

Chapter 2

A History of Archaeology in Great Britain

Archaeology in Britain spans the entire history of archaeology as a field of enquiry, and it may be no co-incidence, therefore, that Britain is where some of the most significant developments took place in shaping the modern profession. That said, archaeology in Britain has been the domain of the amateur for most of its history and the role of the amateur in an increasingly professionalised field, enabled largely by commercial funding, is a long-standing debate in British archaeology. It is also one of the themes of this chapter. The other two themes we address are, first, the development of archaeological techniques and second, the development of multiple readings of the British past.

Arguably, the origins of archaeology in Britain lie in the mediaeval period with inquisitive monks. It is then taken up as a pursuit for the leisured landed class, and subsequently becomes a subject suitable for university academics, before becoming, from the late 1980s, a fully fledged practical profession. There are no single publications telling the entire story of archaeology in Britain, despite a recent growth in interest in the history of the discipline (but c.f. Trigger 2006), and most reviews are quite old now: the best include Marsden (1983) and Piggott (1989) on the period to 1900, and Hudson (1981) on the period from the Victorians to the 1970s, all of which emphasise the role of the amateur. A short version which focuses specifically on the rise of professionalism is McAdam's (1995) chapter 'Trying to Make It Happen' in Cooper et al. (1995), while Schofield's *Great Excavations* (2011) summarises the contribution made by notable excavations and excavators to shaping the modern archaeological profession. For critical reviews of how professionalisation came about and its consequences, refer especially to Lucas (2001), Roskams (2001) and Everill (2006).

Before 1800: Seeking King Arthur, Druids and Others

The earliest example of archaeological work in Britain can, perhaps, be claimed by monks at Glastonbury Abbey in 1194, where the supposed burial place of King Arthur was found during the rebuilding of the great church after a fire

(it was most likely the grave of a former Abbott). A more systematic – and less accidental – approach was taken by John Leland, appointed ‘the King’s Antiquary’ by Henry VIII in 1533 and charged with searching England and Wales for antiquities of all kinds. His *Itinerary* was never published due to his death before its completion, but it stands as an example of the early kind of recording, focussing chiefly upon Roman, Saxon and what were assumed to be ‘Danish’ remains. There is nothing of earlier date as Leland was dismissive of anything pre-Roman (Marsden 1983, 1; Trigger 2006, 85). Leland’s leading successor was William Camden, author of the monumental *Britannia* first published in 1586: this work also included pre-Roman and later Saxon material, although with no clear chronology yet established since major prehistoric monuments – among them Stonehenge – were not identified as such (Trigger 2006, 86; Marsden 1983, 2). The sixteenth century also saw the first society of antiquaries dedicated to the study of Britain’s past, founded by Camden and others in 1577. This had a relatively short existence: it became a place where lawyers, in particular, could discuss the legal regime then in place, and was finally suppressed by King James in the early seventeenth century for its political activities (Marsden 1983, 2; Carman 1996, 48).

Despite the closure of the first society of antiquaries, however, the seventeenth century would see significant advances in the study of British prehistory. Among those showing an interest were members of the landed classes such as William Dugdale, who identified stone tools as the product of ancient Britons from an era when metalworking must have been unknown. Robert Plot, first Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, and his assistant Edward Lhew undertook comparison of stone tools from Britain with those known to have been manufactured by the inhabitants of the New World to confirm their manufacture by humans, and in Scotland, Robert Sibbald was doing similar work (Trigger 2006, 93–94). The best known of these antiquaries, however, and one courted by King Charles II, was John Aubrey, who among other achievements recognised stone circles as a distinct category of ancient remains, identified and planned the monument at Avebury and (by noting how shadows fell) was the first to see the ring of holes at Stonehenge that now bear his name (Trigger 2006, 107; Marsden 1983, 3). He was also the first to attribute these great prehistoric monuments to the historically attested Druids, thus providing the basis on which a persistent myth has been based. Nonetheless, the work of Aubrey, his contemporaries and his immediate successors, led to an emerging interest among the landed and more leisurely classes in the material evidence of their country’s past. By the end of the century, a number of clear traditions had been established to be built upon by others. From Camden came the recognition that buried features would indicate their presence by differential crop growth or by undulations in the ground surface; and from Aubrey and others a tradition of fieldwork, involving the active seeking-out of remains and their careful recording in words, pictures and as plans; and also the grouping together of monuments into similar types.

The eighteenth century saw the emergence of ‘the first great English field archaeologist’ (Marsden 1983, 5), William Stukeley. Stukeley drew on the established traditions of fieldwork to identify and record ‘the Antiquitys of Britain’, resulting in

