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PAPER

Saxon Obsequies: The Early Medieval Archaeology of Richard Cornwallis Neville

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This paper investigates the origins of British Anglo-Saxon archaeology by focusing on the work of one early Victorian archaeologist: Richard Cornwallis Neville. The seemingly descriptive and parochial nature of Neville's archaeological pursuits, together with the attention he afforded to Romano-British remains, has impeded due recognition, and critical scrutiny, of his contributions to the development of early Medieval burial archaeology. Using his archaeological publications as source material, I will show how Neville's interpretations of Saxon graves were a form of memory work, defining his personal, familial and martial identity in relation to the landscape and locality of his aristocratic home at Audley End, near Saffron Walden, Essex. Subsequently, I argue that Neville's prehistoric and Romano-British discoveries reveal his repeated concern with the end of Roman Britain and its barbarian successors. Finally, embodied within Neville's descriptions of early Medieval graves and their location we can identify a pervasive Anglo-Saxonism. Together these strands of argument combine to reveal how, for Neville, Saxon graves constituted a hitherto unwritten first chapter of English history that could be elucidated through material culture and landscape.

Introduction: The Origins of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology in Britian

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, burials that were dated to the early Middle Ages (c. AD 400–1100) were frequently allocated tribal and racial identities such as: 'British', 'Romans', 'Romanised-Britons' or 'Danes' (Smith, 1856; Hawkes, 1990: 4). As part of a rising enthusiasm for the Saxon roots of the English (Sweet, 2004), the late eighteenth-century antiquary James Douglas (1793) in his *Nenia Britannica* set a clear precedent when he attributed early Medieval furnished graves, found by barrow digging in Kent, to the 'Saxons' (see also Content and Williams, 2010). However, varied ethnic labels persisted until the initial Victorian surge in the popularity of archaeology. The attribution of early Medieval furnished graves to the Anglo-Saxons took place against the background of the founding of local and national archaeological and historical societies. It also coincided with the avidly pro-German, socio-political context of the early decades of Queen Victoria's reign. In this environment, Douglas' Germanic or Saxon attribution rapidly became universal through the work of a generation of archaeologists, epitomised by the work of Charles Roach Smith and John Mitchell Kemble (Rhodes, 1990: 31–35; Williams, 2006a, 2006b).

Between c. 1845 and 1870, many early Medieval cemeteries were excavated, collected, interpreted and published by a generation of antiquaries and archaeologists for whom the 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'Saxon' attributions simultaneously had local, regional, national, imperial and racial resonances. Therefore, while the antiquarian search for the origins of the English can be traced back to the sixteenth century (Horsman, 1976: 387), it was during the first half of Victorian era that Anglo-Saxonist discourse was repeatedly and regularly materialised by digging up graves. Moreover, this search for 'Pagan Saxondom' (Akerman, 1855) formed part of a nexus of subjects addressing Anglo-Saxon origins, that included philology and history, and increasingly, craniology (see also Young, 2008). Hence, while the making of an 'Anglo-Saxon archaeology' is traditionally defined as resulting from the work of the early twentieth-century scholars E. T. Leeds and J. N. L. Myres (e.g. MacGregor, 2007), their later work relied heavily on the discoveries, publications and racial discourse of this previous generation of Victorian archaeologists.

For early Victorian archaeologists furnished graves provided the possibility of delineating a hitherto unwritten chapter in English history. These material remains could elucidate Germanic immigration, the Teutonic supremacy over, and amalgamation with, the earlier Celtic and Roman inhabitants of the island of Britain, and the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to Christianity (Frantzen and Niles, 1997; MacDougall, 1982). Consequently, the Anglo-Saxons or Saxons were defined explicitly through the comparison between, and in contrast with, the material

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traces of Celtic/British and Roman remains (e.g. Curtis, 1968; Horsman, 1976: 407) as well as with the remains from Merovingian, Alemannic and other Germanic graves excavated on the Continent (see Williams, 2007a). The supposed shared Teutonic character of the graves facilitated reflection on the qualities of the English past and present, in comparision with the qualities and experiences of other people in Europe, as well as with those encountered across the globe, both in the colonies and beyond (Bowler, 1992; Colley, 1992: 324–326; Kumar, 2006; Trigger, 1989). Therefore, the narrative derived from graves excavated from British soil was dictated by an imperial and colonial ideology, and not simply by a local and national one (see also Williams, 2008).

Approaches to the History of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology

Although still in its infancy, the history of Anglo-Saxon archaeology is a growing and vibrant area of research (Content, 1995; Content and Williams, 2010; Hills, 2007; Lucy, 2000; 2002; MacGregor, 2007; Williams 2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2008). Recently the subject has been the focus of detailed doctoral research (McCombe, 2011; also see Rhodes, 1990). However, the first-ever and recently-published *Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology* does not include an historiographical essay (Hamerow, Hinton and Crawford, 2011). Accordingly, it would seem that within the archaeological investigation of the Anglo-Saxon past (see e.g. Giles, 2006) there is more scope for further research into the detailed intellectual and social interactions between individual archaeologists, contemporary antiquaries and historians, and the ideas, institutions and landscapes within which they operated.

Within this scope, my particular research interest, and the subject of this paper, is how interpretations of early Anglo-Saxon artefacts and graves were integrated into historical narratives of English origins through archaeological practice and publications (but see Evans, 2007; Williams, 2008).

Using the archaeological work of one individual as a case study, this paper links and examines four arguments about Victorian Anglo-Saxon archaeology. I will demonstrate how an archaeologist's personal, familial and martial context informed their archaeological pursuits. I will explore how the landscapes in which archaeologists operated, framed and informed their interpretations, and how the eclectic range of interests pursued by individual achaeologists influenced their interpretation of early Anglo-Saxon graves, through their concepts of racial identity and inheritance of earlier peoples (see also Williams, 2006b; 2007b; 2008). And finally, I will discuss how attention on the mortuary context, on the cemetery as an entity, and its landscape situation, combined to configure interpretation through the description and illustration of 'facts' (Ebbatson, 1994: 31–32; Levine, 1986), and helped archaeologists distance themselves from the 'speculations' of earlier generations of antiquaries (e.g. Bateman, 1853; also see Trigger, 1989: 4–5).

Together each of these four themes cumulatively constituted the social identities and memories of archaeologists,

as much as it assigned meaning to, and interpreted, the remains of particular past epochs (see Giles, 2006; Parsons, 2006a). Bonnie Effros has explicitly made this point for early Medieval graves. She argues that the digging, collecting and publication of early Medieval graves constituted a distinctive form of memory work for archaeologists and their social circles (Effros, 2003a; 2003b). Therefore, archaeology was both a practical and an intellectual activity that defined the identities of its participants on many levels. Within the specific socio-political and intellectual context of early Victorian England, digging and writing about Saxon graves was regarded as an active medium for constructing and disseminating a vision of the earliest English people.

Neville's Archaeological Publications and Network

The archaeologist Sir Richard Cornwallis Neville FSA (b. 1820, d. 1861: the Fourth Baron Braybrooke, from his father's death in 1857) was a key participant in the discoveries, meetings, societies and publications of a generation of early Victorian archaeologists eager to reveal the material remains of the earliest English from grave-finds. He published his findings in books (Neville, 1847a; 1848; 1852a) and in numerous articles in archaeological journals. His discoveries of Saxon inhumation and cremation graves at Little Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire, were published in a lavishly-illustrated volume entitled *Saxon Obsequies* (Neville, 1852a; Meaney, 1964: 70–71; see Figure 1). Subsequently, his account of inhumation graves, found as secondary burials within an earlier burial mound at Linton Heath, was published in the *Archaeological Journal* (Neville, 1854a; Meaney 1964: 67–68). Both were widely reported and cited in contemporary literature (e.g. Akerman, 1855: 43, 54–57; Davis and Thurnam, 1865). From their discovery to the present day, the collections and
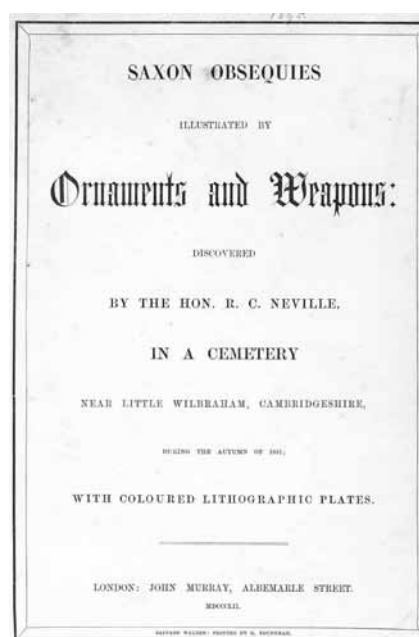

Fig. 1: The frontispiece of *Saxon Obsequies* (Neville, 1852a).

publications of Neville's excavations at Little Wilbraham and Linton Heath have persistently and fundamentally informed scholarship regarding the early Anglo-Saxon period in the Cambridge region.

