

# Pont Arc

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PONTEFRACT  
& DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

NEW SERIES NUMBER 47

WINTER 2008

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

## 50<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The first event of our Golden Anniversary Year was the keynote lecture by Society President Dr Peter Addyman on October 26th entitled *Fifty Years of Yorkshire Archaeology*. Peter had been taken ill during September, and this was the first public engagement which he had undertaken since then. Members and guests were treated to a marvellous digest by one who had not only been there, but had played a major role in many of the events illustrated and described. The venue, Micklegate Methodist Church was pleasantly warm, and there were plenty of questions afterwards.

The final event was on December 21st. Members friends and distinguished guests gathered from near and far on the cold, frosty evening, to discover that the heating in St Joseph's Roman Catholic Parish Hall (the Society is very ecumenical) had failed! In spite of this we exhibited the Dunkirk Spirit and carried on regardless.

Treasurer, Secretary and Past Chairman Bob Evison began the evening and welcomed Parish Priest Father Funnell who gave a blessing to the Society and the event. Bob then introduced Chairman Eric Houlder who gave a brief illustrated presentation entitled *Fifty Years of Pontefract Archaeology*. We saw pictures of Alf Ward with Ken Gardiner at the moment of the Society's gestation in All Saints' churchyard, followed by images of

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*Dorothy Arundel, second Treasurer of the Society and one of our oldest members, cuts the cake made and decorated by Programme Secretary Janet Niepokojczycka.*



*(Continued from page 1)*

members at work throughout the last half century, culminating in the work on an active golf course with golf balls flying in all directions! This was most appropriate as the Celebration cake depicted that dig in great detail.

A wonderful buffet supper followed, prepared by Programme Secretary Janet Niepokojczycka. During the supper Dorothy Arundel, the oldest member present and second Treasurer cut the cake.

Next, the celebratory booklet by the

Chairman was given out, after which the Hermitage Team made a presentation to Founder Member and current Vice-President Bill Booth to mark his dedication to the Hermitage over the full term of the Society's existence.

Field Director Simon Tomson proposed the Loyal Toast, after which Ian Clayton, well-known television presenter and friend of the Society gave an amusing closing address.

All agreed that the lack of heating had made little difference to an evening of warm friendship and recollection.

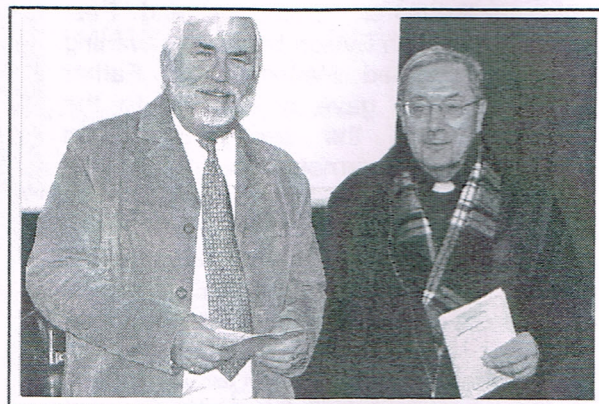
## A PICTORIAL RECORD OF THE TWO EVENINGS.



*Dr Addyman chats with Dr M<sup>r</sup> Naught following his lecture in the Micklegate Methodist Church*



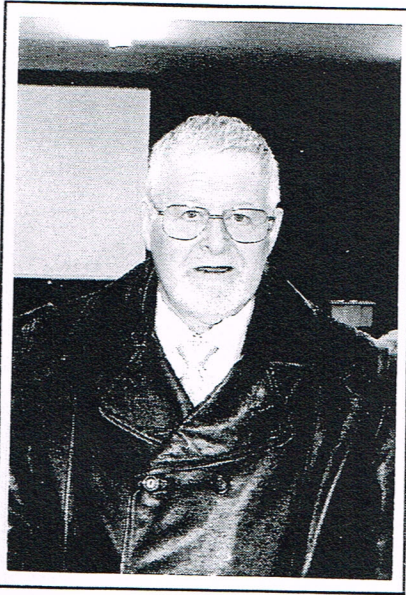
*A well-deserved cup of tea for our President following his lecture.*



*Right: Secretary/Treasurer & Past Chairman Bob Evison with Fr Funnell at the beginning of the evening.*

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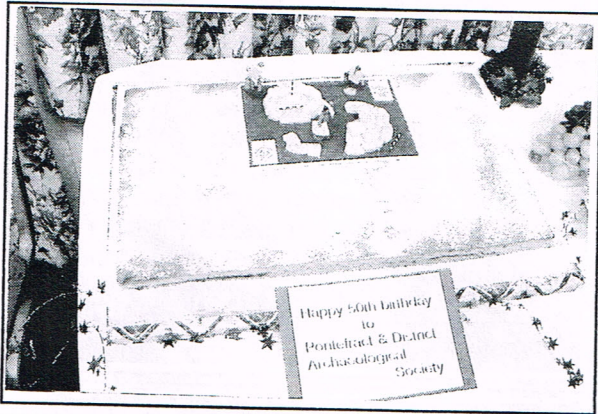




Chairman Eric during the evening. All pictures except this one, (by Steve Moorhouse) are by him.



