'Artefacts, sites and landscapes: Archaeology and medieval studies',

by

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The Antiquarian Prelude

The role of archaeology, broadly defined as the study of all material culture and monuments, in medieval studies has a long history. One of the earliest recorded 'excavations' is described by Roger of Wendover in his *Flores Historiarum*, when monks at St Albans exposed ten human skeletons at Redbourne (Herts), believing one to that of St Amphibalus (Arnold 1988, 3; Coxe 1841, 389). The first published illustration in British archaeology, in Camden's (1586) pocket bestseller *Britannia*, was of a medieval monument - the Saxo-Norman chancel arch at a church in Lewes (Sussex) (Kendrick 1950) - whilst the earliest illustration of medieval (or certainly early medieval) artefacts was by Sir Thomas Browne (1658) in his *Hydriotaphia, or Urne Buriall* (and see Daniel 1981, 42). Before the last quarter of the nineteenth century, however, medieval interests were mostly confined to the surviving remains of the great and the good, notably ecclesiastical architecture, the earthworks of castles, and high status metal objects (notably coins, arms and armour) which were among the regular finds made when ground was dug for new services, railway lines and buildings (eg Salisbury: Saunders and Saunders 1991).

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, medieval architectural history had become a sophisticated study, major blocks of primary medieval documentation had been transcribed and published, certain monument classes such as monasteries and castles had received cursory archaeological attention but, predictably, there was, as yet, little interest in urban or rural settlement and artefact classification and dating were crude. There were no 'medieval archaeologists', and neither the body of evidence nor the conceptual or methodological binding to suggest any sort of disciplinary unity or awareness.

Early promise, 1878-1930

The late 19th/early 20th century saw the emergence of archaeological methods being applied to the medieval period, though it is difficult to argue that even as late as *c*.1930 there was no discipline of 'medieval archaeology'. Two projects undertaken by General Pitt Rivers towards the end of the 19th century mark the first application of rigorous excavation techniques and recording on medieval sites in Britain. At Caesar's Camp near Folkestone (Kent) in 1878 the General quickly deduced a Norman date for the earthworks and his presentation of stratigraphy and finds from the site still seems remarkably modern (Pitt Rivers 1883). At Tollard Royal (Wilts.) the General's archaeological eye was brought to bear on a historic building, combining architectural recording with excavation and even producing models of the thirteenth-century pointed arches he had uncovered beneath the plaster and stucco. The final publication promotes the study of 'odds and ends, that have no doubt, been thrown

away by their owners as rubbish', and includes some of the first section drawings of later medieval pottery (Pitt Rivers 1890).

A few years either side of Pitt Rivers' death, at the turn of the new century, three organisations came into being which would prove to be of lasting influence. The *Victoria History of the Counties of England* was launched in 1899 and, while the first parish-by-parish volumes catered mainly for interests in genealogy, heraldry, manorial and church history, accounts of Anglo-Saxon archaeology did appear in the introductory sections for every county (e.g. Smith 1903). Today the 'VCH' is still an essential source for any archaeologist with an interest in local medieval studies and later volumes are packed with detail on all aspects of landscape and settlement study (Lewis 1989).

The second key organisation was *the Committee on Ancient Earthworks and Fortified Enclosures* in 1900, a joint initiative of the Congress of Archaeological Sciences and the Society of Antiquaries. This committee immediately set about reporting damage to monuments, mostly minor infrigements such as the tipping of town refuse into castle moats, but also more serious offences such the destruction of part of Norwich Castle for the extension of the Shire Hall (Committee 1907, 3-6). Their 'special reports' informed contemporary debate on matters as wide-ranging as the recording of churchyard and church inscriptions and the study of place-names. A few years later, financial support from the British Academy for a pilot assessment of the social, historical and linguistic implications of place-names (Mawer 1921) resulted in the formation of the *English Place-Name Society* in 1923, after which county editions of scholarly place-names studies began to appear on a regular basis. These are once again an invaluable resource for the medieval archaeologist, reflecting the highly interdisciplinary nature of the subject.

The new standardised schemes of earthwork classification endorsed by the Committee were publicised through Hadrian Allcroft's important textbook on the emerging discipline of field archaeology, *Earthworks of England* (1908). Here there were separate chapters on Norman castles and moated farmsteads, and even minor medieval monuments such as vermin traps and pillow mounds were included alongside prehistoric and Roman monuments (although the early medieval (pre-Conquest) period, with so few visible monuments, remained a 'dark age'). Such 'best practice' in the identification and recording of monuments influenced both regional surveys (e.g. Williams-Freeman 1915) and the standards of the new Royal Commissions on Historical Monuments for England, Scotland and Wales which came into being that same year.

The early work of the Commissions (e.g. RCHME 1910) certainly helped to create the necessary conditions for the emergence of medieval archaeology in later years. At the time, however, this was far from the intention. Indeed, the prevailing view amongst archaeologists of the first quarter of the century was summarised by the father of field archaeology O. G. S. Crawford when he remarked that there was only a role for archaeology in helping history 'by confirming or contradicting its facts', believing that 'archaeological material so used...is inferior in value to the material remains of prehistoric man, which remains are the only evidence we have' Hence the word 'antiquary' might be reserved for the students of 'historic' archaeology' (Crawford 1921, ix). An analysis of almost any aspect of archaeology and medieval studies reveals this attitude to be implicit. The study of early medieval artefacts was firmly embedded within the world of art historical approaches (e.g. Brondsted 1924; Brown 1915-21), while the focus of later medieval pottery studies similarly remained based upon recognisable styles of catalogued museum pieces, mainly for intact and decorated finewares (e.g. Hobson 1902). Depressed excavators complained that 'the differentiation of unglazed sherds from Roman to Norman times, and even later than that, is practically impossible' (Chater and Major 1909).