Neville was an avid collector of both archaeological remains, particularly those of Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Medieval dates, and natural specimens, amassing a vast collection of exotic animals and birds (Jeffrey, 2002: 54–55). His work explicitly drew inspiration from a long antiquarian tradition from Stukeley (particularly for Great Chesterford: Neville, 1847a: 10, 39) through Douglas' *Nenia Britannica* to Hoare's *Ancient Wiltshire* (Neville, 1848: v–vi). Indeed, Neville, like many of his generation, was respectful but critical of earlier antiquarian interpretations, while at the same time aware that he was working at a time of great discoveries and new perspectives (Neville, 1848: 1). *Antiqua Explorata*, records Neville's clear vision of the value of his collection, and local research more generally. Rather than determining the study of locality as being innately parochial, Neville regarded it as a microcosm of, and as an essential stepping stone towards, a national, macrocosmic, past (Neville, 1854b). The *Proceedings of the Archaeological Institute* was equally explicit, noting the importance of Neville's discoveries, and his museum collections, to 'the cause of national archaeology' (Anon., 1854: 399).

Neville's society memberships reflected both the local and national dimensions of his endeavours. He served on the council of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society and towards the end of his life (from 1858 onwards) he became President of the Essex Archaeological Society. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1847, joining their council in 1860 (Anon., 1860: 143). He also became a member of the Archaeological Institute, later becoming its Vice-President and presiding over numerous summer meetings. He was the contemporary of many like-minded explorers of Roman and early Medieval sites and objects. These included a generation of enthusiasts for Anglo-Saxon burial sites, as well as Anglo-Saxon historians and philologists with interests in archaeology and architectural history, such as John Kemble, Edward Freeman, Edwin Guest and William Stubbs (Ebbatson, 1994: 56; Levine, 1986: 79–80).

Complementing his associations with national societies, Neville had numerous local antiquarian contacts who supplied him with artefacts for his museum, including 'Mr J. Frye of Saffron Walden' (Neville, 1847a: 13; 1848: 64–69). Although Neville often bemoaned his inability to access a large portion of the parish of Chesterford (Neville, 1847a: 9–10), through his local and society connections, he drew on a wide pool of expertise of 'more qualified people' (Neville, 1848: 82) in the identification of antiquities. For example, Samuel Birch was consulted over coins (Neville, 1847a: 12) and Charles Roach Smith seems to have assisted Neville in distinguishing Roman from Saxon finds (Neville, 1848: 49). Clearly these discussions could take place at the trench edge just as easily as at society meetings; Neville reports how Sir John Boileau, Professor Henslow, C. R. Smith and J. C. Buckler visited his excava-

tion of Roman mosaics near Great Chesterford (Neville, 1848: 90–92).

Neville's impact on Anglo-Saxonist discourse took place via his publications, his collections and their display and illustration. He presented finds from Little Wilbraham twice to the society in 1852, including a 'ground-plan' although subsequently this was not published (Anon., 1852: 199). At the summer meeting of the Archaeological Institute at Cambridge in July 1854, William Wylie gave permission for the display of his Fairford discoveries (see Williams, 2008) for comparison with Neville's discoveries from Cambridgeshire (Anon., 1854: 394). Neville's aristocratic home was of pivotal importance as the setting and stage for the local, national and international dimensions of his collections. Over two hundred members of the Archaeological Institute visited Audley End at Neville's invitation, to view his museum, which included the Little Wilbraham and Linton Heath finds (Anon., 1854: 399). Both as assemblages in their own right, and as comparanda to the reports of other cemetery excavations, Neville's early Medieval collection defined and perpetuated the 'Anglo-Saxons' as an ontological entity in the historical past through graves and their contents.

Neville's Method and Theory

Neville divulges little of his own archaeological methodology, but there is no evidence that his manner of excavation was unusual for his time. Indeed, his method received criticism from some contemporaries. John Mitchell Kemble, seemingly driven to disprove the contemporaneity of inhumation and cremation disposal methods among the earliest English, criticised Neville's irregular attendance of his own excavations (see Williams, 2006a). Certainly it is evident from a number of places in Neville's writing that he usually only visited his excavations daily (Neville, 1847a: 41, 48). However, his subsequent detailed diary-record for the excavation for sites of Little Wilbraham and Linton Heath, demonstrates attention to the burial assemblages, if not to the stratigraphy and spatial relationships between graves.

More can be said regarding the precise socio-political context of his writings: Neville was writing about Saxon graves at a time of internal and external threats to Britain and its empire. While contemporary affairs are never mentioned directly, his writings about his archaeological endeavours coincided with the significant 1848 revolutions that occurred across much of Europe, and with the Chartist movement at home. Subsequently, his excavations of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries were contemporaneous with the Crimean War (1853–56; see below).

Set in this context, it is significant that Neville regarded archaeology as being equal to history as a means of discerning the human past, in that archaeology was able to both confirm and test historical sources (Neville, 1858a: 92). Mortuary contexts were particularly significant, revealing 'however barbarous' the 'reverence which consecrated the last resting-places of their departed relations and friends':

'Hence, in accordance with the superstitions peculiar to each nation, or tribe, the sepulchres were provided with ornaments, weapons, implements, and utensils which they deemed most serviceable in a future state, and most agreeable to the tastes and pursuits of the deceased while living. The contents of their tombs, therefore, are found most valuable in affording a clue to the manners and customs of ancient people, as well as identifying the race to which they belonged' (Neville, 1858a: 89).

Therefore, for Neville burial evidence revealed the distinctive character of different peoples, including the 'Saxons from Germany, who, in their turn, imported their own peculiar forms of burial' (Neville, 1858a: 89).

While regarding graves as an invaluable source of historical knowledge, Neville showed unusual ambivalence towards the opening of tombs. He concluded his *Antiqua Explorata* with the following assertions that the tomb should be: 'a sanctuary universally respected, a shield from the venomed tongue of slander and abuse, inviolable to men' (Neville, 1847a: 50). This aristocratic defence of the tomb contradicted his activities 'in the grave-digging line' which are at 'variance with this opinion'. Neville's get-out clause was to blame the 'spirit of antiquarianism' and that 'I certainly do not handle skulls and bones with the callousness of those of my calling, so ably characterised "Hamlet;" on the contrary, "mine ache to think on't"' (Neville, 1847a: 51, citing Hamlet V. I. 96–97). In contrast to this sensitivity, he described visiting his labourers' excavations at Great Chesterford to find a 'regiment' of cinerary urns 'drawn up in martial array, regularly sized according to their respective heights …' (Neville, 1847a: 41). Given his own martial background, and his contemporary military career, this portrayal of vessels as 'soldiers' of history seems fitting.

Neville saw mortuary evidence as more than just the impassive vestiges of ancient times, he went so far as to use them to imagine the sentiments of ancient mourners. He considered fifteen 'tiny bodies' (infants) in immediate proximity to a Roman-period wall at Great Chesterford as evidence that 'their parents had done all in their power, by providing them with nourishment, to soothe them, and stop them crying' (Neville, 1858a: 91). Here Neville was demonstrating his aristocratic Classical education, specifically, his knowledge of Book 6 of Virgil's *Aeneid* (Crummy, 2010: 43; see also Neville, 1847a: 41).[1] The attribution of emotions and beliefs in the afterlife were again extrapolated from burial practises when discussing the ancient British. He described them as similar to those of 'the prairie Indians of North America, who buried their coursers with their masters, to be in readiness for use in the happy hunting-grounds, for the chase or for war as occasion required' (Neville, 1848: 15–16). Neville was clearly considerate of the mortuary context of his finds, and incorporated a vision of graves as indicative of past races' customs and beliefs.

Neville's archaeological work was interesting in its own right, but has received little attention, seemingly because of its tight geographical focus and descriptive nature (but see Williams, 2006b). From the evidence so far, we can describe Neville as 'nothing special', he was no great innovator in either archaeological method or ideas. In the mid-nineteenth century it was not uncommon for aristocrats like Neville to participate in archaeology (Hingley, 2007; Levine, 1986), adding cachet to societies while being largely passive in their endeavours (see Parsons, 2006a: 236). Yet Neville's active role in fieldwork as well as his collecting, his interest in the Anglo-Saxons, together with the prolific publications of his findings, make him distinctive within his aristocratic generation, and require some explanation. The reason for Neville's distinctive archaeological work can be found first, and foremost, in his familial and martial background.

Family and Military

Neville inherited a Barony and his aristocratic and martial background seems typical of many leading families of the era. However, many of the leading proponents of British archaeology at this time were members of the growing British middle-class for whom membership of archaeological societies and involvement in archaeological activities were not only popular pastimes, but also ways of attaining greater social advancement (Ebbatson, 1994: 35–52; Parsons, 2006a: 247–248; see e.g. Giles, 2006). Smith, Wright, Kemble and Wylie all appear to have used archaeology as a mechanism for climbing the social ladder. In fact they were subjected to social prejudice from the upper-class members of the societies of the day with private incomes, because of their middle-class roots and for their occupations (Rhodes, 1990: 33). For example, Charles Roach Smith was a chemist, Thomas Wright wrote about antiquaries to sustain himself, and John Kemble came from a theatrical family and never achieved academic recognition despite his achievements in numerous fields. Both Wright and Kemble died in poverty (Thompson, 2004; Wiley, 1979). The Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries during the 1850s, John Yonge Akerman, was also noted for his relatively modest mercantile background (Parsons, 2006b: 242; Wroth, 2004).

