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Walking, and Knowing the Past: Antiquaries, Pedestrianism and Historical Practice in Modern Britain

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Abstract

How do those who write history know the past? This article addresses this question by examining the work of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquaries, whose historical practice was closely tied to their embodied experience of the places about which they wrote. On-foot out-of-doors observation provided them with evidence as important as that which might be derived from written sources, while also acting to stimulate their historical imaginations. This was the method of the Rev. Richard Warner, who made a 469-mile 'pedestrian tour' of Wales in August 1797, and for whom walking (often more than 20 miles a day) was an essential element of his approach to understanding the past. Similarly, William Hutton's *History of the Roman Wall* (1802) was not based on consultation of the accounts of others, or even on separate in-person site visits, but on a single journey, on foot, along the course of the fortification. As argued here, these and other pedestrianised forms of historical knowing had a lasting influence on the writing of history in Britain.

How do those who write history know the past? Either remotely via digital technology, or directly in person, the practice of the professional historian has centred on the sifting, selecting, reading and interpretation of documentary evidence, especially (though not exclusively) written texts. This remains true despite the material and spatial turns, and more recently the emphasis on embodied understandings of history, and it is with the aim of offering a longer perspective on these historiographical developments that this article is offered. I will do this by examining the methods of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquaries, who – before the advent of professional academic historians – were the principal interpreters of the past for present-day audiences. Antiquaries were indefatigable in grubbing up information from archives and muniment rooms. But I want to suggest that their historical practice was closely tied to their physical, embodied experience of the places about which

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they wrote. On-foot observation, walking as well as looking, was central to their work, providing material as important as that which might be gleaned from cartularies or chronicles, not least on account of the stimulus it gave their historical imaginations. To paraphrase the social anthropologist Tim Ingold, antiquaries thought not only with their heads but also with their feet.¹ This pedestrianised form of historical knowing had more influence than is often supposed, persisting across the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries – and it retains considerable value today.

I

In their day-to-day practice, professional historians have displayed a persistent tendency to be sniffy about antiquaries; to call a work of modern scholarship ‘antiquarian’ is usually to criticise it. Among other things, antiquarianism is taken to imply lack of interest in the bigger picture, the larger currents of history, a quixotic addiction to the accumulation of facts – however trivial – for their own sake. Unlike the far-seeing and nowadays theoretically tooled-up historian, antiquaries cannot see the wood for the trees. Or perhaps we should say, they *could not* see the wood for the trees – since the glory days of antiquarianism have long passed, having been driven into eclipse by the rise of academic, university-based history, a process described some years ago now in Philippa Levine’s book, *The Amateur and the Professional*.² It is possible to dispute Levine’s chronology, as it is the idea, so well entrenched as to be almost axiomatic, that the professionalisation of historical scholarship led to its sequestration behind the walls of universities.³ As Martha Vandrei has demonstrated, antiquarianism, along with other non-academic expressions of historical culture, retained considerable vitality deep into the twentieth century.⁴ But Levine’s book nevertheless remains a good illustration of how antiquarianism has provided nourishing fodder for scholars seeking to explore the place of the past in modern British culture. Other examples can of course be adduced. These include Stuart Piggott’s seminal studies of the antiquarian roots of British archaeology, Roey Sweet’s work on eighteenth-century urban histories and her marvellously compendious *Antiquaries*, and Rosemary

¹ Tim Ingold, ‘“Culture on the ground”: the world perceived through the feet’, *Journal of Material Culture*, 9 (2004), pp. 315–40; Tim Ingold, ‘Ways of mind-walking: reading, writing, painting’, *Visual Studies*, 25 (2010), pp. 15–23.

² Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838–1886* (Cambridge, 1986).

³ For a recent critique emphasising the persistence of historical scholarship outwith the universities, see James Kirby, *Historians and the Church of England: Religion and Historical Scholarship, 1870–1920* (Oxford, 2016), esp. pp. 6–7, 66–74.

⁴ Martha Vandrei, *Queen Boudica and Historical Culture in Britain: An Image of Truth* (Oxford, 2018); eadem, ‘A Victorian invention? Thomas Thorneycroft’s “Boadicea Group” and the idea of historical culture in Britain’, *Historical Journal*, 57 (2014), pp. 485–508.

Hill's book-length study of the interrelationship between Romanticism and the study of the material remains of the past.⁵

For all the merits of such work, however, little attention has been given to the pedestrian practice of antiquaries. This is odd, as many antiquaries were prodigious walkers. William Camden's *Britannia* (1586) was pathbreaking in its relating of history to landscape, an achievement that owed something to its author's perambulations around the country and his (then novel) use of field-trip observations to supplement documentary inquiry.⁶ And while Camden, and the seventeenth-century antiquaries who came after him, remained largely reliant on textual evidence gleaned from books, manuscripts and the testimonies of correspondents,⁷ a more decisive break came in the early decades of the next century. The key figure here was William Stukeley, first secretary of the re-established Society of Antiquaries (1717). Stukeley's *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1724, 1776) and his studies of Avebury (1743) and Stonehenge (1740) drew heavily upon the on-site surveys he undertook during tours made in the 1710s and 1720s.⁸ And while Stukeley got around from place to place usually on horseback, his explorations of antiquarian sites were made on foot. Indeed, some now regard him as a pioneer of the British tradition of field archaeology, with its emphasis on walking the landscape, imaginative engagement with place, and pictorial as well as textual observation.⁹ One can even, perhaps, see his methods as prefiguring later phenomenological approaches to archaeology and its use of embodied, sensory experience as a means of interpreting the remains of past times.¹⁰ But whatever Stukeley's longer-term legacy might have been, his open-air approach gained currency over the course of the eighteenth century, establishing a mutually supportive relationship with romantic and picturesque ways of viewing the landscape. Indeed, its currency was such that by the turn of the nineteenth century the long-distance walk had come to provide the organising structure for many antiquarian and

⁵ Stuart Piggott, *William Stukeley: An Eighteenth-Century Antiquary* (2nd edn; London, 1985 [1st edn; 1950]); idem, *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism* (Edinburgh, 1976); idem, *Ancient Britain and the Antiquarian Imagination* (London, 1989); Rosemary Sweet, *The Writing of Urban History in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1997); eadem, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2004); Rosemary Hill, *Time's Witness: History in the Age of Romanticism* (London, 2021), and also her *Stonehenge* (London, 2008).

⁶ William Camden, *Britannia: Or, A Chorographical Description of Britain and Ireland together with the Adjacent Islands*, ed. and trans. E. Gibson, 2 vols (London, 1753 [1st edn; 1586]); Graham Parry, *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 38–40.

⁷ Parry, *Trophies of Time*, p. 39 n. 19, p. 363.

⁸ As Stukeley described the *Itinerarium* in its preface, the book was 'an account of places and things from inspection, not compil'd from others' labors, or travels in ones study': William Stukeley, *Itinerarium Curiosum: Or, An Account of the Antiquities, and Remarkable Curiosities in Nature or Art, Observ'd in Travels Thro' Great Brittain* (London, 1724), preface, n.p. [p. ii]. A second volume was published posthumously in 1776. See also William Stukeley, *Stonehenge, A Temple Restor'd to the British Druids* (London, 1740) and *Abury, A Temple of the British Druids* (London, 1743).

⁹ For this interpretation, see esp. Piggott, *Stukeley*.

