

PAPER

# Samuel Lysons and His Circle: Art, Science and the Remains of Roman Britain

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This paper critically evaluates the social and intellectual influences which shaped Samuel Lysons' (1763–1819) interests in the archaeological remains of Roman Britain, and assesses the extent to which his work was innovative. While Romano-British archaeologists have long admired his achievements, there has been no detailed examination of the factors influencing the development of his interests and approach. This paper will outline how Lysons' social networks, his genuine concern for preserving and recording Romano-British remains, his broad scholarly interests, and the support of an intellectual elite involved with the expansion of national institutions during a period characterized by intense international rivalry, resulted in his exemplary approach to the excavation and publication of the remains of Roman Britain. Scrutiny of newspaper reports, diaries, correspondence, and the previously unpublished contents of his personal library, and an examination of his publications in relation to contemporary Classical and scientific scholarship, shows how and why his work was at the forefront of archaeological scholarship in this period. The results of this study support his reputation as a founding father of Romano-British archaeology and show that both he and his associates deserve far wider recognition of their contributions to the development of archaeology as a whole.

'No job was too great for him to tackle, no exertion too exacting to expend. It was not of his nature to lengthen his days by conserving his energy. He did not belong to the eighteenth century. He was forerunner of the moderns.' (Fleming 1934: 48)

## Introduction

Samuel Lysons (1763–1819) was a lawyer, antiquary and artist who became vice-president and director of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He was a notable figure in British social and intellectual circles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Fleming 1934; Steer 1966; Goodwin 2004), and his volumes on Romano-British remains, most notably his *An Account of Roman Antiquities Discovered at Woodchester in the County of Gloucester* (1797; from now on *Woodchester*) and *Reliquiae Britannico-Romanae: Containing Figures of Roman Antiquities Discovered in Various Parts of England* (1813: vol. I; 1817a: vol. II; 1817b: vol. III; from now on *Reliquiae*), ranked among the most sought-after publications of their day. Copies of Lysons' *Woodchester* (1797) and various sections of *Reliquiae*, Volume I, bound separately, are listed in the sale catalogue of Queen Charlotte's Library, which took place

in June 1819 under the auctioneer, Mr Christie's hammer (1819), and the *Woodchester* volume 'splendidly bound in Russia, with joints' ('for £9': handwritten notes suggests this price; see also Phillips 1823).

Samuel Lysons is widely acknowledged as a founding figure of Romano-British archaeology, and the accuracy of his recording became the model for subsequent scholarship, particularly with regard to the excavation of villas, and the recording and evaluation of mosaics. The accuracy of much of his work has been proven via the context of later excavations, and in the recent recording of mosaics (e.g., Clarke, Shepherd and Rigby 1982; Frere 1982; Torenns 1982: 72–78; Neal and Cosh 2002, 2005, 2008; Cosh and Neal 2010). His work has been recognized as being at the forefront of archaeological methodology, and his publications are examples of some of the finest archaeological scholarship achieved during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both in British and Continental contexts (Morgan 1886: xxii; Haverfield 1924: 80–81; Henig 1995: 178; Johns 2001; Todd 1996: 100). The buildings, which were constructed over the mosaics at Bignor, still survive today, and thanks to his efforts the Woodchester Great Pavement was meticulously recorded, re-covered and preserved (Henig 1995: 178; Stewart 2008).

While his achievements have long been admired, there has been no detailed evaluation of the factors, which inspired and shaped his interests, and enabled him to produce such impressive publications, or of the extent to which his work was innovative for its time. As Todd sug-

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gests: 'the stimulus to record and preserve, if possible, was powerfully present ... There is a large subject here waiting to be thoroughly explored' (Todd 1996: 100).

Some understanding of the origins and development of research methodologies and priorities is now regarded as an essential aspect of all academic disciplines (e.g., Foucault 1972; Shumway, Sylvan and Messer-Davidow 1993). However, in archaeology this type of research has often focused on the most dramatic events, such as the discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum, or on those periods that have come to be seen as most significant in human history (Levine 1978: 340; Wallace 2002: 389). In particular Romano-British archaeology has long been marginalized within Classical scholarship, occupying a 'liminal' position between 'Classical' and 'European' archaeology (Henig 2004: 134). While recent scholarship concerning antiquarian interest in Roman Britain represents a very significant step towards redressing this balance (see e.g., Sweet 2001; Hingley 2008), there is still much to be done to improve our understanding of the ways in which scholars, working in this field, developed and refined their interests and methodologies, and how their work shaped subsequent scholarship.

This paper draws on a range of previously disparate sources, including correspondence, the diaries of Lysons' friend Joseph Farington (1793–1821), newspaper reports, a previously unpublished catalogue of his library (Evans 1820) and an inventory of his possessions (National Portrait Gallery, Collected Archives, MS163). Using these sources, it explores the social and intellectual context in which Lysons' interests in Roman Britain developed, particularly looking at how and why he was able to mobilize considerable resources to excavate, publish and preserve the remains of Roman villas during a period when cosmopolitan interests were dominant, and Roman Britain was largely seen a military outpost (Sweet 2004a: 155–187; Hingley 2008: 157–169). The extent to which his scholarship was innovative within the context of Romano-British archaeology, and within British archaeology more generally, will be addressed through scrutiny of his excavation reports, and further areas for study will be identified.

### Samuel Lysons and His Circle: The Emergence of An Approach

Samuel Lysons was born on May 17, 1763 into a wealthy Gloucestershire family, the second of three children (the others being Daniel, b. 1762, who also became an antiquary, and Mary, b. 1765). His father, Samuel Lysons senior (1730–1804), was rector of Rodmarton in Gloucestershire. He was educated at home and subsequently at Bath Grammar School, where he became an excellent Classical scholar (Fleming 1934: 1). On completion of his education he began a career in the law, was called to the Bar in 1798, and selected the Oxford circuit. However, he did not focus his attention entirely on the law.

While in Bath, Samuel Lysons was quickly integrated into an eminent social circle which comprised famous socialites, intellectuals and artists, such as Mrs Hester Lynch Piozzi, a close friend of author, Samuel Johnson (Franklin 2004; Balderston 1942; Clifford 1941; Garlick 1954)



**Fig. 1:** Samuel Lysons by Sir Thomas Lawrence, pencil, 1799. 6 in. x 5 in. (152 mm x 127 mm). Purchased, 1976: National Portrait Gallery 5078. Reproduced with the permission of the National Portrait Gallery. ©National Portrait Gallery.

and Sir Thomas Lawrence, the English society portraitist (Williams 1831; Albinson, Funnell and Pelt 2011). Lysons dined regularly with Lawrence (Levey 2004); with Joseph Farington, RA, the landscape painter (Newby 2004); with Richard Smirke, a talented antiquarian draughtsman (Fiske 2004); with his brother Sir Robert Smirke, the renowned architect whose commissions included the British Museum, the Royal Mint, and the General Post Office (Riddell 2004); with their father, the artist Robert Smirke RA (Fiske 2004; Fleming 1934: 4); and with Horace Walpole, author, antiquary and Whig Member of Parliament (Langford 2004; Fleming 1934: 16).

When in London Samuel Lysons attended the lectures of Sir Joshua Reynolds and developed his passion for etching. He regularly practised this art with Lawrence, and the results of his endeavours can be seen in many of his publications, such as in *Views and Antiquities in the County of Gloucester* (Lysons 1791), and later in volumes of *Magna Britannia, Being a Concise Topographical Account of the Several Counties of Great Britain* (Lysons and Lysons 1806–1822; from now on *Magna Britannia*) and in *Woodchester* (1797). There are around 300 watercolours by Samuel Lysons in the British Library. From 1785 onwards he regularly exhibited drawings at the Royal Academy; these included landscapes, the architecture of churches and castles, and the Woodchester 'Great Pavement' in 1795 (Graves 1906: 121; Fleming 1934: 4). Lawrence's portrait of Lysons can be seen in **Figure 1**, and Lawrence also contributed art work to Lysons books, e.g., in *Woodchester* (Lysons 1797: plate XXXVII, Lawrence with J. Flaxman as draughtsman and Fiesinger as engraver). Lysons owned

a number of paintings and drawings by Lawrence, which are listed in an inventory of paintings, drawings and furniture belonging to him (National Portrait Gallery, Collected Archives, MS163, London: Speaker's House).