Unlike these individuals, Neville's aristocratic status meant that he had far less to prove. He refrained from overt patriotic sentiments in his writings (Colley, 1986: 110). Indeed, as the first-born son, he inherited not only a name shared by his father and grandfather, but also one shared by many Medieval ancestors, along with their illustrious military and political stature. Moreover, Neville's immediate ancestors were closely implicated in the imperial and national politics of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Neville's grandfather, Richard Aldworth Neville (later Richard Griffin, Second Baron Braybrooke [1750–1825]), was a Whig politician who voted for the suppression of the rebellion in the American colonies. He supported Lord North's administration and married the daughter of the former Whig premier George Grenville. He later allied himself with his in-laws by backing Pitt the Younger's government, and then succeeded as the Second Baron Braybrooke, taking up residence at Audley End in Essex from 1802 (Thorne, 2004).

Neville's father, Richard Griffin (Third Baron Braybrooke [1783–1858]), was also a military man and politician. He served as a captain of the Berkshire militia, and he was a Member of Parliament who supported the Grenville Whigs, although in later life he supported Peel's Conservative Party. He succeeded his father as the Third Baron Braybrooke, residing at Audley End from 1825 onwards. Significantly, Griffin was also a literary editor and an antiquary, producing an edition of Samuel Pepys' diary and *The History of Audley End* in which he reports the discovery of some ancient graves. Undoubtedly he inspired Neville's own antiquarian pursuits (Meaney, 1964: 88). He improved the mansion and became President of the Camden Society from 1853 (Fisher, 2004; Jeffrey, 2002: 37–38).

Neville's paternal family history and his inherited social position as a landed aristocrat are likely to have influenced his pursuit of archaeology. As did the precedent of his father's antiquarian interests, as well as the clear precedent of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, which explored the origins and fate of the Roman Empire as the analogy for the British Empire (see Hingley, 2008).

However, the connection with his mother's family probably had an even greater influence on developing Neville's archaeological interests in the collapse of Roman Britain and its barbarian successors. His father married Lady Jane Cornwallis and they had five sons and three daughters. His mother, from whom Neville took his middle name, was the eldest daughter of Charles, the Second Marquis Cornwallis. This Cornwallis was a Tory Member of Parliament before succeeding his father, the famous First Marquis, whose career began as a general in the army, and who then became the Governor-General of India and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The First Marquis was most famous for his surrender of the British forces (and ending British aspirations) to the American colonies at Yorktown in 1781 (Bayly and Prior, 2004). It is probable that, from the perspective of family and social memory, all three of the principal components of the First Cornwallis' prestigious military and political career – America, India and Ireland – would have weighed heavily on his great-grandson Neville, and made him reflect on the fates of empires.

While there is a direct link between Neville's pursuit of archaeology and his father's antiquarian interests, additionally, Neville made another with his mother's background and influence. He explicitly commemorated his maternal family's achievements by dedicating his first publication, *Antiqua Explorata*, to his grandmother (the daughter of the First Marquis Cornwallis), specifically 'to the continued interest' she showed in his work (Neville, 1847a). Meanwhile his *Sepulchra Exposita* (Neville, 1848) was dedicated to his mother. In this dedication he described his archaeological research as 'by no means devoid of interest to you, I am well assured, as was evinced by your pleasure in the Bartlow labours of the late lamented Gage Rokewode, Esq., F.S.A., who was certainly, with gratitude he records it, the godfather in archaeology of, Your very affectionate Son,' (Neville, 1848). Here

Neville's mother was juxtaposed with Gage as an adopted 'father' to his archaeological pursuits.

Even if Neville's immediate family history, itself set against a long aristocratic genealogy with Medieval origins, could be discounted, we still have his own personal experiences of the conflicts of empire that influenced his archaeological activities. Neville was educated at Eton and in 1837 was gazetted an ensign and lieutenant in the Grenadier Guards. He saw active service in Canada, suppressing rebellion in the winter of 1838 where he almost drowned in the St Lawrence River. He was promoted to captain in 1841 and retired from service, possibly due to ill-health (see below) in 1842, aged only 22 (Boase and Smail, 2004).

With his short military career behind him, his family's military heritage interceded directly during the very time when he was digging Anglo-Saxon cemeteries. Two of Neville's brothers died within a week of each other in 1854 in the Crimea. Grey Neville, a Cornet in the 5th Dragoon Guards, died in the military hospital at Scutari from wounds received in the charge of the Heavy Brigade at Balaclava. Meanwhile, Henry Aldworth Neville, Captain in the Grenadier Guards, was mortally wounded at the Battle of Inkerman.

There is a strong circumstantial case to be made that the patriotic and martial weight of both his family's Medieval and recent history, inspired and informed Neville's archaeological interpretations concerning the fate of the Roman Empire and the warrior status of its Anglo-Saxon successors. While for some early Victorian archaeologists, digging was a means of social advancement (Parsons, 2006a: 247–248), for Neville, his pursuit of the past was a proxy form of military activity. From his publications, Neville appears as the indefatigable antiquary, yet his early writings contain repeated references to his illness as a reason for the limitations of his archaeological research (Neville, 1847a: 26–27). As mentioned above, he dedicated the second of his three monographs, *Sepulchra Exposita*, to his mother, thanking her for her attentions through a 'long and painful illness of eight years' (Neville, 1848). Therefore, in a practical sense, excavation was a safer alternative to the usual hunting and military pursuits, and certainly the local nature of his collections and interests reflect issues of mobility, as well as pride in locality.

If the connections between Neville's family and martial identity and his archaeology remain tenuous, one has to only note the impact of visiting his excavations at Great Chesterford: he imagined the 'martial hum of Roman legions'. He also imagined the thoughts of the common man in the Roman army, describing modern Britons as not having '... degenerated in aught from the ancestral spirit: witness the bloody fields of Vittoria and Waterloo!' (Neville, 1847a: 48).

Landscapes of Memory

Neville's martial background and family history only become fully explicable in relation to place and locality. Neville's focus on local archaeology was also motivated by pragmatism. He states clearly that his interest in archaeol-

ogy derived directly from his ill-health. His investigation of 'British barrows' at Triplow in July 1846 was because he was 'incapable of taking more violent exercise'. Neville described his excavations as 'in default of better occupation' (Neville, 1847a: 26–27). His subsequent inspiration was due to the 'agreeable occupation alike for mind and body' that archaeology afforded him (Neville, 1847a: 29). So archaeology offered a means of physical and intellectual exercise when other avenues were denied him.

However, the parochial character of Neville's work can also be regarded as the inheritance of the long antiquarian tradition of chorography – the description of regions that defined aristocratic identity in relation to place (Levine, 1986: 71–72; see also Swann, 2001: 97–148). This remained the zeitgeist of Neville's day and had a precedent in antiquarian practice over the longue durée. Moreover, Levine (1986: 60–64) describes 'fierce local pride' as symptomatic of the mid-nineteenth-century growth of archaeology, and of the development of local archaeology societies. As she states, the 'reconstitution of the past was a means of consolidating and realising place and identity in a landscape increasingly unfamiliar' (Levine, 1986: 61). The distinctive 'region' for Neville was unique to, and focused on, his family home, Audley End, smaller than the county of Essex, and spanning parts of the counties of Essex and Cambridgeshire, rather than being bound by them.

Neville's father provided the direct inspiration for archaeology in the locality, through his discovery of ancient skeletons within the grounds of the estate (Meaney, 1964: 88). Neville himself encountered ancient mounds whilst beagling near his home (Neville, 1847a: 26–27). As mentioned above, Neville was directly inspired when he visited Gage's excavations at the Bartlow Hills (Gage, 1832; 1836) as a boy of fifteen. And Neville himself conducted excavations there, but without success (Neville, 1847a: 30). He outlined the local folk tradition which attributed the site to the Danes, before recollecting the details of the excavations and using them to dispel this myth (Neville, 1847a: 31). For Neville, in this case, archaeology salvaged local history from the folkloric confusion of the 'lower orders' (Neville, 1847a: 35–36). He expressed detailed knowledge of the many discoveries of sites and artefacts in his neighbourhood squandered either because of the 'ignorance and superstition' of villagers or their 'avarice' (Neville, 1847a: 6, 9). Instead archaeology promised to reveal a vivid and tangible history rooted in his aristocratic identity and family's history, and local pride in his estates and residence (Levine, 1986: 98).