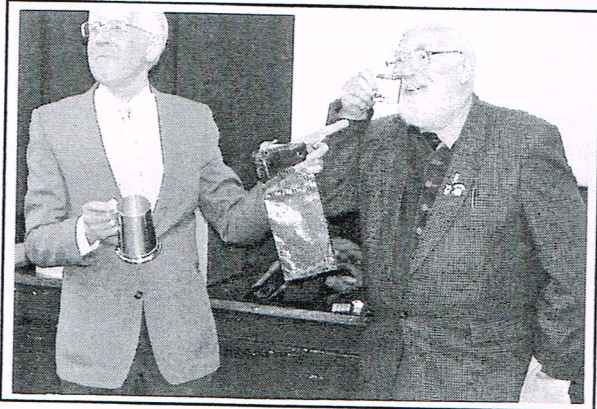
Well-known television presenter Ian Clayton, who clearly enjoys his food!



Janet's Wonderful cake with a complete dig on it.



Field Director Simon with Vice President Bill.



David Wilcox, making a presentation to Vice President Bill.



Mrs Moorhouse, Steve Moorhouse and Pam Judkin.



Ruth and Alan Powell with David Hedges.



Pat Bentley and Margaret Lound.





*The 'Hermitage Team' table.*



*The McNaught family and guests table.*



*Bill O'Brian, Norman Blackburn and Peter Cookson.*



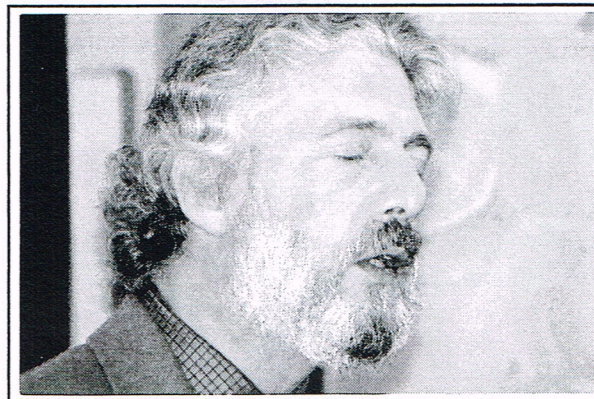
*Ron Jewitt, Wendy Beale, Cynthia Upton, Wendy Jewitt & Dorothy Arundel.*



*Ken Womersley, Margaret Womersley, Connie Clamp & Helen Harbron-Applegarth.*



*Overall view of the room.*



*Field Director Simon proposing the Loyal Toast.*



*Ian Clayton closing the evening.*

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# EDITORIAL

What a year our fiftieth anniversary has been! When I agreed to write a short account of the Society's history I honestly did not realise just how time-consuming it would be. Luckily, son Mark had just given me his old Macintosh computer and it seemed sensible to start from scratch on this, rather than make the old PC struggle on beyond its capabilities. When I admit that the old PC still runs Windows 3.1, those of you who are conversant with computers will realise just how old it is!

Those of you who have been members since the '90s will realise that the book *The First Fifty Years - 1957-2007* is based loosely upon a series of articles that first appeared in *PontArc* some ten years ago. However, because of the complete incompatibility of the Mac with the Amstrad which I used in those days, the whole thing had to be typed again, so I took the opportunity to expand and update the text as I went along.

Part way through this I was sitting in the museum chatting to Richard Van Riel, our Curator, and happened to bemoan the fact that no pictures were taken of Alf Ward, Ken Gardiner, Bill Booth and Mollie Millward at the moment of the Society's gestation in All Saints' Churchyard. "Oh yes they were..." quoth Richard, and pulling out a file he showed me half a dozen pictures of that very event!

The result of that conversation was the copying of several of these pictures, donated to the museum by Alf Ward himself. Sadly, only he and Ken Gardiner actually appear on them, but at least we do have actual pictures.

By the miracle of *PhotoShop* I was able to straighten and sharpen one of them sufficiently to appear in the book. Needless to say I am disappointed that they were all in black and white... Cue Richard?

The final touches were applied to the text during our holiday in France during August, so that your Editor could be seen wandering around Agincourt and Crecy writing notes which had more to do with P&DAS than the Hundred Years War.

In September and October the pictures were scanned, corrected and finalised ready to go to the printers. Of course family matters had to come first at this stage for son Mark had his wedding arranged for 17<sup>th</sup> November, which is also his sister's anniversary! As his father and

mother were also married on the seventeenth, of a different month, anniversaries are easy to remember in the Editorial household. By coincidence, Secretary Bob had a family wedding at the same time, so you can imagine the following committee meeting.

Members may remember that last March I announced the death of one of our early stalwarts, Doreen Roberts. It is particularly sad that Doreen died in this significant year for us as she was instrumental (with others) in setting the high standards which we are now noted for. Few of us realised in those early days that she had been involved in archaeology in the Ripon/Harrogate area before moving to Pontefract. One of the youngsters whom she taught to dig was a boy called Peter Addyman! Several of us learned correct committee procedure from Doreen, as well as a lot of archaeology. Our President, Dr Addyman, represented the society at her funeral.

Later this month I have been asked to represent the society at a small ceremony in the Yorkshire Archaeological Society headquarters, in which a framed print, contributed to by P&DAS, will be presented to the YAS in Doreen's memory.

Our work on Roman road M28b has now been going on for twenty five years. Unfortunately, the 2007 season had to be cancelled because of the Foot & Mouth Disease epidemic. All being well, however, our Field Director Simon will be resuming work there this summer.