From 1789 onwards Samuel Lysons started to publish papers on Romano-British discoveries in the Society of Antiquaries journal, *Archaeologia*. His interests in archaeology developed initially through discoveries made by agricultural labourers in the vicinity of the family home in Gloucestershire, an area particularly rich in Roman remains, where he made excellent use of his Classical education and artistic skills in the recording and interpretation of sites, such as Comb End and Great Witcombe (Lysons 1789, 1791, 1792, 1797, 1803, 1804, 1817d, 1821b). He was soon celebrated as an expert in the field, and from the 1790s onwards was responsible for excavating and publishing sites such as Bignor in Sussex, and Horkstow in Lincolnshire, where he not only surveyed the remains, and recorded pavements, but was also instrumental in persuading the owner to erect a shelter to protect the site (Lysons 1813: iii, 3).

Samuel often worked closely with his brother Daniel (Baigent 2004), and together in 1800, they embarked on a major project: a county history of England, *Magna Britannia*, which Messrs Cadell and Davis, one of the three leading publishing houses of the day, agreed to produce (Fleming 1934: 32; Besterman 1938; Todd 1996). Sir Joseph Banks reported to King George III that this project would 'add dignity to the Kingdom' (Grieg 1923b: 178). Although the scale of the enterprise was ultimately to prove too challenging, Samuel came to be widely acknowledged as an authority on architecture, and was admired by Edward Smirke, the lawyer and archaeologist (Courtney 2004), and seen as an important influence on his architect brother Sir Robert Smirke (Fleming 1934: 34). His interests in British topography are reflected in the contents of his library, which is dominated by publications in this field (Evans 1820).

In 1786 Samuel Lysons was elected Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and regularly attended its meetings. He acquired additional influential friendships, perhaps the most important and advantageous of which was with Sir Joseph Banks (Smith 1911). Within the first weeks of arriving in London Lysons had been introduced to Banks, who subsequently became a great supporter of him and his projects (Fleming 1934: 14). Banks was a key figure within social and intellectual circles during this period, with interests in exploration, archaeology, art and most notably, in botany (see e.g., Carter 1988; Gascoigne 2004). He was elected to the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries in 1766, and became President of the Royal Society in 1778, retaining this position for the next forty-two years. As Sweet notes, Banks was a polymath, a representative of the type of gentleman scholar who played a formative role in the English Enlightenment before the development of academic disciplines (Sweet 2004a: 103). However, Banks had shunned the superficiality of those who undertook the Grand Tour, and purchasing his own passage, he accompanied Captian James Cook on the

HMS Endeavour's scientific voyage to the South Pacific, from 1768 to 1771, to chart and explore the ocean and to witness the transit of Venus. The voyage was mounted by the Admiralty and the Royal Society and Banks played an important role in recording, with the help of artist Sydney Parkinson, and organizing its botanical discoveries, according to the scheme devised by Linnaeus (Smith 1911; Craske 1997: 117; Carter 1988; Gascoigne 1998).

Banks actively sought the promotion of links between the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries, stressing the importance of exploration, and accurate recording of discoveries, as being fundamental to the development of British Science, and therefore, in the national interest. He was instrumental in institutionalizing science within foreign policy and the imperial administration (Gascoigne 1998; Hooek 2010a: 16). The French were regarded as more advanced than the British, particularly in the study of their Roman past, and Banks used his considerable influence, including close links with the British Royal Family, to promote the study of Romano-British antiquities (on patronage, see Hooek 2003a, 2010a: 211–213; Sweet 2001: 34, 2004a: 161). Numerous papers in *Archaeologia* are dedicated to Banks, and Lysons, in particular, benefited enormously from his patronage.

Through Banks, Lysons too, became acquainted with the Royal Family, and he established a close relationship with George III's daughter, Princess Elizabeth (1770–1840). Due to his royal connections, in 1804, Lysons was appointed Keeper of the Tower Records, responsible for royal letters, state papers and parliamentary documents. Lysons had a significant impact on the organization and publication of the records, and the position came with a salary of £290 a year, with an increase to £500 in 1809 (Bayley 1821: II, 259; Fleming 1934: 28). During this period he became increasingly active and influential within elite social circles (Grieg 1925: 198; Fleming 1934: 28). In 1815 his financial circumstances improved further when he inherited estates worth around £800 per annum, due to the death of his aunt, the wife of Dr Lysons of Bath (Grieg 1928: 36). Evidence of the Royal Family's high esteem can be found in the fact that Queen Charlotte not only owned some of his books, but she also owned two portraits of Samuel Lysons, one by Reynolds, and another by Joseph Planta. These are listed in a sale catalogue of 1819, where his portraits are among others of favoured nobility and celebrated military and political figures of the day, including Horatio Nelson, William Pitt and the Duke of Buccleugh (Christie 1819, no. 30 under English portraits). Lysons' books *Woodchester* (1797) and *Reliquiae* (1813, 1817a, 1817b) were dedicated to King George III.

In 1797 Lysons was elected Fellow of the Royal Society, and he went on to become its vice-president and treasurer in 1810. In 1798 he was elected director of the Society of Antiquaries, and he was re-elected annually until he resigned in 1809. He became its vice-president in 1812. He was an active member of the Royal Academy, and in 1818 he was requested to accept the position of antiquary professor with the support of the Prince

Regent (Graves 1906: 121). Samuel Lysons was also listed as a subscriber to 'the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom' (*Morning Chronicle*, Monday, June 9, 1806: issue 11563). This means that Lysons paid a subscription of £52 10s, which would have entitled him to life governorship of the institution, and which helped to establish a gallery where the works of British artists could be displayed and collectors could conspicuously demonstrate their wealth, taste and patriotism without actually needing to acquire any British art (Colley 1992: 179). While many members showed little genuine concern for British art, the cost of subscription was a significant financial investment on Lysons' part and suggests a genuine commitment to its causes (see Colley 1992: 178 and Hoock 2003a, 2003b: 53 on aristocratic interest in British art).

While Lysons' interests were focused on Britain, he socialized regularly with well-known collectors and connoisseurs of Classical art, such as Charles Townley and Richard Payne Knight, and took an interest in their affairs. For example, John Hawkins discusses the activities and opinions of Payne Knight in letters to Lysons, most notably in relation to Payne Knight's views on the Elgin Marbles (John Hawkins to Samuel Lysons, July 2, 1815 in Steer 1966: 26; Hawkins to Lysons, August 3, 1816, in Steer 1966: 32).

In addition, through his activities at the Royal Society, Lysons interacted with many of the leading scientists of the day, such as Sir Humphry Davy (Knight 2004). Lysons' scientific interests, most notably in geology, can be observed through his correspondence (Fleming 1934: 34; Jeffers 1960; Steer 1966) and by his collection of scientific books in his personal library. For example, he possessed copies of Cuvier's *Theory of the Earth* (1817), Douglas' *On the Antiquity of the Earth* (1785), Martin's *Natural History of England* (1797) and Mawes' *Mineralogy of Derbyshire* (1802) (Evans 1820: catalogue nos. 288, 588, 941, 947). Lysons also possessed a collection of fossils, and a collection of his drawings of sea shells and fossils is now in the Harvard University Library (e.g., *Figures of fossil fish from the Monti Dolca in the Possession of Mrs Piozzi*: Lindsay Fleming Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, series 1, item 1). Mrs Piozzi collected the fossils for Lysons on her Continental tour (Fleming 1934: 34).

