedges.



has expressed a desire to see the work continue for another season. All that being said, the Field Director has grand plans for a full excavation of the area next autumn, when all the access and conservation issues have been ironed out. Watch this space.

PEGGY WILSON: AN APPRECIATION

by Eric Houlder.

As announced before our March meeting, Peggy Wilson died at her home in Alderney on 29th February 2004. Peggy will be remembered by fewer than half a dozen members, but her contributions to the Society, both direct and indirect, were such that she can be regarded as one of the chief architects of the Pontefract and District Archaeological Society. Amazingly, she never held office, and was only a member for less than half a dozen years. As will be seen below, Peggy's integrity and strength of character worked to the benefit of every organisation and group to which she belonged during her ninety-two years and eleven months.

Born March 16th 1911 near Hyde Park Gate in London, she was christened Margaret Markham Dean. Her father was an important official in the Falkland Islands administration, and Peggy spent much of her childhood there. Indeed, she was recently honoured for presenting an original painting of Brunel's *Great Britain* in its final configuration as a three masted sailing ship, a family possession, to the Islands' museum.

Growing up in such a challenging environment, Peggy learned a number of useful

skills. Her mother taught her sewing, and she learned how to strip down, clean, load and fire a rifle; a skill which she was to utilise in the early part of the Second World War. Educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College, she went on to the Polytechnic School of Speech Training and Dramatic Art, following which she acted under the name of Peggy Dean.

Travelling all over the UK in rep., Peggy came to know many of the stage personalities of the immediate pre-war era, including J B Priestley who on one occasion entertained her and an actress colleague to tea. During this period of her life she was supported by her sister Pamela, who having 'married rich,' was able to lend Peggy fashionable clothes for contemporary roles. She also met and married Richard Meadows White whom she later described as a totally impractical person! They had a son and a daughter, but the marriage did not last.

Peggy was in London when the war began. Typically, she tried to join the Home Guard, but was turned down because she was a woman. However, when her skill with firearms

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Peggy digging at St John's Priory in 1960. An early colour picture by the Chairman

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became known, she was employed by them, firstly as a weapons instructor, and later in charge of their London clothing store.

After the war, Peggy worked from home utilising her sewing skills as a dressmaker. It was around this time that she became interested in archaeology. Digging in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire she worked with many of the legendary figures of the era. She was never in the least interested in what we would now call 'celebrities,' but if asked could relate humorous and sometimes scandalous tales about several household names. Peggy also hated affectation and any form of name-dropping, and it was a long time before her Yorkshire friends learned that she had worked with Sir Mortimer (Rik) Wheeler. One of the souvenirs of this phase of her life of which she was inordinately fond was the small childrens' book, *I Spy Archaeology*, which had a full page picture of Peggy excavating a skeleton near Stonehenge. Shortly after this picture was taken, she met Ken when they both joined a dig on an island off Wales. They married in 1962.

I was privileged to work with them both at St John's Priory Pontefract in 1960, when the picture appended was taken. They both joined

PontArc at a time when the Society could have sunk without a trace. A letter from Peggy to the Committee following a particularly chaotic AGM caused a still-remembered flurry of activity. An Extraordinary General Meeting was called, a number of professional people were elected to office, and the Society was assured a future. Ken was elected President in 1965.

Without in any way denigrating the friendship and training of Vince Bellamy, who was instrumental in forming the Society, Peggy, with Ken, widened members' perspectives to encompass the national scene. In particular, Peggy's precision excavation and recording was taken up by members who soon found themselves in demand in the decades before the present professional organisation of the discipline was even conceived. Their own digs - Drax - St Richard's - Ilkley, to name but three re-enforced the doctrine, namely precision digging, accurate recording and prompt publication. Throughout, she organised campsites, befriended landowners, cooked meals, and hosted visitors. Between these digs

she worked as Deputy Director for a number of well known archaeologists, all the while encouraging her own protégés through the ranks. Peggy would not recommend anyone who was not up to the job, but her training was such that many PontArc members found themselves in supervisory posts on digs which today typify sixties and seventies archaeology, including Sutton Hoo, West Stowe, Silbury Hill, and Mucking.

Ken and Peggy retired to Alderney in 1967, though until 1969 they returned to the mainland regularly to complete previous obligations. In the early years of retirement they jointly directed a dig on an Iron Age site on the island, but after this they deliberately abandoned archaeology to a younger generation.

I remained in regular, if infrequent touch with them and was gratified to receive signed copies of Ken's poetry books. Following his death in 1989, Peggy characteristically took upon her shoulders the task of organising the family history records of the whole island of Alderney. She handed this over as a working entity a year before her death.