At the end of February I received a telephone call from Michael Wood. Yes, that Michael Wood. He is working on the 937AD battle of Brunaburgh (sometimes thought to have been fought at Brinsworth, near Rotherham) and has discovered a Northumbrian document giving an alternative name of *Wendun* for the battle, which implies that it took place by the river Went. We had a long conversation on strategic points along the various routes south over the Went, and I sent him copies of our reports on the various seasons of work on M28b. It's nice to see that our work is appreciated and consulted by historians as well as by archaeologists.

What would Alf and Ken had made of this? I know that this was the sort of thing they would have appreciated.

Eric Houlder, Editor.

**Overleaf, on page 6, is an exact reproduction of the society's very first newsletter from 1958. Please remember this and do not turn up at St John's Priory with trowel, whisk, and kneeling mat!**



NEWS LETTER

Your Committee got down to some real hard work at their first meeting and this letter is a result of one of the suggestions. We hope that all our members will find it interesting and informative. It is still in the experimental stage but we hope to produce at least one letter each month. Your Secretary and Mr. J. Holmes have the task in hand and we hope the idea will prove popular.

Fancy starting a news letter without News!--but that's the situation at the moment with regard to the Castle, except that we are to meet the representative of the Duchy of Lancaster in the near future to discuss the matter.

Due to the recent snow we had to postpone the proposed visit to the Castle by The Girls' High School Historical Society, but some members of the Society went round the Castle, including the dungeons and magazine while the Secretary explained what proposals had been made for the repair and preservation of the fabric.

The Beginners' Class appeared to be quite successful, considering we had a beginner for an Instructor, but just to make sure, we are having a lecture on Practical Archaeology by Mr. Bellamy on Saturday, 22nd March, at 7-30 p.m. The venue is not quite certain, but keep your eye on the Public Notices in "The Pontefract & Castleford Express."

Have you your Trowel ready? You'll need it this Easter. Excavating is due to start on St. John's Priory on Saturday, April 5th, and on Saturday, March 8th. on the Trinity Site, having been spurred on by a letter in The Express. We are quite serious about your trowel, by the way, Mr. Bellamy has asked that each helper should bring their own Trowel (preferably NOT the rivetted type as these soon break), kneeling mat and whisk. We shall also be very happy to see plenty of people willing to become "Labourers" for a short while. (Ladies excepted of course).

Another suggestion was that we affiliate the Society to The Yorkshire Archaeological Society. We thought that this was a good idea as it will add to the prestige of the Society and we may make use of the amenities available to us, for instance our "Digs" will be reported in the Y.A.S. Journal. The only cost is £1 per year so we set the wheels in motion.

The matter of All Saints' is still in the air. Your Secretary wrote immediately after the last General Meeting, but so far there has been no reply.

We are hoping to visit Kirkstall Abbey when the weather settles down, it will be interesting to compare the foundation plans of Kirkstall and St. John's. A visit to Monk Bretton, the daughter house of St. John's has also been suggested. Here again it will be interesting to make comparisons.

Well, here's hoping for some nice weather at Easter. No excavating on Easter Sunday, by the way, but Mr. Bellamy hopes to be at the Priory for much of April.

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# HUMANE AND HEROIC,

## a review by the chairman.

ISBN 978-0-9750082-1-8



*The Angel at Ferrybridge, a major inn during the coaching era.*

Last year I received a telephone call from Tasmania. The caller identified himself as Dr John Tooth, one of over five hundred great great grandchildren of Robert Storr, a GP who practised in Doncaster between 1824 and 1847. Dr Tooth had inherited most of the casebooks and much of the private correspondence of his ancestor and was writing a biography. He wished to pick my brains regarding stage coach travel at that period. I was delighted to help, and to my surprise (for I did little more than point him in the right direction and clarify the British laws on copyright) I received an invitation to the book's launch, (which I was unable to attend) and a complimentary copy.

Robert Storr lived and worked before nearly all of the great discoveries which transformed medical science in the middle and late nineteenth century. In fact the only 'modern' technique which was available to him was vaccination for smallpox, and though its effects were known, the mechanisms were still to be discovered by Pasteur twenty years after Storr's death. Thus, his main treatments consisted of purging and bleeding. However, during his career he was beginning to approach the actual cause of Puerperal (childbed) fever, and had he not died

in harness, he may have anticipated Semmelweis who first published the true cause (contaminated hands) shortly after Storr's death.

The casebooks only describe unusual or particularly interesting cases. However, the patients are named, and their 'addresses' noted. Many of them lived in outlying villages like Marr and Sprotborough; imagine having to saddle a horse and ride out to places like this in the middle of the night, long before the roads were lit. The patience and acceptance of most of these people is in direct contrast to some of today's patients. It is surprising too, how many recovered in spite of treatments which we now know would have had little or no positive results; perhaps people's faith in their doctors was the main cause of this. Sometimes they recovered as a result of unseen consequences of treatment; a boy with a head injury was bled, for example. Dr Tooth suggests that the bleeding, by reducing blood pressure, may have aided survival.

As his wife came from London, much travelling occurred in Storr's life, and a lot of letters passed between him and his wife when she was visiting her parents and other relatives. This gives us an insight into the discomforts of

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coach travel and also the efficiency (and expense) of the postal service before Rowland Hill's Penny Post.

I found this to be a fascinating insight into the life and work of a professional man in

Doncaster in the days when it was a main staging point for the Royal Mail and other coaches. Also fascinating was the author's personal experience of the gradual growth of railway travel which occurred in the 1840s. I highly recommend this book.

