

THOMAS BATEMAN, BARROW OPENER

BY G. A. LESTER

(University of Sheffield, Department of English Language)

Thomas Bateman is the best-known Derbyshire archaeologist and was in his short life the most active in collecting, recording and preserving the antiquities of his locality, prolific in publication, generous in assistance to fellow antiquaries, and liberal in granting access to his remarkable museum, the most important sections of which are now kept in Sheffield. Though spoken of in terms of high praise in his lifetime and for many years afterwards, Bateman has suffered an eclipse and his reputation has dwindled, so that in 1961 the centenary of his death passed virtually unnoticed and it has become customary today to dwell upon his faults rather than to respect and admire his knowledge and industry. This essay does not seek to reinstate Bateman, but calls for a little justice in assessing him. If he is to be judged, let it be on the basis of the facts and by comparison with his contemporaries; for if hindsight alone is used, which of today's archaeologists will survive the test one hundred years from now?

The few facts which are commonly known of his life are mostly from the obituary notices written by his friend Llewellynn Jewitt.¹ Bateman was from a well-established Derbyshire family and was born in Rowsley in 1821. He died in 1861 aged only 39 and his comparative youth, therefore, should be a factor in our assessment of his career, for at the start of his publicly-known archaeological work he was only 22. Two older members of his family were particularly influential in moulding Thomas's character. One was his father, William Bateman, F.S.A., who was an assiduous collector, published in *Archaeologia*, and seems to have inspired his only son with interests much like his own. The other was his grandfather, also called Thomas, who became guardian when William died in 1835, when his son was 14. Thomas Bateman Senior was purchaser of the family estates at Middleton near Youlgreave, a man of wealth and therefore well able to give his grandson a good education. At his death in 1847 Thomas was left with the knowledge and the means to pursue his great passions of barrow-digging and collecting. He occupied Middleton Hall and Lomberdale House and in the latter arranged a museum from the collection which had been begun by his father. Young Thomas received affection from his grandparents, as their surviving letters make clear, which helped compensate for the death of his mother, which had happened during his first year. In the year of his grandfather's death he married a local girl, Sarah Parker, by whom he had a daughter in 1848, then a son, Thomas William, and three more daughters (1852-58). Thomas William did not share his father's passion for archaeology, but the museum was kept together by provision of will until in 1876 application was made to the Court of Chancery for the removal of the bulk of the collection on permanent loan to Sheffield. In 1893 the Court authorised the sale of the collection, and all the items of particular interest in Derbyshire, Yorkshire and Staffordshire were bought by the Corporation of Sheffield for the City Museum.

The character of the man is strangely elusive, and perhaps this is one of the factors contributing to the romanticism of his name, which continues locally despite his tarnished archaeological reputation. He is described by those who knew him as naturally timid and retiring, simple and unaffected in his manners, seeming to the casual observer to lack geniality, but warm and generous to his friends. Uncomfortable among the overtly learned, he took little active interest in the Society of Antiquaries. He did read an early paper before them, but it was never published in print. Instead he became a loyal member of the newly-formed British Archaeological Association, in whose journal he published many of his finds, and expressed the view that 'those retiring spirits who shrink from the chilling atmosphere of more aged societies, now breathe a more congenial air, and revel in the sunshine of a younger and more generous assembly'.² He had a passion for collecting, and reorganised and reclassified the material which had been brought together by his father, adding to it by his own excavations and by purchase and donations

from others. He was essentially a practical archaeologist and was proud to refer to himself in his published works as an opener of barrows. Yet despite the rigorous fieldwork which must have been necessary he is described in the obituaries as weak and sickly. He died suddenly after only two days of illness and was buried at Middleton.

Thomas Bateman, then, is remembered for and through his archaeological work, which is described in his own published books and articles, in the large amount of manuscript material which he left, and in the accounts of others. From these sources we can learn something of his aims and ideals as well as of his methods of fieldwork and excavation, the standard of his archaeological reports, and the arrangement of his museum. And if we are to make any assessment of his achievement, we will need to consider the work of near contemporaries, particularly those who excavated in Derbyshire and the adjoining counties.

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It is not surprising that we learn little about Bateman's preparatory fieldwork from his excavation reports, which are concerned more with end products than with means. Occasionally we are told that an inconspicuous barrow was spotted in the course of fieldwalking or at the time that another nearby was being dug.³ Bateman records that at one time, while walking over Stanton Moor with his friends Samuel Carrington and Stephen Glover, the party noticed a number of bones which had been scratched up by rabbits. They set to work with their pocket knives, then borrowed a hack and spade from an adjoining farm. The results of their labours were the pieces of three or four urns and the same number of 'incense cups'.⁴ Bateman and his friends were always careful to secure the permission of landowners, who sometimes attended during the openings.⁵ The advantage of being the local expert in the subject was that Bateman was often notified of casual discoveries and was quick to arrive at any disturbed site which looked promising.⁶ In the absence of much of Bateman's own correspondence (the many letters which survive were mainly written *to* him) we are dependent on more dubious evidence for the details of his preparations for fieldwork. For instance, the poem *Barrow Digging* by 'a Barrow Knight', though written in a lighthearted vein perhaps gives a true picture of the enthusiasm engendered by an evening among friends of similar antiquarian interests, which stimulated them to set up the dog-cart and venture out on a barrow-digging expedition:

In talk like this the night advanced,
No eye once towards the timepiece glanced;
For all in fact possessed the will,
To make both sun and moon stand still.
While old wives' tales and village gossip,
Of bed and sleep quite made the loss up;
And all exclaimed, their grog whilst swigging,
There's naught on earth like barrow digging!⁷

More is known about the actual excavation procedure. The party often included Stephen Glover, author of *The History of the County of Derbyshire* (1829), who assisted in compiling *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire* (1848), Samuel Mitchell the Sheffield antiquary, the Rev. Stephen Isaacson, who was reading papers with Bateman at the earliest meetings of the British Archaeological Association, Samuel Carrington of Wetton, Staffordshire, Frederick Lock, who made on-the-spot drawings, Bateman's father-in-law William Parker, and various friends of the family. The frontispiece of *Barrow Digging* is a 'faithful delineation' of the scene on 28th May 1845, when a number of these were present at the opening of Taylor's Lowe, Wetton.⁸ On at least one occasion Mrs. Bateman was present and succeeded in losing her gold cameo ring of classical design, an accident which Bateman humorously reflected might send some future excavator on a false trail.⁹