In truth, the lead taken by Pitt Rivers had found no ready followers and it was many years before the General's broad-minded and logical approach to excavation was to take firmer root. That is not to say that archaeological monuments of medieval date did not receive attention. By 1935 the HM Office of

Works had taken all the Edwardian castles in North Wales into its care (with the exception of Conwy) and in Yorkshire alone ten abbeys and priories representing five different Orders, as well as seven castles, were in the guardianship of the State. Large areas of such major sites were cleared down to the latest floor levels, the walls stripped of vegetation, repointed and conserved, though partial reconstruction, such as part of the cloister arcade at Rievaulx Abbey (Yorks.), was considered 'controversial' (Ormsby Gore 1936, 9). Unfortunately, the strategy for minimum architectural intervention was rarely matched by archaeologists who enthusiastically 'chased' walls around the edges of buildings with long narrow trenches, leaving deposits in the centre of buildings which were then shovelled away. At Rievaulx thousands of tonnes of spoil and fallen masonry were trucked away on a specially constructed light railway, a popular strategy of the day (Thompson 1981).

Three archaeologists, William St John Hope, Harold Brakspear and John Bilson, were particularly responsible for the way in which monastic precincts are presented to, and perceived by, the general public today and it was they who established the standard plans of monastic precincts with which we are familiar, including popularising the use of phased plans (Coppack 1990). Hope's excavation tally of twenty-four monasteries and two friaries in thirty years at the turn of the century may be shocking today but, at the time, there was no recognition that excavation was, in itself, destructive. The aim was restricted to uncovering plans rather than unravelling any sequence, and little attention was paid either to stratigraphy or the recording of the fabric of upstanding buildings.

Castle sites also proved irresistible. Archaeologists were attracted by the promise of documentary evidence and associations with known historical personalities and events that might hold useful clues to dating structures and artefacts (e.g. Stone 1895-97). However, they seem barely to have entered the academic debate on the identity of mottes begun by Clark (1884) and finally settled by the historian Ella Armitage who drew up the first firm chronology for medieval fortifications (Armitage 1912). The archaeological contribution is again far greater in exercising a powerful influence on the impressions of modern visitors to sites following their 'restoration'. At Beaumaris (Anglesey), Bodiam (E. Sussex), and elsewhere, moats were scoured, waterproofed and re-flooded while at Caerphilly (Glam.) modern houses were demolished and the medieval structures extensively rebuilt (Thompson 1981). Thanks to the posters, pamphlets and maps provided by the railway companies and the Automobile Association interest in archaeological heritage began to spread rapidly.

Technological advances also gave archaeologists new perspectives on the past. The first air photograph of a deserted medieval village, at Gainsthorpe (Lincs.) was published in 1925 (Crawford 1925) and three years later Crawford and Keiller included ridge and furrow at Calstone (Wilts.) in *Wessex from the Air* (Crawford and Keiller 1928). Even so, early in the century there was judged to be little to display at medieval rural and urban sites and their potential, even their very existence in some cases, had yet to be convincingly demonstrated. The historian L. F. Salzman, who made exceptional contributions to the early study of medieval industry, could draw on his encyclopaedic knowledge of sources in Record Offices and extracts from medieval writers and nineteenth-century publications, but found that the results of archaeological endeavour had little to offer (Salzman 1913). Both national and regional reviews of British archaeology ended with the Anglo-Saxons (Dobson 1931; Kendrick and Hawkes 1932).

Overall, therefore, this early phase in the development of medieval archaeology saw it progress little further than infancy. The collection of data had started, and this data was being marshalled into typologies. However, the issues that archaeology was being used to address were firmly culture-historical in approach and structured around a documentary-based narrative (e.g. Fox 1923; Leeds 1913): the discipline was yet to set its own agenda.

New priorities, 1930-70

After 1930 the new *Research Committee of the Congress of Archaeological Sciences* began to frame clearer priorities. In a deliberate move away from the excavation of monastic and military buildings, the Committee highlighted the need for investigation of domestic sites stressing the value of recovering pottery sequences (Congress of Archaeological Societies 1930, 36). Encouraged by senior academics (Hawkes 1937), rural settlement quickly began to receive increased attention from archaeologists. Following developments in continental Europe (eg Steensberg 1952) and promising results from the early medieval settlement site at Sutton Courtenay (Berks.: Leeds 1923), excavators at Seacourt (Berks.; Bruce-Mitford 1948), Great Beere (Devon; Jope and Threlfall 1958) and elsewhere, began to grapple with the shallow stratigraphy of rural sites, though recognising the ephemeral traces of buildings in the narrow trenches that were the fashion of the day was difficult, especially where they were damaged by robbing or field drains.

