

Memory and identity: the influence of early preservation practices on English culture
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Abstract

Until the nineteenth century, written records were often considered an adequate form of preservation for historic monuments, buildings, and landscapes. The shift from written to physical preservation was a gradual one that was pioneered by seventeenth century chorographers, eighteenth century antiquarians, and nineteenth century archaeological and architectural societies. Drawing on the work of historians who have examined these eras of amateur historical study, this paper will examine how chorographers and antiquarians who have not always been given serious consideration by historians of the modern preservation movement were, in fact instrumental in popularising heritage and advocating for early protectionist measures.

Keywords: History of Heritage Management, Preservation, Chorography, Antiquarians, Amateur History

Introduction: the creation of a preservation movement in England

From the sixteenth to the twentieth century, many historians and antiquarians used art and textual documentation as their primary means of preserving ancient monuments, historic buildings, and traditional landscapes. In the second half of the sixteenth century, writers pioneered chorography as a new style of documentation that was similar to geographical writing but distinguished itself by recording not only the topography of a particular region or district, but the historical remnants that could likewise be observed in a locality. Most chorographical writers and antiquarians, men who were studying and collecting archaeological remains, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were gentleman hobbyists who worked and published independently, but the Society of Antiquaries, which was founded in 1717, encouraged independent scholars to gather and share their research. A century after the Society of Antiquaries was established in London, regional antiquarian groups began propagating throughout the country, giving independent history enthusiasts the opportunity to gather to discuss their research. The proceedings and transactions recorded by such groups also allowed for further documentary preservation, as many of the members of regional groups would not have had the means to publish independently. Many nineteenth-century antiquarian societies devoted an overwhelming majority of their funds to the printing and distribution of their annual transactions, and in so doing, ensured that records of lost monuments, buildings, landscapes, and artefacts survived. Regional antiquarian groups and the Society of Antiquaries were important participants in the efforts to enact preservation legislation, create county record offices, and create preservation interest groups at the turn of the twentieth century.

These three distinct movements, the rise of chorographers in the seventeenth century, the popularity of antiquarianism in the eighteenth century, and the promulgation of regional antiquarian and archaeological societies in the nineteenth century, have been well-studied by historians, but few have made a connection from the early chorographers to the rise of a national preservation movement, preferring to limit study to specific time periods.¹ Such studies limit the broader

¹ Notable studies of seventeenth century chorographers include Stan Mendyk (1986). 'Early British chorography', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 17(4): 459-481. doi:10.2307/2541384; Michael Shanks and Christopher Witmore (2010), 'Echoes across the past: chorography and topography in antiquarian engagements with place', *Performance Research* 15(4): 97—106.

connections that can be made across the centuries. The development of the preservation movement in England occurred slowly and only flourished in the closing decades of the twentieth century, but the preservation spearheaded by organisations like the National Trust and Historic England has its roots in the writing that was pioneered by sixteenth-century chorographers. This paper will draw connections between the works of existing historians and expand beyond it, examining how chorographers and antiquarians who have not always been given serious consideration by historians of the modern preservation movement in fact were instrumental in popularising heritage and advocating for early protectionist measures.

Writing as a tool of preservation

Before the nineteenth century, written records were often considered to be an adequate form of historical preservation. Chorographical and topographical writers from the Renaissance onwards published accounts with the knowledge that monuments were likely to disappear, and the published descriptions and drawings of such sites served to memorialise vanishing physical touchstones of the

doi:10.1080/13528165.2010.539888; D. Rohl (2012), 'Chorography: history, theory, and potential for archaeological research', *TRAC 2011: Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference*, 2012; and Claire Kennedy (2014), 'Those who stayed: English chorography and the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries', in Ofer Gal & Yi Zheng (Eds.). *Motion and knowledge in the changing early modern world: orbits, routes, and vessels*. Dordrecht: Springer; Rosemary Sweet (2004). *Antiquaries: the discovery of the past in eighteenth-century Britain*. London: Hambledon and London, is the seminal tome on eighteenth-century antiquarianism. Philippa Levine (2002). *The amateur and the professional: antiquarians, historians, and archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, and Charles Dellheim (1982). *The face of the past: the preservation of the medieval inheritance in Victorian England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, are two of the most notable works on nineteenth-century antiquarian and archaeological and the preservationist trends of the century. Michael Riordan (2017), 'Materials for history? Publishing records as a historical practice in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England', *History of Humanities* 2(1):51—7. doi:10.1086/690572 examines the bridge between early chorographical traditions and nineteenth century philological practices, and Miles Glendinning (2013). *The conservation movement: a history of architectural preservation, antiquity to modernity*, London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, takes a high-level look at British and European preservation movements, focusing mainly on the nineteenth century campaigns and legislation for physical conservation protects. More work remains to be done to trace the English preservation movement, particularly at the provincial level.