## DID YOU GET YOUR COPY OF THE CELEBRATORY BOOKLET?

Not all members were able to attend the December 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, at which the books were given out. If you were one of these members, and were not able to collect a copy at a subsequent meeting, please contact the Secretary in writing (address in the box at the

end of the newsletter), with your membership number (on the front of your card) and he will be pleased to post your copy on to you. Copies for non-members are obtainable for £6-50 including postage. Please make cheques payable to Pontefract & District Archaeological Society.

## CHASING ROBIN HOOD

by Eric Houlder.

Living on the edge of the old forest of Barnsdale, I have always been interested in Robin Hood, and indeed have been able to add to the corpus of knowledge on the outlaw in a modest way. As a result of my travels giving lectures about the outlaw, I was contacted one day by a lady who lives in Calderdale and who had heard me speaking. She informed me that Calderdale Council was organising guided walks to Robin Hood's Grave at Kirklees Priory (confusingly, Kirklees Priory is **not** in the Metropolitan County of Kirklees!). On telephoning the lady in charge of the walks I was informed that this may be the last chance to visit the grave and the other sites associated with Robin. The reason was that Lady Armytage, the owner of Kirklees Hall, had sold the hall to a developer to convert into luxury apartments. The new owners of these flats were not at all keen on having assorted members of the public traipsing around, and perhaps 'casing their joints' in the process. My lecture on Robin Hood does contain slides of the Kirklees gatehouse and grave, but from Victorian postcards. I had been trying for years to obtain access, with no success. Here was a heaven-sent opportunity. Accordingly I immediately booked myself onto the last of the walks.

For those members unfamiliar with the various ballads which make up the Robin Hood corpus, I should add that the Robin Hood **of the ballads**, though not the first to bear that name, had little connection with Nottinghamshire. He was apparently born in Outwood near Wakefield, lived in what is now Wakefield Bus Station, was declared outlaw in Pontefract in 1322, fled to

Barnsdale Forest, and died at Kirklees Priory near Brighouse in about 1346.

The various versions of the final ballad: *Robyn Hode - Hys Death*, tell basically the same story:

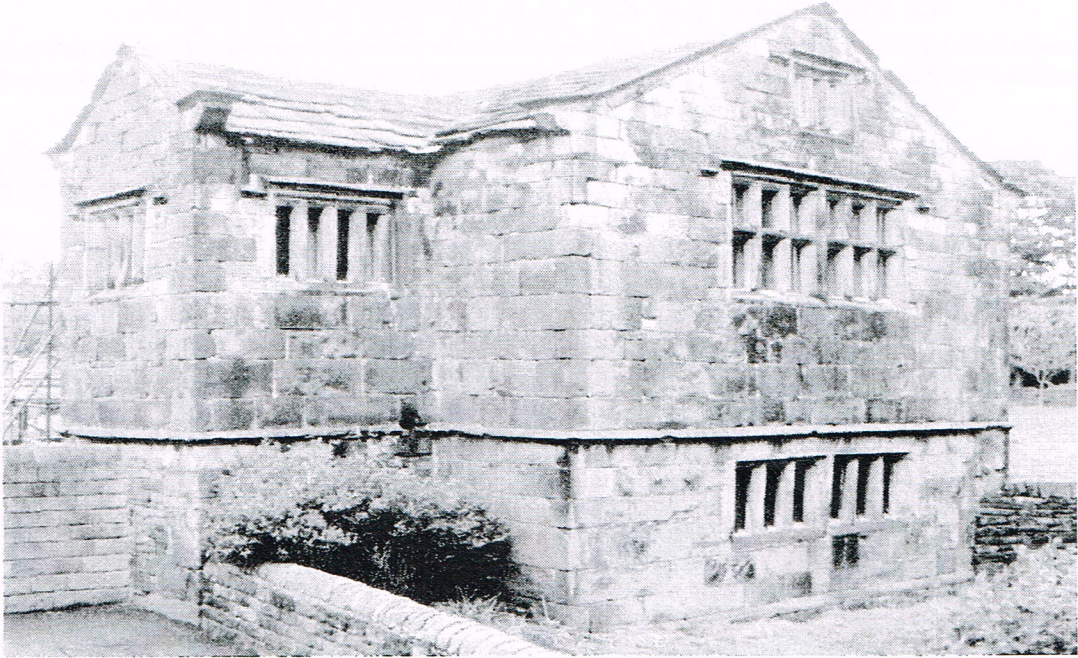
Feeling ill one day in Barnsdale, Robin takes Little John with him to Kirklees Priory where the Prioress was Elizabeth de Staynton, a relative of his wife. Unknown to Robin, His 'cousin' was having an affair with 'Sir Roger of Doncaster,' who was short of money.

Leaving Little John outside, Robin entered the gatehouse, the only part of the convent where men were allowed, and was met by his 'cousin' who suggested bleeding. However, having started it, she never came to stop the flow, (the fact that Robin did not realise this does suggest that he really did come from Wakefield!) and predicting that his time was near Robin summoned Little John with his horn. Later versions of the ballad have him shooting an arrow through the window and being buried where it landed. Earlier ones simply have him being buried there.

Unlike other parts of the Robin Hood story, there has never been any dispute about the gatehouse or the grave. However, the latter is a good three bowshots from the gatehouse, suggesting that the 'final arrow' story is a later addition. Access has always been difficult because the Armytage family purchased the Priory at the Dissolution and used the stones to

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*Kirklees Priory gatehouse, where Robin Hood allegedly died, about 1346.*

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build their hall and the Home Farm. The gatehouse was left intact, whilst the grave is in a distant grove of trees.

