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**FROM WESSEX TO THE WORLD:
THINKING ABOUT SCALE IN ARCHAEOLOGY**

Abstract. Archaeology has always been torn between two desires: to say something fundamental and wide-ranging about human life in general, and to elucidate the humps and bumps in a particular locality and landscape. In this lecture, I examine the tension between general and particular, between human agency and social structure, and between different scales of explanation. I draw examples from my own work on landscapes and vernacular houses, and move from the particularities of places and regions such as Wessex to archaeological patterns on a world scale.

Prof Kelly, friends, colleagues and guests, first, thank you so much for coming today. My theme is perhaps best introduced by talking about two very different archaeological traditions that I encountered in my archaeological education. Before I went to University I read books like WG Hoskins' *The Making of the English Landscape* and *Fieldwork in Local History*, avidly attended meetings of local amateur archaeology societies, and dragged my reluctant family around obscure and damp corners of the Norfolk countryside guided by the obscure Gothic lettering on the Ordnance Survey map. This was an archaeology of local engagement; it was profoundly particular in its scope – what do the humps and bumps in that field mean? Why does this church stand on its own? Why is there a kink in that field boundary? It was also profoundly field-based, empirical and empiricist – it revelled in detailed observation and recording; the highest form of praise for a colleague was his or her muddy boots, the acuteness of their observation.

A second tradition became evident at University. Here, archaeology was conceived of primarily not as field activity, but as a rigorous intellectual enquiry into the human past. Its claims to intellectual credibility rested on a commitment not to muddy boots, but to rigour in theory and method. It was thoroughly theoretical and generalising in its tenor and scope, addressing a series of wide-ranging and often cross-cultural 'big questions' – the origins of agriculture, of social complexity, the nature of social power and its correlates in the archaeological record, social archaeology, the archaeology of mind. The specific theories used varied wildly, from different forms of Darwinian and cultural evolutionary theory to systems thinking to what then was termed the postprocessual critique. However, these wide and often acrimonious divergences concealed a deeper common discourse: the view of archaeology as a theoretically rigorous social science that developed theories and interpretations at a world scale was unquestioned.

These two traditions have remained equally important to me; the divergence between them is one that can be understood in different ways as we shall see, but which is primarily one of scale – particular place versus wider pattern, locality versus a world perspective. In anticipating my arrival at Southampton, it was the second of these traditions that I looked forward to – the reputation of Southampton Archaeology for a commitment to social archaeology, to the big questions of human origins, of European prehistory, and to the role of archaeology in the present.

My anticipation has been fully justified, but since coming here I have found that the first tradition, the understanding of the small scale and the locality, has been just as pleasurable and just as challenging. I'm thinking of places like Portchester, where the grim exterior of the Roman fort and medieval castle, looking out over the mudflats and estuary towards Portsmouth, conceals within its walls a late medieval palace, built but never used by the unfortunate Richard II. Or Selborne and nearby Titchborne, where Gilbert White's observations of the natural world were made possible, in part, by the particular geological location, that is the junction of the chalk band and greensand deposits. This junction is seen in the archaeology of the local building materials, the use of timber, flint, greensand and chalk in houses adjacent to one another.

However, I have found that the most evocative and intellectually arresting places, are found to the northwest, past Salisbury, on the Wessex chalk downlands. Here we find much more than vistas and viewsheds across rolling, open countryside. This is a landscape that carries tremendous cultural and symbolic freight – one cannot contemplate placenames like Nether Wallop, Compton Chamberlayne, Melbury Abbas, and Wimborne St Giles without invoking some perceived image of quintessential Englishness. As such, it has tremendous symbolic capital. It is also a backdrop for the great monuments of Stonehenge and Avebury, and the landscapes around those monuments. Finally, it stands at the centre of key developments in the development of the discipline of archaeology as a field method and indeed in its theoretical parameters. It contains material for a wider view in which archaeologists engage with wider questions of human development. Historically, it stood at the centre of key horizons in archaeological thinking, from Pitt Rivers, to OGS Crawford to Colin Renfrew to postprocessualism. This particular corner of Wessex, then, is much more than simply a pleasurable arena for a Sunday outing.

The chalk landscapes of Wessex, however, can be the starting point for an exploration not merely of a locality but of wider themes. The linear earthworks that criss-cross this area, such as Wansdyke and Bokerley Dyke, raise questions of territoriality, land division, and the complexity of the social forms that made the building of such monuments possible. Such wider themes are not confined to prehistory. The different forms of settlement, both living and deserted, raise more general issues about the relationship between nucleation, state formation, and political stratification. The changing forms of local buildings, built of regional materials but (as we shall see) part of a common national pattern, offer inferences about the cultural affiliations of their builders and owners, which tell us in turn about the rise of the socially middling farmer and of the rural capitalism that made the Industrial Revolution possible.