past.² William Camden's *Britannia*, first published in 1586, pioneered this trend, and the Society of Antiquaries' official series the *Vetusta Monumenta*, which began in 1718, as well as countless antiquarians working independently, compiled similar chorographies of historic monuments and sites throughout the country in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, antiquarians' interest in the documentation of historic monuments did not translate to a movement to protect such monuments from destruction. In fact, by the eighteenth century, some critics held that the 'art of engraving' was responsible for the loss of many monuments in England. This belief represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the work of chorographers, for many, especially those contributing to the *Vetusta Monumenta*, sought to record monuments that were already endangered, but it also raises a bigger question: why didn't antiquarians work harder to preserve monuments *in situ*? Furthermore, how did the preservation movement rise from these beginnings?

A fundamentally important aspect of the rise of the preservation movement was the cultural shift that led people to see historic buildings and monuments not just as pieces of architecture or even craftsmanship, but as important parts of a legacy created by ancestors and tangible markers of British identity.³ The conscious change in the treatment of the built environment was one aspect of a general movement towards the acknowledgement and even creation of British identity and culture over the course of the nineteenth century, and it revolutionised how people cared for historic monuments.⁴ But the relationship between the built environment and cultural practitioners was a symbiotic one. By the nineteenth century, generations of chorographers, antiquarians, historians, and archaeologists had laid the groundwork that allowed a new set of connoisseurs to use historic structures as sites of memory and culture. The treatment of historic sites prior to the nineteenth century, while generally not

² Maria Grazia Lolla (1999), 'Ceci nest pas un monument: *Vetusta Monumenta* and antiquarian aesthetics', in Martin Myrone and Lucy Peltz (Eds.). *Producing the past: aspects of antiquarian culture and practice, 1700-1850*. Aldershot: Ashgate, p.17.

³ Paul Claval (2007). 'Changing conceptions of heritage and landscape', in Niamh Moore-Cherry & Yvonne Whelan (Eds.). *Heritage, memory and the politics of identity: new perspectives on the cultural landscape*. Aldershot: Ashgate, p.86.

⁴ On the creation of culture, Eric Hobsbawm & Terrence Ranger's 1983 volume *The invention of tradition* is a key text. E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger (Eds.) (2012). *The invention of tradition* (20th ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

recognised as preservation by modern critics, nevertheless played a fundamental role in shaping the views of nineteenth-century preservation advocates.

When William Camden's *Britannia* was published in Latin in 1586, it was a ground-breaking piece of work. Prior to the publication of *Britannia*, there existed in Britain a tradition of regional studies, but these studies existed without acknowledging one another, and often failed to situate regional history in the context of broader national history.⁵ Camden's *Britannia* revolutionised the field of regional studies by rejecting the existing tradition and creating a work that examined and connected the touchstones of local history throughout Great Britain and Ireland. His chorography was immensely popular, running to five editions even before an English translation appeared in 1610, and it was hugely influential to the antiquarians that followed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁶ Chorography was a new practice in Britain at the time of the *Britannia*'s publication, and it created for historians and antiquarians of the time a new opportunity to assess the context and significance of local history. Although the practice has not been widely studied by historians, it has been acknowledged as a fundamental aspect of the establishment of an antiquarian tradition in Britain.⁷ Chorographies such as Camden's contextualised landscapes and monuments in local and regional perspectives, utilising techniques that would later be used in antiquarian, archaeological, etymological, geographical, and historical analyses. Chorographies like the *Britannia* also served an important additional function: they memorialised the landscape and monuments of a region, providing a lasting record not only of their existence, but often of their history and origins, as best as they could be traced.

⁵ Mendyk, 'Early British chorography', p. 464.

⁶ R. C. Richardson (2000). 'Introduction: the changing face of English local history', in R. C. Richardson (Eds.). *The changing face of English local history*. Burlington: Ashgate, p.2.

⁷ Rohl, 'Chorography: history, theory, and potential for archaeological research', p. 19.