his *Itinerarium Curiosum* of 1724 which contained over 100 descriptions and engravings of monuments and objects of antiquarian interest. It was Stukeley's particular contribution to first suggest that certain classes of monument predated the Roman Conquest and that connections with the nearby European continent may have helped shape Britain's past. He was also one of the first to use excavation as a tool of investigation into the past, driving trenches into a number of mounds which he then was able to classify according to type. Although stratigraphy was yet to be developed as a method of analysis, Stukeley carefully recorded the internal structure of such mounds as well as their contents: for those who came after he would leave evidence of his earlier incursion by leaving a memento – usually a coin – in the backfilled trench. His detailed plans and descriptions of Stonehenge and Avebury have proved valuable to modern scholars, and his attempts at relative dating established principles still followed today: in particular, his recognition that Roman roads that cut through burial mounds or bypassed other monuments must postdate them. The consequent inference that such monuments must predate the Roman occupation led to the theory of a long occupation of Britain prior to the Roman invasion. Stukeley's later work, which followed Aubrey's earlier ascription of major monuments to the Druids (Piggott 1989, 143–146), was aimed to defend the (then still relatively new) Church of England orthodoxy against those who challenged it: it was felt that demonstrating the supposed antiquity of the Trinity would give the theology propounded by the Church a greater degree of authority. With the decline of the debates in which these arguments were embedded, a strictly antiquarian interest in Druidism emerged to cloud developments in understanding the early history of Britain: as Piggott (1989, 150) described it, 'Druids in various fantastic disguises persist'.

Stukeley was a founder member of the Society of Antiquaries of London, originally a group of like-minded individuals meeting informally from 1707, then formally constituted in 1717 before being granted a charter in 1754: it remains a leading learned society that has its offices just off Piccadilly Circus in London. The foundation of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland followed in 1780, and a further Society of Antiquaries for (the city of) Newcastle upon Tyne (northeast England) in 1813. As Piggott (1989, 152–157) (see also Trigger 2006, 118–120) makes clear, however, the period from the early eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries saw few real advances in the study of the material past in terms of understanding: chronological schemes had yet to be developed, and even though Stukeley had shown that the mound at Silbury Hill must predate the Roman road that swerves to avoid it, thus providing a means to attempt relative dating, field monuments were still haphazardly ascribed to various figures of fancy, history and myth. The publications of the various societies accordingly abound with descriptive pieces and such speculative articles.

However, the fashion for excavation was one trend which did see development in this period. Throughout the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth, a number of individuals – generally referred to as 'barrow diggers' because of the burial mounds ('barrows') they investigated – carried out extensive investigations, usually in the areas where they lived or on land they owned. The majority came from the professions, which in those days meant the Church or medicine, with the occasional

soldier also taking part. By the early nineteenth century, however, members of the new professions and the emerging capitalist class were also becoming interested in these relics. Notable among these were Sir Richard Colt Hoare (the son of a banker) and William Cunnington (a wool merchant), who co-operated on investigating barrows in Wiltshire in southwest England (Marsden 1983, 15–20). In all these cases, those credited with the ‘digging’ were not those necessarily responsible for the actual spade-work: Everill (2006) identifies a father-and-son team of workmen, Stephen and John Parker, as ‘the invisible diggers’ who actually carried out work on behalf of Cunnington but whose names are generally excluded from histories of archaeology. Drawing upon and extending an analogy made by Piggott, he compares the group with modern practice, as an early example of a ‘contracting unit’ in the service of Colt Hoare.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, British archaeology had some of its foundations in place. Specific antiquities, including some famous ancient monuments, had been identified and ascribed if not to a specific time period, then at least to a period before written history, and the beginnings of a relative dating methodology were established. They had been surveyed, planned and recorded to a very high standard that serves modern researchers well (see, e.g., Ucko et al. 1991 on Avebury; Chippindale 1983b on Stonehenge). There was also, as a result of earlier work by Camden and others, a broad understanding of the types of antiquity that dotted the British landscape, and although the techniques of the ‘barrow diggers’ of the eighteenth century left much to be desired from a modern point of view, the key methodology of field archaeology – excavation – was well established. The archaeology of this period was inevitably a pastime for the leisured classes: the idea of a state-sponsored archaeology was yet to emerge and the working poor so far lacked the educational background, the time and the energy to take any part in studying the past. As we have seen with the Parkers, however, it was mostly such people who undertook the physical task of excavation, while their employers stood by to watch, and frequently not even that.

The Nineteenth Century: The Emergence of Archaeology

The main intellectual strands of the development of archaeology in the nineteenth century – those that were to transform earlier antiquarianism and ‘barrow digging’ into archaeology proper – have been widely discussed by historians of the discipline (e.g., Trigger 2006; Daniel 1967; Daniel and Renfrew 1988). These were aspects widely shared across Europe and North America, and although some major participants in this story were based in Britain, they cannot be claimed as uniquely British contributions. Nevertheless, the efforts of British individuals to disseminate the findings of research and of approaches to dating developed elsewhere did much to promote the internationalisation of the field. These include the adoption by such figures as John Lubbock of the so-called ‘Three Age System’ for European prehistory developed initially in Denmark and extended by the work of Lubbock and others to

all of Europe; the adoption from geology of principles such as that of stratigraphy, allowing the identification of deposits separately, and in sequence; the recognition from the work especially of figures such as Boucher de Perthes and – more pertinently for Britain – the finds at Brixham Cave (Devon, southwest England), of the bones of extinct animals associated with worked stone tools, of the antiquity of humanity. All of these combined in the latter half of the nineteenth century to a recognition that the past – the prehistoric past in particular – was deeper than first thought, and could not be filled either by reference to Biblical or historical sources alone, and that the study of material traces of that past was key to its understanding.

