

Obituary: Lawrence Butler (1934 – 2014)

Lawrence Butler, one of the founding members of the Society and the first editor of its journal, died on 10th December 2014. Born in Nottingham in January 1934, he attended Nottingham High School before reading History at Peterhouse, Cambridge. His interest in material culture from an early stage can be seen in his researching medieval grave slabs for his PhD whilst also undertaking his National Service tracking Russian aircraft in Fighter Command.

Lawrence's archaeological career commenced after a brief period teaching when he joined the Welsh Royal Commission for Historic Monuments in Aberystwyth, where he worked as an Investigator from 1959 to 1965. His elder brother Ronald made his career within the English Commission, but Lawrence moved to an academic career in 1965 when he moved to the University of Leeds as lecturer in medieval archaeology, and was active in the transition of the Post-Medieval Ceramic Research Group into that of the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology in the following years. He acted as editor of the journal for its first four issues, and was elected Vice-President in 1993.

Lawrence continued to undertake research, including a series of excavations, in Wales for the rest of his career, even though he was based in Yorkshire. He was an active member of the Cambrian Association, serving as President from 1997-98. However, he also immersed himself in the local Yorkshire archaeological community as indicated by his long-term involvement with the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, acting as President from 1994 until 1998. University restructuring led to the closure of several small archaeology departments in the early 1990s, and Leeds was one of these, with its staff moving to the University of York. As a colleague of Lawrence's at York for 20 years, I had the pleasure of jointly teaching a number of courses with him, and recognising his dry sense of humour, astute assessment of students' character and abilities, and providing an empirically based haven for those who were not attracted to more theoretical approaches to archaeology. His field trips by minibus were legendary, sheep always magically grazing over the key below-ground locations of features, pointed out of even the rear window of the vehicle whilst driving at speed down country lands.

Whilst most of Lawrence's research was on high medieval sites, many had significant later phases of occupation which he excavated and interpreted with as much care as the earlier ones. Of particular significance was his major excavation project at Sandal Castle, Yorkshire, with the Society's first Secretary, Phil Mayes, leading to the highly influential monograph *Sandal Castle Excavations 1964-1973: a Detailed Archaeological Report* in 1983.¹ These extensive excavations enabled the first spatial analysis of activities within the site based on artefact distributions, and provided so much more than a purely structural sequence of the structures. The site is managed by Wakefield Council and is open to the public. Castles were one of Lawrence's abiding interests, with his many seasons at Dolforwyn training a number who are now professional archaeologists, with another legacy being the public opening of this site by Cadw. As one of the few surviving castles built by Welsh princes, this site has a particular resonance in devolved Wales.

Lawrence was also dedicated to the study of religious buildings – monasteries, churches and cathedrals. A number of monastic sites attracted his attentions, including the first scientific excavation of the only major monastic site on the Isle of Man at Rushen Abbey. He served on the Cathedrals Advisory Commission for over 10 years and for many years was Consultant Archaeologist

at Lincoln, Wakefield and Sheffield Cathedrals, as well as York Minster. Lawrence published a steady stream of articles related to church matters, and co-authored a monograph on Deerhurst, Gloucestershire² and co-edited a festschrift for H.M. Taylor.³ Specifically post-medieval publications include co-authoring with Richard Morris a seminal paper on the post-medieval Cavendish vault in Derby Cathedral,⁴ and several papers on post-medieval memorials for county journals and *Church Monuments*. Lawrence always recognised the importance of documentary sources in the understanding of material remains, and this is well illustrated in the two volumes he edited of the 18th-century *Bishop Gastrell's 'Notitia'* which provides descriptions of the state of churches at that time. These reveal a great deal about the buildings' fabric, layout and monuments prior to Victorian 'restoration'.⁵ He also edited for publication the notes of antiquarian Sir Stephen Glynne which described 400 Yorkshire churches and abbeys, supported by reproduction of 250 of Glynne's illustrations.⁶ He was serving as President of the Society for Church Archaeology from 2012 until his death.

Lawrence retired to Swaffham Bulbeck, Cambridgeshire on retirement, but sadly his wife Isobel died soon after. Nevertheless, he immersed himself in the local community – being active in its church, choir, and the Swaffham Bulbeck Summer Theatre; he had a particular affection for the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, and had been an active Morris dancer. Despite living and working away from the Midlands all his adult life, Lawrence continued to support Nottingham Forest Football Club – and not just in that period when they were European champions. In retirement he also continued his archaeological and historical interests, researching the parish church by recording the gravestones in the churchyard and its standing fabric during building work; he produced its current guide book.⁷ A committed Christian throughout his life, Lawrence had carefully prepared his own funeral service on the theme of pilgrimage; Lawrence's life was a journey, and one which many of us feel privileged to have shared along various parts of that path. The funeral brought many together who were surprised at the diversity of his interests and groups of friends. The Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology owes Lawrence a particular debt, but his Editorial in the first issue of the journal on the theme of faith, hope, and charity is one which all those elected to Council would do well to read, to prepare them to serve the Society in the same spirit that Lawrence did.

Harold Mytum

References

Butler, L.A.S. 1986, *The Archdeaconry of Richmond in the eighteenth century: Bishop Gastrell's 'Notitia' –The Yorkshire parishes 1714-1725*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series **146**. Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

Butler, L.A.S. 1998, *The Cumbria Parishes 1714-1725 from Bishop Gastrell's Notitia, with additions by Bishop Porteus 1778-1779*, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Record Series **12**. Kendal: Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.

Butler, L.A.S. 2007, *The Yorkshire Church Notes of Sir Stephen Glynne (1825-1874)*, Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series **159**. Woodbridge: Yorkshire Archaeological Society.

Author Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Post-medieval Archaeology* vol 50.1 (2016) pp. 178-180.

Available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00794236.2016.1193301>

Butler, L.A.S. 2009, *St. Mary's Church, Swaffham Bulbeck Church Guide*. Swaffham Bulbeck: Swaffham Bulbeck P.C.C.

Butler, L.A.S. & Morris, R. (eds) 1986, *The Anglo-Saxon Church: studies in honour of Dr. H. M. Taylor*, Council for British Archaeology Research Report 60. York: Council for British Archaeology.

Butler, L.A.S. & Morris, R. 1994, 'Derby Cathedral: The Cavendish Vault', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal* **116**, 14-28.

Mayes, P. & Butler, L.A.S. *Sandal Castle Excavations 1964-1973: a Detailed Archaeological Report*. Wakefield: Wakefield Historical Publications.

Rahz, P.A., Watts, L., Taylor, H.M., Butler, L.A. & Aldsworth, F., 1997, *St. Mary's Church, Deerhurst, Gloucestershire: fieldwork, excavations, and structural analysis, 1971-1984*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press.



¹ Mayes & Butler 1983.

² Rahtz et. al. 1997.

³ Butler & Morris 1986.

⁴ Butler & Morris 1994.

⁵ Butler 1986, 1998.

⁶ Butler 2007.

⁷ Butler 2009.