Memorialisation was an important aspect of conservation even before the idea of preservation in place took hold in England.⁸ Written records of historic monuments served as important memory tools, and records of historic monuments likewise served as tools to interpret and contextualise English identity for readers. According to Rosemary Sweet, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ‘antiquaries were encouraged to record and preserve the memory of the monuments of history before their disappearance from the face of the nation’.⁹ There was no concerted effort to prevent the destruction of monuments or historical sites on the part of chorographers and antiquarians either in Camden’s time or in the years that followed, but conversely, such writers would have been acutely aware of the potential for destruction that had been borne out first by the dissolution of the monasteries in the sixteenth century, and then by the iconoclasm experienced during the English Civil War.¹⁰ The destruction experienced during both of these upheavals served as a reminder of the temporality of architecture and the discontinuity of history. Both the Reformation and the Civil War were difficult topics for chorographers to broach because of their partisan nature, but nevertheless, writers such as John Leland, who was active during the time of the Reformation, as well as Camden and his successors documented ruins from these events and were spurred by the large-scale destruction to catalogue historic structures they encountered.¹¹

Nonetheless, for a variety of reasons often closely related to the way contemporary chorographers and antiquarians understood land rights and property ownership, memorialisation was seen as an adequate form of preservation well into the nineteenth century.¹² Antiquarians in the eighteenth century devoted considerable effort to chronicling historic monuments, and the Society of

⁸ Rosemary Sweet (2014). ‘The historic built environment and the conceptualisation of urban space in Britain and Italy c. 1700-1830’, in Michel Pauly & Martin Scheutz (Eds.). *Cities and their spaces: concepts and their use in Europe*. Vienna: Böhlau, p.185.

⁹ Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p.36.

¹⁰ Stuart Piggott (1976). *Ruins in a landscape: essays in antiquarianism*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, p.2.

¹¹ Jan Broadway discusses antiquarians’ partisan interpretations of the dissolution of the monasteries in Jan Broadway (2012). *‘No Historie so Meete’: gentry culture and the development of local history in Elizabethan and early Stuart England*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.224.

¹² Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 279.

Antiquaries' series *Vetusta Monumenta*, which was begun in 1718, the year the society was founded, focused its attention on structures that were endangered by demolition or restoration, an act which often destroyed original features of a building or monument.¹³ The publication of chorographies and illustrated plates was influential in debates over the concept of national identity and heritage, as antiquarians understood historic monuments to be an important aspect of local and even national culture and identity.¹⁴ Antiquarians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries viewed historic monuments as memorials to ancestors who had erected them. Although this added a layer of significance to such historic structures, kindred or patriotic attitudes towards the built environment still did not eventuate any sustained movement for preservation in place.

In fact, some early preservationists believed the practice of engraving historic monuments led to their destruction.¹⁵ Although the Society of Antiquaries' *Vetusta Monumenta* was widely read and hailed as an innovation for preservation in its time, others pushed back against the series of engravings as a factor in the destruction of historic sites.¹⁶ In many cases, however, the factors of destruction were not so straightforward. Historic monuments were generally either destroyed by time and neglect, a process which many antiquarians viewed as natural and even inevitable in the eighteenth century, or because they stood in the path of intended new developments, a process that few contemporaries seemed willing to interfere with.¹⁷ The sites that were chosen for engraving in the *Vetusta Monumenta* were often already endangered by one of these two processes, and the artworks

¹³ The *Vetusta Monumenta* was originally published as a series of independent plates before the first collected volume was compiled and issued in 1747.

¹⁴ Michael Cyril William Hunter (1996). 'Introduction: the fitful rise of British preservation', in Michael Cyril William Hunter (Eds.). *Preserving the past: the rise of heritage in modern Britain*. Stroud: Alan Sutton, p.5.

¹⁵ Lolla, p.19.

¹⁶ A letter to the editor in *Gentleman's Magazine* praised the *Vetusta Monumenta* saying, 'To collect and preserve every thing tending to illustrate the history and antiquities of this country, is a most laudable object'. 'Prints, portraits, engravings, biographical anecdotes, &c'. in *Gentleman's Magazine* 52 (1782), p.223; and Lolla, p. 19.

¹⁷ Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 285.

that the Society of Antiquaries' draftsmen produced served to memorialise historic structures that could well have been lost to time without intervention.

