



STUART PIGGOTT

Stuart Piggott 1910–1996

STUART PIGGOTT was born on 28 May 1910, the grandson of the schoolmaster at Childrey, four miles from Uffington, at that time in Berkshire, and a mile from West Challow where he ended his days. Piggott's father was also a schoolmaster and in 1910, at the age of 36, he was a master at Churcher's College, Petersfield. Known affectionately as 'The Captain' to the boys, he had married a Welshwoman, a Phillips, from Breconshire. In this pedigree must have lain the source of Piggott's distinguished good looks and his startlingly original, mercurial mind. There were no brothers or sisters and the focus of familial contact lay with his paternal grandparents and aunts living, as Piggotts had lived since at least the early seventeenth century, under the hooves of the Uffington White Horse.

This sense of place and belonging was clearly, to all who knew him, close to the core of Stuart Piggott's being. Tracing his ancestry in a *Retrospect* published in 1983,¹ he emphasised how 'Piggotts have been around in Marcham, Hatford and West Challow and the families had died out or slipped quietly downhill to the status of farm labourer or, at best, small peasant farmers. My great-grandfather was one of these, in Uffington . . . and my grandfather at the age of 10 was taken up to the last of the traditional festive "scourings" in 1857 by Thomas Hughes . . . who wrote up the event in *The Scouring of the White Horse* and who recorded the scourers as "singing a rambling sort of ditty, with a fol-de-rol chorus":

The awld White Horse wants zettin to rights
And the Squire hev promised good cheer
Zo we'll gee un a scrape to kip un in zhape
And a'll last for many a year.

¹ 'Archaeological Retrospect 5', *Antiquity*, LVII (1983), 28–37.
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A was made a lang lang time ago
 Wi a good dale o' labour and paines
 By King Alfred the Great when he spwiled their consate
 And caddled they wosbirds the Danes.'

Before he was twenty Piggott was to publish a rather different cultural and chronological attribution for this unique chalk hillside carving. But the salient aspects of his approach to life and study are set out here very clearly. He believed in the laying on of hands and the transmission of tradition. He was a great democrat and deplored snobbery of any kind.

In 1918 Piggott entered Churcher's College where he appears to have had a relatively undistinguished career. In the *Retrospect* he says 'I suppose I was reasonably intelligent but I was idle, wayward and capricious, exerting myself only on subjects that interested me, and acquiring a detestation of alternative activities such as compulsory games, sports and the OTC.' Lack of interest in maths and science led to his failure to attain part of his School Certificate which led to his non-qualification for university entrance. Nevertheless, a number of his masters at Churcher's had (in those happier pre-national curriculum days!) imparted to him an eclectic baggage of interests—Biblical textual criticism, Indo-European philology, botany, and the history of art and architecture. Furthermore Petersfield, with its bookshop (and Stuart could never long resist a bookshop) provided something of a *salon* of artists, journalists, and writers to whom he was introduced and from whom he absorbed much of the 'business' side of academic life: writing to set length, book production processes, illustration techniques.

This informal and extramural education created the perfect background for his career as it was to develop. By the age of fourteen he had produced, in a school exercise book, *The Prehistoric Remains at Petersfield* which wedded pretty creditable drawings of flint implements to what Piggott himself called an 'embarrassingly awful' text; he had already sent some of those drawings to Reginald Smith, at that time Keeper of British Prehistory at the British Museum, whence he had received an encouraging and useful reply. Increasingly during his summer holidays Piggott had been devoting himself to more and more seriously directed fieldwork. Between the ages of sixteen and eighteen he was to spend a good deal of time looking at, and drawing, plans of earthworks on Butser Hill, just south of Petersfield.² By assiduous sherd collection, he located a Roman-British settlement site there; a note appeared in the parish magazine which, picked up by a local newspaper, thus came to the attention of O. G. S. Crawford. Crawford was a key figure in British archaeology at this time. 'Possessed with the divine impatience of the pioneer' (as Wheeler described him)³ he had, in

² Ultimately published in *Antiquity*, IV (1930), 187–200.

³ R. E. M. Wheeler, *Alms for Oblivion* (1966), 155.

1921, been made chief of the Ordnance Survey's newly founded Archaeology Division and was, with extraordinary energy, compiling their index of sites and find-spots in Britain. A great publicist, in 1927 he founded the journal *Antiquity* which was to form an important outlet for Piggott's early work. Crawford immediately recognised Piggott's qualities and they became fast friends as Piggott devilled for him, checking references, and the accuracy of their location on maps.

A further important figure in Piggott's development was a family friend. George Heywood Sumner had retired in middle age to Hampshire from a quite prominent position in the Arts and Crafts Movement, associated first with Morris and latterly with the 'populist' wing that included Walter Crane and W. A. S. Benson. In 1902 he set up house at Cuckoo Hill near South Gorley and exercised a consuming interest, for his last forty years, in the antiquities of Dorset and Hampshire. He became a close friend of Dr J. P. Williams-Freeman of Weyhill whom Piggott knew from the Petersfield connection. Both men were at the forefront of that style of landscape archaeology founded in a deep love of the countryside that surrounded them, and an intimate knowledge of its contours and natural cover. Sumner's unique contribution was his development of a wonderfully evocative illustrative style, gentle, humorous and supremely decorative, yet also rigorous and precise, that adorns his beautiful volumes, published by the Chiswick Press, *The Ancient Earthworks of Cranborne Chase* (1913) and *The Ancient Earthworks of the New Forest* (1917). A glance at Piggott's early drawings will reveal the homage that he paid to Sumner's artistic vision.

Piggott published his first note in the *Antiquaries Journal* for 1927 on the excavation of some Iron-Age pits at Knighton Hill, near Compton Beauchamp, about five miles from Childrey. In this same year he published papers on place-name evidence⁴ and on Berkshire mummers plays⁵ which demonstrate the breadth of his early interest in 'his country'. Kipling, of whose pastoral poetry Stuart was very fond, had summed all this up a quarter of a century before:

God gave all men all earth to love,
 But since our hearts are small,
 Ordained for each one spot should prove
 Belovèd over all;
 That, as He watched Creation's birth,
 So we, in godlike mood,
 May of our love create our earth
 And see that it is good.

('Sussex', 1902)

and had enshrined in poems such as 'Puck's Song'⁶ the model of such landscape-historical cum archaeological affection.

⁴ *Antiquity*, I (1927), 478–9.

⁵ *Folklore*, XXXIX (1927), 271–81.

⁶ R. Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906).

Piggott's first lengthy analytical article was published in 1930.⁷ It summarises fieldwork conducted between the ages of sixteen and eighteen on Butser Hill (above) which he had clearly discussed with Williams-Freeman and O. G. S. Crawford; the illustrations were drawn from RAF air photographs (to which Crawford must have guided him). His own beautiful maps and plans were founded on Heywood Sumner's approach, but executed with greater restraint, and running to an altogether greater depth of landscape detail. A major force in landscape archaeological analysis had clearly arrived.

But we leap ahead. Piggott's frequent visits to Berkshire had brought him into contact with the museum at Reading and its curator, W. A. Smallcombe, who offered him, on leaving school at seventeen, a post as assistant 'at a nominal salary'—which Piggott recalls in his 1985 *Retrospect* as ten shillings (50p) a week. His duties encompassed everything from the classification of wild flowers (in which, we have already seen, he had some capacity even if he had to 'sweat it out with Bentham and Hooker') to archaeology itself. Here another formative experience awaited, for, living at Boxford, a few miles from Reading, was Harold Peake—the co-author with Herbert Fleure of 'The Corridors of Time' series of books that covered broad archaeological issues across the whole of the Old World; *The Origins of Agriculture* had just appeared in 1926. Peake was also a highly original honorary curator at Newbury Museum; giving each century of prehistory equal presentation in his displays, he offered a genuine sense of time to his public. The story was told⁸ that when a school inspector spoke of things that had happened 'very long ago', a Newbury child interjected, 'Oh but that was quite lately, in the La Tène period.' Such exuberance also acted host to some archaeological eccentricities, but Piggott, quite able to see his way through that, took good advantage of the 'open-house' kept by the Peakes at Boxford. Peake, at that time President of the Royal Anthropological Institute, was instrumental in appointing Vere Gordon Childe, who had just taken up the first appointment as Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at Edinburgh, as Honorary Librarian of the Institute in a design to create a new focus for scientific, interdisciplinary archaeology—away from the Society of Antiquaries with its baggage-train of *incunabula* and heraldry. Significantly Abercromby's endowment of the Chair in Edinburgh arose out of an essentially similar dispute with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Archaeology was changing shape and size rapidly and Piggott was, unorthodoxly but nevertheless precisely, placed to take advantage of this.

Another important figure of the old school who was to influence Piggott at this time was Dr Eliot Curwen. He and his son E. Cecil Curwen had been

⁷ *Antiquity*, IV (1930), 187–220.

