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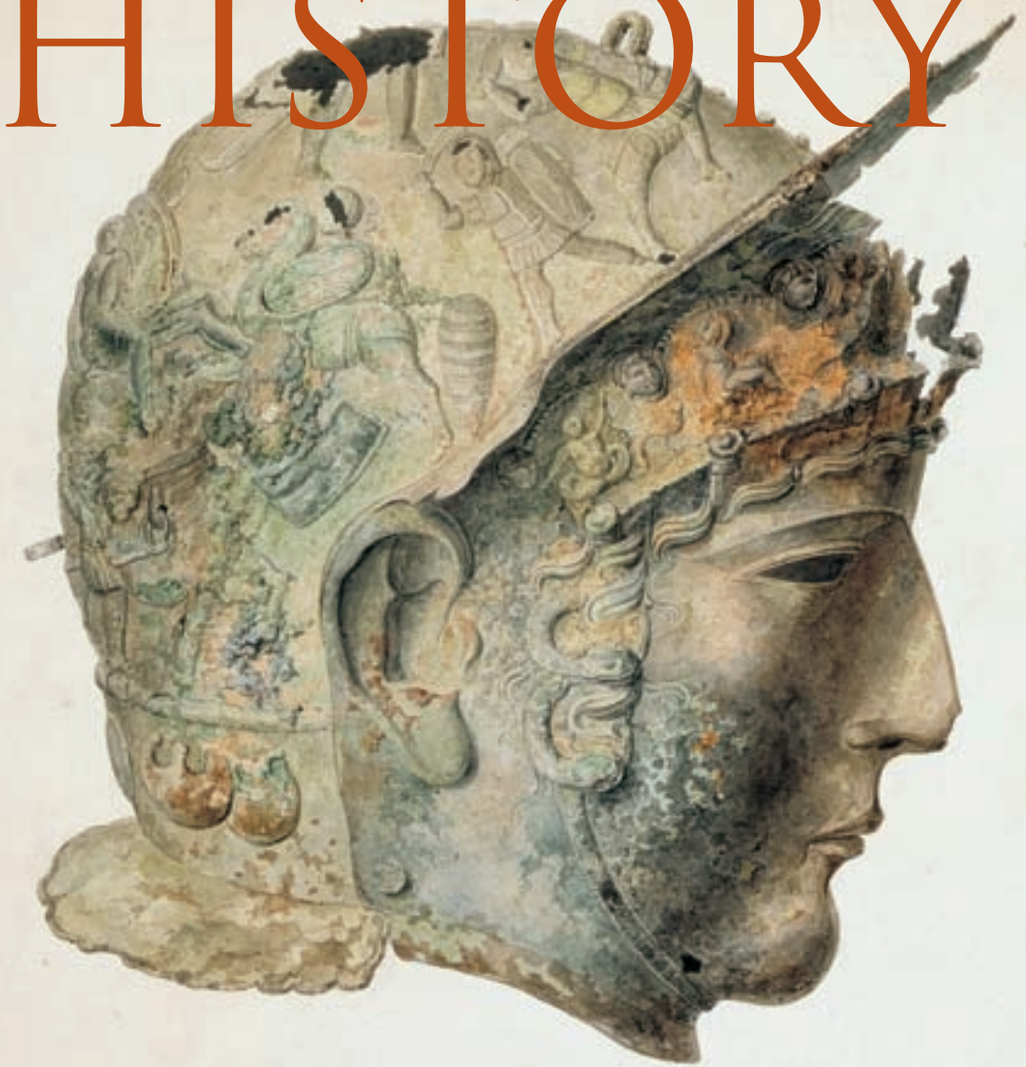
Royal Academy of Arts

MAKING HISTORY



ANTIQUARIES IN BRITAIN 1707–2007

MAKING HISTORY
ANTIQUARIES IN BRITAIN 1707–2007

Main Galleries 15 September – 2 December 2007

An Introduction to the Exhibition
for Teachers and Students

Written by Greg Harris
For the Education Department

This exhibition has been organised by the Royal Academy of Arts and the Society of Antiquaries of London to celebrate the Society's tercentenary

FRONT COVER
Detail of cat. 78
Attributed to Thomas Underwood
Drawing of the Ribchester helmet, 1798
Society of Antiquaries of London
Photo © Society of Antiquaries / John Hammond

BACK COVER
Cat. 77
The Ribchester Helmet,
Late first or early second century AD
The British Museum
Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum

Designed by Isambard Thomas, London Printed by Burlington Press

'He does not concern himself with the future, for the future is simply another today. He is interested in yesterday, in the past that is vanishing, and in peril of fading from memory, of being lost to us forever – a prospect that fills him with panic. We are human because we recount stories and myths; the past – that is what differentiates us from animals. Shared histories and legends strengthen community, and man can exist only as part of a community, only by virtue of it.'
Ryszard Kapuscinski on the Greek historian Herodotus, 2007

INTRODUCTION

The growing popularity of internet sites that enable us to research our family's past, or the number of history and archaeology programmes on television suggest a need to understand our own personal and national origins. Faced with the mass of information now available, it is hard to enter the mindset of people whose sense of the remote past was shrouded in mystery and speculation. This exhibition, to celebrate the founding of The Society of Antiquaries in 1707, asks us to do just that. Tracing the development of efforts to grasp the complexity of antiquity, it reveals the faltering and haphazard steps with which the monuments, buildings and material remains of the past came to be recorded, illustrated, recovered, preserved, collected and understood. In the nineteenth century, those efforts devoted to the architectural glories of the medieval period bore fruit in the Gothic Revival. In the second half of the century, under the influence of theories of evolution and geology, the timespan of pre-Roman history expanded in a manner that would have been unimaginable to the founders of the Society – a Society that was now contributing to the development of archaeological practice and understanding, helping to refine methods which would be used in the study of that iconic British monument, Stonehenge, whose origins and purpose have fascinated antiquaries for the last 400 years.

