PREHISTORIC NARRATIVES IN COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY MUSEUMS IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

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ABSTRACT

The general aim of this paper is to illuminate that prehistoric narratives were being constructed and disseminated by county archaeological society museums in England during the mid-nineteenth century. This was unprecedented in the callow age of museums, a phenomenal part of British museum history that has been badly neglected. This paper explores three strands concerning prehistoric narratives presented by county archaeological society museums in mid-nineteenth-century England.

To demonstrate this, five case-study museums are examined: Norfolk and Norwich Museum (f. 1825); Museum of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society (f. 1840); Taunton Museum (f. 1849); Lewes Museum (f. 1850); and Devizes Museum (f. 1853).

The first strand situates the multifarious ways in which the museums were translating prehistoric archaeological objects into narrative, i.e., Temporary Museums (temporary exhibitions) set up during the archaeological societies’ annual meetings were important elements in the construction of narratives that were in turn reflected in the permanent museums. Narrative, in this sense, was not confined to text, but it embraced the field of discourse, exhibitions and objects.

The second strand explores to whom these prehistoric narratives were directed. The archaeological society members were the ones who were running the museums. Prehistoric narratives were regarded as useful knowledge. Then were the prehistoric narratives concocted for the members’ own knowledge or for the public, at large?

Finally, the third strand examines why county archaeological society museums in England were suddenly taking up the banner to create prehistoric narratives in the mid-nineteenth century. Were the prehistoric narratives that the county archaeological society museums propagated for a greater social, economic, political, philosophical, or scientific cause?

INTRODUCTION

The development of prehistoric narrative has always been told in terms of the excavations that bore them (Hudson 1981; Pearce 1990). However, prehistoric narratives were also created in county archaeological society museums, which is a subject that has not been dealt with in-depth (Daniel 1978; Piggott 1991; Schnapp 1996; Trigger 1989). It is the context and not the content in which prehistoric narratives were being constructed that I wish to center upon.

In order to examine how county archaeological society museums constructed prehistoric
narratives, I take an historical approach. Between the period 1840 to 1880, county archaeological societies were being founded in England to specifically compile historic and prehistoric narratives.

In this paper, I argue that county archaeological society museums were creating and presenting prehistoric narratives through the preservation, research and communication of prehistoric archaeological objects in museums.

THE TRANSLATION OF PREHISTORIC NARRATIVES

Early-Century Prehistoric Narratives vs. Mid-Century Prehistoric Narratives

In the early-nineteenth century, literary and philosophical society museums were also creating and presenting prehistoric narratives, but this was done in a curio-antiquarian fashion (Leicester City Museums Service, Leicester, England [LCMS] 1869: Reports &c. Lit & Phil. Soc. & Museum 1851 to 1870. Report of the Council of the LLPS 1869:5; Norwich Museum Service, Norwich, England [NMS]: Subscriptions and Donations to the Norfolk and Norwich Museum No.3).

For example, in the Leicester Town Museum, which was originally the Museum of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, British antiquities were described with text such as "Fragment of the Picts wall from Chollerford, Northumberland" (LCMS: A Synopsis of the Contents of the Museum). Furthermore, different types of antiquities were mixed with those from different periods.

In the Norfolk and Norwich Museum, another early-century museum, the keepers presented British prehistoric archaeological objects and recorded them as "Curious shaped Stone" (NMS 1826-1830: Norfolk & Norwich Museum Donations 1826-1830). In essence, their purpose was not about creating prehistoric narrative, but filling up a cabinet full of curiosities.

However, county archaeological society museums aimed to fulfill county historic and prehistoric narratives. They were adamant towards developing into merely a local museum that collected an unlimited variety of objects for curiosity sake. Rev. J.O. Picton, a member of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, stressed the importance of the connection between past and present narratives:

...the study of the past in the most comprehensive sense, implying thereby an examination of all existing remains, whether in the shape of architectural erections, written records, spoken dialects, and the implements of warlike, civil and domestic use... In fine, the ultimate aim of this science is to supply such data as will enable us to draw fair inferences as to the state of those who have gone before us, to present us with a vantage ground from which we may discern, as in a bright and well defined prospect, the complexity of life and action which signalised those who are no longer upon earth. And, I would ask, is it possible for a man to enter on such studies aright, who is dead to what is being transacted in his own day? There cannot be an intelligent apprehension of the past, unless in some way or other a comparison can be instituted, and an analogy sought for,
in antecedent and existing conditions. It is difficult to separate a book from the writer—the present is but the ever increasing past, - and no book that was ever written about the past was worth the reading, if it did not exhibit a manifest sympathy with living actors and present interests (Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine [WAM] 1857: 275).

