

THE PARKERS OF HEYTESBURY: ARCHAEOLOGICAL PIONEERS

Paul Everill

Paul Everill, Department of Archaeology, University of Winchester, Winchester SO22 4NR, UK.
E-mail: paul.everill@winchester.ac.uk

This paper uses original documentary evidence held in the archives of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society in Devizes to reassess the work of William Cunnington, FSA, carried out on behalf of Sir Richard Colt Hoare, and the contribution of his two principal excavators, Stephen and John Parker, of Heytesbury, in Wiltshire. Previously the Parkers have been regarded as little more than regular labourers on Cunnington's pioneering excavations; the evidence now suggests that they (and in particular John) were, in fact, key to the success of Cunnington's work. By the time of Cunnington's death in 1810, John Parker was identifying new sites on the Wiltshire Downs and, on occasion, taking sole responsibility for excavating and interpreting them. After 1810 Hoare sponsored few further excavations and, though John was employed on at least one occasion, in 1814, the Parkers dropped back into obscurity and poverty without the regular employment, and perhaps protection, provided by Cunnington. Although John's obituary in 1867 described him as Cunnington's 'principal pioneer', no research has previously been undertaken that specifically considers the contribution of the Parkers in those early British excavations. This paper seeks to redress that oversight.

Histories of archaeology almost invariably focus on the role of wealthy, educated men and women in the development of the field techniques and the production of knowledge. While it is undeniable that these individuals were, in many senses, the instigators of archaeological endeavour and interest, traditional histories of our discipline ignore the central contribution of the ordinary excavators – the majority of whom were drawn from amongst agricultural labourers who had spent a lifetime working with, and developing an understanding of, soil.

Principal amongst these forgotten pioneers must be Stephen and John Parker, the two labourers employed by William Cunnington on all his excavations between 1801 and his death at the end of 1810 (fig 1). Cunnington, having previously found some of the labourers unreliable and more interested in the prospect of treasure, took the unusual step of establishing the Parkers as his regular excavators, and ultimately conferring a degree of autonomy and responsibility on them. Until now, our understanding of the role of the Parkers comes only from biographies of Cunnington¹ and Sir Richard Colt Hoare;² however, the author's recent research at the Wiltshire Heritage Museum in Devizes, maintained by the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, has enabled a new analysis of the relationship between Cunnington and the Parkers, and of the exact

1. Cunnington 1975.

2. Woodbridge 1970.



Fig 1. Cunnington and Hoare supervising the excavation of a barrow on Normanton Down, 1805. This watercolour, by Phillip Crocker, is the only illustration to show Cunnington's labourers – almost certainly the Parkers. *Photograph*: reproduced with the permission of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society

nature of their employment and their archaeological skill. It is the intention of this paper to relate several key aspects of this research, to establish the importance of the Parkers in the story of archaeology and, for the first time, to provide information on the location of key documents cited in order to aid future research on the subject.

It is not clear exactly when Stephen Parker, the father of John, was first employed by Cunnington, but John's obituary in the *Salisbury and Devizes Journal* of 23 May 1867 states that 'His name is favourably mentioned in Sir R C Hoare's "Ancient Wiltshire" as the principal pioneer engaged by Mr Cunnington, of Heytesbury, in 1801, and as having assisted him for several years in his interesting discoveries of British and other antiquities.' A further clue is present in a small, handwritten note placed within the pages of Book One of Cunnington's manuscripts for Hoare, which formed the basis of the eventual publication of *Ancient Wiltshire*. This note dates from 1808, but refers to the excavation of a barrow in Ashton Valley in 1801. Re-excavating the barrow in January 1808, Cunnington evidently noticed that the bones had been previously disturbed and not reported to him. He writes that this burial:

had been broken into by the rascals I employed to open it seven years ago – At that find those employed conceived that it contained treasure – therefore opened it themselves but being disappointed covered it up + told me there was nothing. I do not charge John with this as he was not there, nor am I quite clear that Stephen was.³

The implication of this note, in tandem with John's obituary, is that the events described probably took place before John's employment, but that Stephen had quite likely been employed by Cunnington before 1801.