MYTHS AND MYSTERIES

During the sixteenth century, an understanding of Britain's history prior to the arrival of the Romans in AD 43 depended on the speculation of medieval historians. Chief among these was Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *History of the Kings of Britain*, dating from 1138–9, was one of the most successful accounts to be written. According to Geoffrey, Britain owed its name to the Trojan prince, Brutus, who took over the country and expelled a race of giants. As the grandson of Aeneas, who supposedly founded Rome, the connection gave Britain a comparable foundation myth.

But in sixteenth-century Italy, much excavation of Roman sculpture and buildings had already taken place and Italians had a range of histories

'At that time, the name of the island was Albion, and none of it was inhabited save a few giants. None the less, the pleasant aspect of the land ... did fill Brute and his companions with no small desire that they should dwell therein. Wherefore ... they drove the giants to take refuge in the caverns of the mountains, and divided the country among them by lot.'
Geoffrey of Monmouth, 1138

FIG.1 (CAT.1)
Roll Chronicle, mid-fifteenth century with additions from *c.* 1665

Illumination with coloured inks and tint on vellum rolls
1245 × 58 cm; 192.5 × 58 cm
Society of Antiquaries of London
Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London/John Hammond

CAT. 13
Aylett Sammes
The 'Wicker' image from *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata*, 1676

Printed book
37.2 × 49 cm
Society of Antiquaries of London
Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London/John Hammond

to consult about the past. It was the availability of these Roman histories in printed editions and their failure to mention a successful civilisation in Britain that led some scholars to question the myths of Brutus or of settlement by descendants of Noah's son Japhet. The last speculation is contained in a genealogical roll presented to Henry VI in 1455, tracing his descent from Adam and Eve via Noah (cat. 1, fig. 1). The roll was updated in 1665 to include the newly restored Charles II, demonstrating that the need to confirm dynastic continuity overrode such unproven claims. Others rejected the Roman accounts as presenting pre-Roman Britain in too barbaric a form, and despite the beginning of antiquarian research and activity, the propagation of myths continued well into the seventeenth century.

CAT. 13 One of the strangest ideas about the origins of pre-Roman Britain was published by Aylett Sammes in 1676. A lawyer who indulged in antiquarian research, he suggested that the first settlers of this island were Phoenicians. A people based on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, in what is now modern Lebanon, the Phoenicians flourished from 2,000 to 200 BC and were described by ancient writers as traders and colonisers (the founders of Carthage). It is likely that they visited Cornwall in search of tin, but Sammes, working on the supposed likeness of British place-names to Phoenician words, proposed a wholesale colonisation complete with language and religious practices. He argued that Welsh was the surviving form of Phoenician spoken by ancient Britons who had been driven into the mountains by Saxon invaders. The book has illustrations of deities and rituals, many associated with Stonehenge, but absolutely no material evidence. The Wicker-man, for example, was a hollow giant constructed of wood and filled with sacrificial victims that was set alight as an offering to the gods. Sammes drew on Caesar's *History of the Gallic Wars* in which he describes the barbaric savagery of the Druids.

The first date Sammes ascribes to the events recorded was AM1910, by which he meant one thousand, nine hundred and ten years after the Creation of Man. He derived this precision from the work of Archbishop James Ussher (cat. 2), whose computation of the successive generations of Old Testament patriarchs descending from Adam and Eve to the birth of Christ allowed him to pinpoint God's creation of the world to 4004 BC. His ingenious calculations gave antiquaries the sense of a universal chronology but would prove an awkward stumbling block in understanding the timespan of the pre-historic past. Ussher's dating of Old Testament events were still being printed in nineteenth-century Bibles, and even today American religious groups accept his dating of creation.


Government of the BRITAINS. 105

The Wicker Image.

The Ceremony observed in sacrificing of *Men* to their Idols, in a *Wicker* Image, as it was strange, so, without any question to be made, it was not begun by chance, but upon some great occasion, and something extraordinary may be sought for in the Magnitude of the Statue it self, whence it proceeded.

The *Heathens*, in their festival Fires, which were most usually attended with the Sacrifices of *Beasts*, but sometimes of *Men*, as this was always used to represent the occasion of the Solemnity, which they did by some visible sign of an apparent signification, a Custome not left off at this day, as sometimes by burning the Effigies of the person, either to his Honour, as in Deifying him, or else in publick detestation of some high and notorious Crime and Misdemeanour; Sometimes they burnt Living persons themselves (even for *pleasure*, on their publick Feast dates) to the Honour of their Gods, and the mirth and jovialty of their Barbarous Spectators. Thus *Nero* wrapt the Christians in *Hemp* and *Pitch*, and made them serve as Torches to his Theater in a mock (as some write) of that saying, *Ye are the Lights of the World.*

Hor

EARLY ANTIQUARIES

The early antiquaries of the reign of Elizabeth I faced an enormous task in understanding the successive waves of invasion and settlement that made up the history of Britain. The material evidence of the Celtic past, of Roman occupation, of Anglo-Saxon settlement and Viking incursion prior to the Norman Conquest would not be easily unravelled. Lacking the means to classify and understand the material remains from these periods of history meant that early antiquaries concerned themselves more with manuscripts and written evidence, with language (the translation of Anglo-Saxon), with understanding ideas about the development of English Christianity and the different forms of government.