The object of barrow opening at this time was mainly the acquisition of antiquities for the numerous private collections and new provincial museums which were everywhere being formed in the 19th century. Despite Bateman's avowed and evident interest in relating objects systematically to early societies, his terminology and sometimes his categoric statements make it clear that it was the special and well-preserved skeleton

or artefact rather than the ordinary and fragmentary that he was mainly interested in. We are told that in one barrow he found five flint instruments 'of no particular interest', and that in another 'nothing was found on this occasion more interesting than the remains of two human skeletons, and some fragments of an urn'.¹⁰ At other times it is the excitement of 'success' which betrays the prime motive, as in a bleak spot on a wet, cold day in June 1845, when a continuous sequence of discoveries 'kept up the excitement, and the inclemency of the weather was disregarded'.¹¹ In a barrow near Church Sterndale, Bateman and his fellows were annoyed by the appearance of a considerable quantity of water which prevented any view of the floor of the grave and made it necessary 'to fish for the expected treasure'. They were rewarded with a drinking cup, a skeleton, a jet stud and two flints.¹² Digging sometimes was done for more casual motives, as when Bateman worked a little in a large barrow 'to occupy the afternoon' or when 'having been repulsed in an application for liberty to open a mound near Cotton, we amused ourselves with some unsuccessful digging in the Cauldon Hill group of tumuli'.¹³

The usual manner of excavating a barrow was to dig a trench through the centre, but occasionally, where there was some difficulty, such as an extensive growth of trees, the sinking of a hole was resorted to. It is only rarely that other approaches were recorded, but it seems that sometimes trenches were dug from the four cardinal points, 'which left very little of the mound unexplored'. At other times Bateman records with evident satisfaction that 'no pains were spared in removing a large area of the artificial soil, until the rock came into view'.¹⁴ Trenches often followed devious, unplanned routes as evidence of a promising deposit, such as charcoal or a declination in the soil, was spotted. Lacking neatness, they sometimes became unsafe, such as an excavation of 1845 which had to be abandoned at a depth of six feet. The hazards were increased by the practice of undercutting, which became necessary when an awkwardly-placed wall crossed the barrow. In 1843 at Cross Lowe, near Parwich, a skeleton was accidentally discovered near the surface when the skull fell down owing to the ground being undercut for the purpose of following up traces of other skeletons. Another practice which the present-day archaeologist would find reprehensible is the abandonment of an excavation on the grounds of its difficulty. This was sometimes the case where a barrow or cairn was found to be built mainly of large stones.¹⁵

Digging was seldom allowed to take long, a day or less being considered quite sufficient under normal circumstances. Frequently two barrows were opened in one day, particularly if the first proved to have been rifled.¹⁶ On 15th May 1845 four barrows were examined, but 'owing to the shortness of time allowed by the length of the day nothing decisive could be ascertained, except a conviction of the impolicy of attempting to explore so many barrows in one day'.¹⁷ The length of time needed for an opening could not always be foreseen, however, and in November 1848 the party was obliged to clear out a grave by candlelight. Such expedients were often made necessary by the length of the 'season', which sometimes extended to include barrow openings in February or even December.¹⁸

Bateman achieved the opening, under his personal inspection, of over 200 barrows by the usual practice of employing labourers to do the bulk of the digging. Details of labourers' expenses are given in letters from Samuel Carrington respecting barrows dug on Bateman's behalf. So we read: 'January 12th, 16th, 20th, 1849 at Alstonefield, one man 3/6; the same dates, for boy and ale 1/-; ale 3d; paid two men and for beer 4/3'. There seems to have been a good deal of private enterprise among the labourers, which accounts for many entries such as 'flints 8d'.¹⁹ Usually we hear nothing of the labour force in the published reports, but Bateman once attributes the failure to find a primary interment to the negligence of his workmen who, being left to themselves, were not sufficiently careful; 'on this account, nothing of the slightest interest occurred, all that was found being the bones of two human skeletons, animal bones, and the remains of rats, in a confused heap just beneath the turf'.²⁰ And again, stimulated by the lack of success of earlier excavations, Bateman records a determined final effort in 1848 to disclose the primary interment in the large barrow at Steep Low, to which end (we are

told) two men were constantly employed for a fortnight. Bateman records with no shame that he was later sent an iron arrowhead which had been picked up by an onlooker when an opening had first been made by him in 1845.²¹

When he attended personally, Bateman was prepared to wield the labourers' tools himself, as the poem *Barrow Digging* makes clear:

With pick uprais'd still see him pause,
Lest urn, or celt, or human jaws
Should suffer from a hasty shock,
And wreck his hopes, like ship on rock.²²

When caution was called for, the pickaxe and spade were put aside and the 'scratcher' and trowel used instead.²³ The degree of care sometimes taken is evident from records of animal and vegetable matter, such as cloth, skins and wood, found in the graves.²⁴ On the other hand, excavations showing lack of care are not kept secret, as at Stand Lowe in 1845 when, 'there being no indications of bone, or change of colour in the soil, the scrupulous care, so necessary on these occasions, was not used; consequently, the hack was struck amongst a quantity of glass beads'.²⁵ Furthermore, re-examination by Bateman of barrows previously excavated by himself or others sometimes revealed that an earlier trench had passed within as little as six inches of a deposit.²⁶

It will perhaps be useful to describe, by way of specific illustration, the opening of the large mound called Gib Hill at Arbor Low. As a result of the exceptional size of Gib Hill, the operations extended over several days and are recorded by Bateman in journal form. On the first day a trench was begun in the top half of the mound, which on the second day was dug through the centre. No interment being discovered, the trench was widened on the third day. On the fourth day the trench was deepened and, still no interment being found, the natural earth was bared over an area of 25 by 18 ft. On the sixth day the party was driven to desperate measures and 'a tunnel was driven from the west side of the trench at right angles, in the hope of finding an interment, but after carrying it three or four yards it was deemed unsafe to continue it; and the supporting timbers being knocked away previous to abandoning the work, the whole superstructure fell in, and, much to our surprise, revealed the interment near the top of the mound, which we had been so laboriously seeking at its base By the sudden fall of the sides [of the cist] and the adjacent earth, a very pretty vase of small size was crushed to pieces.'²⁷ The cist was afterwards re-erected in the garden at Lomberdale House but was later returned to the site.