Although the discipline of historic preservation has its origins in antiquarianism, which in turn was influenced by early modern chorography, neither chorographers nor antiquarians were necessarily preservationists in accordance with a modern understanding of the term. While chorographers and antiquarians were certainly interested in the physical vestiges of history that surrounded them, and many antiquarians were avid collectors of historical artefacts, their interest did not often translate to a desire to protect historic buildings and landscapes in place. It was not until overseas factors precipitated a significant scholarly turn to British antiquity that attitudes towards historic structures began to change. Before the beginning of the nineteenth century, antiquarians were often most interested in relating British history to classical antiquity, and antiquarians were often most interested in historical remains that demonstrated connections to the Roman Empire.¹⁸ Wealthy gentlemen commonly participated in the Grand Tour in their young adulthood, and their experience of the classical structures of Italy often heavily influenced their view of vernacular British structures and monuments.

But as the Napoleonic Wars prevented Britons from visiting the Continent, more and more began touring the British Isles, studying British architecture with a similar rigour to that with which their predecessors had studied classical architecture in Italy.¹⁹ Several monographs examining mediaeval British architecture and codifying Gothic styles were published around the turn of the nineteenth century, and significantly, these volumes gave British antiquarians a new vocabulary with which to examine historic architecture. Richard Gough's *Sepulchral monuments in Great Britain*, published in 1786, and John Carter's volumes on *Views of ancient buildings in England*, which were published between 1786 and 1793, were particularly influential, and Carter likewise produced illustrations for

¹⁸ Francis Haverfield (1924). *Roman occupation of Britain*, comp. George Macdonald, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, p. 78.

¹⁹ Lucy Peltz & Martin Myrone (1999). 'Introduction: "Mine are the subjects rejected by the historian": antiquarianism, history, and the making of modern culture', in Martin Myrone and Lucy Peltz, (Eds.). *Producing the past: aspects of antiquarian culture and practice, 1700-1850*. Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 3.

Gough's book and was heavily involved in the production of the *Vetusta Monumenta*.²⁰ Carter was a vocal critic of architectural restorationists who attempted to, in their view, improve upon historic architecture by modifying historic forms in accordance with contemporary fashions. In addition to protesting the wholesale destruction of monuments, the anti-restorationist movement would become another vital cause for nineteenth-century preservationists, particularly on the national stage.²¹ For Carter, Gothic architecture was a 'national science' which deserved as much attention from antiquarians as was usually afforded to classical structures, architectural forms which did not have a history in Britain prior to the seventeenth century.²² Antiquarians throughout the country would have been familiar with works by the likes of Camden and Carter, which were regularly reprinted into the nineteenth century. By promoting the notion that architecture was part and parcel of a national heritage, antiquarians before the nineteenth century helped ensure that historic monuments would be seen as important aspects of identity and collective memory throughout the nineteenth century.²³

The popularisation of antiquarianism

It was Thomas Rickman's book, *An attempt to discriminate the styles of English architecture*, published in 1817, that proved to be most influential for British antiquarians, however.²⁴ In it, Rickman traced the chronology of Gothic architecture in Britain, and his definitions of stylistic periods from Norman to Early English, Decorated, and Perpendicular, became the new standard for antiquarians and architects alike. Megan Aldrich has called the work 'nothing less than the first accurate account of

²⁰ Richard Gough (1786). *Sepulchral monuments in Great Britain*. London: T. Payne & Son; John Carter (1824). *Specimens of Gothic architecture and ancient buildings in England*. London: E. Jeffrey & Son, originally published 1786 as *Views of ancient buildings in England*.

²¹ Stephan Tschudi-Madsen (1976). *Restoration and anti-restoration: a study in English restoration philosophy*, Oslo: Universitets-forlaget, p. 37.

²² Noah Heringman (2013). *Sciences of antiquity: romantic antiquarianism, natural history, and knowledge work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 279.

²³ David Lowenthal (2004), 'The heritage crusade and its contradictions', in Max Page and Randall Mason (Eds.). *Giving preservation a history: histories of historic preservation in the United States*. New York: Routledge, pp.16-7.

²⁴ Thomas Rickman (1817). *An attempt to discriminate the styles of English architecture, from the conquest to the reformation*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown.

the history of mediaeval architecture in the British Isles'.²⁵ Rickman's book was instrumental to the Gothic Revival, but even for antiquarians who did not participate in the creation of neo-Gothic structures and were not interested in the craze for restorations that was sweeping across the country, Rickman's work allowed them to study historic remains through a new lens.