It is not clear exactly why the Parkers were selected for this archaeological work, largely because the early letters very rarely refer to them by name, but more often simply as 'the men', 'the labourers', 'the spade men', 'the barrow men' or 'the pioneers'. However, it is evident that Cunnington wanted careful excavators and, most importantly, men he could trust in his absence. Unlike the majority of his peers, he also appears to have taken the time to get to know people of lower social status than himself. Cunnington was no aristocrat but, as an educated middle-class merchant, would have been a prominent figure within the village of Heytesbury, in Wiltshire, where he lived and worked. His relationship with the Parkers appears to have transcended that of employer and employees and by the middle of the decade of their work together he writes of the Parkers with great warmth. But this was not unusual for a man whose epitaph includes reference to his role as 'benefactor of the poor'. Indeed, a letter of August 1800 from the Baronet of Heytesbury, Sir William a'Court, asks Cunnington to find out if his tenants intended to quit his farm at the expiration of their lease, and is optimistic that Cunnington will get an answer from them as he had 'always professed [himself] a friend to the family of Flowers + [had] interested [himself] about them on several occasions'.⁴ This friendship with the Flower family takes on an added significance when one considers that John Parker's sister Mary had two illegitimate children between 1806 and 1813, both of whom were given the middle name Flower.⁵ It seems possible that it was through a mutual acquaintance with the Flowers that the Parkers were recommended to Cunnington. In March 1802 Stephen also felt able to ask his employer to intercede on behalf of his

3. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2594, Book 1, between pp 36 and 37.

4. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2598, letter 52.

5. C Parker, pers comm.

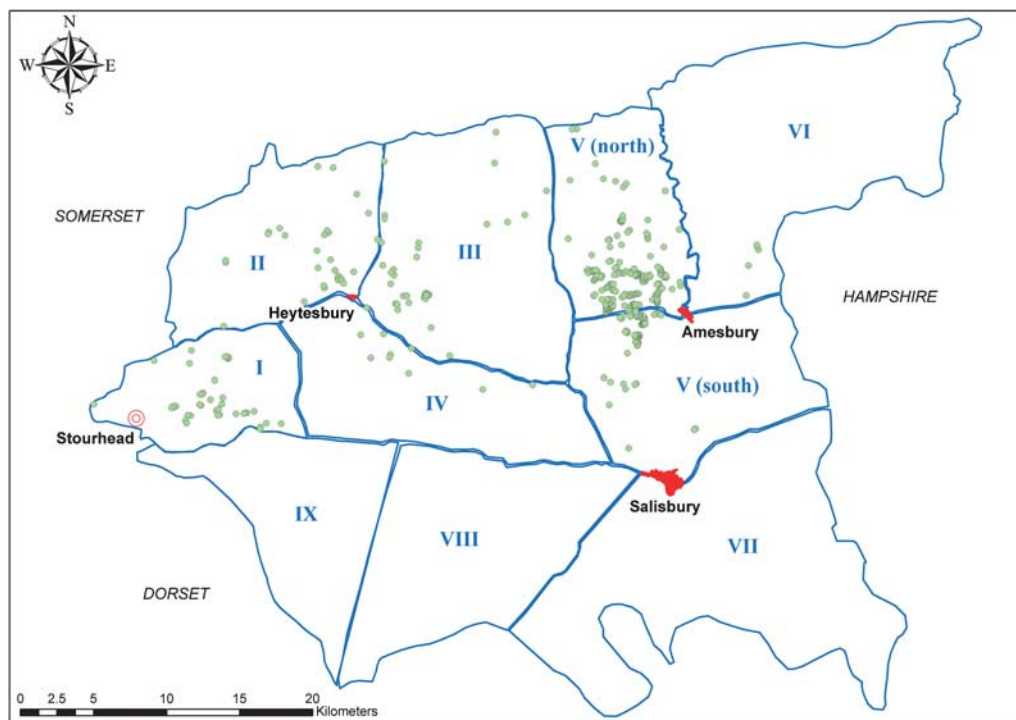


Fig 2. The nine stations of south Wiltshire into which the text of the first fascicule of *Ancient Wiltshire* is divided, showing approximately 400 barrows excavated by Cunnington and the Parkers. *Drawing: author*

eldest son, also Stephen, who had been sentenced to death at Winchester gaol for stealing a pig. Cunnington wrote to Sir William a'Court to ask him to speak to the judge on behalf of the Parkers,⁶ and Stephen's sentence was commuted to transportation to Australia.

