

**'PARTICULAR THANKS AND OBLIGATIONS':
THE COMMUNICATIONS MADE BY WOMEN
TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES
BETWEEN 1776 AND 1837, AND THEIR
SIGNIFICANCE**

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This paper brings together the evidence bearing on the relationship between the Society of Antiquaries and the women who contributed to it during a significant period when archaeology, through the work of such men as Samuel Lysons and Richard Colt Hoare, was beginning to emerge as a distinct field with its own conceptual and technical systems. It takes its departure from the first substantial appearance by a woman in the Society's publications in 1776, and continues until the accession of a female monarch, Victoria, in 1837, a period of just over sixty years. It explores what women did and what reception they received and assesses the significance of this within the wider processes of the development of an understanding of the past and the shaping of gender relationships through the medium of material culture, in a period that saw fundamental changes in many areas of intellectual and social life, including levels of material consumption and the sentiments surrounding consumerism.

Women were not formally admitted to the Fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries until 1921,¹ but the growing number of women who have been elected since then follows on from a history of female interest in the physical remains of the past that reaches well back into the seventeenth century.² Before we can discuss the contributions made by six women between 1776 and 1837 it is necessary to consider the broad context in which these contributions were made. Mark Salber Philips, in his study of genres of historical writing in Britain between 1740 and 1820, makes it clear, among other points, that one of the salient shifts in the practice of writing history during the period was an enhanced breadth of concern and a greater flexibility, both of which were difficult to accommodate within the classical narrative tradition. He says 'eighteenth-century historians were forced to grapple with the problems of representing worlds of social experience and social feeling'; this included the experiences of women, 'primitives' and others, all of whom were outside the circle of those holding political and military power whose exploits had constituted the focus of traditional history.³ These shifts also involved the exercise of sympathy and the higher value accorded to sentiment. Part of the response to

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these new concerns entailed the adoption of a wider range of genres of historical writing, to include memoir and biography. Two characteristic antiquarian genres emerged at this time: the discussion of early manuscripts (as opposed to nationally significant acts of state) whose content was administratively routine, and the detailed physical description of (mostly British) ancient sites and objects. Although they have earlier roots, the pages of *Archaeologia* show that they are also elements in this new response.

The broadening out of legitimate historical content, matched by an enlarged range of practices, might be expected to have widened the scope for participation in the production of history by extending it to women. Woolf has documented and analysed the relationship of women to historical scholarship during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He is able to cite a few women who made contributions to historical writing, such as Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay and Charlotte Cowley, and he has found one or two others who were directly involved in the gathering and appreciation of antiquarian material, such as Anne Blundell of Little Crosby, Lancashire, who searched for Anglo-Saxon coins in the early seventeenth century, and the two young ladies who viewed Henry Prescott's coin collection a century later.⁴ Elizabeth Elstob's level of Anglo-Saxon scholarship⁵ in the first half of the eighteenth century was outstanding among men or women, but she remains virtually alone among women in Britain until the nineteenth, if not the twentieth, century. Elstob apart, none of these women can be described as major contributors, and their numbers are very small.⁶

Woolf makes the point that women were particularly valuable – and sometimes unique – as sources of information for genealogical and family history, both being among the prime concerns of eighteenth-century antiquaries, and in the way in which they created the detailed, local chronological frameworks by which much surviving material culture could be dated.⁷ Chance remarks within the Society of Antiquaries' records also suggest that women were part of the network that enabled information about finds, and perhaps speculation about them, to move around the polite world and, sometimes, to find their way into print. Samuel Pegge,⁸ for example, in his *Archaeologia* paper of 1780, mentions Lady Sharbourne, who brought a palstave and a spearhead from Ireland and gave them to him.⁹ Interesting though this participation is, it does not help to explain why women, overall, make so limited a showing in their own right in historical writing and so very thin a direct appearance in antiquarian studies. The practical implications of the whole social fabric are, of course, easily listed: travel was difficult for women until the safer conditions of the later eighteenth century; women seldom had freedom to spend money; they were tied to family and household; they were worn out with pregnancies or restricted as unmarried poor relations who had no access to employment outside domestic teaching. The history of Elizabeth Elstob shows the implications of the social system for an academic female. After the death of her clergyman brother William in 1715 she was left without any resources. She was forced to abandon her books and manuscripts and to make a living as a village schoolmistress, a process that seems to have sapped her energy and enthusiasm. She spent the last part of her life as more or less of a dependant in the household of the Duchess of Portland and although she considered resuming her Anglo-Saxon studies, she did not have the heart to do so.¹⁰

The difficulties women faced in attempting useful work in historical study, and perhaps even more in antiquarian pursuits, were more insidious even than the practical problems of money and movement, although they sprang, of course, from the same

social assumptions. Activity was subject to gendered presumptions in which the public sphere was allotted to men and the private to women. The nature of English coffee-house culture, so crucial to establishing the clubbiness and the free discussion central to English intellectual development, was set in an open-to-all-comers mode in which all kinds of men rubbed shoulders on an assumption of equality during the course of the meeting: something, plainly, from which gentlewomen had to be protected.¹¹ Wives, daughters and female friends were kept private and cast as helpmates, operating behind the scenes to provide discreet support and assistance. The antiquarian network was probably seen in this light by its male and female participants, and the occasional women who appear in the records of the Society as sending in antiquities in their possession for exhibition at a meeting of the Society seem to have been operating in the same supportive mode. In 1797 John Wood exhibited a ring with an inset sardonyx showing a Janus head on behalf of Lady Dorothea Hotham, apparently because she felt the accident of her proprietorial position required it.¹² Widows occasionally communicated material that had belonged to their late husbands and the implication was that the husband had intended to exhibit. So in 1775 Mrs De LaFaye, widow of the Revd De LaFaye, exhibited two onyx cameos showing Anthony and Cleopatra, said to have been worn by Charles II, through Dr Morrell.¹³ In these notices, the women adopt a retired position in order to give the impression of acting according to their duty, rather than of putting themselves forward personally. It is always difficult to judge how far these sentiments were merely conventional and how far they conceal some genuine individual keenness, but the appearance of these two women's name in *Archaeologia* does not seem to have helped other women to venture into print in its volumes in their own right.

At root, all these restrictions sprang from the belief that knowledge, the capacity to know and therefore the ability to act effectively were themselves gendered. As John Bennett put it in his advice to women of 1789, turning what might have been the liberating notion of the importance of sentiment into part of the mechanics of female repression: 'Cultivate then such studies as lie within the region of sentiment and taste. Let your knowledge be feminine as well as your person. And let it glow within you, rather than sparkle upon others about you'.¹⁴ 'Feminine' knowledge meant the presentation of existing material in derivative, probably simplified, form, rather than original work: Joseph Bosworth dismissed (unjustly) Elstob's Anglo-Saxon *Grammar* as 'compiled from the works of Dr Hicke and Mr Thwaites', and he went on to patronize women in general and Elstob in particular.¹⁵

The contemporary view of understanding assumed an innate female inability to achieve mastery of subjects demanding logical thought, the assimilation of large quantities of facts and substantial hard work, such as Latin and Greek. These considerations applied just as powerfully to the collecting and publishing of material considered antiquarian – manuscripts and ancient material culture – as they did to study deemed more properly 'historical', although the relationship of women to objects is complex and will concern us again later in this paper. Most activity in the period, including publication, was expected to promote Christian values, but the requirement to give a high but simple moral tone probably lay more heavily on women writers. Overt competitiveness or argumentativeness in print or in acquisition (or any other medium) was clearly transgressive.

This is the background against which the Society received six communications featuring women between 1776 (the date of the earliest) and 1837. The first was

communicated by a man, using established practice, but the lady's name appears quite prominently and the text was published as an appendix item in *Archaeologia* in 1785. Of those produced directly by women, one became a substantial part of the *Vetusta Monumenta* series, one was published as a paper in *Archaeologia* and three appeared as appendix items. These communications began in the usual way, with letters by the finder and eventual author (except in the first case), addressed to a prominent Fellow, who arranged for them to be read out at a weekly meeting and entered *in extenso* into the Minutes. From here, they were chosen for publication through the Society's standard procedures. Throughout, as far as it is possible to tell, the writers were treated formally, exactly as any contributor. Perhaps, given the small number of women correspondents, together with other factors discussed below, the Society evaded the problems posed by potential female antiquaries by treating these few exceptional women as 'honorary men', and in so doing effectively refused to acknowledge women's claims to membership of the antiquarian community. Perhaps, also, this cool attitude helped to discourage other women who might have thought of contributing. No evidence has appeared to suggest that females were ever discouraged from getting in touch with the Society, or that they had their letters suppressed if they did,¹⁶ probably because the matter never became an issue. One of the great difficulties, of course, is the impossibility of knowing how many communications originated with women, but were mediated to the Society by men, without the woman's name ever emerging.

