ARCHAEOLOGY IN 1851

By JOAN EVANS

I feel that I have chosen an unduly pretentious title for this, the last of my Presidential addresses. It suggests that from the heights of some archaeological Olympus I am going to survey archaeology in the whole world—or at least, the whole of Europe—a hundred years ago. I do not live on Olympus, and my purpose is the much more modest one of drawing a vignette of archaeology in London in the years round 1851—in fact, of sketching what our Institute may regard as a short period of parochial history. It needs no excuse but that of a mild parish pump interest, but may have, perhaps, the further purpose of showing on a small scale how greatly our science has increased in the course of the last century.

At first glance the organization of archaeology in 1851 appears rather astonishingly like it is to-day. Such Societies as those (not wholly archaeological) for Greek and Roman studies date from the eighties and nineties of last century; the Prehistoric Society is a child of yesterday; the need for the Co-ordinating Congress of Archaeological Societies and its successor the Council for British Archaeology had in 1851 not yet been felt. At the same time one of the great features of the years round 1851 is the pullulation of new learned societies—the Historical Society, the Camden Society, the Shakespeare, the Percy, the Hakluyt, and the Chetham Societies; the Bannatyne, the Maitland, the Surtees and the other clubs, were all founded; and by providing organs of publication for specifically literary and historical subjects helped to clear the field for pure archaeology in such publications as Archaeologia. (We are apt to forget that in volume xxxiii, which takes us to the end of 1850, it seemed natural to the Antiquaries to print papers on the administration of the Navy in the time of Elizabeth, on the place-name Coldharbour, to publish the text of satirical rhymes on the defeat of the Flemings before Calais in 1436, and to give in the Proceedings a full report of a paper on the approaching extinction of such old breeds of dogs as the English mastiff, the Dutch pug, and the old English turnspit.) Moreover the highly specialized field of oriental archaeology was just beginning to have its own publications; a short-lived Syro-Egyptian Society published the first volume of its Proceedings in 1850.

A vigorous interest in archaeology was shown not only by these new enterprises but also by the foundation of local archaeological societies on a county basis. In 1851 many were already founded: the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, the Sussex Archaeological Society, the Bury and West Suffolk Archaeological and Historical Society, the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (which in the best Liverpool fashion derives its title from the United States), the Architectural and Archaeological Society for the County of Buckingham, and the Archaeological Societies of Canterbury, Cheltenham, Chester, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, Ipswich, Lincoln, Leeds, Scarborough, Somerset, St. Albans and York, and the Cambrian Archaeological Society, were all recent foundations. Some have amalgamated; nearly all survive.

1 The author, Octavius Morgan, knew of one still at work in the inn at Caerleon on Usk, Proc. Soc. Ants., ii (1850), 75.
In 1851, too, you will remember our own Institute and the rival Association were lively youngsters nearing their teens.

The undoubted centre of archaeology in England, then as now, was the Society of Antiquaries, in whose rooms we are privileged to meet to-day. 1851 was, in deed, a festival year for the Antiquaries, for they then celebrated the centenary of their royal charter, as they do the bicentenary this year. They celebrated it by a dinner at the Freemasons' Tavern, as they hope to celebrate this year by a dinner at Grocers' Hall. They were still in the rooms at Somerset House, of which the memory is agreeably recalled to us by Rowlandson's caricature of the admission of an antiquary as yet unidentified that hangs over the attendance book in the hall outside. A single sitting of the Antiquaries a century ago both took up more time and covered wider interests than one would be likely to do now. On June 6th, 1850, for instance, they began with a collection of relatively modern Indian curiosities, and went on to a paper on beads from many localities, another on the oath taken by the members of the Parliament of Scotland in 1641, and wound up with a dissertation on the Early Greek François vase, which was so long that only a third of it could be read that day. The Society had a coffee-room as well as a meeting room at Somerset House, and coffee, tea, buttered toast and muffins were served at the meetings. The subscription had been set in 1849 at four guineas; but the numbers had dropped to just under 500, and a suggestion was being aired—and was put into effect in 1852—that this subscription should be halved. The chief difference, however, that we should notice in the 1851 list of F.S.A.s if we compared it with that of to-day, would be the almost total absence of the man who made his living by archaeology. It was still the age of the distinguished amateur, and the Society still included a considerable number of Fellows with no very direct interest in antiquity, though they held great positions in public life. It was a matter of course that the Archbishop of Canterbury should be a Fellow. Sir Robert Peel, Leader of the Opposition, was the most eminent Fellow to die in 1851; Bishop Wilberforce (alias Soapy Sam) was a senior Vice-President; and the second President of the Royal Society in succession had just been elected an ordinary F.S.A. The other learned Societies, indeed, were in close touch with the Antiquaries; the Zoological Society sent the Antiquaries their transactions as a matter of course, and the Royal their Philosophical Transactions.