⁸ H. Peake and H. J. Fleure, *Times and Places*, Corridors of Time, X (1956), iii.

discovering and mapping the landscape archaeology of the South Downs since before the First World War. They had recognised, in some instances for the first time, the enclosures and traces of flint-mine shafts pertaining to the Neolithic, the earliest period of farming prehistory in Britain. Their work had been of the keenest interest to O. G. S. Crawford whose research in Wiltshire and Dorset had focused on similar objectives. Piggott, using his time at Reading to maximum advantage, had meanwhile found his way into the study of Neolithic pottery particularly through a series of pit-finds located by the Thames at Pangbourne and at Caversham, the former including a rare type of burial with an intact pot of what Piggott was later to term the Abingdon style. He published these finds in 1928⁹ and it was his interest and energetic expertise in the analysis of Neolithic pottery that impelled the Curwens to invite Piggott to participate in their excavation of the Neolithic 'causewayed enclosure' at The Trundle in 1928, an excavation which in turn reflected on what had been done since 1925 by Alexander Keiller at Windmill Hill near Avebury in Wiltshire.

Piggott, in company with his father, who was a friend of the Curwens, excavated at The Trundle in 1928 and 1930. Clearly during this period his authority and the breadth of experience were burgeoning and by 1930 he was laying out the trenches at The Trundle according to the new precepts of order and precision that he had encountered during a visit to the excavations at Windmill Hill. At The Trundle Piggott also met for the first time two Cambridge men, Charles Phillips, at that time teaching history, and Grahame Clark, conducting research on the Mesolithic of Britain at Peterhouse. Both men were to play an important role in Piggott's future development. Thenceforth they were to meet regularly in London and Cambridge and were to form an important axis for change.

In 1927 the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales had disappeared under a cloud, or perhaps 'pall of smoke' would be a more accurate expression, when R. E. M. Wheeler from his position as late Keeper at the National Museum of Wales had conducted a quite devastating review of the *Inventory for Pembrokeshire* (in *Antiquity*, 1927). The review (which still makes the flesh of Secretaries of Royal Commissions creep) brought about the resignation of the Secretary of the Welsh Royal Commission and the appointment of W. J. Hemp, a member of the Ancient Monuments Inspectorate at that time, in his place. Through the intercession of O. G. S. Crawford, Hemp offered Piggott the post of 'typist' (later investigator) with RCAHMW. This would almost certainly have been a disaster (indeed Piggott would not have accepted the appointment) except that RCAHMW

⁹ 'Neolithic pottery and other remains from Pangbourne, Berks and Caversham, Oxon', *Proc. Prehist. Soc. E. Anglia*, VI (1928), Pt. I, 30-9.

was headquartered, at that time, in London, thus placing him, at this delicate stage of his career, close to the centre of affairs. As he himself later put it (*Retrospect*, 31) ‘I found . . . that I was not temperamentally a fieldworker, and realised that, with no academic qualifications, my only hope of recognition would be through publications of adequate standard.’

Piggott’s self-assessment is at fault in at least one regard. Nobody who worked with him, or who reads the reports of his excavations or survey fieldwork, can conclude other than that he had a natural fieldworker’s eye. That he was not happy in the Welsh Commission cannot be gainsaid. This was due however, it may be suggested, to the humiliating mean-mindedness of the old-style Government service, from which Piggott’s personality had little inborn defence; to an innate lack of sympathy between himself and Hemp (whom Piggott regarded as a snob) and to an inability to love the north Welsh landscape of Anglesey and Caernarvon where he was asked to work. Nowhere is this lack of sympathy with a non-lowland landscape made more explicit than in a short poem written much later in thanks to Cyril and Aileen Fox for a short sojourn spent with them in Exeter in the late 1940s.

Warm west winds in an Exeter garden
 Far from Scotland’s Calvinist gloom
 Ere my Celtic arteries harden
 While the snowdrops are still in bloom
 How I gasp for it, eagerly grasp for it
 A spring resurrection from winter’s tomb.

Talks Dobunnic, and walks Dumnonian
 Cruks and mirror-style, chamfrein and bowl
 Façade and pediment (quite Summersonian)
 Each one blowing his own trumpet scroll.
 Hint of the sun in it, glint of the fun in it
 A light-hearted banquet for reason and soul.

As neat a parody as one could wish of his friend and neighbour John Betjeman, and a delightful acknowledgement of hospitality, but with clear overtones of alienation in Edinburgh’s grey winter.

But the time was not wasted; indeed the years 1929–32 were frenetic in their activity. Besides, as always, fulfilling his duties fully and conscientiously, Piggott was now crucially positioning himself in the newly emergent discipline of archaeology. It was during this period that he undertook his first major research project—a study of British Neolithic pottery—following the Reading and The Trundle experience. He already had access to the Windmill Hill material excavated by Keiller, and Thurlow Leeds’s material from Abingdon, Oxfordshire. He visited collections all over England, in the Isle of Man, in Cardiff, and in Edinburgh (where he discussed the subject in some depth with Gordon Childe). In 1932, his first major research paper—drawn hurriedly from

him by a request from Wheeler (who knew a good thing when he saw it) appeared in the *Archaeological Journal* which Wheeler was editing.¹⁰

This paper exhibits a quite astounding process of maturation by a man still only twenty years old. His links with Peake, and with Childe, had been exploited and consolidated as he identified the European antecedents of Neolithic pottery style; he drew on the 'Western' bowl styles and the North/Central European corded wares to indicate fundamental divisions in the British record, then skilfully manipulated the British evidence to indicate its regional variety. With time, of course, he was to take this analysis much further. In the same number Childe, now well in the saddle as Abercromby Professor in Edinburgh, contributed a complementary article on the European background of the material¹¹ and important links were forged at this time, the future value of which Piggott could not have known. In this same year he also published a paper¹² in which he trailed quite another area of interest that was to exercise considerable influence over him for the next forty years—neatly set in the context of his home country. The Uffington White Horse had long been either dismissed as a non-antiquity (for example, by Stukeley) or, following the line propounded by Thomas Hughes, was seen to be of Anglo-Saxon date. Piggott took up an earlier suggestion of prehistoric Iron Age date by documenting and demonstrating this likelihood on the basis of Iron Age decorated coins and metalwork. Iron Age decorated metalwork was to form a key interest for Piggott in the future.

With almost papal *chutzpah* (if the notion can be forgiven) Grahame Clark, Piggott, and Christopher Hawkes, according to more than one of them, decided that the known prehistoric world (in Britain) should be divided between them. Clark already deeply entrenched (literally at Peacock's Farm) in the Mesolithic laid incontrovertible claim to that quarter. Hawkes was clearly devoted to the Iron Age and Late Bronze Age 'which left the Neolithic and Earlier Bronze Age to Piggott'. To what extent this was always a joke and to what extent it *became* a joke is unclear; one suspects that, at the time, Piggott may have felt a little insecure in the face of these colleagues' impeccable academic credentials. A little gamesmanship, natural enough among twenty year olds running the same course, may have been taking place and his relationship with the two in the future, while always friendly, was sometimes guarded in a manner not wholly accounted for by his innate shyness.

But Piggott and Clark had one serious piece of business to attend to before they set off on their 'predestined' separate paths. The 'Old Guard'—among them Reginald Smith, Reid Moir, Miles Burkitt, and Leslie Armstrong—

¹⁰ 'The Neolithic pottery of the British Isles', *Archaeol. Journ.* LXXXVIII (1931), 67–158.

¹¹ V. G. Childe, 'The Continental Affinities of British Neolithic Pottery', *Archaeol. Journ.* LXXXVIII (1931), 37–66.

¹² 'The Uffington White Horse', *Antiquity*, V (1931), 37–46.

controlled many of the linkages of 'the profession' as it stood. Their interest focused upon the Old Stone Age where some of their ideas were very questionable, notably those of Reid Moir on the exaggerated antiquity of Man in East Anglia based upon a false reading as 'worked flints' of stones that had been shaped by natural forces and were associated with very early stratified deposits—the 'eoliths'.¹³ Reginald Smith had, rather perversely, interpreted A. E. Peake's excavated evidence of 1914¹⁴ from the flint-mine complex at Grimes Graves clearly against Peake's own views; solely on the basis of flint implement typology Smith saw the mines as Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) in date. From 1920 to 1939 A. Leslie Armstrong¹⁵ conducted a long series of excavations to confirm that Palaeolithic date, by flint tool typology as well as other evidence. All the excavational evidence at Grimes indicated, to the uncommitted mind, a Neolithic date, as did all the evidence from all other excavated mines in Britain and in Europe.

It was on this weak point that Clark and Piggott decided to focus their attack,¹⁶ demolishing the unstable structure of the evidence as previously built. It was the first torpedo in British archaeology, understandably launched jointly, and with very considerable courage. Published by the young Turks in the somewhat older Turk's journal, it caused a considerable *furor* in archaeological circles at the time. A major blow had been delivered to the hierarchy as it stood; more were to follow.