The early maps of John Speed (1611) omitted roads in favour of rivers as the most reliable means of transport. Travel was a rare event and many people's knowledge of the country was restricted to their own locality. Much antiquarian research was devoted to local issues, and since many antiquaries were heralds, men responsible for the regulation of knights' coats of arms, there was great interest in establishing genealogical trees for prominent local families. The leading antiquary of Elizabeth's reign was William Camden, also a herald, but whose work would have great national significance.

CAT. 17 William Camden's great work, *Britannia*, was first published in Latin in 1586. In it he set out to describe the location of Roman settlements and in doing so hoped to give some idea of the native British tribes that the Romans had subdued. By travelling the country, studying the manuscripts, histories and ancient sites in the different counties his work became a geographical and historical account of Britain. Expanded in later editions, it was finally translated into English in 1610. Camden did discuss the early tribes but could find no physical remains of their existence. However he soon realised the greater contribution of the Saxons rather than the Romans to the history of the country.

Camden attracted a large group of antiquaries who co-operated in their research, corresponded and met frequently: men like Sir Robert Cotton who built up a large library of Saxon and medieval manuscripts which he made available to fellow antiquaries. The members of this group ceased to meet formally in 1607 and attempts to revive a society were discouraged by James I who suspected their researches might undermine royal powers. Nevertheless, important work was done by individuals later in the century on county histories and an extensive history of Monasticism.

In a period where the flint tools of our Stone-Age ancestors were regarded as 'thunderbolts from the gods', little archaeological activity was carried out. Chance finds of burial urns or coins might enter the popular cabinets of curiosities (cat. 7) alongside exotic objects from the natural

'For I am not ignorant that the first origins of nations are obscure by reason of their profound antiquity, as things that seem very deep and far remote: like as the courses, the reaches, the confluents, and the let outs of great rivers are well known, yet their first fountains and heads lie commonly unknown.'
William Camden, *'To the Reader' Britannia*

CAT. 17
William Camden
Britannia, 1610
Printed book
34 × 48 cm
Society of Antiquaries of London

world, but with little questioning of their potential significance. Cotton and Camden had made an expedition to Hadrian's Wall in 1600 to note inscriptions and unearth altars and what statuary they could find, but such archaeological interest was rare. In 1620 James I's curiosity about Stonehenge was satisfied by his Surveyor, the architect Inigo Jones, who dug and measured and concluded the monument was Roman in origin. The characteristics of the antiquary were already being recognised, and were somewhat unfairly described by John Earle in 1628 as 'one that hath that unnatural disease to be enamoured of old age, and wrinkles, and loves all things (as Dutchmen do cheese) the better for being mouldy and worm-eaten.' But love of the past could have a more pressing and immediate purpose.

CAT. 19
John Gipkyn
Diptych of '*Old St. Paul's*', 1616

Oil on two panels
Each panel 127 × 101.6 cm
Society of Antiquaries of London

CAT. 19 The idea of using an illustration to record and help preserve a building would be an important aspect of antiquarianism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The diptych of *Old St Paul's* may be the first painting to be created for that purpose. In 1561 the old St Paul's Cathedral had been struck by lightning, its spire destroyed and roof damaged. Its consequent state of disrepair led a legal clerk, Henry Farley, to mount a campaign for its restoration. Writing poems and publishing pamphlets, he appealed to the Mayor and Bishop of London, even to James I. His poem *The Complaint of Paules* ends with a dream in which the author sees the church restored to its former glory. This diptych was commissioned by Farley to illustrate his vision.

The outer panel depicts ships sailing up the Channel while a procession of dignitaries crosses London Bridge into the City. Opening the panel reveals the two inner paintings: on the left, the assembled crowd gather in front of the cathedral to hear a sermon lamenting its present condition, as a flock of black crows hover over the ruined spire; and on the right, Farley's vision of restoration with the gleaming tower and spire heralded by a choir of angels.

The foundation of the Royal Society in 1660 might have provided a focus for antiquarian research, since not all members were scientists and antiquaries were able to join. Among them was John Aubrey, best known for his *Brief Lives*, who was fascinated by the stone circle of Avebury in Wiltshire. The first to realise that this was not a random collection of stones but carefully planned circles, he drew and measured and made plans of the site. In his view, 'it does as much exceed in greatness the so renowned Stonehenge as a cathedral does a parish church.' On the basis of the rough finish of the stones he made the important judgement that the monument was pre-Roman and presented his findings to the Society in 1663. His attention

'[Mr Aubrey] presented to the Society a piece of Roman antiquity, which was a pot found at Weekfield in the parish of Headington in Wiltshire in 1656, then half full of Roman coin, silver and copper, about Constantine. In this field ... had been a Roman colony, there having been digged out many foundations of houses and much coin.'
Royal Society minutes, 1668

to methodical research and accurately presented information fitted into the new intellectual ethos, and his treatise *Monumenta Britannica*, though not published until the twentieth century, could be seen as the first English archaeological study.