Today the estate is within a short distance of the M62 Junction 25. Enthusiasts from as far away as Lincoln gathered on Spring Bank Holiday Monday for their final opportunity to see the site. I was accompanied by Janet Niepokojczycka, our Programme Secretary who also lectures on Robin Hood.

The day began well, though of course it rained at times; this **was** Bank Holiday! Our guide was an elderly lady of great knowledge and fitness. We were all surprised at the wonderful medieval survivals around the farm. Sadly, the gatehouse is in parlous condition and is currently propped up with scaffolding. It has either been re-built or had early Tudor windows fitted since 1346, the assumed date of Robin's death there; I prefer the latter explanation for the apparent anachronism. We were informed that Lady Armytage is negotiating with English Heritage regarding restoration, with little hope of success

as she has no plans for public openings.

Needless to say, the rain became heavy as we approached the gatehouse, but not too heavy to prevent us taking pictures. The building currently faces onto a paddock, which had a couple of miserable horses in it, so we were not allowed to go around it and photograph the window of Robin's room.

The grave is a good walk from the gatehouse, and clearly more than a longbow shot away. However, it must be remembered that ballads are not history, and though this particular one has a real named Prioress who was actually related to Matilda Hood, Sir Roger cannot be traced at all. In any case, the 'final arrow' is in a later version!

Sadly, the trees surrounding the grave, which has been badly vandalised, caused my camera to bleep in protest. I hurriedly reloaded with a faster film and was able to shoot one or two pictures using the stone surround as a firm rest. Returning past the gatehouse we were able to shoot more pictures before leaving the estate for perhaps the final time.

## PROGRAMME CHANGE

Please note that **John Hudson**, who is on the current programme as speaker on **April 18<sup>th</sup>** is **unable to come on that date**. Instead, our Chairman, Eric Houlder, will give his popular talk *COACHING MEMORIES; stage coaches along The Great North Road in Yorkshire*. This is a completely revised version of the lecture originally given to the Society twenty years ago. Committee apologises for any inconvenience caused. John Hudson's talk will now take place in the next programme, previewed elsewhere in this issue.



# GROUP PHOTOGRAPHS.

*Many people have remarked on the attraction of the group pictures in our anniversary book. Here, the author sets out some guidelines for members to ensure that future events are recorded as well, or better than past ones for the benefit of posterity.*

Whilst assembling pictures for the booklet covering the first fifty years of the society, I was struck by the attraction that the group photographs possess. Having been involved in site photography for much of the last half century, it has fallen to my lot to record the personnel of various digs, from small local amateur excavations to prestigious professional projects. Sadly, not every director has found it necessary to record the personnel, and particularly on rescue digs there has often not been the time or inclination to do so. Obviously a winter weekend in blizzard conditions wresting data from a Dark Age cemetery is not the place to pose a group picture, but perhaps the same team is involved on a longer term dig where posing a group may not be out of place.

The actual photographs are naturally on several formats, reflecting the changing equipment thought necessary for archaeological recording. Fortuitously, the groups tend to be on formats still commonly used, the earliest on monochrome film, most on colour slide film, some on colour negative film, and the latest as jpegs saved on to CDs. Luckily, in almost every case, the original slide or negative was available.

The first task was to assemble all the pictures on to a common platform. The most obvious method was to scan all the earliest ones as jpeg files. The originals were then carefully stored away in the dark as the primary archive; it is commonly acknowledged that film stock is sharper and lasts longer than digital media, and as platforms change it may be necessary to re-scan the originals from time to time. Careful storage simplifies this task considerably.

The jpegs were then examined, corrected in Photoshop if necessary (removal of dust spots, sharpening, restoration of contrast and/or colour, correction of framing, etc) and assembled in order.

Memory plays a vital role in the correction process. For example, the countryside (or townscape) assumes different colours according to the season. An autumn dig has an overall warm hue, whilst winter groups tend to have a cold one unless shot early or late in the day. The 1975 and 1976 summers both had a dusty, warm glow to them, as did that of 2006. Most spring seasons have a fresh atmosphere. This seasonal variation should be evident in the group pictures, and usually is, unless deterioration has occurred. Nowadays, this 'feeling' is easy to restore, though care must be

exercised to avoid over-doing it. Luckily the original colour slides have lost little if any colour and subsequently, atmosphere.

Once the group pictures were all assembled a major problem became apparent. Relying on my memory, I rarely made notes of people's names. This was no problem in the 'fifties, 'sixties and 'seventies, but now after fifty years many of the names have simply slipped my memory. A dig may be so memorable that its participants are certain they will never forget their companions. Believe me, they will! The solution is simple, but sadly cannot be applied in retrospect. Write the names straight onto a spare print before too long a time has elapsed. This is easy nowadays utilising *Photoshop's* 'text' facility.

The older groups naturally often depict people who have since died, many of them at too young an age. However, to most viewers, the pictures bring back happy memories of people and places, whilst the more recent ones will serve the same purpose in years to come. I like to think that the collection adds something to the historiography of archaeology. It certainly emphasises the changing fashion scene, and latterly the impact of legislation, with the more recent subjects togged out almost identically in helmets, flash jackets and rigger boots.