The activities of his intellectual coterie were focused on three institutions: the Royal Society, the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Academy. These were all housed in one of the most impressive public buildings constructed in London in the latter part of the eighteenth century, in a dramatic assertion of British intellectual and cultural leadership (Hoock 2003a, 2003b: 37). Many members of Lysons' close-knit social circle were cross-members of the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Academy and the Royal Society, and not only attended all of the meetings, but also socialised in between. For example, on April 24, 1799, those attending the meeting of the Society of Antiquaries at Somerset Place, and dining afterwards at the Crown and Anchor Tavern included George, Earl of Leicester (Presi-

dent), Samuel Lysons, Charles Townley and Richard Payne Knight (*Sun*, London, Thursday, April 27, 1799: issue 2056; see also *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, London, Monday, April 23, 1798: issue 19916).

It is clear that Lysons was an active, and celebrated figure in these social and intellectual circles. His interests in Romano-British archaeological remains developed out of his Classical, antiquarian and artistic accomplishments, and the discovery of numerous Roman remains in the vicinity of his family home. While his background was relatively modest, his early integration into a close-knit and highly talented social circle, the patronage of Banks, his subsequent links with the Royal Family, and later his income and inheritance, enabled him to devote considerable time and resources to the excavation and recording of these local discoveries.

The appropriation, accurate recording and publication of the archaeological remains of ancient societies became an arena for fierce international competition during this period and rivalry, particularly with the French, was intense (on eighteenth-century patriotism and the development of national consciousness, see e.g., Newman 1997; Colley 1984, 1986, 1992; Hoock 2010a; Kidd 1996; on science and national identity, see e.g., Gascoigne 1998; on patriotism and rivalry in the arts, see e.g., Craske 1997; Newman 1997: 111–113; Hoock 2010a; on Anglo-French rivalry, see Sweet 2001: 34, 2004a: 161; Ballantyne 2002; Hoock 2007, 2010a: 22). Banks was a driving force in the development of national institutions to rival those of Continental counterparts and competitors, and he appreciated and nurtured Lysons' talents. Restrictions imposed upon travel in Europe, as a result of conflicts in the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, brought Romano-British remains to the attention of a wider and more receptive audience (Colley 1992: 175) who could no longer visit museums and sites on the Continent.

The ways in which Lysons applied the resources at his disposal to the excavation and recording of Romano-British remains, and the extent to which his work can be seen as innovative, will now be explored, with a focus on his excavations at Woodchester and Bignor.

### **Excavating Roman Britain: Lysons at Woodchester and Bignor**

During the first half of the eighteenth century many antiquarians became concerned with the accurate recording of archaeological remains. William Stukeley's (1687–1765) work was particularly influential: he cut trenches into barrows, recorded stratigraphic profiles and produced detailed reports and accurate drawings (on the importance of his work, see Piggott 1950: 111; Lynch and Lynch 1968: 56; Trigger 1989: 62; on seventeenth-century fieldwork, see Broadway 2012).

The increasing importance accorded to the systematic excavation and accurate recording of physical remains was also due, in part, to the notion that, like other scientists, antiquarians should base their studies of the past on the first-hand observation of evidence. However, it

was only in the latter part of the eighteenth century that the accurate measurement of remains and antiquities came to be seen as an essential element of antiquarian projects, and that antiquaries were frequently judged on their abilities in this respect (Lynch and Lynch 1968: 56; Sweet 2001: 189). The Director of the Society of Antiquaries from 1771–1791, Richard Gough (1735–1809), was passionate in his belief that because artefacts and monuments were important sources of information about ‘the manners and customs of the past’, fieldwork and accurate observation and recording should underpin all antiquarian endeavours, in order to avoid historic inaccuracies and ‘flights of fancy’ (Gough 1768; Sweet 2001: 189, 2004b; Smiles 2007). This resulted in the widely acknowledged exemplary recording of prehistoric monuments in Wiltshire by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and William Cunnington, and the excavations of James Douglas (Colt Hoare 1810, 1812, 1818, 1819, 1821, 1822; Douglas 1793; for discussion of their work, see Lynch and Lynch 1968; Trigger 1989: 67; see also Nurse 2007 on the innovative and ambitious publications of the Society of Antiquaries, e.g., *Vetusta Monumenta*).

The new edition of Camden’s *Britannia*, published in 1695 more than a hundred years since it first appeared, and translated and edited by antiquarian scholar Edmund Gibson (1669–1748), stimulated interest in Roman Britain, so much so that the second edition appeared in 1722, and further revisions by Richard Gough were published in 1789 and 1806 (Ayres 1997: 102–104; Sweet 2001: 160, 185). John Horsley’s *Britannia Romana* published in 1732, was perhaps the most influential British volume and dominated the study of Roman Britain until the end of the eighteenth century and beyond (Ayres 1997: 103; Sweet 2004a: 162; Hingley 2008: 155). A member of the Royal Society Horsley (1685–1732) believed that it was essential to record all kinds of evidence and details from the past, such as the sizes and shapes of stones and the scale of letters and figures, and he criticized earlier works, for example Camden’s *Britannia*, for their inaccuracy (Horsley 1732; Levine 1991: 393).

While Horsley’s *Britannia Romana* did not provide a coherent history of Roman Britain, it was an essential addition to the libraries of specialists and non-specialists alike, and became a much-admired foundation for future scholarship (Levine 1991: 402; Ayres 1997: 104; Hingley 2008: 155). Early antiquarian interest in Roman Britain focused on the excavation and recording of military remains and roads (Roy 1793; Todd 2004; Hingley 2000, 2008), but by the latter part of the eighteenth century Roman mosaic pavements were being found on a regular basis, and excavations in urban centres, such as Bath, were being undertaken more systematically (Hingley 2008: 173–205). Many Roman mosaics were often discovered accidentally, as was the case with the Stonesfield Mosaic in Oxfordshire (Levine 1978: 341). Occasionally the subsequent excavations of mosaics revealed the plan of a building in which the mosaic was laid: e.g., at Weldon in Northamptonshire, a Roman villa was excavated and a description and plan presented to the Society of Anti-

quaries in 1739 (Gale 1739; Hingley 2008: 172). By the 1780s a number of more extensive excavations of Roman sites were taking place: e.g., Hayman Rooke’s exploration of the villa at Mansfield Woodhouse, in Nottinghamshire, where excavations followed the line of walls and care was taken to record elevations, mosaics and some of the finds (Rooke 1787: 376; Todd 2004: 449; Hingley 2008: 235). Samuel Lysons was familiar with this scholarship through his membership of the Society of Antiquaries, and shared this concern for accurate excavation and recording of archaeological sites.

### **Woodchester**

In 1793, while working on a portfolio of Gloucestershire views, Lysons heard of the rediscovery of the remains of a Roman mosaic pavement at Woodchester. The excavation of a vault ‘for the interment of the late John Wade Esq. of Pud Hill’ allowed him to ascertain the dimensions (48ft 10in) of the remains of an ‘Atrium’, and with the support of Banks, Lysons exploited the opportunity fully (Lysons 1797: pl. vi; Baddeley 1926; Fleming 1934: 20). Excavations began in 1793, and continued again in the spring, autumn and winter of 1794, and again from the autumn of 1795 through to the summer of 1796 (Fleming 1934: 21). Lysons received military help and equipment, arranged by Banks.

Lysons conducted the excavations with a meticulous concern for detail. He reported on the plan and discoveries in correspondence with Sir Joseph Banks (see e.g., Letter to Sir Joseph Banks, Rodmarton, January 2, 1794, in Fleming 1934: 21). He followed the line of the walls in order to ascertain the plan of the building, opening up larger areas whenever possible. The locations of finds, most notably of the mosaics, but also of small finds, such as fragments of wall plaster, coins, glass, and bone, were carefully recorded (Lysons 1797: 16). The dimensions of the walls were meticulously recorded, and when opportunities arose, such as where the pavement had been broken up in the northwest corner, the strata underneath were measured and described (Lysons 1797: 4–5). Where full excavation of the walls was not possible, pits were dug in order to ascertain the whereabouts of further rooms (Lysons 1797: 5–6).