The Club feeling was emphasized by the fact that any communication from someone not a fellow had to take the form of a letter to the Secretary and to be read by him to the company. The practice of discussion after a paper had been instituted by the President, Viscount Mahon, in 1849, though he expressed some anxiety lest the privilege should be wrongly used. If it were judiciously employed, as it was designed to be, it would 'aid in the elucidation of dark or controverted points; but it is equally obvious', (he continued) 'that it is capable of being misapplied to irrelevant discussion or oratorical display. It will be at all times the bounden duty of the Chair to confine such discussion to the subjects which are actually before us, and also within the limits of literary argument.' In the same progressive spirit Lord Mahon had for the Anniversary Meeting of 1849 inaugurated the delivery of a Presidential Address, as being—in his words—'the most respectful, and therefore the most proper, mode of information.' His formula of an address recounting the

archaeological achievements of the Society, the deaths of Fellows and the general progress of antiquarian knowledge, is still followed; Sir James Mann gave the hundred and second of the series a fortnight ago.

To turn from the Antiquaries to the two more recent national societies, the British Archaeological Association and our own Institute, I am happy to remind you that a hundred years ago they had at last buried the hatchet and were living side by side in a state of armed neutrality that was soon to become something warmer, though the attempt to unite them that had been made in August, 1850, had (as usual) failed.

The British Archaeological Association in 1851 still maintained the old antiquaries' tradition of comprehensiveness. Volume VI of their Journal, covering 1851, has a serious paper on the excavation of barrows in Yorkshire by John Tissiman of Scarborough, but also includes two papers on coins that are far from profound, one on a head of Janus in the best meandering style of the amateur folklorist of the time and a paper by a parson on the symbolical character of the letters Aleph and Tau. Not unfamiliar notes are struck by the titles 'On an ivory carving of the thirteenth century, with observations on the prick-spur,' and 'On the tippets of the Canons Ecclesiastical.'

An address which had been delivered in October, 1850, by Mr. T. J. Pettigrew, Vice-President and Treasurer, 'On the Study of Archaeology and the Objects of the B.A.A.' had, indeed, clearly defined the comprehensive principles of the Association.

'The researches of the Antiquaries of the present day, it must be recollected, are no longer directed to the accumulation of antiques, or to the mere development of the characters of an ancient inscription, but have reference to their relation to history, and the illustrations they afford of the habits and customs of former times. The pursuit of the true antiquary demands a knowledge and exercise of various attainments. To render his labours effective he must possess no little acquaintance with heraldry, with genealogy, with various languages in which inscriptions are to be found either on monuments or in manuscripts, with history, in general and particular, manners and customs, and a variety of other attainments too numerous to be expected to be efficiently combined in any one individual.' It is noteworthy that Mr. Pettigrew makes no mention of art or architecture, and appears to have no idea of the importance of visual as against literary knowledge.

Our own Institute was in 1851 established in rooms on the first floor of 26 Suffolk Street, and was under the presidency of Lord Talbot de Malahide. Its Council had lately spent a lot of time in discussing the possibility of arranging an archaeological annexe to the 1851 Exhibition, but for financial reasons nothing had been done. The aims of our Institute had lately been set out by Mr. Charles Newton in a paper read at our Oxford Meeting in June, 1850. They were—as he records them—much more archaeological in the modern sense than those propounded by Mr. Pettigrew for the B.A.A. His first words are 'The record of the human past is not all contained in printed books.' He continues: 'Before there can be composed History, there must be evidences of documents, Tradition Oral and Tradition Monumental.'

He includes, in fact, anthropology—or perhaps rather Folklore—in archaeology; but in spite of a predisposition to linguistics he makes a great point of what he calls

*Journal of the British Archaeological Association, vi, 164.*
the Archaeology of Art, which is very much what we now mean by archaeology *tout court*: that is, for knowledge necessarily based on objects rather than literary documents.