By the end of May 1801 Cunnington remarked to the Revd Thomas Leman of Bath that he had opened ten barrows within the previous twelve months,⁷ but at this stage the work was funded on occasion by H P Wyndham, the Revd Coxe or by Cunnington himself, and was on a much smaller scale than it was to become (fig 2). By January 1802, before Hoare became involved in the excavations, Cunnington and the Parkers – on occasion supported by other workmen – had worked at twenty-six barrows.⁸ At that time Coxe wrote to Cunnington regarding the expense of the work:

It strikes me that these excavations must cost you a considerable sum of money: I wish therefore that a subscription was set on foot for that purpose and as an earnest, I beg you will for the present put me down as your debtor for a guinea towards continuing the excavations of the long Barrow at Tilshead.⁹

6. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2598, letter 54.

7. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2598, letter 193.

8. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2595, Book 1.

9. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Coxe letter 16.

Of course the price of this financial support was a degree of intellectual ownership, and Cunnington found himself fending off requests for access to the material. In August 1802 Coxe wrote once more to Cunnington on the subject: 'I am much obliged to you for your delicacy in declining to give the drawing of the Urn which was found at Stonehenge, because the Barrow was opened at my expense.'¹⁰

By 1803, Cunnington had been introduced to Hoare by Coxe and Wyndham, and found himself in the middle of competing interests. In April 1803 he was forced to write to an ambitious young antiquary, John Britton, to explain a perceived slight:

I only remember saying that M^f Coxe requested I would not communicate my discoveries to any one. Now only consider my situation with M^f Coxe + Sir Rich^d Hoare – the former has paid a great deal towards the expenses of opening several Barrows during this last year, +the latter offers to pay the expenses, viz, for the labourers, in opening Barrows, examining camps etc etc in future.¹¹

Hoare, full of enthusiasm for his plans to publish the results of Cunnington's excavations in a series of volumes, took sole responsibility for the funding during 1803, and by 1804 the excavations had entered a new phase. From this time Cunnington's letters are far more frequent and detailed, as he reports back to his patron, and consequently the Parkers are also more commonly referred to by name.

At the beginning of November 1804, the Parkers had been working at Sherrington Barrow, near Heytesbury, for a week when Cunnington reported to Hoare that Wyndham had visited and suggested it was a Saxon barrow. 'Against this opinion Stephen and John and myself entered our protest; we had no objection to the interments on the top of the Barrow being Saxon or what they pleased, but contended it was a British Tumulus.'¹² This is the first occasion in which the Parkers are credited with sufficient skill and expertise to offer an opinion based on a stratigraphic understanding of the archaeology, and consequently being able to differentiate between primary and secondary burials. However, when Hoare edited this account for *Ancient Wiltshire* he removed any reference to the Parkers being involved in the discussion.

If the removal of the Parkers from the story of Sherrington was a consequence of societal, rather than prosaic, considerations, it did not stop Hoare from having special barrow knives made in Salisbury and presented to the Parkers. These knives were designed by Hoare and consisted of a strong, flat blade, measuring 7 inches long and up to 2 inches wide (fig 3). It is interesting to note that Mortimer Wheeler recommended an almost identical implement in *Archaeology from the Earth*.¹³ It is known from Cunnington's letters and Hoare's *Tumuli Wiltunenses*¹⁴ that the Parkers made use of a mason's trowel – the first ever known reference to this tool on an archaeological site being in a letter from Cunnington in 1808¹⁵ – but the knives were considered better for some aspects of excavation. On a particularly wet Saturday at the end of November 1804, the Parkers returned to Heytesbury from site, where Cunnington 'presented one of the knives to John who is not a little proud of this Badge of his

10. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Coxe letter 28.

11. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2600, Britton letter 7.

12. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2594, Book 1, 51.