### **Bignor**

The remains of a Roman villa at Bignor, in West Sussex, were discovered in July 1811, as the consequence of ploughing, and excavations took place sporadically between 1811 and 1819 (Lysons 1817c, 1820, 1821a). Lysons supervised them for only a few weeks in total, but he was in regular contact with those involved, most notably with John Hawkins who lived nearby at Bignor Park. The excavations were largely carried out by the farmer whose plough had unearthed the site, George Tupper, and his men, and also by Hawkins’ men. Hawkins explained his plans in a letter to Lysons: ‘I intend to measure the whole with a chain and to lay down the direction of each wall with a small Theodolite’ (Hawkins to Lysons, November 11, 1817, in Steer 1966: 41). Richard and (Sir) Robert

Smirke and Charles Stothard assisted with the recording of the site (e.g., Lysons 1817b: plates V, VIII, IX, XIV, XVI, XVII, XIX, XXXII). Stothard was greatly admired by Lysons and Banks for his skills as an antiquarian artist (Lindley 2012: 407) and was appointed historical draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries.

Hawkins was enthusiastic about the excavations. He was an important local figure, highly educated and well travelled, with particular interests in geology and antiquities (Steer 1966: vi; Torrens 2004). The excavation and recording of the site were undertaken seriously and methodically, and publicity was carefully organized, and included advertisements in local papers, guidebooks, and the sale of reproductions.

The systematic approach adopted by Lysons, Hawkins, and their associates, which included the digging of trenches to expose strata and examine the relationships between features, the recording finds in context, and accurately measuring features and artefacts, was characteristic of only a small number of excavations in this period, most notably those of Colt Hoare and Cunnington, and was rare on the Continent (see e.g., Ramage 1992 and Hooch 2010a on indiscriminate looting of Italian art and antiquities). While evident, to some extent, in the work of contemporary local antiquarians such as Major Hayman Rooke, Thomas Pownall (1788) and others, the systematic way in which this approach was adopted at a number of sites associated with Lysons was certainly exemplary within the context of British archaeology during this period.

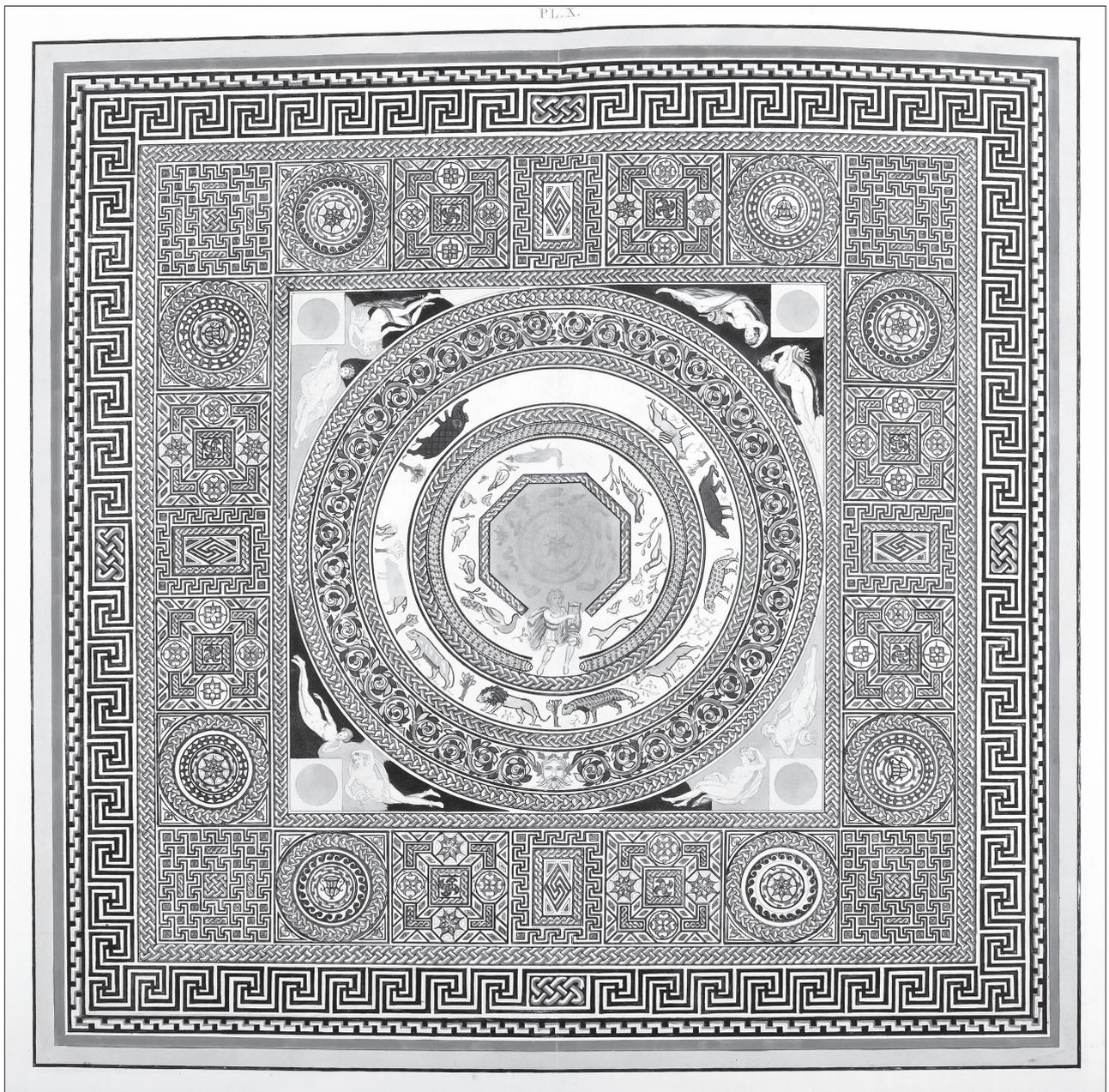
### Accuracy and Fidelity: Recording Romano-British Remains

Lysons moved in intellectual circles where the concern for the accuracy of recording archaeological sites was not only the primary motivation of undertaking any study, but it was also considered to be essential for doing justice for the posterity of the nation (Lindley 2012; Smiles 2007; Nurse 2007; Ballantyne 2002; Sweet 2001). In this he was also influenced and encouraged by his acquaintances. The scientific work commissioned by Sir Joseph Banks, for example, was known for its attention to detail, a fact observed by Farington: 'Accuracy of drawing seems to be a principal recommendation to Sir Joseph' (Grieg 1923a, December 12, 1798: 27). Banks' concern with accurate recording developed during his period with Cook on the Endeavour, but he may have also been influenced, in particular, by the work of William Hodges (1744–1797), the artist on Cook's second voyage. Hodges, perhaps best known for his volume *Travels in India* (1793), promoted scrupulous observation in the recording of landscapes (Craske 1997: 116), and produced paintings that were both works of art and accurate scientific records. Hodges and John Webber (an artist on Cook's third voyage on the HMS Resolution) 'were engaged, who, by their drawings, might illustrate what could only be imperfectly described' (Cook and King 1785: lxi–lxii. Lysons possessed a copy of *Cook and King's Voyage to the Pacific Ocean of 1785*: no. 284 in Evans 1820).

Much of the correspondence between Banks and Lysons related to the importance of accuracy, and this concern



**Fig. 2:** Hand tinted engraving of 'Venus' from Bignor, drawn by Samuel Lysons and Richard Smirke (Lysons 1817b: plate XIX). Photograph by Colin Brooks. Image: Courtesy of the Special Collections of the University of Leicester.