¹⁰ Rick Peterson, 'William Stukeley: An eighteenth-century phenomenologist?', *Antiquity*, 77 (2003), pp. 394–400.

topographical texts. Richard Warner's *Walk through Wales*, published in 1798, and his *Second Walk through Wales*, which appeared the following year, were especially influential.¹¹ In these books, Warner provided an accessible account of the Welsh antiquities – ruins, Druidical circles, castles and the like – that he encountered in the course of his walk. His efforts approached the heroic. The *Second Tour* involved a circuit of 783 miles, completed in the course of six weeks – an average of over eighteen miles a day.¹²

Other antiquaries clocked up similar mileages, many inspired by Warner's exploits. One such was John Britton, for whom Warner's example acted as a spur to a pedestrian tour from London to Wiltshire.¹³ This expedition resulted in his *Beauties of Wiltshire* and led on to his and Edward Brayley's eighteen-volume *Beauties of England and Wales*, one of the most important topographical projects of the early nineteenth century, full to bursting with detailed accounts, and many invaluable engravings, of the presence of the past in the British landscape. The stupendous scale of the project, which took fifteen years to complete, was commensurate with the effort involved. In one fourteen-week period over the summer of 1800, the two men walked 1,350 miles, and the total distance they traversed on foot for the first five volumes in the series amounted to 3,500 miles.¹⁴

More examples could readily be given. The antiquarian and historical writings of William Hutton, a bookseller and paper-merchant, drew heavily on information gleaned from walks. Hutton's 1781 *History of Birmingham*, the first history of his hometown, was one case in point.¹⁵ But he outdid himself when, on 4 July 1801, he set out on foot to visit Hadrian's Wall, walked the length of it from Carlisle to Newcastle upon Tyne, and then retraced his steps back along the line of the fortification and home to Birmingham. Loaded with information for his resulting book on the Wall, Hutton completed this 601-mile journey on 7 August, often covering more than twenty miles a day, an impressive feat in any

¹¹ Richard Warner, *A Walk through Wales, in August 1797* (2nd edn; Bath and London, 1798 [1st edn; 1798]); idem, *A Second Walk Through Wales ... in August and September 1798* (2nd edn; Bath, 1799 [1st edn; 1799]).

¹² Idem, *Literary Recollections* (2 vols; London, 1830), I, p. 139.

¹³ John Britton, *The Autobiography of John Britton* (3 vols; London, 1849–), I, pp. 136ff.; John Britton and Edward Wedlake Brayley (eds), *The Beauties of England and Wales; Or, Delineations, Topographical, Historical, and Descriptive, of Each County* (18 vols; London, 1801–15).

¹⁴ John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire, Displayed in Statistical, Historical, and Descriptive Sketches* (3 vols; London, 1801 [vols I and II] and 1825 [vol. III]); J. R. Mordaunt Crook, 'John Britton and the Genesis of the Gothic Revival', in John Summerson (ed.), *Concerning Architecture* (London, 1968), pp. 98–119, at pp. 105, 107; Britton, *Autobiography*, I, p. 239; Britton, *Itinerary*, at pp. 238–9.

¹⁵ William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham* (3rd edn; Birmingham, 1795 [1st edn; 1781]); Llewellynn Jewitt, *The Life of William Hutton* (2nd edn; London, 1872 [1st edn; 1872]), p. 197. For Hutton's life and work, see Susan E. Whyman, *The Useful Knowledge of William Hutton: Culture and Industry in Eighteenth-Century Birmingham* (Oxford, 2018). Although she notes his pedestrian prowess (pp. 28–9), Whyman does not discuss the relationship between Hutton's walking and his historical or writerly practice.

circumstances, but especially impressive for a man well into his eighth decade of life.¹⁶

One source of motivation for such herculean efforts may have been a desire to demonstrate the masculine vitality of antiquarianism at a time when, at least in some quarters, its exponents were seen as desiccated and unmanly, unhealthily obsessed with death and decay.¹⁷ If so, such an aim was not expressed openly, but the expeditionary pedestrianism of Warner, Britton and Hutton did support a conception of their activities as distinctively if perhaps eccentrically male. Certainly, it did little to encourage female involvement in antiquarianism: despite the exploits of pioneering individuals such as Celia Fiennes,¹⁸ long-distance travel of any kind remained difficult for most women deep into the nineteenth century, and long-distance travel on foot very much more so. And while weeks- and months-long pedestrian tours were less common after the first few decades of the nineteenth century, walking remained a vital element of the practice of antiquaries throughout the Victorian period and beyond. Not least because of its compatibility with gendered assumptions about public (male) and private (female) space, the persisting importance of on-foot exploration in the open air conduced to the continued domination of antiquarianism by men, one legacy of which was the resiliently masculine associations of archaeology as a discipline, especially insofar as fieldwork was concerned.¹⁹

Victorian and Edwardian personifications of this male-dominated form of historical knowing are legion. Notable examples include Walter Rye in Norfolk, W. S. Banks and Edmund Bogg in Yorkshire, Thomas Potter in Leicestershire, W. G. Collingwood in the Lake District, and Charles Henderson in Cornwall – to name but a few whose antiquarianism was inseparably connected to embodied, on-foot, engagement with the past as evident in the landscape.²⁰ To put it another way, and again to invoke Tim Ingold, for antiquaries, landscape was

¹⁶ William Hutton, *The History of the Roman Wall* (London, 1802); idem, *The Life of William Hutton ... Written by Himself* (London, 1817), pp. 313–18; Jewitt, *Life of Hutton*, p. 279. Another source gives the distance covered by Hutton as 635 miles: Cecil Hartley, *British Genius Exemplified* (London, 1820), p. 50.

¹⁷ Mike Goode, 'Dryasdust antiquarianism and soppy masculinity: the Waverley novels and the gender of history', *Representations*, 82 (2003), pp. 52–86.

¹⁸ D. R. Woolf, 'A feminine past? Gender, genre and historical knowledge in England, 1500–1800', *American Historical Review*, 102 (1997), pp. 645–79, at p. 653.

¹⁹ Anna Catalani and Susan Pearce, "'Particular thanks and obligations': the communications made by women to the Society of Antiquaries between 1776 and 1837, and their significance", *Antiquaries Journal*, 86 (2006), pp. 254–78, at pp. 254–6; Stephanie Moser, 'On disciplinary culture: archaeology as fieldwork and its gendered associations', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 14 (2007), pp. 235–63.

²⁰ See, for example, Walter Rye, *An Autobiography of an Ancient Athlete and Antiquary* (Norwich, 1916); W. S. Banks, *Walks in Yorkshire* (2 vols; London, 1871); Edmund Bogg, *A Thousand Miles of Wandering Along the Roman Wall, the Old Border Region, Lakeland, and Ribblesdale* (Leeds, 1898); T. R. Potter, *Walks Round Loughborough* (London, 1840); W. G. Collingwood, *The Lake Counties* (London, 1902). For Charles Henderson, see below.

'history congealed'.²¹ As much was also clear from the continued vitality of local antiquarian societies, whose decline has been misdated by Levine, and whose activities, much reported on in local newspapers, often centred on walking excursions to and around sites of historic interest.²² Indeed, in his autobiography, Britton suggested that what he called 'archaeological ambulatory Societies' such as the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, which had been established in 1853, were 'novelties of the age'.²³ Furthermore, this persistence of ambulatory antiquarianism was in mutually supportive relationship with the increasing popularity of history-conscious tourism, which had an important pedestrian element, with increasingly affordable travel by railway facilitating the on-foot exploration of storied locales.²⁴ County guides such as those published by Murray's, Black's and Stanford's were richly stocked with detail about the antiquities and historical associations of the English landscape and indeed were often written by antiquarians.²⁵ To give one example, the energetic Walter Rye – lawyer, prolific author, walker and pioneer of cross-country running – was responsible for Stanford's *Tourist's Guide to the County of Norfolk*, which extended to five editions between 1879 and 1892.²⁶ Such books were complemented by more specialist publications, such as William Crossing's phenomenally successful *Guide to Dartmoor*, which first appeared in 1909. Drawing on his own extraordinarily thorough on-foot exploration, Crossing presented pedestrian excursions as the best means of gaining an understanding of the history of the place.²⁷ And to these works were added the great slew of fin-de-siècle and Edwardian belletrist historical writing, exemplified by such ventures as Macmillan's *Highways and Byways* series of illustrated antiquarian travelogues.²⁸

²¹ Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling, and Skill* (London, 2000), p. 150. Also helpful here is Barbara Bender's conceptualisation of landscape as 'time materialized': Bender, 'Time and landscape', *Current Anthropology*, 43 (2002), supplement, S103–12.

²² Levine, *Amateur and the Professional*: for some comments on the vitality of these societies – and antiquarian culture more generally – into and beyond the late nineteenth century, see Paul Readman, 'The place of the past in English culture, c.1890–1914', *Past and Present*, 186 (2005), pp. 147–99, at pp. 159–60.

²³ Britton, *Autobiography*, I, pp. 443–4.