A particularly British contribution, however, was reflected in one significant attempt to fill the void of this deeper prehistoric past. In 1859, Charles Darwin finally published his theory of the evolutionary process, whereby species changed in response to natural selection, favouring those individuals best suited to their environment. This ground-breaking theory was published under the title *The Origin of Species*. Darwin's work was underpinned by the geological studies of his friend Charles Lyell, who published his multi-volume work *Principles of Geology* between 1830 and 1833. Darwin received the volumes as they were published – sent to him during his voyages on *HMS Beagle*. Lyell's main contribution was to formalise the principle of stratigraphy in geology, which was of course later applied to archaeology. Darwin never intended to extend his theory to the development of humanity: a devout Christian, he believed fervently that humanity was a special case. Later, however, he would apply his theory to the physical emergence of humanity – making the crucial links with other primates – but not to human social existence.

Yet figures such as Herbert Spencer took the view that if 'survival of the fittest' was a natural law, then it would apply equally to matters social and cultural as to biological phenomena, and it was this view that took root in archaeological and anthropological thinking to develop the first 'scientific' approach to archaeology. This was developed by Lubbock in his series of publications which were later combined into the book *Pre-historic Times*, first published in 1865 (a mere 6 years after Darwin) and which went through 11 editions into the twentieth century. The book combined several concerns: the extension of the Three Age System of Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages to divide the Stone Age into a Palaeolithic (old-) and a Neolithic (new stone age); the establishment of the antiquity of humanity; and an argument that social and moral development went hand-in-hand with technological development, derived from both archaeological and ethnographic sources. For Lubbock, the last of these – and the most important point of the book – connected to his own beliefs in human progress and betterment in his own society through processes of education, especially in the natural sciences (Patton 2007). It also provided support for the conquest – and even extermination – of other peoples on the basis that their inferiority was the result of a natural inability to better themselves.

Figures such as Lubbock, Darwin, Spencer and their associates, including Thomas Huxley, are frequently depicted as a Victorian scientific aristocracy, and indeed confused with the actual aristocratic class in part because of Lubbock's later career in politics that led to his becoming Lord Avebury. It is true that Lubbock and

some others were wealthy (Lubbock was director of a leading bank) and had close connections with the landed class, their wealth having allowed them to buy land and the houses to live in. There was also an established connection between students of the past and the aristocracy through the main London-based societies dedicated to its study. However, many of those involved in scientific study in the later nineteenth century were from relatively humble origins and very frequently self-educated, as was Lubbock himself (Hudson 1981, 50; Patton 2007). The closeness of individuals was a crucial component of Victorian science and has been the subject of some study (e.g., Barton 1990, 1998; Chapman 1989). What is less well studied, but equally important for archaeology, was the rise of local, county and regional archaeological societies from the 1840s onwards: it was the work of these bodies that represent the bulk of archaeological work in the nineteenth century, largely continuing in the tradition of ‘barrow digging’ from the previous century and also extending the range of interests.

Piggott (1976) addresses the origins of the Victorian surge of archaeological societies, tracing its origin to a number of influences: efforts to reform the official religion; the Romantic imagination; a greater ease of transport; and – paradoxically – the emergence of geology as an organised science. The latter had become ‘a developed natural science’ by the 1820s (Toulmin and Goldfield 1967, 199), thereby effectively excluding the intermittent efforts of amateurs from making any significant contribution, although its findings were also becoming more widely available. At the same time, an improvement in roads (noticeable especially in Scotland, in part the result of a response to the threat of rebellions now past) and the rapid and increasing development of rail travel allowed more people to travel more easily around the country, and thus gave greater opportunity to explore those features that geologists, antiquarians and others had made prominent in the cultural landscape (e.g., see Hudson 1981, 43–47). The works of Romantic writers such as Walter Scott and poets such as William Wordsworth had a similar effect by focussing the historical imagination upon the picturesque, the local and the traditional. A final function was to loosen the increasingly tight restrictions on social activity that were emerging: the members of these societies could – on the pretext, however true, of studying the local past – mix with people of almost all social classes and both sexes without fear of breaking social taboos: this was especially important for women, who would otherwise be largely housebound.

For Piggott, however, the catalyst that brought about the invention of the local society as an institution was the emergence of a concern to rejuvenate the established Church of England by making it distinct from its Protestant rivals. The Cambridge-based Camden Society (by no means accidentally named after the antiquarian) and the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture were in fact organisations devoted to ‘ecclesiology’, which meant changing the liturgical practices of the Church by restoring them to what they saw as a kind of mediaeval ‘purity’ (as the original aims of the Camden Society have been forgotten, this movement is normally referred to as ‘the Oxford Movement’). In doing so, they advocated changes to the way the fabric of churches was used: restoring fonts (some of which were used as deposits for wet umbrellas, for instance, or as horse-troughs)

to their 'rightful' place inside the church; and removing the altar from perhaps a central position close to the congregation, to the East end and away from them. Such concerns inevitably led to a wider interest in the fabric of church buildings, encouraging antiquarian interests among the clergy in particular. In this respect, Hudson (1981, 18–20) demonstrates the high number of clergy involved in the emerging archaeological societies in the 1840s, while Piggott (1976, 182) provides the reason for this and goes further to indicate the nature of religious disputes that caused divisions within the new societies.