Despite Aubrey and others, the Royal Society was to prove an uncongenial home to the broad scope of antiquarian research, and when Sir Isaac Newton became president in 1703 its concentration on scientific matters convinced antiquaries that they needed their own organisation.

FOUNDING THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES

On 5 December 1707, John Talman, the son of an architect, Humfrey Wanley, a student of ancient inscriptions and Anglo-Saxon, and John Bagford, an eccentric shoemaker and dealer in books, met for the purposes of forming a Society for the study of British antiquities. An outline of the proposed activities of the Society was drafted by Wanley for his patron Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, to present to Queen Anne for the purposes of Royal incorporation. Optimistically, he included a list of some 35 books that would be written, under such headings as The Country, The King, The Church, The People and Good Books Wanted. Unfortunately, Harley's dismissal from Anne's government left them without powerful connections and the proposal lapsed. Continuing to meet informally, a proper constitution was not established until 1718.

'[The English] take all occasions and pretences of forming themselves into those little nocturnal assemblies which are commonly known by the name of clubs. When a set of men find themselves to agree in any particular, though never so trivial, they establish themselves into a kind of fraternity and meet once or twice a week on account of such a fantastic resemblance.'
Joseph Addison, 1710

Meeting at the Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street, formal minutes of the Society began on 1 January 1718. At these gatherings members would present interesting objects or finds for discussion, report on the condition of ancient buildings and propose new theories on the design and purpose of pre-Roman monuments. Much time was spent on the more traditional interests of genealogy, heraldry and the study and reading of ancient charters and manuscripts. The first secretary of the Society was the eccentric William Stukeley, a doctor, who had an acute eye for detail and outstanding powers of observation, although his reputation was undermined by his more fanciful theories.

CAT. 34 Intrigued by Aubrey's suggestion that Avebury was a pre-Roman monument, Stukeley spent time over a number of years drawing, measuring and surveying, both here and at nearby Stonehenge. Alarmed by the loss of stones to local builders in the village of Avebury, he was determined to reconstruct the original layout as closely as possible. Using the newly invented theodolite, an optical instrument used to measure angles, and modern surveying methods, he was able to calculate the original number and position of the stones, and draw an accurate geometrical representation of the site.

Stukeley was the first to observe the alignment of Stonehenge to the summer and winter solstices, but his belief that both monuments were temples of the Druids had no basis in actual evidence, although it still persists today. With his observations, Stukeley was reclaiming the reputation of the Druids from Caesar's accusations of barbarity.

From its low-key beginnings, the Society took an important step forward after it received the gift of a large collection of drawings and engravings in 1749. In order to own property it needed Royal incorporation, and this was granted by George II in 1751. From then on the development of its collection was actively pursued, concentrating on illustrations and manuscripts. The housing of artefacts was more problematical, but these were frequently given to the Society, as no other institution was concerned with their preservation. In 1828 the Reverend Thomas Kerrich gave his important collection of early paintings of royalty to the Society, nearly 30 years before the foundation of the National Portrait Gallery. They include the finest portraits of Edward IV and Mary Tudor and two of Richard III that show how his image became distorted by Tudor propaganda (cats 48, 53, 49 and 50).

More official recognition of the Society followed when they were granted rooms alongside the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Arts in the newly built government offices in Somerset House in 1781. An expansion of membership and a raised public profile led to greater understanding of the way in which the Society's differing activities contributed to a sense of the British past.

'As to the construction of this circle, by diligent observation, I found this to be the art of the Druids. Tis not to be thought, they would be at the trouble of bringing so many mountains together, of placing them in a regular form, without seeking how to produce the best effect therein, and thus they obtained their purpose.'
William Stukeley, 1743

CAT. 34
William Stukeley
Ground Plot of Avebury, 1724
Engraving
34.4 × 50 cm
Society of Antiquaries of London
Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London/John Hammond

'I advised them ... to open the ground above, till they should get down to the skeleton, and then carefully to examine the bottom of the grave. This advice ... they did not at all relish; but after a little persuasion and a little brandy ... they very cheerfully approved and very contentedly followed, so that in a very short time they got to the skeleton.'
Bryan Faussett's Diaries

UNEARTHING THE PAST

There were two strands to the recovery of the material remains of the past from the ground: the accidental and the deliberate. The principal targets for excavation were the raised mounds of earth known as barrows, which contained the graves of the distant past, sometimes with burial chambers of stone or wood. Of the two main types, long barrows dated back to the Neolithic or New Stone Age (*c.*3,500 BC), and were generally communal graves, while round barrows were common from the Bronze Age (*c.*1,800 BC) right through to the Saxon period (AD 500–1,000) and were for individuals or small groups of people. Many had been disturbed in the past, either out of simple curiosity or in hope of finding some buried treasure, but they were now being investigated to provide information about the past.