13. Wheeler 1954.

14. Hoare 1829.

15. Everill 2009.

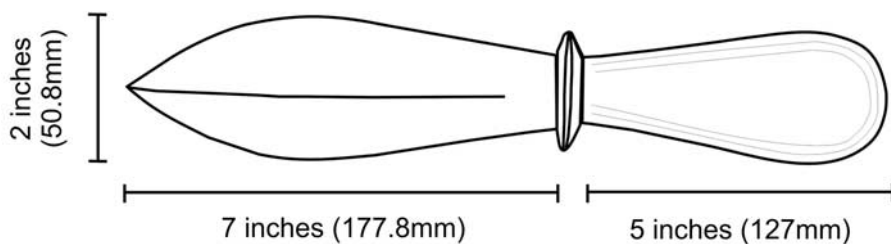


Fig 3. The barrow knife designed by Hoare. *Drawing*: author, from the original illustration in *Tumuli Wiltunenses* (Hoare 1829, 8)

office. I have desired him to get a leather case for it. Stephen desired that I will keep the other till wanted.¹⁶

Early in 1806 Hoare requested a survey of Stonehenge and its environs, as well as other sites, from Phillip Crocker – the young and talented surveyor and draughtsman who produced the illustrations for *Ancient Wiltshire*. In March, John was despatched to assist Crocker in this work by fixing his rods and dragging the chain.¹⁷ On 14 March 1806, Crocker wrote to Cunnington reporting their work and ended by writing ‘We are very loath to part with John.’¹⁸ The invoice from A Crocker & Sons to Hoare shows that John Parker was paid 3s 6d a day for this work,¹⁹ which compares very favourably with the 2s 6d that Pitt Rivers paid his workmen eighty years later. Unfortunately it is not clear from the letters whether this was the standard rate for the Parkers’ normal duties; however, in December 1809 Hoare wrote to Cunnington ‘I mean to give our three men’ – as by this stage the Parkers appear to have been joined on occasion by a third, unnamed regular – ‘10/6 each at Xmas – if they mend their manners.’²⁰ This was not an insubstantial amount and Crocker’s other invoices to Hoare provide a useful comparison – for example, the cost of his three-day stay at the Inn at Heytesbury, from 5 April 1810, including stabling for his horse, was 19s 9d.²¹ There is also some indication of the annual costs incurred by Cunnington and repaid by Hoare – of which the workmen’s wages must have been a significant percentage – when the latter wrote, in May 1806: ‘inclosed are drafts for last years expences. I should not wish to exceed £50 this year as my expences in furnishing my House &c have nearly drained my purse.’²²

The normal duties of the Parkers, certainly in the early years of their employment, were largely limited to excavation. However, they were often expected to report their findings back to Cunnington, who never felt it necessary to be constantly supervising their work. There is a rare insight into their working conditions in one of Hoare’s notebooks, in which he describes his visit to the ‘giant’ barrow near Marden in 1807. It was of such a size

16. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 3.

17. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 15.

18. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Crocker letter 11.

19. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.726, Hoare’s accounts.

20. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 80.

21. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.726, Hoare’s accounts.

22. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 25.

that Cunnington had taken on six extra workmen, supervised by the Parkers, but their endeavour was still unsuccessful. Hoare wrote, rather dispassionately, that:

From the moisture of the substratum of sand, I have much doubt if we shall be able effectually to explore it. Our workmen had a most providential escape, by being taken off to another spot by Mr Cunnington; when, during their absence, several ton weight fell in, at a time when the floor of the barrow was nearly uncovered ... the manouveres of the day being interrupted by the heavy fall of earth, I left Marden and ascended the chalk hills.²³

John's apparent enthusiasm and interest in his archaeological work seems only to have been dented by several unsuccessful attempts on the 'Giant of Marden' after which Hoare accused him of 'sulking fits',²⁴ and later demanded that John 'must be in sweet temper & await my pleasure for I will have no sulks'.²⁵ The difficult relationship between John and the demanding aristocrat is best illustrated by events in late 1809, by which time John was being despatched on regular travels around the Wiltshire countryside to identify possible new sites. It seems that his employers paid a bonus to him for each new earthwork discovered, as Hoare wrote to Cunnington in November 1809: 'I must come over this month for a day to you to examine the newly discovered villages, and place them properly on our map. John will make money enough to build one if he goes on as prosperously as he has hitherto done.'²⁶ Later that month, Cunnington replied to Hoare, writing that 'I find John discovered another village near Bonham, in a piece of ploughed ground he picked up some pieces of pottery, brick flues &c. I wonder he did not tell, or send word to you.'²⁷ Bonham being very close to Hoare's home at Stourhead, he clearly felt aggrieved by this. 'John Parker seems to encrease in stupidity as he grows in years', he wrote, 'for he said nothing to me about his discoveries at Bonham.'²⁸ Cunnington felt this was unnecessarily harsh, and his reply offers the closest to a rebuke of his patron to appear in any of the letters: 'John thinks you blame him wrongfully because you told him that you knew of every thing around your house.'²⁹