²⁴ Many proponents of pedestrianised antiquarianism welcomed the coming of the railway. In the 1830s Britton, for example, was vocal in making the case for a railway between London and Bristol: John Britton, *Lecture on the Road-Ways of England, Pointing out the ... Advantageous Situation of Bristol for the Commerce of the West; with Remarks on the Benefits Likely to Arise from a Rail-Road between that Port and London* (Bristol, 1833), pp. 6–7.

²⁵ For a sense of this, see W. B. C. Lister, *A Bibliography of Murray's Handbooks for Travellers and Biographies of Authors, Editors, Reviewers and Principal Contributors* (Dereham, 1993).

²⁶ Walter Rye, *Tourist's Guide to the County of Norfolk* (London, 1879).

²⁷ William Crossing, *Guide to Dartmoor*, ed. Brian Le Messurier (London, 1965 [2nd edn; Plymouth, 1912]); Matthew Kelly, *Quartz and Feldspar. Dartmoor: A British Landscape in Modern Times* (London, 2015), pp. 193, 195.

²⁸ The first volume in the series was A. H. Norway, *Highways and Byways in Devon and Cornwall* (London, 1897).

II

Why did antiquaries walk so much? Even in the days of Warner, Britton and Hutton, it was not because of the cost of other forms of transport. Thanks to the extension of the turnpike system, mile per mile, road carriage was becoming less and less expensive, the increasing speed of travel reducing the amount of money laid out on overnight stops: indeed, it was cheap for a wealthy man like Hutton.²⁹ Furthermore, for all that their athletic efforts may have challenged essentialising characterisations of their engagement with the past as effete or unmanly, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquaries were acutely conscious of the counter-cultural nature of what they were doing: despite the peripatetic romanticism of Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Lake Poets, walking was not a popular pastime until deep into the Victorian period.³⁰ That this was so was acknowledged by the antiquarians themselves: journeys on foot were ‘unfashionable’, even ‘disgraceful’, as Hutton put it in his autobiography.³¹ Thus Warner, in his *Walk through some of the Western Counties of England*, fulminated that:

The pedestrian has to encounter many little slights and many petty affronts, much inattention and much impertinence ... He must have courage enough to meet with indifference ... the grin, the sneer, and the laugh of the coxcomb of the blockhead, whom Fortune, in her blindness, has perched up in a phaeton, or mounted upon a gelding.³²

Antiquaries walked not from necessity but because walking was central to their method. John Britton was clear that the work of the antiquary had to be conducted on foot. Writing in his autobiography about his decision to embark on his career, he recalled the then much-quoted lines of the poet Thomas Warton:

Nor dull nor barren are the winding ways
Of *hoar Antiquity*, but strown with flowers.

And, Britton went on,

Having traversed those paths for more than fifty years, – explored their ‘highways and by-ways’, on mountain and dingle, on the wide-spread plain, in the secluded dell, in the ‘busy haunts of men’, and in deep recesses, now almost deserted by the human race, and only occupied by the owl, the bat, the toad, and the fox, – I can confidently assert that objects of the deepest interest may be found in all those devious tracks.³³

²⁹ Eric Pawson, *Transport and Economy: The Turnpike Roads of Eighteenth Century Britain* (London, 1977), 282–97; Dorian Gerhold, ‘The development of stage coaching and the impact of turnpike roads, 1653–1840’, *Economic History Review*, 67 (2014), pp. 818–45.

³⁰ For discussion of literary-romantic pedestrian practice, see Anne D. Wallace, *Walking, Literature, and English Culture: The Origin and Uses of Peripatetic in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1994).

³¹ Hutton, *Life*, p. 327.

³² Richard Warner, *A Walk through some of the Western Counties of England* (Bath, 1800), pp. 53–4.

³³ Britton, *Autobiography*, I, p. 333. The quotation was from Warton’s ‘Sonnet written in a Blank Leaf of Dugdale’s “Monasticon”’ (1777).

The perusal of documents was not enough. Taking what Hutton called ‘pains in minute research’ meant treading the landscape, as he had done for his book on the battle of Bosworth, which he claimed was the first scholarly account of that event by anyone who had actually ‘seen the field’.³⁴ For Britton, only through seeing ‘ancient buildings in their native places, and imbued ... with realities, with a tangible character and expression’ did they become ‘objects to convey forcible truths and data for history’: hence his insistence on the centrality of on-foot excursions to organised antiquarianism, if it were to remain effective and vital.³⁵

Walking was important because it enabled careful observation – the collection of evidence through visual scrutiny of the past in the landscape. Thus, while Hutton was certainly an obsessive walker, his decision to walk the length of the Roman Wall was not merely a function of eccentric pedestrianism. As he explained, not only had many writers on the subject not actually seen the wall, nobody, he said, ‘had penetrated from one end to another’; and ‘if those who paid a transient visit chose to *ride*, they could not be minute observers’.³⁶ The slow pace of walking gave time for thorough examination and reflection, and brought the antiquary closer to the embodied experience of human beings in the past, who, by and large, would have walked the same ground. Conducting ‘minute research’ on foot in this way also removed restrictions on the gathering of knowledge: being free to roam where their curiosity took them, antiquaries could make discoveries that were denied by reliance on other modes of travel, with their impedimenta and complexities. In his *Beauties of Wiltshire*, Britton paused to note that there was no direct road from Wardour, seat of the Arundell family, to Richard Colt Hoare’s famous estate at Stourhead, about fourteen miles away. But ‘To *me* this was immaterial’, he explained:

Being a PEDESTRIAN ... I could diverge to the right or to the left, as inclination prompted, or objects presented themselves. The comforts of pecuniary independence are manifold; but the man of independent *mind* enjoys superlative advantages; and this superiority is manifested ten thousand different ways. Every one who tries the experiment must be convinced, that, even in walking, he has latitude for indulging his inclination with much greater freedom, and far better opportunities for *acquiring knowledge*, than he could ever attain when encumbered with horses, and their attendant cares ... [N]one can more readily attain the materials of thought, than the man who can depart from the beaten track with every impulse ... [M]y object was more to see, than to be seen; and my intention to acquire information, not to gratify the feelings of vanity and arrogance.³⁷

How useful was the information antiquaries acquired on foot? It is clear from the accounts of antiquaries that their pedestrian exploration was a vital means of gathering historical information. Some of this

³⁴ William Hutton, *The Battle of Bosworth Field* (2nd edn; London 1813 [1st edn; 1788]), pp. 3–4.

³⁵ Britton, *Autobiography*, I, pp. 443–4.

³⁶ Hutton, *History of the Roman Wall*, p. ix.

³⁷ Britton, *Beauties of Wiltshire*, I, pp. 307–8.

could be mobilised in point-scoring criticism of other authorities. Thus, for example, Hutton's painstaking examination of the earthworks at Sycharth, birthplace of Owain Glyndŵr, led him to conclude that the oft-repeated claim, derived from bardic sources, that the Welsh patriot-hero's castle had been 'as large as Westminster Hall' was indeed a case of Cymric exaggeration.³⁸ But walking the landscape could yield substantive as well as recondite findings. Warner's on-foot exploration of the New Forest led him to argue that the popular narrative of its afforestation, one that emphasised the 'tyranny' of William the Conqueror, was 'egregiously overcharged';³⁹ while Hutton's own claims as to the great antiquity and commercial significance of Birmingham, which he made with some force in his history of the town, were derived from walking its streetscape and hinterland. His wandering of the highways and lanes that radiated out from its centre, for example, had shown him that the town had long been a settlement of importance: in places, centuries of traffic had worn holloways 14 yards deep.⁴⁰ On these perambulations, he also noted the remnants of disused coal pits and enormous piles of cinder, proof to him that Birmingham had been the site of an 'ancient British manufactory' of iron.⁴¹

III

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the single months-long pedestrian expedition in the manner of Warner or Hutton was no more, or at any rate did not provide an organising structure for the books written by antiquaries. But walking as a means of making careful observation of the traces of the past still legible in the landscape, of reading landscape as history congealed, remained central to antiquarian practice. Books such as Thomas Potter's *Walks around Loughborough* or W. S. Banks's *Walks in Yorkshire* presented on-foot exploration as a key means of acquiring knowledge about the past, routes being described in detail so readers could follow in the footsteps of antiquarian experts, seeing what they had seen.⁴² In a similar vein, publications aimed at the 'antiquarian tourist', a term that had wide currency until the Second World War, described walks calculated to give access to the past through observation of the landscape. The excursions detailed in Crossing's *Guide to Dartmoor* began with a walk to the summit of North Hisworthy Tor (now North Hessary Tor), from which might be read 'the history of modern Dartmoor':

³⁸ William Hutton, 'Remarks on Owen Glendwr; Caractacus; and Cross Hour in a Tour Through Wales', *Gentlemen's Magazine*, 67: Supplement for the year 1797, p. 1081; also idem, *Remarks Upon North Wales, being the Result of Sixteen Tours through that Part of the Principality* (Birmingham, 1803), pp. 48–9.