William Stukeley worked on the barrows near Stonehenge, proving that they were pre-Roman and leaving a record of his presence by depositing a contemporary coin, but he incorrectly assumed that the barrows were the same age as the monument. The two most successful barrow diggers of the eighteenth century were the Reverend Bryan Faussett and the Reverend James Douglas. Both worked in Kent, and Faussett, elected a Fellow of the Society in 1763, was responsible for opening nearly 750 mainly Anglo-Saxon burial mounds. Keeping careful diaries and recording and illustrating much information, he eventually collected over 400 items of Anglo-Saxon jewellery, including the beautiful Kingston Brooch (cat.56, fig.2), although he lacked the means to prove their origin, referring to the inhabitants of the barrows as 'Britons Romanised'.

Before becoming a priest, James Douglas worked as a military engineer on the defensive earthworks defending the Medway and Chatham Docks, work that involved the destruction of many grave-sites. Douglas was interested enough to collect and record the many Anglo-Saxon artefacts recovered, and went further than any of his contemporaries in his analysis of the process of burial.

FIG.2 (CAT.56)
The Kingston brooch, seventh century AD

Gold, inlaid with blue glass, white shell and flat-cut garnets
8.5 cm diameter

National Museums Liverpool (World Museum Liverpool)

CAT. 60 Douglas wrote his *Nenia* ('dirge') *Britannica* over a number of years, publishing it in one volume in 1793. He aimed to write a general history of funerary customs but produced much more. He used both his own finds and the notes and drawings of Bryan Faussett, who had died in 1776. Douglas's approach to the artefacts and his attention to their proper illustration enabled the reader to compare and contrast related objects, in what was to be the first systematic recording of such material. Unlike Faussett, he recognised that their finds were Anglo-Saxon in origin. Containing the first sections and plan of a grave, the book was regarded as too scientific by his contemporaries.

CAT. 60
James Douglas
Nenia Britannica, *c.* 1793

Watercolour
52 × 66 cm

The British Library

The excavation of barrows went on well into the nineteenth century, with more sophisticated attempts to classify the objects found and greater attention paid to the human remains. The antiquaries' apparent obsession with death and burial, and the opening of royal tombs, inspired Thomas Rowlandson's satirical print *Death and the Antiquaries*, published in 1815 (cat. 69, fig. 3).

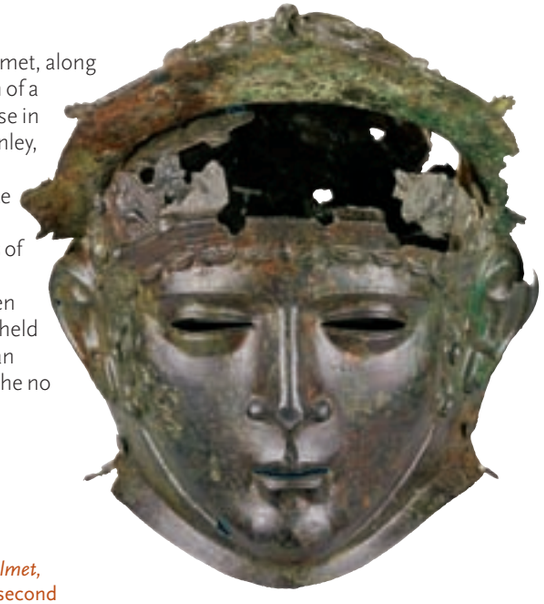
During the eighteenth century, the landscape of the country changed with the expansion of agriculture and the building of canals and new roads. These and other interventions, such as the cutting of peat, quarrying for sand and gravel, or the search for new sources of minerals, all produced chance finds of objects that local gentry with an interest in antiquities might report or present to the Society. Sometimes the exact location of artefacts was unrecorded by the workmen who found them. Often their association with dateable items like coins was lost. But the flow of casual finds provided valuable material that needed to be properly recorded, both for the sake of comparison and as objects whose future preservation might be uncertain.

Right from the start, William Stukeley had recognised the importance of a proper description and illustration of the objects presented for discussion, but it was not until 1784 that the attendance of a qualified draughtsman became a formal requirement for meetings. Many artefacts ended up in private collections, some were lost, others melted down for bullion, and in these cases the Society's records provide the only evidence of their existence. Some would be acquired by museums.

FIG.3 (CAT.69)
Thomas Rowlandson
Death and the Antiquaries, 1815
Aquatint
14 × 24 cm
Private collection
Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London/John Hammond

CATS 77 AND 78 This exquisite Roman cavalry helmet, along with other military equipment, was found by the son of a clog-maker in a deep hollow near to his father's house in Ribchester. Purchased by the antiquary Charles Townley, it was shown to the Society and drawn by Thomas Underwood, allowing us to compare its original state as found with its museum condition. Helmets like these were used for sports events involving displays of horsemanship and mock battles.

The head piece is decorated with a battle between cavalrymen and foot soldiers, and would have been held with a leather strap to the visor, cast as the mask of an idealised youth, that would have added glamour to the no doubt weather beaten face of the rider.