In 1932 London saw the first meeting of the resurrected International Congress for Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences. Childe and Hawkes were the prime movers with Sir Charles Peers, president of the Society of Antiquaries, presiding. The old was brought face to face with the new. The *gravitas* of international authority lay in the hands of Childe (aged 40), Hawkes (27), Clark (25), and Piggott (22). Piggott had given a paper on the chronology of British long barrows (published in S. Piggott, 'The relative chronology of British Long Barrows', *Proceedings of the First International Congress for Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences*, 1932) which demonstrates both the island-wide grasp of his material and the speed with which he was generating his wider expertise in Neolithic studies. Keiller provided one focus of the conference when his house at 4 Charles Street, Berkeley Square, was opened as a meeting place for the conference with material from his work at Windmill Hill on display.

¹³ J. Reid Moir, *The Antiquity of Man in East Anglia* (Cambridge, 1927).

¹⁴ A. E. Peake, *et al. Report on the Excavations of Grimes Graves, Weeting, Norfolk March–May 1914*, Prehist. Soc. of East Anglia (1915).

¹⁵ A. L. Armstrong, 'The Grimes Graves Problem in the Light of Recent Researches', *Proc. Prehist. Soc. East Anglia*, V (1926), 91–136.

¹⁶ J. G. D. Clark and S. Piggott, 'The Age of the British Flint Mines', *Antiquity*, VII (1933), 166–83.

Alexander Keiller is the next figure to exercise a major influence on Piggott's life. In 1925 when he took on the excavations at Windmill Hill, Keiller was 35 years old. He was a member of the Dundee family that had made a considerable fortune by the manufacture of confectionery and, of course, marmalade. He found little to attract him to the family business and prior to the First World War established a motor-car firm in London which fostered in him an interest in fast cars, precision instruments, and technical drawing. He learned to fly in 1909 and by the early 1920s he was expressing greater and grander interest in field archaeology in Britain, undertaking a detailed survey of stone circles in Aberdeenshire (where the family estate, at Morven, was located). In 1923 he corresponded with O. G. S. Crawford about their mutual interest in flying and aerial photography. The two Scots, 'borrowing' a DH9 aircraft from the De Havilland aviation company, and using captured German camera equipment, embarked upon the 'Wessex from the Air' project. This was the first archaeological survey of a region from the air, financed by Keiller and executed in the summer of 1924, and published in 1928 by the Oxford University Press in large format.¹⁷

Today their photographs evoke a landscape long gone, apparently illuminated by a brighter sun; the number of new discoveries, and new perceptions was quite staggering. Avebury figures prominently and the proposal to erect a Marconi radio mast on Windmill Hill, a low eminence just north-west of Avebury, where many Neolithic finds had been made, prompted Keiller to purchase the site and to commence excavations in 1925. At first he secured the assistance of H. St George Gray, one of General Pitt-Rivers' original assistants in his seminal series of excavations on Cranborne Chase in the 1890s and now curator at Taunton Museum. A laying-on of hands indeed, and it is difficult to picture the mercurial, impulsive man of affairs working well in harness with the older archaeologist from a quite different background. By 1927 Keiller felt able to take on the direction of work himself.

By 1928 Piggott had met Keiller in connection with his study of Neolithic pottery—for which Windmill Hill was already providing the most fertile source available. After the 1932 Congress (above) Piggott came to know Keiller well and one recognises, perhaps, the mutual friend Crawford working steadily in the background. Certainly in due course Crawford was to write to Piggott, 'Keiller is erratic and sometimes infuriating, but he is a genuine enthusiast and really loves archaeology . . . I have a feeling that you and K *will* work well together. . . . K is open to ideas.' If any man could work courteously but firmly according to his own lights, carry the moment of tension with a happily chosen quip and be assured in his production of ideas in an easily digestible format, it was Stuart Piggott.

¹⁷ O. G. S. Crawford and A. Keiller, *Wessex from the Air* (Oxford, 1928).

By 1933 Piggott was asked by Crawford, with Charles Drew, Curator of the Dorset County Museum, to excavate one of the Thickthorn Down Long Barrows in north-west Dorset. Keiller volunteered to do (his beloved) survey work. Piggott took his entire annual leave (four weeks) from RCAHMW to work on the site. This, Piggott's first set-piece major excavation, was published in 1936 in the second volume of the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*.¹⁸ The excavation took place over two months and used W. E. V. Young, the invaluable Windmill Hill foreman, as well as local workmen. In the excavation report, an exemplary model, Piggott—for it is largely Piggott—sets out previous work on similar sites, the objectives of the excavation and then a succinct statement of results with excellent drawings and photographs; as nice a piece of business as could be concluded in two months of an English summer. But not in one month, and when Hemp visited towards the end of the four weeks he was asked for further leave of absence because 'as always, the work took longer than we had anticipated' (*Retrospect*). Hemp refused the request 'out of hand' and, if he sensed that which I sense at this distance in time, I am not sure he can entirely be blamed—he was no stranger to excavation himself having been responsible for two chambered tomb excavations in Anglesey. A crisis was thus created, an entirely fortunate one for Piggott.

Keiller 'after a short silence' offered Piggott full-time employment as his general assistant with principal responsibility for excavations, now due to begin at Avebury itself, as well as other initiatives, keeping abreast of which would require a man of Piggott's sweep of understanding. One idea that Stuart recollected was Keiller's proposal to use a Zeppelin dirigible to carry out an air photographic survey of a large tract of England—as he put it to Stuart 'It's so slow and so large you could plot sites straight on six inch maps—and it's even got a *bar!*' Other ideas were more practicable if, perhaps, less glamorous. Following the lead of W. F. Grimes and others, Keiller had since the 1920s been fascinated by the prospect of identifying the geographical origin of stone axes by examining their petrology. In 1936 he, together with Piggott and Drew, established the Sub-committee of the South-Western Group of Museums and Art Galleries on the Petrological Identification of Stone Axes. Keiller was chairman and Piggott secretary with F. S. Wallis as petrologist. The organisation is still at work today with over 1500 implements sectioned and a corresponding contribution to knowledge attained.¹⁹

Keiller had also, in 1924, acquired a considerable quantity of William

¹⁸ C. D. Drew and S. Piggott, 'The Excavation of Long Barrow 163a on Thickthorn Down, Dorset', *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* II (1936), 77–96.

¹⁹ W. F. Grimes, 'The history of implement petrology in Britain', in T. H. McK. Clough and W. A. Cummins, eds., *Stone Axe Studies*, CBA Research Rep. 23 (1979), 1–4.

Stukeley's papers from his descendants. Piggott's introduction to this source-material had important results in the future; in 1934 he used the content of the papers to demonstrate to Keiller that limited excavation might locate the course of the West Kennet Avenue and expand knowledge of the stone circles within the earthwork enclosure at Avebury itself—a notion sweetly judged to appeal to Keiller's enthusiasm. The result was five major seasons of excavation in the Avebury area from 1934 to 1939 in which the basis of our knowledge of the monument today was completely laid. More than that, however, was to follow. As Piggott relates²⁰ 'I was hardly prepared for the plan which he suddenly propounded to me late one night in the Red Lion at Avebury. He had decided . . . to acquire the whole of the land on which the main monument of Avebury lay and as much of the West Kennet Avenue as possible; to devote himself to its excavation and judicious restoration and as there was the possibility . . . of ultimately acquiring the Manor House as well, of leaving London and transferring his library, drawing offices and museum to Avebury as an archaeological institute (the Morven Institute) to carry out this task.'

All this was done and must have kept Piggott well occupied, the work continuing until the very eve of the Second World War. Yet Piggott's professional development was gaining apace in stature and quality alongside these events.

1935 was the year when the keys finally passed from the Old to the New Guard in British Archaeology. The courageous publication of the paper on 'The Age of British Flint Mines' in 1933 had dealt a considerable blow; the need now was for a publication dedicated to prehistory, partly in Britain but also in Europe, where the interest of younger prehistorians was turning now to the later periods of prehistory. The plan, conceived by Grahame Clark, was to take over the Society controlling the premier journal of British prehistory—the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia* and to re-launch it as '*The Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*'. In 1934 Piggott offered a paper to the former journal, which was accepted, on 'The mutual relations of the British Neolithic ceramics'²¹ which clearly indicated the way things were going. In 1935 a referendum of members was held and then, inevitably, a crucial meeting, which some of the Old Guard saw fit not to attend, and fast car journeys from Wessex and Cambridge to Norwich were in order to 'put infantry on the ground'. How Piggott must have enjoyed driving Keiller's MG Midget that 200 miles, as he long afterwards enjoyed driving his own MG until some time after his retirement. In the nature of British revolutions, this was a relatively bloodless affair which, however, gave birth to one of the most

²⁰ I. F. Smith, 'Alexander Keiller 1889–1955' *Windmill Hill and Avebury: Excavations by Alexander Keiller 1925–39* (Oxford, 1965), xix–xxii.

²¹ *Proc. Prehist. Soc. East Ang.* VII, Part III (1934), 373–81.

successful learned societies that still flourishes today—Grahame Clark became its editor (and continued in the role for thirty-five years). The membership of 420 rose by 59 at its first AGM; it now stands at well over 2,000.