Peggy was unstinting with praise and blame; I still remember her (justified) anger at

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an example of my 'creative trowelling,' and her subsequent pleasure when I got it right. She was too, like her mentor, somewhat resistant towards newer archaeological techniques which were beginning to be introduced in the late sixties, especially the ones which **appeared** to abandon her beloved precision digging in the 'Wheeler Box System,' as it is now called. It is a common trait of younger archaeologists to belittle the work of the previous generation, and Peggy's reaction may now be seen as the defence of a

system which still has a lot to teach newer generations.

Throughout, she 'compartmentalised' her life to such an extent that when one phase was over, she felt no need or inclination to discuss it. This has made it quite difficult to do her justice in the present appreciation. I am greatly indebted to her daughter, Mrs S M Chorley of Southampton, for generously loaning her mother's surviving papers.
Margaret Markham Wilson 1911-2004. RIP

SOCIETY NEWS

We have a number of changes to report, both from before and after the last AGM. Following many years of service on and off Committee, our Auditor, Ann Hawkins, reluctantly decided not to seek re-election. Mr R McNaught, previously a Committee Member 'without portfolio' was elected in her place. We sincerely thank Ann for her sterling work, not only in auditing the accounts, but for her professional advice to Committee. It is not generally realised that it was Ann, working almost single-handed, who secured the Society's grant which enabled us to update much of our AV hardware.

Bob McNaught's place on Committee has been filled by an old friend, David Hedges, who jointly directed the Thorpe Audlin dig with the present Chairman twenty years ago. David's position is also 'without portfolio,' but he is acting as an unofficial assistant to the Field Director.

It certainly has been an eventful year on Committee, for shortly after the AGM, Peter Lockett, the Treasurer, decided that he would retire too. Many members expected Peter to retire at the same time as Pauline, but luckily for us he stayed long enough for a successor to be found.

Peter has been treasurer for many years. It is true to say that when he took over the Society's finances it was a small, almost parochial organisation. Under his management we have gone from strength to strength, collecting an Ironbridge Award and a Pitt Rivers Award in the National Archaeology Awards, as well as appearing in the pages of *Current Archaeology* on several occasions. The importance of a sound financial basis cannot be over stressed. Indeed, Peter, with Pauline as Secretary, literally held us together for the last couple of decades. Our sincere thanks, with best wishes for a long and active retirement with Pauline, go to him.

Peter's post as Treasurer has been filled by yet another old friend, immediate Past Chairman Robert (Bob) Evison, who is no stranger to members, having served on

committee for as long as Peter and Pauline.

Members who attended the AGM may remember a heated discussion on the subject of non-members attending meetings. Until now we have trusted non-members (who are of course most welcome as prospective members) to voluntarily pay the requisite one pound. However, our numbers are now sufficiently large to make it difficult for any single person to know every other member. Accordingly it was decided to re-design the programme card as a membership card to be presented on admission to Society functions. A signing-in book will also be purchased which will have separate columns for members and visitors. Hopefully, these measures will ensure that visitors are welcomed, but also made to realise that they must actually pay!

Congratulations to our Hon Secretary, Natalie Elsey, for an excellent performance in her exams. As well as working as Secretary, Natalie is chairing a sub-committee charged with preparing for the Society's impending 50th Anniversary in 2007. She is also collecting members' E-Mail addresses and running our Website; a very busy young lady indeed!

This brings us to Communication. Committee is very aware that Communication with members is a weakness; it always has been. When all our members lived in and around Pontefract there was still a problem, but now with people as far away as Huddersfield and Harrogate it becomes a major issue. Natalie's E-Mail list is one approach, but Committee is well aware that few of our members are on-line. With this in mind we intend to set up a database, with the aim of sending out at least one mailing per year to each member. This newsletter includes a full programme, as well as an application form for membership. Cards will only now be issued on payment of a subscription, so if you didn't re-join at the AGM, please either send the form with a cheque to the Treasurer (Details in the final box)

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or bring your chequebook to the first meeting.

The database will also solve the problem of the fieldwork register. Previously the Treasurer had to inform the Field Director if a

new member wished to be included. Inevitably this led to omissions. With a single list available to all officers (but **not** to commercial concerns) the organisations of surveys and digs should become much simpler.

EDITORIAL



Above: Angela Boyle, of Oxford Archaeology North, just before she spoke to us last October on 'The Ferrybridge Chariot Burial.'
Photo: E. Houlder

The Society is quite proud of its achievements, and one of these was certainly the invitation extended to Angela Boyle of Oxford Archaeology North to speak to us last October. Angela was, of course, the person who directed the dig on the now-famous Ferrybridge Chariot Burial. At the time she visited us, no other group in the region had heard of the discovery from the discoverer.

In order to afford the event, we invited members of many other societies in the region to come along, and of course arranged an hotel room for Angela, with transport to and from the railway station. A six foot projection screen and professional stand was loaned by the Chairman,

and David Hedges kindly lent us his data projector, laptop and expertise.