The starting-point of my lecture today, then, is the tension in archaeological thought between the small scale and the large scale, the specifics of the artefact and the archaeological site and the generalities of human development, between particularising and generalising explanations. It has been said that what characterises a discipline is not what people agree on, but rather what they disagree on: the key tensions and disjunctures that scholars come back to again and again. Obvious examples are between positivism and relativism in philosophy, between –emic and –etic approaches in cultural anthropology.

In what follows, I will:

First, trace something of the historical and discursive origins of this tension;

Second, propose that the most interesting and productive work in archaeology consists of a shuttling back and forth – a tacking, to use a maritime metaphor first developed by Alison Wylie -- between the different poles of this tension;

Third, discuss the issues raised through reflection on my current work on English vernacular houses;

Fourth, look at some of the ways archaeologists negotiate this tension in practice, with reference to the work of Southampton colleagues;

Fifth, make some concluding comments on the future of archaeological thought, with reference to the centrality of the study of human life, which I'll be trying to persuade you is much more than just a platitude.

General and Particular: Origins

The tension within archaeology between local and particular, general big questions and what is in the back yard, has gnawed at the heart of archaeology since its emergence as a distinct discipline.

The bundle of changes often referred to as 'The Renaissance' can be said to have hinged on two key intellectual developments of relevance. The first was that of a local antiquarianism, in this country from the efforts of the 16th century topographers Leland and Camden onwards. The early modern antiquarian was interested in his own backyard; hence the local maps, the parish and county histories and 'chorographies', the 'descriptions' and 'topographies'. Of course, such a description is an oversimplification; there was a wider agenda here, most explicitly in reference to an emergent nation-state; one thinks of Camden's 'descriptions' of England.

Following on in this antiquarian tradition, the barrow-diggers and others of the 18th and 19th centuries revelled in locality and place.

This antiaquarian and particularising strand had its strongest intellectual connections to history. Indeed, Rosemary Sweet has shown how the activities of 18th century antiquarians were of as much relevance to the development of the modern discipline of history as the more famous national narratives of Macaulay, Trevelyan and others. They could also be characterised as intellectually proximal to Romanticism, particularly in the work of William Stukeley, whose connections to Wordsworth are well known. They appealed to a specific sense of place, of *genius loci*, and to the emotional and aesthetic attachment to that place. Prof Stoye's work on Exeter city walls arguably stands in this tradition, and I like also to see this particularising sense in the artwork in the new building: Brian Grahame's canvasses are meditations on particular places, with the interaction of soil and light at their centre.

The second key intellectual development stemming from the Renaissance stood in direct distinction to that of the celebration of locality. What later generations have terms the colonial encounter posed a direct intellectual challenge to the Renaissance mind. European explorers, encountering the New World for the first time, met people who were recognisably human but nevertheless utterly different. These were peoples with other ways of life, who to the 16th century European lacked all the essentials of civilisation -- true religion, recognisable agriculture, systems of monarchy, writing, the arts of civility. Nevertheless, these peoples could act in noble and generous ways -- hence the myth of the noble savage. So the colonial exploration of the 16th and later centuries gave rise to the enduring concerns of anthropology, and to the inevitable observation: perhaps 'we' were like this in the past (as Prof Moser discusses in her *Ancestral Images*), perhaps 'we and they' were not utterly different, but instead represented different stages in a common evolutionary process affecting all humankind. Here, the intellectual connections were to a nascent anthropology and to evolutionary thought in general.

Such an intellectual strand led ultimately to the cultural evolution of Herbert Spencer (I'm going to set aside the thorny question of the relationship between Darwinian and sociocultural, or Spencerian, evolution) and the other great 19th century evolutionary thinkers, including Marx and Engels. This global and comparative understanding of humankind also found a natural partner in a confidence in Science with a capital S and in formal scientific method, and ultimately in positivism, in other words the belief that the study of humanity could and should be conducted according to the methods and principles of the natural sciences.