The societies that were formed from the 1840s gave themselves varied names once the area they covered (frequently a county, but sometimes the smaller area around a particular town) was specified: 'Archaeological and Natural History Society', 'Geological, Archaeological, Botanical and Zoological Society', simply 'Archaeological Society' or sometimes more simply 'Field Club', indicating the focus of the group on fieldwork outdoors. These societies were responsible for the great bulk of archaeological research undertaken in Britain during the period from mid-eighteenth century to the 1970s, co-operation and exchange between their members being encouraged and enhanced by the creation in 1898 of the national Congress of Archaeological Societies. Archaeology throughout this period was, therefore, driven not by any official or government interest, nor largely by any form of professional concern, but by keen amateurs who laid the basis for much of the knowledge that would be developed by those synthesisers such as Lubbock later in the century. Nevertheless, the seeds of what would become professionalism were sown remarkably early. In 1851, the first academic Chair of Archaeology, named for its first incumbent John Disney, was established at Cambridge University, followed by others at Oxford and elsewhere. Meanwhile the older societies – such as the Society of Antiquaries of London – continued in existence, and newer London-based national societies, such as the Archaeological Institute were also formed in the 1840s.

A key development that would assist the move towards professionalism, although it was never the intent of its founders, was the creation by William Morris of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877. This group, dedicated to the philosophy of conservation espoused by such promoters of art and architecture as John Ruskin, included in its membership those such as John Lubbock with an interest in conserving the monuments of the past. The agenda of the society was expressly *contra* to that of the ecclesiologists, whose extreme views on 'restoration' to a pristine state defined by ideology rather than fact they abhorred. SPAB was closely linked to the 'Arts and Crafts Movement' also promoted by Morris following the ideals of architects and designers such as Augustus and Ernest Pugin. Looking back to a vision of the mediaeval period as one where artisans had control over their work and could invest in it some moral and ethical values, Morris and his followers sought to challenge the rise of capitalist industrial production by establishing workshops where works of artistic quality could be produced that would in turn influence those who experienced those works. In the end, Arts and Crafts production would be seen merely as a 'style' rather than an attempt to change society for the better, but the influence of SPAB on the preservation of old buildings and in

particular their protection from unwarranted alteration was more profound. Its links with the work of others concerned for ancient structures who would inform the emerging conservation ethic that in turn is applied today.

SPAB was not the only archaeological entity to emerge in the 1870s. The decade also saw the MP John Lubbock's repeated attempts to pass into law a measure for the protection of prehistoric structures (Chippindale 1983a; Carman 1996, 67–91). This story is long and complex. On the surface, and largely in reality, arguments about the law concerned issues of protecting private property from government control, and who were the better custodians of Britain's heritage: government appointed experts, or the landed aristocracy in whose hands the monuments had been held for centuries. Below this, however, were other, equally contentious issues: the role of education in promoting welfare, visions of the nation's future, the need for Britain to be seen as an advanced and civilised nation state in comparison with its European neighbours, and even the future of Ireland (then part of the UK). Despite ultimately gaining widespread support for the measure, the government then in power (Lubbock's own political party) repeatedly failed to give it full support and consequently it repeatedly ran out of Parliamentary time before becoming law. In the end, in 1881, Lubbock forced a vote which required the government to take action in respect of ancient monuments, which in the following year they did, and a version of Lubbock's measure finally became law. The law as passed was concerned only with prehistoric monuments, an indication of the ideological differences between prehistorians (generally Liberal or Conservative) and some mediaevalists (such as the libertarian Morris) at the time; it merely allowed landowners to hand over control of their monuments to the State for protection; and although it created a post of government Inspector of Ancient Monuments, it gave the holder very few powers. The law would stay in place until the early twentieth century.

Lubbock's choice for the position of first Inspector was Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers (Bowden 1991), a close ally in promoting prehistoric study. Pitt Rivers (originally named Lane Fox: he took the additional names on inheriting land at Cranborne Chase in southern England, which was required as part of the bequest) was by profession a military engineer, but he also had a strong interest in archaeology. On inheriting Cranborne Chase, he retired from the army and took up residence as a member of the landed classes and began the work of investigating the archaeological monuments of his estate, covering periods from prehistory to the Romans (Bowden 1991; Marsden 1983, 79–80). The publication of these researches is his lasting monument. Although by no means an innovator in terms of technique (see Lucas 2001, 19–26), he was a believer in 'total excavation' as a method and in detailed recording of stratigraphy and of finds. As testimony to its success, those he trained in this technique continued to use his approach after his death in 1900. As Inspector of Ancient Monuments, he regularly exceeded his legal authority, persuading landowners to part with their monuments rather than waiting for them to volunteer them, and carrying out survey work on other people's land to establish the condition of monuments. He also employed assistants to carry out investigative work in his capacity as Inspector and subsequently claimed the costs of doing so from the relevant government office, despite the fact that the post provided no such authority.

By the close of the nineteenth century much of what we would recognise as ‘archaeology’ had emerged. The work of Pitt Rivers had established a system of excavation that provided a solid basis on which to build interpretations and one that allowed the identification of multiple phases within a site to be identified. In conjunction with – and partly derived from – an evolutionary model of social development, it also allowed interpretations of long-term change to be developed that had meaning for contemporary society. The establishment of the first Chairs in Archaeology at British universities from the 1850s gave the field a respectability it had so far lacked, while the rise of the local and county amateur society as well as national interest groups provided a base from which archaeological work and interests could be promoted and developed. The simultaneous development of a concern for preservation, whether of mediaeval and later buildings by the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, or for prehistoric monuments under legislation, and the work of Pitt Rivers as Inspector of Ancient Monuments, looks forward to later refinement of law in the field and the development of formal structures to conserve and record the material remains of the past.