The house and designed gardens of Audley End comprised a landscape of memory that surrounded and informed Neville's archaeological pursuits (see Figure 2). The house itself was originally a Benedictine priory that was converted into an Elizabethan house, which was subsequently transformed into the Jacobean mansion of Thomas Howard, First Earl of Suffolk, between 1603 and 1614 (Drury, 1982; 2010; Jeffrey, 2002: 2, 29; Essex SMR, 26840). By Neville's day, the location of the house's Medieval predecessor – Walden Abbey – was lost, with only archaeological work revealing that the house had absorbed it into its structure and plan (Drury, 1982: 94). The house, through its architecture, largely reconfig-

Fig. 2: Audley End, Essex, view from the west with the Temple to Concordia in the distance (Photograph: Howard Williams, 2008).
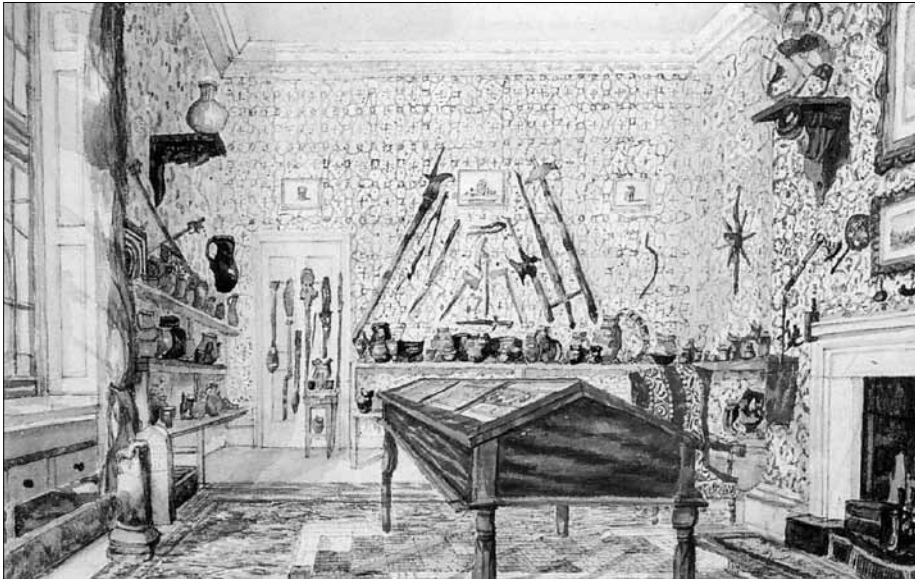
Fig. 3: The Museum Room, Audley End c. 1845, likely displaying artefacts collected by Neville's father (reproduced after Jeffrey, 2002: 21, with kind permission of English Heritage).

ured during the 1820s by his father's antiquarian taste, remained a palimpsest of allusions to the Classical and Medieval past.

In addition to the antique architecture, family portraits covered the walls of many of the rooms, including images of Neville, Cornwallis and Howard ancestors in the Dining Room (Drury, 2010: 13; Jeffrey, 2002: 12). The Picture Gallery was enhanced in the 1820s to enable the addition of portraits of Cornwallis ancestors (Drury, 2010: 14). The Great Hall was restored to reflect not only the Third Baron's tastes with paintings of distant ancestors and militaria, but also to include the armour of his two sons (Neville's younger brothers) who were killed in the Crimean War, serving as a tangible memorial to their deaths in battle (Drury, 2010: 6–7; Jeffrey, 2002: 4–7).

Early nineteenth-century Audley End was replete with commemorative martial material culture, fusing ancestry to place and serving to confer a sense of continuity through genealogy (see also Mytum, 2007).

Neville's private museum, presumably augmenting his father's collections, contained the range of prehistoric, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon and Medieval finds both from his own excavations and through acquisitions. This room at Audley End can be considered as a further component of the commemorative architecture of the house (Drury, 2010: 19; Jeffrey, 2002: 21; see Figure 3).

Fig. 4: Key elements of 'the landscape of memory' surrounding Audley End, designed by architect Robert Adam: a. the Adam Bridge (1763), b. the Temple of Victory (1771-73), c. Lady Portsmouth's Column (1774) (Photographs: Howard Williams, 2008).

For example, Neville accumulated a collection of 250 finger rings that spanned two thousand years, from the Roman period to the nineteenth century, and included a silver ring purported to be of Saxon date and several from his Saxon cemetery excavations (Neville, 1863). The house also contained Neville's substantial collection of stuffed birds (Jeffrey, 2002: 38, 54–55). Together, they displayed and proved Neville's identity, linking the distant past to a recognised aristocratic genealogy that stretched back into the Middle Ages and beyond.

The gardens at Audley End also document the evolution of social memory through the palimpsest of many successive architectural styles, and a redesign by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (Drury, 2010: 30). For example, the gardens that Neville experienced daily included Jacobean stables (Essex SMR, 406) and a seventeenth-century Lion Gate (Essex SMR, 26837; Drury, 2010: 29), an Adam Bridge (Essex SMR, 503; Drury, 2010: 31) and other neo-classical style features. Some of these were 'follies' explicitly commemorative in character: patriotic memorials to empire and past victories of the British army, as well as of former occupants of Audley End (see Figures 4a, 4b, 4c). For example, the Temple of Victory (built c. 1771) commemorated the Treaty of Paris that ended the Seven Year's War in 1763 (Essex SMR, 35577; Drury, 2010: 31). Ring Cottage was a menagerie constructed in 1774 with later additions in the Gothic style; inspiring and contributing specimens to Neville's own stuffed bird collections within the house itself (Essex SMR, 35581; Drury, 2010: 31; Jeffrey, 2002: 44–45). Lady Portsmouth's Column, constructed in 1774, commemorated one of Neville's notable ancestors (Elizabeth, d. 1762: Essex SMR, 500; 26846; Jeffrey, 2002: 33–34, 45). The small Corinthian Temple of Concordia, constructed

1790–91, celebrated George III's first recovery from insanity (Essex SMR, 404; 26844; Drury, 2010: 33; Jeffrey, 2002: 46; see Figure 2, left cornor). Neville's father continued to construct architectural features in the gardens including a 'Jacobean' Cambridge Lodge (Essex SMR, 35575).

In contrast to other eighteenth-century designed landscapes, the gardens did not contain coffins, graves or the dead themselves in mausoleums, but instead, they were commemorated through a series of generic allusions and specific monuments (Mytum, 2007) that constituted a 'patriotic landscape' of memory (Sheeran, 2006). Such landscapes can be regarded as engines of inspiration, and as repositories, for the accumulated results of archaeological pursuits. Moreover, they employed archaeology as a mechanism for social remembrance. As a result, Neville grew up in a veritable 'garden of time' (Bradley, 2002; see also Holtorf and Williams, 2006; Mytum, 2007). Amongst this Arcadian conflation of the natural and ancient worlds that incorporated both the house and its designed landscape, in Neville's day Audley End included real and striking archaeological remains within its grounds, i.e. the Iron Age Hillfort (Essex SMR,151) Ring Hill Camp (containing the aviary and adjacent to the Temple of Victory).

This landscape of memory extended beyond Audley End's house and gardens. For example, St Mary's Church at Saffron Walden, where the Neville family attended services on Sundays, was where the coffins and bodies of many Neville family members were buried and memorialised (Jeffrey, 2002: 15). The wall memorial to Neville's two brothers, killed in the Crimea, was proudly displayed against the east wall (see Figure 5), and significantly, was placed adjacent to the black marble tomb of Sir Thomas Audley, the builder of a part of the house that survived

Fig. 5: The memorial to Richard Neville's brothers, in St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden (Photograph: Howard Williams, 2008).

Fig. 6: The tomb of Sir Thomas Audley juxtaposed with the Neville Brothers memorial (above and to left), in St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden (Photograph: Howard Williams, 2008).

in Neville's day (see Figure 6). Therefore, the memorial to Neville's recently-dead brothers was proudly juxtaposed against the residential ancestor of their home.

Neville's enmeshed military, imperial and aristocratic upbringing, and his pseudo-archaeological landscape of memory at Audley End predominated the subtitles of his second book, 'discovered in the neighbourhood of Audley End, Essex', just as they dominated and qualified every relationship in his life, and everything in the landscape was related to Audley End. Therefore, rather than 'parochial', Neville's ancient aristocratic seat was the pivot or fulcrum from which he swung in his hunt for the fate of Rome in the Essex and Cambridgeshire landscape (see also Giles, 2006: 308). Neville's chorography was the result of a succession of individual accounts of excavations and discoveries, through numerous discrete books and articles, and not the result of a single act of discovery, culminating in a discrete publication. This accumulation of memorials and their long history provided a unique aura of antiquity that would have had an impact on the members of the Archaeological Institute who visited Neville's home and museum in 1854.

Britons and Romans

Neville's numerous discoveries of the predecessors of the Anglo-Saxons were integral to his Anglo-Saxonism. Indeed, for most archaeologists working in the 1840s and 1850s, the succession of 'Celt', 'Roman' and 'Saxon' was the most commonly utilised 'Three Age System' and the adoption of chronological divisions for prehistory was still heavily contested (Wright, 1852; see Briggs, 2007: 251; Levine, 1986: 95; Rowley-Conwy, 2007: 113–136; see also Hingley, 2008: 266). In 1854, in his lecture to the Archaeological Institute on 'Ancient Cambridgeshire', Neville outlined known sites from the successive archaeological periods (Early British, Roman, Romano-British and Anglo-Saxon) using Ordnance Survey maps (Anon., 1854: 392; Ebbatson, 1994: 57). He discussed surviving ancient trackways and dykes, as well as British finds. However, his principal focus was on the Roman discoveries in his collections. Neville viewed the Anglo-Saxons as the 'successors' of the Roman archaeological remains with which he had greater familiarity (Williams, 2007b).