General and Particular are Dialectically Related

I am suggesting, then, that a key defining tension in the intellectual habits, what Foucault would call the underlying discursive rules, of archaeology, is a binary distinction between particular and general, which might be further broken down as follows (what follows is an oversimplification, and we could spend an hour debating each opposition: the point of the diagram it is simply to make the point that the distinction I've drawn in terms of scale of enquiry spreads or leaks into the whole

structure of archaeological enquiry and indeed beyond into intellectual life in general):

Particular/General
Emotion/Intellect
Romantic/Rational
Engaged/Cartesian
Human Agency/Social Structure
Event/Process
Short-term/Long-term
Local History/Comparative Anthropology
Arts/Sciences
Community/Professional
Periphery/Metropole

I now want to introduce a central point, itself fairly obvious and one I'm sure you have guessed at already: that in terms of their formal intellectual properties, these terms and the traditions and activities they stand for are dialectically related – in other words, each constitutes the other. The two archaeological traditions I've described may appear opposed, but they are also and at the same time interdependent. It's easy enough to demonstrate that any exploration of the particular is itself dependent on certain generalised ideas, for example categories of 'culture', 'assemblage', 'region' and 'place'. Conversely, general models of social development are always and already constrained by reference to particular ideas, cultures and places. Such an observation applies both to archaeology and its wider intellectual context.

For example, let's consider the distinction between periphery and metropole. I'm sure that my colleagues in English here are dying to point out that the modern idea of 'Wessex' is a creation of, most obviously, Thomas Hardy; and further, that when Hardy constructed his image of an unchanging rural landscape it was exactly that – a construction. Ralph Pite goes further and suggests that when you look closely at Hardy's 'descriptions' of the Wessex countryside and the inhabitants thereof he is borrowing from Baedeker guides – in other words, his evocation of locality is actually mediated and controlled through the metropolitan gaze. (I would add that I've been reading a number of novels set in Wessex recently, from Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* to Christopher Priest's *Wessex* to John Cowper Powys' *Wolf Solent*, and what all these books do is open the story or otherwise construct it around train journeys to and from London. In other words, a literature that presents itself as a celebration of locality, or arguably of provincial England, can only do so with reference to the metropole.)

My point here is that we can deconstruct these oppositions, in particular between the small scale and particular and large scale and general, in an intellectually pleasing manner. That doesn't necessarily help us, however, in addressing the tension between them in understanding what archaeologists actually do and suggesting a productive integration. One of my enduring interests as an archaeologist theorist has been not so much in the formal intellectual properties of particular theories or intellectual positions. I've always been more interested in their context – for example, how theories relate to and interact with particular patterns or traditions of field practice.

Crawford, The Wessex Landscape, and Archaeology in the Field

We've looked briefly at the work of Pitt Rivers in this context; let's look at another so-called 'founding father', OGS Crawford, who worked in Southampton between the wars and is often seen as the 'father of modern field archaeology' and who has, of course, given his name both to the old Crawford Building. Crawford's development of a field method was intimately connected with the landscape archaeology of the Wessex chalk downlands, and yet also moved outwards, to develop a set of general propositions both about field method and about archaeology on a wider, even world scale.

Crawford's method might be described as the blueprint for the particularist landscape archaeology I started this lecture discussing. In his great books *Wessex From the Air* and *Archaeology in the Field*, Crawford brought together an appreciation of air photography, the use of the Ordnance Survey map, and the use of documentary and place-name evidence, and codified these into what he called "field archaeology". He outlined a form of archaeology that did not involve excavation as the principal or primary mode of archaeological research and concentrated on the locality and its immediate questions. His method was to start in the local Record Office: he examined the six-inch Ordnance Survey map, and followed this by exploring, both through documents and by walking and indeed flying across the landscape. He used the analogy of palimpsest to understand the landscape -- an analogy that was used earlier by the historian Maitland, and popularised a few years later by the historian WG Hoskins, who added an aesthetic and indeed musical gloss.

Crawford was quite explicit that his whole method was "a modern, and primarily a British invention" and went on to suggest that field archaeology as he had defined it "is an essentially English form of sport," in part due to the presence of "persons of means, leisure and intelligence" living in the country. It was a method that was highly local, particular and small-scale in its focus -- it "assumes that one has plenty of time to devote to a region that may comprise no more than two or three parishes. It is perhaps a programme more suited for a permanent resident than a temporary visitor". An important point here is that this form of archaeological field method gave only a small role to excavation -- the study of maps and air photographs, of standing buildings, of the earthworks and surface scatters of the landscape, was just as if not more important. (It is worth noting in passing that field surveys of buildings etc. make this a particularly appropriate pursuit for enthusiastic groups of amateurs, more often than not engaged with their local landscape and working as part of a local society.)

The classic expositions of Crawford's methods were to be found, again, on the Wessex chalk downlands, and the classic expositions of such a method also in Hoskins' *Devon*; Chris Taylor's classic 1970 study of Dorset; more recently, Mick Aston's favoured landscapes, many known to us from Time Team.