Meanwhile papers continued to appear in the journals—on Stukeley (a note on Anna Stukeley's account of the Uffington White Horse),²² on Neolithic pottery from a number of sites, on long barrows, and on the excavations at Avebury with one notable collaboration with S. Hazzledine Warren, Grahame Clark, *et al.* on the Archaeology of the submerged land-surface of the Essex coast.²³ This last paper, with its interdisciplinary content, its focus on documentation and its extraction of the maximum from unattractive and difficult evidence set in its geo- and eco-archaeological environment, tells us that we have entered the modern archaeological world. Piggott played, of course, only a part, but a prominent part it was, and his contribution defining the late Neolithic Grooved Ware style shows his burgeoning authority in this diagnostic feature of the Neolithic period.

In 1935 Piggott produced a first book, modest in size but not in scope, and firmly based on the Childean approach, *The Progress of Early Man* (in the 'How-and-why' series edited by Gerald Bullett). The book is, above all, attractively written and leads the reader to an accessible appreciation of what prehistoric archaeology is about, while displaying very considerable reading and erudition. The influences of Harold Peake are there to be seen, as well as Piggott's own unique sense of 'the past in the present'. 'Inside . . . [the Prae Wood Iron Age Oppidum of the Catuvellauni near St Albans, Hertfordshire] . . . among other remains, cobbled roads have been found with cart ruts, which are the same width apart as the modern gauge of 4ft 8½in. The standard width is evidently extremely ancient, for it appears as early as the New Stone Age in the Mediterranean.' The fascination with wheeled vehicles (and not just fast motor cars!) was with him, we shall see, a lifetime later.

By 1936, over and above his growing responsibilities at Avebury, Piggott was called upon to conduct the rescue excavation of a long barrow threatened by house-building at Holdenhurst near Christchurch, Hants.²⁴ Now, at last, Piggott was alone running his own full-scale excavation which for any excavator is the moment of test. With a budget of £30 Piggott mounted an irreproachable sampling exercise that covered all the statistical possibilities of the barrow. He sets out a very modern looking research strategy and part of the flanking ditches of the barrow were excavated. The report, published within a year, is well illustrated, brief, and very much to the point, with a pottery report

²² *Antiquity*, VIII (1935), 230.

²³ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* II, 2 (1936), 178–210.

²⁴ 'The Excavations of a Long Barrow in Holdenhurst parish, near Christchurch, Hants', *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* III, 1 (1937), 1–14.

by Piggott. It set a pattern followed in successive reports of writing up very soon after the digging season finished (during the following winter) which meant that every aspect of the work was entirely fresh in his memory. It also meant, of course, that no backlog of report writing ever arose—an aspect of Stuart's career that is scarcely paralleled.

It was also in 1936 that Keiller took the important step of proposing Piggott for Fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries, at the age of 25. His youth, as well, perhaps, as his recent association with 'the young Turkish tendency', together with the distrust with which Keiller himself was viewed in some antiquarian quarters, led to his exclusion by blackball. Stuart told the story that he had been enjoined to meet Keiller after the election, at the Ritz, just a step away along Piccadilly, in order to celebrate. Upon the bad news being communicated, Keiller, predictably, exploded with a Scots roar 'I'll give them black balls! Waiter! A bottle of champagne and caviar!' Piggott was elected a Fellow on 4 February 1937. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in the following year.

In 1935 Piggott entered for the postgraduate Diploma in Archaeology, a one year course in the Institute of Archaeology in London founded the year before by the Wheelers, in order to gain some formal qualification. There, with Wheeler daily arriving stylishly in his grey Lancia, as Stuart gently puts it in the *Retrospect* he was 'one of the few who heard Wheeler lecture on the lower Palaeolithic'. 'After I had attended a couple of times he begged me not to appear again, but "mug it up myself".' Piggott did this 'with the help of friends' and obtained the Diploma in 1936 (he was eventually to be made a Fellow of University College London, in 1985). One of those friends, a fellow student whom he had met earlier on Curwen's excavations at The Trundle, was Cecily Margaret Preston, the daughter of a wealthy ironmaster; now 24 years old, she had, through a childhood interest in Roman coinage, come into contact with the Wheelers and learnt the excavator's trade on their technically path-breaking excavations at Verulamium in the early 1930s. Although born in Kent, she had conceived a great affection for the downland of Wessex which drew the two together. Stuart and Peggy were married on 12 November 1936 and moved to Priory Farm, Rockbourne in Hampshire, an early nineteenth century Gothic Revival house, the delights of which they proceeded steadily to enhance. Both were highly accomplished excavators and dedicated archaeologists but complementing talents also existed; Peggy was, by all accounts, an awful cook, while Stuart was fascinated by the art. Indeed the story goes that as a very young boy Stuart had been confined to bed with scarlet fever with strict medical instruction to eschew nourishment. His mother suggested that an egg, lightly boiled, might be in order, to be told that he was content, sublimating his appetite by reading recipe books.

In 1936–7 Piggott carried out the research for his second major contribution to prehistoric studies. His familiarity with the early antiquaries working in

Wessex, and with the museums of the region, together with his enlivened interest in broader European connections fostered by Peake and his contacts at the 1932 Congress—including of course Childe—all conspired to interest him in the series of apparently rich metalwork-bearing graves relating to the southern British Early Bronze Age. ‘The Early Bronze Age in Wessex’²⁵ is an enquiry and argument of such complexity and such erudition, packed with ideas, that it is fair to say that it is still now, after his death, a controversial paper. Still much quoted, it is a seminal example, alongside Childe’s own analysis of the *Linearbandkeramik* cultures of Central Europe, of the historico-cultural approach to prehistory.

By 1938, of course, the gravity of the political situation in Europe was apparent to everybody. Piggott had, anyway, been tiring of the Keiller autocracy; his marriage had made this insupportable and he left Keiller’s full-time employment in 1937, although he went on assisting Keiller on an *ad hoc* basis until 1939. In a manner that many today might find surprising, Government, at that time of immense stress, agreed a programme, not inexpensive, of excavation of ancient monuments in advance of urgent defence works. Stuart and Peggy found themselves excavating round barrows on Crichel Down, Dorset.²⁶ This particular land requisition was, on its disposal after the war, to create political history. Far more important, arguably, was the extraordinary find of a trepanned skull of Early Bronze Age date to which Piggott gave major prominence in a paper drawing on the British and European parallels for this practice.²⁷

By early 1938 the Piggotts’ reputation as freelance excavators was highly regarded. They worked at Little Woodbury with Gerhard Bersu in both 1938 and 1939, Stuart building a series of models to illustrate the structural development of the site as well as assisting Bersu through the unfamiliar process of publication in Britain. Also in 1938, the investigation of a group of burial mounds at Sutton Hoo near Woodbridge, Suffolk, had commenced. Preliminary work in 1938 had made it clear that the mounds represented an Anglo-Saxon cemetery of considerable importance, and in 1939 the excavation of the largest mound was begun under the auspices of Ipswich Museum. When the indications of an unrobbed *in situ* ship burial became evident, the Office of Works was notified and, war-time works being under way in the vicinity, the excavation was taken over by The Office and Charles Phillips was asked to assume direction. In July and August of that year both Peggy and Stuart were prominent members of a team of experts brought in to expedite, in the most difficult circumstances, the excavation of a royal East-Anglian ship burial that contained probably the

²⁵ *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* IV (1938), 52–106.

²⁶ Published ultimately in the *Archaeologia*, jointly with C. M. Piggott, XX (1944), 47–80.

²⁷ ‘A Trepanned Skull of the Beaker Culture from Dorset and the Practice of Trepanning in Prehistoric Europe’, *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* VI, 1 (1940), 112–32.

richest and most interesting furniture known to British archaeology. Of course any such heroic episode will create its own tradition of stories and Stuart's was almost too often told to be retold here: the retrieval of the great golden and jewelled purse mount and belt buckles, the problems with security that enjoined secrecy and the need to retain the finds on the person at all times despite the need for relaxation at the local pub. There they met with the standard scepticism of all British workmen contemplating the work of others, so seemingly similar to their own but conducted for longer hours and for less money. 'Found any gold yet, then?' came the enquiry, and one can see Stuart lifting his head with a smile and saying 'Oh yes, my pockets are full of it' — in the certain knowledge that they wouldn't believe him.

But September 1939 saw an end to all this, as the global imperative brought a new direction to Piggott's life. The beginning of the war found him serving with a Light Anti-Aircraft battery stationed at Longford Castle 2½ miles north-west of Fordingbridge. The battery had been raised by the Earl of Radnor, and Piggott became a clerk in the Battery Office (it was here that the Crichel Down report was written up). In early 1941 Glyn Daniel, working at that time with aerial photographic intelligence was asked by his CO about other archaeologists 'at a loose end'. He quickly traced Piggott, who was soon offered a commission in the Intelligence Corps and ultimately, after a period at Medmenham, near Marlow, was detailed, with two junior officers, to set up an air photographic interpretation unit for transfer to the Far Eastern theatre.