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'Excavation without publication is destruction' runs the archaeologists' maxim, and to his credit Bateman published extensively and often at his own expense. His main works are *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire, Ten Years' Diggings* (published in 1861 only a fortnight before his death) and a catalogue of his museum.²⁸ We therefore have a fair record of the span of his archaeological career which ran approximately from 1843 until 1861. At the time of his death he was planning a catalogue of his manuscripts with palaeographic and bibliographic notes, and a second edition of his museum catalogue.²⁹ *Vestiges* is as much a descriptive record of the general antiquities of Derbyshire and of the memoranda of earlier barrow-openers as of Bateman's own work, and includes tumuli, circles, rocking stones, earthworks, settlements, and later material up to medieval times. Bateman himself considered that the most interesting and original section of the book was that which gave 'notice of every tumulus hitherto opened in the county, of which any record has been preserved' and added that 'though some of the earlier discoveries may lack minuteness, the writer flatters himself that the barrows opened under his own immediate inspection are reported in such a manner as to render the work highly useful as a book of reference, on almost any subject connected with the sepulchral usages of the Ancient Britons'.³⁰

In *Ten Years' Diggings* Bateman writes solely as practical archaeologist and offers 'a greater amount of information respecting the primaeval sepulchres of Britain, derived from actual excavations than has ever appeared in a single work, except, perhaps, in

the costly folios of Sir Richard Hoare's *Ancient Wiltshire*, which are in a great measure useless to the scientific student, from an absence of any Craniological Notices or Measurements'.³¹

Previously he had made many complimentary references to Hoare, but by this time craniology was in vogue and Bateman in an appendix gave a list of skeletons, skulls and separate bones. He also included an analysis of Celtic pottery, lists of barrows in Derbyshire and Staffordshire, and of animal and vegetable substances, minerals and rocks, which had been found in barrows. In the preface he was able to reflect with some pride that it had rarely fallen to the lot of anyone else to record the systematic opening of more than 400 tumuli by himself and fellow labourers. The fellow labourers were principally Samuel Carrington, who opened the Staffordshire barrows on Bateman's behalf, and James Ruddock, whose collection (and notes) relating to excavations in North Yorkshire Bateman purchased. He published Ruddock's records in *Diggings* with full acknowledgment, after correcting the bad English.

These two books were written for the general reader as well as for the specialist, a fact made clear in the introductory chapters which attempt to 'throw vivid light upon the domestic history of the rude and warlike Briton'.³² However, Bateman's books tend to be more detailed than his papers, such as those which appeared in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*. Furthermore, the books published under his own supervision represent his own standards more accurately. Archaeological and antiquarian societies at this time tended to be parsimonious and short-sighted, publishing only brief and unspecific records of the more spectacular finds reported by their members and failing to set reasonable standards of excavation and publication. Charles Roach Smith complained: 'They preoccupy the ground; they find fault; they profess, and cajole their members and others to write and cater for them. But the meetings being served, the papers are thrown by as of no further use, or if printed are printed in an abridged state with imperfect illustrations and edited probably by persons quite incompetent to understand them.'³³ Nevertheless, in the papers which Bateman contributed it is evident that he spared no pains in reporting his own finds and in recording the discoveries of others, details of which would otherwise have been lost for ever.³⁴

We must assume that Bateman himself was responsible for the choice of subjects for his papers and communications, which increasingly tended to emphasize the exceptional (such as the rich Anglo-Saxon burial from Benty Grange) rather than the ordinary, but an editorial hand may be responsible for the frequent lack of detail. A Roman bottle is described as being 'of the characteristic form', or an urn 'of the usual globular shape',³⁵ as if fellow antiquaries do not expect to be given the information demanded by the general public. Where a notice in a journal is reduplicated in *Diggings* it is interesting to note that the journal account is often more wordy but less informative. 'Without much success' appears in a journal as 'without any satisfactory result', 'near the top of the mound' is rendered 'embedded in the upper part of the barrow', and, with true decorum, the crest of the helmet from Benty Grange is described as being not in the form of a 'hog' but of a 'pig'. Useful comparisons, as of the Benty Grange enamels to certain seventh-century manuscripts, are made in *Diggings* but not in the corresponding journal account.³⁶

Despite some excellent recording work, Bateman's great fault lay in failing to preserve accurate means of identifying the barrows which he investigated. At times he is reasonably precise, given the absence of an acceptable Ordnance Survey standard, and attempts to locate them by reference to local landmarks, such as 'to the right of the road from Ashbourn to Buxton, near the eighth milestone from the latter place'. But more often he is too imprecise, especially when dealing with a barrow which was considered unimportant, such as when in 1847 'three unimportant barrows in the neighbourhood of Thorpe were opened'. Sometimes a location is spelt differently at different points in his reports.³⁷ Nor does he always make clear the current location of the artefacts he describes, although the implication is often that they are preserved in the writer's own museum at Lomberdale House.

The normal method of identifying a barrow is by its date of opening. This information Bateman was not always able to give when describing his father's and earlier excavations, but his own barrow openings are chronologically described and exactly dated from entries in his journal. This presents no problem except where several barrows were examined in one day (in which case 'the larger' or 'the smaller' is usually specified) and when sometimes a barrow was reopened a number of times.³⁸ This approach was useful to Bateman in publishing the accounts of other barrow diggers which he received in letter form. This was the case with Samuel Carrington, who dug the Staffordshire barrows for Bateman and communicated his findings in neatly written correspondence. Bateman then rewrote the letters, as he did the notes of James Ruddock, and incorporated them in *Ten Years' Diggings*. From this and the information in *Vestiges* it can be calculated that the numbers of barrows opened and published were as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

	1821-27	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	Total
William Bateman ..	11																			11
Thomas Bateman ..		18	11	38	21	14	24	25	18	13	2	3	2	7	3	7				212
Samuel Carrington ..							26	39	17	17	5	1								105
James Ruddock ..								10	26	22		10	1							69
GRAND TOTAL ..																				397

By present-day standards Bateman paid inadequate attention to the construction of the barrows, and although he frequently gives a general idea of soil composition it is clear that the basic principles of stratification have not been grasped. In the case of long barrows or others containing stone structures he was reasonably descriptive, sometimes making comparisons, for example with New Grange.⁴⁰ He was aware of the difference between primary and secondary interments, although the bulk of those which go under the latter name in his accounts would in today's terminology probably be labelled 'intrusive'.⁴¹ Only rarely does he record in the text the orientation of a skeleton, and this information is seldom given in the illustrations of the barrows. More serious is the omission of accurate dimensions. Barrow sizes, where given, are usually in yards horizontally and feet vertically. In the absence of accurate surveying or reference points, deposits have to be described as 'about four feet from the top of the barrow' or 'about four yards from the middle'. One reference to 'measurement with a tape' suggests that exceptional care was being taken on that occasion and implies that pacing was the more usual method of determining a barrow's size.⁴² In illustrations, measurements tend to be drawn on rough manuscript sketches but not to be included on the blocks prepared for publication. When Bateman informed the British Archaeological Association in 1851 that 'he had a few days since cleared out the most complete and best preserved cist he ever saw, but found that some one had been before him', the accompanying rough sketch-plan by Llewellynn Jewitt had all the main dimensions marked.⁴³ More polished illustrations, however, as well as having no scale or dimensions, frequently show details of the construction of a barrow where no excavation actually took place. Under such circumstances illustrations are partial reconstructions rather than an accurate record of material examined. But drawings are not often given in Bateman's published works, most barrows being unillustrated and described simply as 'small' or 'large' or 'spread over a pretty large area'.⁴⁴