Twentieth-Century Developments: Archaeology Emerges as a Discipline and Profession

The First World War saw the effective end of the nineteenth-century project in archaeology (Trigger 2006, 294): a generation raised on the social evolutionary principles of Lubbock’s *Prehistoric Times* was virtually wiped out. This was not the beginning of the end of archaeology, however, so much as the end of the beginning: in its place would emerge a more mature, more sophisticated discipline. The period to the 1970s would see developments in technique, in outreach to a wider public, the establishment of archaeology as a recognised academic discipline and further efforts to preserve the material record of the past. The period beyond would see the emergence of a fully professional archaeology, with greatly reduced amateur involvement and a system designed to preserve sites that paradoxically allowed more scope for investigation.

By 1900, the 1882 Act was out of date. However, during the twentieth century, a revived interest in old things and their preservation led to new efforts in legislation (see, e.g. Saunders 1983; and for a more detailed outline Carman 1996, 100–111). An Ancient Monuments Protection Act of 1900 went further than Sir John Lubbock’s original intent by specifically defining in broad terms what could be considered an ‘ancient monument’ for purposes of preservation, and this went beyond prehistoric remains to include mediaeval structures. In 1910, a revised Act created the category of ‘guardianship monuments’ which were those held specifically by the state to allow direct public access. An Act of 1913 extended the range of legal coverage further, consolidating efforts to include mediaeval remains and attempting also to include Church (of England) buildings: this was defeated, but the Church was forced to establish its own similar protective arrangements under its own power to make law.

A series of further Acts to manage ancient monuments have followed over the decades, culminating in 1979 in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act which remains the main law in place at the time of writing, in spite of efforts to overhaul the system in recent years.

From 1944, and in response to the threat of widespread clearance of historic buildings from bomb-damaged towns and cities, Planning Acts have limited the capacity for uncontrolled development and have incorporated historic buildings which remain in use into the protective scheme (a system known as ‘Listing’ – see Chap. 4). From 1973, named historic wrecks have also had protection, and the 1996 Treasure Act extended protection to portable antiquities of inherent monetary value. The creation from 1949 of the first National Parks extended protection to wider landscapes and the archaeology they contain as part of a programme of land-use policy that provided access to the countryside to the wider population. The result over the past 100 years has been a proliferation of laws to do with archaeological remains, and of bodies of law related to archaeology and historic buildings, which makes the overall legislative framework for Britain very complex. This complexity is one of the motivations behind recent attempts to reform the means and approaches to heritage protection, including the legislation that underpins it.

This rising complexity in the mechanisms for managing archaeological resources was coincident with an increase in the sophistication of investigative techniques. One such technique was the development of aerial reconnaissance from its military origins during the First World War into a valuable approach for archaeology during the peace which followed. Aerial archaeology was notably pioneered by O. G. S. Crawford at the Ordnance Survey: the identification of soil- and crop-marks from the air allowed the recognition of previously unknown buried sites. Excavation techniques also evolved. Between 1921 and 1937, Mortimer Wheeler developed a technique of excavation that went beyond Pitt Rivers’ detailed recording of a total excavation. Wheeler’s technique involved excavating in grid squares leaving standing baulks between squares (‘box excavation’) to allow the detailed recording of stratigraphy, with finds recorded in relation to their context and the sections drawn only after interpretation. This focus on the stratigraphic relationships within the site was widely adopted for several decades, but many of Wheeler’s successors forgot the final stage, whereby the baulks would also be removed to result in a total-area excavation revealing the overall plan of the site (Barker 1982, 15). As Barker (1982, 15–16) emphasises, the stratigraphic approach was ideal for Roman sites, but the complexities of prehistoric sites, with many intercutting features, required a truly three-dimensional approach to recording that emphasised section and plan in equal measure. This approach – adopted from continental archaeologists and pioneered by Gerald Bersu during the Second World War – was applied by Bersu particularly to a Viking-age site on the Isle of Man where the presence of overlapping buildings from different phases was indicated only by changes in soil-type (Barker 1982, 20, 24–25). Such open-area excavations were used to great effect on mediaeval settlements, both urban and rural, during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, as well as at the Roman site of Wroxeter where detailed recording of contours from the distribution of gravel deposits on part of the site allowed the identification of the presence of ephemeral post-Roman structures (Barker 1982, 153).

Wheeler was not only an entrepreneur in developing excavation techniques. He was also instrumental in founding one of the major academic centres for archaeology in Britain at the Institute of Archaeology, part of University College London, a project he began in 1926 and which saw fruition with its opening in 1937. The Edinburgh Abercromby Chair in Archaeology was established in the early 1920s, and at about the same time Cambridge University established its *tripos* (a 3-year undergraduate course) in archaeology and anthropology, although this became a full (stand-alone) course only after the Second World War (Clark 1989, 6). The first British PhD in archaeology was awarded to Cyril Fox at Cambridge in 1922, and a series of others followed, reading rather like a ‘Who’s Who’ of twentieth-century archaeology across large parts of the globe: among them were Louis Leakey in 1931, Grahame Clark (1934), Glyn Daniel (1938), Charles McBurney (1948), Desmond Clark (1951), and John Evans (1956), Brian Hope-Taylor (1962), Ian Longworth (1964), David Clarke (1965), Colin Renfrew (1966), Barry Cunliffe (1967), Paul Mellars and Derek Roe (1968) and Glyn Isaac in 1969 (for a full list to 1986, see *Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 1989). Of these, three would become Disney Professors at Cambridge, including Colin Renfrew, the first archaeologist to be made a peer of the realm (as Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn). Other universities would follow suit and establish archaeology departments – sometimes in conjunction with other disciplines such as Art, Ancient or Mediaeval History, Classics, Geography or Anthropology – in the decades that followed.