Neville's reading of *Nenia Britannica* (Douglas, 1793) meant that he expected barrows might contain 'Danes as well as of the pure Saxons' in addition to remains of earlier periods (Neville, 1847a: v-vi). Consequently, during his early barrow-digging, Neville identified the remains of an 'Anglo-Saxon warrior' among a group of mounds at Triplow, following the local 'tradition' as to their date (Neville, 1847a: 27; 1847b: 352). He also found what he regarded as black pottery of 'Anglo-Saxon' date (Neville, 1847c: 357). At the centre of this mound he found Roman coins but deduced that this was not necessarily the date the mound itself. He also found the jawbone of a horse and a human skull, and other bones, all burnt. These were subsequently examined by a surgeon (E. Jones, Esq.) and interpreted as the remains of a 'fine young male in the prime of life (probably a Saxon warrior) ...' buried '... in

company with his favourite steed.' (Neville, 1847a: 27–28). Neville was undoubtedly aware of the character of Anglo-Saxon graves from Douglas' *Nenia Britannica* and seemingly alludes to this when he states that 'treasures [were] found in similar barrows in Kent' (Neville, 1847a: 29). His attribution was influenced by the local 'tradition' but also by the report that two swords had been found in a nearby mound in the not-too-distant past (Neville, 1847a: 28). It is evident that Neville was seeking the Anglo-Saxons long before he found them!

However, by the subsequent year, significantly 1848 (see Young, 2008: 32–36), Neville had changed his mind, and he completely rewrote the report of his Triplow excavations, stating that these were 'British barrows' (Neville, 1848: 11). It is not clear what caused this shift in his interpretation. Perhaps he was influenced by the wider enthusiasm for Saxonism that followed the 1848 uprisings that, paradoxically, made him refine his interpretation. Whatever the reason, from this date onwards numerous other Saxon remains were found and published that palpably contrasted with those uncovered by Neville (Williams, 2006a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b; 2008). Perhaps he equated the Saxons too closely with the Danish folklore wrongly attributed to the Bartlow Hills (see above). Neville now likened the Triplow mound finds of the horse and man to the 'nomadic pastoral life' of 'our Celtic fathers' (Neville, 1848: 16). Despite this shift in interpretation, Neville regarded the iron spearheads and shield-boss found at Mutlow Hill, Wendens Ambo, to the 'British' and not the 'Saxon' as they were later to be attributed (Neville, 1848: 7; Meaney, 1964: 89).

In discussing other barrows, Neville was evidently aware of the concept that the individual barrow could contain the successive remains of 'nations'. In the case of barrows at Royston, both remains of the Romans and the British were uncovered (Neville, 1848: 29). Neville repeated this interpretation concerning barrows investigated near Melbourne; although 'British' he sees them as 'subsequent to the Roman invasion' (Neville, 1848: 85). For Neville, 'British' was not a chronological term, but a cultural or racial one, applicable to burials and mounds dating to both before and after the Roman occupation.

In addition these examples reveal that Neville, like his famous contemporary Charles Roach Smith, had a passion for Roman archaeology (Wetherall, 1994: 9), fondly attributing discoveries to 'our Roman forefathers' (Neville, 1848: 1). Indeed, Neville has been recognised as one of the most influential figures of early Victorian archaeology, for bringing into common use the term 'Romano-British', as well as for his extensive excavations, publications and collections (Ebbatson, 1994: 58). Neville investigated Roman villas, 'forts' (now considered Romano-Celtic temples), urban contexts and burial grounds (e.g. Neville, 1853a), and he wrote about Roman artefacts (e.g Neville, 1858b) and reviewed discoveries in the region (e.g. Neville, 1858c).

Neville was familiar with the variability of Romano-British mortuary and ritual practices from his excavations in the Bartlow Hills (Neville, 1848: 31). At Great Chesterford, he records that both furnished inhumations and crema-

tions were uncovered mixed together in 'no order', and included burials in lead coffins (Neville, 1847a: 22, 40; 1847b: 351; 1848: 77, 95–96; Anon., 1858: 169) encountered in at least two cemeteries (Neville, 1858a: 90). He also found infant burials associated with Roman buildings at Bartlow, Ickleton and Chesterford (Neville, 1853a: 21; 1858a) as well as human remains within the 'sacrificial' shafts at Great Chesterford (Neville, 1855).

Neville made frequent use of his Classical education to substantiate his interpretations of archaeological remains. For example, he used descriptions from Virgil and Horace to support his identification of artefacts from inhumation graves as 'funereal sacrifices' (Neville, 1847a: 41; 1848: 95–96). Similarly, Neville comments on the position of cemeteries outside the walls of Great Chesterford as evidence for the adherence to Roman customs (Neville, 1847a: 45). Some of these analogies are motivated by antiquarian insights. Indeed, he follows Douglas in ascribing cockerel bones from Roman burials at Chesterford as sacrifices to Aesculapius (Neville, 1848: 34). Likewise, his interpretation of infant-burials found adjacent to villas (see above) was developed with reference to Virgil, Pliny, Juvenal and Fulgentius (Neville, 1858a: 91–92). All of this suggests his lens onto Roman Britain was heavily Classical.

Yet it is also clear that Neville was aware that Roman remains found in the neighbourhood of Audley End differed to those from the Mediterranean. He describes in his *Sepulchra Exposita* the remains of a sculpted and inscribed tomb brought from Italy (Neville, 1848: 86). Equally, he regarded the lack of stamped pottery among many graves as evidence that the burials were not altogether Roman in character (Neville, 1847a: 48). Neville saw Roman influence moderated by the British landscape.

However, in the case of some Roman artefacts, Neville wanted them recognised as exemplars of later eras, noting for example, that a terracotta vessel shaped like a font resembled those of later Saxon and Norman dates (Neville, 1847a: 20; 1847b: 351). The same applies to Neville's consideration of place. For Great Chesterford, he argues:

> 'That the Saxons followed the Romans we have abundant proof; and, indeed, this very interesting spot also exhibits relics of the Normans and English, each succeeding century having left us palpable evidence of the progress of ages, and the passage of events, as may be seen subjoined in the order ensuing' (Neville, 1847a: 6).

Further evidence of his Anglo-Saxon interests can be identified in his excavations at a 'Roman fort' at Weycock, Berkshire (Neville, 1849) where a Saxon coin was found amidst the Roman ruins and identified by Samuel Birch of the British Museum as dating to the 'period of transition between the departure of the Romans and the succession of the Saxons' (Neville, 1849: 120). Subsequently, Neville concluded that the site was of 'Roman origin, and continued to be occupied by the founders and their successors for many generations' (Neville, 1849: 122). Together, these examples imply that Neville was regularly probing Roman sites through a Saxon lens.

At Mutlow Hill, Essex, in addition to burials within the mound and an adjacent Roman building and inhumation, Neville found a 'crude coin of the later emperors'. He surmised that it was used by Romano-Britons or after the Romans had departed (Neville, 1852b: 230). This displays a willingness to accept the post-Roman date for both the use of Roman artefacts as well as the contexts in which they were found. Simultaneously, Neville 'extinguished' the legend of a gold coach contained within the barrow 'believed by labouring classes thereabouts' by 'turning it over regularly from end to end' (Neville, 1852b: 226).

At his excavations of a Roman villa at Hadstock, Neville recognised Saxon succeeding Roman, when he claimed that the 'villa had been rudely dealt with by the last inhabitants of the site' and that it may have remained occupied in 'Saxon times'. He also described its complete destruction perhaps only occurring at the time of Alfred the Great because a coin from his reign was found in the same field (Neville, 1853a: 14).

In the final published archaeological report of Neville's lifetime, writing as Lord Braybrooke, he described once again, his discovery of seventy burials at Great Chesterford (Neville, 1860: 117). Here, he more explicitly argued that the burial place demonstrated the transition from Roman to Anglo-Saxon, and it is an argument that has been accepted until recent times (Evison, 1994).

The ritual shafts identified and dated by Neville were estimated by him as being from the very late Roman or post-Roman period. He based this on their proximity to Saxon burials and the fact that they contained a mixture of 'Roman' and 'Saxon' finds, i.e. the presence of Roman objects in Saxon graves and the late date of the coins found 'in the surrounding soil' (Neville, 1856). Neville extended the same idea to Roman material culture, arguing for its continuity indicated by the lack of potteries available in Saxon times (Neville, 1853b: 226).

Perhaps because of his flagrant misattribution of the Triplow finds (see above), and because they were implicated in local folklore (Neville, 1847a: 31), Neville was reluctant to apply the Saxon epithet without some critical consideration. For example, at Hildersheim, the recent investigations were regarded as 'more than sufficient to upset the advocates for the Saxon origin of these defences' (Neville, 1848: 68). Even when he speculated about a Saxon date, as in the case of an arrowhead, he quotes from Sir Samuel Meyrick concerning the fact that the Saxons, like modern Tahitians, only used arrows to kill birds, whereas the Normans used them as an effective weapons of war (Neville, 1848: 63). Here, deferring to the views of others, Neville seems dismissive of the Saxons.