Aside from the occasional friction with Hoare, John's enthusiasm and developing archaeological skill – and the dependence placed on him by his employers – is a feature of much of the correspondence between Cunnington and Hoare. The ability of both Stephen and John to offer an archaeological interpretation was referred to as early as 1804, during their work at Sherrington, and by 1806 John was not only locating new sites, but also excavating and interpreting them single-handedly. Hoare wrote to Cunnington in May 1806 describing one such occasion:

John, having observed three large erect stones placed in a straight line at about the intervals of 50 yards, wished to examine their vicinity, as supposing them Indexes to some great event. He overturned one of the stones, but discovered nothing. It then struck him they might have been placed there to direct the eye to the Graves of the Mighty: one of which he fancied he had discovered in a small elevation of

23. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.740, Notebook: Oct 1807, 19–23.

24. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 17.

25. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 19.

26. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 79.

27. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2599, loose letter.

28. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 81.

29. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 82.

earth mixed with stones with an erect stone in the centre – & he was not mistaken, as on opening it he discovered this urn, entire with its mouth downward on a coarse flagstone surrounded with long stones placed on end.³⁰

In summer 1806, during a spell in Marlborough, Cunnington found himself dependent on John's common-sense approach to excavation. He wrote to Hoare:

my landlord whom you have made an Antiquarian, had recently discovered a wall on the East side of his Garden which he conceived to have been the Wall of which he had read an account in an old history of England, said to have been discovered near the Mount – but on clearing away the Earth from this supposed ancient Roman Brick wall unfortunately John pronounced it modern, insisting that the Bricks were Seymerian or of the same date with the House, & as I could not contradict him we moved from this spot.³¹

The following year, the Parkers had been working at a barrow while Cunnington remained at home with a cold. His letter to Hoare clearly conveys John's excitement upon their return:

Yesterday I was on tiptoe expecting Stephen and John on their arrival with your account of the October meeting and your present of Game and Fossils half cured my cold. Stephen & John were highly delighted in narrating their discoveries. Had John found a purse of Guineas he could not have been better pleased.³²

As well as enthusiasm and the ability to apply common sense to archaeological problems, both John and his father were gaining an unprecedented level of experience. In July 1808, during excavations on Normanton Down, Cunnington remarked that 'our men, from having more experience in this business' than Stukeley, had found evidence that he had missed.³³ This experience in the field was to result in John Parker being the first to prove that Wansdyke post-dated the Roman road next to it, eighty years before General Pitt Rivers is credited with the same conclusion. In April 1809, John was sent to Lacock with Cunnington's chaise and, when illness prevented the latter from joining him the next day, John continued with the planned work on his own. Cunnington wrote: 'I desired him to make some sections at the junction of the Wansdyke with the Roman road, in consequence he has completely ascertained that the Wansdyke cut through the Roman road, for in turning the Vallum of the former he came to the original Turf covering the curved Roman road &c &c.'³⁴

John's very straightforward interpretation of the evidence was met with some scepticism from Hoare:

John Parker has by means of his spade overturned Mr Leman's system respecting Wansdyke, which he imagined to have been formed by the Belgae. I wish you could have attended there for by your better judgement I should have received more satisfactory accounts and I am very anxious to hear about the ditch he discovered.³⁵

30. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 25.

31. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2596, Book 8, 35.

32. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2600, Hoare letter 19.

33. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2596, Book 10, 1.

34. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 65.

35. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 52.