Back in town, in 1937 Martyn Jope and Rupert Bruce-Mitford were grasping their opportunity to salvage objects from the jaws of machinery excavating for the Bodleian Library extension in Oxford. The resulting publication did more than just establish a datable sequence of medieval pottery for Oxford (Bruce-Mitford 1939) and lead to the establishment of the National Reference Collection of Dated Medieval Sherds at the British Museum (Bruce-Mitford 1964), it also opened archaeologists' eyes to the value of rescue archaeology. The 'Oxford connection' for medieval archaeology bound together a number of scholars before and just after the War years, including, for example, Dennis Harden, later to be editor of the first seventeen volumes of the Society for Medieval Archaeology's new journal.

As the numbers of excavations increased so did the opportunities for work on artefacts. For example, J.N.L. Myres (1969; 1977) established a typology/corpus of early Saxon pottery vessels, whilst D.B. Harden (1956; 1978) did the same for medieval glass. Similar typologies were established for different classes of metalwork (e.g. Avent 1975; Hawkes and Dunning 1961; Swanton 1974), whilst Shetelig (1940; 1954) catalogued the *Viking Antiquities in Great Britain and Ireland*. It is pottery, however, that is the most common artefact in medieval archaeology, and Gerald Dunning's contribution was perhaps most significant. He built up basic chronologies for medieval pottery (including imports), reporting and illustrating regional variations and distributions in some 305 scholarly articles published between 1926 and the year of his death in 1981 (for bibliography see Evison *et al* 1974). Dunning's achievement is easily under-rated because he published no general textbook on medieval pottery but there are many who regard him as 'the main founding father of medieval archaeology' (Hurst 1982), an accolade which is even more remarkable when we remember the paucity of firmly dated medieval contexts until the 1950s.

Publication standards rose too at this time with the inclusion of black and white photographs, well composed illustrations and specialist reports on 'animal remains' and 'pottery'. Perhaps if one single volume had to be singled out from the pre-War period it would be John Ward Perkins' *Medieval Catalogue* for the London Museum (1940). This corpus marshalled a wide range of evidence from archaeology, illustration, sculpture, manuscripts, and painting, much of it from non-British sources and set out rough typologies of medieval artefacts as a 'convenient basis for classification'. Today the available data is far more voluminous but, even so, the catalogue was reprinted in 1993 and found a new readership, a tribute to the breadth of scholarship on offer and Ward Perkins' fascination with the ordinary and the domestic, rather than merely exceptional museum pieces. The thematic grouping of the London Museum material according to function rather than material type has had a lasting effect on the presentation of all 'small finds' catalogues (e.g. Biddle 1990).

Where did this new found vigour emerge from? First, there comes a point in the development of any aspect of a discipline when sufficient data has accumulated to allow synthesis to be undertaken. It might be argued that, for some limited aspects of medieval material culture at least, that point was

reached in the 1930s. Second, medieval studies were mostly disregarded by other archaeologists until the emergence of economic history at the end of the nineteenth century and the drawing of history closer to the social sciences during the first thirty years of the twentieth century. While it is not possible to draw direct links between medieval archaeology and the more multidisciplinary and inclusive approach offered by the *Annales* approach, it is possible to suggest that some English historians such as Postan, Power and Tawney all saw the benefit of contributions from anthropology, archaeology and sociology. Their attention was drawn to the value of the historical landscape as a means of illustrating arguments about population fluctuation, crops, landuse and agricultural techniques (Beresford 1985). Tawney, in particular, is credited with the exhortation 'History needs not more books but more boots' and this was echoed by Randall (1934):

> 'The idea has grown slowly, and historians have assimilated it more slowly still. To many it is entirely repugnant: to others it is completely alien. There are historians whom it would be inequitable to disparage and dangerous to neglect, to whom documents are documents and men are just men, affected neither by ancestry nor environment. To these the face of the country is meaningless, and the influence of physical conditions a fond thing vainly imagined.'

Nor was economic history the only influence at this period. Geography had emerged as an independent field of study in the early years of the twentieth century and its potential was quickly recognised by archaeologists (Crawford 1921, 132). The work of the Fenland Research Committee showed the way for multidisciplinary collaboration (Darby 1932; Fowler 1934) and researchers like H. C. Darby (1934) began to produce narrative descriptions of local geography for the historic period. Geographical techniques, most notably distribution maps, quickly found their way into both landscape work (Coles 1935) and artefact studies (Ward Perkins 1937) with greater attention being paid to the geographical patterning of artefacts rather than simply to chronological change. Explanations for changes to the technical and stylistic attributes of artefacts mimicked the culture-history paradigms popular elsewhere in archaeology, relying on migrations and diffusion as ways of explaining changes in material culture. This was most clearly demonstrated in the early medieval period, with the archaeology of the 5th to 7th centuries written almost entirely within a documentary framework provided by the likes of Bede (eg Alcock 1972; Leeds 1913; 1936; Collingwood and Myres 1936).

It is conventional to see the Second World War as marking the end of an archaeological era, but in this essay we have chosen to see events immediately after the War as merely an intensification of what went before. Aerial photographs, for example, had been used by archaeologists for many years but, after the War, the potential of RAF pictures for the identification of new medieval settlement sites was quickly seized upon by Maurice Beresford and others (Bruce Mitford 1948), resulting most notably in his collaboration with Cambridge flyer Kenneth St Joseph, *Medieval England: an Aerial Survey* (Beresford and St Joseph1958). Another boost was provided by the opening up of archives in record offices. In one English county, Essex, the collection of deeds grew from five thousand in 1946 to half a million by 1969 (Barraclough 1969, 195). Archaeologists underlined the value of the combined study of documents and visible remains in the developing arena of 'field archaeology' (e.g. Crawford 1953) as exemplified by the work of the VCH in Cambridgeshire (1948), the Royal Commission in Dorset (1952-75) and new initiatives such as the National Buildings Record (1940) and the revival of the archaeology branch of the Ordnance Survey (1947).