The evening was a resounding success, and we would like to thank everyone who contributed in many other ways than those listed above.

For our fiftieth, in only two years time, we are planning another celebrity lecture on the same lines as this recent one and the last one by Professor Mick Aston. If any member can suggest ways in which such events can be improved, please see any member of Committee.

It was surely a coincidence that just before Angela's lecture, workmen replacing the Southgate wall opposite our venue discovered the top of the castle's South Gate. It was investigated by West Yorkshire Archaeology Service, and a decision was made to leave it in-situ. The illustration opposite was taken from just in front of the Parish Hall.

An afternoon visit to the current dig site for local farmers, arranged by David Hedges was very successful. none had seen an exposed Roman road before, and all promised us access to their land to follow the road towards Castleford at future dates.

Most members will by now have heard of the theft of our Chairman's car whilst visiting a kindred group in Leeds. Quite a few of our digging members have ridden in it at some time, and though fifteen years old it never balked at ploughed fields, motorways and scruffy diggers. It took us to Catterick, Immingham, Hull, St Aidan's, Wood Hall and many other sites over the years. It had, indeed, more experience of archaeology than many professionals. Alas, the insurance company had to write it off, and the Chairman is now riding around in a shiny *Focus*. So shiny and new (ish) that he is now reluctant to take it on to ploughed fields and other assorted archaeological venues. It will take years to acquire the correct smell of soil with fish and chips.

The thief also took a full set of photographic scales. Our Chairman is grateful to Bob McNaught for making a replacement set, which actually are better than the ones which are missing. Also missing was my teaspoon, the famous tarnished one which has stirred tea and cleaned out skeletal eye-sockets for over forty years! I hope that he eats from it!

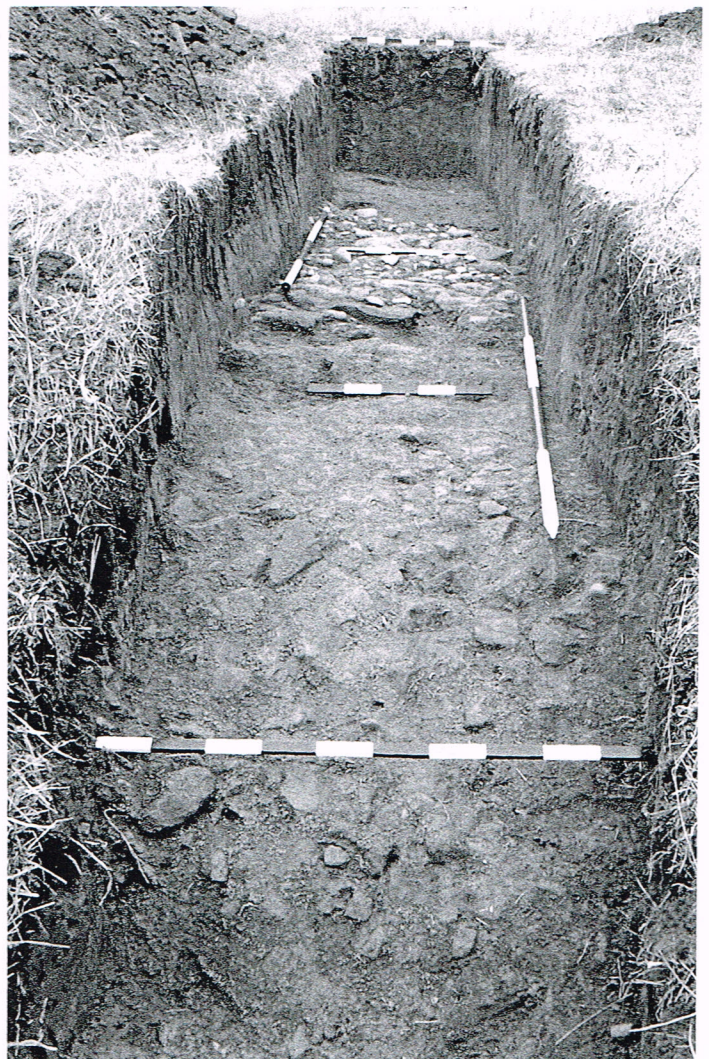


*Above: The presumed South Gate of the castle, taken with a powerful telephoto from the bottom of Baghill Lane.
Picture: E Houlder.*

Editorial continued.....

Mention has already been made of Peter Lockett's retirement from the post of Hon Treasurer. We are currently collecting monies for a suitable retirement gift. All members wishing to make a contribution should pass their contribution on to Committee member Elizabeth Love at the next meeting.