Here was a field method that was particular, intensive, local, and arguably distinctively English. However, a common denominator in all these studies is the repeated reference-back to a series of elements that recur over and over again -- for example, the clearance of woodland, the creation of nucleated villages in some areas

but not others, the national phenomena of enclosure, as well as processes and institutions like manorialisation and parish formation. Hoskins paid overt homage to particularising explanations and Romantic habits of thought – he quoted William Blake who famously wrote: ‘To Generalise is to be an Idiot. To Particularise is the Alone Distinction of Merit’.

However, a closer reading of Crawford’s *Archaeology in the Field* shows that he did so with reference to a comparative ethnography. In other words, Crawford appreciated that archaeology was much more than the piecing-together of little bits of material to form particular narratives. Crawford worked around the world; as founder Editor of *Antiquity*, then as now the leading journal in the world, he took a world perspective. It is this latter perspective to his work that is often missed or underplayed by later historians of archaeology, in part I suggest because it superficially appears not to fit with his other achievements.

Following the example of Crawford, the origins and early history of Southampton Archaeology can be characterised as a productive negotiation between the themes of particular and general. The first Professor, Barry Cunliffe, used his 1970 inaugural to place archaeology firmly on the side of the sciences (he wrote and I quote that ‘even first-year students have to know something of matrix analysis and cybernetics’, an element of the curriculum that I am forced to admit is no longer required), but used as an example a piece of local landscape, ‘a stretch of the south Downs centred upon the [Hampshire] village of Chalton’. And he described the archaeological analysis of this landscape in terms traceable back to Crawford, of the ‘peeling away of one period of landscape from another’. The thrust of Prof Cunliffe’s talk was to discuss the issues of destruction, facilities and organisation facing archaeology, but the theme of general versus particular came out more centrally in the inaugural of his successor, Colin Renfrew, in 1973. Prof Renfrew referred to the commitment of the University to the archaeology of Wessex; I understand from my colleague Prof Champion that there was talk around this time of the established Chair being entitled ‘Wessex Archaeology’. However, his theme was resolutely large-scale, scientific and generalising: ‘what are the things that distinguish human culture from that of other species, which are unique to human experience? The irreversible growth in the size of settlement over the past 10,000 years...? The development of political institutions? The emergence of symbolic systems of communication such as writing?’ He illustrated these general themes with a visual representation of maps of the Wessex landscape superimposed with modified Thiessen polygons.

Scale in the Human Sciences

I now want to turn to the understanding of archaeology in the present, and I want to start with the cultural and social context and representation of archaeology. Now what I have characterised as a tension between two poles can be seen across the human sciences generally and indeed in the cultural and political context of modern life. We have established that, in terms of their formal intellectual qualities, general and particular are complementary rather than in opposition to one another. Just because they are philosophically congruent does not mean that they do not present issues and apparent tensions in terms of archaeology as a cultural practice. At heart, I fear I’m still an English empiricist, a bit like Crawford -- my interest in archaeological

theory, and in theory generally, has not primarily been a desire to delve deeply into the formal philosophical properties of systems of thought. Rather, I have always been interested in the way specific theories interact with wider understandings of the world and with 'practice' however one might wish to define that latter term. My interest here, then, is not so much in different scales of explanation in a purely theoretical sense, but rather in how the opposition between particular and general has been played out in intellectual and cultural life generally.

Archaeology has long occupied a very uneasy space in which its own view of itself, and others' views, differ widely. As Prof Moser has shown, much of the emotional and cultural appeal of the discipline comes most powerfully from a rhetoric of ancestry and of discovery. A similar pattern occurs in filmic representations of the English countryside – one example among many is the representation of the Kentish countryside in Powell and Pressburger's *A Canterbury Tale*, in which an archaeologist appears as the bearer of mystical truths about tradition and the soil. Film representations of archaeologists are adventurers or mystics, rarely scientific generalisers. Archaeologists themselves, however, like to think of themselves in very different terms. The intellectual credibility of the discipline rests upon very different grounds which stress science, system and method. Lewis Binford complained about the public perception that all an archaeologist had to do to succeed was to be lucky. There is a disjuncture, then, between internal and external perceptions of the discipline.

There is also a disjuncture between the desire to be wide-ranging on the one hand, and the thrust of many of the theoretical trends over the last two decades. Opposition to ideas of essentialism and critiques of foundational histories is central to postmodernism, postcolonial thinking and many strands of feminism, all of which have been profoundly influential in archaeology. As such, much thinking in the humanities undercuts and renders problematic any suggestion that the ultimate aim of empirical study is the elucidation of general truths about humankind. I have always felt that the epistemological critique of postmodern thinking – that it leads to easily to what has been termed a slippery relativism in which all views about the past are equal – is misconceived, and ironically rests on a partial and often wilful misreading of the relevant texts (as Derrida himself once commented). A more valid concern is that the postmodern critique has led, particularly in archaeology but also in history and arguably in literary studies, to a licence to return to a mindless particularism. Increasingly, much of archaeology seems to be degenerating into little studies of little fragments of pottery being ritually deposited in little actions by, it is implied, little people.