THE ALDINGTON FINDS

The earliest publication by the Society of a new discovery in which a woman was a major player was not published directly under her name; the importance of this has already been discussed. On 14 March 1776, a communication by Sir John Pringle, President of the Royal Society, was read into the Minutes of the Meeting concerning finds discovered in April 1775 'on the top of Aldington Knoll near the church, in the parish of Aldington, not far from Romney Marsh in Kent'. They consisted of '2 copper tubes ... 2 thin plates of copper ... a copper cylinder ... a quantity of narrow ... bands of copper with pins in them ... fragments of pure gold, diapered with a kind of mosaic work', and they were presented by Sir John 'from himself and the Dowager Mrs Scott and her son of Scottshall in the County of Kent (Parish of Allington)'. Mrs Scott 'who was present at the digging supposes them to be part of an altar in the time of heathenism: they were fixed on wood. Some human bones were found in the place and also large stones standing like the ones in Stonehenge'.¹⁷ However, when the account was published in *Archaeologia* in 1785, the person said to have been present was Mr Scott of Scottshall, who gave them to his nephew, also called Scott, who passed them to Sir John; there is no mention of any female Scott. Given that the finds were made while men were digging for foxes on top of the Knoll, it is possible that a mistake was made, and that Mrs Scott was never involved: however, the clear statement in the Minutes and the use of the unequivocal word 'Dowager' suggest that the solution may rather lie in family history.¹⁸

Mrs Scott was born Margaret, the daughter of John Sutherland, near Dumbarton on 19 August 1725 and buried aged ninety-three in Brabourne church, Kent, in 1819. She married Edward Scott of Scottshall, who died on 25 May 1765, so that she survived as his widow for fifty-four years. This probably accounts for the rather particular use of the

title 'Dowager', a term not usually used for the relicts of plain gentlemen such as Edward Scott. Moreover, during the early part of her life, Margaret had been foster-mother to the Prince of Wales, afterwards Prince Regent and George IV, and 'had the principal charge for many years of that prince'. Thereafter she was governess to the Princess Royal, the eldest sister of the Regent. Their father, George III, was said to be 'very partial to Mrs Scott, and at times would sink the dignity of the monarch in the natural impulse of the parent, and would gambol on the floor with his royal children in that lady's presence'.¹⁹ The Prince of Wales 'always showed marked attention and kindness to Mrs Scott, frequently visiting her at her residence at 67, Upper Berkeley Street [London]'.²⁰ It is clear that Margaret was on intimate, but irreproachable, terms with both kings, and with other members of the royal family, and was able to combine this close domesticity with later marriage to a landed gentleman. Probably the royal link accounted, at least in part, for the anxiety to ensure that she was associated with the credit for the discovery in the early stages of its reporting, and possibly also explains why she herself did not wish her name to appear in the *Archaeologia* paper.

CELTIC ANTIQUITIES: LADY RIDDELL

In 1779 a woman who appears in the Society's records as 'lady S Riddell' sent a letter to John Felton; this was communicated to the meeting on 4 November 1779,²¹ and published in the Appendix to *Archaeologia* for 1785, 'dated Mains near Dumfries, September 26, 1779'.²² The letter was published only in extract but it runs, with its drawing, to nearly two pages, which is substantially longer than most such contributions. It concerns a polished stone axe found in the course of land clearance at the estate, and includes a simple line illustration of the axe, which Riddell had evidently made by drawing round it. The clearance involved the blowing-up of 'enormous stones'²³ and the axe was 'forced up with the fragments'.²⁴ She continues that 'there are several Druidical temples and Danish burying grounds on the estate; also the remains as believed of a Roman station'²⁵ and adds that one of them, when plundered for road gravel, yielded three or four 'close-mouthed jars of coarse clay, which their coarse make proves to have been made before the art of glazing was known'.²⁶

'Lady S Riddell' was evidently a member of one of the well-known Scottish lowland landed families called Riddell, and since her letter came from the Mains of Southwick, an estate about fifteen miles from Dumfries, it seems that she belonged to the Riddells of Ardnamurchan in Argyllshire, who possessed this land. She can be identified with Sarah (born Burden), widow of John Swinburne; she married James Riddell of Ardnamurchan in 1775 as his second wife, and brought to her husband considerable estates in Yorkshire. James was made a baronet in 1778, and Sarah died in 1817.²⁷ Judging by her remark in the letter about 'the estate we are now upon'²⁸ she and others of her family had recently taken up residence at the Mains. They were undertaking improvements: the stone breaking which brought the axe to light was done in order 'to bring many parts into cultivation'.²⁹

Other Riddells were settled a short distance away: Robert lived at Friars Carse and his brother, Walter, resided at Wood Park.³⁰ Robert was a patron of Robert Burns and an antiquary well known for collecting material on Scottish archaeology and history who contributed articles to *Archaeologia* on the history of Galloway and on fortification.³¹ Eight volumes of his antiquarian notes and sketches survive in the possession of the

Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (three had turned up in Manchester about 1855 and were presented to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1856).³² These do not seem to contain any further reference to the Mains axe. We do not know of any social connections between these three Riddell households, but they must have been aware of each other and their interests given their proximity; it is possible Robert Riddell encouraged Sarah to send the communication to the Antiquaries, even though the letter was sent via John Felton rather than Robert.

Sarah expresses conventional sentiments in her letter relating to the landscape and the past: 'The estate we are now upon is a rocky romantic scene bordering on the Solway Firth'³³ and 'As I have ever been fond of comparing the former ages with the present, I cannot let any opportunity pass without indulging myself, and among all the collections I have yet seen nothing like this [the axe] I have met with'.³⁴ Even so, her comment about seeing collections of antiquities (perhaps at Friars Carse?) suggests more than a superficial interest in the subject, and this is supported by her bitter complaints that digging organized by the bailiff in the family's absence had destroyed the barrows in which the above-mentioned urns were found.

CELTIC ANTIQUITIES: LADY MOIRA

Elizabeth, Countess of Moira, was born Lady Elizabeth Hastings in 1731 and belonged to the highest reaches of the English aristocracy.³⁵ Her father, Theophilus Hastings, ninth earl of Huntingdon,³⁶ was descended from Edward III and owned extensive estates throughout the country, with his seat at Donington Hall in Leicestershire.³⁷ Her mother, Selina (born Shirley), converted to Methodism in 1739 and founded the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection, which endeavoured to bridge the gap between the Anglican Church and Methodist practice.³⁸ Selina, Lady Huntingdon, is a figure of genuine importance in the history of modern English Christianity and provided living evidence for her daughter of what a determined woman could achieve, but Elizabeth found her difficult to live with and is on record as saying that she married in order to leave 'a life of duty with my mother'.³⁹ By 1760 she had lost her faith and in later life she 'openly professed the most violent enmity to religion'.⁴⁰

At her marriage, in 1752, Elizabeth became the third wife of Sir John Rawdon (1719/20-93), who had estates at Moira, County Down, and who was created earl of Moira in 1762. Elizabeth bore eleven children, five of whom died very young. Elizabeth's brother, the tenth earl of Huntingdon, died without issue in 1789 and she inherited the Hastings property and the family baronies, although as a woman she did not inherit the earldom. Lady Moira died in 1808 and was buried at Moira.

Moira House, in Dublin, was a considerable intellectual and political centre, with strong leanings towards the twin causes of native Irish culture and Irish nationalism. Lady Moira's circle included Bishop Thomas Percy of Dromore, the famous collector of early ballads, and the novelist Maria Edgeworth was a close friend. She had links with Joseph Walker, whose *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* (1786) and *Historical Essay on the Dress of the Ancient and Modern Irish* (1788) added resonance to the turbulence in Irish politics that eventually erupted in the rebellion of 1798. Another friend was Charlotte Brook, one of the most important woman authors of the period, whose *Reliques of Irish Poetry* was published in 1789. Lady Moira assisted with the collection and translation of some of the material, while Walker also passed Gaelic poetry and tales

to Brook, whose material he inherited.⁴¹ Lady Moira openly supported Henry Flood, the Irish patriot, and spoke out for the Hearts of Steel patriotic movement, dedicated to agrarian agitation and reform, in 1772, and for the United Irishmen in 1798.⁴² Her vision of Ireland's future seems to have been one which brought Catholic and Protestant together (shades of her mother?) in a shared idea of Irishness (it is worth noting that she was later a combatant on behalf of Mary Wollstonecraft, who taught one of her granddaughters-in-law).

Lady Moira's contact with the Society concerned the finding on her husband's Moira estate of a human skeleton. She told the Society⁴³ that she first learned of the find in 1781 when her husband's surveyor gave her a plait of hair from the skull of the skeleton, which had been dug from a local turbarry at Drumkeragh in 1780. By early 1783, a substantial account of the find (twenty published pages) had been prepared in the usual form of a letter, which was addressed to The Hon John Theophilus Rawdon,⁴⁴ and communicated to the Society by Daines Barrington. It was read out at the meeting on 1 May 1783 and the following two meetings,⁴⁵ and published in the next *Archaeologia* volume, in 1785.⁴⁶ John Theophilus seems to have been one of Lady Moira's sons or one of her husband's brothers. The question of the extent to which Lady Moira herself was responsible for writing the letter – and gathering the information in it – is easier to ask than answer. The letter certainly reads as if she had written the text of it herself, but beyond this we cannot go.