The lack of a consistent standard apparent in the description of barrows and structures also affects the reporting of skeletons and artefacts. In *Vestiges* and *Diggings* Bateman did not adopt the practice of marking the scale of a drawing, although this is sometimes given in his manuscript sketches. Bateman himself was no artist, and the majority of drawings were prepared for him by Frederick Lock, William Bowman and Llewellynn

Jewitt. The re-use and loan of old blocks was a practice which inhibited the development of a uniform standard of clear illustration. The usual practice was that important objects were described in the text, such as 'a broadsword one yard long' or 'two iron knives, about six inches in length', but the sizes of objects less important to Bateman, such as 'two smaller bits of iron', were left vague. We are told that Roman lead coffins from York were of uniform width throughout, but not what this width or their other dimensions were. The description of an iron knife as 'of the usual form' or of a bronze celt as 'of great beauty' is equally useless, being indicative only of Bateman's personal attitude towards the objects in question.⁴⁵ In this respect, Bateman fell far short of his avowed aim, which was 'with the utmost care and preciseness, to preserve a faithful record of everything observed in the excavations (aided by accurate measurements and drawings), and to collect and accumulate, with patient industry, every relic brought to light'.⁴⁶

In interpreting and dating his material Bateman's wide experience served him well. He made cross-references to his own accounts and pertinent allusions to the works of others. Wisely, he did not attempt any firm dating of the prehistoric remains he came across, but constructed a useful relative chronology for the objects in his possession. Where it was possible to assign an approximate date, in the case of the Roman or Saxon material, Bateman, though modest in his conjecture, was not often wrong. In *Vestiges*, for instance, he is probably quite correct in his list of barrows containing Anglo-Saxon material, and his belief that no purely Anglo-Saxon barrows existed in the Derbyshire region is reasonable on the basis of the evidence then available. After the discovery of the burial at Benty Grange, however, he changed his mind and was inclined thereafter to assign many skeletons and artefacts to the Anglo-Saxon period which he had formerly considered to be Romano-British. It was here that his wide knowledge of illuminated manuscripts made very useful comparisons possible.⁴⁷ He was sometimes wrong in his interpretation of objects, believing the bronze boar crest on the Benty Grange helmet to be carved in iron and rusted chains from a hanging-bowl to be the remains of a cuirass of mail, but he recognised that the frame had originally been covered with plates of horn and correctly identified the silver cross on the nasal which is now only clearly visible in a radiograph.⁴⁸ On another occasion he had the good sense to submit vegetable matter to microscope inspection, from which the remains of an ashen spear shaft were distinguished.⁴⁹

Bateman was remarkably free from romanticism, believing it incompatible with his status as a man of science. He was aware of the follies of 'the old school of antiquarianism' and refers with gentle disparagement to 'Druids' Barrows' which Stukeley named 'without any substantial grounds'. When genuinely affected by the beauty of an upland scene he allows some modest fancy to heighten his prose. When confronted by a particularly fine tumulus he reflected that it 'cannot be looked upon without at once carrying the mind back through scores of centuries, until one would hardly feel surprise at seeing a Druid or a British hunter stop in his solitary path across the hill to pay his tribute of respect to the hill of graves'.⁵⁰ Rarely, though, does Bateman allow conjecture to enter his accounts, except in a few instances, such as when he describes random objects as 'possibly cast into the mound during its construction by mourners and friends of the deceased, as tokens of respect', or reflects upon 'the primeval beauty over whose mouldering remains this barrow had been raised by the hand of affection', or on the boar's tusks in the hunter's grave which were 'the trophies of some, perhaps his last, sylvan triumph'. He promises us facts, and this, on the whole, is what we are given.⁵¹

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Bateman's excavations and purchases gave rise to what contemporaries considered to be 'such a collection of Celtic remains, as no other museum, public or private, has, or even can contain'.⁵² Its contents, which were by no means all from barrows, comprised five unequal divisions. First, the antiquities of the Celtic, Roman, Romano-British and Teutonic (or Iron) periods; secondly, the ethnographical collections of Egyptian,

Etruscan and Greek antiquities; next, relics connected with remarkable persons and localities (such as 'a small portion of skin, from the body of Lord Darnley, husband of Mary Queen of Scots');⁵³ fourthly, arms and armour; and last, items of interest for their design and technique of manufacture. In the 1855 catalogue, items are distinguished according to their acquisition as either from the collections of Thomas or William Bateman, Carrington or Ruddock, purchases or donations. There are some 535 catalogue entries relating to Thomas Bateman's discoveries, 316 to Carrington's, 211 to Ruddock's, 176 to William Bateman's, and over 1,000 entries refer to British antiquities purchased. In all, the catalogue contains over 3,500 entries, many relating to groups of items, representing the extent of the collection six years before Bateman's death.

The expense at which this vast collection was acquired can only be imperfectly ascertained from the surviving account books. The manuscript *Museum Books* show that William Bateman was in the practice of making frequent payments of a few pence for 'blades and scales of stone', a practice which his son continued with characteristic method and regularity. Thomas, in fact, recorded by date every item acquired, whether '3 flints from Staley's land, May 2nd 1849, found by Sarah', 'trifling articles from three barrows near Ballidon, August 4th 1849', or 'cuckoo shot at Middleton, August 11th 1849'. Nothing is too insignificant for record in the *Museum Books*. Items are sometimes bracketed together as being from Carrington, and discounts meticulously noted for the larger purchases⁵⁴. However it is the correspondence which gives the fullest picture of his financial dealings, particularly the letters from James Ruddock on the purchase of items from barrows opened in North Yorkshire. For the first part of the collection Ruddock named £60 as his price, claiming that Lord Londesborough and others were anxious to purchase. Bateman replied by requesting some details of the items. Ruddock's information was along the lines of 'urns, perfect' or 'urns, imperfect', but on this basis Bateman agreed. However, it appears that he was disappointed, feeling that the collection had been over-valued and noting that it was 'a few urns short'. To this Ruddock replied, 'what with my expenses and mens' wages it has cost me 8t [imes] more than the price I fixed on them'. Ruddock later agreed to sell a further section of his collection to Bateman, though he claimed that he got for it far less than he had hoped. He once asked Bateman to value some skulls and send one back 'for the gentleman who I have been employed by' who would give ten or twelve shillings for one, though he was 'not particular to a few shillings'. Despite these distasteful and ungentlemanly haggings, Bateman continued purchasing from this source even beyond Ruddock's death, when we read that the bereaved Mrs. Ruddock, having no regard for the rigorous treatment of the carriers, failed to pack some urns securely so that they arrived in pieces.⁵⁵ Bateman experienced the results of the rough handling of the post on several occasions, and publicly advised against the sending of small items by this means as 'the officials whose duty it is to stamp the letters, will invariably do so most vigorously upon the object enclosed, if, by any swelling of the envelope, its presence is betrayed either to sight or touch'.⁵⁶