Much credit for popularising the multidisciplinary approach must be due to the extraordinary revival of local history after the War. The success of *The Making of the English Landscape* (Hoskins 1955) and the series of county histories which followed it under the same title seems to have overshadowed other significant achievements such as Finberg's case study at Withington (Glos.; Finberg 1957), Donkin's research on the impact of the Cistercian monasteries (Donkin 1963) or even the classic trio of guiding manuals which, remarkably, emerged in the space of only ten years; *History on the Ground*

(Beresford 1957), *Local History in Britain* (Hoskins 1959) and, *Fieldwork in Local History* (Hoskins 1967). The best of this work married an appreciation of relict landscape features such as deserted settlements and boundaries with vivid writing which could be appreciated by specialist and general reader alike. The analysis of 'topography' was given a central place, together with documentary sources. Not one of these volumes contained the word 'archaeology' in the title, but their broad approach to 'open-air studies' (Marshall 1997) was hugely influential on later practitioners.

During the 1940s and 50s, as new fieldwork began to indicate the potential of excavation at sites of former rural settlement. Moated sites, for example, which had received very little attention before the War, now became a target for small-scale excavations (e.g. at Milton (Hants.); Hurst and Hurst 1967), and increasingly combined archaeological results with documentary research, topography, landuse and settlement geography. All kinds of settlements began to receive attention, from upland hamlets (e.g. at Hound Tor (Devon); Beresford 1979), farmsteads (e.g. at Pickwick Farm (Somerset); Barton 1969) farm complexes (e.g. at Upton (Gloucs.); Hilton and Rahtz 1966) to high status sites (e.g. Cheddar (Somerset); Rahtz 1979). All the same, most attention was reserved for the deserted medieval village and those which made an early contribution to research questions were the Midland clay sites at Goltho (Lincs.) and Barton Blount (Derbs.; Beresford 1975) and the long-house and courtyard sequences at Gomeldon (Wilts.; Musty and Algar 1986). Above all, the outstanding contribution to rural studies was made by excavations at the deserted medieval village of Wharram Percy (Yorks.) between 1950 and 1990.

Wharram holds a special place in any history of medieval archaeology for several reasons. Novel techniques were introduced and tested out there, most notably open-area excavation which had been in use for some years in Denmark and Holland on medieval sites (Hurst 1971). Once the technique proved useful at Wharram it was encouraged elsewhere in England. Less obviously, Wharram also proved to be an important nurturing ground for many archaeologists over the years and indirectly it has spawned numerous friendships and projects, many of which still endure today. For example, the original idea for the earliest of the medieval special interest groups, the Deserted Medieval Village Research Group, came out of discussions at Wharram Percy in August 1952 (Hurst 1979, 1) and later inspired individuals, local societies, and extra-mural groups all over the country to identify and record new examples of desertion. Nationally, the 1,353 sites identified in 1954 more than doubled over the next twenty-five years and it is fascinating to look back and see just how far and how quickly the young subject was nurtured and developed, demolishing stereotypes in its wake (Beresford 1971).

John Hurst, the co-director of the Wharram project, also had a large part in the formation of the *Society for Medieval Archaeology* that held its first public meeting, chaired by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, in Burlington House on 16 April 1957. Rupert Bruce Mitford became the Society's first President and, little more than twelve months later, the first volume of the journal was received by the new membership of almost 400. The Society was the first of its kind in western Europe and remains at the centre of all activities in British medieval archaeology. Since 1957, conferences, monographs, a newsletter and a website have all been added to its roster of activities as well as providing both advice and financial support for medieval archaeology projects throughout Britain.

In addition to increasing interest in the archaeology of buildings, there was renewed rigor in the study of standing structures. During the War many medieval buildings were destroyed, amongst them St Benedict's church (Norwich), St Peter's Hospital (Bristol) and Brooke House in Hackney (London). Church archaeology, in particular, was boosted by the opportunity to work on bombed sites in London (Grimes 1968) and at St Mary-le-Port in Bristol in 1962-3 where both the church and its graveyard were examined (Watts and Rahtz 1985). Perhaps one of the many effects of War was to focus minds on what remained of the medieval building stock. New protective legislation was introduced and this was paralleled by new vernacular building studies, notably *Monmouthshire Houses* (Fox and Raglan 1951) and *The English Medieval House* (Wood 1965). The latter drew upon a diverse range of new

research by Barley (1961), Harvey (1954) and Hewett (1962-3), amongst others, though the contribution of W. A. Pantin on medieval English town houses might be singled out for the emphasis he placed on the combined study of buildings and documentary sources (e.g. Pantin 1963).