So what have I learned from the exercise? Firstly, the important lessons: always write date and site details on the back of a print using a proper pen, not ballpoint; make a spare copy and write names on the faces, also with a proper pen. Next, in setting up a group, remember that the most attractive compositions are rarely made up of people standing in a line. For example, at St Aidan's, the diggers stood, sat, or crouched in various poses using the contours of the vessel as a guide. At Sutton Hoo, the crew was posed in the burial chamber area of the void that had contained the ship. At Darrington Windmill a bank was used to position people at different levels. Placing the camera on a tripod enables the group to be assembled carefully, leaving space for the photographer. In one case (Sutton Hoo again) where the camera did not have a self-timer, a long remote release was utilised.

Finally, make a resolution. Take more group pictures. You may not want them now, but believe me, in fifty years or more you will regret not doing so.

*My thanks to those members who supplied group pictures.*



# PONTEFRACT YOUNG ARCHAEOLOGISTS' CLUB.

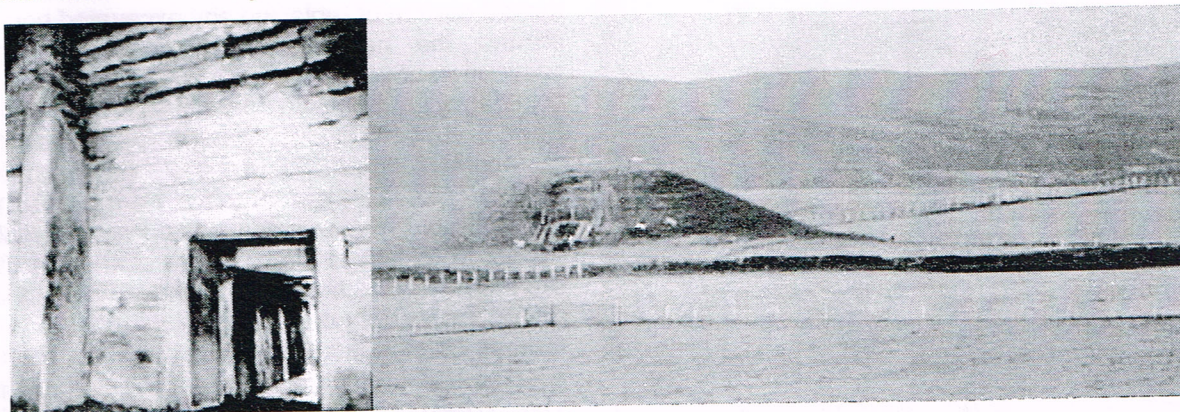
## Burial practices

Janet McNaught

Pontefract Young Archaeologists have shown a great interest in skeletons and the burial practices carried out in this country, so over the last few months we have looked at tombs, cists and coffins, the people buried in them and the variations in body position.

We started our research in prehistory, the chambered cairn of Maes Howe was studied as it related not only to an unusual method of skeletal storage, but also has an arrangement of light wells which allow entry to the sun's rays at the winter solstice. The rays are directed along the

burial ground, as at Lundin Links in Fife. During the Iron Age both buried human remains and cremation urns have been found in cists (graves lined with flat slabs of Stone) and covered with a slab and a cap stone. The Romans buried their dead to the sides of main roads outside their settlements and fort sites be it inhumation or cremation, though later they did create and use quite large areas, set aside for interments. One of these sites was partially excavated by Time Team during their multi-period excavations in York. The site of this cemetery is in the gardens of the York Hotel which sits next to York railway station, where a large number of neatly aligned



Maes Howe, Orkney with the passage way and bone recesses inset to the left.

passage way running between the bone recesses of the cairn, as if the building was orientated to capture and keep safe the dying winter sun, so that it would return in spring.

Each recess contains a separate sort of bone, humeri in one femora in another as if they have been brought and placed here after excarnation (the dead body is placed on a raised platform until no flesh remains) or, buried somewhere else and then moved into this place. Archaeologists are still debating the merits of the various academic beliefs about Maes Howe.

We found that in Britain, cremation and burial appeared to have been practiced

simultaneously, often with both internment and cremation urns being excavated from the same

burials were discovered.

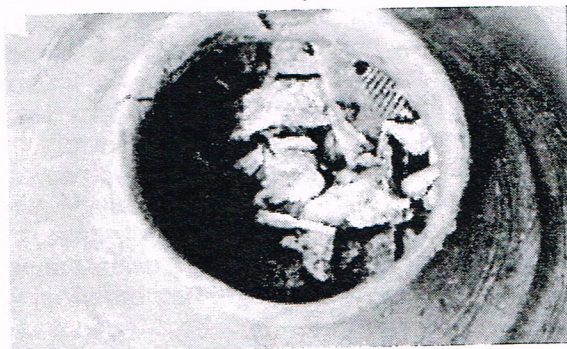
A cremation urn when buried in prehistory was usually the right way up and covered by a flat stone, while in the Roman period they were often inverted. To reduce bone to ash a pyre of logs was laid with each layer laid at right angles to the previous layer with a space at ground level to

allow a through draft that would allow the fire beneath to burn at maximum strength. The body was placed on top of the pyre and the fire set alight. The contents of excavated urns show that the ash from the pyre was gathered up as well as the bone fragments.

Occasionally, as at Castleford 2001 (Time Team), an urn is

excavated which contains only sherds of pottery,

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Cremation urns containing the cleaned burnt bone, and in the top right a horn comb.