³⁹ Richard Warner, *Topographical Remarks relating to the South-Western Parts of Hampshire* (2 vols; London, 1793), I, p. 164.

⁴⁰ Hutton, *History of Birmingham*, p. 25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.

⁴² Potter, *Walks Round Loughborough*; Banks, *Walks in Yorkshire*.

Northward and southward are the untamed hills, rising grim and bare; vast solitudes where nothing of man's work is seen. Between these wild tracts is the more sheltered part, where the settler has formed his enclosures, and planted his few trees and made his roads. Immediately below, the prison and the town that grew up around it, and on the other side the iron way that has penetrated to the verge of the forest.⁴³

Antiquaries possessed what Potter called 'the organ of *observativeness*'; the non-textual evidence of the world around them was at least as important as that provided by the written evidence of library and archive.⁴⁴ On their walks, they attended to what their eyes told them. Theirs was a visual sensibility: they made diagrams and sketches as well as taking written notes. Hutton's simple plans of the physical remains he encountered on his walk along the Roman Wall are one case in point; the detailed drawings made by Britton and his collaborators on the *Beauties of England and Wales* provide a rather different example, but both illustrate the importance placed on careful looking, on observativeness. Indeed, Britton saw the creation of accurate pictorial records as central to his antiquarian project; this was why he nurtured many artists, the engravings of whom added great value to his and Brayley's books.⁴⁵ Although not an engraver himself, Britton took on a number of these artists as apprentices, and they often accompanied him in his travels around Britain. This reflected an understanding of their true-to-'nature' artwork as itself a form of antiquarianism, of studying the past in the landscape. As William Henry Bartlett (1809–54), one of Britton's favourite artistic protégés, told his old master shortly before he died, it was the 'drives and walks about the Wiltshire downs' in search of 'cromlechs, stone temples, old churches, and old gateways' that caused 'the awakening of the antiquarian spirit within me under your tuition'.⁴⁶ Others shared such a perspective, the importance of precise visual records of a (sometimes disappearing) past remaining central to antiquarian method throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, perhaps reaching its apotheosis at the *fin de siècle*, in Sir Benjamin Stone's Photographic Survey Movement.⁴⁷

⁴³ Crossing, *Guide to Dartmoor*, p. 85. As Matthew Kelly has pointed out, Crossing's 'Dartmoor was not ... unspoiled nature nor the improver's waste but a landscape long shaped by human civilisation' (Kelly, *Quartz and Feldspar*, p. 206).

⁴⁴ Potter, *Walks Round Loughborough*, p. 50 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁵ Thanks to the *Beauties of England* project, 'A whole school of artists and engravers had grown up under Britton's direction': J. Mordaunt Crook, 'Britton, John (1771–1857), antiquary and topographer', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/oiidm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3458>> [accessed 7 Sept. 2021].

⁴⁶ Crook, 'John Britton and the genesis of the Gothic Revival', pp. 108–9.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Edwards and Martin Barnes, *A Record of England: Sir Benjamin Stone and the National Photographic Record Association 1897–1910* (London, 2006); also Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885–1918* (Durham, NC, 2012).

Accuracy was not all, however. The pedestrianised looking of antiquaries also involved affective engagement with landscape and its associations.⁴⁸ Those without the organ of observativeness, Potter felt, not only had ‘no eye to see’; they also had ‘no heart to feel, they only count the mile-stones and the hours’.⁴⁹ Walking the landscape not only provided antiquaries with empirical evidence, it was also a means of stimulating their historical imaginations. This, perhaps, is not surprising, since human imagination is rooted in our perceptions of the outside world, or to put it another way, the pictures we make of the outside world, the word imagination deriving from the Latin ‘*imaginari*’: ‘to picture to oneself’. Thus, antiquaries pictured the past through their embodied, on-foot, experience of the physical environment. Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century antiquaries such as Warner and Britton made frequent allusion to how their encounters with historical sites conjured vivid impressions of times gone by. Writing about his visit to Glastonbury in his *Walk through the Western Counties of England*, Warner reflected how ‘My imagination readily enters into “the deeds of the days of other years”’; and while I tread the hallowed spot, reverts with ease to, and interests itself in the transactions which it has witnessed, the grandeur it has exhibited, the vicissitudes it has suffered.⁵⁰ Later antiquaries also found their imaginations similarly provoked by such experiences, even in cases where little enough remained to be seen. In his *Rambles round Loughborough* of 1868, Potter described his visit to the site of the Roman town of Vernometum, near the village of Willoughby on the Wolds. This was now a large grassy field in which, as he put it, ‘Black earth and some slight traces of straight lines, that may have been streets, are nearly all that can be seen’, but ‘where so much may be imagined’. As he walked the landscape, what Potter called his ‘Fancy’ sought ‘to realise the scene when Roman villas stood on a most pleasant slope, when Roman legions encamped around, and where a Roman Emperor, Hadrian, spent the winter’ of 197–8 ce.⁵¹

The invocation of ‘fancy’ was an important antiquarian convention at least until the First World War. As Robert Colls has noted, it loomed large in the late nineteenth-century efflorescence of antiquarian writing about Northumberland – a place richly redolent of the storied past, largely on account of its persisting associations with Sir Walter Scott, the Border Ballads, and romantic tales of Anglo-Scottish derring-do. Here Scott’s epic poem *Marmion* exemplified these associations, its story of knightly honour and heroism at the battle of Flodden in 1513 enjoying considerable celebrity across the nineteenth and into

⁴⁸ Although not primarily concerned with antiquaries’ responses to landscape, Stephen Bann has highlighted how their habits of careful observation supported an imaginative project suffused with affective solicitude for the physical records of the past: ‘Views of the past’, in Bann, *The Inventions of History: Essays on the Representation of the Past* (Manchester, 1990), pp. 122–47.

⁴⁹ Potter, *Walks Round Loughborough*, p. 50.

⁵⁰ Warner, *Walk through some of the Western Counties*, pp. 26–7.

⁵¹ T. R. Potter, *Rambles round Loughborough* (Loughborough, 1868), pp. 20–1.

the twentieth century.⁵² Fancy was a means by which Northumbrian antiquaries sought, as one of them described it, to ‘re-visualise ... what is dead’, to use their imagination to reconstruct the past amid its still-extant present-day vestiges.⁵³ By this time, in Northumberland as elsewhere, fanciful reimagining was especially noticeable in more popular texts, often bleeding over into belletrist and touristic variants of antiquarianism. In these accounts, the embodied experience of landscape was presented as a means of entering imaginatively into the world of the past.⁵⁴ One example was Maria Hoyer and Mary Heppel’s book on the castles and churches of the Welsh border. Published in 1912, this was arranged in the form of an account of a walk along the line of Offa’s Dyke, the eighth-century earthwork leading the two women, as they put it, ‘along a great historic track where we had met with Kings and Warriors, Nobles and great Ladies, Saints and Hermits, Knights and Priests and People, and enriched our minds and memories with many thrilling and tragic pictures’.⁵⁵ Even the outwardly humdrum market town of Oswestry, possessed of ‘quite a modern look’, seemed to them re-enchanted by vivid figures from a tumultuous border past:

Great figures of kings and mail-clad warriors ride ghostly through the streets, and all the air quivers and rings with the shrilling of trumpets, the whiz of flying arrows, the clang of battle-axe and pike and sword. No, it could not have been dull when any day some Conan or Gruffydd or Llewelyn might come rushing down with a horde of wild Welshmen to burn and harry, or the Norman kings assemble their troops here to return the compliment in Powysland.⁵⁶

Indeed, re-enchantment is perhaps the operative word here. As has often been noted, still to my mind most productively by Marshall Berman, central to the experience of urban-industrial modernity was a sense of the often-jarring interaction between the present and the past.⁵⁷ Arguably, as the work of Stephen Kern has suggested, this was felt most acutely at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, though it was by no means confined to these years.⁵⁸ Perhaps, then, to adapt

⁵² Walter Scott, *Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field* (Edinburgh, 1808); W. Ruddick, ‘Sir Walter’s Scott’s Northumberland’, in J. H. Alexander and D. Hewitt (eds), *Scott and his Influence* (Aberdeen, 1983), pp. 22–30.