After the War excavations on monastic sites were few, though archaeology benefited from the historical overview provided by David Knowles' (1948-59) great four volume history of the religious orders in England as well as two major collaborations, *Monastic sites from the Air* (Knowles and St Joseph 1952) and *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (Knowles and Hadcock 1953). Castle sites, on the other hand, were to benefit from a more targeted and careful approach by archaeologists, particularly the earth and timber motte and ringwork. Brian Hope-Taylor's 1949 excavation at Abinger (Surrey) produced the first plan of a castle motte (Hope-Taylor 1956) and later longer-running excavations at sites such as Ludgershall Castle in 1964-72 (Wilts: Ellis 2000) and Hen Domen in 1960-88 (Powys: Barker and Higham 1982; Higham and Barker 2000) demonstrated what the application of modern excavation and fieldwork techniques could achieve in a subject hitherto dominated by documentary and architectural study. It is perhaps here, in revealing aspects of the daily life, that the archaeology of castles has a role to play in the future.

Urban archaeology began in earnest in bomb-damaged medieval towns like Southampton (Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975). In London, W.F. Grimes led the *Roman and Medieval London Excavation Council* (1946-62) in the investigation of a handful of destroyed church and monastic sites as well as some secular buildings and portions of the city wall (Grimes 1968). It was Martin Biddle's work, however, in late 1960s Winchester that set new technical standards in recording and developed a justified research agenda in which documentary sources were thoroughly integrated with excavation data (Biddle 1983: Keene 1985). Rather than dig solely where the opportunity presented itself, research took priority over rescue excavation in guiding a strategy which sought to examine a changing city over time, privileging no one period over another and giving equal attention to all parts of the social and economic spectrum. The importance of the investigation of complete tenements quickly became apparent, as did the value of excavating discrete units, such as castles, in order to examine their effect on the town plan.

Since the War, one of the most important discoveries in medieval towns has been the realisation that river banks and sea shores have constantly been encroached upon and reclaimed, burying buildings and rubbish behind revetments (see Good *et al* 1991; Milne and Hobley 1981). Household and industrial waste of all kinds can be well preserved here because the stratigraphy can be both deep and waterlogged (up to 10 metres deep in the case of London) and sometimes finds can be closely dated because quays and warehouses were supported on wooden piles which can be dated by dendrochronology. The first medieval timber waterfront in England was exposed at Thoresby College wharf in King's Lynn in 1964 (Clarke and Carter 1977) following pioneering excavations at Bryggen in Bergen (Norway) and at sites in the Netherlands (Milne and Hobley 1981). Since then there have been excavations on waterfront sites in a number of cities, notably London where the publication of structures and finds from excavations and metal-detecting surveys on reclamation-dump deposits is one of the greatest sustained achievement in British archaeology since the War (e.g. Egan and Pritchard 1991; Egan 1998; Milne and Milne 1982).

To what can we attribute the establishment of archaeology and medieval studies during this exceptional forty year period? In general terms the threat to life and landscape during and after the War increased attention on the valued traditions and monuments of the past. In his nostalgic appreciation of the past and horror at the destruction he saw all around him, William Hoskins (e.g 1955) touched a chord in a public whose awareness of archaeology was being broadened by television, new educational opportunity and access to stately homes and National Parks. At the same time technological advances and economic recovery had turned students away from political and constitutional matters and tuned them into cultural, social and economic history. This benefited links

between archaeology and other disciplines and drew together those with common interests. Much of their work might be labelled as 'empiricist' and it was often expressed in a historical-style narrative in which material culture was seen as a passive reflection of the wider social and economic picture. The post-War period was one of continuing accumulation of archaeological data with more funding, improved organisation, record-keeping and standards and increases in personnel, but where theoretical issues remained largely uncontested (though see Jope 1952) and historians and archaeologists continued to eye one another somewhat nervously.

A dedicated follower of fashion? 1970-2000

Three radical changes have influenced the style and scale of archaeological projects since 1970: the nature of funding for excavation and research, the development of new ideas influencing archaeology generally, and the influx of new technologies and techniques. These changes can be linked to broader themes common to a number of the social sciences.

By the late 1960s Britain's archaeological record was at risk from the latest wave of infrastructural developments, particularly in cities, gravel quarries and along new motorway corridors. Sites were 'rescued' however and wherever it was possible to do so, often with the minimum of public funds and the considerable enthusiasm of volunteer labour. High profile events as such the destruction at Barnard's Castle in London and at the New Palace Yard at Westminster in 1972 (Jones 1984) brought the plight of archaeology to the attention of the public and a series of important publications made clear the urgency of the situation (Biddle *et al* 1973; Heighway 1972). All over the country, the challenge to record threatened sites was taken up, often with greatest success by 'units' like that set up in York in 1972. Many of these impressive 'rescue' campaigns have now been published and, amongst the highlights for the medieval period are urban sites in Hull (e.g. Evans 1993), Canterbury (e.g. Blockley *et al* 1995), Exeter (Allan 1984), Lincoln (e.g. Gilmour 1988), Norwich (e.g. Atkin *et al* 1985), Perth (Bogdan & Wordsworth 1978), Reading (Hawkes and Fasham 1997), Southampton (Oxley 1986) and York (Lilley *et al* 1994), excavations in smaller towns like Trowbridge (Graham and Davies 1993), ports like Poole (Horsey 1992) and rural settlements such Thrislington (Austin 1989), Raunds (Boddington 1996), and those in Milton Keynes (Mynard 1994).