Even if she received assistance – and she was in a position to command significant help – the tone of the letter suggests a considerable personal interest in antiquities and in the Irish questions that were intertwined with them. She concentrates upon the preserved remains of fabric which had been associated with the inhumation rather than the skeleton itself (no other objects seem to have been associated with the burial).⁴⁷ The letter records substantial efforts to acquire from the surveyor, and through him from the country people, as much as possible of the preserved fabric. Eight fragments were ultimately secured, including two plaits of hair. She describes these fragments very carefully, noting what she could about their composition and weave. She (or somebody who reported to her) experimented with some of the fragments in order to discover as much as possible about the dyes used: 'As in endeavouring to revive a piece that I imagined had originally been of a red dye there resulted in a precipitation of verdigrease, I was inclined to suspect that this ... arose from ... having lain in contact with some implements of brass or copper',⁴⁸ though there was no evidence of metalwork. She backs up her speculations about the nature of the clothing by annexing 'two sketches that are to be seen in Montfaucon's Antiquities'⁴⁹ and two more such sketches,⁵⁰ giving proper references to the relevant plates, for the style of the hair. She also sent with her letter 'a pattern of the sleeve and shoulder' of one of the garments, and 'a sample of the stuff'.⁵¹

Lady Moira is able to cite other local finds, saying that 'A stone hatchet (similar to one in Sir Ashton Lever's Collection) ... was dug up at the foot of this mountain [Drumkeragh] a few years ago'.⁵² By way of comparative material she mentions a letter (dated 2 December 1689) from 'Mr Andrew Paschall to Mr John Aubrey a Fellow of the Royal Society', describing a similar find of human bones and preserved fabric in the Isle of Athelney, Somerset.⁵³ The letter suggests that she had grasped the significant stratigraphical point that the remains had been found at the bottom of the bog, resting on the underlying gravel, and that the age of the find was tied to the length of time the peat had taken to form.⁵⁴ Although the discussion is intertwined with speculation about Druidical practice and the various customs described in ancient authors, the letter

clearly recognizes that understanding of the material culture of the past can only come with specific records of find contexts, detailed description (including technical experiment where appropriate), comparison with other material and an informed view of stratigraphy.

Lady Moira's broader concerns also emerge clearly in the paper. She (or the assistant whom she was willing to follow) is able to demonstrate some expertise in the study of early Irish culture, by giving the English translation of the name of the mountain near which the find was made,⁵⁵ and by citing traditional royal payments in the *Munster Book of Rights* and the *Irish Book of Rights*.⁵⁶ She cites the prominent Irish antiquarian Charles Vallency's material,⁵⁷ and apparently has direct experience of the herbal yellow dye, wrongly called 'saffron', the use of which is a significant strand in Irish tradition.⁵⁸ The letter also shows awareness of Vallency's thinking about the course of Irish early history and prehistory, referring to 'when the Phoenicians established their religion in that island',⁵⁹ and to the Danish invasions.

In a passage that is striking for its heavy use of irony, Lady Moira pursues the link between Irish history and culture and contemporary politics. She suggests that the skeleton may be of somebody 'who had fallen a prey to famine, in consequence of the prosecution of those humane methods my countrymen continued to employ in Elizabeth's reign, to civilize the Irish, and conciliate their affections to the conqueror'.⁶⁰ She takes the opportunity of reinforcing the point in a footnote: 'It seems but candid to seize any opportunity of relating what the ancient Irish endured from the English, since the cruelties of the former are generally stated as not to have arisen from a provocation.'⁶¹ She quotes at length some truly terrible, but apparently genuine, stories of the Elizabethan Irish famine recorded by Fynes Morrison, drawing on his brother's first-hand experiences.⁶² It is interesting, and to their credit, that the Society's officers were willing to publish her comments.⁶³

THE ROMAN VILLA AT PITTMEAD, NEAR WARMINSTER

In a note dated 6 November 1786, the *Gentleman's Magazine* published a very brief account of 'a Roman villa ... Discovered in Pittmead ... Warminster, by Mr Walker and Son, Lecturers in Philosophy'.⁶⁴ What lay behind this bald announcement was made clear a few weeks later when, at the meeting held on 11 January 1787, Mr Daines Barrington⁶⁵ 'was pleased to communicate' a letter he had received on 6 January from 'Mrs Downes of Warminster, together with her drawings of some Roman pavements and other antiquities lately discovered at Warminster'.⁶⁶ The transcription of the letter in the Minutes by the Secretary ran to over seven pages. Mrs Catherine Downes prefaced the meat of her letter by saying that a 'gentleman of Warminster requested her permission to permit a drawing of hers to be sent to the Antiquarian Society; but as he neglected to send it and as no other gentleman seems inclined to take the trouble on him, she cannot help giving herself the satisfaction of communicating the particulars relative to a curious piece of antiquity lately discovered in her neighbourhood'.⁶⁷ After further disclaimers about her 'want of learned phrases and grammatical knowledge' she 'without further apology will proceed'. These may be conventional expressions of female self-deprecation, but she might have felt a genuine diffidence in making a public statement given the complicated and rather difficult history which she goes on to relate, while recognizing that the site would not be placed on record unless she did so herself.

In fact, Downes's account of the discovery of the Romano-British villa in the parish is one of the better descriptions we have from this period of such a site. She gives clear location and topographical detail for the site at Pittmead, a subdivided field in the parish of Warminster. In the portion of the field owned by Lord Weymouth, his tenant uncovered 'ruins' and 'the tessellated pavement I have delineated No. 1' in the accompanying drawings. This sketch was made by a local 'person' but the local people 'carried away' the pavement, and as 'nobody seemed to stir in the matter' he 'threw it by' and no more was thought of the site, until 'Mr Walker,⁶⁸ Lecturer in Philosophy, came to the town [presumably Warminster]' visited the spot, found a few fragments, and 'inserted a paragraph in the *Salisbury Journal*, tho' very unsatisfactory. Seeing this ... after applying to the occupier for permission, I took a man over and began to dig ... I hit upon the top of pavement No. 2 and traced it to its full extent'. Two days later 'an imperfect floor, No. 3, was discovered'.⁶⁹

At this point, Lord Weymouth sent in some workmen, who found floor No. 4. The remains of a building were discovered, which Downes thought, quite accurately, to be a bath-house, because 'I found some pieces of burnt wood in a kind of drain or flow'. Structural details are given clearly, and at the time of writing, 'one man is still at work, and as they politely gave me leave to direct his search, on Monday last I set him to open the uninvestigated part' but no more had turned up apart from a few stray finds, which included an ivory 'bodkin or pin'.⁷⁰ She laments the lack of an experienced supervisor and details the finds of glass, pottery and bone.

'With infinite regret' Downes describes what had happened to the mosaic pavements. Pavement 1 had already been destroyed, and Pavement 2 was almost immediately 'almost totally destroyed by a clown, who took up the greater part of it and carried it away by night'.⁷¹ Pavement 3 was 'demolished in like manner' but Lord Weymouth's surveyor had lifted the best part of Pavement 4 and taken it to Longleat. The lifting method involved waxing the pavement surface, covering this in paper and board, undercutting and lifting; the application of a thick layer of hot plaster of Paris on the underside melted away the wax as it set and fixed the mosaic in place. Of this lifting method, Downes says she has been 'this particular in [describing] the process here observed, in the hopes the hint may be the means of preserving future discoveries of this kind'. She concluded her letter with a brief account of her opening of a barrow in the same meadow and with details of her discovery of more Roman remains nearby, where 'I made a man dig a small hole' from which came tiles and bricks, and which Lord Weymouth's steward promised to have 'properly investigated', concluding that she will report upon it if the finds justify it.

She enclosed drawings of all four pavements, adding that the Society 'may depend upon the accuracy of the drafts, as I took them all (except the first, which I copied from the before mentioned sketch) upon the spot, which no other person had the opportunity of doing',⁷² and she asks for her drawings to be returned, as convenient. The second despatch was duly sent, and read out on 8 February 1787.⁷³ Here Downes described the discovery of a further part of Pavement 2, giving an overall sketch plan and a sketch of the pavement portion on the back of her letter.

It was decided, presumably chiefly by Richard Gough, Director of the Society of Antiquaries from 1771 to 1791, that Downes's account and drawings would be published as one in the series of prints issued by the Society. At the Anniversary Meeting of 1788 the President, the earl of Leicester, announced that the fourth in the group of the prints 'which would be ready for delivery to the members on Monday next' was 'Roman