⁵³ Robert Colls, ‘The New Northumbrians’, in Robert Colls (ed.), *Northumbria: History and Identity 547–2000* (Chichester, 2000), pp. 151–77, at p. 160.

⁵⁴ For some suggestive comments on this in relation to the ‘phenomenal topology’ of late nineteenth-century writing on the Lake District, see Christopher Donaldson, Ian N. Gregory and Patricia Murrieta-Flores, ‘Mapping “Wordsworthshire”: A GIS survey of literary tourism in Victorian Lakeland’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20 (2015), pp. 287–307, at pp. 304–6.

⁵⁵ Maria A. Hoyer and Mary Louisa Heppel, *The Welsh Border: Its Churches, Castles and Dyke* (London, 1911), p. 238.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵⁷ Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London, 1983 [1st edn; 1982]).

⁵⁸ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880–1918* (2nd edn; Cambridge: MA, 2003 [1st edn; 1983]); cf. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York, 2004).

Michael Saler's usage, antiquarians' embodied – that is to say, on-foot – engagement with landscape as history congealed exemplified a means by which the modern world might be 're-enchanted' through the exercise of imagination, or fancy.⁵⁹ Throughout the period considered here, treading storied ground helped maintain a sense of connection between the past and the ever-advancing present; it nurtured a sensibility whereby disbelief could momentarily be suspended to allow the revisualisation of people and events long gone. It was this that caused Warner to fall into reverie amid the ruins of Glastonbury, Potter to picture the Roman legionaries encamped at Vernometum in Emperor Hadrian's time, and Hoyer and Heppel to encounter the ghostly forms of kings and mail-clad warriors amid the workaday bustle of Oswestry. Antiquarian writing, and its touristic and belletrist variants, was a key means by which the past was re-enacted in the minds of contemporaries. So too was the fashion for historical pageantry, which was wildly popular in the first half of the twentieth century, and in which antiquaries were often closely associated – as organisers, scriptwriters and historical authorities for the events re-enacted. The English Church Pageant of 1909 is a good case in point. Originated by Walter Marshall (1859–1921), a Cambridge-educated antiquarian and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, its executive committee was composed of precisely the kind of people who were involved in the writing of topographical and ecclesiastical guidebooks, the *Victoria County History* (then just getting under way), and antiquarian associational culture more generally.⁶⁰

IV

If all this is right, then, building on the work of scholars such as Vandrei, we must recalibrate conventional assessments of the cultural legacy of antiquarianism beyond its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century heyday.⁶¹ The connection between antiquarian practice and modern-day archaeology and landscape history should be obvious, even if this connection is often not as well acknowledged as it might be. Writing in the 1920s and 1930s, H. J. Randall, one of the pioneers of the British school of landscape history later popularised by W. G. Hoskins and

⁵⁹ Michael Saler, "'Clap if you believe in Sherlock Holmes": mass culture and the re-enchantment of modernity c.1890–c.1940', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), pp. 599–622. For more general reflections on this theme, see idem, 'Modernity and enchantment: a historiographic review', *American Historical Review*, 111 (2006), pp. 692–716.

⁶⁰ Arthur Burns, 'A national church tells its story: the English Church Pageant of 1909', in Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Alexander Hutton and Paul Readman (eds), *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain* (London, 2020), pp. 56–79. For more general discussion of the early twentieth-century pageant craze, see Ayako Yoshino, *Pageant Fever: Local History and Consumerism in Edwardian England* (Tokyo, 2011); and for an interactive database of all major historical pageants, see Angela Bartie, Paul Caton, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Tom Hulme, Alex Hutton and Paul Readman, *The Redress of the Past*, <<http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/>> [accessed 2 Aug. 2021].

⁶¹ Vandrei, *Queen Boudica*.

Maurice Beresford, made clear that his approach, which he called ‘history in the open air’, was essentially that of the antiquarian tradition.⁶² For Randall, the key lesson imparted by that tradition was that ‘The face of the country is the most important historical document that we possess’. ‘The man who would read it’, he felt, ‘must ... have an eye for country and a feeling for landscape. He must love the high places of the earth and have felt “the tangle of the isles”. And he must remember that this knowledge can be gained in one way and one way only – by tramping the country on his own feet.’⁶³ To be sure, not all Randall’s colleagues relied so exclusively on pedestrian exploration as a means of reading the past in the physical environment: as Kitty Hauser has shown, from the interwar period the toolkit of archaeologists and landscape historians was spectacularly enhanced by aerial photography, as influentially promoted by O. G. S. Crawford, founder of the journal *Antiquity* (1927) and the Ordnance Survey’s first Archaeology Officer.⁶⁴ But while Crawford and the new generation of field archaeologists who followed him, among whom included Stuart Piggott, Grahame Clark and Charles Phillips, relied on modern technology as well as shoe leather to conduct their research, they combined a self-consciously scientific professionalism with a romantic sensibility and a conviction that their practice bore a direct, filial relationship with that of earlier antiquaries.⁶⁵ Writing in 1950, Piggott presented the work William Stukeley had done in the 1720s at Avebury and Stonehenge as

the first evidence for a branch of field archaeology which in Britain has taken on a peculiar importance. It is pure fieldwork and survey carried out in the open air ... [W]ith this fieldwork goes a high standard of draughtsmanship and the visual presentation of evidence which is in direct descent from Stukeley. It is not for nothing that this study is one of the open air, and it seems to me intimately bound up with the English approach to the countryside which was developed unconsciously side-by-side with the Romantic movement in literature and the arts.⁶⁶

Enabled by aerial photography and OS maps, but still critically reliant on an embodied and affective experience of the landscape, the practice of Crawford, Piggott and others is eloquent evidence of the enduring influence of antiquarianism on professional scholarly practice. An

⁶² H. J. Randall, *History in the Open Air* (London, 1936); M. W. Beresford, *The Lost Villages of England* (London, 1954); W. G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (London, 1955).

⁶³ H. J. Randall, ‘History in the Open Air’, *Antiquity*, 8 (1934), pp. 5–23.

⁶⁴ Kitty Hauser, *Shadow Sites: Photography, Archaeology and the British Landscape 1927–1955* (Oxford, 2007), esp. ch. 4; Hauser, *Bloody Old Britain: O. G. S. Crawford and the Archaeology of Modern Life* (London, 2008).

⁶⁵ On Crawford’s romantic sensibility and ‘poetic imagination’, see Hauser, *Bloody Old Britain*, pp. 71–3, 80–1. For a broader discussion of the compatibility between the ‘modern’ and the (rural) past in English interwar culture, see Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns: English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper* (London, 2015). Also relevant on this theme is David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (2nd edn; London, 2016 [1st edn; 1998]).