The Gothic Revival also played an important role in bringing antiquarians to the cause of preservationism. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, architects such as James Wyatt were engaged to repair mediaeval churches and cathedrals around the country. The maintenance and repair of these churches was undoubtedly necessary, as several of them had fallen into disrepair, but for Wyatt and the church officials who contracted him, the needed repairs also presented an opportunity to 'improve' upon the original mediaeval construction.²⁶ Restorations at some of the nation's major cathedrals, including Durham and Salisbury, destroyed original craftsmanship in favour of supposed beautification.²⁷ Many church leaders and the architects they hired favoured remodelling churches and cathedrals in a unified style, commonly using Perpendicular Gothic forms, which often necessitated destroying original features of such churches that did not conform to the chosen style. Although such restorations were generally popular with the public, some antiquarians, John Carter chief among them, were fundamentally opposed to the idea of architectural restorations.²⁸ Vocal criticism of the modification and destruction of historic architecture was a marked change from the general practice of antiquarians prior to the end of the eighteenth century, and this time frame represents the first time there was a significant movement in favour of preservationism amongst British antiquarians.

The nineteenth century saw a sustained and growing movement towards preservation. It was experienced at the national level, in part as a reaction to the plans of groups like the Cambridge

²⁵ Megan Aldrich (2004), 'Rickman, Thomas (1776–1841)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 4.

²⁶ Françoise Choay (2001). *The invention of the historic monument*, trans. Lauren M. O'Connell. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 62.

²⁷ Jukka Jokilehto (1999). *A history of architectural conservation*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, p. 106.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

Camden Society, which was founded in 1839, to restore ancient churches, a process which performed some necessary repairs and beautified many deteriorating structures, but at the expense of historic fabric and styles.²⁹ But it was also experienced at the local level, as antiquarian and archaeological groups dedicated to studying local history propagated from the 1830s.³⁰ Prior to 1834, the Society of Antiquaries, based in London, and a provincial branch of the society, the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne, founded in 1813, were the only notable antiquarian societies in England. Beginning around 1835, however, societies were established for the express purpose of local and county antiquities. By 1840, at least six societies existed in as diverse locales as Penzance, Warwickshire, Shropshire, and Kent. In the 1840s, at least twenty-five new societies were formed across the country. It was often the leaders of such groups who were at the fore of the creation of culture and the propagation of collective memory. From 1830 to 1850, at least forty local antiquarian, archaeological, architectural, and natural history societies were formed across England.³¹

As tremendous societal and technological changes transformed traditional English society, a new interest in understanding the past emerged across a wider range of the population than had ever been experienced before.³² Prior to the nineteenth century, local history and antiquarianism were generally the domain of the upper classes and the clergy, but throughout the nineteenth century, the audience for and interest in antiquity grew.³³ The study of local history generally remained a pastime rather than a profession, but it became a pastime of an ever-broadening section of the public. Many antiquarians undertook their studies out of a sense of duty and local pride, and there was a certain amount of political coding to antiquarian experience as well. Many of the traditional upper-class antiquarians were politically conservative-leaning, while many of the new preservationists were more liberal. According to Diane Barthel-Bouchier, 'social elites looked back to the past to legitimate their

²⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner (1976). 'Scrape and anti-scrape', in Nikolaus Pevsner and Jane Fawcett, *The future of the past: attitudes to conservation, 1174-1974*. New York: Whitney Library of Design, p. 35.

³⁰ Haverfield, p. 82; Levine, *The amateur and the professional*, p. 4.

³¹ Levine, pp. 47-51.

³² Charles Dellheim (2016). 'Interpreting Victorian medievalism', in Florence Saunders Boos, (Ed.). *History and community: essays in Victorian medievalism*. London: Routledge, pp.44-8.

³³ Peltz & Myrone, 'Introduction', p. 4.

present power and to maintain it in [the context of industrialisation], while culturally progressive forces, an identifiable status group of artists and intellectuals, saw in preservation an alternative to the human and natural costs of industrialisation'.³⁴ Such an approach to national history stemmed from the Burkean tradition of using historical study and writing to interpret the past in such a way that would create a narrative arc connecting British success in the present to traditions that had their origins in the mediaeval past.³⁵ This practice was not unique to men of either liberal or conservative political leanings, but politics did have an influence on interpretations of history.³⁶ As Charles Dellheim has argued, political differences led to a fundamental difference in views of history. Conservatives saw the mediaeval past as a 'dream of order', while for liberals, the mediaeval era represented a 'vision of liberty'.³⁷

Antiquarians' attitudes towards preservation were undoubtedly shaped by their political views, although to define a liberal and conservative preservation principle would be generalising too greatly. Politics brought nuance to preservationism, but it also had the potential to bring tension to preservation groups. Politics and religion did play an important role in access to antiquarian groups, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century.³⁸ Generally, and particularly in the southern areas of the country, antiquarian societies were founded by prominent local citizens who were often fervent members of the Church of England and politically conservative. Antiquarians who were nonconformists or who were politically liberal could have trouble gaining membership to such groups. In Cambridge, the university architectural society had specific religious requirements for members, while in Essex, one of the founders of the Colchester Archaeological Society was quickly pushed out

³⁴ Diane L. Barthel-Bouchier (1996). *Historic preservation: collective memory and historical identity*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. 33.