**Fig. 3:** The Woodchester Great Pavement (Lysons 1797: plate X; volume in Special Collections of the University of Leicester published as *Reliquiae IV*). Photograph by Colin Brooks. Image: Courtesy of the Special Collections of the University of Leicester.

can be seen, for example, in correspondence between Lysons and Hawkins relating to the illustration plates for the Bignor volume (see **Figure 2**):

there is one thing which I had omitted to notice, & which when you walk that way I shall be much obliged to you if you would have the goodness to ascertain for me. It is how many centres there are in the inner twisted border round the head of Venus from a. to b. (sketch included) inclusive in the strait line & from a. to b. (also inclusive) in the bow these being the only ones which I omitted to count carefully. (Samuel Lysons to John Hawkins, 1814, in Steer 1966: 16)

Lysons' most celebrated work is the hand-tinted engraving of the 'Great Pavement' (see **Figure 3**), which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1795 and published in 1796 (Cosh and Neal 2010: 212). He was ably assisted with this detailed work, on many occasions by a number of his closest acquaintances, noting with pride in the Advertisement to *Reliquiae* that:

The several pavements have been copied with scrupulous fidelity, and carefully coloured from the originals; many of the subjects in the second and third volumes, and the latter part of the first, were drawn by Mr. Richard Smirke, an artist distinguished for the accuracy of his pencil, and his zeal

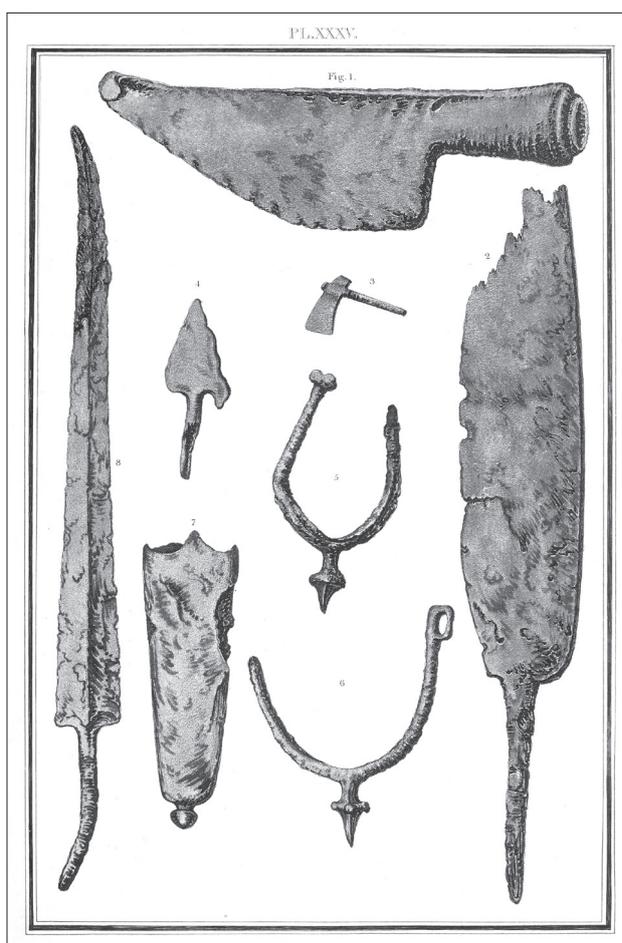
for antiquarian exactness. (Lysons 1813: Advertisement, p. iii)

Portrait painter, Sir Thomas Lawrence contributed drawings for two of the engravings in *Woodchester* (Levey 2004) and Richard Smirke may have assisted with the drawing of the 'Great Pavement' (Baddeley 1926: 94; Fleming 1934: 22; for further discussion see Henig 1995: 180; Todd 1996: 95; Hingley 2008: esp. 248). Additional illustrations of the Great Pavement and the Bonum Eventum Mosaic appear in *Reliquiae*. Architect Richard Smirke also assisted with the recording of mosaics at Withington (Lysons 1817a: i, plates XIX and XX; see also Cosh and Neal 2010: 203, pl. 213; for further contributions by Richard and Robert Smirke, see Lysons 1817a: i, plates III, IV, VI, VII, XV, XVI, XVII). Other eminent contributors included well known engravers Charles and Thomas Stothard (Carlyle 2004; Lindley 2012; Sullivan 2004), and sculptor and draughtsman John Flaxman (1755–1826) (Symmons 2004).

Lysons' approach undoubtedly owed much to earlier attempts to record Romano-British villas, for example, in the drawing of sections and in the recording of mosaics in context (see Smiles 2007 for an overview of British recording). However, unlike other antiquarians of the period, he was influenced by the work of Continental scholars Bernard de Montfaucon and the Comte de Caylus, who asserted the importance of the scrupulous observation and recording of all forms of evidence of the past (Montfaucon 1719–1724; Caylus 1752–1767; on the importance of these works for the development of antiquarianism, see Haskell 1993: 185). In addition, Lysons referred frequently to Friedrich Samuel Schmidt de Rosson's (1737–1796) publication of Roman sites in Switzerland (Schmidt de Rosson 1771; no. 1519 in Evans 1820), during his discussion of the Woodchester discoveries (e.g., Lysons 1797: 7, plate XIX, 1817b: plate VI). Schmidt de Rosson's book comprised detailed descriptions and explanations of archaeological finds, including small finds such as fragments of wall plaster and lamps, for which Schmidt employed 'Mr Zingg, très célèbre Artiste Suisse' (Schmidt de Rosson 1771: preface) and a number of well-drawn plans and illustrations.

Significantly, Lysons and his associates did not 'repair' flaws in artefacts or monuments, as was often the case with the recording of Classical antiquities during this period; e.g., as D'Hancarville did with Hamilton's vases (D'Hancarville 1766–1767; Brylowe 2008: 54), and they took great care to record smaller archaeological finds. Where reconstructions were attempted, the state of the original was clearly shown. For example, for the Diana and Bull sculpture from *Woodchester* (Lysons 1797: 10, plates XXXVIII and XXXIX) Lysons employed the services of John Flaxman (1755–1826), a renowned neoclassical draughtsman and sculptor, who 'by following the lines of the drapery with clay, ascertained in the most satisfactory manner what the defective parts of the figure must have been' (Lysons 1797: 10: footnote 24, plate XXXVIII, figure 2).

Todd suggests that it was James Buckman and Charles Henry Newmarch who broke new ground in their publica-



**Fig. 4:** Iron and brass objects found 'among the rubbish of the building in the Parks ... The knife fig. 1 very much resembles in form and size one of the same metal, which was found with an altar dedicated to Mars near the Borghese palace at Rome' (Lysons 1797: 13, plate XXXV; volume in Special Collections of the University of Leicester published as *Reliquiae IV*). All are the same size as the originals. Photograph by Colin Brooks. Image: Courtesy of the Special Collections of the University of Leicester.

tion of finds of pottery, metal and glass in their volume on Roman Cirencester (Buckman and Newmarch 1850), but more than thirty years before them, Lysons included numerous descriptions and illustrations of small finds such as coins and fragments of painted plaster, some of which are drawn the same size as the originals (e.g., Lysons 1817b: plate XXIII; mosaics are drawn to scale: e.g., Lysons 1817b: plate XI, drawn at a scale of 2 inches to a foot (1:6)), and the majority of these illustrations included scales or dimensions (see **Figure 4**). The contexts of finds are recorded in the room-by-room descriptions of the villas, while plans show the mosaics in context (e.g. Lysons 1797: plate VI).

The accuracy of some of Lysons' recording of mosaics, particularly in relation to the animals at Woodchester, has been questioned, and the extent to which Lysons' drawings were more or less accurate than those of his associates merits further investigation (Baddeley 1926: 94;

see Cosh and Neil 2010: 212–234 for a discussion of the pavements and the accuracy of the engravings of mosaics at Woodchester by Lysons and his associates). Nevertheless, his achievements have long been celebrated; in 1820 Burke described the works of Lysons as ‘remarkable for the industry and accuracy of information with which they have been compiled’ (Burke 1820: 462), and the accuracy of the villa plans has been verified in the course of subsequent excavations (e.g., Clarke, Shepherd and Rigby 1982; Frere 1982; Wessex Archaeology 2006). Lysons’ generally meticulous recording of all forms of evidence in context, the care taken to record flaws, and the accuracy of his work certainly place him at the forefront of antiquarian scholarship in this period. The contributions made by his talented and enthusiastic associates, most notably Richard and Robert Smirke, John Hawkins, Charles and Thomas Stothard and Thomas Lawrence, merit further recognition and scrutiny. The ways in which scientific knowledge was applied in the description, and the analysis and dating of the discoveries were similarly exemplary.