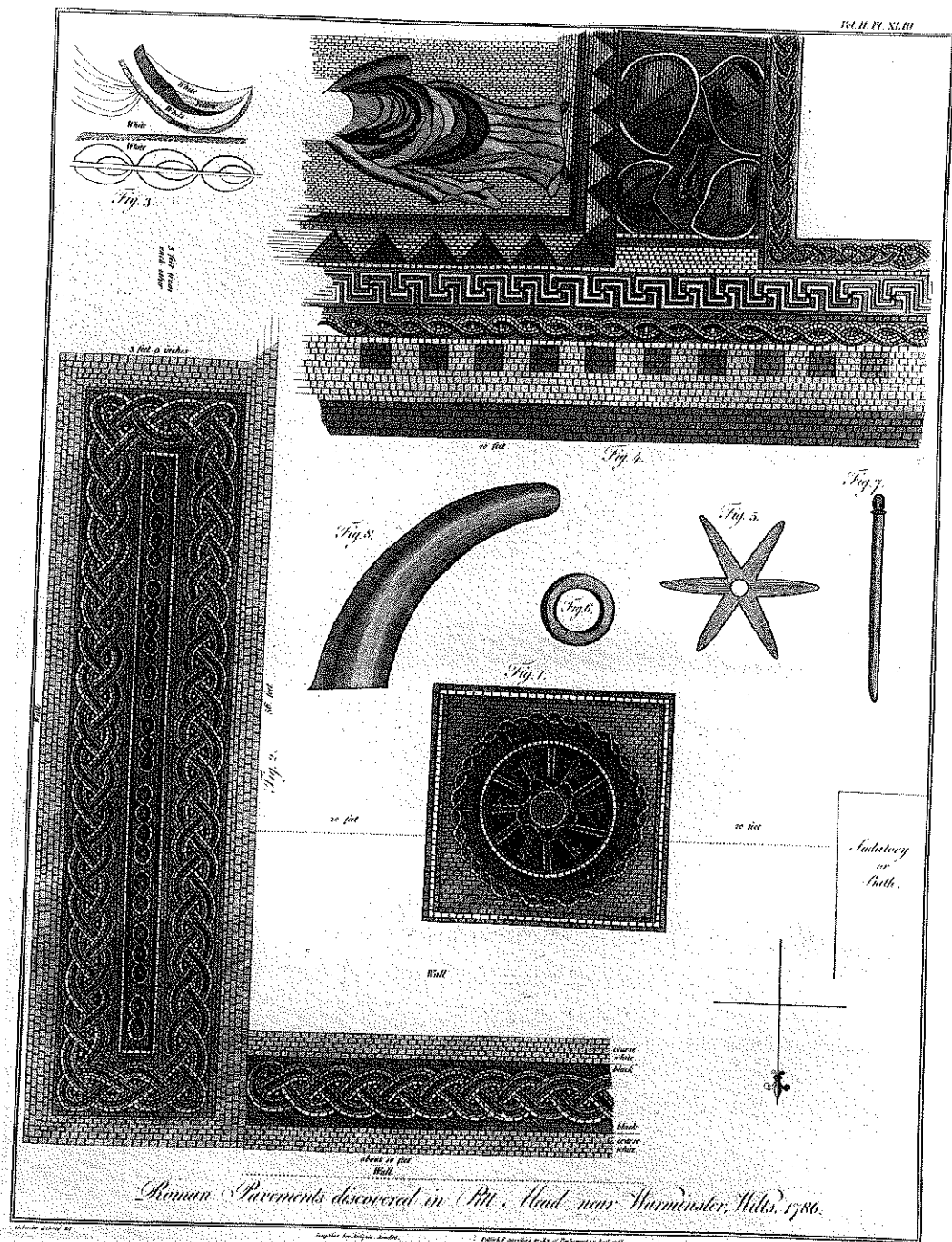


Fig 1. Plate of Pittmead mosaics and finds, *Vetusta Monumenta*, II, pl 43.
Photograph: Society of Antiquaries of London

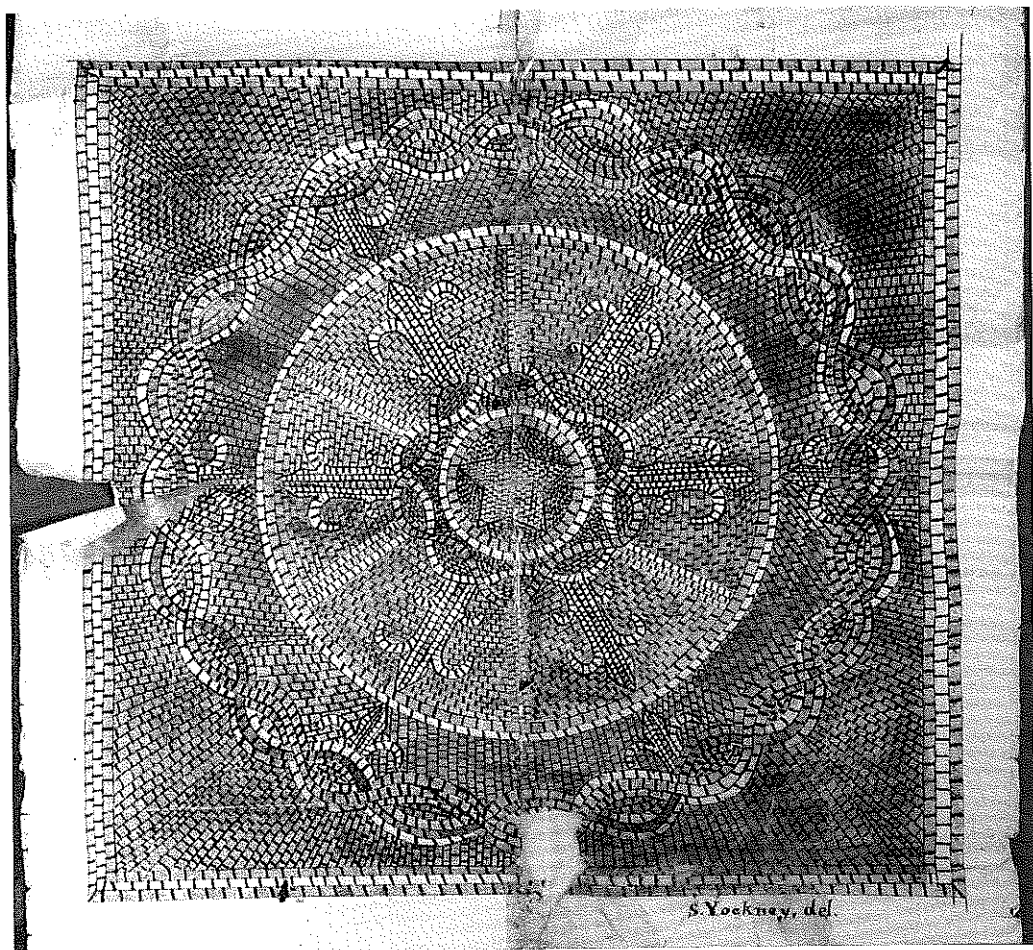


Fig 2. Drawing of Pittmead mosaic by Catherine Downes.
 Photograph: Longleat Archive

Pavement discovered in Pittmead, near Warminster, Wilts in 1786⁷⁴ (fig 1).⁷⁴ It shows drawings of four sections of mosaic pavement (1 to 4) and of what were thought to be the most significant of the small finds: a star-shaped piece of iron, thought to be a spur roundel (5), an iron ring (6), an ivory pin (7) and part of a horn (8). Meanwhile, a substantial account of the Pittmead pavements had appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, in a letter from 'HW',⁷⁵ which does not mention Downes or any of the other individuals involved, though it was accompanied by a plate showing drawings of two of the pavements and of the ivory pin, a coin and two sample pieces of pottery.⁷⁶

Two drawings of the mosaic pavements from Pittmead remain in the Longleat House archive,⁷⁷ although nothing survives of the mosaics themselves at Longleat (or anywhere else, as far as is known). The first (fig 2), a pen drawing with wash added to show the colours of the stones, corresponds with one of those shown in the *Gentleman's Magazine* plate, and with the same illustration in *Vetusta Monumenta*. It depicts a complex roundel and is marked 'S. Yockney del', a reference to the Warminster family of printers of that name.⁷⁸ The second (fig 3), a rough sketch in pen and ink, shows one