Despite some derogatory attitudes, Neville repeatedly returned to the theme of the Saxon succession in his discussions of the Britons and Romans. Like many of his peers, such as Charles Roach Smith (see Hingley, 2008: 281), early Anglo-Saxon graves were the lynch-pins connecting the British and Roman past to the Victorian present, and therefore, of crucial significance to Neville's

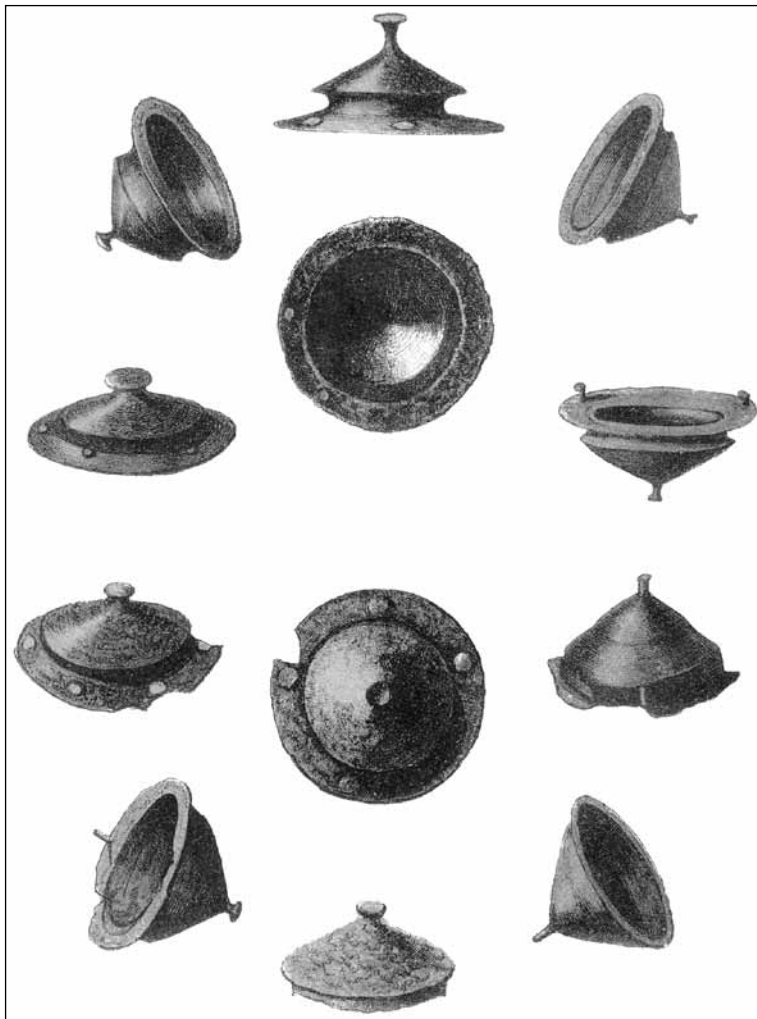writing of history from archaeological remains in the Cambridge region.

Writing the Saxons

In his early work, Neville alluded to the discovery of Anglo-Saxon pottery at Wenden (Neville, 1847a: 33) and for Neville, the local 'Saxon' churches like Hadstock (with Neville reporting that its door bore the skin of a Dane, according to folk tradition) memorialised their succession to the Romans (Neville, 1847a: 33–35). Therefore, memorials to the Christian successors of the pagan graves he uncovered continued to populate Neville's contemporary landscape. Equally, he alluded to the 'lower orders' of the parish regarding themselves as of Danish ancestry (Neville, 1847a: 36). Likewise, the plundering of Roman buildings for road-building suggested to Neville, jokingly, that the foreman had 'Gothic ancestry' (Neville, 1847a: 38). What is clear, however, is that Neville did not force his interpretations, and seemed content to dismiss remains as neither Roman nor Saxon when they appear to be earlier or later (Neville, 1848: 52).
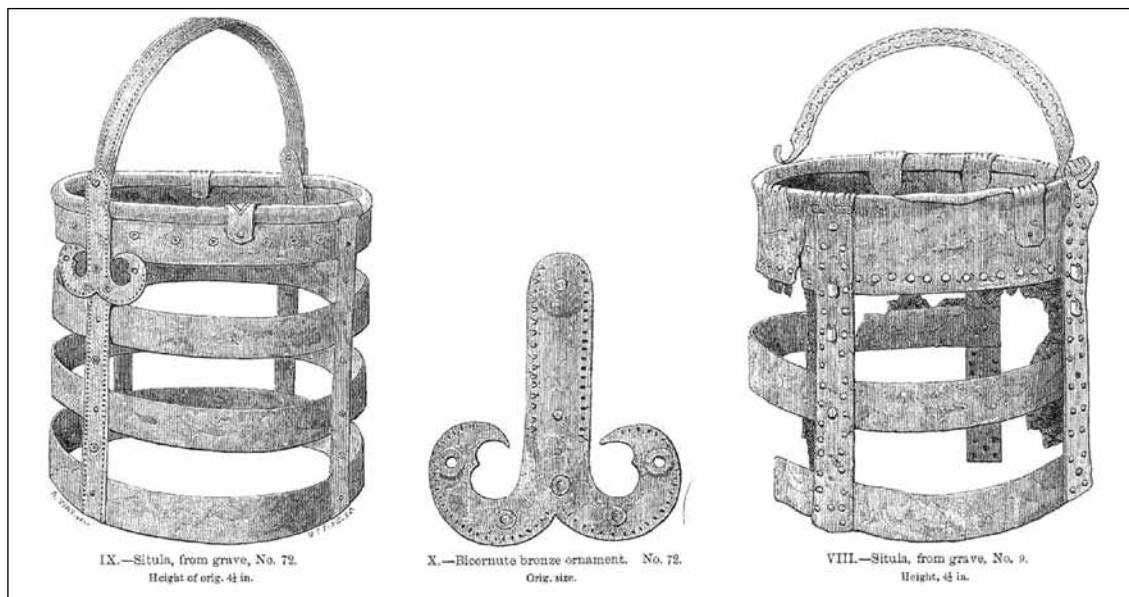
At Great Chesterford, Neville recorded his first encounter with Saxon antiquities. Inspired by Charles Roach Smith he identified an iron nail as Anglo-Saxon and stated that he has in his possession several exactly similar 'from a Saxon cemetery at Colchester' (Neville, 1848: 72). He also found a glass bottle, that he claimed with no supporting

evidence, to date to the eighth or ninth centuries (Neville, 1848: 79). Neville then claimed to have identified the remains of a possible Saxon warrior, uncovered by navvies on the railway line from Chesterford to Newmarket, which he argued had not been previously identified. The discovery comprised: a 'perfect skeleton', accompanied by 'iron braces', that were interpreted as parts of a coffin and a handle, and the remains of the body had been covered by a sheet of bronze over four feet in length and three inches wide. A 'curious vase' was also found adorned with 'white streaks' (Neville, 1848: 82–84).

Neville's Little Wilbraham and Linton Heath site reports defined the region's cemeteries (Lethbridge and Carter, 1927; Meaney, 1964: 67–68, 70–71). In combination, they typified the two main media by which excavation reports were published during this period, either as separate monographs or as journal articles, and they are exemplars for their factual and descriptive character, and for their use of illustrations (see Figure 1, Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9 and Figure 10). These reports still comprise considerable and valuable information for the modern researcher of early Medieval burial archaeology. For example, in the diary records for both the Little Wilbraham and Linton Heath reports, details of each grave were recorded including the skeletons' orientation, posture (when unusual) and grave-depths. Brief descriptions of artefacts supported the illustrations. Sometimes Neville recorded the positions of

Fig. 7: Shield Bosses illustration in *Saxon Obsequies* (Neville, 1852a).

IX.—Situla, from grave, No. 72.
Height of orig. 4¼ in.

X.—Bicornute bronze ornament. No. 72.
Orig. size.

VIII.—Situla, from grave, No. 9.
Height, 4½ in.

Fig. 8: Buckets illustration in Neville's Linton Heath report (Neville, 1854a).

artefacts in relation to the skeleton and other objects. In both of the reports, interpretations were made about the character and functions of metal, pottery, glass and bone artefacts. Moreover, wooden and leather remains were noted where they had survived.

Therefore, to the modern eye, these reports appear to be thorough, well-written and factual commentaries on the excavations, albeit limited with the benefits of hindsight, by the methodologies and academic knowledge of the era. Such limitations include the lack of published plans of individual graves, or of the whole cemetery, but these were rare inclusions in publications from this era. The descriptions of individual graves were also limited. However, Neville's reports were of the highest quality and were exemplary for their time. Indeed, Neville self-promoted the rationale behind his recording standards in the preface of the Little Wilbraham report. This statement illuminates Neville's desire to focus on reporting 'facts', and to keep interpretations to the very minimum. He claims to have 'abstained from making any observation on the nature, and application of the relics exhumed, feeling confident that a faithful delineation will be far more satisfactory than the most diffuse, and lengthened treatise' (Neville, 1852a: 3). Equally, the illustrations of artefacts are intended as 'fac-similes' of the originals, expressing the desire of Neville to record a 'factual' account of discoveries (Neville, 1852a: 3; see Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9 and Figure 10). Artefacts conferred date. For example, the barbarous nature and post-Roman date of some artefacts was apparent because of the presence of coins pierced for suspension rather than used as coinage (Neville, 1852a: 6; 1854a: 114; but see Crummy, 2010). Other objects of Roman manufacture told him the same story (Neville, 1854a: 96, 99, 113).