### Archaeology, Geology and Chronology

Lysons’ close friend, and collaborator on the site at Bognor, John Hawkins, was an eminent scientist whose work focused on the geology of Cornwall. A considerable amount of correspondence between them related to on-going efforts to identify the geological strata of Britain (Torrens 2004). Hawkins would have known William ‘Strata’ Smith (1769–1839), a pioneer in this field, who collated the first geological history of England into a single record. He would also have known John Farey, who played an important role in disseminating and developing Smith’s work, and in getting it recognised and accepted by the English scientific community (Smith 1815; Torrens 1998: 40–42). From 1816 onwards, Hawkins also developed an acquaintance with the geologist Gideon Mantell (1790–1852) at the start of his distinguished career in the field (Hawkins to Lysons, August 3, 1816, in Fleming 1934: 46). Close links developed between these geologists and archaeologists, with both coterie recognising that objects could tell a story (Rudwick 2005: 187), and that this story was dependent on the accuracy of their recording of the artefacts and their contexts. While advising Lysons on the geology of Derbyshire for *Magna Britannia*, Hawkins questioned the accuracy of Farey’s book, *A General View of the Agriculture and Minerals of Derbyshire* (1811), and emphasized the importance of descending into mines in order to obtain accurate information:

I am glad to hear you say that the account of the Strata of Derbyshire is put together and that you will bring it with you. I think we shall be able to make it sufficiently correct and scientific for the public eye. Theorys [sic] must be avoided, fact only are [sic] to be collected and generalized. (Hawkins to Lysons, August 26, 1817, in Steer 1966: 38; see also Hawkins to Lysons, April 21 and 22, 1817, in Steer 1966: 3)

Lysons expertly applied his geological knowledge in the course of his excavations and in the subsequent analysis of discoveries, and Hawkins was undoubtedly both his inspiration and an advisor. James Buckman and Charles Henry Newmarch were regarded innovative in their evaluation of the materials used in mosaics (Todd 2004: 455), and yet thirty years before their work, Lysons pre-empted them in his discussion of the tesserae at the site of Woodchester (see also identification of materials in mosaics at Bignor, Lysons 1817c: 204):

The dark bluish grey are of a hard argillaceous stone, found in many parts of the vale of Gloucester, and there called blue lyas. The ash-colour are a similar kind of stone, and frequently found in the same masses with the former. (Lysons 1797: 4)

The accuracy of his identifications has since been verified (Torrens 1982: 72–78).

Lysons employed the term ‘stratum’, and took care to describe and measure strata in the course of excavation (e.g. Lysons 1797: 5, 1812: 129). For example, in describing buildings discovered at Caerhun, in Caernarvonshire, he noted that:

To the depth of five feet below the surface it was filled with large stones, earth, and rubbish, below which was a stratum of black mould, mixt with burnt wood, in which lay many fragments of course earthen vessels of various kinds. (Lysons 1812: 129)

Lysons was aware of earlier descriptions of substrata under mosaics in Britain, and at Woodchester he relates those underlying the Great Pavement to the directions given by Vitruvius for the formation of the substrata of pavements (Lysons 1797: 5: footnote 13).

While Lysons could not have used strata as a means of dating, given the state of geological science at the time, he did attempt to reconstruct sequences of events on the basis of these. For example, some tiles were found on a pavement at Rodmarton in 1630, and were thought to have been laid down to help with the preservation of pavements at the end of the Roman period. He questioned this interpretation and instead placed them within a sequence of events based on the strata:

the reason of their being so found, appears to have arisen from the buildings having been only of one story, frequently of timber: and when destroyed by fire, as this at Rodmarton and several others appear to have been, large portions of the roof falling on the pavement, would be very likely to occasion the appearance here noticed. (Lysons 1817d: 116)

Sequences of construction are noted, for example, in the passage on the east side of the Great Pavement at Woodchester:

At the east end of this passage, part of another pavement was discovered laid over it, a foot above

its level. It was of much coarser materials than the original one, and very ill-executed; the design being nothing more than stripes of white, blue, and red, very irregularly put together. (Lysons 1797: 6)

While strata are examined and recorded in order to show sequences of construction and the relationship between features, dating was attempted using coins, through comparisons with Continental material, and through references to events described in ancient sources. For example, similarities with mosaics from Pompeii are noted: 'many of the ornaments and general style of the mosaic work bear a striking resemblance to those of the pavements discovered at Pompeii, which could not have been of a later date than the reign of Titus.' (Lysons 1817c: 220–221; for sources of reference, see e.g. *Ornati delle pareti ed i pavimenti dell'antica Pompeii*, Naples, 1796 in Lysons' library. No. 1333 in Evans 1820).

Lysons expressed disappointment at the lack of inscriptions suitable to help with dating the Woodchester site, but he proposed that other forms of evidence enabled some conjecture, including evidence for Roman settlement in the vicinity of the villa and 'the internal evidence which the remains themselves furnish' (Lysons 1797: 19). On the basis of evidence for 'public works in the neighbourhood in the reign of Claudius', he suggested that the villa may have been initially constructed during this period, although he pointed out that 'it does not follow that the remains above described are part of the edifice of that age, as it may have been rebuilt' (Lysons 1797: 19), and indeed, he decided that the mosaics are most similar to those of the Hadrianic period. He also acknowledged the potential limitations of dating on the basis of style, since 'the same ornaments continued in use for a considerable time afterwards' (Lysons 1797: 20). The 'several repairs' to the mosaics, of 'rude workmanship', are suggested as 'the work of a later age, when the arts had much degenerated: the same observation may also apply to some of the fragments of columns' (Lysons 1797: 20). He proposed that the building was destroyed, probably by fire, 'not long before the Romans quitted this island, and perhaps at the time of their departure', an argument which was supported by discoveries of coins of the 'lower empire' (Lysons 1797: 20).

Throughout the publications Lysons described the highest-quality and most impressive sculptures and mosaics as the products of the earlier Roman period (see e.g., Lysons 1797: 19–20, 1820: 34–35). Where the date of a pavement/mosaic was known to be later, such as in the case of the Chi–Rho Pavement at Frampton (Dorset), the poorer quality of execution was noted, and lent support to the notion that the quality of mosaic form and execution had degenerated over time (e.g., Lysons 1813: iii, 3). Likewise, the rather crude repairs to the mosaics at Woodchester served to emphasize this decline. Lysons' conclusions, while often inaccurate by modern criteria, are unsurprising given the widely accepted view that the quality of art degenerated dramatically in the later Roman Empire as a result of moral decline, decadence and imperialism (Gibbon 1826; Haskell 1993: 187). This idea was also used

in the work of Caylus and Gibbon, but was formalized by Classical art historian Johan Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), whose highly influential series of books and essays, published between 1755 and 1768, set out a systematic theory of the development and decline of art, with that of Periclean Athens representing the pinnacle of human artistic achievement (on Winckelmann, see e.g., Marchand 2003: 7–16; Scott 2006. Lysons' copy: Winckelmann, 1767, no. 1814 in Evans 1820; see also Ballantyne 2002 on Payne Knight, imperialism and the decline of art). The finest-quality sculptures and mosaics, which most closely approximated this Classical ideal, were seen as earlier in date.