³⁵ J. W. Burrow (1983). *A liberal descent: Victorian historians and the English past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 22.

³⁶ Dellheim, 'Interpreting Victorian mediaevalism', p. 48.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³⁸ Hoselitz, p. 56.

of the group, a move he believed was related to his political views.³⁹ For many local preservationists, politics had particular importance when it influenced interpretations of local historical events and figures, two practices that were closely related to the act of creating memory places in historical monuments. In the nineteenth century, especially outside of London, monuments were often considered to be significant because of their associations with historic people and events, rather than merely because of their architectural significance, especially in the case of secular rather than religious architecture.⁴⁰ In Taunton, for example, the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society purchased and preserved the Taunton Castle not because it was a particularly notable example of Saxon architecture, but because it was believed to be the site of one of the earliest castles in the country, and because the surviving buildings had seen significant battles during the Civil War.⁴¹ The people who were able to historicise structures in accordance with their own worldview could have a significant influence over the sense of culture and community in a locality.

Many, if not most, of the people who became preservationists in the nineteenth century did so because of changes, whether owing to neglectful decay or purposeful demolition, they observed in their surroundings.⁴² Local preservationists were aware of the debates taking place at the national level regarding preservation theory and practice, but for all their awareness of high-level argumentation, they found motivation in provincial issues that had personal significance.⁴³ In the nineteenth century, many people from the English provinces retained lifelong ties to relatively small areas, and antiquarians and preservationists often approached their craft with particular pride of place.

³⁹ 4 March 1847 meeting minutes, Cambridge Architectural Society minutes, 1846-7, MS Add 8971/1/1, University Library, Cambridge, f. 7r; Letter draft, William Wire to unknown recipient, 15 February 1851, 'Letter and account book', D/Y 37/1/16, Essex Record Office, Chelmsford, f. 24v.

⁴⁰ Christopher Miele (2011). 'Heritage and its communities', in Melanie Hall (Ed.). *Towards world heritage: international origins of the preservation movement 1870-1930*. Farnham: Ashgate, p. 172.

⁴¹ W. Hunt & O. W. Malet. Solicitation for donations to the Taunton Castle Purchase Fund, June 1874, Printed papers, 1873-5, DD/SAS/G755/8, Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton, f. 1r-v.

⁴² Ben Cowell (2008). *The heritage obsession: the battle for England's past*. Stroud: Tempus, p. 20.

⁴³ Alan J. Kidd (2000). 'Between antiquary and academic: local history in the nineteenth century', in R.C. Richardson (Ed.). *The changing face of English local history*. Aldershot: Ashgate, p. 101.

Preservation as a grassroots movement

Even as the preservation movement gained momentum at the beginning of the nineteenth century through the raised awareness created by antiquarian and archaeological societies, the British government did not show a particular concern for preservation until the closing decades of the century. Instead, the rise of the preservation movement was experienced as a grassroots movement in local communities throughout the country. Antiquarians and archaeologists with a particular interest in local history took it upon themselves to use historical remains, including monuments, antiquities, and buildings to interpret and understand the past, and in doing so, they created a more meaningful connection to their history. Historic places became sites of historical understanding and memorialisation, tangible connections to the past.⁴⁴ This seemed particularly important in the nineteenth century, as the rapid changes of the industrial revolution made the past seem particularly distant to many students of history.⁴⁵ In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the shifting historical consciousness had the effect of creating a new understanding of how history related to the present.⁴⁶ Combined with the fact that in the nineteenth century, more people were participating in antiquarian and archaeological societies than ever before, changing historical consciousness led people to historicise architecture, and it is in these changes to participation in and understanding of history that the roots of historic preservation can be found.