It seems that this response from Hoare planted doubt in Cunnington's mind and it is clear that neither he nor Hoare fully appreciated John's simple stratigraphic reasoning – despite Grinsell's assertion that Cunnington had been convinced by John's excavation.³⁶ In fact, Cunnington's subsequent assessment, based purely on a visual study, was so reliant on supposition that its publication in *Ancient Wiltshire*, without mention of John's findings, ultimately led to it being discounted as unreliable. Cunnington's letter to Hoare, in October 1809, begins 'although John has completely failed in proving the Roman road anterior to the Wansdike by digging – yet from what I saw I cannot hesitate a moment in pronouncing the Wansdike a posterior work',³⁷ before embarking on a description of his overlong and convoluted reasoning.

Despite their occasional uncertainty regarding his methods – methods which seem very familiar to a modern archaeologist, despite their undoubtedly primitive nature – Cunnington and Hoare did recognize the skill of John and his father, Stephen. In autumn 1806, the Revd Edward Duke proposed opening several barrows on his land on Lake Down, south of Stonehenge, and requested the help of Cunnington and Hoare. The latter wrote to Cunnington: 'Mr Duke is impatient to know when we begin our operations that he may take his first lesson – I think we must let him have one of our experienced men to show his apprentices the right path, as well as prevent the internments &c being deranged & destroyed.'³⁸ Three weeks later Hoare wrote again, informing Cunnington that Duke planned to cover the costs of the excavation as he intended to keep the finds, and that 'he seems very anxious to obey orders and I hope he will turn out an apt & useful coadjutor'.³⁹ This financial input also bought Duke the right to publish material resulting from the excavations, which he did in a short article in the *Antiquarian and Topographical Cabinet* in 1809.⁴⁰ However, Cunnington's more expert, and far more detailed, account appeared in *Ancient Wiltshire* the following year. The excavations began at the end of October 1806, on barrows known locally as the Prophets; Cunnington was present initially, but left the Parkers to supervise the work. Writing on 30 October, Cunnington joked: 'I am just returned from Lake Downs & although I have been among the Prophets I have not caught the spirit of Prophecy', before adding as a footnote: 'Stephen and John pretend to this gift + predict that our new disciple will soon tire of opening Barrows.'⁴¹ On 1 November, Duke wrote to inform Cunnington that he had 'detained the men for a couple of days more',⁴² before writing again on 5 November 1806 to say:

for your advice + assistance I am much obliged to you, and you will allow me to testify the satisfaction I have received from the conduct of your two men, which has been that, during the time they have been under my employ, which ought ever to be the conduct of good labourers.⁴³

The work at Lake Down was the first time that the Parkers were employed by someone other than Cunnington and Hoare for their archaeological expertise, though the work

36. Grinsell 1958, 285.

37. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2596, Book 11, 9.

38. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letter 28.

39. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597, Hoare letters 30 and 31.

40. Duke 1807–11, v, unpaginated, 'British antiquities, Wiltshire'.

41. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2596, Book 13, 1.

42. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2598, letter 57.

43. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2598, letter 58.

was effectively directed by the former. However, in 1807, the Parkers travelled beyond Wiltshire, into the 'strange country'⁴⁴ of Hampshire, to excavate a site without Cunnington. On 30 June of that year, the Revd Richard Iremonger of Wherwell wrote to Cunnington outlining his plans for a campaign of excavation at Old Winchester Hill, Hampshire. He went on to write: 'You will I trust not think me of great intrusion in requesting the assistance of your Wiltshire labourers on this occasion, for my Hampshire men have disgraced themselves by their exorbitant demands + I am confident that the expenses of their journey will be amply repaid by their superior skill + alacrity.'⁴⁵ It is clear from the evidence that, contrary to claims that the barrows on Old Winchester Hill were excavated 'on behalf of the Cunningtons' in July 1807,⁴⁶ Cunnington himself never visited the site, and only wrote an interpretation of the evidence after Iremonger had requested his opinion. The actual excavations (among the very first barrow excavations in Hampshire) were, however, undertaken by the Parkers and their verbal descriptions, with Crocker's sketches, were the only record that Cunnington had at his disposal.