Eventually late in 1941 Piggott left on the 'horseshoe' run to India, first to Shannon (where, delayed for a week, he was able to paint and sketch) and then on to Lisbon, Freetown, Lagos, Leopoldville, Kampala, Khartoum, and Cairo. In Cairo the parlous state of affairs at Singapore, and the Japanese invasion of Burma in mid-December, led to delay, which facilitated informal study of Islamic architecture among the city's mosques, although the National Museum of Antiquities was closed (only five months later Rommel was to be hammering at the gateway to the Nile Delta). After some delay Piggott joined Glyn Daniel (later to be Disney Professor at Cambridge) and Terence Powell (later to be Professor at Liverpool) and other officers in Delhi to form the Central Photographic Interpretation Section within which Stuart was the senior Army representative in a combined operations office under Daniel's command.

After some time, as Army and Air Force representatives, Daniel and Piggott were detailed to attend an Anglo-American conference on aerial photographic interpretation in Algiers in the summer of 1943. Difficult relations between British and American commands after the head-banging of the 'Torch' episode meant that the conference was cancelled so that the two were delayed in Cairo — by now fairly relaxed in its distance from the sterner aspects of the war. Daniel was taken ill and unable to fly so that the two, as

Daniel puts it²⁸ ‘ . . . spent a very pleasant few days in Cairo, went out again to the pyramids and ate and drank surprisingly well. One night after a very good dinner at the St James’s Restaurant we were so delighted with the local Egyptian wine . . . that we found ourselves unsteadily walking home singing “Vinicole et Viticole, let the tide of victory roll”—two putative professors in splendid form!’ The Cairo episode was a wonderful opportunity for relaxation and almost certainly the episode that cemented a friendship that lasted until Glyn’s death in 1986. Daniel suggests that it was Stuart who prompted him to try his hand at detective fiction which he did with not inconsiderable success.

After several weeks, with the Algiers meeting in the air, passage was offered to Malta and the two spent two ‘blissful’ days inspecting megalithic monuments and rock-cut tombs on the island, several spattered with bits of German and Italian aircraft. In August 1943 when the first convoy with wine aboard reached the island, Piggott and Daniel were still there, and after a ‘good evening’, Daniel tells us, Piggott added a poem to a collection of war-time poetry he had been writing. The two did eventually reach Algiers—an abortive mission that led to an initial, rather abrasive, episode with Wheeler who, preparing himself for the rigours of Sicily, had, wrongly, and like many another ‘sharp-end’ soldier, little regard for carefully garnered intelligence.

Fire among the Ruins—1942–45 was eventually published by the Oxford University Press in 1948. The motive:

Come with me, sharing my walk in the ruins,
the unloved walk I have made so many times,
must make again and must make for how long
for how long—
in a ruined world in an unending sunset
where underfoot the ground is treacherous, slipping
in the unseen bog, the scree or the silent river . . .
‘The Fire’²⁹

Piggott’s sense of the past in the present is nowhere, perhaps, better illustrated than by a verse written on his ack-ack battery in Wiltshire:

Watching the platoon
boil tea on fires made in
the forsaken courtyard
switching the wireless
to a febrile croon.

I had not forgotten
barbarian hearths blackening
proud pavements in Verulam

²⁸ G. E. Daniel, *Some Small Harvest* (London, 1986), 159.

²⁹ *Fire Among the Ruins—1942–45*, (Oxford, 1948): ‘The Fire’, 7–9.

when Rome had crumbled
 Goth ridden, rotten . . .
 'Soldier Making Tea',³⁰

His sense of loss while separated from his wife and the English countryside is best captured in these lines written in India:

. . . with half the earth, and all a maniac war
 to separate me from you.

How we two
 shared in our love of England! Whether the creeks and flats
 by Orford or by Cley, or whether the land
 where England ends, and Wales begins in hills,
 and Craswall Abbey never will be found.
 And how we knew, and, God! how well we loved
 the downland; from the Purbeck to the Thames,
 from Frome to Chichester in the western wind
 that ever sweeps Blewburton, the menacing calm
 in Kingley Vale, the evening night aslant
 on Alton Priors below the Knap Hill steeps:
 sun on the sea and bright on Upwey Down,
 and then the Knoll from Toyd and our own valley!
 'Letter from India (for C.M.P.)'³¹

In India, Piggott, who always fully acknowledged the very privileged conditions of his war service, was nevertheless frustrated by the imposed break in his professional career and its development. A partial solution was however to hand. Within a month of life in Delhi he had found the Central Asian Museum and had obtained permission to work on its reserve collections there when off-duty—a project he published in *Antiquity* in 1943.³²

In April 1944 Wheeler, after delaying until after the Salerno landings on the mainland of Italy, accepted appointment as the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India and later sought Piggott's release from 'the women's work of air photographic service', in order that he could be allocated to the Survey's staff. Fortunately the Army vetoed the idea—as Piggott and Wheeler would have, almost certainly, composed a volatile cocktail, the excellent qualities of both being polar expressions of the same dedication. Nevertheless, and more importantly, Piggott was truly bitten by the Indian archaeological bug and conducted considerable correspondence with Childe, in Edinburgh and Seton Lloyd in Baghdad to mitigate the isolation of his research. Most importantly the work gave Piggott the vital view of Europe from the outside, and against its Eurasian background, that was to become such

³⁰ *Fire Among the Ruins*, 'Soldier Making Tea', 9–10.

³¹ *Fire Among the Ruins*, 'Letter from India (for C.M.P.)', 16–19.

³² 'The Hissar Sequence—the Indian evidence', *Antiquity*, XVII (1943), 169–82.

an important component of his future perceptions. His book, *Prehistoric India*, was published in 1950.

In 1945 Lieutenant Colonel Piggott was shipped home to Britain to await demobilisation. This must have represented an unenviable juncture of his life—no job, no formal qualifications, yet with a body of experience and a bibliography that matched the performance of any senior scholar. He returned to Peggy and the house at Rockbourne. Already his collection of paintings was beginning to take shape. Eric Gill, Paul Nash (a wonderful lithograph of the West Kennet Avenue entitled ‘Landscape of the Megaliths’ stunned any visitor to Stuart’s sitting room) and a number of John Pipers and Graham Sutherlands all spoke of his interest in the combined effect of Man and Nature on the southern English landscape while Augustus John and a Ben Nicolson reflected the spareness of Stuart’s aesthetic, if not of his personality. India had not left him aesthetically unscathed and a series of Indian objets d’art accompanied him back to this country. These did not include, however, the base-metal teapot manufactured in Birmingham that was shown to him as a monastery’s greatest treasure, on a visit to Tibet while taking a period of furlough in India—a story used to effect in lectures on prehistoric exchange.

During her grass-widowhood Peggy had met Austin Lane Poole, President of St John’s College, Oxford who suggested a way through one of the obstacles that faced Piggott on his return. Through his good offices Stuart was permitted to enrol for a B.Litt. (with minimum period of residence) in the Modern History Faculty—to present a thesis on William Stukeley. We know that some of this work was already behind him, but the availability of Bodley’s Library accelerated the process so that he was able to submit his thesis in the spring of 1947. The University was, in due course, to offer him an honorary D.Litt.

By that time Vere Gordon Childe had been offered the post of Director of the Institute of Archaeology in London and had accepted it. His post in Edinburgh, part-funded by the Abercromby bequest, had thus become open. Piggott always made it very clear that he had no expectations of this post, although anyone with the perception of hindsight can see that the situation was otherwise. He was the obvious candidate for a Chair distinguished by its unorthodoxy, its internationalism, and its humanity. In late 1946, therefore, Piggott received a letter from the Secretary of the University of Edinburgh asking him to accept the Abercromby Chair. Nobody who knew him can doubt his surprise, but for all his modesty there was not the least surprise among his peers at the time. He accepted the post and was driven the four hundred miles north by Vere Gordon Childe. Childe, notoriously, never had any clear idea of the rules of the road, and it is perhaps a matter of great good fortune that our story does not close at this juncture. Stuart told a delightful story about Childe’s *Schlossenberg Kultur* which as an external examiner during the year before his take-over, he encountered in students’ scripts and which caused him puzzlement and, characteristically, humility. He had not previously heard

of this culture—he questioned widely to conclude that the only possible explanation was the uninitiate's interpretation of Childe's very strong accent and the 'slash-and-burn cultures' of the earlier Neolithic!

With few prejudices Piggott entered post in September 1947. Peggy and he took a flat in Gloucester Place in the New Town of Edinburgh but retained the Rockbourne house for use in the vacations. His welcome to Scotland was relatively warm. His predecessor had been an eccentric, 'difficult' man; here was new blood. In 1947 he was immediately warranted as a Commissioner of the RCAHMS and remained so until 1976. The Office of Works was to invite Stuart and Peggy to excavate sites, and they were quick to assess the nature of the problems in Scotland and to make a deliberate decision to concentrate their efforts differentially, he concentrating on earlier prehistory and she on later.