⁶⁶ Piggott, *Stukeley*, p. 153.

outstanding example of this is provided by R. G. Collingwood, also an archaeologist but better known as a philosopher of history. Collingwood's whole approach to understanding the past owed much to the out-of-doors topographical education he (and his siblings) received from his father, the polymath artist and antiquarian William Gershom Collingwood, who encouraged an imaginative and embodied engagement with the past through walking the landscape of his native Lake District, marked as it was by the physical records of Roman and Norse occupation.⁶⁷

Another figure was Charles Henderson (1900–33), whose extraordinarily thorough autodidactic research into Cornish ecclesiastical antiquities, old bridges and rivers led to academic appointments in the 1920s and 1930s, first at University College Exeter and then at Corpus Christi College Oxford.⁶⁸ Henderson was an avid walker, and like his friend and fellow-Cornishman A. L. Rowse (whose *Tudor Cornwall* was dedicated to Henderson's memory), he had a keenly developed feel for the visual qualities of landscape, and for its historical associations.⁶⁹ Henderson did not shun archival research, personally collecting 16,000 ancient documents, but as Rowse remembered, while his friend was 'crazy about documents', at the same time 'no man was less bookish': his learning 'was of a very concrete kind', resting heavily 'upon innumerable tramps all over the country, constant returns to it, ceaseless questionings and observations of all that came under his notice, and very little escaped his trained eye and acute mind'.⁷⁰ In common with his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarian forebears Henderson did much research while on foot, making careful notes and drawings on site, as well as taking photographs.⁷¹ His 'tramping over the land with his long stride' was integral to his practice, giving him a keen sense of the way in which landscape features such as the river Tamar had shaped Cornish

⁶⁷ Douglas H. Johnson, 'W. G. Collingwood and the beginnings of the *Idea of History*', *Collingwood Studies*, 1 (1994), pp. 1–26; Vicky Albritton and Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Green Victorians: The Simple Life in John Ruskin's Lake District* (Chicago, 2016), pp. 119–73; Teresa Smith 'R. G. Collingwood's childhood: habits of thought', in David Boucher and Teresa Smith (eds), *R. G. Collingwood: An Autobiography and Other Writings with Essays on Collingwood's Life and Work* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 175–212.

⁶⁸ Held in the Courtney Library at the Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro, Henderson's papers give a good sense of the monumental scale of his research into Cornish history and topography. Particularly worthy of note, amidst an enormous collection, is his 'Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Cornwall' (manuscript, 2 vols, 1923–4), which includes hand-drawn maps, drawings and photographs, as well as detailed descriptions and discussions of church architecture, the history of sites, place- and field-names – and much else besides.

⁶⁹ A. L. Rowse, *Tudor Cornwall* (London, 1969 [1st edn; 1941]), p. 5; idem, *A Cornishman Abroad* (London, 1976), p. 198.

⁷⁰ Idem, *Cornishman Abroad*, p. 197; idem, 'Charles Henderson', in Rowse, *West-Country Stories* (London, 1946), pp. 217–21, at p. 218.

⁷¹ A. L. Rowse and M. I. Henderson, 'Charles Henderson', in Charles Henderson, *Essays in Cornish History* (Oxford, 1935), pp. xv–xxiv. Henderson's interest in history had been sparked by the childhood gift of a camera, with which he set out on a mission to photograph all the churches in Cornwall, his original aim being to write a history of the county (p. xvii).

history.⁷² Even when his interests moved beyond Cornwall to the history of eighteenth-century Europe, close topographical observation remained central to his method.⁷³ One Oxford colleague noted after Henderson's untimely death that his 'mind was never absent from his surroundings', his powers of observation enabling him to 'see the past in the present'.⁷⁴

Like the antiquaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Randall, Collingwood and Henderson's envisioning of the past through engagement with present-day landscapes was as much an imaginative act as it was about noting down factual information about the relics of distant times. Of Henderson, for example, one of his obituarists remarked that 'He ... had all the qualities demanded of a good historian, including the quality known as imagination ... He helped us to realise that, after all ... history is the art of living in the past'.⁷⁵ And this affective, highly personal and imaginative historical sensibility expressed the very essence of what doing history involves, fundamentally, what Collingwood described as 'the re-enactment of past experience' in the mind of the historian.⁷⁶ Collingwood's own lifelong antiquarian avocations, often overlooked, are worth noting here. Exemplified in the 'museum-like detail' of works such as his *Archaeology of Roman Britain*,⁷⁷ Collingwood's antiquarianism complemented his philosophy of history, since the re-enactment of past experience is more effectually achieved through embodied presence in the locational contexts of that experience: the work of the historian must be situated in space as well as time.⁷⁸ Given that 'The whole perceptible world ... is potentially and in principle evidence to the historian',⁷⁹ on-foot presence in the landscape is a key means of effecting this work of re-enactment. In this way our bodies, our whole selves, can give us a more completely realised historical understanding of human experience. As the Yorkshire antiquary Edmund Bogg remarked in 1898, 'To see ... time-honoured remains *in situ* ... is to relive in the past'.⁸⁰

⁷² A. L. Rowse, *A Man of the Thirties* (London, 1979), p. 15; Charles Henderson and Henry Coates, *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams* (Exeter, 1928).

⁷³ As evident not least from his travel diaries (Henderson papers, Courtney Library). When working in Europe, Henderson 'would begin in the train, reconstructing an ancient road-system from the date of the bridges as he passed; then he walked straight into the vitals of a strange town and somehow nosed out more history than was ever written of it' (Rowse and Henderson, 'Charles Henderson', p. xxiv).

⁷⁴ W. F. R. H., 'Charles Henderson', *Pelican Record*, 21 (1933), pp. 87–8: copy in Courtney Library.

⁷⁵ W. J. Stephens, 'Charles Henderson', *West Briton*, 5 Oct. 1933: cutting in Courtney Library.

⁷⁶ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1946), esp. pp. 282ff.

⁷⁷ R. G. Collingwood, *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (London, 1930). As Mortimer Wheeler noted in a review of the 1969 edition of that book, 'In many ways' Collingwood 'was by nature a survivor from that long and distinguished line of amateurs – in the fullest and best sense of the term – who for three centuries or more had sustained the study of British antiquities as an inevitable and engrossing study of the educated mind' (cited in Tony Birley, 'Collingwood as archaeologist and historian', in Boucher and Smith, *Collingwood*, p. 290).

⁷⁸ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, p. 246.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁸⁰ Bogg, *Thousand Miles of Wandering*, p. 13.

V

Thus, for all that academic historians have been apt to draw a sharp distinction between their practice and that of their antiquarian forebears, there was considerable continuity in method, in their privileging of embodied encounters with the past in the landscape. This was no atavistic hangover. Indeed, it is better seen as wholly consistent with the experience of modernity (if not necessarily exclusively modern), as congruent with the embodied subjectivity that, as William A. Cohen has shown, was so much a feature of Victorian writing, and which in some ways anticipated the arguments of later thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty.⁸¹ Just as much as theorists of the Parisian Left Bank, or later anthropologists, archaeologists and human geographers, antiquaries understood that cognition as well as perception was ineluctably corporeal; they knew that knowing about the past meant thinking with your feet as well as with your head. Implicit in their practice was a rejection of the Cartesian disconnect between mind and body; theirs was what would now be called a phenomenological approach to landscape. They knew landscape to be something ‘lived in and through, mediated, worked on and altered ... not just something looked at or thought about’.⁸² For them, the past was materialised in landscape.

In this, antiquaries were not alone. The course of the nineteenth century saw narrowly aesthetic or pictorial understandings of landscape lose ground to those more environmental or historical in character, a development that found expression in, *inter alia*, a strengthening sense of valued locales as heritage and thus worthy of preservation.⁸³ But for our purposes here, the currency of this newly minted material awareness of landscape as lived in – as inextricable from embodied human experience, as history congealed – perhaps also explains why so many nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians were keen walkers. T. B. Macaulay is the classic case in point. Extensive travel around Britain and Ireland was central to his method, being undertaken not just to collect written materials from libraries and archives, but to visit in person, and on foot, the places that would feature in his *History of England*, thus getting closer to the past he so vividly brought to life. He was painstaking in

⁸¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (London, 2012 [1st edn; 1945]); William A. Cohen, *Embodied: Victorian Literature and the Senses* (Minneapolis, 2009).

⁸² Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford, 1994), p. 26. On this theme, see also Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford, 2004); Bender, ‘Time and landscape’; Ingold, *Perception of the Environment*; Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London, 2011).