'Next to the value of the museum and its amazing extent', wrote a reporter of the British Archaeological Association visit in 1851,⁵⁷ 'is the beautiful classification under which the specimens are arranged, and the facility with which every object can be examined and understood'. Certainly, Bateman spared no pains in making the museum accessible and useful to all, and prepared in 1853 a neatly written *Synopsis of Contents* 'for the use of friends who take a cursory view of the collection'. In the published catalogue Bateman avowed minuteness 'at the risk of being tiresome' in recording the localities of the finds, but this is a claim which is not borne out by entries such as 'six whetstones from different barrows opened in 1843' or 'two flints found in two mounds near Wetton 18th July 1846'.⁵⁸ It is not surprising, in view of the scope of the undertaking, that there are occasional discrepancies between the catalogue entries and the published accounts of the excavations.⁵⁹ But it would be petty to disparage the magnitude and the serious purpose of a collection which contained as many as 146 examples of 'calcined bone'. One matter for regret is the subsequent disappearance of a number of items of which the importance is only now recognized.⁶⁰

Bateman realised with foresight 'the uncertainty attending the preservation and transmission of all private collections' and this was one of the reasons for the attention which he paid to the arrangement of the museum and its catalogue. But Bateman's collection required Bateman's presence, and not unnaturally Thomas William proved to be a rather different man from his father and was unable to maintain it. Arrangements were therefore made for the removal of most of the contents to the Sheffield Public Museum in 1876. An inspection visit by members of the Libraries and Museums Committee led to the following prosaic report to the Council:

The collection, as at present stored in the house at Lomberdale, occupies five apartments (exclusive of library), as follows; One outbuilding, about 15 feet by 4, containing large stone crosses, sculptures, &c. from Roman, Saxon, and other graves. One corridor, containing leaden coffins with embalmed bodies, sculptures, &c. Room No. 1 contains glazed table case, about 12 feet long by 6 feet wide, one half of which is fitted beneath with drawers. Around the room are 13 wall cases, each about 9 ft. high by 2½ ft. wide; these are filled (together with 20 glazed frames, each a foot square) with objects found in grave diggings &c., and include flint arrow heads and other flint and bronze weapons; a series of skulls, numbering about 100, of very great interest to students of craniology; necklaces and other personal ornaments of great variety; dresses and articles of wearing apparel; Roman pottery and lamps; glass, bronzes, &c., Besides these, there are cases containing two mummies in wooden coffins, and complete skeletons of Saxon man and woman. Room No. 2 contains a very interesting series of pottery from the Norman period to the present day, arranged in four wall cases similar to those in Room No. 1. Room No. 3 contains a series of fossils, principally from the carboniferous limestone of Derbyshire, and comprising many specimens of great rarity; also a number of miscellaneous objects of natural history, chiefly molusca and other invertebrates, arranged in two table cases fitted with drawers.⁶¹

At the death of Thomas William it became possible for the collection to be sold. The price fixed for the British antiquities which were offered to Sheffield was £1,600, the other items being dispersed by auction. Even at this price there were complaints from a correspondent to the local newspaper that the average price per item would be about 16 shillings and that there were already crania enough in the own Hall.⁶² Happily such considerations were not heeded.

* * *

It is salutary to consider also Bateman's near contemporaries, from whose work it is immediately apparent that though many were superior to him in certain respects they were much inferior in others. Only in the 1880s did an acceptable standard of excavation, recording and publication develop. Until this time, and for many years afterwards, a feature of the published accounts (including Bateman's) is their inconsistency. There are many excellent ideas which are not rigorously and consistently applied, with the result that the development of the subject was slow and halting until the great leap forward came with the publication of the first volume of *Excavations in Cranborne Chase* in 1887 by General Pitt-Rivers.⁶³

We find that even as early as 1723 the attitude of Dr. William Stukeley was quite forward-looking and that his publications contain many felicitous observations and ideas that were not taken up. It is well known that in the latter part of his career Stukeley began to postulate preposterous Druidical theories, as a result of which he lost all claim to serious archaeological purpose, but his early book, *Itinerarium Curiosum*, is a remarkably objective account of his travels in England. He was an excellent artist, and his 'groundplots and prospects' show some very advanced features. His 'copper prints' of the groundplots sometimes include a clear orientation and a scale of English or Roman feet, but at other times they are accompanied by only one or neither of these features. His 'prospects' sometimes are also drawn to scale, and that of the Dorchester amphitheatre is accompanied by sections showing surface features along the shorter and longer diameters. There are sketches of sculptured crosses with dimensions marked, and an index of plates—in all, much to support his view that 'tis evident how proper engravings are to preserve the memory of things, and how much better an *idea* they convey to the mind than written descriptions'.⁶⁴

More immediately relevant to Bateman is the work of those whose careers were more nearly collateral with his and who achieved, like him, some degree of fame. Such men

would include Sir Richard Hoare, Charles Warne, William Greenwell and J. R. Mortimer. Hoare has already been mentioned as a pioneer whom Bateman admired but learned to criticise for his lack of care in treating the crania. Certainly this carelessness extended to his excavations of the Wiltshire and Dorsetshire barrows between 1810 and 1820, and we learn that he sometimes disported himself in rich men's houses and 'instructed his men to dig down from the top until they got to the level of the natural soil, when they were to send or wait for him. On his arrival the search was continued, and the cist, if any, examined in his presence'.⁶⁵ This should not be allowed to detract from the value of his magnificent *Ancient Wiltshire*, published from the notes of his colleague William Cunnington, which has been praised for its literary merit as well as for its illustrations and maps.⁶⁶

Charles Warne's *Ancient Dorset* is equally large in format, and a far cry from the practical octavo volumes of Bateman. It contains plans of earthworks, sketch maps showing the location of barrows, sometimes with orientation and scale in chains, oblique views, and sections giving surface shapes and the measurements of slopes. Artefacts are rarely drawn to clear scale, but sizes are usually specified in the text. In all, it is a useful record often of work done by others, but much less consistent and controlled than *Vestiges* or *Diggings*.⁶⁷