The London-based Institute of Archaeology and the Cambridge Archaeology department were two of the most powerful locations for academic archaeology during the mid-twentieth century. In London, from the outset, the importance of scientific techniques to the analysis of the past was seen as central and the focus throughout its history has largely been upon archaeological practice and technique, although some significant theorists – among them V. Gordon Childe – have passed through its doors. In contrast, Cambridge has generally been seen as the home of theory. During the 1930s, Grahame Clark and others founded the Fenland Research Committee, an interdisciplinary group carrying out the first major environmental archaeology project in Britain. Clark is also seen – along with Childe – as a precursor of the ‘New’ or ‘Processual’ Archaeology (Trigger 2006, 322–326; 344–361) that emerged during the 1960s: the most prominent of those who are identified with processualism are David Clarke, who drew particularly upon ideas from the ‘New Geography’ of the time (Clarke 1968), and Colin Renfrew, who developed Grahame Clark’s ‘systems’ approach (Renfrew 1979, 39). From the late 1960s onwards, Cambridge became closely associated with the development of archaeological theory. As well as Clarke and Renfrew leading the British processualist movements, Ian Hodder led the emergence of ‘postprocessual’ or ‘interpretive’ archaeologies. In 1978, Cambridge was one of a group of archaeology departments – others included Southampton and Sheffield – to organise the first of what would become the annual conference of the Theoretical Archaeology Group (TAG), a conference specifically tailored to emerging postgraduates and held in a different department in Britain each year, extending in more recent years to Ireland, and spawning regional TAG conferences in northern Europe (Nordic TAG) and the USA. Whilst Cambridge and London remain leading institutions for the study of archaeology, alumni from both

places have helped to develop important centres of academic research and teaching at Bristol, Bournemouth, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Leicester, Manchester, Sheffield and York, for example.

In spite of the rise of archaeology as a specifically university-based academic discipline, until the 1970s, it also remained an area dominated by amateur involvement. However, the idea that the study of the past was a professional pursuit was inevitably sown with the creation in 1908 of the first of several Royal Commissions for the recording of Historic Monuments, and in 1910 the Office of Works (the government department responsible for ancient monuments legislation) was placed on a fully professional footing. With the increase of building and other development projects following the Second World War from the 1950s to the 1970s, the exposure of archaeological remains – especially in urban areas – became increasingly widespread and efforts to investigate them could not be left to amateur groups alone. An early response came from members of the Congress of Archaeological Societies to form a ‘Council for British Archaeology’ to promote archaeology and co-ordinate research programmes and policy: in 1944 the CBA replaced the old Congress. A number of reports by (largely museum-based) archaeologists working in London and elsewhere emphasised the potential loss of evidence of our past that urban development was causing. The remit of the CBA specifically excluded it from carrying out excavation and other work: its job was to co-ordinate and proselytise. Accordingly, 1971 saw the establishment of the organisation ‘RESCUE: the Trust for British archaeology’ whose primary role was seen to be precisely that of organising what are now called ‘rescue’ or ‘salvage’ excavations on threatened sites (Hudson 1981, 145–148). At first, such excavations were as likely to be carried out by keen volunteers as by low-paid professionals, but over time such projects also attracted other sources of funding and, in times of economic downturn, were used as mechanisms to provide work for the unemployed. 1975 saw the establishment of the Central Excavation Unit, staffed entirely by paid professionals and operating out of the government Department of the Environment (later English Heritage), to take up the inevitable slack in necessary excavation that could not be met from amateur involvement (Hudson 1981, 151–152). The rise of professional, salaried archaeologists also led to the creation of a professional association that would aim to regulate and oversee standards. Initially called the Institute of *Field* Archaeologists (IFA) (some say misleadingly since it also numbered from the outset academic, museum- and laboratory-based staff among its members), this has now been re-branded ‘The Institute *for* Archaeologists’ or IfA.

English Heritage was established as a ‘quango’ (an acronym defining a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation) by the National Heritage Act 1983, part-funded by but operating at arms length from government, to act as the chief advisor to government on heritage issues in England. Similar bodies for Wales (Cadw) and Scotland (Historic Scotland) followed shortly. English Heritage initially retained the earlier structures of the Department of the Environment with a discrete ‘Inspectorate’, archaeologists and some historic buildings specialists employed as Ancient Monuments Inspectors (the same job title as Pitt Rivers a century before), each with specific regional responsibility. There was still an element of the

‘man from the Ministry’ heading out from London to visit farms in Cumbria, pass judgement, and then return to town, causing some local resentment in the process. But in time, and sometime during the 1990s, regional teams were created, which ultimately (and sensibly) were located in the regions in which they worked. Recent new legislation is intended to take ultimate responsibility for managing historic resources away from government itself and instead delegate it further to English Heritage, Cadw and Historic Scotland. Initially, English Heritage also housed the Central Excavation Unit which it had inherited from the Department of the Environment. However, a further shift of policy first rendered the Unit as only a last-resort when all else had failed and finally saw its closure in the 1990s, evolving into what is now Central Archaeological Services.