One of the forms in which present and past narratives were bound together was Biblical narrative. God’s works and those of human beings were presented on the ante-deluvian and the post-deluvian timescale (Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society [PSANHS] 1851: 12).

Temporary Museums

Prehistoric narratives were told through the functioning of Temporary Museums. The 'Temporary Museum' or in today’s term, temporary exhibition, was a part of the General Annual Meetings. The meetings included dinners, conversazioni, excursions to prominent houses and dining within their tennis courts, and excavations sponsored by the archaeological societies. What was significant was that the Temporary Museum was shown prior and after the meeting as physical evidence of the narratives (Wiltshire Heritage Library, Devizes, Wiltshire [WHL] 1867: Wilts Archaeological Society Meeting Programmes, 'The Wilts Archaeological Society at Hungerford').

The Temporary Museum was no longer a cabinet of curiosities but a forum for private collections that were taken out of the homes and transported for a few days amongst a semi-public audience. For example, E.B. Tylor, a member of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, orated a prehistoric narrative on the growth of civilization by exhibiting the different types of weapons in the museum (PSANHS 1874: 67). Thus, to the Society members, the objects were physical evidence for examination and to be used as a reference for prehistoric narratives.

THE CREATION OF PREHISTORIC NARRATIVES IN MID-CENTURY MUSEUMS

Notes & queries

Prehistoric narratives were created through various ways. First of all, collecting information on artifacts, themselves, was crucial. In the journals, data to create prehistoric narratives were collected through questionnaires called ‘Notes and Queries’ (Norwich Archaeology [NA]; PSNHS; Sussex Archaeological Collections [SAC]; WAM). Thus, the three archaeological societies, the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society that founded the Taunton Museum, the Sussex Archaeological Society that founded the Lewes Museum, and the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society that founded the Devizes Museum operated network research for the collecting of information and objects to create past narratives.

Mark Antony Lower of the Sussex Archaeological Society responding to the "Queries" donated archaeological objects that were discovered at Newhaven and Seaford to the Lewes Museum (SAC 1868: 218). To secure objects, 'Notes and Queries' also procured the interests
of persons outside the Society. Lower, as Secretary of the Sussex Archaeological Society, was informed that a flint-digger had found a "British urn twelve inches in height and containing the burnt bones of a human body" upon opening up a tumulus at Mount Harry. Lower gained possession of the urn for the Lewes Museum and asked the flint-digger to look for more objects in the surrounding barrows (Museum of Sussex Archaeology, Lewes, Sussex [MSA]: SAS 51/34). To illustrate the "notes" upon "finds", the "Leaden Coffin found at Wellingham" by a Mr. J. Dudeney, of Milton House, Lewes, was to be given to the Lewes Museum with the circumstances of the find attached (SAC 1871: 327). They tried to obliterate superstition through these questionnaires to concoct more scientific prehistoric narratives (PSANHS 1852: 82; WAM 1854:50).

In addition, network research did not stop at "Notes and Queries". The importance of the publications was also the exchange of prehistoric narratives with other museums and societies in many parts of the world (Wiltshire Heritage Museum, Devizes, Wiltshire [WHM]: Donations Book: 45, 90; SAC 1851: x; Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, Devizes, Wiltshire [WANHS] 2 June 1858: Committee Meeting; WANHS 16 December 1967: Committee Meeting:). These journals were exchanged or donated between the three case-study archaeological society museums (WANHS 2 June 1858: Committee Meeting).