While we now know that these villas reached their peak of architectural and artistic elaboration in the AD fourth century (see e.g., Henig 1995; Scott 2000), this late date would not have seemed feasible to Lysons and his contemporaries. Nevertheless, he correctly identified more than one phase of development at the Woodchester site, and his assertion that the building remained in use until the end of Roman rule is accurate (Clarke, Shepherd and Rigby 1982). Lysons used a range of evidence for the purpose of dating, and recognized the potential and limitations of dating based on style, in that a particular style may have been used for a considerable period of time. His use of sections, and evidence of repairs to the mosaics, in order to suggest a possible sequence of events, was undoubtedly unusual in this period (local antiquarian Major Hayman Rooke (1787: 568) does note one possible sequence at Mansfield Woodhouse) and indeed using this kind of evidence to help with dating did not become commonplace in Romano-British, or British archaeology generally, until much later. Lysons' application of methods of scientific analysis to archaeological evidence was similarly unusual in this period and merits closer examination.

### Archaeology and Science

Some of the first attempts to carry out scientific analyses on ancient materials took place during this period. For example, close scrutiny of the weathering of the stone from Stonehenge allowed Edmund Halley to suggest that the monument might be two to three thousand years old (Lynch and Lynch 1968: 52), while the analysis of faunal remains was also undertaken by some antiquaries: e.g., by Frere at Hoxne (Frere 1800; Lynch and Lynch 1968: 53).

Lysons recognised the scientific analysis of materials as important. In addition to the identification of materials used for tesserae, he employed the talents of the eminent chemist Sir Humphrey Davy (1778–1829). Davy became a fellow of the Royal Society in 1803, was awarded the R. S. Copley Medal in 1805 and, after achieving significant recognition in Europe, he was awarded a medal by Napoleon I in 1813 (Knight 2004). Davy carried out a scientific examination of the colours of wall paintings at Bignor, having previously analysed pigments from Roman wall paintings in Rome and Pompeii (Lysons 1817b: iii, 2 note B; Davy 1817; Rees-Jones 1990: 93–101; on work on Italy, see Davy 1815; Rees-Jones 1990). Davy was not the first to carry out an analysis of ancient pigments, but his work on the pigments from Bignor appears to be the first of its kind on a

villa in Britain (Rees-Jones 1990: 93). Rees-Jones suggests that Davy's main aim in the analysis of the pigments from Rome and Pompeii was to support his evaluation of the historical evidence, thereby lending credibility to his skills as a Classical scholar (Rees-Jones 1990: 101). In the case of Davy's work at Bignor, the similarities noted between the pigments used at Bignor and those used in the baths of Titus in Rome and in the houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum allowed Lysons to explain why the colours appeared so brilliant, and enabled him to situate the British remains within a European Classical context, clearly demonstrating that this part of Britain had reached a comparable degree of civilization.

Scientific analysis was also carried out on one of three Roman pewter dishes found near Manchester: 'A small bit having been taken from one of them, a good deal mutilated, was analysed by Dr Wollaston, and found to consist of nearly three parts of tin to one of lead' (Lysons 1813: iii, 3).

Just as the accurate recording of evidence was seen as an essential step in the process of interpretation, so scientific analysis provided important insights into the processes of manufacture where no relevant sources existed. Nevertheless, Lysons still relied heavily on ancient and contemporary sources and possessed an extensive knowledge of both.

### Explaining the Past: Lysons and Contemporary Scholarship

As noted above, in the process of identification and interpretation of archaeological sites and material from them, British antiquaries frequently relied on the work of Continental scholars, and especially on the publications of Bernard de Montfaucon (1719–1724) and the Comte de Caylus (1752–1767). Lysons possessed copies of volumes by these significant antiquaries in his library (nos. 1311 and 400 in Evans 1820).

These important reference works comprised descriptions and illustrations of many thousands of artefacts that were discussed in relation to literary sources. Montfaucon was a French Benedictine monk and scholar whose *L'Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* included more than 40,000 illustrations of Continental antiquities, as well as chapters on topics such as dress, houses and customs, and texts. The latter was a combination of detailed discussion of literary sources with examples and illustrations from all over Europe, largely obtained from sources available in libraries and collections. Montfaucon's work was extremely influential in the development of antiquarianism and art history during the eighteenth century (Haskell 1993: 131–144).

The work of the Comte de Caylus, comprising 7 volumes of *Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, romaines, et gauloises*, also emphasised the importance of art and antiquities as sources of information about past societies (Haskell 1993: 180–186). As Haskell has shown, one of the most innovative aspects of Caylus' approach was the assertion of the importance of first-hand observation, and the idea that artistic and literary sources, and everyday

objects, might tell different, but equally important, stories about the past (Haskell 1993: 185).

By the second half of the eighteenth century an increasing number of artefacts excavated at Roman sites of non-military origin demonstrated that Roman Britain was not only a military outpost, but was also an established and civilized part of the empire (Leuthieullier 1735: 156; Gale 1739: 41–42; Stukeley 1739: 42–43; Warton 1783; Rooke 1787: 376; Sweet 2004a: 182; see also Hingley 2008: 157–237). Greater interest in the everyday and domestic lives of Romans and Romano-Britons was stimulated by such discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum, which were often reported at the Society of Antiquaries, e.g., by Sir William Hamilton, and also featured in more accessible form in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Account of the Discoveries at Pompeii, communicated by Sir William Hamilton. Read at the Society of Antiquaries, January 26, February 2–9, 1775 (Hamilton 1776: 4)).

In the early part of the eighteenth century discoveries of the remains of Roman houses were often interpreted as evidence of the residences of military commanders (Yonge 1789: 193; Hingley 2008: 236) but by the latter part of the century it was possible to identify them as examples of houses built by Roman settlers or by important Romano-Britons, and to show that parts of southern Britain had achieved a previously unrecognized degree of civilization comparable to that found in Italy and elsewhere during the Roman Empire (Pownall 1795: 2; Hingley 2008: 243). Although, at the time, this conclusion was not widely accepted (Hingley 2008: 237, 243).

Like many of his contemporaries, Lysons made excellent use of his Classical education in the identification and explanation of the evidence, and he was also kept aware of the latest discoveries in Britain and further afield, through his antiquarian networks, and through reference volumes in his own library and in libraries of his eminent acquaintances. The breadth and depth of his knowledge, and the ways in which he scrupulously applied this to the analysis of the archaeological remains of Roman Britain, particularly in the Woodchester volume, were exceptional. Selected examples from his books demonstrate how he worked systematically from description to explanation, drawing on his extensive knowledge of ancient sources and a wide range of comparative material.

Throughout his work Lysons applied his knowledge of Classical sources expertly. For example, he made extensive use of books by Vitruvius, and he possessed a rare edition (in Evans 1820, catalogue no. 1785 (Vitruvii 1552) and no. 1786 (Vitruvius 1649) noted as the 'best' edition). When he discussed the 'substrata' of the mosaics at the Woodchester site, he provided a detailed description of the evidence before relating this to instructions given by Vitruvius for the preparation of the ground: 'If they were laid on the ground, he [Vitruvius] says that it should be made level; and if loose, that it should be well-rammed, and then the *rudus* and *statumen* were to be laid' (Vitruvius 1649: 7.1.1; Lysons 1797: 5; on Pliny, see e.g., Lysons 1797: 13; footnote 32). Similarly, Seneca (*Epistle* 90) was

helpful in the identification and discussion of hypocausts at Woodchester (Lysons 1797: 8).

However, Lysons also recorded and explained differences between British evidence and other examples cited in contemporary sources (e.g., in Lysons 1797: 16, Lysons notes variations in the form of houses described by Vitruvius, that are due to climate). The works of Montfaucon, Caylus, Horsley, Camden and Winckelmann are the secondary sources that Lysons cited most often; e.g., in the discussion of a 'dagger' in Lysons 1797: 15: plate XXXV, 'which seems to have been the head of a dart' (see **Figure 4**): 'The figure of a similar weapon (fig. 8 and 4), in a more perfect state, may be seen in Caylus' *Recueil d'antiquités*. vol. ii, pl. xciii. Fig 5. And another in Montfaucon's *L'Antiquité*. vol. iv, part i. pl. xxv. Fig. 1.' (Lysons 1797: 15: footnote 35; see also Lysons 1797: 7: footnote 17).