It was also during this time that various aspects of the previously almost invisible early medieval landscape came to light. From the 1960s, major excavations, both rescue and research, were revealing for the first time the survival of substantial native 'Romano-British' populations into the early medieval period, seen through cemeteries (e.g. Cannington in Somerset: Rahtz and Hirst 2000), hilltop settlements (e.g. Cadbury Congresbury and South Cadbury also in Somerset: Rahtz *et al* 1992; Alcock 1995), and late occupation in some urban settlements (e.g. Wroxter: Barker *et al* 1997). In the east of England, large scale fieldwalking in areas such as Northamptonshire revealed a scatter of small [5th] to [9th] century settlements within a landscape that later came to dominated by far fewer nucleated villages with their associated open fields (e.g. Foard 1978; Hall and Martin 1979). Excavations of deserted medieval villages (see above) had, however, generally failed to reveal evidence for 'Early or Middle Saxon' predecessors (and where such evidence had turned up, it was of a rather different character to the later medieval village (e.g. Wharram Percy: Milne and Richards 1992). A number of large-scale excavations in rural areas were, however, now revealing early medieval settlements some distance from later villages, and in a landscape which showed fluidity and mobility rather than complete continuity or discontinuity (e.g. Mucking, Essex: Hamerow 1993; and see Hamerow 1991). It is telling that David Wilson's seminal review of *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England* (1976) contained chapters on 'Agriculture and rural settlement', 'Buildings and rural settlement' and 'Animal resources' that could not have been written ten years before, yet no chapter on cemeteries or burial evidence: the very character of early medieval archaeology had changed as new opportunities for large-scale work on rural settlements allowed a more holistic approach to the subject.

Overall, the redevelopment boom of the 1970s and 1980s proved to be a time of tremendous opportunity for the archaeologist, particularly in the south of England. It was, quite simply, a 'data explosion' which led not only to innovations in recording procedures, for example the introduction of the 'Harris' matrix and single context planning (Brown and Harris 1993), but also to leaps forward in understanding. Somehow, triumph was (almost) always conjured from adversity. For example, when changes in legislation in the late 1960s brought medieval churches under the threat of conversion and demolition, architects, art historians and archaeologists combined to co-ordinate action and research through the Council for British Archaeology (Jesson 1973). The seminal studies of Taylor and Taylor (1965; 1978) has already established the extent to which Anglo-Saxon fabric survived in English parish churches. During the 1970s, new projects, like that at Rivenhall in Essex, soon demonstrated the complexity of English churches structures and how much unexpected detail could be added to both the structural history of churches and their wider place in the landscape (Morris 1989; Rodwell and Rodwell 1993). A series of church studies, for example at Brixworth (Northants.) and Deerhurst (Glos.), as well as at cathedrals such as York and Wells have demonstrated that archaeology can and should be integrated into major engineering and structural works.

The single most important document for archaeologists issued during the century was arguably the new planning guidance (PPG 16) which appeared in 1990. This document locked the majority of archaeological fieldwork into the planning process so that developers now pay to have the locations for their new supermarkets and housing estates 'evaluated' by archaeologists. This has raised many issues in the archaeological world, including the closer consideration of professional standards and the need to acquire the commercial trappings of competitive business. At the same time it has also brought frustrations when commercial interests so rarely match academic interests as to where or what to dig. In general the scale of individual excavations has shrunk considerably, but the numbers of archaeological excavations are now greater than ever before; between 1982 and 1991 some 350 to 400 medieval sites were revealed by field evaluations (Darvill et al 1994) and it is already clear that the most successful projects can integrate developer-funded excavation with broader research contexts (Keevil 1995).

Such changes have cemented the central role played by curatorial archaeologists in 'development control', deciding where and how archaeological work should be undertaken in response to the many thousands of planning applications received each year by local authorities. Since the late 1960s county-based 'Sites and Monuments Records' have been developed from the post-War Ordnance Survey records, helping to locate known archaeology and record the history of past investigation. Along with the now computerised National Monuments Record (successor to the old Ordnance Survey record cards), these SMRs represent an invaluable research tool. A higher proportion of State money is also now directed by English Heritage towards what might be loosely termed 'resource management'. In the past this has included specific tasks such as excavation at historic properties (e.g. Castle Rising (Norfolk); Morley and Gurney 1997) in advance of repair and refurbishment. Gradually, however, the focus has widened to embrace assessments of the survival and condition of monuments, such as the loss of ridge and furrow in the Midlands (Hall 1993), as well as the writing of 'framework' and 'policy' documents as different societies and organisations seek to influence future strategy in the face of decreasing sources of non-developer funding (e.g. Blair and Pyrah 1996 for church archaeology; Carver 1980 for an urban context; Society for Medieval Archaeology 1987). Paradoxically, medieval archaeologists are now more aware than ever of the nature and potential of archaeological remains, but less able to resolve their questions through fresh fieldwork and excavation.

Leaving the specifics of funding aside, the overall picture is that the numbers of excavations have increased enormously and broadened to include every conceivable class of monument, but that their scale are now much reduced. Nevertheless, against this background of 'heritage', 'resource',

'framework' and 'implementation', academic interests remain ambitious. The work at Wharram Percy illustrates this well, broadening its aims from an initial search for house foundations and a date for desertion, to embrace the study of the village plan, the prehistoric and Roman underlay, and the entirety of the local settlement pattern (Beresford and Hurst 1990). A capacity for open debate and self-critique as demonstrated, for example, in the re-interpretation of medieval structures at Wharram (Wrathmell 1989) is just one welcome sign of a maturing sub-discipline.