The wider world has not given up its confidence in the wide-ranging and large-scale. However carefully the criteria for the Research Assessment Criteria have been worded, it is too easy to vulgarise its talk of work of 'international quality' that is 'agenda-setting' into a preference for work that addresses larger-scale issues and a distaste for work that particularises. At a more popular level, the work of colleagues in the Textile Conservation Centre has been the subject of controversy on precisely this issue of scale: the study of 17th century women's pockets, it is implied, is not worthy of public funding. It is easy to ridicule this kind of news story as sloppy journalism, which it undoubtedly is, but my point is that it reflects a wider cultural perception that academic ignore at their peril.

I want to suggest a route through this tension, and a possible way forward for archaeology as a discipline, by turning to my own work, which is centred within historical archaeology, which I will define here as the archaeology of Europe and the world from the later Middle Ages to the Industrial Revolution. I suggest that here, we see the intellectual challenge of the issue of scale at its most acute. Historical archaeologists deal with the most fundamental and wide-ranging transition of all, variously packaged as the origins of the modern world, the feudal/capitalist transition, or the archaeology of European expansion and colonisation. Yet also and at the same time, much of historical archaeology is highly particularist. Medieval villages, parish churches, enclosure of the fields, are often studied as ends in themselves, and with reference moreover to an implicit story of ancestry and locality.

English Vernacular Houses

I'm currently trying to write a synthetic book telling the story of the traditional English house, from the Middle Ages through to c.1800. I thought this would be a simple book to write – it's material I should know well; there have been a plethora of regional studies in the last decade or so, but written within established ways of thinking and not demanding a major conceptual shift; the story is hardly one that has not been told before – indeed I told it myself from the perspective of one particular region, western Suffolk, thirteen years ago in *Housing Culture*. Inevitably, perhaps, such a simple task is becoming very difficult, and I want to relate those difficulties, and my proposed solution, in terms of the tension between general and particular.

The central elements in such a story are this. Many thousands of vernacular houses still stand in the English countryside. Through time, their form changes. Late medieval houses were built with a central hall open to the roof; much of my earlier work has been an exploration of how this space carried a heavy symbolic freight, was the focus of patterns of everyday life within the household, and echoed the great formal halls of those of higher social status. By 1600, the open hall had largely disappeared as part of a series of changes often referred to as the 'Great Rebuilding'. A range of house forms succeeded it, most with a chimney stack replacing the open hearth, and a ceiling running through the whole house; through the 16th and 17th centuries, houses become more privatised, with a greater stress on physical comfort. The conclusion of this story is the alleged end of local traditions in the face of Georgianisation, a process whose 'polite' manifestation has been explored in depth by Prof Arnold, and the Industrial Revolution.

Now such a story is often told with reference to one or more of a range of specific models. Maurice Barley told it in the 1960s with reference to geography and social diffusion – in other words, the closer to London and the higher the social status of the house, the more likely it was to be further along this process. Eric Mercer told it in the 1970s with reference to evolution and an implicitly Marxist account of the feudal/capitalist transition – medieval houses corresponded to a feudal social order, the symmetrical house built to national plans by socially middling farmers to that of rural capitalism. Henry Glassie, an American folklorist, told it in a variety of contexts across the globe, from colonial Virginia to Turkey to rural Ireland, as a story of loss, of the decline of the organic community and its replacement by modern society. I told

it in the 1990s with reference to social and cultural change – I posited a ‘process of closure’.

The first point to make is that all these models, including my own, tend to aggregate from the smallest human scale to a national and in the case of Glassie a world scale, from particulars to a general process. But the first point to make about any traditional house, when we first apprehend it, is that it represents the aggregation or the end result of many different actions on the part of the human beings that built it and lived in it.

Houses as Actions, Houses as Homes

We often forget that a medieval house that survives to this day was also, by definition, a 16th century house, a 17th century house, and so on. When traditional houses are analysed, the result is often a dry narrative of first phase building, additions, insertions, selective demolition and so on – the result is a frankly boring read (here is an example from my own work)... What is too easily forgotten is that each of these ‘phases’ represent a human action, or more accurately sequence of actions.

