

THE PITT RIVERS ARCHAEOLOGICAL MODELS

July 26, 2013 Kelly Abbott Community Archaeology, Conservation, Day of Archaeology 2013 archaeologist, Archaeology, Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt, Augustus Pitt, Augustus Pitt Rivers, Bokerley Dyke, Conservation Service, Cranborne Chase, famous archaeologist, General, Geography of England, paint, paint loss, Pitt Rivers Museum, Salisbury Museum, South Wiltshire Museum, Wansdyke, Wiltshire, Wiltshire Conservation Service, Woodyates

THE PITT RIVERS ARCHAEOLOGICAL MODELS FROM 1890'S

PART 3

Watch our conservation video:

<https://youtu.be/9S1UpsOW5ec>

PITT RIVERS AND THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS ON HIS ESTATE

A retired General, Augustus Pitt Rivers inherited Cranborne Chase in 1880. Cranbourne Chase spanned over 26,000 acres across two counties, Dorset and Wiltshire. The estate contained a

wealth of archaeological material from the Roman and Saxon periods and this land provided the perfect area for Pitt Rivers to investigate unspoiled archaeological remains.

A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

Pitt Rivers excavated Cranborne Chase from the mid-1880s and whilst many previous antiquarians had been attracted to burial mounds and their beautiful treasures, Pitt Rivers was interested in a wider area of investigation. His most important innovation was to collect, record and catalogue all the artifacts, not just those most decorative treasures which were admired by his contemporaries.

His approach to studying and recording the archaeology was highly methodical. He was the first to thoroughly document the stratigraphy and position of finds. On the Cranborne Chase estate, Pitt Rivers focused on the excavation of settlements and examined all the Roman and Saxon artefacts, producing illustrations. The discovery of pottery sherds for instance was indicative of everyday life and a subject worthy of study.

Pitt Rivers also published his findings and illustrated his reports. By the standards of the time, Pitt Rivers was systematic in his approach to gathering information and his records are extensive. He is widely regarded as the first scientific archaeologist to work in Britain and archaeologists to this day acknowledge his work and legacy.



Model of Woodyates Hypocaust (1888-90)

3-DIMENSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL MODELS

Pitt Rivers was inspired to improve upon his 2-dimensional plans with 3-dimensional models of his excavations. The archaeological models which survive today in the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum are made from wood, wire and plaster of Paris.

The detail, scale and accuracy of the Pitt Rivers archaeological models is extraordinary. He marked where almost every object was found...



A model skeleton, created by Pitt Rivers from the Woodyates Hypocaust model: part of a Roman settlement, 1889-90

Pitt Rivers displayed many of these models when he opened a museum on his estate and today, the majority of the collection (approximately 22,000 objects) is held at the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford.

SALISBURY AND SOUTH WILTSHIRE MUSEUM

Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum acquired a collection of artefacts, archaeological models and manuscripts called the Pitt Rivers Wessex Collection in 1975. The four large archaeological models from the collection had been in storage for over 30 years and had not been accessible to the public.

This year, Salisbury Museum was awarded a grant from the AIM Pilgrim Trust Conservation Scheme to conserve the models. As these four models are so heavy and fragile, the Wiltshire Conservation Service moved some of its equipment to create an conservation laboatory at the museum and opened the doors to the public.



The Wiltshire Conservation Service moved some of the equipment into Salisbury Museum to create a conservation laboratory and exhibition.

At many museums there is only ever enough space to display a small proportion of the collection at any one time. These models are very large and although they provide a significant resource, they do take up a good deal of space within a gallery. To make the most of the gallery space, smaller examples of Pitt Rivers' models have been on display. By conserving these large models today, the [Conservation Service](#) will ensure that they will be protected and remain in good condition for the future.

More posts to come.....