As a Commissioner, Stuart was an important influence in the re-seeding of RCAHMS after the fallow years of the War. He, then, and throughout his time, encouraged standards of drawing and presentation which have stood RCAHMS in good stead until the present day. The inclusion of elevational and axiometric drawings was something that he had researched (and practised) himself in order to allow greater accessibility to technical drawing standards by a wider lay public. These influences are quite evident in the Stirlingshire and Peeblesshire *Inventories*. In the case of the Roxburghshire *Inventory* he was a tower of strength, assisting staff in site analysis which led directly to Peggy's important excavations at Hownam Rings and Hayhope Knowe, the results of which are only now being re-thought by a new generation of archaeologists. Indeed he wrote substantial parts of the text of the volume. Piggott himself was also increasingly interested by the architecture he saw around him in Scotland; he was a major force in directing the interests of RCAHMS into vernacular recording (barely covered, if at all, by the Royal Warrant at that time) which, again, has been a strong influence that has been sustained.

In 1948 Stuart was invited by The Office of Works to excavate and interpret the site in its guardianship at Cairnpapple Hill, West Lothian. The excavation is an important one because it shows Piggott, for the first time, operating in an excavational environment totally foreign to his own chalk and related soils. Unfamiliar it may have been but there is no sign of this either in the archive of his work nor in the published account.³³ The excavation introduced a new standard to Scotland at that time which was effectively taken up within five years by others. In this particular instance Stuart's customary rapidity in submitting his report actually 'beat the clock' and some delay in the journal's publication resulted in the report appearing in the volume assigned to the year before the excavation took place. During this time he produced

³³ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* LXXXII (1947–8), 68–123.

another important short book *British Prehistory* (Oxford, 1949), in the Home University Library Series edited by the autocratic Gilbert Murray—another extremely effective popularising text for the layman.

But what of the University and the archaeology courses? In the *Retrospect* Piggott recalls that ‘Constructing and teaching single-handed an appropriate course presented problems. Childe had constructed an unworkable B.Sc. which I quickly converted into an Honours MA.’ All of this harks back to the decision by the University of Edinburgh that Abercromby’s bequest should not be amended to provide a full professorial salary. Childe had suffered under this predicament and, likewise, so did Piggott until the mid-fifties. One way of addressing this problem was Piggott’s acquisition of R. J. C. Atkinson as an assistant. Meanwhile he began to teach a fully European prehistory course ‘filling the gaps in my own knowledge before instructing others even more ignorant’. Having no model of teaching for himself, he developed his own—a teaching style that I knew at its fullest and others knew in earlier circumstances. ‘He was an excellent teacher and had both the power to fascinate and intrigue his audience; and to show a real concern for them, his students; he was always ready to help when they were keen to learn and also readily took on the role of *pater familias* when some sorrow or disaster struck any one of them’ writes Anne Ross, a student of the 1950s and I, as a student of the sixties, can aver that his teaching commitment never left him. Known to generations of students as ‘Piggins’ (because of his fussy precise mannerisms?) he was always a well-liked and admired teacher. His predilection for the most magnificent waistcoats also earned him the less attractive, but always affectionate, ‘Toad’ after the expansive but vulnerable character created by Kenneth Grahame. But it is also true that Stuart never suffered fools easily. Students who did not follow him quickly would be lost. They had to be enthusiastic and conscientious, or Stuart himself lost interest, and never very far from Stuart’s elbow was a ‘black dog’, what he termed ‘*accidia et anhedonia*’, easily set loose by the failure of others to live up to his high expectations for them, releasing all his own capacity for self-doubt.

Piggott’s productiveness in the 1950s and 1960s was prodigious. After the publication of *Cairnpapple* he undertook the excavation, in company with his war-time friend Terence Powell, of three chambered cairns at Cairnholy in Galloway on behalf of The Office of Works.³⁴ After *Cairnpapple* and *Cairnholy* he continued work in Scotland excavating at Torwoodlee hill fort and ‘broch’ in Selkirkshire,³⁵ and with Peggy, at Castle Law, Glencorse, Midlothian, and at Craigs Quarry near Dirleton, East Lothian.³⁶ Through all this effort he maintained his interest in the Southern English Neolithic. He wrote an

³⁴ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* LXXXIII (1948–9), 103–61.

³⁵ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* LXXXV (1950–1), 92–117.

³⁶ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* LXXXVI (1951–2), 191–6.

analysis of the available evidence from Stonehenge and excavated there in 1950 with his new lecturer R. J. C. Atkinson and with J. F. S. Stone. The publication of this short season of excavation of two Aubrey Holes (and one of the earliest radiocarbon assays for a British archaeological site) stimulated Brian O'Neil, at that time Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, to project the major series of excavations at Stonehenge undertaken by Atkinson and Piggott in 1953, 1956, 1958, and 1964. But at the same time his interests were expanding in other directions. Study of Iron Age metalwork—firedogs, swords, and scabbards, the Torrs chamfrein which led ultimately to a seminal paper on the Scottish Iron Age grew—first in the context of Pictish studies, as an account of the archaeology in F. T. Wainwright's *The Problem of the Picts* and later, in 1966, his seminal analysis of the Scottish Iron Age formed the core of A. L. F. Rivet's *The Iron Age in Northern Britain* ('A Scheme for the Scottish Iron Age', 1–16). In 1952 and 1953 Piggott was again excavating sites among the Clava group of cairns and ring cairns, and at Braidwood Fort, Midlothian. The excavation of the West Kennet long barrow followed in 1955–6. Piggott's excavation career was by no means over at this juncture; he was to excavate, jointly with Derek Simpson, the stone circle at Croft Moraig in Perthshire in 1965,³⁷ and finally in 1972 his work at Dalladies, Angus, in association with Trevor Watkins, published, in 1974.³⁸

This extraordinary output has to be set against his many contributions to public service. He was a member for many years of both the English and Scottish Ancient Monuments Boards. He was a Trustee of the British Museum from 1968 to 1974 and of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland 1954–77. He was President of the Prehistoric Society 1963–6, President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland from 1967 to 1971 and its secretary for foreign correspondence from 1950 to 1966, and a Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries of London from 1955 to 1958. We have already seen his contribution as a Commissioner of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland.

Alongside this activity Piggott was quickly building his department into one of only two departments teaching a single honours undergraduate degree in the early 1950s, and a highly effective one at that. Richard Atkinson's appointment in 1950 was an essential part of this process and by 1956, when Atkinson moved to Cardiff to inaugurate the Department and Chair there (and a third department), a cohesive academic structure had been built in Edinburgh. Indeed in 1955 Piggott was offered the Directorship of the Institute of Archaeology in London. He firmly refused it, however, as he eschewed all distractions from real scholarly output, but most particularly the distractions

³⁷ Published in *Proc. Prehist. Soc.* XXXVII, Pt. 1 (1971), 1–15.

³⁸ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* CIV (1971–2), 23–47.

associated with administration, and what is nowadays called management. Indeed he used, gleefully, to claim that he never opened brown envelopes, only blue or white ones.

Following Cairnholly, the Office of Works engaged him, with Atkinson, also a skilled excavator, on a series of excavations in the south of England, at Wayland's Smithy (a stone-built chambered tomb set beside the Berkshire Ridgeway in his heart-land) and, as we have seen, at West Kennet long barrow which was published as a monograph by the Ministry of Works (*The West Kennet Long Barrow—Excavations 1955–56* (HMSO, 1962)). In 1956 with Atkinson as principal he undertook the most recent major campaign of excavation at Stonehenge (published in 1996 after Atkinson's death). After Stonehenge (and there is no doubt that the non-publication of this site, as well as that at Wayland's Smithy in Berkshire by his partner, cast a shadow for Piggott) he withdrew from excavation to a considerable extent.

Publications flowed. By 1950 he had published his first major work (finished in 1948) (*William Stukeley—An Eighteenth Century Antiquary*, Oxford, 1950), a work of profound scholarship, and, characteristically, sympathy with his great predecessor. By 1951 he had finished his grand survey of the British Neolithic. 'Vultures' as he always called it (a reference to an alleged misprint on the title page in galley), *Neolithic Cultures of the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1954) is still the only inclusive survey of the period and the only start-point for any student of the period. Regrettably Cambridge University Press dealt with the book in a leisurely fashion, so that its appearance in 1954 coincided with the first impact (tentative as it was) of the radiocarbon revolution. Proving, as it did, that all his dates were wrong, it made little impact upon his thesis—simply showing that everything he had suggested had taken longer to happen, with the sequence broadly still secure.