A closer reading of these details enables us to identify the racial sub-texts of the reports both influenced by, and influencing, contemporary discourses on Anglo-Saxonism. Indeed, this focus on the facts might itself be seen as a result of the desire to claim ontological certainty about the 'Saxon' epithet, as well as connecting the discoveries with wider, contemporary, historical, antiquarian and archaeological research (Levine, 1986: 74–75). Neville aimed to accurately and correctly record the antiquities of the ancestors of the English as part of the quest for a 'scientific' archaeology akin to the pursuits of geology, natural history, history and philology (see Williams, 2006a). I will now trace a series of themes in the reports and see how they (undoubtedly subconsciously for the writer) underpinned the racial context of their composition.

Neville regarded grave-goods as evidence that 'the corpse was attired for the grave …' (Neville, 1852a: 9) and that '… all the appendages occupied their natural, and proper places' (Neville, 1852a: 9). He made the often-repeated assumption that these were the graves of 'warriors without doubt' (Neville, 1852a: 9;). He recognised buckets for what they were, and they were not helmets (see Figure 8). His military interpretations were informed by a Peninsular War and Waterloo veteran, who regarded the bronze vessels found with weapon graves as their 'Camp Kettles' (Neville, 1852a: 9). The martial interpretation was further supported by the discovery of a horse burial beside one weapon grave, the remains of the bridle still adhering to the horse's head (Neville, 1852a: 9–10). Interestingly, he failed to see a clear gender-division in the attire, instead interpreting social class from the differences in burial investment and thinking that: 'it is believed that necklaces were occasionally worn by men' (Neville, 1854a: 215).

The 'better class' of ornaments, including fibulae, were restricted to a small number of graves (Neville, 1852a: 6; see Figure 8). However, Neville did observe that beads were not only found in graves with brooches, but also he suggested that they were not exclusive to the wealthy (Neville, 1852a: 6). He also noted that 'superior interments' often comprised finger-rings, reflecting his avid collection of Medieval rings (latterly acquired by the British Museum) that charted the evolution of a single category of high-status object through the Middle Ages (Cherry, 1997: 192). Hence, rings in Neville's collection –

like the example from Grave 45 at Linton Heath – can be regarded as embodying aristocracy and connecting the Saxon past to the Victorian present (e.g. Neville, 1854a: 105) and exhibiting an incipient Victorian class structure.

Neville discerned a social hierarchy in early Anglo-Saxon times that was integral to his personal experience as an aristocrat in early Victorian England. By way of contrast, unfurnished graves were determined as being 'evidently paupers' (Neville, 1852a: 6).

Neville's excavations occurred prior to the widespread use of craniology that was increasingly adopted in British archaeology during the later 1850s and 1860s (Morse, 1999; 2005; Parsons, 2006b). Within the reports themselves, the medical authority, Professor Owen, examined and commented on the condition of some of the skulls in the inhumations, and confirmed that the cinerary urns from Little Wilbraham contained human remains. Details of Owen's observations are absent from the report although there are general unattributed comments to age and sex that may derive from a mixture of Owen's attributions and Neville's observations. For Linton Heath, a small number of the skulls were sent to Joseph Barnard Davis (future co-author of *Crania Britannica*), who assessed, where possible, the individuals' age and sex (Neville, 1854a: 99). In addition, Owen attributed the sex of Grave 81. Meanwhile, Grave 94 was: 'Pronounced at the College of Surgeons to be the skeleton of a male of large stature, the height being upwards of 6 feet 6 inches' (Neville, 1854a: 110). Davis also corrected a misattribution of the sex of a skeleton by Neville (Neville, 1854c: 215). Indeed, skulls from Linton Heath were to receive subsequent notoriety by appearing in the pages of *Crania Britannica* as indicative of the Saxon race (Davis and Thurnam, 1865). Here, a 'large and well-proportioned' skull from Linton Heath was regarded as resembling the 'modern English skull' (Davis and Thurnam, 1865). Linton Heath Weapon Burial 81 was 'a favourable example of an Anglo-Saxon cranium of truly Germanic form, being large and decidedly broad in the vertical region' (Davis and Thurnam, 1865: 6) while the female skulls were 'similar to modern English skulls'. Therefore, Neville's discoveries directly contributed to the development of the view of racial differences based on cranial characteristics. Moreover, special note was also made of skeletons of large stature (Neville, 1854a: 112), which seems to have been frequently used as a physical quality associated with the Anglo-Saxons in early Victorian reports, implying the perceived racial qualities of the early English (Williams, 2008; e.g. Wylie, 1852).

Neville was concerned with the mortuary context of excavated burials, in addition to the artefacts and bones contained within the graves. Most burials took place singly, ruling out the site as a war cemetery (Neville, 1852a: 8), although there were instances of multiple burials, in one particular case there were five individuals buried together. Orientation was observed: most had their heads to the west or south at Little Wilbraham (Neville, 1852a: 9). Likewise, the absence of 'fractures, and marks of violence' and the presence of females and infants and the 'pains bestowed upon the arrangement of their orna-

ments' (Neville, 1852a: 9) all supported the argument of deaths not caused by violence. Neville observed the presence of infant and child-graves at Linton Heath (e.g. Neville, 1854a: 102, 106) and the overall character of the graves inserted into the mound, remitted against them being the results of a battle (Neville, 1854a: 96).

Neville's empathy towards mourners and their positioning of the dead was also occasionally hinted at. For example, in his account of Grave 22 from Linton Heath, he noted in the burial of a boy of around fourteen years (according to Davis' attribution) that: 'The arms were folded across the breast, with the tips of fingers touching' (Neville, 1854a: 101). Therefore, the body and its positioning were seen as the result of solemn sentimental obsequies.

Most attention was paid to the inhumation graves at both cemeteries, although the cremations at Little Wilbraham did not escape attention either. Here Neville's experience of digging Roman-period cremation graves was apparent in his conclusion that the Saxon ones '... differ entirely from any I have before encountered, and closely resemble those usually met with in Anglo-Saxon burying grounds' (Neville, 1852a: 11; see Figure 9). Neville was familiar with the 'mixed-rite' cemeteries from Great Chesterford where cremation and inhumation graves were repeatedly found in close association (Neville, 1847a: 45–46). Regarding the artefacts found in the urns, he observed that they had been all exposed to the funeral fire. Neville also recognised that their character was similar to items found in the inhumation graves, including tweezers, combs,

Fig. 9: A collection of smaller bronze artefacts from the Little Wilbraham report (Neville, 1852a).

brooches and even iron spearheads. Neville believed that this evidence proved that the two different types of burials were contemporaneous, and the inhumations were racially-affiliated with those bodies interred unburned (contra. Kemble, 1855a; see also Kemble, 1855b; 1863). In the spatial juxtaposition of cremation burials in tightly clustered groups, and the presence of cremations inserted over inhumation graves, Neville recognised that, while cremation was the older rite, they also represented: '... the remains of relatives or friends, who still clung to the customs of their ancestors, which were probably at the date of the formation of the Cemetery, falling into disuse and becoming gradually obsolete' (Neville, 1852a: 11).

Neville demonstrated his increasing knowledge of, and his increasing contacts within, archaeology following the publication of *Saxon Obsequies*, in both of the cemeteries reports. But particularly in the Linton Heath Cemetery report, he made comparisons with other discoveries excavated elsewhere, both in Britain and abroad, in general terms and for specific artefacts. In this report he also closely compared the two cemeteries with each other to determine their similarities and differences (Neville, 1854a: 113), concluding that: 'the resemblance between the two is so striking, as to lead to the conclusion that they were burying-grounds of the same people' (Neville, 1854a: 115).

The extent of Neville's comparisons show his cognisance of contemporary discoveries. These are evident in *Saxon Obsequies* but were more widespread in his 1854 *Archaeological Journal* articles (Neville, 1854a; 1854b; 1854c) that included Dryden's discoveries at Market Drayton (Neville, 1852a: 9), William Wylie's *Fairford Graves* (Wylie, 1852; e.g. Neville, 1854a: 97), Smith's *Collectanea Antiqua* (Smith, 1848; 1852; e.g. Neville, 1854a: 102, 103), Akerman's *Remains of Pagan Saxondom* (Akerman, 1855; e.g. Neville, 1854a: 99) as well as James Douglas' *Nenia Britannica* (e.g. Neville, 1854a: 100, 104, 109). With regard to Continental Germanic discoveries, Neville cites similarities with the graves reported in the Lindenschmidts' *Todtenlager bei Selzen* (Neville, 1854a: 113). Admittedly, he also noted differences between his cemeteries and other known sites, including the lack of saucer brooches like those from the Midlands (Neville, 1852a: 10). Yet it is clear that Neville was positioning his discoveries explicitly, as elements of a wider phenomenon, and subsequently as indicative of Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Neville's attention to the topography and landscape context of the Little Wilbraham and Linton Heath Cemeteries is also enlightening. Here, we find the cemeteries operating as components of his own 'landscape of memory' (see above). As a member of the landed aristocracy, it may have been logical for Neville to consider his discoveries in relation to the history of the Audley End estate as a microcosm for the country as a whole. Hence the topographical context of his findings lent themselves to the character of the finds and implicitly constituted the sense of Neville's own identity rooted in the land (see also Nordbladh, 2002). There is evidence for this in his repeated references to the owners of land where discoveries were made, espe-

Fig. 10: Cinerary Urns from Little Wilbraham illustrated in Neville's *Saxon Obsequies* (Neville, 1852a).

cially when it was his own father 'Lord Braybrooke' who was the 'present possessor' (e.g. Neville, 1849: 114; 1853a: 21)! Indeed, the Little Wilbraham site was adjacent to one such aristocratic country seat (Neville, 1852a: 5).