Like any academic subject, medieval archaeology has its fashions. At castles and monasteries the aims of excavation have switched from public display to the understanding of sequence and evolution, combining below ground archaeology with the detailed recording of standing buildings. Understudied components of the monastic precinct, such as the gatehouse and industrial complexes, have come under scrutiny for the first time (e.g. Bordesley Abbey (Worcestershire): Astill 1993; Norton Priory (Cheshire): Greene 1989) and this is being extended to less-well preserved urban sites. There has, however, been nothing to rival the scale of the British School at Rome's San Vincenzo Project, now one of the best understood early monasteries in Europe (eg. Hodges 1993). In Britain, moated sites (Aberg and Brown 1981), fish management (Aston 1988), and gardens (Everson 1991) are just a few other monument classes which have received increased attention in the last quarter of a century. New specialised journals (eg. *Landscape History*) and interest groups (eg. Medieval Pottery Research Group) have flourished. In the future higher priority is likely to be given to dispersed and shrunken settlement forms like hamlets and farmsteads, features of the countryside like parks and woodlands and their industries, environmental and coastal archaeology.

One enduring theme has been that of landscape archaeology. Some of the most successful projects have been regional in scale, utilising a variety of techniques such as geophysics, fieldwalking, standing building recording, environmental archaeology and documentary study to reconstruct successive phases of landscape development over larger areas (e.g. Hall and Coles 1994 for the Fenland; Aston and Gerrard 1999 for the Polden Hills in Somerset). Among the more influential surveys are also those supported by the British Academy in Italy (in the Biferno Valley: Barker1995; and South Etruria: Potter 1979) and France (the Britany Survey: Astill and Davies 1997). Such multidisciplinary projects, often long-term commitments which have inspired their own methodological developments (e.g. Fowler 2000 for geophysics; Hodges 1991 for test pitting), have often surprised us in showing that elements of the landscape appear to survive, at least in part, from the late prehistoric or Roman periods. Those projects dedicated to wetland areas, such as the Severn Estuary levels, have revealed a particularly astonishing and unexpected wealth of evidence (e.g. Nayling 1998; Rippon 1997; 2000), and encouraged the assessment of long-term trends in settlement, land-use, landscape and population. This growing emphasis upon landscape, and the remarkable preservation of the past afforded by wetlands, has allowed medieval archaeology to move beyond simply great monuments and the aristocracy, to include a more diachronic approach to society as a whole.

Conceptually, this has also been a time of enormous change in archaeology. During the late 1960s and 1970s archaeology, like history and the social sciences before it, began to focus upon general trends and explanations rather than the descriptive and specific. This 'processual' archaeology, which made explicit use of the 'objective' language of numerical methods and statistical quantification in the analysis of its data, affected prehistorians far more than classical, medieval, professional or amateur groups. Notable contributions for the medieval period, however, were made by Hodges (1982), Rahtz (1981; 1983) and Randsborg (1980), though not always without acrimony (e.g. papers in Austin and Alcock 1999; Hinton 1983; Hodges 1989). The prospect of an objective past in which 'processes' could be traced was sometimes pitched rather crudely against a History seen as elitist and overly preoccupied with 'events' and 'high culture' (Moreland 1991; Biddick 1993). Such claims may have been somewhat grandiose but they gave archaeologists greater confidence that they could make significant contributions to medieval studies, especially by giving voice to the ordinary people of the

past and in strengthening their links with sociology, anthropology and geography.

Yet, even as some medieval archaeologists wrote of the 'wind of change' in their subject, theoretical perspectives were already moving on. In recent years a variety of philosophical stances have been adopted which have been grouped for convenience under the banner of post-processual archaeology (Moreland 1991). They include gender and ethnicity studies, Marxist archaeology, structuralism, *Annales* archaeology, phenomenology, and critical theory. None of these are novel approaches to social scientists; phenomenology, for example, was first developed in psychology in the late 1930s and found applications in human geography in the mid-1960s. The belated effect of these stances on medieval archaeology can be noted in many ways: a more inclusive, personalised and less generalised view of society demonstrated by concern for marginalised, disadvantaged and dominated groups (e.g. Gilchrist 1994; 1997 for medieval gender studies; Scott 1999 for infancy; Fox 1996 for transhumant groups); a tide of publications on ethnicity (e.g. Lucy 1998; Gerrard 1999); an acceptance that the archaeological record is as biased as the written record and that the archaeologist must act as interpreter; the notion that material culture is an active element in human behaviour, not merely a passive reflection of it (e.g. Graves 1989 for churches); a renewed interest in the 'form' of written texts (Camille 1987 for the visual coding of the Luttrell Psalter); an emphasis on wider contextual studies which seek similarities and differences across a wide range of material culture (e.g. Johnson 1993); an appreciation of the social and symbolic significance of the landscape and settlement (e.g. Cumberpatch 1997 for household objects; Austin and Thomas 1990 for medieval houses; Williams 1997 for early Anglo-Saxon burial sites), and a drift towards thematic contributions rather than traditional divisions into urban and rural or into monument classes or period exemplified, for example, by Clarke's excellent introductory text (1984).