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none of which match. This is known as a cenotaph urn and is thought to contain pottery from each person present at the feast to celebrate the life of the dead person. Pre-Christian burials in Britain were often



Jarlshof Viking boat burial

accompanied by artefacts, some of which appear to be purely decorative, while others appear to be indicators of male or female occupation. In Scottish coastal burials a scattering of quartz pebbles are often found, arranged around the head, these would have glittered in the sunlight when wet. One of the Iron Age burials from Ferrybridge Henge contained an array of flint and bone tools and, a beaker with incised markings; these items suggest a male burial. The skeletons of this period can be found crouched to the right or left, laid flat on their backs and occasionally on their fronts.

Christianity brought with it order and uniformity to the burials, with feet to the east and head to the west, arms across the torso or by the sides. Coffin burials being less restricting on the limbs of the body and the head, allowed lateral movement of the skull and arms, whereas shroud

burials tightly bound the body allowing the infill of earth to mould itself around the burial restricting movement. Artefacts are not commonly found in Christian burials, although bishops were buried with a set of communion vessels as at Whithorn Priory where seven such burials were excavated. Wooden coffins are rarely found during excavation, but are often indicated by the remains of any metal fittings. The only indicators of a shroud burial are small silver pins which would have been used to secure the folds of material and the tighter position of the arms and legs due to the proximity of soil infill.

Only in modern times have completely separate burial sites for interment and cremation burials become the norm. If today's government and church committees get their way burials and cremations will only have a leasehold on their plot and will eventually have it sold over their dead bodies for use by new internees. At least the old custom of replacing any excavated bones around the new coffin allowed continuing occupation of your burial site even if it was joint occupancy.

Several Young archaeologists agreed to represent Viking and Roman dead. Having taken up their positions, grave goods were placed in the chosen graves in the positions we would expect to excavate the goods in relation to the skeletons. Interestingly, although we had looked at reconstruction drawings of several of the famous burial sites, they were reluctant to put needles and cooking equipment in male graves. The Young Archaeologists were thinking in modern generic terms and not thinking themselves into the past where self-sufficiency of men travelling and surviving without the comforts of home and hearth would have been required.

Next we dealt with the requirements of careful archaeological excavation of all human remains so that they are dealt with sensitively and correctly. Careful excavation of the whole skeleton is required with photography and recording of not only the skeletal remains, but also the grave shape and depth to give precise information for future research. A soil sample is often taken from the infill to allow environmental archaeologists to gain a clear picture of the flora and fauna represented at the time of burial; this then indicates the probable season of burial. The skeleton is allocated an inhumation number as well as a context number which is applied to each finds bag used during the lifting of the skeleton and transferred directly onto the bones after conservation. Left and right limbs are bagged separately and left and right sides clearly marked. This is especially important for the hand and foot bones as the small differences in shape are hard to detect using macroscopic techniques

(Continued on page 13)

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Grave goods from an Iron Age crouched burial at Ferrybridge Henge

when the bones become mixed.

Once lifted, cleaned and conserved the long process of recording the presence or absence of the elements of each skeleton can begin and this was the next practical exercise we carried out. Skeletal data collection sheets produced by Douglas Ubelaker and Jane Buikstra, which are the osteoarchaeologists agreed method of best practice, were handed out. One sheet showing the outline of the whole skeleton from the anterior and posterior positions, one for the anterior skull and face, one for the posterior view of the skull, and two for the lateral or side views of the skull. A photograph of several stone coffins, each containing skeletal remains was handed out and a demonstration of how bones which are present are coloured in and those which are absent are left blank was given, along with the method for representation of trauma areas on the skull. Using macroscopic techniques, a data base was slowly produced. Next, each Young archaeologist was given a magnifying glass and told to study the skeletons again to see which bones they had missed, and to fill them in using another colour. Discussion followed about how difficult it would be to excavate a skeleton without missing any of the bones, especially the finger and toe bones if you did not know an awful lot about human anatomy.

All of our meetings are geared to research, presentation of our research in many forms,



Young archaeologists filling in human born, recording sheets

discussion and practical applications of what we have discovered. Guests who wish to share their knowledge with us are always welcome.



## **PROGRAMME OF LECTURES 2008-9**

In the lecture room of Pontefract Museum beginning at 7-15 pm sharp.  
Visitors are welcome for a nominal charge of £2 per lecture.

**18<sup>th</sup> April 2008. *COACHING MEMORIES*, by Eric Houlder.  
(Chairman).**

Stage coaches along the Great North Road in Yorkshire, showing the inns and toll houses as they were and as they survived.

**17<sup>th</sup> October 2008. *THE NODE TO KNOW*, by Dr Janet M<sup>c</sup>Naught, (Palaeopathologist). Bones and Buildings.**

**21<sup>st</sup> November. *HISTORICAL MINING IN MIDDLETON PARK*, by Martin Roe (Archaeologist).**

**19<sup>th</sup> December. *THE MAGICAL ISLE OF COLONSAY In Poems and Pictures*, by Janet Niepokojczycka (Blue Badge Guide). .**

**16<sup>th</sup> January 2009. *THE WORK OF THE COUNTRY POTTER, WITH REFERENCE TO HISTORIC CERAMICS*, by John Hudson, (potter & TV personality).**

**20<sup>th</sup> February. *THE YORKSHIRE MUSEUM AND ITS ARCHAEOLOGICAL MARVELS*, by Andrew Morrison (of York Museums).**

**20<sup>th</sup> March 2009. *PATHS AND ROADS OF ENGLAND - THOSE WHO MADE THEM AND THOSE WHO USED THEM*, by Tony Morris.**

**17<sup>th</sup> April 2009. *THE HISTORY OF HARDCASTLE CRAGS & GIBSON MILL*, by Trevor Moody.**

**24<sup>th</sup> April. *ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. MEMBERS ONLY.*  
Please inform the Secretary of proposed rule changes and nominations for Committee at least one month prior to this date.**



# HERMITAGE UPDATE,

by David Wilcox, Hermitage Sub-committee Chairman and Team Leader.

