

# PONTEFRACT & DISTRICT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## RETROSPECTIVE REPORT ON THE WORK AT FORDHAM'S CLAY PIPE FACTORY, THE BOOTHS, PONTEFRACT, 1958.

Eric Houlder.

As the last surviving participant in this investigation, the writer is taking the opportunity to put on paper his memories and photographs of the work. However, it must be born in mind that sixty years ago he was still a schoolboy, taking photographs with inexpensive equipment and having films developed and printed at Chas. H Maud Photography. Indeed, the original negatives and prints disappeared during several house-moves, and the Society is indebted to the late Kenneth Gardiner who probably directed the investigation. Kenneth purchased prints from the author, as well as taking his own pictures. This pictorial record of the work was recently re-discovered in his original photograph album in the PontArc archives. The writer was able to scan the prints and in every case improve upon them.

### PARTICIPANTS

The chief participants were Society Secretary Kenneth Gardiner, Founder Member Alf Ward, the then Programme Secretary William (Bill) Booth, and the writer. All except EH were members of CV Bellamy's WEA class in Basic Archaeology.

### LOCATION

The Booths, a setted street leading from All Saints' Church to the castle's East Gate, merges with Beech Hill shortly before running up to the site



of the drawbridge, the latter still evident as a dip in the setted roadway. In 1958 there was a row of derelict cottages directly beneath the castle's rock here. A gap in the cottages gave access to a short yard in which was the small pipe factory, constructed of standard 3½ inch bricks, probably in the mid Nineteenth Century. NGR: SE 462224. It was still known locally as Fordham's.

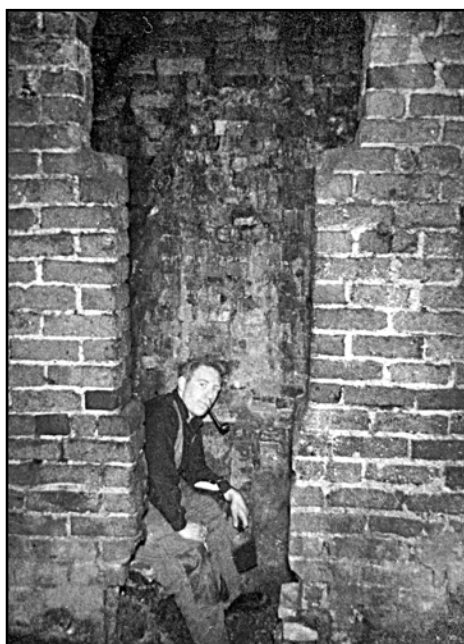
### THE WORK

Work consisted of removing debris and brushing the interior of the kiln. As far as can be remembered, the only record was by photography, with no

written descriptions, plans or elevations. No ranging poles or photographic scales were possessed by the Society so early in its history, though the image of the clay pit appears to have a one foot (30cm) ruler standing in it. Rough dimensions may be gauged by the standard 3½" bricks used in the construction, and by comparison with W Booth who was pictured sitting inside the kiln.

Photographs were taken by the writer using a Coronet Viscount on bantam sized (828) film, and by Kenneth Gardiner on an unidentified folding camera. As the factory was in total darkness, PF1 flashbulbs (at 8<sup>d</sup> each) were used to illuminate the interior.

The only complete pipes noted were



*W (Bill) Booth sitting inside the cleaned kiln. K.G.*

a number of churchwarden pipes still soft and awaiting the kiln. No record of these was made.

#### TECHNICAL NOTE

The photographic prints in question are of two sizes: Kenneth Gardiner's are contact prints 85 x 65 millimetres on a lustre paper. They are slightly soft.

Eric Houlder's are what were known as en-prints: 110 x 87.5 millimetres. Printed by Mauds on glossy paper, they are of good quality still, though limited by their small dimensions in their capacity to enlarge.

All were scanned on an Epson V200 flatbed scanner, and processed in *Affinity Photo* by Serif. EH's pictures were sharpened with the clarity control,



*The Claypit. Note that the scale is probably a foot (30cm) rule. K.G.*

and KG's by the unsharp mask facility.

#### ADDENDUM

The writer's maternal grandfather, Jack Ward of Cromwell Crescent, earlier of Tanshelf, remembered the factory and its then owner well, as he worked there before leaving school. He described the proprietor's custom of taking a horse-drawn cart around the pubs all over the county, selling bundles of clay pipes. These excursions were made during the summer, and he sometimes slept under the cart. Apparently, it was still the custom for pubs frequented by working men to have a jar of pipes on the bar for use by purchasers of

tobacco.

Eric Houlder,  
February 2019.



*Close-up of the kiln floor, showing broken pipes fused in glaze.  
E.H.*