**Excavations**

Excavations that were sponsored by the societies also brought in data to assemble prehistoric narratives in the museums (WHL 14 November 1879; Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society Committee Meeting; PSANHS 1856-7: 27). For example, William Figg of the Sussex Archaeological Society wrote in the paper entitled, "On the Opening of a Barrow at Crowlink, in Friston" (SAC 1852: 207-12), that the comparison of mobile prehistoric objects excavated from barrows across the U.K. helped him to see the ways in which prehistoric narratives could be told on how primeval inhabitants lived.

**Drawings and photographs**

In the journals, illustrations of the prehistoric objects in the museum, usually made by women, were used to create sets of visual prehistoric narrative (MSA:SAS 56/101; NA 1852: 415-16; PSANHS 1853: 10; SAC 1860: 261; SAC 1862: 171; WAM 1859: 127). The use of photographs for prehistoric narratives was unique. For example, in the Temporary Museum formed by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, "photographs and drawings of Avebury, and other remarkable Druidical remains" were loaned and exhibited from the Devizes Museum (WHL 16 May 1866: MS Wiltshire Magazine X: Letter from W.C. Lukis to William Cunnington; WHL, WANHS December 1858: Newspaper Reports 1853-1873: Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette; WHM: Devizes Donations Book: 28; NA 1872: v; NA 1872: iv; PSANHS 1853: 17). In the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, Henry Harrod, Honorary Secretary, stated that without the physical evidence of the object the probability of creating distorted prehistoric narratives was high. However, with the use of photographs this could be reduced considerably (Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society, Norwich, Norfolk [NNAS] 15 February 1855: Minute Book Jan. 25th 1855-March 8th 1855). He then exhibited a photograph of a monument in Anglesea which he stated to have been made
by the Druids. [Indeed, a tall tale even with the use of photographs!]

*Three-Age prehistoric narratives*

In England, prehistoric narrative did not at first revolve around the Three-Age System of Stone, Bronze and Iron. The systematization of prehistoric archaeological objects was accomplished in the national museums of Copenhagen and Stockholm several decades before England (Gräslund 1987: 13). The idea of prehistory was not new, nor was the Three-Age System (Gräslund 1987: 13). In Germany, prehistorians, Friedrich Danneil (1783-1868) and Friedrich Lisch (1801-83), published articles on an inexplicit Three-Age System during the latter half of the 1830s (Gräslund 1987: 18). In Denmark, Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788-1865) published his guidebook *Ledetraad til nordisk Oldkyndighed*. The significance of Thomsen's 1836 publication is that it was a museum classification of the prehistoric archaeological collections in the Museum of Antiquities in Copenhagen. The systematization of prehistoric collections was developed under a series of exhibitions in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (Gräslund 1987: 19; Sørensen 1999: 136).

However, the 'national museum of England' known as the British Museum was focusing on Classical narratives, not on British prehistoric narratives. One hundred years after the date of foundation, the keepers of the British Museum began to pay more attention to British archaeological collections. Finally in 1860 the Oriental Antiquities Department included British, mediaeval and ethnographic collections (Miller 1973: 299). British prehistoric archaeological objects were 'despised' fragments and pieces that could not be assembled together to create narratives compared to Greek and Roman antiquities (Miller 1973: 209). A separate Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities was formed as late as 1866 (Miller 1973: 213).

The Three-Age system of prehistoric narratives was accepted in county archaeological museums before they were in national museums. Four kinds of objects significantly helped the assembling of prehistoric narratives within this system, three of which I should like to discuss now, and the fourth I will elaborate on later in this paper.

First, the detection of the metal components of celts was one of the ways in which the Three-Age prehistoric narrative was concocted (MSA: SAS 62/2; SAC 1849: 260-69; Sussex Archaeological Society Library, Lewes, Sussex, 9 February 1849: BLA/4).

Second, they were also created by decoding the patterns of the urns and pottery in the museums (WAM 1866: 18, 134; WAM 1875: 133).

And third, prehistoric narratives were created by comparing and contrasting British objects directly with Roman and Anglo-Saxon objects (SAC 1858: 149; SAC 1864: 53-64; SAC XVIII 1866: 61; WAM VI 1860: 138; WAM X 1867: 104-9).