New scientific methods have also had wide application. Geophysical survey, pioneered at sites such as Cadbury Castle (Somerset) in the late 1960s (Alcock 1982), is today a routine prospection tool. Dendrochronology too has had a huge impact on the dating of roof-types and carpentry techniques (e.g. Pearson 1994 for Kent; Hillam nd.). Zoological, botanical and environmental studies have become commonplace (e.g. Berryman 1998; O. Rackham 1986; J. Rackham 1994). 'Best practice' in fieldwork is now more widespread thanks to training initiatives (e.g. by English Heritage for medieval pottery studies) and the invaluable guides published by the Institute for Field Archaeologists and the Council for British Archaeology (e.g. Cocke 1996; Mytum 2000). Increasingly, specialists are not providing a service *for* archaeologists but, rather, working *with* them and this happier symbiotic relationship is evident in the proceedings of the joint symposia on archaeological science sponsored by the Academy (e.g. Pollard 1991).

More generally, the computer has joined the trowel in the archaeologist's toolkit. Geographical Information Systems are a routine accompaniment to development control work and computers have featured in landscape projects for many years (Reilly 1988). On-site recording of excavation and fieldwork has been pioneered, notably at West Heslerton (Yorks.) where 'clickable plans', section drawings and even videoclips are combined with primary information about contexts and phasing (Powlesland 1997). Today, an increasing volume of archaeological discussion takes place on the Internet (1,440 members generate an average of 8.5 messages each day on the 'britarch' list), and reports on archaeological projects and datasets often appear on the World Wide Web as an addition or alternative to printed books and journals (for past British Academy projects see <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>). The delicate balance between accessibility, affordability and scholarship is one that is likely to be hotly debated in the future.

It would be quite wrong, however, to leave the impression that recent archaeology and medieval studies are forever at the mercy of either technology, theory or resource management (those these, perhaps, have been the concerns of the majority). There is always a place for classification, chronology and the reflective pause to consider outstanding research questions, outcomes which are

best served by the underlying strengths of printed corpus, catalogue, list and survey. Here, only the highest standards are tolerated, and in this area the British Academy has also made a sustained contribution, particularly in those areas in which archaeology overlaps in its interests with history and art history. Two strengths might be singled out. First, the publication of social and economic historical records which are of key interest to archaeological research (e.g. Gervers 1982; Glasscock 1975; Woolgar 1992). Second, the continuing cataloguing of medieval artefacts, such as stained glass in the *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi* series (e.g. Marks 1998), the magisterial *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* (Cramp 1984; Bailey and Cramp 1987; Lang 1991; Twiddle *et al* 1995; Everson and Stoker 1999), and the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* (e.g. Potin 1999). These major reference works, many of them forty years or more in the making (Wheeler 1970: 106-20), should be weighed alongside the publication of museum collections (e.g. Lightbown 1992), wide-ranging reviews of medieval artefacts (e.g. Biddle 1990; Geddes 1999; Hines 1997; Hurst *et al* 1986; Williams 1993) and monuments (e.g. Cathcart King 1983; Emery 1996; Faull and Moorhouse 1981; Johnson and Rose 1994; RCAHM Wales 1982).

A clear sign that medieval archaeology has now come of age is the number of major recent syntheses published. These include volumes on themes as diverse as death and burial (Daniell 1998), towns (Schofield and Vince 1994; Vince 1990), crafts and industry (Blair and Ramsey (1991), rural settlement (Taylor 1983), monasteries (Greene 1995), fortifications (Kenyon 1990), medieval countryside (Astill and Grant 1988), wetlands (Rippon 2000) and buildings (Grenville 1997). More general surveys have moved away from the historical framework (e.g. Platt 1978) towards a more explicitly archaeological perspective (e.g. Hinton 1990) though historians too have drawn extensively on archaeological evidence, most notably Christopher Dyer (e.g. 1994) in his discussions of the medieval peasantry. These often interdisciplinary overviews are a sign of growing maturity and confidence within the discipline.

Future directions

Some medieval archaeologists have had doubts about the future. Is medieval archaeology relevant to a multi-cultural European society? To what extent is medieval archaeology weakened by increased specialisation? Will the lack of large-scale research excavations paralyse the subject? What impact will electronic data and archiving have? Is medieval archaeology really still to be defined by the use of written sources and should it not have an independent research agenda? We also need to keep the impact of new conceptual approaches in perspective. Some practitioners remain 'traditional' in perspective and concerned largely with description, classification and compilation. The more extreme of these still believe that historical archaeologists are largely immune from theoretical problems (Arnold 1986), although others, mainly those with recent archaeological training, or who keep regularly in touch with the study of archaeology in other periods, adopt more theoretical perspectives in their writing. There is now, for example, greater awareness of methodologies and theoretical stances adopted elsewhere in the social sciences. Medieval archaeologists, whether they be teachers or field unit staff, regularly find themselves cross-reading between periods and across disciplinary boundaries. New methods are constantly being developed, bold conservation and restoration projects are underway (e.g. Charles 1997) and major discoveries continue to be made. These include projects with a high public profile such as raising of the *Mary Rose* in 1982 and the forensic examination of the first mass grave to be excavated from an English battlefield at Towton in 1996 (Fiorato *et al* 2000). Great advances are also being made in the recording of smaller objects, particularly through the Portable Antiquities Scheme which has greatly improved the reporting of finds made by metal detectorists. Media coverage of the catastrophic fire at Windsor Castle in November 1992 may have generated debate on royal tax bills and modern architecture, but it also reaffirmed the relevance of archaeology and a medieval past to a modern society.

Overall, medieval archaeology has changed beyond all recognition during the 20th century, emerging from what was little more that an antiquarian past-time to a respected academic discipline taught in some thirty universities.

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