Greenwell's *British Barrows* and Mortimer's *Forty Years' Researches* are more closely comparable, being the products of actual excavations carried out mainly in the 40 years following Bateman's death. William Greenwell's *magnum opus* occupies a monumental 736 pages. It has a good analytical introduction, a description of excavated barrows by county and parish, tables, craniological analysis, remarks on flora and fauna, and an index. It is impossible to identify many of his barrows, which are given only an imprecise map reference and located as generally as 'on the western ridge of the wolds'. We are told something of his excavation technique: 'My practice has always been to drive a trench, the width of the barrow as it was originally constituted and before it was enlarged by being ploughed down, from south to north, through and beyond its centre; in very many cases, however, I have turned over the whole mound.' Despite his self-righteous air, he neglects to tell us how he was able to determine the original dimensions of a barrow before putting spade to ground, and his terminology betrays a relic-getting mentality which his pupil, Pitt-Rivers, was the first to shake off. Greenwell records proudly of one barrow that 'quite a small museum of warlike, domestic, and personal relics was furnished by the results of a fortnight's digging'.⁶⁸

His great rival in East Yorkshire was J. R. Mortimer, whose *Forty Years' Researches* shows some improvements. It is illustrated by over a thousand drawings made by his daughter. Here the barrows are clearly marked on a large map, and the orientation usually given on the smaller sketches. Good use is made of the newly available photography in the reporting of small finds, most of which have a clear scale. There are elements of a statistical approach in the tables, which list such information as the nature of the interment, the orientation of the body and the type of grave goods. There are sections which give the approximate strata, but most of these are drawn to too small a scale so that their value is lost. Furthermore, the excavation technique does not seem greatly to have improved, for trenches and holes were still the standard method.⁶⁹

Up and down the country there were scores of less famous men in the second half of the 19th century engaging in the popular pastime of barrow-opening. Some published their results, the majority did not; some worked to a high standard, the majority only to what was expedient. Of course, this was a rich man's hobby and an excavator of limited means usually only got his work published with the help of a wealthy patron. Such an excavator, gifted with remarkable care and foresight, was one Benjamin Barrow, who in 1855 published an account of 12 tumuli opened in five days of labour on the Isle of Wight. It contains a sketch map of the area with the mounds clearly marked, orientation, distances between barrows in feet, and sextant readings in relation to a sea mark, likely to form 'a most useful reference in regard to future excavations'. The

investigations were carried as much as two feet into the natural earth. A microscope was used to examine charcoal to determine whether it was animal or vegetable matter, and (we are told) a chemist to whom a sample was submitted pronounced it to be animal on the grounds that it gave off fumes and effervescence when immersed in sulphuric acid.⁷⁰

On the other hand, Rooke Pennington, whose excavations were undertaken to provide specimens for the Castleton Museum (not the present one) can be singled out as the complete antithesis. His reports (if such they can be called), published in 1877 in *Notes on the Barrows and Bone-Caves of Derbyshire*, display a thoroughly cavalier attitude, of which the following account of a barrow opening in 1876 is an example:

We began from the south, but, after pegging away for half a day, we were disgusted to find that it had been already [*sic*] rifled at some distant period. Human bones were plentifully strewn about, and we got many pieces of two fine urns; those who had been before us had no doubt been after treasure, as none of these things had been at all regarded Perhaps more would have been found but that we turned sulky at our disappointment and gave up the search. We had a very rough time of it on this moor; wind and very cold rain ended up in mist, through which we had to grope our way home.

After which he has the presumption to state:

Let it not be thought that because a description is short the work of barrow-opening is quickly over Cautious perseverance and a bright look-out are the requisites for success.⁷¹

Finally, brief mention must be made of A. H. L.-F. Pitt-Rivers, with whom began a new era in archaeology. So exacting were his standards that they have not been surpassed. His military training prompted him to work, through his own skilled staff, to the highest degree of thoroughness and accuracy. He had a sound understanding of stratification and a revolutionary awareness of the importance of common objects and materials, such as those found in rubbish pits. Aware, too, that what might seem insignificant to his generation might be important in the future, he attempted to record every detail, believing that a discovery only dated from the time of its publication. It would be tedious to list the many excellencies of his illustrations, but special mention should be made of the beautiful drawings of bones of all sorts, even including the metatarsals and metacarpals of ancient and modern sheep for comparative purposes. He also had models and reconstructions made of earthworks and villages, and exhibited these with his collection of finds in his own Museum. It seems as if everything he did bore out his assertion that 'so far from barrow digging and camp excavation having been worked out, as I understand some persons have asserted, it has hardly yet commenced upon a thorough system'.⁷²

But how does Bateman compare? Not with Pitt-Rivers, certainly, but amongst his nearer-contemporaries quite favourably in several respects. In particular, his special achievement was in recording and rescuing the antiquities of Derbyshire and the adjoining counties which would otherwise have been lost for ever. Industrious and methodical, he was specially suited to collect together the notes and jottings of lesser men, making of them a coherent account complementary to his own excavation and antiquarian records. Even though his reports have some obvious shortcomings, they are factual, accessible and clear. There can be no doubt, also, that many of the sites he excavated were fast disappearing. He himself mentions some of the hazards to which barrows were subject—levelling, deep ploughing, removal by those in search of stone or minerals, cultivation of waste land, the making of lime kilns, quarrying of land on which barrows were situated, tree-planting, and vandalism. Other diggers frequently preserved no record at all, and one party even went so far as to break an urn to pieces so that each individual might possess a memento of the occasion.⁷³ Bateman, on the other hand, seems to have been endowed with a commendable sense of conservation, to which this remark from *Barrow-Digging* bears witness:

Then carefully replace the soil
Nor for a moment stand, till
The Lowe, by scientific, toil
Is robed in its green mantle.

And lest some future barrow knight
 A cutting here should make in,
 And search in vain from morn till night
 For what we've just now taken;
 A leaden label we enclose
 In pity of such late man,
 Where one and all may read, who choose,
 Inscribed the name T. BATEMAN.⁷⁴

Bateman himself should perhaps be given the last word:

We are indebted to the well-directed efforts of the older archaeologists, and to the interesting facts perpetuated by them, although their own deductions were not unfrequently erroneous. This, however, was a consequence more attributable to the uncertain nature of the study, than in its infancy, than to any defect of judgement or intelligence in the men themselves, whose mistakes we should treat with lenity.⁷⁵

This might serve as his own epitaph.