**PREHISTORIC NARRATIVES DELIVERED TO WHICH AUDIENCE?**

Now, to whom were these prehistoric narrative delivered? Given the archaeological society members were the ones who were running the museums, were the prehistoric narratives concocted for the members’ own knowledge or for the public, at large?

During the general annual meetings and the *conversaziones* (or the intellectual soirées) of the three case-study archaeological societies, Temporary Museums or temporary exhibitions...
were formed.

For the General Annual Meetings of the Sussex Archaeological Society, there were special trains, omnibuses, and carriages that would transport members and visitors to the locations of the exhibitions (MSA 25 July 1850: SAS Committee Minutes 1846 to July 1852: 178). The fact that the annual meetings took place during weekdays and the Temporary Museums were opened at the same time meant that it was hardly possible for those who were wage and salary earners to visit the Temporary Museums.  

For example, a farmer and his wife supposedly visited the Temporary Museum held by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society in Swindon. He wrote in the column under "Correspondence to the Editor of the Wiltshire County Mirror" published on 29 August 1860 with spelling and grammatical errors. The "Varmer" who was not completely illiterate wrote that on a "Zunday" he went to "Zwindon" to "hear what thay book lar"nd genelman have a got to zay for their zelves" and bought a ticket "to zee all the Curiosities" but he and his "missusses" did go to the "Swarry". He continued:

…there we did hear the most butifullest stories, you did ever hear - We couldn"t mak it quite alle out but it did zeem to we that the book learned volk didn"t alle quite agree - vor one did zay Wayland"s cave ware a zort of Church, and tother did zay twere a grave - and then thay did zay that the Stwones were all vulle of vishes, and lor a mercy if thay didn"t zay thare were a matter of vorty thousand comed out of one cart lwoad of hurth, there I did think thick genelman were romancing a bit howsomedever what did terrify I the mwost of all, were to hear one genelman sinify, that we was all growd out of summut else, and that stwones did become sarpents, - and Sarpents vowls, -& Helephants Hapes, - and Hapes We, - now I dwont believe a mossel, that Biddy be virst cousin to our Graat Turkey, nor that I be great grandson to our graat old Bull, thaat there be the draft of, hung up in our Parlour (WHL 29 August 1860: Newspaper Cuttings: Correspondence to the Editor of the Wiltshire County Mirror).

It was signed Giles Gawler. The authenticity of the letter is questionable because of a handwritten note by Cunnington: "...no doubt, Revd. A. Fane" (WHL 29 August 1860: Newspaper Cuttings: Correspondence to the Editor of the Wiltshire County Mirror). But what did this all mean?

The Temporary Museum was not private, but they catered for an exclusive public. The exclusive public included the members of the county archaeological societies, and also those within the town or city that the Temporary Museums were set up. What section of the social strata actually came is not too difficult to deduce. The Society members consisted of aristocracy and gentry who were nominated as patrons and president. Members of Parliament and clergy of the higher order were elected vice-presidents. The rest were of a learned social milieu, many who were Fellows of the Society of Antiquaries, Fellows of the Geological Society, etc. According to a member of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, "the members consisted of country gentlemen of the landed class and the learned and circulars had been sent to clergymen and officials in the county" (PSANHS 1851: 6). A very small portion
of the members were women.

Thus, it is questionable that salary or wage earners were able to visit the Temporary Museums because they were held on weekdays. There were a few instances where laborers and farmers were invited to Temporary Museums.

During the first three decades of its existence the Devizes Museum directed the prehistoric narratives solely to the society members. However, it was only after the move into a permanent building, a former schoolroom and domestic house, that the Devizes Museum started to cater the prehistoric narratives to a wider audience (WANHS 2 October 1874, 26 April 1876, 19 June 1876, 14 November 1876: Committee Minutes 1855-1905). For the museums of Lewes and Taunton, although the prehistoric narratives were prescribed for the archaeological society members, their new permanent locations in castles contributed to their endeavor to address a wider public (SAC 1866: 60).

WHY WERE THEY CREATING PREHISTORIC NARRATIVES IN THE MUSEUMS?