In 2004 I was made aware of future plans regarding the demolition of a large number of the buildings of Pontefract General Infirmary to make way for the new hospital.

The old Dispensary appeared to be at risk, so the Society applied to the Secretary of State, then Tessa Jowell, to have it listed. The application was unsuccessful as there were many examples of Victorian hospitals throughout the country. She had completely disregarded the importance of the building and what lies below it, namely the hermitage.

The Society suggested putting the building to public use, and in order to obtain some idea of possible funding for this, canvassed other local societies for their opinions and support. Only one reply was received!

In 2005, together with three members of our Hermitage Team and invited specialists in

archaeology and conservation, I attended meetings at PGI with the hospital management to discuss future plans. Dr Chris Constable, Senior Historic Buildings Officer joined us at my request.

From this point onwards we made great progress as a result of his research at the Registry of Deeds.

Since then, many specialist visitors and consultants have been involved, to the point that in January 2008, English Heritage sent a breakdown list of costs of both repairing existing structures, and investigating blocked-in sections of the monument.

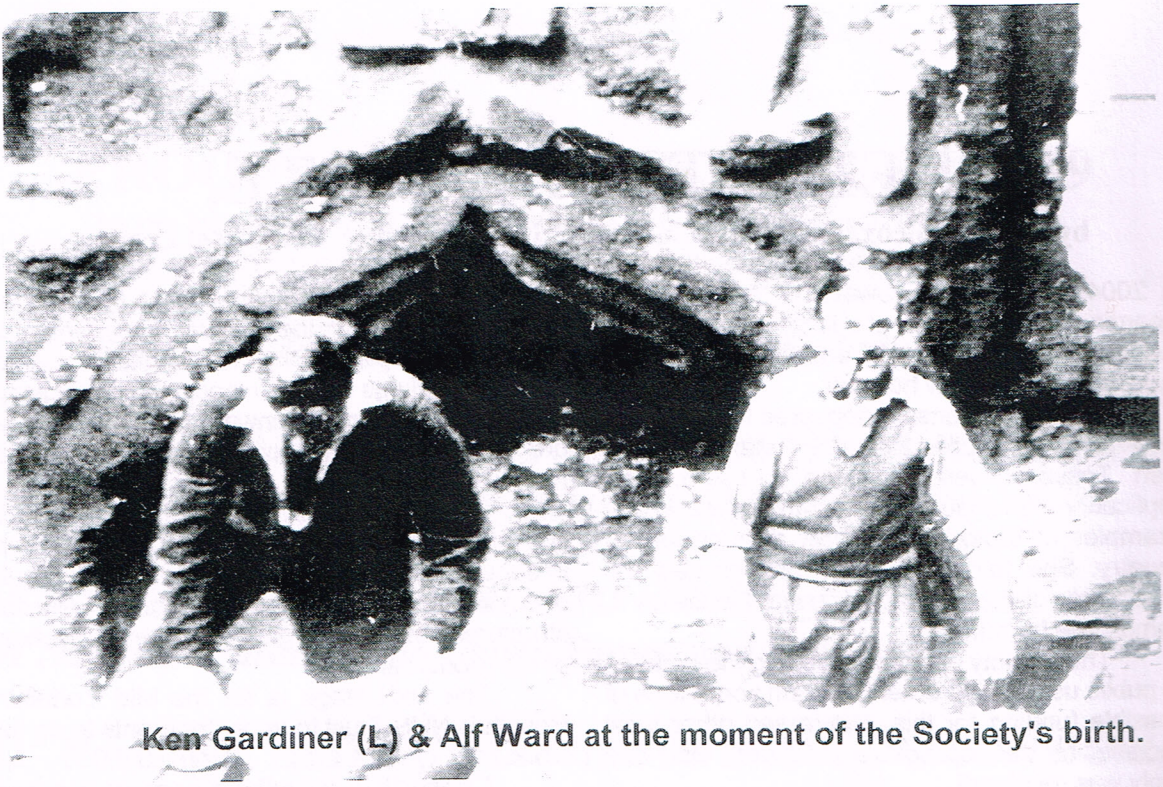
The next stage is for the Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust to apply for grants to do this work.

I hope that everything goes as planned, and that no snags occur to cause failure at this advanced stage.



*David Wilcox making a presentation to Society Vice-President Bill Booth to mark his dedication to the Hermitage since the foundation of the Society (in which he was instrumental!) in 1957. Picture J M<sup>c</sup>Naught.*





**Ken Gardiner (L) & Alf Ward at the moment of the Society's birth.**

This Newsletter is published by THE PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, and Edited by Eric Houlder. Submissions, which should be plain text (\*.txt) format, on CD, should be sent to him at 31 Fairview, Carleton, PONTEFRACT, 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, who is solely responsible for copyright clearance of all images submitted. Items 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/Treasurer: Mr R Evison, 55, Hardwick Rd., Carleton, PONTEFRACT, WF8 3QY  
 Field Director: Mr S Tomson, 36, Holgate Gardens, HEMSWORTH, WF9 4NQ

# PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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