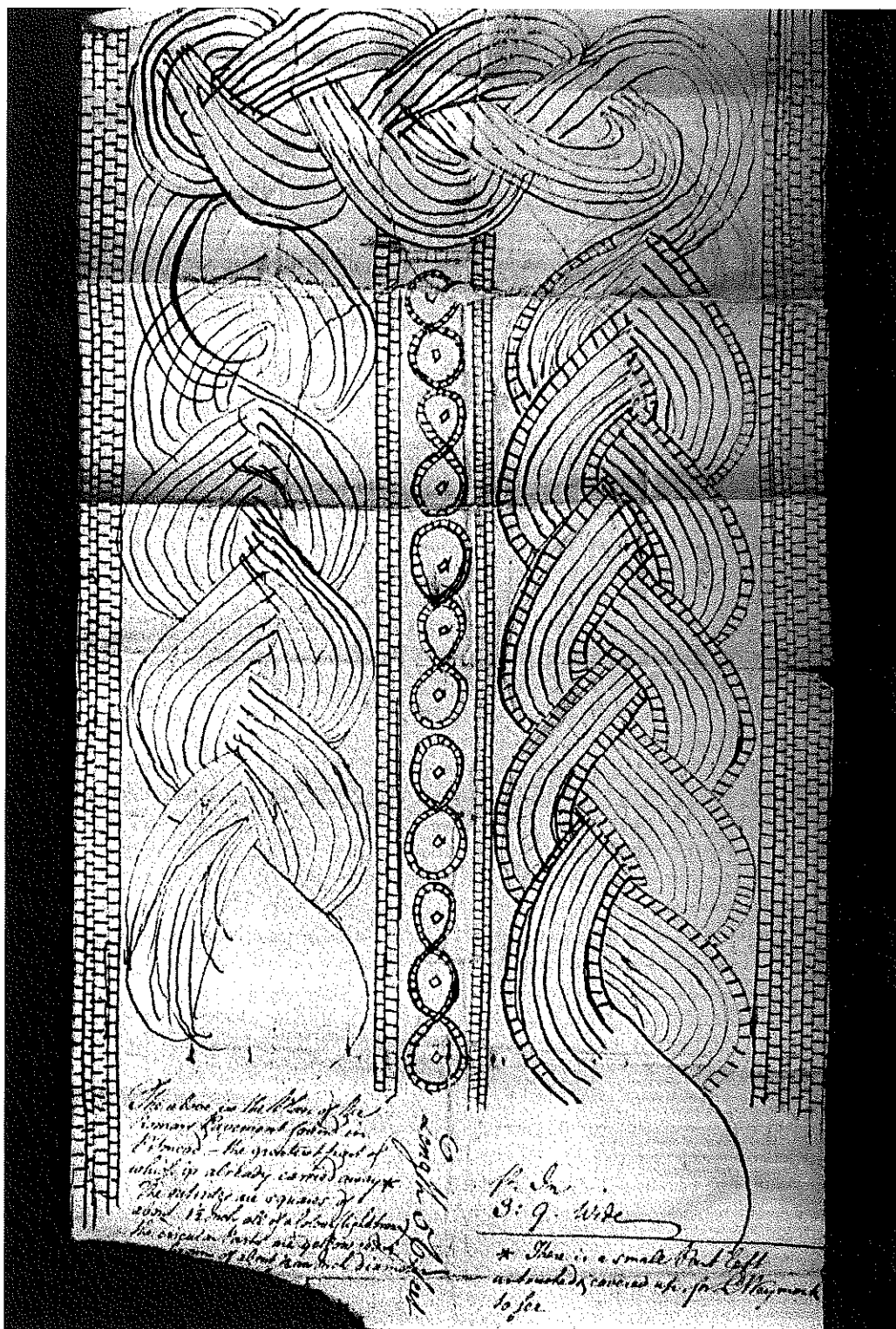


Fig 3. Drawing of Pittmead mosaic by Catherine Downes.

Photograph: Longleat Archive

end of a strip pavement with a braided design: this is shown, complete and re-drawn to publication standard, in *Vetusta Monumenta* but not in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. No original drawing survives in the Longleat archive of the second pavement – printed in both publications, showing three panels containing a draped female, a hare on rocks and a braid design, with a border of braid and Greek key, evidently part of a much larger pavement – and nor do any drawings of the finds. It seems that Downes's drawings of two of the 'best' pavements, made at the time of the discovery, together with those of the ivory piece and other finds, were re-worked (either by herself or by a professional) and then engraved (possibly all by the local firm) and duly printed twice, but that her drawing of one of the damaged pavements was used only once, and that of the other not at all. Downes's original sketches have not survived and the Longleat drawings represent a selection of the material at various stages in the printing process.

The text in the *Vetusta Monumenta* publication accompanying the plate is drawn directly from Downes's first and second letters, lightly edited (evidently by Richard Gough). The first letter appears over her name, expressed as 'Cath. Downes', and the second is preceded by 'Mrs Downes says'. There is also a third letter, dated 10 March 1788, which is not recorded in the Minutes, apparently because it arrived in the Easter recess. This is printed at the end of the publication as a kind of suffix, again over the signature of 'Cath. Downes'. It draws attention to a misprint in the preceding text, stating that the name of the gentleman who had written to the *Salisbury Journal* was not 'Walker' but 'Waltire'. The letter goes on to mention Battlesbury and other finds. Downes's first two letters are set in a context provided by Gough, who begins the piece by saying: 'Through the particular attention of a lady then in the neighbourhood, sketches of [the pavements] were made before the greater part of them were destroyed by the ignorant peasantry'. The whole account (apart from the third letter) is over the initials R.G. There is one intriguing discrepancy between the first letter as it is recorded in the Minutes, and as it appears in the publication. The published version says 'on the 18th was discovered, by the Rev. Mr. Massey, at the head of the last mentioned floor ... an imperfect floor, no. 3'. The Minutes version has no mention of Massey. This may be a simple slip on Downes's part, since just before the corresponding section in the Minutes version she says 'I', and after it she says 'we', but it may also hint at local tensions. When such discoveries were made at this period, with a clergyman involved, it would usually have been he who prepared the written account, but not in this case. The plate and its accompanying 'Explanation' were eventually incorporated in volume II of *Vetusta Monumenta* (1789) as Plate 43.

Nothing else is known about Catherine Downes,⁷⁹ which reflects the lack of sources about women, the tendency to refer to them as wives and daughters in genealogical accounts, and the effects of a system that gives women two surnames in life and sometimes more. We do not know if Downes was married or not. She is referred to as 'Mrs', but this may simply be a courtesy title. If she was married, we do not know her maiden name, through which a local connection might have been identified. She tells us in her first letter that she 'was a stranger in the place' and in the *Vetusta Monumenta* account Gough adds that she was 'a lady then in the neighbourhood', so she may have simply been in Wiltshire on one of the long visits characteristic of the period and could have been settled anywhere in the country. She also says in the same letter that she 'never had the least instructions' in drawing, which might be conventional modesty, but could also suggest that her family did not have the means to equip her with the normal education of a middle-class lady, but this speculation is as far as the meagre clues can take us.

We do, of course, have biographical information concerning the men involved in the exploration of the villa. Lord Weymouth, who may not actually have appeared at the site, was Thomas Thynne (1734–96), who succeeded his father as viscount Weymouth in 1751, and moved the family back to Longleat in 1754. He was made marquis of Bath in 1789.⁸⁰ Millington Massey, who seems to have changed his name later to Millington Massey Jackson, was vicar of Warminster and chaplain to Lord Weymouth from 1773 until his death in 1808.⁸¹

Downes need not have worried (if she really did) about her 'want of learned phrases and grammatical knowledge', for her letters compare very favourably with very many of those the Society received from men. At the end of the transcription of her first letter the Secretary added a note that 'The Society expressed their particular thanks and obligations to the Lady for her very polite and sensible communication'.⁸² This is markedly warmer than the usual thanks and evidently reflects the reaction of those present both to the excellence of the letter's contents and to Downes's gender and persistence.

Downes was clearly a woman of character and determination. She does not scruple to express her impatience with the dilatory conduct of the local gentlemen, and even makes clear her dissatisfaction with Lord Weymouth when he failed to continue the work. In her third letter, of 10 March 1788, as well as pointing out that Mr Walker's name in the prepared *Vetusta Monumenta* text should have been Waltire, she adds, with irritation, that all thought of further search had been dropped and 'Lord Weymouth having taken the matter into his hands, excludes any one else from attempting discoveries'.⁸³ We sense that the co-operation of the Longleat staff and that of a vicar, together with the workmen apparently provided by the estate, were the result of her representations; clearly she was eminently capable of managing all these men to achieve what she saw as the best results in the circumstances, but possibly she also over-reached herself to become more commanding than was thought appropriate for a female of her age. Even so, the record that was made of this genuinely important site was due wholly to her initiative in writing to the Society.

Downes also demonstrates the instincts of an archaeologist. In her third letter, she gives a brief review of the sites and provides the information that Roman coins, including one of Constantine, had been found at Battlesbury, and that 'great numbers' of such coins come from near 'all these spots'. The possible significance of these coin finds in conjunction with the villa is clear to her, leading her to ask 'do not these things bespeak something more than a mere villa at Pitt Mead or Warminster?'⁸⁴ No doubt this was a reference to the supposed identification of Warminster with the Roman site of *Verluccio*, which she had mentioned at the beginning of her first letter. Such identifications preoccupied the antiquaries of the period but Downes's linkage of finds and speculation is considerably more sensible than many.

A final point of great interest is that Downes tells us in a postscript to her first letter that she was 'possessed of a small collection of coins'. She enclosed 'drafts of such as I cannot make out' – six coins in all – and said that she would be grateful for assistance in identification (although as far as we know, no help was forthcoming). She continues: 'I have also, amongst many others, another medal',⁸⁵ so perhaps the collection was not so very small, and maybe she had only needed help with a few. The collection had certainly grown by the time of the third letter, of 10 March 1788, when describing the archaeological sites near Pittmead and the Roman coins found at them, she adds 'many of which I have in my possession'. She is able to talk confidently of coins of Constantine

and 'a small but perfect copper coin of Claudius with a radiated crown',⁸⁶ so clearly she was familiar with the coin identification literature of the time.⁸⁷ Her collection has not survived as a whole; if any individual coins have survived, their collecting provenance has been lost. As recent work on the culture of Georgian Wiltshire has shown, Downes was one of several women involved in collecting local antiquarian and natural historical material; some produced significant work, and Downes must be counted one of their number.⁸⁸

WOMEN ANTIQUARIES IN THE 1830s

After the three substantial contributions made by women and published in the 1780s, there was a very distinct lull, and the next piece did not appear in print until 1832. On 24 November 1831⁸⁹ Miss Carlyle⁹⁰ communicated the finding of an altar 'discovered a few days before' at the Roman fort of Carvoran (*Magnis*) on Hadrian's Wall,⁹¹ and her account was published in the Appendix to *Archaeologia*, in 1832.⁹² Carlyle's account was brief but competent. She included a substantially correct transcription of the altar's inscription,⁹³ 'together with a sketch of the excavated spot, and the form and position of the altar' (it is not clear whether the altar itself had just been discovered, or the fact that it was inscribed). It is natural to assume, from the way in which the piece is written, that Carlyle transcribed the inscription herself. No translation is given, presumably because it was felt to be unnecessary. Equally, no comment is made on the content of the text, although it refers to an interesting First Cohort of Hamian Archers, and is the kind of topic that most contributors would probably have addressed at some length.