Following Cunnington's death, on 31 December 1810, few further archaeological excavations were commissioned by Hoare. The work that was undertaken on his behalf was of a greatly reduced quality, providing a further illustration, if any were needed, of just how far ahead of his contemporaries Cunnington had been and the extent to which Hoare was dependent on him. Men such as Dean Merewether and the Revd John Skinner were inspired to take up the challenge of the barrows, but without the talent for excavation that Cunnington had so ably demonstrated.⁴⁷

There is, however, one final twist in the story of the Parkers. William Cunnington's biography contains an intriguing, but unsourced, reference to John Parker providing information to Pitt Rivers and thus being a 'link between two great periods'.⁴⁸ Yet with John Parker's death in May 1867, within a month of the General's 'first lessons as an excavator ... in Yorkshire under Canon Greenwell',⁴⁹ it seems highly unlikely that this meeting could have taken place. However, there was clearly some interest in the reminiscences of Hoare's pioneers. In 1866, the Revd W C Lukis, in criticizing the excavation methodology of Hoare and Cunnington, wrote:

An aged 'shepherd of Salisbury Plain', now deceased, who himself belonged to Sir Richard's gang of labourers, told me how the work was carried on when he was a lad. 'Sir Richard stopped at the great House, and instructed his men to dig down from the top until they got nearly to the level of the natural soil, when they were to send or wait for him. On his arrival the search was continued, and the cist, if any, examined in his presence.'⁵⁰

While Lukis did not name his source, and John Parker was still alive at the time of his writing, Dr John Thurnam provided clear evidence of contact in an 1860 article on the re-examination of barrows on the Wiltshire Downs. It seems highly likely that it is this

44. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2594, Book 4, 41.

45. WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2598, letter 116.

46. English Heritage 2009.

47. Marsden 1974, 22–7.

48. Cunnington 1975, 69.

49. Bowden 1991, 60.

50. Lukis 1866, 85–6.

encounter that was the source of the erroneous report by Cunnington's biographer. Thurnam utilized the same excavation methodology as Hoare and Cunnington, but was concerned with the retrieval of skeletal information that had not been recorded in the early excavations.⁵¹ Thurnam wrote:

A small low barrow on Pound Down, within a short distance of the last group and nearly opposite the fifth mile-stone from Devizes, was also examined. This proved to be the one opened by Sir R C Hoare August 11th, 1814, which was the subject of a lengthy poem, entitled 'Beth Pennard, or the British Chieftain's Grave', by the Rev. John Skinner, who with Dean Merewether, was present at the opening.⁵²

Thurnam admitted to some initial uncertainty regarding the identification of this barrow as the one that Hoare had previously excavated, because of the limitations of both Hoare's and Merewether's descriptions. However, Thurnam states in a footnote that 'one of Sir Richard's "pioneers", the octogenarian John Parker, perfectly remembers the barrow as one we re-opened',⁵³ thus also confirming John's continued, albeit occasional, employment as an archaeological excavator after Cunnington's death. Although, in a separate article, Thurnam mentioned that Canon Greenwell, Pitt Rivers's archaeological mentor, was present at another of his Wiltshire excavations in 1863,⁵⁴ and Thurnam clearly had some contact with the elderly John Parker, it seems unlikely that the General and the Pioneer ever met.

The story of the Parkers after Cunnington's death is illuminated predominantly through genealogical sources. Stephen Parker died in February 1817, aged sixty-six, and was buried in Heytesbury, two years after the death of his wife, Betty. Three of their five children survived to adulthood. His eldest son, Stephen, was held in a hulk at Portsmouth for over twenty months before being transported. He arrived in Sydney, Australia, in May 1804 and was granted a conditional pardon in June 1815, aged forty-three. The pardon gives his description as 5' 9½" tall, with a dark pale complexion, greying black hair and hazel eyes – perhaps providing some indication of his father and brother's appearance.⁵⁵

John Parker had married Betty Pike in 1801 and four of their children survived to adulthood – John, born in 1802, Stephen, in 1806, Eliza, in 1811, and Elijah, in 1813. Betty died in 1833, and by 1841 the census shows John Parker, a sixty-year-old unemployed labourer, living in temporary accommodation, probably some kind of shack, in Heytesbury churchyard. By the time of the 1851 census, John was accommodated in Heytesbury Almshouse. Clearly he was, by now, dependent on charity. Nevertheless, he married again in 1856 – this time Sarah Pike, perhaps a relative of his first wife – and in that year they moved to a small cottage in Knook, just outside Heytesbury. John is recorded as a woodsman in documents from the mid- to late 1850s. However, in 1861, John is shown once again as being unemployed and, before long, the rent on the cottage – a modest one shilling a week – was being missed. By the time John Parker died in 1867, aged eighty-seven, he was approximately twenty-seven months behind on the rent.⁵⁶ Despite the kind words in his

51. Marsden 1974, 57.

52. Thurnam 1860, 320–1.

53. *Ibid.*, 321.