⁸³ For an interpretation that traces the intellectual origins of this changing sensibility back to Wordsworth, see Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London, 1991). For the development of Victorian landscape preservationism, see Harriet Ritvo, *The Dawn of Green: Manchester, Thirlmere and Modern Environmentalism* (Chicago, 2009); Paul Readman, *Storied Ground: Landscape and the Shaping of English National Identity* (Cambridge, 2018), chs 3–4.

this, repeatedly walking the walls of cities such as Derry and York, constantly envisaging the scenes of the past in solitary strolls around London, sketching out street plans from personal observation, taking detailed notes on the topography of whole districts, exploring battlefields, and so on.⁸⁴

Macaulay's example was followed by other great Victorian historians. E. A. Freeman felt 'the finished historian must be a traveller', and his herculean labours on his six-volume *History of the Norman Conquest* imposed a cost in shoe-leather quite as heavy as the toll of time paid in archival lucubration: according to one account, Freeman 'visited every spot upon which the Conqueror is recorded to have set his foot'.⁸⁵ Believing that historians should 'live in the free human air', Freeman's friend John Richard Green was no less energetic in his pedestrian exertions.⁸⁶ These efforts reflected his view that 'History strikes its roots in Geography' and the insights thereby gained fed into his work, not least his enormously popular *Short History of the English People*, with its vivid evocations of places and landscapes.⁸⁷ To the names of Green and Freeman might be added Mandell Creighton, whose history of Carlisle rested less on book learning than on 'many wanderings on foot',⁸⁸ or James Bryce, a keen mountaineer as well as a walker, and like Green convinced of the imbrication of geography and history (the former being the 'key to' or 'foundation of' the latter).⁸⁹

Bryce was one of the founding fathers of the *English Historical Review*, the establishment of which is often seen, in the words of Michael Bentley, as 'an important staging-post' in the professionalisation of the discipline

⁸⁴ G. O. Trevelyan, *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* (2 vols; 2nd edn; London, 1878 [1st edn; 1876]), II, pp. 218, 222–7; H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Romantic Movement and the Study of History* (London, 1969), pp. 18–21. When working on the Jacobite Risings of the late seventeenth century, Macaulay made two visits to the remote Highland pass of Killiecrankie, the second 'for the special purpose of walking up the old road which skirts the [river] Garry in order to verify the received accounts of the time spent by the English army in mounting the pass which they were to descend at a quicker rate' (Trevelyan, *Life and Letters*, II, p. 223).

⁸⁵ E. A. Freeman, *The Methods of Historical Study* (London, 1886), pp. 314–15; James Bryce, 'Edward Augustus Freeman', *English Historical Review*, 7 (1892), pp. 497–509, at p. 499; E. A. Freeman, *The History of the Norman Conquest* (6 vols; Oxford, 1867–79).

⁸⁶ Green to Freeman, 26 Feb. 1876, in Leslie Stephen (ed.), *Letters of John Richard Green* (London, 1901), p. 427.

⁸⁷ J. R. Green, 'Introduction', in J. R. Green and A. S. Green, *A Short Geography of the British Isles* (London, 1889 [1st edn; 1879]), p. xi; John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People* (London, 1874).

⁸⁸ Mandell Creighton, *Carlisle* (London, 1889), p. vi. 'It is possible for us, while taking our walks, to bring before ourselves a sympathetic picture of the life and efforts of our ancestors, who worked out the problems which we ourselves have to try to carry on a little further': idem, 'The study of a county', in *Historical Lectures and Addresses*, ed. Louise Creighton (London, 1903), pp. 285–304, at p. 297.

⁸⁹ James Bryce, 'The importance of geography in education. I', *Journal of Geography*, 1 (1902), pp. 145–51, at p. 145, and Bryce, 'The importance of geography in education. II', *Journal of Geography*, 1 (1902), pp. 206–13, at p. 207. See also Paul Readman, 'Walking and environmentalism in the career of James Bryce: Mountaineer, scholar, statesman, 1838–1922', in Arthur Burns, Chad Bryant and Paul Readman (eds), *Walking Histories: 1800–1950* (Basingstoke, 2016), pp. 287–318.

of history in Britain.⁹⁰ Indeed, it has been suggested that Bryce and his associates, influenced by continental and especially German practice, conceived the new journal as a vehicle for opposing the importunities of unsystematic antiquarianism with the rigour of a newly specialised and ‘scientific’ form of learning.⁹¹ Maybe so; it is certainly the case that by the interwar period, if not before, the content of the *EHR* exhibited the ‘entrenched professionalism’ of highly recondite and fine-grained documentary research.⁹² And there is no doubting the strength of professionalising trends more generally, for all that they made their presence felt in England later, and in more halting a fashion, than in France or Germany. The years around and after the turn of the century saw a new emphasis on the detailed analysis of archival evidence, a turning away from the sweeping narratives that characterised the once dominant ‘whig’ sensibility, and an increasingly confident belief in factuality as the only sound basis for ‘objective’ history that would stand the test of time. Bentley has demonstrated that these were some of the key characteristics of what he terms the ‘modernist’ approach to the writing of history, one that enjoyed dominant status in England, and especially in the universities, until at least the 1970s.⁹³ But this dominance can be exaggerated. As Bentley himself allows, historiographical modernism was never as all-conquering as its more self-confident practitioners asserted,⁹⁴ and the whigs – exemplified by the figure of G. M. Trevelyan, whose *English Social History* (1942) proved extraordinarily and resiliently popular – were by no means extirpated entirely, either within or outwith the groves of the academy: J. H. Plumb, for one, kept Trevelyan’s fire burning at Cambridge into the 1980s, and himself passed the torch to younger practitioners of narrative history, such as Simon Schama and David Cannadine.⁹⁵ Neither, moreover, were all modernist practitioners of twentieth-century history-writing quite as adamant in their scientism as might be supposed: their rejection of whig linearity did not imply the

⁹⁰ Michael Bentley, *Modern Historiography: An Introduction* (London, 1999), p. 79.

⁹¹ John Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (London, 2009 [1st edn; 2007]), pp. 501–3. See also Alon Kadish, ‘Scholarly exclusiveness and the foundation of the *English Historical Review*’, *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 61 (1988), pp. 183–98 and Michael Bentley, ‘The age of Prothero: British historiography in the long “fin de siècle”, 1870–1920’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser., 20 (2010), pp. 171–93, at p. 182.

⁹² Michael Bentley, *Modernizing England’s Past: English Historiography in the Age of Modernism 1870–1970* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 206.

⁹³ ‘At its hands all speculative or metaphysical understanding of the past suffered strangulation ... as the presentation of historical material took a more crystalline form resembling a scientific report’: Michael Bentley, ‘Shape and pattern in British historical writing, 1815–1945’, in Stuart Macintyre, Juan Maignushca and Attila Pók (eds), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing, IV: 1800–1945* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 204–24, at pp. 218–19; and see also Bentley, *Modernizing England’s Past*, esp. ch. 8.

⁹⁴ Bentley, *Modernizing England’s Past*, pp. 7–10.

⁹⁵ By 1949, Trevelyan’s *English Social History* had sold nearly 400,000 copies, with his earlier *History of England* (1926; 3rd edn, 1945) having shifted 200,000: Stefan Collini, *English Pasts: Essays in Culture and History* (Oxford, 1999), p. 21; J. H. Plumb, *G. M. Trevelyan* (London, 1951), p. 31.

total abandonment of older routes into understanding and imagining the past.