In the same year that the altar inscription was published, on 22 November 1832, 'Lady Mantell, widow of Sir Thomas Mantell, of Dover, FSA, presented to the Society a drawing of a monumental slab inscribed with runic characters, which was found some years ago, at the time the Antwerp Inn, near the market place of that town, received some alterations'. The communication continues: 'It had been Sir Thomas Mantell's intention to forward a notice of it', so evidently we are back in a world where women sheltered their contributions under the notion of an obligation to their men folk.⁹⁴ Sir Thomas was born in 1749,⁹⁵ and was godson to the Revd Samuel Pegge, an antiquary and a very active Fellow. He trained as a surgeon and practised in Dover, although he developed a public career fairly soon, being appointed Government Agent for the exchange of prisoners of war in Dover in 1793, and was rewarded with the lucrative Agency of the Post Office Mail Service in 1815 and a knighthood in 1820. He was mayor of Dover six times between 1795 and 1824. It should be remembered that the presence of Revolutionary – and then Napoleonic – France just across the Channel from Dover, and in particular the massing of boats at Boulogne from 1796 to 1805 for the projected invasion of the Kent coast, meant that the Government had especial need of trustworthy, capable men in positions of authority in the port.

Sir Thomas was also a noted Kentish antiquary. He excavated a considerable number of what are now recognized as Anglo-Saxon burials in various cemeteries in Kent and presented the important finds to the Society. He was elected to the Fellowship in 1810 and communicated frequently with the Society on his barrow finds⁹⁶ until his death in 1831. Lady Mantell shared her husband's antiquarian interests and although she communicated details of the slab to the Society in Thomas's name, there is no reason to doubt that she was equally interested in it. She is thought to have drawn the

excellent illustration of the slab published in the *Archaeologia* note, which she gave to the Dover Museum in the 1830s.

Lady Mantell had an interesting life of her own.⁹⁷ She was born Ann Oakley in 1757, in Dover, and married Thomas on 31 December 1778 when he was still a young doctor and she was a professional actress. After her marriage she continued to act under her stage name of Miss Oakley. Ann was often the leading lady in performances at a private theatre in Snargate Street opened by Peter Fector, owner of the Minet and Fector Bank in Dover, appearing in such plays as *The Orphan of China*, *The Siege of Damascus* and *Zenobia*. Anne seems to have retired from the stage in her mid-thirties when Fector closed the Snargate playhouse, faced with competition from the town's first fully public theatre, the Theatre Royal, which opened in 1790.

DISCUSSION

The six women whose contributions have been outlined here succeeded in getting their finds into print at a time when the contemporary gendered understanding of intellect and learning made it difficult for any woman to succeed in this field. The Society of Antiquaries took a risk in publishing their work, which could be perceived as undermining the Society's antiquarian credibility. The Society did so despite being particularly sensitive in this respect because of the undermining sarcasm to which it was already exposed. As Sweet points out, when Horace Walpole wanted to deride the Society, he chose to describe it as effeminate, referring to the President, Bishop Lyttleton of Carlisle, as 'Goody Carlisle' and describing *Archaeologia* as 'Old Woman's Logic'.⁹⁸

The five women (leaving aside Carlyle, of whom nothing can be gleaned) came from interesting social backgrounds. Lady Moira and Lady Riddell were both members of the landed gentry and considerable heiresses in their own right. Lady Moira was a woman of letters and a significant player in the contemporary mix of Irish history and politics; one wonders if the Antiquaries were fully aware of the relevance of her paper to these explosive issues and to what degree they were influenced to publish it by the fact that the author was a countess. Lady Riddell exhibits the sentiments of the equivalent Scottish cultural movement, while taking a different political direction, and the men whose surname she shared were all well known to the Society.

Scott and Mantell were rather different, though both were women who moved up the social scale as their lives progressed. Scott had domestic access to the heart of royalty and her association with two kings perhaps cancelled out the disadvantages of her femininity; perhaps too she owed her commanding character to manners learned in the royal household. Mantell shows how a woman in a provincial town could pursue her own career and yet combine it with successful marriage to a rising professional and public man. The reputation of that man as a leading antiquary was nevertheless what enabled his wife to make the contribution she did.

Downes is the odd woman out. She seems to have had no useful connections,⁹⁹ although she may have known of Bennett's fossil-collecting activities near Longleat. Her letters show us a woman prepared to act publicly according to her own sense of commitment to the past. As the men of Warminster had already abandoned the enterprise, communications to the Antiquaries could not be in any of their names; given the Society's antiquarian responsibilities, its leading Fellows clearly could not ignore a

site that had produced at least two well-recorded mosaic pavements and a range of linked structures. It is to their credit that, when all this became apparent, they did the handsome thing and arranged the *Vetusta Monumenta* publication.

All six women are linked by their engagement with antiquities, and by their strong personalities. All exhibit a genuine interest in the material culture of the past and the way in which it can emerge unexpectedly from the earth, together with an understanding that finds must be recorded and reported if they are to add to our knowledge. They were also prepared to engage in the wider public world and bring influence to bear upon the academic scene. All six were out and about in the countryside, talking to and sometimes taking charge of male workers, acquiring finds and making records on site. Their participation goes beyond the familiar one (then as now) of excavation assistant, reinforcing the role of women as auxiliary and helpmate to a male family member. We should not underestimate what this means in terms of access to transport and employees and freedom from male disapproval or female disparagement.

There is no appreciable difference in the style or content of their communications, in the way in which they approached the Society or in the Society's treatment of them. No doubt the Society would always have accorded the Countess of Moira a high level of civility, and both Riddell and Mantell had male connections who were Fellows; Downes, who apparently had no such claims, was treated, at least as far as the record goes, in the same respectful manner. The publishing outcomes related not to the women themselves, but to the intrinsic significance of the material they sent in. It is interesting that the *Archaeologia* volume for 1785 contained three of the five items, although, to put the matter slightly differently, Moira's contribution went into print at the first opportunity while Riddell and Scott had to wait – the first for six years and the second for nine (although such delays were not unusual). It would be interesting to know if a conscious decision was taken to group the three women in the same volume: perhaps it was felt that the women would feel easier in association, when both they and the Society could draw upon the support that Moira's superior social position provided.

The five women whose histories we know came from Ireland, south-west Scotland, Wiltshire, Northumberland and Kent. They did not know each other personally,¹⁰⁰ although it is possible that they had friends of friends in common, and all but Downes were in a position to write to a well-known antiquary who could bring their material before the Society. This demonstrates the strength and flexibility of the antiquarian network in enabling information to reach the Society and for the Society to serve as a recording and dissemination centre. Mantell's husband received *Archaeologia*, so possibly she knew of earlier female contributions and took encouragement from them. Others may have done the same, but attention has already been drawn to the gap of forty-four years – more than a generation – between the contribution made by Downes and that made by Carlyle, suggesting something of a shift in British culture from the 1790s or early 1800s. After 1837, the next published female contribution came in 1847, with a careful account of the Roman villa at Acton Scott in Shropshire produced by Mrs Frances Stackhouse Acton.¹⁰¹

Theoretical work on the twentieth-century relationship between women and material culture, together with some research on this relationship in the previous two centuries, suggests that women tend to consume objects by attaching them to past events and personal encounters, and then using them to construct memory systems in which the owner's identity is projected through such reified links.¹⁰² This memory system can be inhabited in the most literal sense, for the objects are usually arranged around the house

— especially the living room. They are likely to be inherited, in a fairly informal sense, by a daughter or a granddaughter, and much material culture, together with the associated story which represents its provenance, seems to have passed down the female line.

This is one reason why archaeological material brought to light by women either side of 1800 tended not to reach a learned audience, since it had become enmeshed in a different kind of narrative. Riddell did indeed publish her find, but in the part of her letter which laments the fact that the bailiff had destroyed ancient material before he could be stopped, we feel that what she chiefly regretted was the loss of part of the story of her own home and its estate. Interestingly, this chimes in with the ways in which Woolf¹⁰³ found that early modern women related to written or oral antiquarian information by presenting it as family history, an approach which, among other things, enabled them to preserve the significance of collateral links on the distaff side, which would be lost in histories based on a family name. Men, in contrast, are more interested in producing relationships seen as intrinsic to an object itself, by linking it with other material in typologies or chronological sequences and by associated documentation, so that information supposedly freed from personalities can be generated; the same techniques in relation to written or oral information produce external historical narratives.

Similar processes are at work when objects within an individual's ownership begin to be thought of as 'a collection'.¹⁰⁴ Men's collections are generally organized, and are kept separate from other material, often in boxes or cabinets. Women's collections tend to remain on open display, cheek by jowl with non-collection items, in the rooms of the home (so contributing to the female ownership of the essence of home and to the male's sense of slight alienation). This fuzziness has an obvious bearing on the likelihood of the collections' survival. During the twentieth century women collected as much as men and we are coming to understand that many women, not necessarily of the highest social class, made significant collections in the previous two centuries also. But, as any scan of early museum accession registers shows, the collections donated were almost all gathered by men and collections made by women stood a much poorer chance of survival. It is clear why: at death male material exists as a distinct unit and can be separated away for a particular destiny, together with supporting data, while women's collections, with their documentation in the oral tradition, are treated simply as a component parts of the household goods and are disposed of as such. Downes tells us that she had a collection of coins (and possibly of other material, such as finds from the villa), and it seems likely that these kinds of considerations worked to prevent its survival intact and in her name (although some of the coins probably remain unrecognized in other collections). Possibly some of the other women collected also. The contrast with Sir Thomas Mantell's collection, presented to and cherished by the Society, could not be more marked.