Often the agencies of builder and owner collide. A fascinating example of this came from Edward Robert’s study of 73-77 Winchester Street in the North Hampshire village of Overton. At first sight, analysis of the structure of this timber-framed house showed a standard pattern of having an open hall which then had a ceiling inserted into it. However, tree-ring dating came up with a date of 1540/1 for both the house and ceiling. Martin’s interpretation of this building, which I fully endorse, is that the house is one phase, built to the demands of a client who wanted a house in the new, fully ceiled pattern, but built by a carpenter who framed up the house in the old way and then ‘inserted’ the ceiling. We do not know the names of either carpenter or owner of this Overton house, but catch here a glimpse of human agency.

The traces of such human action are often as much those of use as they are of building. Let me give a second example from Yorkshire. Peter Brears has recorded the folk practice of the sweeping out of paved floors using sand as an abrasive. He records the housewife’s pride in this practice, their scattering of the sand in complex patterns, their scolding of the children if they disturbed the patterns before six in the evening.. Such patterns were swept out at the end of the day, but their trace remains, in the form of the heavily abraded and patinaed surfaces of the tiles and flagstones of the threshold.

Each house, then, represents a fossilised sequence of actions, the coming-together of a series of agencies. I’m not a fan of Heidegger, but this is very much what he has in mind when he talks of ‘dwelling’, making a home: routine, everyday actions that together express a profound understanding of human life and culture. It is notable that such things are stressed in the folklife tradition; archaeology and folklife shared a common intellectual ancestry, but diverged in the course of the intellectual development of the subject in the 20th century.

So how do we move to the broader scale? I want to suggest a very simple move: we think about the issue of scale not in terms of *a priori* categories, but rather as concrete

material interventions which can be studied empirically. In other words, we should ask the question, for each area and period we are dealing with, of how different scales came to be, see them as actively produced as the result of concrete historical processes. We need to study the historicity of scale – the way in which different cultures and historical periods construct different structures.

This point may seem excessively simple, but let me say that it first occurred to me after hearing a 50-minute seminar paper on Bourdieu's definition of habitus, agency and social structure, models which have I think rightly been especially influential in understanding the question of agency and social structure. After an extensive debate over their relative relationship, the suggestion was made that perhaps we were constructing such relationships in a cross-cultural manner?

So in a sense I'm going back to basics here – consider this period in terms of archaeological pattern and horizon, on a larger and longer-term scale than many of my colleagues in History would be comfortable with. I'm going to look at the changes of the 16th century in material terms, and also in human terms.

The Reformation of English Housing

I want to understand the this reformation not in historical terms as a moment of doctrinal debate but as an archaeological horizon – in other words, a moment of critical material change in the material world of the 16th century. I then want to ask how changes in domestic building can be understood and related to this horizon.

A key element of recent scholarship on the late medieval English church has been to stress its complexity and richness of meaning, and to examine its close ties with patterns of everyday life in the local and regional communities of which it was a part¹. A late medieval peasant saw the church as the largest and most important building in the local community, rivalled only by the manor house or local residence of the lord. Work in the fields, and the everyday rhythm of the working day and week, was regulated by the tolling of the church bell. The tower of the church was often visible from the furthest reaches of the parish territory; in some areas of lowland England it is possible to see six or more church towers from neighbouring parishes at any one time, and difficult to walk across the landscape without having sight of such towers. Ordinary people began their lives by being christened in the church font, and ended their lives by being buried in the churchyard. To traverse the churchyard on the way to church every Sunday was to pass by and even over the bones of their ancestors. The internal fabric and texture of the church gave material expression to the values of the community. Just as in the open fields, the space represented a complex structuring of rights and responsibilities, the chancel for example being the responsibility of the priest and the nave that of the parish respectively. The walls of the church were covered with pictures. These were of Biblical scenes, and/or had moral and allegorical content that attempted to give guidance to people's everyday lives and which reflected the construction of power in the medieval village – scenes of women 'gossips', portrayals of saints, a plough to be blessed at ploughing time, and so on.

¹ In what follows I draw on various recent works, including French, Gibbs and Kumin 1997; Kumin 1996; Duffy 1992 and 2000.

Frequently there would be graphic depictions of Purgatory and Hell, depicting in an age before photography precisely what fate awaited the sinful. Such images were repeated in the stained glass in the windows, filling the church with coloured light.

The impact of religious reform on any local parish church was quite sudden. The architectural fabric was left, but the experience of the internal space was abruptly transformed. Chantry chapels and other fixtures and fittings were removed and destroyed. Images of the Virgin Mary and of other saints were seen as idolatrous and smashed. Stained glass was destroyed. The internal walls of the church had their pictures covered over; the whole church was whitewashed.