Running parallel to this were changes in the planning system, by which new development is regulated. *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 – Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16) of 1990 for the first time made archaeology a material consideration during the process of approving development projects. It was predicated on the principle that those who are responsible for the destruction of historic resources should mitigate this damage: that they should, therefore, pay for any works considered necessary in determining what development, if any, could take place, and often also to pay for the publication of the results. Developers also selected the contractors to undertake such work, usually by competitive tender. This in turn meant the creation of archaeological units working on commercial lines, staffed by waged and salaried professionals who could be relied upon to do work to a high standard. Although PPG16 was replaced in 2010 by PPS5, the basic ‘polluter pays’ principle remains, and the now mature structure of developer funding and commercial archaeology is unchanged.

With the growth of developer-funded archaeology, and its place within the planning system, another component of the heritage sector saw massive growth. In the 1970s, the Department of the Environment had started to encourage the creation of locally based Sites and Monuments Records, with staff to maintain them and promote archaeology and heritage within a particular geographical area. These areas were either historic counties or cities. The posts generally created were a ‘County Archaeologist’ and a ‘Sites and Monuments Record Assistant (or Officer)’. The records in those days were card indices, with sites cross-referenced onto 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey map sheets. With the growth of aerial photography, aerial photographic transcriptions and their interpretation were added to the record. But with PPG16 and its successor PPS5, and the sharp increase in the amount of work undertaken, and the need for consistent and routine advice to developers and planners, these areas expanded and more staff were recruited, especially in those busy areas of the southeast where more development was taking place. The records are now computerised, and supported by a GIS (Geographical Information System), which means the skills of the archaeologists are very different. Even the name has changed. These are no longer SMRs but Historic Environment Records (or HERs), a change that reflects the wider range of information they now contain. It is worth noting that it is not a statutory obligation for local authorities to maintain an HER or an archaeological officer, and in recent years Northamptonshire is one county to have been without local government archaeological cover.

The argument can be made that the gradual (and in later years not so gradual) professionalism of the field led to significant change in archaeologists' response to the wider public, replacing actual involvement with outreach events, such as open days and seminars. The alternative argument is that archaeology in the twentieth century changed from an essentially dilettante pursuit for the wealthy to a field that had attractions for a much wider proportion of the public. Both views have merit. In 1925, the first journal dedicated to archaeology was founded as *Antiquity* and although it has generally failed to reach the mass market, it has survived as a journal widely read (if not actually bought) by the interested archaeological community (Hudson 1981, 101–104). Archaeology has also found a ready audience among television viewers, since it was revived following the Second World War. The programme *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral?* broadcast on the BBC television channel (the only one then available) during the 1950s was extremely popular: a panel-game based upon models developed on the radio, it pitted senior archaeologists – Mortimer Wheeler and Glyn Daniel in particular – against each other in identifying objects borrowed from museum collections. Equally successful was a series of half-hour documentaries on archaeological subjects called *Buried Treasure*. Successors have included *Chronicle*, which ran from the 1960s into the 1970s and introduced figures such as Magnus Magnusson and Colin Renfrew to a wide audience (Hudson 1981, 115–119), and, in more recent years, *Meet the Ancestors*, and especially *Time Team* which provides both a vision of archaeology in practice and a game-show element by requiring completion of a project in a mere 3 days. Such programmes are now the main way in which non-professionals gain access to archaeology, although recent years have also seen a rise in dedicated community-based projects, normally led by professionals but designed to encourage an interest in the past. Among the more successful have been the Sedgeford Project (a dedicated excavation project in which professionals serve as advisors to a local community; see Chap. 7) and work by the Castleford Heritage Trust (a community-led project which includes archaeology but is not driven by it; Smith 2006, 237–275).

Archaeology in the Twenty-First Century

Archaeology in Britain today is a largely professional pursuit, led by agencies and local authority curators as well as units organised along commercial lines who compete for work on behalf of builders and other developers. They operate within a system whereby the effects of construction on the archaeological record are mitigated at the developer's expense. The main entry into archaeology is no longer through amateur involvement, as it once was – although that route is not yet fully closed – but through formal academic training at university level and then employment, perhaps in such a unit or through a local authority (depending on whether the desk or the trench is where you feel more comfortable). There has been a steady decline in university research excavations and in amateur project work – apart from some notable exceptions such as the Sedgeford Project. The preservation of ancient

remains has become the responsibility of quasi-autonomous government agencies rather than that of officers of the government themselves, although the legal basis for that preservation has been steadily strengthened over nearly 150 years. Today's threats to archaeology continue to be urban and rural developments, and the uncontrolled looting of sites by some metal-detectorists. Paradoxically, development also allows access to archaeological remains, enhances our understanding of the past (e.g. Bradley 2007) and generates work for units and contractors. The number of openings for archaeologists will depend largely on economic stability and fortune. At the time of writing things are tough, and archaeologists are out of work, many now returning to take up higher education or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities. But things will pick up. They always do.