These contrasting gendered relationships with material antiquities are bound up with broader changes in the eighteenth century, which saw an enormous increase in the quantity of material goods available in Britain to the substantial (and growing) affluent classes. This triggered a change in the relationship between humans and objects, in which, through events such as exhibitions, spectacles such as mummy unwrapping,¹⁰⁵ and pastimes such as window shopping, people gradually surrendered their active stance towards the material world, becoming passive seekers after the thrills which viewing objects could offer: humans became objects within the force field of the active material. But women were (and are) used to being reified, while men, especially gentlemen, were

not, so one of the ways in which society absorbed the change was to depress the obvious significance of the world of goods by feminizing it. Among other things, this helps to explain Walpole's criticism of the Society as effeminate; it also contributed to the increased restrictions laid upon women in the period after 1837.

The effect of these social shifts upon the practice of antiquarianism was complex. This was a study in which the appreciation of material evidence, excavated or as heirloom, was central, just as was that of family history and pedigree, both of which could be denigrated as female concerns. It yielded a particular kind of history, which focused upon social relationships, and which could be seen as second-class besides the masculine concerns of political and military narratives, even though, as already noted, the nature of historical enquiry did shift towards a greater interest in what would now be called social history during the eighteenth century. It may be among the reasons why antiquarian study, and the Society of Antiquaries, went into something of an eclipse through the nineteenth century, although other significant reasons include the rise of new archaeological and other related societies, national and regional, which were seen to offer desirably useful ways of using leisure time which the Society apparently lacked.¹⁰⁶

These local archaeological societies deliberately had more socially inclusive policies, in part because they could not have survived without them. They were slightly more hospitable to females but granted them only an inferior status, which involved the payment of a lower membership fee and which did not permit them to vote on the society's council.¹⁰⁷ Membership of national bodies remained open only to men, and very few women operated as part of the archaeological elite during the period. As Levine puts it: 'By virtue of their minority status they [women] warrant little mention.'¹⁰⁸

However, social practice as it unfolded was, as always, complex. In its first year, 1843, the British Archaeological Association claimed 1,200 members. These were all men, but during its first (and revolutionary) Congress, held in Canterbury in 1844, a number of 'venturesome ladies' turned up to the barrow-digging expedition held on the Tuesday of the Congress week, and these 'crowded round the tumuli and almost passionately expressed their gratification as beads, and the wire on which they were strung, or amulet, or ring or armlet was handed to them for inspection'.¹⁰⁹ On the Friday evening, in the Canterbury Theatre and before a packed house, Dr Thomas Pettigrew performed one of his famous mummy unwrappings, clearly a lively event with a good deal of audience participation. As part of the climax, Pettigrew distributed pieces of linen bandage to the ladies in the boxes.¹¹⁰ This is a long way from the restrained, even timid, style of female participation of fifty or so years earlier and demonstrates, for reasons that are not yet clear, that some women were pushing at the boundaries controlling their archaeological activities. These practices contributed to the broader patterns of female emancipation, and women began to operate at a major level in many fields, including archaeology, from the last decades of the nineteenth century. The twentieth century produced many women archaeologists of the first rank and, given the history of the discipline sketched here, it is not surprising that able women found it a congenial field. But in the Society of Antiquaries ancient habits lingered: as we saw at the outset, the Society did not elect its first lady Fellows until it had no alternative.

Contemporary understanding of the epistemology current during the modern period (roughly from 1660 to 1960) stresses that much of the personal or domestic detail that determines how understanding is gathered and organized has been deliberately erased from the picture. It is, of course, precisely this social detail that a discipline embodying traditional feminine perspectives is able to contribute. It would have been interesting to

conclude that the work of the women discussed here contributed both to the emergence of such a perspective in relation to the past and to the encouragement of future women archaeologists. Unfortunately, this cannot be said. The efforts of Downes, Riddell, Scott, Mantell and Carlyle seem to have made no impact until the major studies of particular classes of finds and monuments began in the later nineteenth century, when of necessity their contributions formed a small element in the whole. Lady Moira, indeed, was cited in 1830,¹¹¹ perhaps because she was a countess and a lady of letters quite apart from her antiquarian interests. But when significant women archaeologists started to emerge in the later nineteenth century, they do not seem to have drawn upon their late eighteenth-century forerunners.

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NOTES

1. In 1920, the issue could no longer be avoided because new legislation made the opening of the Fellowship to women compulsory: see Evans 1956, 388–9. In this the Society matched the Royal Academy, where Angelica Kaufmann (1741–1807) and Mary Moser (1744–1819) had indeed been Founding Members in 1768, but no women were elected until 1922 (and then only as Associates). Interestingly, Stukeley's Society of Roman Knights had envisaged women members (Haydock 2002). In his presidential address of 1936, Sir Frederic Kenyon referred to the good work done by women, especially in excavation, as well he might given the number of significant female archaeologists in the 20th century, including his daughter Kathleen (Kenyon 1936; Evans 1956, 417).
2. For 17th-century women antiquaries, see Woolf 1997.
3. Philips 2000, 342–3.
4. Woolf 1997, 645, 653.
5. Hughes 1982.
6. Women were also beginning to be active in the study of other types of material and their collection. A number were active in geology, which in the 1750s to 1780s was in the process of establishing itself as a new science, distinct from the study of antiquities, although both involved collecting material evidence in the field, and sometimes digging for it. Etheldred Bennett (1775–1845) of Wiltshire is well known – see Cleavelly 2004 and references there – but she was only one of a network of women fossil collectors whom work is revealing in Wiltshire; see Haycock 2004 for the wider Wiltshire picture. One of the most prolific fossil-bearing sites, well known to Bennett and others, was Brims Grove Field, Chute Farm, near Longleat.
7. Woolf 1997, 653–5; see also 2003, 99–137.
8. Pegge 1789, 84.
9. We do not know if working-class women played any part within the surrounding penumbra of ploughmen, canal diggers and general labourers who brought finds to the attention of local gentlemen and their ladies, but perhaps they did, just as they certainly did among the geologists of the south west. Although fossils intended for sale are relatively easy to search for in likely localities, similar antiquities-rich locations also exist and might have similarly been exploited by the poor. This is an

- area of antiquarian practice about which very little is yet known.
10. Hughes 1982.
 11. The point is made by Dena Goodman (1994, 121-4); the immediate contrast with the French salons run by famous women, is obvious, but the consequences are probably highly complex.
 12. Riddell 1785, 414-16.
 13. Society of Antiquaries of London (SAL), Minutes, XIV, 159, 11 May 1775. Rather different were the negotiations, recorded in the Minutes, with Mrs Vertue, widow of George Vertue, who had been employed by the Society as its principal engraver from 1717 to 1756. She donated to the Society twenty-two plates of antiquities engraved by her husband 'at his private expenses' and sold nine others to it, at a cost of £100 (SAL, Minutes, XIV, 247-8, 9 November 1775; XIV, 301-3, 25 January 1776); a set of impressions from the purchased plates was laid before the Society (SAL, Minutes, XIV, 325, 15 February 1776).
 14. Bennett 1789, 169; see Philips 2000, 110-11.
 15. Bosworth continued: 'Some ladies, who are an ornament to their sex ... have studied Saxon with evident advantage ... Were it not for the retiring modesty of an amiable female [Elstob]' (1823, xxviii-xxix, xxxii-xxxiv); see Hughes 1982, 119, 141. For more on the female need for simplification and abridgement in their reading, see Philips 2000, 110-22.
 16. It would be interesting to know if there is evidence from other comparable societies of women being discouraged from communicating, or having their letters suppressed.
 17. SAL, Minutes, XIV, 353-5, 14 March 1776, 'Aldington, vulgarly called Allington': Pringle 1785, 408. For copper objects (the gold had evidently disappeared), see Pringle 1785, pl XXX, figs 2-4. Scott's Hall (modern spelling) stood just north of the probable Roman road, and old coaching road, now the A20, and was actually in the parish of Smeeth (older spelling Smethe): it was rebuilt three times and is now destroyed, although its site can be recognized on the ground. A new property, also called Scott's Hall, has been built nearby.
 18. Information about Margaret Scott is taken from a memoir of his family published by James Renat Scott in 1876. We are indebted to Councillor Peter Wood for access to material in this book, for drawing it to our attention, and for supplying additional information.
 19. Scott 1876.
 20. Ibid.
 21. SAL, Minutes, XIV, 345-7, 4 November 1779.
 22. Riddell 1785, 414-16.
 23. Ibid, 414.
 24. Ibid, 415.
 25. Ibid, 415.
 26. Ibid, 415.
 27. For Sarah, see *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* 1896, 1215; Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland MS AF 49/11. The two Riddell families are apparently quite separate: see *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* 1896, 1213-15. Robert and Walter Riddell had a sister, Sophia (Sophy), who died in 1797 and could possibly be the 'lady S. Riddell' of the Minute, but in view of Sarah's connection with Mains, and the title of 'lady' (albeit without the capital letter, which could allow a less formal reading but may be a simple misprint), she is the most likely. We are grateful to Neil Moffat of Libraries, Information and Archives Central Support Unit, Dumfries, for information.
 28. Riddell 1785, 414-16.
 29. Ibid.
 30. For Robert and Walter, see *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* 1896, 1213-15.
 31. Riddell of Glenriddell 1789; 1792a and b. Robert's use of his estate's name as a declaration of lordship was, of course, normal Scottish custom at the time.
 32. Reid 1895-6.
 33. Riddell 1785, 414; perhaps Scott took a hint from the Riddells for the setting of *Redgauntlet*.
 34. Riddell 1785, 414.
 35. The National Register of Archives for Scotland holds some Moira papers (NRAS 631/4/ Bundle A125) but these are closed to researchers; the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland holds letters and papers of Lady Moira (M/2-3, NRA 32660), and the National Library of Ireland has correspondence between her and Dennis Scully (NRA 29990).
 36. For the family's relatively recent political background, see Walker 1997.
 37. For Donington Hall, see Fryer and Squires 1996. Sweet (2004, 71 and 376)