His aims for our Society are lofty, and still valid. He writes: 'He who would master the manifold subject matter of Archaeology, and appreciate its whole range and compass, must possess a mind in which the reflective and the perceptive faculties are duly balanced, he must combine with the aesthetic culture of the artist, and the trained judgement of the Historian, not a little of the learning of the Philologer; the plodding drudgery which gathers together his materials, must not blunt the critical acuteness required for their classification and interpretation, nor should that habitual suspicion which must ever attend the scrutiny and precede the warranty of archaeological evidence, give too sceptical bias to his mind. . . . He must travel, excavate, collect, arrange, delineate, decipher, transcribe, before he can place the whole subject before his mind. He cannot do all this single-handed; in order to have free scope for his operations he must perfect the machinery of museums and societies. . . .' What Newton said in 1851 is still profoundly true to-day. We have, to some extent, perfected the machinery of museums (and we may remember that in 1851 the British Museum had only just instituted its Department of British and Medieval Antiquities); though I would point out that we still have not the Museum of Casts of Sculpture which our President desiderated in 1852. We have to some extent perfected the machinery of Societies—though I would venture to remark that except for the Walpole Society, exclusively devoted to English Art, we have no society for the promotion of the study of the History of Art—but what Charles Newton asked of the personal character of the antiquary of 1851 is still very much what we ask of the archaeologist of to-day.

His analysis of the functions of our Institute remain no less valid.

'A Society which would truly administer the ample province of British Archaeology should be at once the Historian of national art and manner, the Keeper of national record and antiquities, and the Aedile of national monuments.

'These are great functions. Let us try, in part at least, to fulfil them. But let us not forget that national Archaeology, however earnestly and successfully pursued, can only disclose to us one stage in the whole scheme of human development—one chapter in the whole book of human history—can supply but a few links in that chain of continuous tradition which connects the civilized nineteenth century with the races of the primeval world—which holds together this great brotherhood in bonds of attachment more enduring than the ties of national consanguinity, more ennobling even than the recollection of ancestral glory—which, traversing the ruins of empires, unmoved by the shock of revolutions, spans the abyss of time, and transmits onward the message of the past.'

We may feel that we know more about the ruins of empires and the shock of revolutions than ever Charles Newton did; but none the less what he says is still true for our generation. These, as he says, are great functions; may our Institute flourish and increase that it may worthily fulfil them.

In 1851 our summer meeting was held at Bristol from 29th July to 5th August. John Scandrett Harford, President Elect—whose house is now known to archaeologists as the Blaise Castle Museum—took the chair in place of the retiring
President, Lord Talbot de Malahide. The Institute went to Wells, as we did last year; saw the cathedral under the guidance of Professor Willis and Professor Cockerell, as we did under that of Professor Webb; and were given lunch—as we were not—at the Deanery. Dr. Whewell, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and encourager of medieval studies there, attended the meeting and made himself useful in proposing votes of thanks.

Hitherto I have spoken of the organization of archaeology in England in 1851. It remains to consider, however briefly, its scientific attainments. It will be clearest, I think, to consider them more or less chronologically in relation to the epoch concerned. Then, as now, English archaeology was primarily concerned with the study of our own country. Yet some of its most brilliant achievements in the middle of the nineteenth century were in the oriental field. The middle of the nineteenth century was the great days of Layard, Rawlinson and Birch. Layard produced his collection of cuneiform inscriptions, with ninety-eight plates, just a hundred years ago, and his Monuments of Nineveh and Babylon two years later. As yet, however, cuneiform could not be read; they were at just the stage at which we are to-day with Minoan script, when groups of signs can be recognized and classified but not yet interpreted. In February, 1850, Rawlinson exhibited a fine collection of specimens of his Assyrian discoveries to the Antiquaries and read an extremely tentative paper on the Gods of Babylon; and in March showed the paper casts of the great cuneiform inscription of Darius at Behistun, which was later to be the basis of its decipherment. In Archaeologia xxxiv, indeed, covering 1851-2, the next step was taken by printing this inscription and its Babylonian and Median translations, in type cast specially for the purpose. Egyptology was further advanced; Samuel Birch in January and February took up two meetings of the Antiquaries with his translation of hieroglyphic tablets of Rameses II about the gold mines of Ethiopia. When he published them more fully in Archaeologia he complained that although France, Prussia and Austria had founts of hieroglyphic types, England had not.

On the other hand, the classical archaeology of Greece and Rome was at an ebb between the great tides of the late eighteenth and the late nineteenth centuries. It is, however, worth noting that the first volume of the catalogue of the Greek and Etruscan vases in the British Museum was published in 1851.