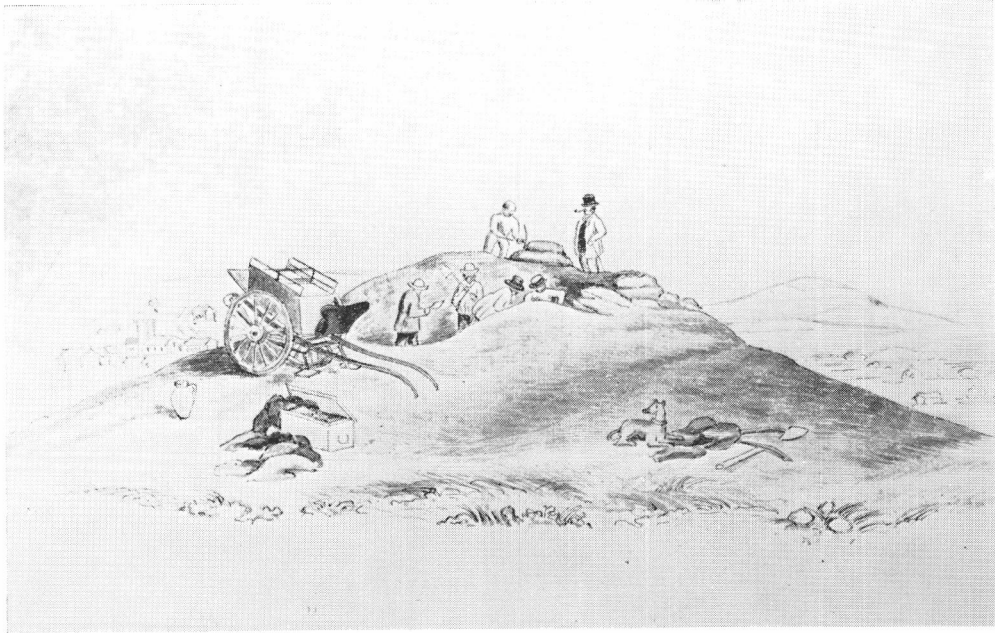
REFERENCES

- ¹*The Reliquary* II (1861–62), 87–97; *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* [JBAA] 18 (1862), 362–67; *Telegraph and Weekly Country Advertiser*, 31st August 1861. See Plate I.
- ²JBAA 18, 363.
- ³T. Bateman, *Vestiges of the Antiquities of Derbyshire* [Vestiges] (London, 1848), 87.
- ⁴T. Bateman, *Ten Years' Diggings in Celtic and Saxon Grave Hills in the Counties of Derby, Stafford, and York, from 1848 to 1858* [Diggings] (London, 1861), 84.
- ⁵Diggings, 106 and correspondence, *passim*.
- ⁶Diggings, 98 and correspondence, *passim*.
- ⁷The poem, published in 1845, is in six 'fyttes' and describes a day's barrow digging. It was written anonymously by the Rev. Stephen Isaacson, a friend and associate. The lighthearted description seems to us to damage Bateman's credibility and to belie his own serious work. But there can be no doubt about his approval of the poem in which he allowed his name several times to appear.
- ⁸Vestiges, 66. See Plate II.
- ⁹Diggings, 79.
- ¹⁰Vestiges, 58, 70.
- ¹¹Vestiges, 79.
- ¹²Diggings, 38.
- ¹³Diggings, 67, 154. This last reference relates to a group of barrows whose opening is ascribed to Samuel Carrington. Bateman rewrote Carrington's accounts in the first person plural and therefore it is not clear when Bateman himself attended personally.
- ¹⁴Diggings, 20; Vestiges, 35, 43, 52, 53, 68, 83.
- ¹⁵Diggings, 113–114; Vestiges, 77; Diggings, 62; Vestiges, 49, 37.
- ¹⁶Vestiges, 44, 67, 70, 77, 78, 85.
- ¹⁷Vestiges, 63.
- ¹⁸Diggings, 45; Vestiges, 99–101.
- ¹⁹*Barrow Diggers*, a volume of manuscript correspondence now in the Derby Local History Library.
- ²⁰Vestiges, 62.
- ²¹Diggings, 125–26. (The spelling *low*, without final *-e*, is adopted in the later publications.) Spectators frequently came in their hundreds. They were not always so helpful, and are ridiculed in *Barrow Digging*, 36:
 At arrow-head they jeering squint
 Exclaiming, 'Lauk, that's nout but flint
- ²²*Barrow Digging*, 22.
- ²³*Barrow Digging*, 10, 45.
- ²⁴Vestiges, 75, 94, 102; Diggings, 26, 30, 34.
- ²⁵Vestiges, 75.
- ²⁶Diggings, 45.
- ²⁷Diggings, 17–19.
- ²⁸*A Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities preserved in The Museum of Thomas Bateman at Lomberdale House* (Bakewell, 1855).
- ²⁹*Reliquary* II, 87–97.
- ³⁰Vestiges, 15.
- ³¹Diggings, v.
- ³²Prospectus for *Vestiges*, 1846.
- ³³In a manuscript note dated 1857 attached to Thomas Bateman's *A Description of Tumuli or Barrows in Derbyshire opened in the Summer of 1843*, now in the Sheffield City Museum.