By 1954 Stuart's and Peggy's marriage was at an end. There is no point in minimising the impact that this had upon Stuart. In material terms it led to the disruption and loss of the Rockbourne house and his move from Gloucester Place to a smaller flat in Great King Street, also in the New Town. Stuart was fortunate enough to possess, and to find, friends in Edinburgh who matched his own interests and with whom he could find solace. Stewart and Alison Sanderson, living at that time in the New Town, became very firm friends and by the mid 1950s he had begun to share a delight with them in his old interest in cooking—for Stuart was always a most attentive and capable host. In the early 1960s he began to participate in the column that Stewart Sanderson offered to *The Scotsman* entitled *Off the Beeton Track*. The example of such punning set Stuart, in one of his pieces, to write, '“If you are a good scholar”, I said to my hostess as we were having a cosy chat in the kitchen before dinner, “you go back to the original sauces.”' A subtle mixture of wit and knowledge then led through to a discussion of the deeper origin of sauces (and the sources

of sauces), finally providing a sauce recipe comprising ‘nothing more than *foie gras*, olive oil, red wine and a grating of nutmeg’. To eat *chez* Piggott was always to enjoy much laughter, good company, archaeological and non-archaeological, and wonderful food and drink. Even a trip to the loo was memorable, confronted as one was with a collage of newspaper cuttings, (Piggott Wins Against All Odds, Piggott Trounced Again—different Piggott of course but he always followed his namesake’s career with interest), jostling with his certificates of membership of the Order of Mark Twain (twice) and other memorabilia.

With Atkinson’s departure Piggott was joined in 1957 by Charles Thomas and then slowly, with the Robbins revolution, numbers, hard fought for, began to increase until by 1977 Stuart was supported by three staff, Dr Trevor Watkins, David Ridgway, and myself. Working together with David Talbot Rice (Watson Gordon Professor of Fine Art) a post in Classical Archaeology had also been created which, upon Anthony Snodgrass’s elevation to the Chair in Cambridge, passed to James Coulton. All of his colleagues felt the impact of Stuart’s academic leadership and example and all felt his constant encouragement to develop new ideas, seek to prove them by recourse to the evidence available, retrieve the evidence by field research if the evidence was not available, and to publish, always to publish, the result.

But once again we leap too far ahead, for from 1955 we enter probably the most internationally active and intellectually productive years of Piggott’s life—a period heralded by his election as a Fellow of the British Academy in 1953 and the award of a D.Litt.Hum. by the University of Columbia in 1954. In 1958 he produced *Scotland Before History*, set off with haunting illustrations by Keith Henderson. The book was the first survey of Scottish prehistory since Childe’s foundational work of 1935³⁹ incorporating all the new information, much of it of his own collection since that date. This volume was closely followed by one of the best popular introductions to archaeology, published in 1959, *Approach to Archaeology*. The book shows again immensely catholic knowledge as it draws excerpts from all over the Old World. The book grew from a lecture course given to future teachers of history in the Moray House Teacher Training College in Edinburgh (what a splendid idea!)—and, of course, was a ‘topping out’ of Stuart’s regular appearances on the panel of ‘Animal Vegetable Mineral?’—the very seriously successful TV show that went out between 1953 and 1959 to the strains of the Prelude from Bach’s Violin Sonata No. 6 in E major. Both Glyn Daniel, the chairman of the show, and Mortimer Wheeler became national figures, but Piggott, a regular contributor, very much the ‘straight man’ to Wheeler’s and Daniel’s splendid fireworks, did not court that. *AVM?* was, by far, the most successful

³⁹ V. G. Childe, *The Prehistory of Scotland* (1935).

archaeological exposition ever to have been seen on British television, one senses that it contributed not a little to Piggott's growing confidence during this period.

In 1957 O. G. S. Crawford died suddenly and Glyn Daniel took over the editorship of *Antiquity*. He wrote in his autobiography⁴⁰ that he wanted Stuart to share the editorship with him but Stuart would not do so. Nevertheless, 'I have spoken to Stuart Piggott on matters relating to *Antiquity* almost every week from 1957 until the present day.' Here was indeed the binding cord of that friendship that began in the War years. Ruth and Glyn Daniel, with their love of good food and travel, were constant companions for Stuart in summers spent in various parts of Europe. Stuart travelled widely in France and Iberia, Scandinavia and Germany, and jointly directed with John Ward Perkins the survey of the monuments of prehistoric Malta sponsored by the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas. A joint Edinburgh-Cambridge (Piggott-Daniel) student field visit to the Lipari islands forms a memorable highlight in a number of careers. All this, of course, was the fabric of Piggott's rapidly burgeoning knowledge of European archaeology, carefully crafted into his lecture courses in Edinburgh. In 1962 he gave six lectures to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland comprising the Rhind Lecture series for that year that were to form the foundation of his magnum opus (in my view) *Ancient Europe* published in 1965.

In 1963, however, Piggott produced two extraordinarily important pieces of work that must be singled out for their significance in his, and British Archaeology's, development. The first was his Presidential Address to the Prehistoric Society, that he had helped to found in 1935, in which he sets out a passionate plea for the maintenance and enhancement of standards. 'I . . . do not want to see an anticlimax, and a tolerance of shoddy work, merely because the problems are now more complex and the subject so much more difficult. The very difficulties should serve as a challenge and they are not diminished by trying to persuade ourselves that they do not exist.' It is to be hoped that British Archaeology has risen to this challenge. Stuart, however, never an optimist, perceived very strongly the danger of declining standards and, towards the end of his life, felt their actual presence. His words have for all of us in the discipline of field archaeology an extraordinary relevance today.

Also in 1963 as a tribute to his friend of long standing, Cyril Fox, he produced his beautifully written, elegantly constructed model for the Beaker Culture of Britain—an astonishing feat of insight which reveals par excellence Piggott's ability to sweep a broad horizon with photographic recollection and then to synthesise the mass of accumulated data clearly, concisely, and convincingly. At a stroke Piggott brought Beaker studies from Abercromby's

⁴⁰ G. E. Daniel, *Some Small Harvest* (1986), p. 229.

study of 1912 very much into the modern world. Simultaneously, of course, he paid tribute to that eminent founder of the Edinburgh Chair. Since 1963 successive attempts to reanalyse the Beaker pottery of Britain have never been as wholly convincing, and none have the sweep of ‘Abercromby and After’.⁴¹

Ancient Europe—from the beginnings of Agriculture to Classical Antiquity (Edinburgh, 1965), dedicated ‘To my pupils, past and present’, is an equally remarkable synthesis but, of course, on an altogether wider canvas. The apparatus of the book alone, its index, bibliography and annotations are substantial achievements. The aim of the body of the book is to ‘place barbarian Europe in . . . its rightful place, as the necessary precursor and subsequent contemporary of the ancient civilised world’.⁴² The book is firmly aligned on an historico-cultural approach, with links to the historic and recent era firmly indicated. All variation is between innovating and non-innovating societies defined by standard Childean cultural models. Piggott ends the book⁴³ in a manner that makes his approach abundantly clear ‘But there is one most moving work of art from the ancient world into which one could read an epitome of the final situation, the great silver birthday-present dish of Theodosius I of 388 AD. The emperor sits flanked by the youths of his barbarian guard . . . bewildered boys look out, away from the Byzantine World, beyond the Barbarian Europe that was theirs, and into that of the Middle Ages, and of our own time.’

Travel in Europe, particularly now in eastern Europe, continued and Piggott was honoured everywhere as a distinguished guest. His excursions with, and in support of, Ruth Tringham were a notable feature of the early sixties and led to her own synthesis of the Neolithic of Eastern Europe published in 1971.⁴⁴ With other close friends Terence Powell, Nancy Sandars, and John Cowen he also travelled widely—notably to the Caucasus in 1966 and, in 1968, to Poland, Moscow, Leningrad (as then was), and Kiev. He was an active member of the British Academy’s Overseas Policy Committee from 1969 to 1981 and in 1971 he went to Moscow as its emissary to negotiate formal exchanges of archaeologists between the two countries.

The stream of published work did not falter. In 1965 he produced the Neolithic and Bronze Age chapter for Volume 1.1 of the *Victoria County History of Wiltshire*, his final statement on the earlier prehistory of Wessex and reassessing his own seminal contribution of 1938. In 1968 he produced an

⁴¹ I. LL. Foster and L. Alexander, eds., *Culture and Environment. Essays in Honour of Sir Cyril Fox* (1963), 53–92.

⁴² *Ancient Europe*, p. 21.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁴⁴ R. J. Tringham, *Hunters, Fishers and Farmers of Eastern Europe, 6000–3000BC* (London, 1971).

entertaining yet vastly learned volume, the sixty-third in the *Ancient Peoples and Places* series edited by Glyn Daniel for Thames & Hudson, entitled *The Druids*. In the volume he considers the evidence for Druids as they existed in their European Celtic *milieu*, their description within contemporary written sources, and thence to their re-invention in the sixteenth century and the flourishing of the spurious (or, at least, quite separate) tradition to this day.

In 1968 Stuart received a spontaneous tribute from those ‘pupils’ to whom he had dedicated *Ancient Europe*. The *Festschrift* was edited by John Coles and Derek Simpson. *Studies in Ancient Europe—Essays presented to Stuart Piggott* (Leicester, 1968) was ‘a mark of respect and affection by [seventeen] former pupils and colleagues who have benefited from Stuart Piggott’s scholarship and friendship in the past . . .’