The prehistoric archaeology of England and France was in a transitional state in 1851. The sky was showing the first lightening before the dawn of great things. Yet prehistory as such hardly existed and the blessed word Celtic covered everything pre-Roman—and everything that now needs a Society to itself. Boucher de Perthes had inherited the discoveries of Dr. Casimir Picard but had as yet hardly recognized their potential importance. He had communicated a paper on his Celtic and Antediluvian antiquities to the British Archaeological Association in April, 1849, but it had made so little impression that when in November, 1851, he presented one of his books to the Antiquaries it was not on the flint implements of the Somme Valley, but an Alphabet des Passions et des Sensations: a work which I regret to find is no longer in the Library upstairs.

Yet our Institute had already begun to play a part in the nascent science of prehistory. At our Oxford meeting in June, 1850, Gideon Algernon Mantell, F.R.S., had read a paper 'On the Remains of Man, and Works of Art Imbedded in
Rocks and Strata, as Illustrative of the Connexion between Archaeology and Geology, which was published in book form in February, 1851. His studies are frankly based on Boucher de Perthes' *Antiquités Celtiques et Antédiluviennes*, but in a critical spirit: he thinks Boucher de Perthes no geologist and cannot swallow his flint sculptures. He rather discounts the discoveries at Kent's Hole near Torquay of flint knives and arrowheads in conjunction with the fossil bones of extinct carnivora, on the perfectly sensible grounds that it was a fissure into which anything might drift. The importance of his paper lies not only in his knowledge of Boucher de Perthes, but also in his constant and almost unconscious geologist's stress on the importance of stratification.

The science of prehistory, indeed, was already taking shape, although the existence of palaeolithic man was not to be recognized until 1869. The Dane, Worsaae, visited England in 1851, and in consequence the Presidential Address given by Mr. Edmund Oldfield to this Institute in 1852 stresses the fact that Worsaae has established a classification for the prehistoric objects of Denmark as stone, bronze and iron, and that it remains to apply the classification to Britain—a task that Worsaae himself did not fully achieve before 1878. We must remember too, that even Worsaae did not divide the Stone Age into two periods—both neolithic—until 1857. He had revealed the Iron Age to an age of Iron, but even yet—as our President reminded us two months ago—we have yet much to learn about it.

Apart from man's dim realization of the existence of the ages of stone and bronze there was a strong general interest in barrows. Pitt-Rivers was still doing research only on the Army rifle, but Akerman was investigating the barrows of the South Downs, and classifying them as Celtic and Anglo-Saxon. A paper on Stonehenge in the eighth volume of our *Archaeological Journal* dates it to the time after the Southern Belgae had pushed their frontier to the Wansdyke, and not long before Durtiacus obtained his *imperium* over the other Belgic races. A paper by Albert Way in *Archaeologia* for 1851 on a beaded torc from Lochar Moss, Dumfriesshire, recognizes it as Celtic (though we must remember the word had then a wider connotation) and tries to fit it in to Worsaae's classification. Another paper read to the Antiquaries in May, 1850, on a gold fibula from Scotland raises a point of law which it has taken nearly a century to settle. The fibula was exhibited, but the name of the owner was not given, as it had been accidentally discovered and fear was entertained that with such disclosure it might be claimed as treasure trove by the Scottish Exchequer. As a consequence, the Council of the Antiquaries was asked to communicate with the Government on the necessity of revising the law of treasure trove.

The investigation of Roman sites in Britain was being pursued on lines that sound deceptively familiar. Richborough was being excavated in the winter of 1849-50 by William Rolfe, and a walled amphitheatre had just been discovered; and the *Archaeological Journal* for 1851 contains a long article and a plan of Silchester by Henry MacLauchlan, followed by a further article on finds from the site. When I first thought of a paper on archaeology in 1851 I had not expected it to include anything of my own family history, but I find that the year included an account, given by my father John Evans to the Antiquaries in December, 1851, of some Roman

1 *Arch. Journ.,* ix, 4.
3 Ibid., viii, 228.
discoveries at Boxmoor. I venture to mention it, not only out of pietas, but also because I think it is the first paper of the kind to publish sections of the pots discovered. My father gives an elaborate account of how he made them, with plaster of Paris in sand, into which he pressed the pots. He also gives a carefully classified list of the coins found with them, of a kind that is still perfectly familiar to us.