It should be noted that the perceptual transformation produced by these changes hinged on text, in an age when the majority of the population could not read. The whitewashed walls were covered with the words of the Ten Commandments and the Royal coat of arms set up at the upper end of the church; thus, when the congregation faced the altar, they faced the Royal Coat of Arms as well. In the official doctrinal view, the Word of God was to be disseminated into hearts and minds not through visual imagery but by preaching. The liturgical mystery was reduced or abandoned – the rood screen with its pictures of saints cut down or dismantled, the view to the altar made clearer or the altar even moved into the nave, the orientation of the altar changed according to religious preference.

These changes were top-down; they were enforced by the power of the State. As such, they were a centralising force, producing a heightened consciousness of the nation-state as opposed to the individual, household and community. Local communities resisted passively or actively. The physical evidence of Reformation is very clear; much of the documentary evidence comes from extensive and systematic surveys, commissioned by the State through the apparatus of the established Church. Local priests were directed to comply and ensuing correspondence details enforcement where priests and communities were less than willing. It was also economically destabilising: people less willing to put money into Church

Reformation of the parish church is followed, then, by two centuries in which the middling sort of people seek to continuously improve their houses using a local and vernacular idiom. So we see three generations of rebuilding in the English countryside after 1560 – but in a manner which is not complete rejection of earlier architectural models, nor is it complete acceptance of what was prescribed for the middling sort by their social superiors. The later 16th and 17th centuries saw the production and circulation of printed books of different genres, getting steadily cheaper in price. One of these genres was the advice book, often written by a man of the gentry classes, but explicitly addressed to both women and men of the middling sort. The gentry were free in dispensing advice on farming, household affairs, the management of family life, table manners. One such writer was Gervase Markham, who wrote on how to be a gentleman's servant, how to be a housewife, garden design, the art of horsemanship, and the practice of 'husbandry' (a word that in the 17th century denoted not just farming but also the management of the household).

Markham's *The English Husbandman* included an idealised plan of a farmhouse. In size, it is appropriate to a gentry house rather than a house of the middling sort, and in form, it remains steadfastly traditional, with a central hall, chimney stack placed to

one side, and extensive and rambling wings. Socially middling farmers read Markham's advice and proceeded to build houses that expressed their view of their world, not that prescribed for them. It was not a rejection of Markham's model, but nor was it complete acceptance. Their houses tended to be more compact, in part a function of their lesser size and status, but also a choice on their part – plenty of late medieval houses had had Markham's rambling wings.

What I am arguing, then, is that any individual house built in the late 16th and 17th century is a careful and nuanced expression of a balance between national patterns on the one hand, and local models on the other. This balance was an enduring one. It lasted for a century and a half, until a second horizon can be discerned, that of the so-called 'death of vernacular' and the deployment of symmetrical, Georgian forms of building.

What I want to do in the longer term is to expand this question of scale still further. Vernacular building in England, and the social lives of the people that lived and worked in those buildings, did not take place in a vacuum. People migrated, to Ireland and to the New World, to the Caribbean where their houses are being studied by Roger Leech, to Virginia and New England. They brought with them ideas of appropriate ways of living which they expressed in the form of their houses, and in the way they carved up the wider landscape. The 'archaeology of the Atlantic world' then, offers a field to explore a range of scales, from the decision of a settler in Protestant Ireland to build an unfortified rather than a fortified house, through to an understanding of how definitions of Englishness and Britishness, and their material expression, came to be created across an area spanning thousands of kilometres. And this wider scale then reacts back on local communities – sundial.

The work of my colleagues in the Centre for Maritime Archaeology is critical here in understanding the archaeology of this transition. Jon Adams' study of late medieval and early modern ship technology has shown ships not as Tardis-like teleporters, but as sites and communities, loci of social action in their own right, and in analysing maritime cultural landscapes at different scales, from Fraser Sturt on the Meolithic Fenlands to Lucy Blue at the Roman port at Quseir.

Scale at Southampton

Now what I've tried to do in this example is to take the abstract question of what scale should archaeologists work at and turn it round into an empirical question, for any area or period, of what forces were at work, at what level, and how were these understood and worked through materially. Such an analysis, then, involves a commitment to empirical study, to an understanding of theory not as a recipe-book to be followed blindly but rather as a tool-kit to be deployed in different contexts, and to a reflexive 'tacking' back-and-forth between particular and general, small and large scale, agency and structure. I want to suggest that it is precisely such a commitment that is distinctive to Southampton Archaeology, and can be seen as a common thread running through everything that we do. I don't have time to address all areas of Southampton research, so let me ask colleagues' forgiveness if I pick out four examples.