CAT. 78
Attributed to Thomas Underwood
Drawing of the Ribchester helmet, 1798
Watercolour on paper
41 × 34 cm
Society of Antiquaries of London
Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London/John Hammond

CAT. 77
The Ribchester Helmet,
Late first or early second century AD
Brass
30 × 30 × 30 cm
The British Museum
Photo © Copyright The Trustees of The British Museum

'The horsemen enter the exercise ground fully armed and those of high rank or superior horsemanship wear gilded helmets to draw the attention of the spectators ... From the helmets hang long yellow plumes ... as the horses move forward the slightest breeze adds to the beauty of these plumes.'
Flavius Arranius, AD 136

RECORDING AND ILLUSTRATING

Stukeley's belief that 'without drawing and designing the study of antiquities ... is lame and imperfect' would provide the focus for one of the Society's main activities. The building up of a body of drawings and their dissemination through the engraved print allowed systematic comparison of the objects discussed at meetings, or preserved records of monuments and buildings under threat. Many members were competent draughtsmen, but it was recognised that the skill needed to record accurately the appearance of artefacts or buildings depended on professional training, and from the 1780s the Society employed suitably qualified artists.

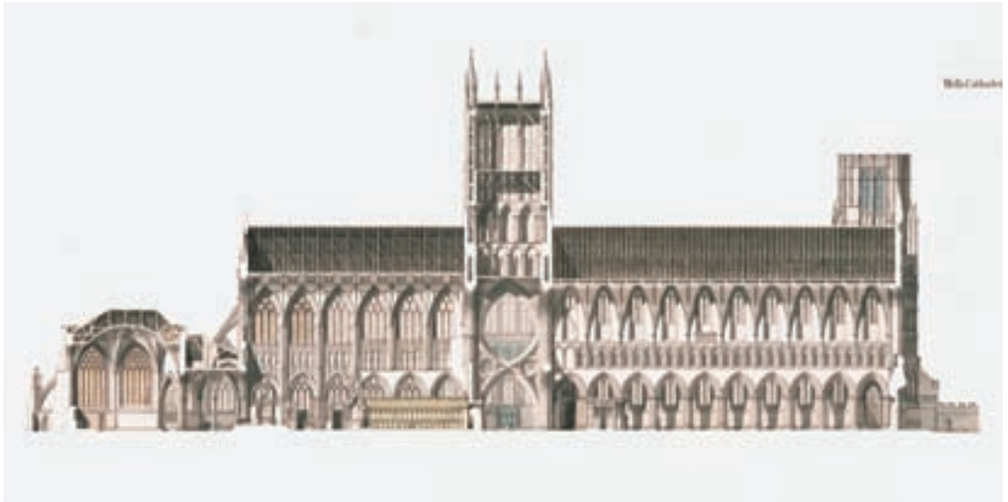
The majority of engravings were issued in the series *Vetusta Monumenta* (Ancient Monuments), which ran intermittently from 1718 to 1906. The distinguished engraver George Vertue was an early member and was responsible for most engravings up to his death in 1756. Each member of the Society received a free copy. From 1770 the Society began to publish its journal, the *Archaeologia*. The first volume, a collection of previous papers presented at the meetings, covered a wide range of topics from the Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and Elizabethan periods.

The foundation of the Royal Academy of Arts in 1768 and the belief of its first President, Sir Joshua Reynolds, in the superiority of history painting led to the popularity of images depicting important moments in British history, or scenes drawn from writers like Shakespeare or Milton. Keen to play their part in this growing sense of national identity, the Society began, in 1775, to issue engravings based on earlier paintings. By concentrating on the Tudor period and Henry VIII's difficult relations with France they reflected current hostility between the two countries. Five of these engravings were based on wall paintings at Cowdray House, destroyed by fire in 1793.

CAT. 114 Samuel Hieronymus Grimm's watercolour of the Cowdray House mural depicting the Procession of Edward VI on the day before his coronation was commissioned by the Society so that an engraving could be made from it. The nine-year old Edward can be seen in the centre of the picture under a golden canopy. The four-hour procession from the Tower of London to the Palace of Westminster allowed the heir apparent to meet his people, and along the way there were pageants and other entertainment. The destruction of the original mural meant that the watercolour and subsequent engraving provided an important record of the appearance of the city at a particular moment in its history.

The large size of these engravings and their consequent cost limited the number of historical prints, a problem that would also affect the Society's next series, devoted to the cathedrals. Concern about the decay of many religious buildings of the medieval period and worries about the stylistic compatibility of some restoration led the Society to commission John Carter to provide records of selected buildings. Between 1794 and 1798 he worked at Exeter, Bath, Wells, Durham and Gloucester, producing drawings of astonishing accuracy and understanding. His passionate concern for the Gothic style was expressed through vitriolic attacks on architects whose restoration he felt was destructive, unnecessary or inappropriate.

CAT. 114
Samuel Hieonymus Grimm
Coronation Procession of Edward VI, 1785
Watercolour
57.8 × 133.3 cm
Society of Antiquaries of London
Photo © Society of Antiquaries of London/John Hammond



CAT. 116
John Carter
Wells Cathedral, Section from East to West, 1807–08

Pen and black ink heightened by colour washes
59.5 × 91 cm

Society of Antiquaries of London

CAT. 116 Carter had begun work on Wells Cathedral in 1794, but the project was put aside while drawings of other buildings were engraved. When the time came to complete the drawings for Wells Cathedral in 1806, he had fallen out with the Society because of his continued attacks on other architects, but it was accepted that only Carter could understand his initial plans and sketches. The cross section from east to west is extremely accurate and still used by Cathedral staff today. Prick holes show Carter's use of compass and dividers to ensure precision. For the connoisseur, a drawing like this was seen to be completely lacking in the spontaneous exercise of the imagination or a search for the ideal, but nevertheless, it has its own aesthetic qualities.