In an earlier report on the discovery of a weapon grave on the Little Wilbraham site, Deck emphasised the military and heroic aspects of both the grave's contents and the location. A bucket found in the grave was interpreted as '... an insignia of honour – as a crown to the illustrious dead ...'. Meanwhile the location of the grave was explained in terms of invasion strategies as befitting a Saxon warrior:

> 'The site is one worthy of those suitably selected for the tomb of a warrior – its elevation commanding a complete panoramic view of the whole surrounding country, forming an important military station either for attack or defence ...' (Deck, 1851).

We have seen that Neville preferred more practical interpretations of grave goods but retained a romanticised view of the racial significance of the finds. In a similar way, Neville's description of the geographical location of the Little Wilbraham Cemetery was less fanciful than Deck's, but still managed to focus on the historical and strategic situation of the cemetery. Firstly he noted the relationship with the university town of Cambridge, and proximity to the 'remarkable earthwork, known by the name of "Fleams Dyke" ... and is plainly visible from this spot ...' (Neville, 1852a: 5). He then observed the relationship of the cemetery with an 'old Roman way' that he infers from the road being known as 'Streetway' and the hill as 'Streetway Hill'. The route runs over the crest of the hill and created the border of the burial ground. Next, the prominence of the site is emphasised by the visibility of six churches from this 'commanding position', as well as the view of Ely Minster, 'on a clear day' (Neville, 1852a: 5).

The Little Wilbraham site report comprises a rare example of a map that shows the placement of the cemetery in its contemporary landscape (Neville, 1852a: 29). This map also prominently displayed the location of the 'ground trenched' within an agricultural landscape of roads, field boundaries, a country house and the nearby village with its church and rectory clearly marked. The geographical association between the cemetery and 'Street Way' is clear, as is the association with water springs, the cemetery being located in 'Spring Field' (Neville, 1852a: 5). The association of pagan burial grounds with water was

noted by other Victorian antiquaries and was regarded as an indication of the intentional association of burial sites with pagan sacred locations (e.g. Akerman, 1857: 145). While no interpretation of the location is explicitly presented, the map implicitly supports the interpretation and significance of the cemetery as a pagan Saxon communal burial site, situated in both an ancient landscape, among natural features and the contemporary rural setting of fields and villages.

The introduction to the Linton Heath Cemetery report has a similar, but more abbreviated, review of the site's topography. Here the chronological relationship with the Romans took a more explicit form because, during excavations, Neville observed that the Saxon burials were secondary interments in an older barrow thought to be of Roman date (Neville, 1854a: 96, 100; see Fox, 1923: 260). Such re-use of monuments was regularly identified as a phenomenon of early Anglo-Saxon cemeteries (e.g. Wright, 1847; 1849; 1852). Another particularly Anglo-Saxon phenonenon was their renaming of extant prehistoric monuments (Wylie, 1852), and the appropriation of British and Roman monuments by the newcomers was regarded as spatial and monumental evidence for the Saxon settlement of the region (Williams, 2006a; 2006b; 2007; 2008).

Neville noted that the Saxon cemetery was inter-visible with the well-known Roman tumuli at Bartlow Hills that had been excavated by Gage two decades earlier (Neville, 1854a: 95; see Gage, 1832; 1836). Similarly, in his 'Ancient Cambridgeshire' he hints that the prolific Roman and Anglo-Saxon discoveries at Linton are to be expected, given its proximity to Bartlow with its remains (Neville, 1854b: 213). As mentioned above, Neville's discovery of Anglo-Saxon burials in immediate proximity to Roman remains at Great Chesterford may have also sustained his views about the transition between the peoples (Neville, 1856; see also Evison, 1994). Finally, he emphasised that the burial ground was close to a Roman Way (meaning the Icknield Way) although the significance of this relationship to the settlement of the Anglo-Saxons is left implicit.

These landscape descriptions appeared to have served two interpretative purposes. They illustrated the antiquity of the landscape and situated the Saxon burial ground as the successor of the remains of the British and Roman past. At the same time, the descriptions emphasised the burial grounds as precursors to the subsequent Medieval landscape of towns, villages, churches and university, inherited by the Victorians. Consequently, the cemetery is perceived as a landscape locale 'sandwiched' between a primordial 'British' and 'Roman' past and a Victorian present. The cemetery was conceived as both heir to the past and ancestor of the present through the description of its location, as well as through the act of its discovery and publication.

Conclusions

This paper has explored four connected arguments that together develop a new picture of Neville's archaeology, and his interpretations of Anglo-Saxon grave-finds in particular. They describe Neville's archaeology as framed,

informed and inspired by his family and personal history, by his experience of inhabiting and moving through his house, gardens and locality, by his discoveries of British and Roman remains, and by his digging up and writing about Anglo-Saxon cemeteries.

Neville used the past to construct a local, national and racial history. This was achieved through an emphasis on place and locality, in dialogue with an imperial perspective that extended far beyond British shores. He was not simply one contributor to a growing body of archaeological knowledge, nor was he primarily conducting archaeology in response to external, socio-political motives (see Abadía, 2010). Instead Neville's archaeology was a mnemonic practice, a form of memory work, linked to many aspects of Neville's personal, social and ideological world. It was performed in the landscape, through society meetings and presentations of finds, in his museum collection and in his publications (see Evans, 2007).

In most accounts of Victorian Anglo-Saxonism, archaeological discoveries, and also archaeological texts, have been largely and systematically ignored. Primary recognition has been given to the developments in, and contributions by, historical and philological research, albeit in the context of contemporary popular literature and politics (Horsman, 1976: 399–401; Levine, 1986: 79–86; MacDougall, 1982; Melman, 2001; Young, 2008).

In contrast, I have shown how Neville's descriptive reporting of 'facts' was far from neutral, but enmeshed within a series of contexts in which archaeology defined his identity as an aristocrat, a military man, and part of a social network of like-minded antiquaries and archaeologists. Far more than a pioneering artefact-collector deferential to existing historical, philological and literary research (e.g. Lucy, 2002), Neville and his generation can be appreciated as setting a powerful precedent by espousing an interpretation of early Anglo-Saxon graves through the practice of digging and writing descriptive accounts (Peltz and Myrone, 1999: 9). Conversely, Neville's work is only partially explicable in terms of the key themes of mid-nineteenth century archaeology identified by Díaz-Andreu (2007: 338–367). Neville cannot merely be understood as concerned with 'nation', he did not explore distant prehistory, pioneer new methods, utilise phrenology or contribute in distinctive ways to museums and societies. Likewise, Neville was not a prolific enough 'barrow-digger' to merit discussion and inclusion in most histories of Victorian archaeology (see e.g. Hingley, 2008; Giles, 2006; Parsons, 2006a; 2006b). However, by focusing on Neville's work, we come closer to understanding the role of material culture in the negotiation of early Victorian social memories, to written histories of the early English, and to archaeology as a process for elucidating all of them.

The wider implications of this argument for how we interrogate seemingly matter-of-fact descriptive accounts in the history of archaeology, and the empirical basis of early Anglo-Saxon burial archaeology, require further research. This paper has demonstrated that the view that archaeology only began to have a significant influence on the study of the *Adventus Saxonum* during the early

twentieth century, is wrong, and that a prominent aspect of early archaeological research has been missed (contra White, 1971: 589).

By reviewing the archaeological excavations and writings of Richard Neville, this paper has considered how Victorian excavation reports of early Medieval cemeteries were the material product and constituent element of a burgeoning contemporary Anglo-Saxonist discourse. Neville and his contemporaries used early Medieval graves as powerful metaphors for homogenising Anglo-Saxon racial origins. Archaeological pursuits were both an outlet and expression of Neville's personal identity and his concerns regarding the fate of the British Empire and its English origins. With regard to Neville's interpretation of the cemeteries, he did not use overt and explicit racial interpretations of bones, he focused more subtle and implicit attention on the description and illustration of artefacts, graves, burial grounds and their landscape situation to provide the evidence to support his conclusions.

The specific context of Neville's archaeology was soon lost, and his personal and familial anxieties over their identity and the fate of British Empire were fluid. Still, as McCombe (2011) has recently shown, charting the biography of Neville's collection might also reveal how it was perceived and used to provide successive generations' understanding of early Anglo-Saxon Cambridgeshire and Essex and, more widely, of early Medieval Britain. While these issues lie outside the scope of this paper, I hope it has demonstrated how modern archaeologists may have not only, implicitly inherited Neville's discoveries, but also his terminology and outlook.

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Notes

[1] I thank Nina Crummy for this point.

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