Summary

Archaeology has changed, from being largely an amateur pursuit, the domain of the landed classes, those with sufficient leisure time and money to follow their passion, to one that has become a profession, with procedures, practices, laws, protocols and ethics codes. There is still room for the amateur but it is now a marginal role, albeit with considerable guidance and encouragement from organisations such as the Council for British Archaeology, and funding initiatives including the Heritage Lottery Fund. In reality, projects that actively encourage amateur participation and which truly benefit the sector (as well as being fun to participate in) are few and far between. The (1995–2002) Defence of Britain Project was a guiding light in this area. A significant gap in our understanding of Second World War archaeology was filled in no small part by the 2,000 volunteers who recorded sites the length and breadth of Britain, guided by the CBA and with HLF funding. The lack of opportunities for the amateur is regrettable, as is the fact that archaeology remains largely (as it always seems to have been here) a white, middle class pursuit. Hopefully, both of these patterns can be reversed with time.

Having reviewed the emerging 'professionalism' of archaeology, especially over the past 25–30 years, we now turn our attention to the results of all this endeavour. What have the archaeologists of the past and present created by way of a record of Britain's past occupation and use? What is the archaeological record for the occupation of Britain actually like?

References and Further Reading

- Archaeological Review from Cambridge* 1989. Occasional Paper 1: Doctoral Research in Cambridge (1922–1987). Cambridge, *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*.
- Barker, P. 1982. *Techniques of Archaeological Investigation*. London, Batsford.
- Barton, R. 1990. 'An influential set of chaps; the X-Club and Royal Society politics 1864–85'. *British Journal of Historical Studies* 23, 53–81.
- Barton, R. 1998. 'Huxley, Lubbock and half a dozen others: professionals and gentlemen in the formation of the X Club, 1851–1864'. *Isis* 89, 410–444.

- Bowden, M. 1991. *Pitt-Rivers*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Bradley, R. 2007. *The Prehistory of Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carman, J. 1996. *Valuing Ancient Things: archaeology and law*. London, Leicester University Press.
- Chapman, W. 1989. 'The organisational context in the history of archaeology: Pitt-Rivers and the first Ancient Monuments Act'. *The Antiquaries Journal* 69.1, 23–42.
- Chippindale, C. 1983a. The making of the first ancient monuments Act and its administration under General Pitt-Rivers. *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 136, 1–55.
- Chippindale, C. 1983b. *Stonehenge Complete*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, G. 1989. Early days in the development of postgraduate research in prehistoric archaeology in Cambridge. In *Archaeological Review from Cambridge*, 6–10.
- Clarke, D.L. 1968. *Analytical Archaeology*. London, Methuen.
- Cooper, M. A., Firth, A., Carman, J. and Wheatley, D. (eds) 1995. *Managing Archaeology*. London, Routledge.
- Daniel, G. E. 1967. *The Origin and Growth of Archaeology*. Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Daniel, G. E. and Chippindale, C. (eds) 1989. *The pastmasters: eleven modern pioneers of archaeology*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Daniel, G. E. and Renfrew, C. 1988. *The Idea of Prehistory*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Everill, P. 2006. *The Invisible Diggers: contemporary commercial archaeology in the UK*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Southampton.
- Hudson, K. 1981. *A Social History of Archaeology: the British experience*. London, Macmillan.
- Lucas, G. 2001. *Critical Approaches to Fieldwork: contemporary and historical archaeological practice*. London, Routledge.
- Marsden, B. M. 1983. *Pioneers of Prehistory: leaders and landmarks in English archaeology (1500–1900)*. Ormskirk, G. W. & A. Hesketh.
- McAdam, E. 1995. 'Trying to Make It Happen'. In Cooper, M. A., Firth, A., Carman, J. and Wheatley, D. (eds) 1995. *Managing Archaeology*. London, Routledge, 89–100.
- Patton, M. 2007. *Science, Politics and Business in the work of Sir John Lubbock, a man of universal mind*. Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Piggott, S. 1976. The Origins of the English County Archaeological Societies. In Piggott, S. *Ruins in a Landscape: essays in antiquarianism*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 171–195.
- Piggott, S. 1989. *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination: ideas from the Renaissance to the Regency*. London, Thames and Hudson.
- Renfrew, C. 1979. The Aegean and the West Mediterranean. In Renfrew, C. (ed.) *Problems in Prehistory*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 43–64.
- Roskams, S. 2001. *Excavation*. Cambridge Manuals in Archaeology. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Saunders, A.D. 1983. A century of ancient monuments legislation 1882–1982. *The Antiquaries Journal* 63, 11–29.
- Schofield, J. (ed.) 2011. *Great Excavations: shaping the archaeological profession*. Oxford: Oxbow.
- Smith, L. 2006. *Uses of Heritage*. London, Routledge.
- Toulmin, S. and Goldfield, J. 1967. *The discovery of time*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Trigger, B. 2006. *A History of Archaeological Thought*. 2nd edition. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Ucko, P. et al. 1991. *Avebury reconsidered: from the 1660s to the 1990s*. London, Unwin Hyman.



<http://www.springer.com/978-0-387-09452-6>

Archaeological Practice in Great Britain

A Heritage Handbook

Schofield, J.; Carmen, J.; Belford, P.

2011, XVII, 227 p. 24 illus., 17 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-0-387-09452-6