Finally, it has just been brought to the Editor's attention that our extremely efficient and hard-working Hon Secretary, Natalie Elsey, has just become engaged. On behalf of all members we give her our congratulations, and wish her and her fiancé every happiness for the future.



*Right:
The very latest transect across Road M28b taken just before we went to press.
Picture: D J Hedges.*

Pontefract & District Archaeological Society

Annual Programme 2005-6

LECTURES 2005/6

In the lecture room, Pontefract Museum, Salter Row, unless otherwise noted below the lecture. All begin at 7-15 prompt. £1 admission for non-members. AGM: members only.

- October 21st **THE HENGE CAPITAL OF BRITAIN, George Chaplin
(local Amateur Archaeologist)**
- November 18th **SHIPWRECKS OF THE NORTH EAST, John Buglass,
(Freelance Archaeologist)**
- December 16th **A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS, Alan Garlick (former
Museum Curator).**
- January 20th *The Don Lodge Memorial Lecture:*
**THE SHIP BURIALS OF SUTTON HOO, a new, updated
version. Eric Houlder, (Excavation Supervisor Sutton
Hoo, & Society Chairman).**
- February 17th **GRANARY WHARF AND THE LEEDS CANAL BASIN,
Jaqueline Depelle (Local & Family History Tutor).**
- March 17th **SECRETS OF YORK MINSTER REVEALED, Derek
Harker, (Retired teacher/Semi-retired Tour Guide).**
- April 21st **HIGHWAYS AND WAYMARKERS, Jan Scrine & Liz
Hayes (Members of the Milestone Society).**
- April 28th **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.**

*SOCIETY CONTACT NUMBERS: Secretary: Natalie J Elsey 01924 314713.
Hermitage: David Wilcox 01977 707728. Programme: Janet Niepokojczycka
01977 618327. Chair: Eric Houlder 01977 702995. Membership: R Evison
01977 798264. Field Director (digs & surveys): Simon J Tomson: 01977
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This Newsletter is published by THE PONTEFRAC T & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, and Edited by Eric Houlder. Submissions should be sent to him at 31 Fairview, Carleton, PONTEFRAC T, WF8 3NT, UK., enclosing a SAE if you wish your text, disc(s) and/or pictures to be returned. In the absence of a SAE it will be assumed that items may be disposed of. All items published are copyright the author, and may not be reproduced, (except for review, of course,) without permission of the Editor who will seek the author's permission. Opinions, letters and articles published do not necessarily represent the views of the P&DAS unless this is stated categorically.
Contact details:
Secretary: Miss N J Elsey, 9, Fairway Close, NORMANTON, WF6 1SW
Treasurer: Mr R Evison, 55, Hardwick Rd., Carleton, PONTEFRAC T, WF8 3QY
Field Director: Mr S Tomson, 36, Holgate Gardens, HEMSWORTH, WF9 4NQ

PONTARC TRIPS/VISITS

A questionnaire

This year only two of the five proposed tours actually went ahead, and even those two did not attract the numbers required to fill a coach. Does this mean that members are no longer interested in these events? To help the Society plan for the future, please take a couple of minutes to fill in this questionnaire, and bring it to the next meeting, or post it to: J Niepokojszycka, 36, Holgate Gardens, Hemsworth, Pontefract, WF9 4NQ. Needless to say, you are welcome to submit a photocopy if you do not wish to deface your copy of *PontArc*.

1. Have you attended a Pontarc trip in the past three years?.....

If 'yes,' where to?.....

2. What form of transport did you use?.....

3. Would you be interested in future trips?.....

4. Do you prefer daytime or evening trips?.....

5. Would you be willing to drive to the site/venue?.....

6. Do you have any suggestions for future trips?.....

.....

7. Do you consider 'hand-outs' of information are a good idea on trips?.....

8. Would you be interested in a two or three day trip within the British Isles?.....

9. If you have any further comments or suggestions on this subject, please feel free to use the space below. Thank you for your time.

.....

.....

.....

.....

(Please photocopy this form if you wish to use it and return the questionnaire overleaf anonymously.)

✕

PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,

Application for membership/ Renewal (*please delete accordingly*)

Subscription rates (please circle) Student/OAP £3. Adult £4. Family £7.

NAME _____ (Please print)

ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____

TELEPHONE (including full dialling code) _____

MOBILE _____

E-Mail ADDRESS _____

I would/would not (please delete as appropriate) like to be included on the fieldwork register.

Please forward with the appropriate remittance to the Hon Treasurer, P&DAS, Mr R Evison, 55, Hardwick Road, PONTEFRACT WF8 3QY

✕

Please feel free to use the extra application form below for a friend.

✕

PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,

Application for membership/ Renewal (*please delete accordingly*)

Subscription rates (please circle) Student/OAP £3. Adult £4. Family £7.

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