Although England was ahead in the competition to collect Classical Antiquities, scientific archaeology proved to be far ahead abroad. This was especially true in Egyptian and Assyrian archaeology. For example, the Rosetta Stone was discovered under Napoleon in Egypt in 1799, and the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphic script was made possible through the scientific rigor of French scholar Jean François Champollion in 1822. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Auguste Mariette, a French archaeologist, led an excavation on numerous sites in Egypt. It was only later that Sir Flinders Petrie used new scientific methods to the archaeology of ancient Egypt.

Another French archaeological expedition was in 1843. Paul Emile Botta excavated the palace of the Assyrian King Sargon II at Khorsabad. It was only later that Sir Henry Rawlinson and other scholars such as Georg Grotefend of Germany deciphered the cuneiform writing of ancient Mesopotamia.

In prehistoric archaeology, there were numerous discoveries in other countries. Investigations into the caves in Southern France were led by Paul Tournal, Jules de Christol, and Marcel de Serres and by the Belgian Schmerling in the early-century. Japetus Streenstrup and Jens Jacob Wörsaae applied relative chronology on Stone Age finds from excavations in Denmark.

Again in France, Jacques Boucher de Perthes' discoveries, although rejected by the majority of French scientists, contributed to the antiquity of man through the advanced use of stratigraphy. There were the discoveries by Swiss archaeologists such as Keller, Morlot, Troyon, Desor, and Schwab of the lake-dwellings of the Neolithic (WAM 1878: 14). English antiquarians had been barrow digging for treasures in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. But on the whole, English scholars did not accept this as archaeology, but poets like Lord Byron called barrow digging "rummaging" (WAM 1857: 237). The discoveries of McEnery at Kent's Cavern were overlooked and other researches by Vivian were not accepted for publication (WAM 1878: 14-15). It was only later that Pitt Rivers urged the importance of using scientific techniques in excavation.
There was a strong obstinacy towards accepting the Three-Age System in the Society of Antiquaries of London and in the British Archaeological Association. Joan Evans states that as early as 1828, Thomsen introduced the methods of classification of Northern antiquities to the Society of Antiquaries. However, Thomas Wright rejected the notion of bronze being dated earlier than the ones imported from overseas, relying on Latin literary evidence to the contrary (Evans 1956: 230). Even into the mid-century, Wright concluded in *Celt, Roman and Saxon* (1852) that:

...There is something, we may perhaps say poetical, certainly imaginative, in talking of an age of stone, or an age of bronze, or an age of iron, but such divisions have no meaning in history...We have to do with races of mankind, and we can only arrange the objects which come under our examination according to the peoples to whom they belonged, and as they illustrate their manners or history... (Evans 1956: 281).

It was across the Continent that societies and museums were formed for meetings, and collecting and preserving objects. At the Twenty-third General Meeting, Sir John Lubbock stated that Stonehenge could be attributed to the Bronze Age because bronze mobile objects were found with no traces of iron in the primary interment of the tumuli around Stonehenge.

He had to consult Italian archaeologists to confirm that the bronze weapons were not analogous to the Roman bronze weapons. However he was required to search the museums across the Continent. Lubbock took statistics of French museums from M. Chantre. 409 bronze objects were found in the French museums. There were 480 bronze objects in the Swedish museums. The museums in Denmark had 600 bronze objects. And in Italy 60 bronze objects were in museum collections. In addition the Royal Irish Academy museum had 300 or more bronze daggers and swords (WAM 1878: 11).

Nonetheless, Three-Age prehistoric narratives were actively created in the county archaeological society museums rather than the national museum. These county archaeological society museums started off with a local interest then evolved into a national cause (NA 1884: 1; PSANHS XIV 1869: 172; Somerset County Record Office, Taunton, Somersetshire: DD/SAS C/2646/1: 21 October undated Letter from W Boyd Dawkins to Mr H. Warre; WAM 1867: 14).

I now wish to return to the fourth category of prehistoric archaeological objects, which are flint implements. These proved to be major agents in the construction of prehistoric narratives on the Three Ages, and particularly ethnarchaeological narratives (SAC 1867: 53; WAM 1867: 221-33). This will then lead to the conclusion as to why the museums were creating prehistoric narratives.

The Blackmore Museum in Salisbury of South Wiltshire influenced the Devizes Museum in arranging their collections according to the Four-Age System of Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Bronze and Iron (WAM 1875: 125).