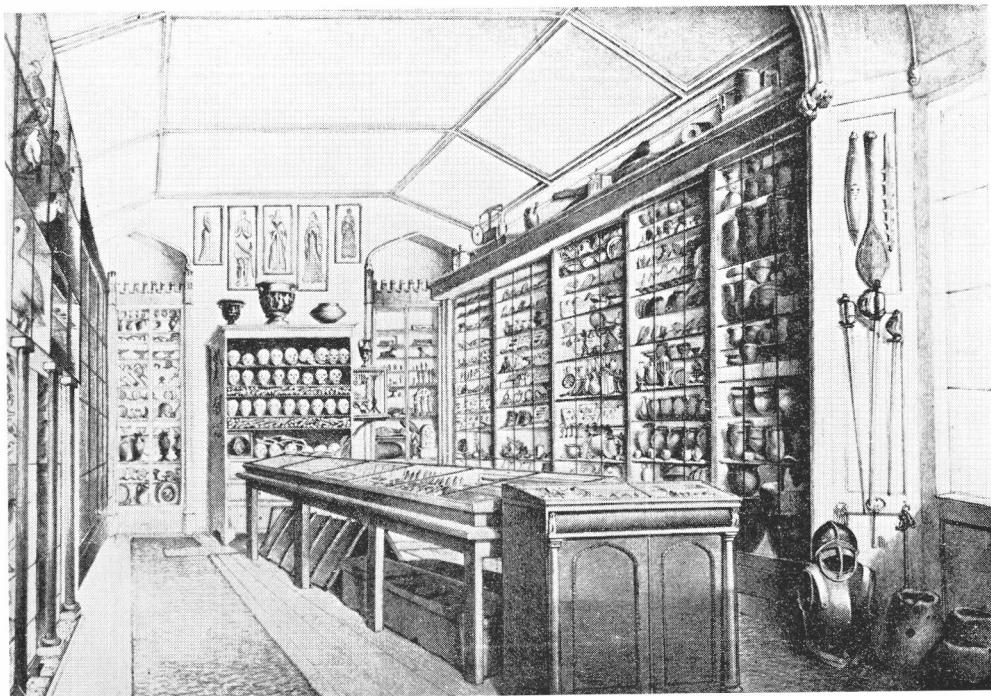
- ³⁴See *Reliquary* II, 87–97, for a full list of Bateman's publications.
- ³⁵*JBAA* 2 (1847), 191.
- ³⁶*JBAA* 15 (1859), 151–53 *cf.* *Diggings*, 17–20; *JBAA* 4 (1849), 276–79 *cf.* *Diggings*, 28–33.
- ³⁷*Diggings*, 28 and 138 *cf.* 148; *Vestiges*, 103. The list of barrows appended to *Diggings*, with some analysis of names, is of great value, and was used by S. O. Addy in 'The Names of the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Barrows', *DAJ* 30 (1908), 103–41.
- ³⁸*Diggings*, 125.
- ³⁹This excludes re-excavation by the original party. Lack of precision in the reports means that some figures are conjectural only. However, the details given by Bateman were sufficiently clear for others to base statistical analyses on them. See R. Pennington, *Notes on the Barrows and Bone Caves of Derbyshire* (London, 1877), appendix I; J. Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times* (London, 7th edn. 1913), 150–53. The claim that he examined more than 500 barrows, made in *Catalogue of the Bateman Collection of Antiquities in the Sheffield Public Museum* (London, 1899), p. v, is misleading.
- ⁴⁰*Vestiges*, 40.
- ⁴¹L. V. Grinsell, *The Ancient Burial-Mounds of England* [Grinsell] (London, 2nd edn., 1953), xviii; *Vestiges*, 39, 43, 64, 92; *Diggings*, 21.
- ⁴²*Vestiges*, 35, 51; *Diggings*, 91.
- ⁴³*JBAA* 7 (1852), 434.
- ⁴⁴*Vestiges*, 37, 67; *Diggings*, 28.
- ⁴⁵*JBAA* 7 (1852), 219; *JBAA* 2, 191; *Vestiges*, 9, 33; *Diggings*, 26.
- ⁴⁶*Catalogue of the Bateman Collection*, v–vi.
- ⁴⁷*Vestiges*, 12–14, 106, 168; *Diggings*, 28–33, 51, 62, 66, 75.
- ⁴⁸*Diggings*, 30–33; *Sheffield City Museum Annual Report, 1955–6*, 13–15.
- ⁴⁹*Diggings*, 123.
- ⁵⁰*Vestiges*, 96–97.
- ⁵¹*Vestiges*, 42, 63, 76. Bateman has been reported as stating at the Canterbury Congress of the British Archaeological Association in 1844 that 'In all barrows hieroglyphic tracery is evident, but great care should be taken in removing the stones, that the characters be not broken, divided or lost'. (See Grinsell, 113.) This assertion, highly damaging to Bateman's reputation, comes from the misunderstanding of a report in *JBAA* N.S. 38 (1932), 194. Anyone who knows Bateman's work will realise that it is quite impossible for him to have made such a sweeping statement, even in the earliest years of his career.
- ⁵²*Reliquary* II, 87–97.
- ⁵³*Descriptive Catalogue*, 245.
- ⁵⁴The *Museum Books* are now in the Sheffield City Museum and are in three volumes: I, 1791–1846, II 1846–50, III 1851–61.
- ⁵⁵*Correspondence*, 21st October 1850.
- ⁵⁶*JBAA* 11 (1855), 351.
- ⁵⁷*JBAA* 7, 325.
- ⁵⁸*Descriptive Catalogue*, vii, 2, 33.
- ⁵⁹E.g. *Descriptive Catalogue*, 31 *cf.* *Vestiges*, 37–39, 42.
- ⁶⁰E.g. the remains of the padlocked box from Cow Lowe (*Vestiges*, 94). Luckily, Bateman commissioned Jewitt to paint a series of superb water-colours of his collection which, in the absence of some of the objects themselves, are invaluable. They are bound as *Relics of Primeval life* (about 1850) and are kept in Sheffield City Museum.
- ⁶¹*Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 13th July 1876. See Plate III.
- ⁶²*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8th February 1893.
- ⁶³A. H. L.-F. Pitt-Rivers, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase* (printed privately, 1887–98).
- ⁶⁴W. Stukeley, *Itinerarium Curiosum* (London, 2nd edn. 1776), preface.
- ⁶⁵*Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* 10 (1867), 86.
- ⁶⁶*The Ancient History of Wiltshire* (London, 1812–21). See Grinsell, 6.
- ⁶⁷*Ancient Dorset* (Bournemouth, 1872).
- ⁶⁸*British Barrows* (Oxford, 1877), 27n, 135.
- ⁶⁹*Forty Years' Researches in British and Saxon Burial Mounds of East Yorkshire* (London, 1905).
- ⁷⁰*JBAA* 10 (1855), 162–65.
- ⁷¹Pennington, *Barrows and Bone Caves of Derbyshire*, 13, 12, 25, 49, 26–27, 20, 31.
- ⁷²Pitt-Rivers, *Excavations in Cranborne Chase*, iv, 28.
- ⁷³*Diggings*, 133; see also 24, 28, 37, 60, 75, 101 and *Vestiges*, 47, 48, 52, 56, 57, 66, 71, 76–77, 90, 99, 100, 103, 113. In the preface to *Diggings* he remarks upon the exhaustion of barrows. There can be no doubt that Bateman's labours, more than any other cause, have pre-empted much subsequent archaeological work and contributed to the odd situation in which the marginal land of the Peak has produced greater evidence of wealth than the fertile valleys of the Trent basin. See *Medieval Archaeology* 6 (1962), 15–52.
- ⁷⁴*Barrow Digging*, 69. The practice was observed by Pitt-Rivers.
- ⁷⁵*JBAA* 8 (1853), 183.



Thomas Bateman, drawn by Llewellyn Jewitt, and lithographed by Bemrose of Derby, from *The Reliquary* II



Frontispiece of *Barrow Digging* by a A Barrow Knight showing work at Taylor's Lowe, Wetton, May 1845



The Interior of Thomas Bateman's Museum, drawn and lithographed by W. Bowman