Antiquaries were also responsible for commissioning a new generation of Romantic artists to portray the medieval buildings they were so fond of.

CAT. 96 Commissioned by the antiquary Sir Richard Colt Hoare, who planned a modern history of Wiltshire to complement his work on the barrows of the county, this watercolour was one of a series devoted to Salisbury Cathedral. Then in his twenties, Turner had had training as an architectural draughtsman and easily conveys the complexity of Gothic vaulting. His attention to detail is constrained by the imaginative handling of light, a freedom which would have been impossible for Carter.

CAT. 96
Joseph Mallord William Turner
The Interior of Salisbury Cathedral, looking towards the North Transept, *c.*1802–05

Pencil and watercolour
66 × 50.8 cm

Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum

THE ARTS, ANTIQUARIES AND THE GOTHIC REVIVAL

This kind of concentration on English subject matter was part of a general rejection of the Neoclassical ethos that had been the dominant artistic aesthetic for much of the eighteenth century. Based on the art and architecture of ancient Rome and Greece, and inspired by archaeological discoveries at Herculaneum and Pompeii, this ethos was absorbed by wealthy Englishmen on the Grand Tour who commissioned houses or works of art in a Neoclassical style.

Denied access to Italy by the upheavals following the French Revolution, patrons and artists reassessed the medieval heritage of their own country. An attraction to the 'picturesque' – wild scenery, ruins and castles – was also a theme of the popular 'gothic' novels that caught the public imagination with their stories of the macabre and super-natural. The romantic historical writing of Sir Walter Scott was less fanciful in imagination, but based on detailed historical research by a man who also published volumes on Scottish antiquities.

The defining moment for this new interest in the medieval past came with the designs for the new Houses of Parliament following the destruction by fire of the old Palace of Westminster in 1834. The competition was restricted to Gothic or Elizabethan designs, periods that were felt to express the antiquity of the Parliamentary institutions and the sense of national identity. The architect Charles Barry won with a building that was 'modern' in its comfortable contemporary amenities, but clothed in Gothic decoration by his collaborator Augustus Welsby Pugin. Pugin had studied Gothic design intensively, drawing on the work of earlier antiquaries and on the ideas of John Carter. The new Parliament provided an example for civic building in the rapidly expanding industrial cities and for new churches needed for their growing populations.

Artists who were concerned with the depiction of historical events now had a range of books analysing and describing stylistic developments in architecture, furniture, the decorative arts, armour or costume. One such artist was a young painter, Ford Madox Brown, who had unsuccessfully entered the competition for murals for the new Parliament, and who had a large range of source material for his representations of the British past.

'Artists of the highest repute have sometimes produced pictures, of which the details are so full of incongruities and anachronisms, as materially detract from the general merit of the piece ... extreme accuracy, even in the minutest detail, can alone produce that illusion which is requisite for the perfect success of a work of art.'
Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, 1836

CAT. 118 Ford Madox Brown's *Chaucer at the Court of Edward III* was shown at the Royal Academy in 1851. Sketched out as part of a triptych celebrating English poetry, Brown never attempted the other panels, concentrating only on the central painting. After its sale, he began the second version in 1856 (shown here). Brown drew on antiquarian sources for the accuracy of his picture, which is set in 1375, on the forty-fifth birthday of the Black Prince, Edward's eldest son, when Chaucer was at the start of his career. The strong vertical composition, which leads the eye up to the

CAT. 118
Ford Madox Brown
'Chaucer at the Court of Edward III', 1856–68
Oil on canvas
123.2 × 99.1 cm
Tate. Purchased 1906

'As for Romance, what does Romance mean? I have heard people miscalled for being romantic, but what romance means is the capacity for a true conception of history, a power of making the past part of the present.'
William Morris

'Not only does the Government begin with gathering the monuments, ancient and modern, of all foreign countries, but it ends there also. Our national antiquities are not even made subservient and placed in the lowest grade; they are altogether unrecognised and ignored; and that, too, with an English metropolitan Museum, surrounded by an English population, and paid for, with no stinted liberality, by English money.'
Charles Roach Smith, 1856

standing figure of Chaucer, was taken from a medieval miniature. The Royal figures are based on Brown's study of tomb effigies. The women's head-dresses come from copies of medieval manuscripts, and Brown spent much time searching out old pieces of fabric to be made into garments based on histories of costume.

Brown was a partner in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., the company set up by William Morris to maintain the old standards of craftsmanship and design that were being undermined by the Industrial Revolution. Morris was influenced by the ideas of John Ruskin, who saw the creation and appreciation of art as imbued with a moral virtue capable of transforming society. The company produced a wide range of decorative art and furniture that drew on the individual craftsman's understanding of the art of the past. Morris, alongside the Antiquaries, campaigned for the preservation of ancient buildings, and Kelmscott Manor, Morris's country home, is now owned by the Society.