From 1967–70 Piggott served as President of the Council of British Archaeology. On demitting office he gave a valedictory address,⁴⁵ an address which follows on from the concerns about standards set before the Prehistoric Society in 1963 (above) to a point where these concerns are much graver and reveal the degree of Piggott’s concern for the welfare of archaeology as he approached the age of sixty. Piggott, with the heights of *AVM?* behind him, inveighs in his address against the trivialisation of archaeology, against falling standards and against fundamentally unsuitable governmental structures that he saw as exercising an unfortunate influence upon its proper development and practice. This visionary address of 1970 makes arresting reading twenty-five years later when many of the issues to which he animadverts are still now at the centre of our attention.

In 1972 Piggott was appointed CBE. (He appears in his investiture photograph⁴⁶ to be less than quite comfortable in top-hat and tails.) On the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday a more formal celebration edited by Vincent Megaw was made: (*To illustrate the monuments—Essays on archaeology presented to Stuart Piggott* (London, 1976)). With thirty-four contributions by scholars from all over the world, many of them close friends, it was prefaced by a tribute from his old friend John Betjeman, now Poet Laureate, who characteristically harked back to former days

. . . ‘When church was still the usual place for marriages
And carriage-lamps were only used for carriages.

How pleased your parents were in their retirement
The garden and yourself their chief requirement.
Your father, now his teaching days were over,
Back in his native Berkshire lived in clover.
Your cheerful mother loyally concealed

⁴⁵ *Annual Report*, Council for British Archaeology, XX (1970).

⁴⁶ G. E. Daniel, *Some Small Harvest* (London, 1986), facing p. 320.

Her inward harkening for Petersfield.
 For Hampshire Downs were the first Downs you saw
 And Heywood Sumner taught you there to draw

. . . St. Mary, Uffington
 . . . To us the Church, I'm glad that I survive
 To greet you, Stuart, now you're sixty-five.

Stuart retired in June 1977 to the cottage at West Challow, that he had inherited almost ten years before from his two maiden aunts whom he had supported in their latter years, and where he spent the rest of his life; the Department of Speculative and Preventive Archaeology, University of West Challow, as he would entitle it on mischievous postcards. For there is no doubt that Piggott found unattractive and often plainly unreadable much of the archaeological theory that increasingly dominated the subject in the latter years of his academic tenure, and there was little prospect that he would come to terms with it in retirement. He thought much of it pretentious in tone and feeble in capacity and there he would stand. While standing there, however, he would continue to produce publications of extraordinary quality. In the year after his retirement Stuart had given the Walter Neurath Memorial Lecture on the subject *Antiquity Depicted—Aspects of Archaeological Illustration*—a discourse upon the history and nature of the depiction of archaeological material and sites, produced by Thames & Hudson as a very attractive little book.

One of his first tasks on taking over the cottage at West Challow was to construct an extension that rivalled the cottage itself in size, in order to accommodate his enormous library. Many of the books and most of the host of offprints arranged in labelled cardboard boxes had been gifted to him from almost every imaginable source creating a unique research resource now, at least partly, permanently available to scholarship in the Ashmolean Museum and the Institute of Archaeology in Oxford.

By 1983 he had produced a volume of major importance following his life-long interest in wheeled vehicles which he saw as a key issue in the emergence of a European identity, as well, of course, as a fundamental cultural stimulant throughout the whole of the Old World. *The Earliest Wheeled Transport*, was published by Thames & Hudson, and was recognised by the award of the Gold Medal of the Society of Antiquaries of London and by the award of an Honorary D.Litt. by the University of Edinburgh in 1984. He was to extend this survey by a second volume *Wagon, Chariot and Carriage* published in 1992. Before this Piggott filled the void that still existed between his own work on William Stukeley (which he had revised and extensively enlarged in 1985) and the volume published by Sir Thomas Kendrick in 1950,⁴⁷ covering the

⁴⁷ T. D. Kendrick, *British Antiquity* (London, 1950).

emergence of the British antiquarian tradition up to the end of the sixteenth century. *Ancient Britain and the Antiquarian Imagination* published in 1989 contains all the characteristics that one expects of his writing—elegance, precision, conciseness, and incisiveness.

In 1987 Stuart was elected President of the Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society a tenure that he shared with Peggy (now Guido) who was a vice president from 1984. They both died in office sharing this most appropriate homecoming. From 1991 Piggott's health began seriously to fail and as his sight became affected so his ability to read was curtailed. Unfailing consideration and his hospitable instinct never left him but the brilliant glow of his zest for life was dimmed. In 1993 he was awarded the Grahame Clark Medal of the British Academy and he went on producing items for publication until 1995. Stuart died on 23 September 1996. To the very end his was always an amazingly acute understanding which was a valuable and a valued sounding board for younger scholars, and he retained a phenomenal breadth of knowledge within what appeared to be an unimpaired memory, as well as a sometimes gentle, sometimes not so gentle, wit and a delight in gossip. He also, to the end, remained, in his modesty, reticence, and willingness to please and to help others, a very natural gentleman.

Any final assessment of Stuart Piggott's career will have to wait some years or even decades for a proper evaluation. It has been said, within Scotland, that he never fully played his part in the development of Scottish archaeology; the record as only partly set out in this memoir shows that view to be entirely mistaken. From 1947 until his retirement from the Abercromby (to Stuart always 'the Applecrumble') Chair in 1977 he served both research and public archaeology in Scotland with dedication and enthusiasm. He undertook the effective creation of a thriving archaeology department in the University of Edinburgh ultimately of international renown, together with an Honours degree that was in design and content second to none, producing a stream of graduates and postgraduates who have in turn served the enhancement of the subject in Scotland and all over the world. His own revolutionary work upon the Neolithic and Iron Age of Scotland is perfectly matched by that of one of his postgraduate students, John Coles, who gave a modern foundation to Scottish Bronze Age Studies⁴⁸ in which Piggott took great pride. He was, of course, a long-term member of both major public bodies in Scotland's archaeology and was President of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (in a reforming presidency). He conducted at least seven major excavations in Scotland and exercised a guiding influence over many others. He wrote and edited two major works of synthesis on Scottish archaeology as well as pursuing his international career.

⁴⁸ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.* XCIII (1959–60), 16–134; XCVII (1963–4), 82–156 and CI (1968–9), 1–110.

He was, however, customarily frank in declaring that his *Urheimat* and his heart lay elsewhere and Scots, understandably, find this difficult to understand. But it was so, and he made no bones about it; it is quite irrelevant to the issue, and there is no doubt that Piggott served his adopted home well. The suggestion that he did not found 'a School of Scottish Archaeology' would have been met with a clap of that deep bass laughter that those who knew him delighted in. Stuart's love for his own 'fair country' was of an intensity that scorned national loyalties of any sort—and he entertained a deep suspicion of any who proclaimed them. Piggott regarded himself as truly a European; if there was to be any division between himself and the universality of mankind. He would have been appalled by the very notion of a School of Scottish (or English, or British) archaeology.

But did Stuart Piggott not produce a 'school', a human legacy, of any kind? Indeed he did. He, together with Hawkes perhaps, brought the school of pragmatic historico-cultural archaeology to its highest current level of attainment. Like taxes, and death itself, this school has always been with us since the foundation of archaeology as a discipline and I suggest that it will always be with us. It was upon this platform that Piggott, with his profound historical and humanistic insights, found himself comfortable. If asked why he did not exercise his considerable influence to further the interests of that 'school' and its adherents he, I think, would have replied that he saw it as neither necessary, on the one part, nor, indeed, entirely proper, on the other, so to do. But Piggott's other major contribution lay on the altogether broader canvas of the history and development of human ideas where as a scholar of astounding breadth of experience and erudition he offered archaeology its proper place in the broader development of thought from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century; and it is difficult to see, among his contemporaries, who could have accomplished this to such all-inclusive and such readable effect.

In the last analysis, however, Stuart Piggott's influence upon his students and colleagues was a very personal one. To know him was to understand his straightforward appreciation of the vulnerability of the evidence with which he dealt. He argued archaeology as a study of humanity with his own peculiarly enlightened view of that objective. If students followed that inspirational lead they could be guaranteed the 'fun' of which Stuart so often spoke. It was Stuart's ability to impart that sense of 'fun' that made him such a very effective communicator to the public, both through the written word and, with his distinctive beaky nose and splendid waistcoats, directly through television—when gently led to the ring by Glyn Daniel. It is that personal impact that led me, days after his death, to write that 'to many Stuart Piggott's death will be a personal bereavement' and I have been astonished how many people have responded positively to that spontaneous remark. He, himself,

quoted John Aubrey (1626–97) with reference to his own career, again with characteristic modesty:

Surely my starres impelled me to be an Antiquary, I have the strangest luck at it, that things drop into my lap.

If Stuart had been born today I would like to think that they still could.

Stuart was, by his own request, cremated *simpliciter* in Oxford on 30 September 1996.

ROGER MERCER

*Royal Commission on the Ancient
and Historical Monuments of Scotland*

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