- cites Hunter (1830, II, 302) on a Lady Elizabeth Hastings who spent an afternoon with Ralph Thoresby on 19 October 1720 looking at court rolls and charters. This was presumably Lady Moira's aunt and hints at early family encouragement of an antiquarian interest.
38. See Harding 2003 for the most recent study of Lady Huntingdon.
 39. See Richey 2004.
 40. Ibid.
 41. O'Halloran 2004, 119.
 42. Richey 2004.
 43. SAL, Minutes, XIX, 2-19, 1 May 1783; XIX, 21-31, 8 May 1783; XIX, 34-43, 15 May 1783.
 44. He does not seem to have been a Fellow.
 45. SAL, Minutes, XIX, 2-19, 1 May 1783.
 46. Moira 1785.
 47. The find is sometimes referred to as a 'bog body' but this is misleading; it was not a preserved body, such as have been found in Denmark and Britain, but a skeleton with associated fragments of preserved fabric.
 48. Moira 1785, 93.
 49. Ibid, 98.
 50. Ibid, 100.
 51. Ibid, 97.
 52. Ibid, 9.
 53. Ibid, 103.
 54. Ibid, 100-4.
 55. Ibid, 90.
 56. Ibid, 99-100.
 57. Ibid, 107. For Charles Vallency see O'Halloran 2004, 41-56. Whether Lady Moira had read him, or merely knew something about his theories, is a difficult question.
 58. Moira 1785, 107-8.
 59. Ibid; O'Halloran 2004, 41-70.
 60. Moira 1785, 91.
 61. Ibid, 92.
 62. Ibid, 92 and footnote [e]; the famine stories are taken from Morrison 1768, 282, 284.
 63. Lady Moira's paper was not forgotten: in 1830 E Donovan published a paper in the *Gentleman's Magazine* which referred to a statement about the find and her paper 'which has lately appeared in the public prints' (291). Donovan goes on to air various speculations about ancient Irish practices and makes no political references.
 64. *Gentleman's Magazine* 1786, 990.
 65. Daines Barrington was a prominent Fellow, who contributed a large number of papers to *Archaeologia*.
 66. Minute of first letter: the full letter is in XXI, 463-70. Concentration here is upon Downes's activities: David Neal is investigating the mosaics and their sites. The field name appears in various styles and spellings; 'Pittmead' has been used here except where a different form is given in a direct quotation.
 67. SAL, Minutes, XXI, 463, 11 January 1787.
 68. 'Walker' was apparently a (persistent) mistake on the part of the Society; the name should have been Waltire: see note 83 below.
 69. SAL, Minutes, XXI, 464-5, 11 January 1787.
 70. SAL, Minutes, XXI, 466, 11 January 1787.
 71. Perhaps by 'clown' Downes meant a local labourer, although local tradition seems to have held that he was attached to a small travelling fair camped nearby at the time: Michael March, pers comm, Local Studies Library, Devizes.
 72. SAL, Minutes, XXI, 467, 11 January 1787.
 73. SAL, Minutes, XXII, 23-4, 8 February 1787.
 74. SAL, Minutes, XXII, 379, 23 April 1788. It was *Vetusta Monumenta* 1789, II, pl 43 and Explanation, 1-5. Much interest in Romano-British villas and their mosaic pavements had been generated by the discovery in 1712 of the pavement at Stonesfield, Oxfordshire; it was not the first such known find but, in part because of its proximity to Oxford, it caused a major stir in educated circles and attracted local crowds to the site: see Levine 1987, 107-22, 253-8. The Stonesfield affair helped to ensure that Gough, and the Society in general, would feel a particular obligation to try to ensure that mosaics were adequately recorded.
 75. *Gentleman's Magazine* 1786, 57, 221-2. 'HW' is thought to be Henry Wansey, FSA: see Daniel 1879, 7. Daniel also states that the villa ruins 'were examined, and described by Richard Gough and Mr. Downes in the *Vetusta Monumenta*': 7.
 76. The villa site was re-excavated by Cunnington in 1800 (finds in Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes), and was investigated again in 1820: see Colt Hoare 1819, I, 71; II, 101-11.

77. We are very grateful to Kate Harris, Longleat Historical Collections, for information.
78. Kate Harris, pers comm.
79. Wiltshire Record Office, Wiltshire Local Studies Library, Wiltshire Archaeological Service, Wiltshire Heritage Library and Longleat Historic Collections have no record of her, and nothing which can be linked to her securely has been found in the National Archives or in trawls through the extensive genealogical material available on the internet. There does not appear to have been a local family called Downes in the area at the time.
80. Thomas Thynne (1734-96), fourth Baron Thynne of Warminster, third Viscount Weymouth, first Marquis of Bath: see *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* 1836.
81. We are grateful to Steven Hobbs, Wiltshire Record Office, for this information. Massey graduated from St John's College, Cambridge, in 1755, so presumably he was in his early fifties at this time.
82. SAL, Minutes, XXI, 470, 11 January 1787.
83. She adds: 'the mistake was natural, as there is a Mr. Walker, a lecturer, also'. Nothing further has emerged about these people, or what the lecturing involved.
84. The third letter was not read or minuted, but in its publication in *Vetusta Monumenta* 1789, 5, it is dated 10 March 1788; there is a gap in the Minutes from 13 March 1788 and 3 April 1788, presumably representing the Easter recess.
85. SAL, Minutes, XXI, 470, 11 January 1787.
86. See note 84; presumably the radiate was of Claudius II Gothicus, emperor AD 268-70.
87. She may have had some help, although in the narrative as we have it only the Revd Massey Millington appears as a likely candidate and there is no suggestion of this. Roman copper from British soil is often extremely difficult to identify as a result of corrosion, but even if some coins were too badly damaged, it does seem that she was able to make something of some of the others. It would be fascinating to know what publications she was using and how she gained knowledge of, and access to, them.
88. See Haycock 2004.
89. SAL, Minutes, XXXVI, 155, 24 November 1831.
90. Miss Carlyle has not been identified.
91. For Carvoran, see Keppie 2001, 330-1 and references there; the site is 240m south south east of Milecastle 46, at the junction of Stanegate and Maiden Way. For the altar see Collingwood and Wright 1965, no. 1778; no. 1779 also refers to Hamia, making it clear she was a goddess.
92. Carlyle 1832, 352.
93. Carlyle's only slip was to read an 'I' with an abbreviation mark over as a 'T'.
94. Mantell 1834. The slab was correctly identified as carrying an inscription in runes: see Tweddle *et al* 1995, 43-144, ills 76 and 77.
95. See Wroth 2004.
96. Eg SAL, Minutes, XXXII, 545-9, 2 May 1811.
97. We are very grateful to Mark Frost of Dover Museum Service for additional information about Sir Thomas and particularly Lady Mantell. The slab is still in Dover Museum.
98. Sweet 2004, 73.
99. Downes had no such connections as far as we know, and she does not write as if she had.
100. Scott and Mantell lived quite near each other and could have been acquainted, but we do not know of any connection.
101. Acton had, in fact, made her first records of the site when it first appeared in 1817 and realized that it might be a villa in discussion with a local clergyman some years later. Meanwhile the exact location of the site had been lost 'until, in July 1844, the scantiness of the herbage enabled me to trace hollow lines where the foundations had been removed [in 1817], and, on setting some labourers to work, they soon uncovered the floor which we had before seen' (Acton 1847, 341). Acton had married into the chief landowning family of the parish, and she came from the same kind of background as Riddell. Acton's letter, addressed to the Dean of Hereford, was read on 13 February 1845 and published as a paper in *Archaeologia* in 1847.
102. Pearce 1998a, esp 125-51; 1995, esp 206-8. For an interesting discussion of 18th-century women in relation to purchase and consumption, see Pointon 1997, 17-57, particularly on their use of objects to create and cement personal relationships, often with other women.
103. Woolf 1997, esp 668-77.
104. Pearce 1998a, 2-11; 1998b.

105. Pearce 2002, esp 71.
 106. For these societies see Piggott 1976; Wetherall 1998; Levine 1986.
 107. Levine 1986, 69.
 108. Ibid.
 109. The barrow digging took place on Breach Downs, near Canterbury, on Tuesday, 10 September 1844: Marsden 1974, 30-1.
 110. The mummy unwrapping happened on the following Friday evening, 13 September 1844: Marsden 1984, 27-31.
 111. See note 63.

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