Saxon antiquities were chiefly being illuminated by the work of John Yonge Akerman, the President Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries. We may call him the E. T. Leeds of his day, for in March, 1850, he read a paper to the Antiquaries on the Saxon Settlement in England, clearly pointing out the evidence from the jewellery buried with members of different tribes. In May, 1851, he contributed a paper on the weapons of Celtic and Teutonic races, in which he gets heavily involved with much earlier material—mostly neolithic—of which the date had not as yet been recognized. Similarly his account in Archaeologia xxxiv, of a Saxon cemetery at Stone strikes one as notably old-fashioned. It compares unfavourably with Sir Henry Dryden’s paper (1850) in the preceding volume, reporting a discovery of early Saxon remains at Barrow Furlong in his own county of Northamptonshire. He records the exact depth at which the graves were found, he gives a plan of the cemetery, and a systematic inventory of the objects discovered. The things he found did not fall into known categories as they would now, though Roach Smith was beginning to fumble after a classification; but here, we may feel, is a modern antiquary at work.

Much work was being done on the dark ages, but it was chiefly outside England and much of it was literary; the sagas, for instance, were being published in Norway. Roach Smith’s Collectanea Antiqua was coming out a century ago and show both what a genuine antiquary he was and how inchoate were the studies of the centuries between the fall of Rome and the Norman conquest.

Medieval studies were more advanced, especially in the work of Robert Willis and John Henry Parker. Willis had published his Architectural History of Canterbury in 1845, and his Jerusalem and Monasteries of the Levant in 1849, as well as acting as Professor of Applied Mechanics at Cambridge. Parker had produced his Gothic Architecture in 1849, and in 1851 published in Archaeologia his ‘Notes Made During a Tour in the West of France’—a sensible and clear account of Romanesque and Gothic architecture in French provinces that were once English, illustrated by a fine engraving of the painted and sculptured arch in Saint Aubin d’Angers, valuable for its evidence of what condition it was in a hundred years ago. Similarly his paper in the Archaeological Journal for the same year on the Tower of St. Mary the Virgin’s at Oxford is important because it gives a competent description of it before restoration. In contrast some medieval papers are distressingly general: for example one by Repton entitled ‘Remarks to Assist in Ascertaining the Dates of Buildings’. In 1849 it was worth printing in Archaeologia; in 1951 it would do nicely for the meeting of a Women’s Institute. And in 1851 we may remember that Ruskin was toiling in Venice, through a notably rainy winter, at his Stones of Venice. I have lately been privileged to read his diaries and notebooks of the time, and have recognized the authentic thrill of the man ploughing his way through many difficulties to fresh discovery. Ruskin was not an archaeologist; but in the early months of 1851 he worked as an archaeologist does. If we turn to to-day, in architectural studies I

hardly think, we, as an Institute, are in a position to feel self-satisfied. Too few of us can say if a moulding is half-an-hour too late, as it used to be said that the old generation could do; too few of us can see behind the skin of a structure to its bones. There is no class of people whom I should better like to see more fully represented in our membership than ordinary practising architects and architectural students. We are fortunate in having a few brilliant specialists, who make our summer excursions as interesting as they are; but I should like to see them as the leaders of a phalanx of their profession.

In other aspects of architecture we can see a no less startling change. In 1851 the Institute was beginning to realize, very slowly, that over-restoration and reconstruction might be a danger; in 1951 we are learning how much may be lost by the neglect and dereliction that ensues on want of money and on the *incuria* of public bodies that do not share our interests. So, too, the danger to more portable objects of antiquity is now less that they should be lost through ignorance — though this still happens, more often than one would suppose — than that they should go to form part of the trophy of the American victory of gold. There has been the Gowers Commission; there is in being the Anderson Commission; but let not the humblest member of the R.A.I. sit back and feel that this is enough. Constant watchfulness, especially over what lies at our particular door, is required of each and all of us as our part in the battle for the preservation of European civilization. Yet the army that fights for the preservation of these values grows daily.

In March, 1852, your then President, Edmund Oldfield, addressed the Institute. He said: 'Within no very distant period the study of antiquities has passed, in popular esteem, from contempt to comparative honour. That this change should have occurred in an age by no means remarkable either for its reverence for the past, or its sensibility to impressions of romance, an age distinguished in common phrase as pre-eminently "practical" and "utilitarian", furnishes some proof of an improvement in the method in which the study itself has been pursued.'

The style is more polished, the language perhaps a shade more old-fashioned than my own; but otherwise you might hardly guess from the context that it was Mr. Oldfield addressing the Institute in 1852 and not your retiring President in 1951.

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1 Arch. Journ., ix (1852), 1.