However, a cohesive national preservation movement was slow to take hold in the nineteenth century, and most antiquarian and archaeological societies who undertook any preservation advocacy operated only at a local level, at least until the 1890s. Antiquarians in England were aware of preservation organisations in other countries, especially in northern Europe, and when Thomas Wright attempted to found the British Archaeological Association as a preservation advocacy

⁴⁴ Raphael Samuel (1994). *Past and present in contemporary culture*, vol. 1, *Theatres of memory*. London: Verso, p. 39.

⁴⁵ Rosemary Jann (1985). *The art and science of Victorian history*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, p.xx.

⁴⁶ Peter Fritzsche (2004). *Stranded in the present: modern time and the melancholy of history*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 48.

group in 1843, he sought to model it on the Comité historique des arts et monuments in France.⁴⁷ According to John Waller Green, a contemporary of Wright's, he wanted to create an organisation that could lobby the government to protect 'objects of antiquarian and historical interest'.⁴⁸ The government seemed wary of private efforts to promote preservation, however. Acknowledging the role of the French government in preserving monuments in that country, Henry Pelham-Clinton, Earl of Lincoln and Commissioner of Woods and Works, declared 'in this Country the Societies which exist have done, and I believe can do, very little good'.⁴⁹ The fact that the British Archaeological Association was not created solely as an advocacy group likely dimmed its chances of success, however. Charles Roach Smith, one of Wright's associates, hoped the association would provide an educational opportunity for amateur antiquarians and archaeologists, which created a conflict with archaeologists who hoped the body would take a more academic tone.⁵⁰ The first congress of the British Archaeological Association, held in Canterbury in 1844, devolved into infighting which led to a split in which the Royal Archaeological Institute was created to be a more serious archaeological body.⁵¹ Ultimately, neither society ever truly became a lobbying group; the British Archaeological Association became known for organising excursions to historic sites, and Thomas Wright, while he remained a member, concentrated the bulk of his efforts elsewhere.

The British Archaeological Association did revolutionise access to antiquarian study for many casual participants throughout England, however. Coordinating with local antiquarian and archaeological societies, the British Archaeological Association encouraged both local archaeological

⁴⁷ F.J. Levy (1964). 'The founding of the Camden Society'. *Victorian Studies* 7(3):295—305, p. 302.

⁴⁸ Notably, Waller invokes 'objects', not 'sites'. Charles Roach Smith (1891). *Retrospections, social and archaeological*. London: John Green Waller.

⁴⁹ J. Mordaunt Crook & M. H. Port (1973). *The history of the King's works*. Volume 6: 1782-1851. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, p. 641.

⁵⁰ Dafydd Kidd (1977), 'Charles Roach Smith and his museum of London antiquities', in *Collectors and collections: the British Museum Yearbook 2*, ed. Richard Camber, London: British Museum, p.124.

⁵¹ 'British Archaeological Association – Statement of the Committee' (1846). *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 1: iii.

activity and coordination between the different provincial archaeological groups.⁵² While the Archaeological Institute retained a professionalising approach to their practices and focused their study largely on ecclesiastical remains, the British Archaeological Association picked up on the ascendant spirit of nationalism that was beginning to infuse politics and national life by the mid-nineteenth century and use archaeological and antiquarian study as a tool to celebrate the illustriousness of the national past.⁵³ Although the members of the British Archaeological Association were true amateurs, and the appeal of joining the group was often as much social as historical, politics nonetheless had an important effect on the association's activities throughout the country.⁵⁴

The societal changes, coupled with the physical changes to the landscape that the technological advances of the nineteenth century brought, created a sense of loss from the destruction of historic monuments amongst antiquarians. In the middle of the nineteenth century, as sentiments towards historic monuments evolved, John Ruskin's books *The seven lamps of architecture* and *The stones of Venice* were ground-breaking treatises on the importance of historic architecture, even if they would not be considered preservationist tomes by more modern standards. In *The seven lamps of architecture*, Ruskin states that 'if indeed there be any profit in our knowledge of the past [...] there are two duties respecting national architecture whose importance it is impossible to overrate: the first, to render the architecture of the day, historical: and, the second, to preserve, as the most precious of inheritances, that of past ages'.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Ruskin asserts, 'we may live without architecture, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her'.⁵⁶ Ruskin recognised the importance of a preserved environment to heritage and identity, but Ruskin himself was not a particularly strong proponent of concrete preservation projects in England. He disparaged

⁵² D. Kidd, 'Charles Roach Smith and his museum of London antiquities', p.124.

⁵³ A. MacGregor (1998). 'Antiquity inventoried: museums and "national antiquities" in the mid nineteenth century', in Vanessa Brand (Ed.). *The study of the past in the Victorian Age*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, p. 125.