THE BIRTH OF MODERN ARCHAEOLOGY

In the second half of the nineteenth century, important changes occurred in both the preservation and collection of antiquities and in the development of archaeological method and understanding. Antiquities recovered from the rapid development of both London and other cities were only preserved and recorded by enthusiastic amateurs. In 1854, a fellow of the Society, Charles Roach Smith offered to sell his large collection of artefacts, rescued from the building sites of London, to the British Museum or the City Corporation. Both rejected his offer, and it was only extensive lobbying of the House of Commons by the Society that led to a special Treasury grant, enabling the British Museum trustees to purchase the collection and thus change their policy with the inauguration of a Department of British Antiquities in 1860.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, excavation and the practice of archaeology acquired a new classification of the prehistoric past and a growing sense of the timespan involved. Danish archaeologists had introduced the division of prehistory into the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages according to the type of tools that were made. Geological theories on the formation of different layers of rock led to the understanding of the stratigraphic principle that the oldest objects would be found in the deepest layers of excavation, and that objects found in the same layer would bear some relationship. So when Fellows of the Society returned in 1859 with the Abbeville hand axe (cat.130, fig.4), a flint tool that had been discovered in quarried gravel at the same level as the bones of extinct animals, Ussher's

FIG.4 (CAT.130)
*Flint Handaxe from Abbeville, France, c.*300,000 years old
Flint
11.5 × 9.5 cm
The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London
Photo © Natural History Museum, London

dating of Creation had to be re-examined. John Lubbock's influential *Prehistoric Times,* published in 1865, presented a view of 'deep time' influenced by Charles Darwin's theories of evolution.

The work of Lieutenant General Augustus Pitt-Rivers at Cranborne Chase in Dorset would provide one of the most complete records of an excavation so far published (1887–98). Believing that everything was of importance, he annotated each step of his work, providing plans, sections, models and an array of illustrations. Realising that different questions might later be asked of the same material, he sought to record every detail 'in the manner most conducive to facility of reference.'

In 1889 the Society started a Research Fund from which grants could be made to encourage excavation. Work at the Romano-British town of Silchester was carried out from 1890 to 1909, employing the expertise of different Fellows. With Stonehenge after World War I and the important work by Mortimer Wheeler at the Iron-Age hill fort of Maiden Castle (1934–7), British archaeology was entering the popular imagination, an imagination now fed by the range and depth of television programmes that bring the modern forensic skills of the archaeologist to the attention of the public.

'Tedious as it may appear to some to dwell on the discovery of "odds and ends" that have, no doubt, been thrown away by their owners as rubbish ... yet it is by the study of such trivial details, that Archaeology is mainly dependent for determining the dates of earthworks ... The value of relics, viewed as evidence, may on this account be said to be in an inverse ratio to their intrinsic value.'
Lieutenant General Augustus Pitt-Rivers

STONEHENGE

CAT. 168 John Constable's poetic vision of Stonehenge, with its emphasis on the distressed and fallen stones, the ominous storm cloud, the arching rainbows and the shadow cast on stone by the seated visitor, suggests a sense of human transience in the face of a timeless but fragile monument. For Constable, Stonehenge 'carries you back beyond all historical record into the obscurity of a totally unknown period.'

Geoffrey of Monmouth, on the other hand, found nothing obscure about Stonehenge, believing it to be a memorial for British leaders slain by the Saxon king Hengist. Built around 485AD for the British king Aurelius Ambrosius, the stones were transported from Ireland and manoeuvred into position through the magic of Merlin. Later speculation saw the monument as Roman, Danish or a temple constructed by the Druids, and it was only in the 1950s that archaeology had the means to provide us with dates for its probable construction and the length of its use.

In 1901 William Gowland, while returning a stone to an upright position, conducted a small excavation around its base and drew conclusions about the methods of construction, suggesting a possible date of 1,800 BC. The first major excavation took place from 1919 to 1926 under the auspices of the Society of Antiquaries, following the nation's acquisition of the monument. Conducted by Colonel William Hawley, the years of patient work were later criticised for their lack of conclusion and inadequate publication.

'... to Stonehenge, over the Plain and some great hills, even to frighten us. Came thither, and find them as prodigious as any tales I ever heard of them, and worth going the journey to see. God knows what their use was!'
Samuel Pepys, 11 June 1668

CAT. 168 *overleaf*
John Constable
*Stonehenge, c.*1835
Watercolour
38.7 × 59.7 cm
Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Bequeathed by Isabel Constable, daughter of the artist
Photo V&A Images / Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The excavation was typical of its time and the necessary destruction an inevitable consequence. It was Hawley's finds, subjected to radiocarbon dating in the 1950s and after, that give us a clearer understanding of the dating and timespan of Stonehenge.

Used as a ritual site for 1,400 years from the construction of the first encircling ditch in about 3,000 BC, the design of the stones matches similar wooden 'henges' nearby. The date of the lintelled megaliths is less precise, but they were built probably in one generation, between 2,600 and 2,300 BC. Although we know very little about the everyday lives of the people living in its shadow, we can find evidence of changes in their burial practices and thus in their possible beliefs; changes in the design of their stone tools and pottery; and the introduction of the first metals. The purposes and use of the monument still elude us, and these may well have changed over the period in which it functioned as the central focus of people's lives. Work will continue and more evidence will be found and interpreted.

THE FUTURE

The need to protect and preserve the monuments and buildings of the past is ongoing. Historians will always need to return to the manuscripts and written records of the past to question the work of their predecessors, to try and find the right meaning that can be drawn from the evidence. At the same time, archaeologists, now equipped with a whole range of scientific dating methods, draw on other disciplines so that more and more can be learnt from each object uncovered. With many fundamental questions still to be answered and a broad range of membership, the Society of Antiquaries will still play an important role.

Further information can be found in the exhibition catalogue:
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