The nucleus of the collection in the Blackmore Museum consisted of North American archaeological objects that were found by Squier and Davis from the mounds of the Mississippi valley. These were acquired in order to compare them with the Wiltshire tumuli objects. In
addition to the nucleus collection, there were other prehistoric objects gathered from all over the Continent and ethnographic objects from all over the world:

Whilst the present building was in course of erection, we gathered from all quarters - from the drift-beds of England and the gravel-pits of Amiens and Abbeville - from the bottoms of Swiss lakes and the caves of southern France - from the shell-mounds of Denmark and the peat-bogs of Ireland - the earliest known works of man, and we have sought to explain the probable use of these ancient objects and the actual status and condition of primitive man, by exhibiting implements and ornaments of modern savages, thus enabling the student to institute a comparison between them (WAM 1868:60).

A group that the Blackmore Museum categorized as " Implements, Weapons, and Ornaments of Modern Savages... [were] to throw light upon the use of similar objects belonging to prehistoric times" (WAM 1868:109). This was the start of ethno-archaeological museum narrative. Despite the fact that foreign objects did not represent the local or County history, the purpose of these objects were for the comparative analysis of ethnography.6

Since the early 1850s, the Sussex Archaeological Collections advertised London publications of monographs such as And Miscellanies: Illustrations of Eating, displaying the Omnivorous Character of Man, and exhibiting the Natives of various Countries at feeding-time, by a BEEF-EATER... (SAC 1850: 12). With the influence of outside publications and their own theories as well, the archaeological society museums created prehistoric narratives in relation to biased ethnographical theories.

Stevens, the curator of the Blackmore Museum, accounted that some natives were living in the Stone Period. He continued that the three periods were also a conceptual interpretation representing the cultural progress of human beings rather than a time "positive" (WAM 1872: 23). According to Stevens, each period represented a "culture-stage" in which implements and weapons, such as the ones represented in the Blackmore Museum, were used for man to survive (WAM 1872: 23). In addition, he compared all different cultures. He asserted that the Maoris, natives of the Caribbean, and Cherokees were savages who continued to live in the Stone Age (WAM 1872: 26). In comparison with the lake inhabitants of Switzerland, he argued that they were not savages at all, but barbaric (WAM 1872: 26). For the Bronze Period or the "middle range of civilisation", he claimed that the Mexicans and the Peruvians were a good example of people continuing to live in the Bronze Period. These two races could throw light upon how prehistoric people lived. Stevens tried to justify that the use of bronze exemplified that they were not savages (WAM 1872: 26).

When speaking of the Iron Period, he stated that iron represented a higher state of civilization, yet at the same time, "savages" used it as well. He presented Persians, Hindus, and Chinese as higher state of civilizations because they used iron, while there were "barbarous" Kalmuks and Khirgis and the "savage" Ostyaks who made use of iron, too (WAM 1872: 26).

For those examples in Africa, he claimed that although the Kaffir and Hottentots
employed iron, their culture-level was not higher than the Mexicans and the Peruvians. Stevens quoted E.B. Tylor in *Trans. International Congr. Pre-hist. Archaeol.* 1868, pp.11-14' that “the Maylay, Tartar, and Africans were the closest comparison to the prehistoric people in their manufacture of iron weapons” (cf. WAM 1872: 27).

As for the making of pottery, Stevens affirmed that "lower savages" such as the Australians, Fuegians, and the Bushmen never knew how to make pottery until the Europeans arrived to show them. In comparison with the prehistoric people of Europe, Stevens continued that pottery was not to be found in the Drift with the flint implements. He concluded that pottery was evidence of distinguishing "the lower savage from the upper savage" but then he stated that Papuans and Fijians make low-level pottery while the Tahitians and New Zealanders do not make pottery at all (WAM 1872: 27). Thus this was his explanation of the systematic arrangement in the Blackmore Museum. The collection was classed by sub-divisions such as culture and country. For example, France was represented by those implements of the Stone Period found in the drift, caves, and surface soil, and displayed in separate sections. Therefore, he did not class the objects according to material, but to the circumstances of the find and its period. For comparative display, some implements from different classes were found in the case together.