Indeed, as it turned out, antiquarian methods died hard. In fact, at least so far as pedestrianised forms of historical knowing were concerned, they never really died at all; they featured in the practice of some of the most successful professional historians of the twentieth century. This was true of Trevelyan, for whom walking was not only integral to his sense of self and keen, poetic appreciation of nature, but also a means by which he gained imaginative access to the people and pasts he wrote about. Trevelyan's books on Garibaldi, for example, relied quite heavily on extensive on-foot re-tracings of the marches undertaken by the great man in the course of his military campaigns.⁹⁶ It was also true of Henderson's friend A. L. Rowse. Much of Rowse's work was indebted to embodied encounters with the past in the landscape, and not only that of his beloved Cornwall. Many of these encounters were experienced during long walks accompanied by colleagues whose own historical practice was also informed by such 'topographical expeditions', as one of Rowse's walking companions, Bruce McFarlane, termed them.⁹⁷

For some of these historians, walking the landscape was less purposive, and certainly less so than for many of the antiquaries who preceded them. Documentary scholar to his fingertips, scourge of earlier whig readings of the medieval past and one of Bentley's exemplary modernists, Rowse's friend McFarlane is a case in point.⁹⁸ But while walking may not have provided the kind of historical evidence that might be cited in footnotes, it retained much value as a stimulus to the historical imagination. This was true for academic, university-based historians as well as those who wrote for wider audiences: not all modernist historical minds were as uncompromisingly positivistic as was, say, G. R. Elton's. When it came to the interpretation and recovery of the past, to the writing of history, imagination continued to matter. Regius Professor of History at Oxford between 1928 and 1947, F. M. Powicke is one example. Powicke had a keenly developed topographical sensitivity: for him, vigorous walks in the countryside were a means of getting closer to the spirit of past, of bringing it to life in his mind, of making it real. To Powicke, 'the poetic element in history' was inextricably bound up with the landscapes of that history: thus was his study of thirteenth-century monastic life stimulated and nourished by tracing 'the very sheepwalks of the monks'

⁹⁶ G. M. Trevelyan, *Garibaldi's Defence of the Roman Republic* (London, 1907); idem, *Garibaldi and the Thousand* (London, 1909); idem, *Garibaldi and the Making of Italy* (London, 1911); idem, *An Autobiography and Other Essays* (London, 1949), pp. 31–3; Mary Moorman, *George Macaulay Trevelyan* (London, 1980), pp. 101–8.

⁹⁷ Bruce McFarlane to Karl Leyser, 5 Aug. 1944, in K. B. McFarlane, *Letters to Friends, 1940–1966*, ed. Gerald Harriss (Oxford, 1997), p. 27. For examples of walks with Rowse, see *ibid.*, pp. 13–14, 15–18, 33, 36, 37.

⁹⁸ For McFarlane's historiographical modernism, see Bentley, *Modernizing England's Past*, pp. 42–4, 134–5.

of Furness Abbey in his beloved Lake District.⁹⁹ Powicke was no outlier, either. The ‘novelistic flights of empathetic imagination’ that characterised much of the work of the Byzantinist Steven Runciman, for instance, owed much to his travels in the Mediterranean and Balkans.¹⁰⁰ But a perhaps more notable case still is that of another medievalist, Eileen Power, to whose memory Trevelyan dedicated his *English Social History*. As Maxine Berg has shown in her fine biography, a crucial formative experience for Power was her experience of South and East Asia on a Kahn Travelling Fellowship in 1920–1. Power’s encounters with India, Burma and China gave her what she experienced as flashbacks to the world of medieval Europe, which was thus brought to life for her as never before. A walking tour in the Western Hills of China proved particularly important in Power’s Orientalist recovery of the European past in the present-day landscape of the East, the monasteries she visited seeming akin to those of the Middle Ages.¹⁰¹ This experience, and that of the fellowship more generally, charged Power’s historical imagination, making what Berg judges to have been ‘a very significant impact on her choice of subjects and her ways of writing about these’ in her work on medieval Europe.¹⁰²

R. H. Tawney, Power’s colleague at the London School of Economics, saw a still more instrumental relationship between embodied encounter with the landscape and the doing of history: his recommendation that historians equip themselves with ‘a stout pair of boots’ is well known, and he practised what he preached in his own work, most notably that on the enclosure of land.¹⁰³ Interestingly, and by way of giving one final example here, Tawney’s antagonist in the ‘storm over the gentry’, Hugh Trevor-Roper, was also an enthusiastic walker. Indeed, despite chiding Tawney with cavalier disregard for the status of history as ‘an empirical science’,¹⁰⁴ Trevor-Roper’s own intellectual sensibilities were profoundly shaped by embodied experience of landscape. As he told the audience at his valedictory lecture on ‘History and Imagination’ at Oxford in 1980, his original interest in history could be attributed to childhood exposure to the Northumberland landscape ‘with the symbols, or deposit, of age

⁹⁹ F. M. Powicke, *Three Lectures, given in the Hall of Balliol College, Oxford* (London, 1947), pp. 71ff.; idem, *Historical Study in Oxford: An Inaugural Lecture* (Oxford, 1929), p. 29; R. W. Southern, ‘Sir Maurice Powicke 1879–1963’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 50 (1964), pp. 275–304, at pp. 300–2.

¹⁰⁰ Minoo Dinshaw, *Outlandish Knight: The Byzantine Life of Steven Runciman* (London, 2017), p. 454.

¹⁰¹ Maxine Berg, *A Woman in History: Eileen Power 1889–1940* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 97–8, 100–2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁰³ Tawney’s comment was a verbal one, made sometime in the 1930s in response to a paper by C. S. Orwin on ‘Open Fields’. Reports of what he said vary. It may in fact have been, ‘What historians need is not more documents but stronger boots’: W. K. Hancock, *Country and Calling* (London, 1954), p. 95. On Tawney’s love of walking, see also Lawrence Goldman, *The Life of R. H. Tawney: Socialism and History* (London, 2013), p. 142.

¹⁰⁴ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘The Gentry 1540–1640’, supplement I to *Economic History Review* (1953), p. 1.

after age of history around me ... visible, palpable, alive'.¹⁰⁵ Throughout his life, Trevor-Roper undertook 'formidable solitary walks' which, rather like Trevelyan before him, offered both psychological solace and a spur to historical creativity.¹⁰⁶

VI

In his 1929 inaugural lecture as Regius Professor at Oxford, Powicke suggested that many an historian found 'the source of his strength in the associations of a countryside, his native place or made his own by adoption, where every line and colour evoke mysterious memories and associations which, for all he knows, may be as nearly related to the object of his study, as much a part of history, as the documents which he has to use'.¹⁰⁷ Such comments certainly applied to him; but – as we have seen – they applied to others too. For historians, as for antiquaries, walking was not only a form of relaxation; it could also be a means of understanding, imagining and feeling the past through embodied encounter with those places of which this past is constituted. Certainly, this mattered most to historians in the whig tradition, for whom history remained a literary art centred on the crafting of sweeping narrative accounts; but it also mattered to at least some professionalised, university-based exponents of historiographical modernism. Perhaps this should not surprise us. As Bentley points out, these latter individuals were actuated by a 'commitment to the past's visitability and the idea that a living pastness still existed in its various deposits in the present'.¹⁰⁸ Many of these deposits took the form of documentary evidence, and the sheer scale and variety of the sources now available certainly promoted chronological specialisation. But not all the deposits of interest to the historian, even those committed to fine-grained, technical research, were sequestered in archives and libraries. Others were to be found congealed in the landscape, their living pastness visitable in a different sense: on foot. Sometimes obliquely, sometimes more directly, the embodied experience of landscape continued to inform the writing of history in ways that have not adequately been acknowledged. And for all that we may now find objectionable in the writings and interpretations of people such as Trevelyan, or Rowse, or Trevor-Roper (and the list is a long one), this aspect of their practice has enduring value. By way of closing, and underlining the point, it is worth returning to Collingwood:

¹⁰⁵ Idem, 'History and Imagination', in Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden (eds), *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper* (London, 1981), pp. 356–69, at p. 357.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Davenport-Hines, 'Introduction', in Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Wartime Journals* (London, 2012), pp. 1–23, at pp. 19–20. See also Richard Davenport-Hines and Adam Sisman (eds), *One Hundred Letters from Hugh Trevor-Roper* (Oxford, 2014), passim.

¹⁰⁷ Powicke, *Historical Study in Oxford*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁸ Bentley, *Modernizing England's Past*, p. 203.

Every present has a past of its own, and any imaginative reconstruction aims at reconstructing the past of this present, the present in which the act of imagination is going on, as here and now perceived. In principle the aim of any such act is to use the entire perceptible here-and-now as evidence for the entire past through whose process it has come into being.¹⁰⁹

As Collingwood was aware, this is an impossible aim to fulfil in practice: the past can never be known in its entirety. But his principle remains valid. By applying it, by using 'the entire perceptible here-and-now as evidence' for the stories we tell, we fail better as historians. And in an age where our sense impressions of the physical world are increasingly likely to be mediated by technology, especially digital technology, we would do well to remember this.

¹⁰⁹ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, p. 247.