54. Marsden 1974, 98.

55. C Parker, pers comm.

56. C Parker, pers comm.

obituary, the 'principal pioneer' appears to have spent the last thirty years of his life in poverty. This seems an unjust end for one who contributed so much to early archaeological endeavour, and yet it illustrates the harsh reality of the world in which he lived. It is surely time, however, to recognize the contribution of the Parkers and to acknowledge them as archaeological pioneers, rather than simply as footnotes in the lives of antiquaries.

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WHM, DZSWS:MSS.740 (Hoare notebooks, sketch)

WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2594 (Cunnington notebooks, Hoare letters and drawings)

WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2595 (Cunnington notebooks)

WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2597 (Letters, drawings)

WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2598 (Letters, drawings)

WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2599 (Letters, notes)

WHM, DZSWS:MSS.2600 (Letters, notes, portrait, poem)

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RÉSUMÉ

Cette communication se sert des indices documentaires d'origine qui se trouvent dans les archives de la Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society [Association d'Archéologie et d'Histoire Naturelle du Wiltshire] à Devizes dans le but de réévaluer les travaux de William Cunnington, FSA, exécutés pour le compte de Richard Colt Hoare, et l'apport de ses deux fouilleurs principaux: Stephen et John Parker de Heytesbury, Wiltshire. Jusque là, on estimait que les Parkers n'étaient guère que des travailleurs ordinaires pour les fouilles novatrices de Cunnington; les indices suggèrent à présent qu'ils étaient en fait la clé du succès (en tout particulier John) des travaux de Cunnington. A l'époque de la mort de Cunnington en 1810, John Parker était en train d'identifier de nouveaux sites dans les Wiltshire Downs et assumait parfois la responsabilité entière des fouilles et de l'interprétation des découvertes. Après 1810, Richard Colt Hoare ne parraina que quelques autres fouilles et, bien que John ait été employé pour au moins l'une d'entre elles, en 1814, sans l'emploi continu, et peut-être sans la protection fournis par Cunnington, les Parkers retombèrent dans la pauvreté et dans l'obscurité. Bien que la notice nécrologique de John, en 1867, l'ait décrit comme le 'découvreur principal' de Cunnington, des recherches dans le but de prendre tout particulièrement en considération l'apport des Parkers à ces premières fouilles britanniques n'avaient pas été entreprises auparavant. Cette communication cherche à remédier à cette omission.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Bericht stützt sich die Erschließung von originalen Quellen aus den Archiven der Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society in Devizes um das Werk von William Cunnington, FSA, zu re-interpretieren, und den Beitrag, den die beiden Ausgrabungsleiter Stephen und John Parker, aus Heytesbury, in der Grafschaft Wiltshire geleistet haben, zu bewerten. Bisher wurden die Parkers als wenig mehr als reguläre Arbeiter bei Cunningtons bahnbrechenden Ausgrabungen angesehen; neueste Belege weisen jedoch darauf hin, daß sie (insbesondere John) jedoch der Schlüssel zum Erfolg von Cunningtons Werk waren. Als Cunnington im Jahr 1810 verstarb, entdeckte John Parker immer noch neue Ausgrabungsstätten in den Wiltshire Downs und war gelegentlich allein für deren Ausgrabung und Interpretation verantwortlich. Nach 1810 förderte Richard Colt Hoare nur noch wenige neue Ausgrabungen und obwohl John noch mindestens einmal im Jahr 1814 in einem Arbeitsverhältnis stand, verfielen die Parkers wieder in Obskurität und Armut, ohne reguläre Arbeit und ohne den Schutz, den Cunnington ihnen vielleicht gewährte. Obwohl John's Nachruf im Jahr 1867 ihn als Cunningtons 'Hauptpionier' bezeichnete, wurden bisher noch keine Studien durchgeführt, die sich darauf beziehen, welche Rolle und Beitrag die Parkers in diesen frühen britischen Ausgrabungen geleistet haben. Diese Abhandlung soll diese Lücke füllen.