First, the archaeology of the body and of the senses. Colleagues bring together the scientific study of human skeletal remains with an understanding of the body from contemporary social theory. They do this from a variety of perspectives, from Sofaer's and Zakrzewski's work on human skeletal remains, to Hamilakis' work on the 'consuming body' and archaeologies of the sense. Hinton's *Gold and Gilt, Pots and Pins* is not a study of objects-in-themselves; rather, its aim is 'to examine some of the ways in which people in medieval Britain represented themselves'.

Second, and following on from this, the use of archaeological science to investigate the meanings of human life. Where Colin Renfrew described a social archaeology in terms of Thiessen polygons drawn from the abstracted space of the map, now David Wheatley described an Avebury landscape in terms of what human beings can see, both looking in and looking out. The techniques of materials science are used by Andy Jones to investigate those most human of attributes -- colour, art, memory. Graeme Earl's use of virtual reality is so much more than pretty pictures -- it gives a reflexive understanding of the role of the visual in interpretation, again in human terms. The Laboratory for Zooarchaeological Research under the leadership of Jaco Weinstock is committed to the study of the triangle of relationships between humans, animals and the environment.

Third, an understanding of the centrality of issues of scale to an understanding of the Classical world and the Roman Empire. Prof Keay and Drs Revell and Izzet are looking at the relationship between identities on the one hand and the systems and processes on the very largest scale on the other that make up one of the oldest problems known to the humanities -- the rise and fall of the Classical world system. My predecessor David Peacock, with David Williams, continues his work on amphorae and trade patterns, again, moving from the minutiae of pottery fabrics to economic questions that span the Mediterranean and beyond.

Fourth, perhaps the most fundamental way in which colleagues are addressing this issue is in the Centre for the Archaeology of Human Origins. Research takes questions that the humanities engage with in an abstracted and philosophical sense -- what makes us human, is there a foundational basis for human behaviour and action -- and transforms those questions into empirical ones. I don't think it is any coincidence that human origins research faces some of the most profound methodological challenges in terms of the question of scale. Superficially dry questions, for example of dating and the pace of environmental change, become theoretically loaded issues in this perspective. One can take that most archetypal of stone tools -- a handaxe -- and reconstruct with great precision the sequence of individual actions that led to its creation. At the same time, it removes that most foundational of assumptions -- that one is dealing with other human beings.

Conclusion

In this lecture, I have looked at issues of scale in enquiry about the past, and I have focussed on the question of particular understandings versus generalising explanation. I've tried to show how in various ways, both my own research and those of colleagues is exploring this apparent contradiction and showing how these apparent alternatives

are in fact interdependent: how different ranges of explanation each construct and enable the others.

It is a cliché that a common thread here is a commitment to understanding of human life: that behind the pots, the stones and bones, lie the desires, intentions and beliefs of countless dead generations, and that the one true goal of archaeology and indeed of the humanities in general is to better understand those human lives past and present. We may question essentialist notions of a common humanity, some of us may deride the notion of a biological or otherwise essential base-line from which to construct notions of fundamental human nature, but that does not lessen the imperative to understand our material in human terms.

Such an imperative is at least partly political in nature. An urge to generalise that rides roughshod over particular cultures and sequences is more than simply bad archaeology. The World Archaeological Congress held at Southampton in 1986 rested intellectually not simply on a commitment to a politically situated archaeology, but also on a commitment to the archaeology of particular traditions and places, and in particular to recognition of the danger that when Western science sought to use a broad sweep of evidence to generalise, it risked turning the heritage of other peoples and places into a playground for Western science. Again, I think it's entirely characteristic of Southampton Archaeology that it has developed and moved forward this insight from a generalised political critique that could too easily slide into passivity – the moral high ground of the uninvolved -- into a positive, concrete, theoretically informed programme of 'community archaeology' being taken forward by both Prof Moser and Dr Marshall and others.

What I have tried to show in this lecture is a distinctive contribution of Archaeology to the understanding of humanity. Archaeologists study the whole range of questions that give shape and purpose to the humanities -- the relative importance of the individual and society, the question of biology versus 'culture' in the human make-up, the place of ideas like aesthetics and morality in human life, the ways in which humans choose to represent the past lives of their ancestors. But we do so through rigorous empirical enquiry, and in particular by the study of these questions not as abstracted theoretical issues, but rather as concrete archaeological problems.

When we pick up a handaxe or a fragment of Bronze Age pottery, or we walk around a 17th century farmhouse or across the Wessex landscape, we are working at the scale of the local and the particular. But when we address what we handle and see in human terms, we move to a wider scale, and ultimately to the wide-ranging issues without which the humanities are an irrelevance, and archaeology merely the meaningless accumulation of old junk. My appeal is to move from Wessex to the world and back again, from a social archaeology to an archaeology of human life.

Thank you for listening.