Thus, the Museum was for constructing the prehistoric narrative of *man*. Stevens referred to two contemporary theories of *man*. The first theory looked upon the natives as degenerates from a more advanced culture. It was to declare that the present cultivated races had not degenerated. The second theory argued that the developed races were descendants of the natives. For Stevens, he affirmed that there should be a compromise between the two theories. His conclusion was, however, that *man* strove toward improvement not degradation (WAM 1872: 29).

In the Taunton Museum, E.B. Tylor referred to the flint weapons in the museum to complement his address on the development of civilization. He stressed the importance of the study of ethnology because it would help illuminate the state of prehistoric people in relation to contemporary primitive people (PSANHS 1874: 68).

By 1880, S.B. Dixon, a member of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, classed flint implements of the Archaeolithic and Neolithic periods into six types: 1. Celts, 2. Hammers, 3. Hammer-Stones, 4. Scrapers, 5. Finger-Flakes, 6. Flint Flakes and Cores. The paper aimed to show the analogous relations of Wiltshire’s flint implements to those used and made by New Zealand aborigines and natives of the Pacific islands. But this was to further demonstrate the progressive stages that England had reached from such an ignoble beginning. There was hope for the cultivation of the modern natives (WAM 1881: 102).

As the prehistoric narratives centered on the progress of civilization, the national matter was to get the message across that England was the epitome of civilization. Through these prehistoric narratives in the county archaeological society museums, the society members believed that England would bring good tidings of progress to the natives.

Thus, prehistoric narratives were created through various sources such as the questionnaires, excavations, drawings and photographs, and particular kinds of prehistoric archaeological objects such as celts in the county archaeological society museums. Prehistoric
narratives were thus told in the form of exhibitions and discourse. The society members were at first targeting the prehistoric narratives amongst themselves and the learned, but through the popular nature of the permanent buildings such as the castles, they started to cater for a wider audience. Lastly, the propagation of the Three-Age prehistoric narratives were for a national cause in which England was to be secured as the most progressive of all nations by the comparison and contrast of past narratives with present ones.

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2. 1867, 1872-4 1 bundle
3. 1875-1877 1 bundle
8. C1880-1898 (mainly 1898) 1 bundle
10. C 1880-1898 1 bundle
11. late 19C Undated letters and printed material 1 bundle

DD/SAS S/2721 Admin. papers of the S.A.N.H.S.

8. 1837 Catalogue of the library of Then Taunton & Somerset Institution. 2 docts
14. 1875-1907 Castle restoration and purchase fund accounts 6vols.
18. 1875-1893 Incl. opening of the museum by Viscount Bridport. 1 vol.
25. 1875-1906 Registers of additions to the library 1 vol.

Sørensen, M.L.S.
Stocking, G.W.


Sussex Archaeological Society Library
*BLA/1-39* Letters from Blaaauw to Lower.


Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society
*Committee Minutes* 1855-1905.

Wiltshire Heritage Library
*MS Wiltshire Magazine Vol I to Vol. XIX: Compiled by William Cunnington F.G.S.*
*WANHS Newspaper Reports 1853-1873.*
*WANHS Newspaper Reports 1876-1890.*
*Wilts Archaeological Society Meeting Programmes.*

Wiltshire Heritage Museum
*Donations Book.*

**NOTES**

1 This was called "Natural Theology" (Morrell & Thackray 1981: 226-29).
3 For social history see G. Best (1979).
4 See P. Levine (1986).
5 The British Association for the Advancement of Science was formed after a German model which was established since 1822. It was through the Yorkshire Philosophical Society that cooperation for the forming of the BAAS was conceived in 1831.
6 In his paper on ‘Craniology and the Adoption of the Three-Age System in Britain’, Michael Morse showed the influence of this system in the British Isles (1999). He stressed that Thomsen’s publication did not directly make an impact on the chronological arrangement of
prehistoric archaeological objects in the museums. Morse argued that the Three-Age System spread in Britain through the science of ethnology. In this section, I wish to explore deeper into how the System was converted into prehistoric narratives in the county archaeological society museums in England.

7 Also see T. Richards on dominance and control by England through intellectual methods (1991:40).