⁵⁴ A. Kidd, 'Between antiquary and academic', p. 101.

⁵⁵ John Ruskin (1849). *The seven lamps of architecture*. London: Smith, Elder, & Co., p.164.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

English historic churches in his books, and although he set up a preservation fund within the Society of Antiquaries, Ruskin was essentially the only contributor and available funds were negligible.⁵⁷

Nonetheless, Ruskin's fund was pioneering for its time, and represented a shift towards the sorts of concrete preservation projects and advocacy that would be seen in the second half of the nineteenth century. The definition of preservation shifted gradually over the course of the nineteenth century. Written descriptions and images remained an important tool of preservation, and photography was seen as a boon to many regional archaeological societies, who collected photographs of local antiquities in the closing decades of the century. The Society for Photographic Old Relics of London was founded in 1875.⁵⁸ In the 1890s, archaeological societies in Oxford, Cambridge, Ipswich, and more formed photographic sub-committees. But written and visual records were no longer enough for these groups. Groups like the Lake District Defence Society were established specifically to fight for the physical preservation of regional historic landscapes and monuments.⁵⁹ Prominent national organisations including the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877), and the National Trust (1895) were also created. The 1882 Ancient Monuments Act offered extremely limited protections for England's historic archaeology, but it was still an important and hard-fought step for advocates.⁶⁰ In the 1890s and 1900s, the Society of Antiquaries' Congress of Archaeological Societies undertook the sort of preservation advocacy Wright had envisioned for the British Archaeological Association, writing to members of Parliament to push for better enforcement of the Ancient Monuments Act and coordinating a nationwide survey of archaeological remains.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Tschudi-Madsen, *Restoration and anti-restoration*, pp. 50-1.

⁵⁸ Glendinning, *The conservation movement*, pp. 107.

⁵⁹ Albert Fleming (1884). Notes on the formation of a Lake District Defence Society, Papers: establishment of the Lake District Defence Society, 1883-7, DSO/24/15/1, Cumbria Archives Centre, Carlisle, f. 1r.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Hudson (1981). *A social history of archaeology: the British experience*. London: Macmillan, p. 56.

⁶¹ Ralph Nevill (1895). Report of the seventh Congress of Archaeological Societies, 4 July 1895, Congress of Archaeological Societies Annual & Special Reports 1888-1920, B314d/9, Society of Antiquaries, London, f. 3.

Conclusion

The second half of the nineteenth century marked a true turning point for the preservation movement in Britain and was a culmination of the gradual evolution that grew interest in historic monuments in Britain from the seventeenth century onwards. Antiquarian and archaeological societies continued to flourish, and over sixty new groups were formed throughout the country between 1850 and the passage of the 1913 Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act.⁶² Local groups continued to play a vital role in preservation, which took on a personal tone as groups worked to save monuments because of the specific local cultural currency with which they had been imbued. Even at the close of the nineteenth century, the preservation movement in England was still in its infancy, but the long history that saw chorographers evolve into antiquarians, and antiquarians to archaeologists and preservationists by the middle of the nineteenth century was a fundamental precursor to the actions that followed. Historians of the preservation movement and of local history groups often discount the actions of early antiquarians as insignificant and unlearned, but doing so discredits important early moments in the history of architectural preservation in Britain.

The long legacy of the preservation movement was also an important aspect of the way in which early preservationists played a role in the development of English culture in the nineteenth century. As regional antiquarian and archaeological societies preserved monuments, landscapes, and buildings either through documentation or in situ, such groups made important statements about their understanding of local and national history. Written documentation was easily accessible to other antiquarians and archaeologists across the country, as nineteenth-century societies regularly exchanged transactions and annual reports, allowing aspects of local history to be considered in national contexts. As physical conservation became more important to advocates, the actions of preservationists had even greater importance. The physical remnants of the past that were protected in place, especially when otherwise threatened with destruction, contributed to the collective memory of a locality and allowed all residents, whether members of archaeological societies or not, to engage

⁶² The 1913 act significantly expanded preservation protections that had first been enacted with the passage of the 1882 Ancient Monuments Act. Simon Thurley (2013). *Men from the ministry: how Britain saved its heritage*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 82-3.

with the past. The documentation and physical conservation undertaken at a local level raised general awareness of heritage, encouraged conversations about the past across all levels of society, and was a direct legacy of the chorography and antiquarianism of earlier centuries.