Wherever possible, the evidence was compared with examples found elsewhere in Britain and on the Continent. For example, in discussing the occurrence of an inscription (*Bonum Eventum*) on a pavement at the Woodchester site:

One discovered at Augsburg more than two centuries ago had figures of gladiators in compartments, with names inscribed under them. This is engraved in Welsler's *Res Augustanae Vindelicae*, p. 237, and in the first volume of Gruter's *Inscriptions*, p. 336... Another discovered in 1755 at Metz in France, had DIANA VENATRICI inscribed on it. See *Recueil d'Ant. De Caylus*, vol. v, pl. cxviii. A fragment of mosaic is engraved in Winckelman's [sic] *Monumenti Antichi Inediti*, pl. clxv. Representing the head of a philosopher, with this inscription – ΓΝΩΘΙ CAYTON. (Lysons 1797: 7: footnote 17; Lysons' copy of Gruter's *Inscriptions* (no. 875 in Evans 1820))

As noted above, Schmidt de Rosson's *Antiquités de la Suisse* (1771) was an important reference, as seen, e.g., in illustrations of a mosaic pavement discovered in 1708 at Avenches in Switzerland: 'resembling in style the Bignor pavements marked A in the Plans' (Lysons' copy, no. 1519 in Evans 1820. Plate VI in Lysons 1817b; see also pl. XIX in Lysons 1797: 7). Through a comparison of form and style, Lysons suggested that the same artists might have been responsible for both pavements. While the similarities are somewhat overstated, perhaps to emphasise Britain's previously unrecognised place within a shared pan-European Classical tradition, and for a British and Continental audience with largely cosmopolitan tastes, it is nevertheless significant that Lysons was making comparisons and was aware of the potential of this kind of analysis.

While Lysons possessed a considerable library, 1,814 volumes in total, it was dominated by works relating to British history and topography (Evans 1820). However, the vast libraries and collections of his wealthy acquaintances, many of whom had a particular interest in Classical antiquities, provided a wealth of additional material for him to draw on; e.g., he refers to the collection of Charles

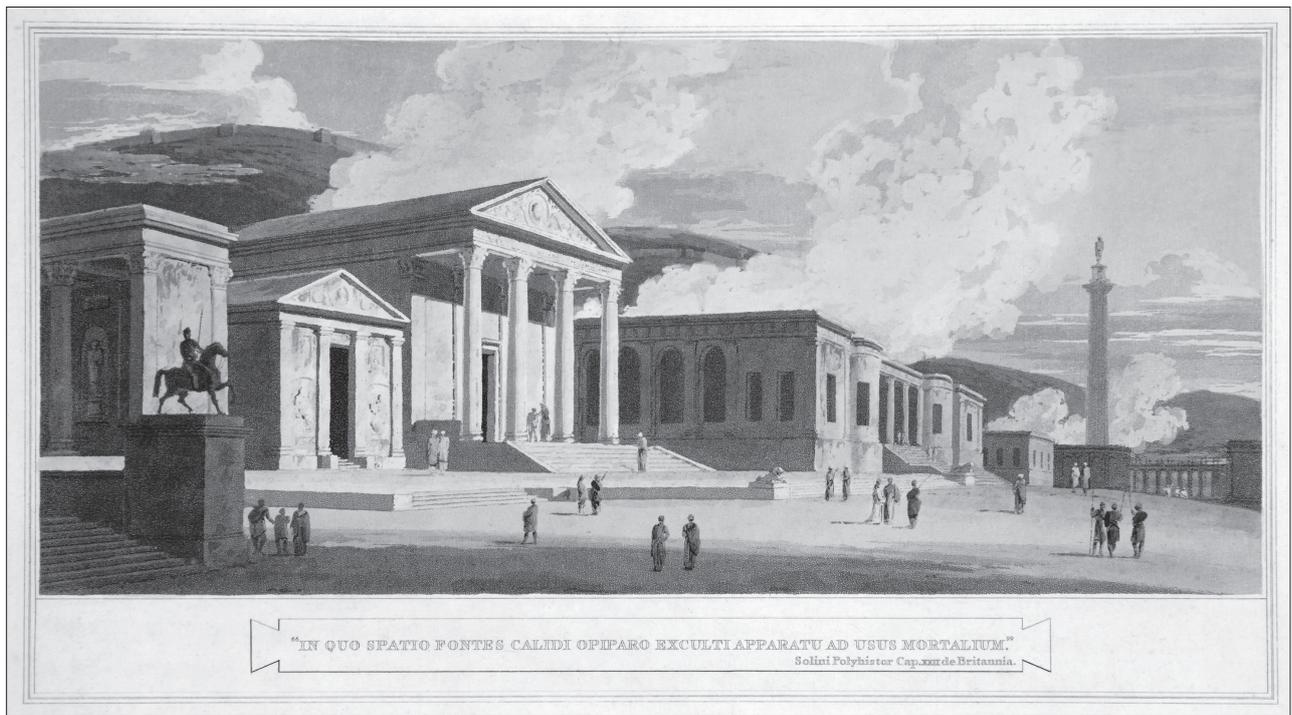
Townley (1737–1805: a wealthy antiquary whose Graeco-Roman antiquities were donated to the British Museum) in a discussion of pottery from Woodchester (Lysons 1797: 10: footnote 28; see also the reference to Sir William Hamilton's collection at the British Museum (Lysons 1797: 15: footnote 36); on library collections see Coltman 1999, 2006)).

### Interpreting the Romano-British Villa

Having described and explained the evidence, Lysons attempted to evaluate the significance of the discoveries. In the cases of both sites at Woodchester and Bignor, he argued that the buildings were the remains of Roman houses or villas, because they resembled wealthy houses described in sources (Lysons 1797: 16), and buildings identified as houses elsewhere. Lysons attempted to identify various rooms on the basis of their location, but he also based his discussion on internal evidence of the use of space: e.g., 'It is very probable that most of the rooms on the west side of the great court were appropriated to the use of the servants, as they do not appear to have had any mosaic pavements or other decorations' (Lysons 1797: 17).

The size of the building at Woodchester and its magnificence lead him to conclude that it was 'built for the residence of the Proprætor, or, at least, of the governor of this part of the province, and occasionally, perhaps, of the Emperor himself' (Lysons 1797: 17). Lysons' assumption was that these structures were built by, and for, Romans from outside of Britain, which is perhaps unsurprising, given the widely held view that Britain was a military outpost. In explaining the significance of the remains at Bignor, however, Lysons suggested that the villa might have been the residence of the eminent local leader, Cogidubnus (Lysons 1817c: 219; Hingley 2008: 255). The idea that a villa might have been built by, or for, a Briton was unusual during this period, and directly challenges the dominant contemporary perception of Britain as a cultural backwater during the Roman Empire. Lysons attempted to evoke the character of this period of British history through a visual reconstruction based on excavated remains from Bath (Lysons 1813: ii: frontispiece). The scene is populated with figures dressed in togas, and there is socializing in the foreground. While reconstructions of historical events were common during this period (Barnard 1790; Haskell 1993: 294; Hingley 2008: 230), Lysons' reconstruction appears to be the first example, in the history of Romano-British scholarship, of a reconstruction based on first-hand observation of excavated remains, showing the nature of social life in the Roman period (see **Figure 5**).

Lysons explained why the villas at Woodchester and Bignor (see **Figure 6**) were constructed, by situating them within their broader landscape context: for example, he emphasized the 'beauty of the surrounding countryside' around Woodchester, and its convenient distance from Gloucester and Cirencester and other important Roman sites and roads (Lysons 1797: 18). Beautiful watercolour landscape paintings, and a detailed map, of the surround-



**Fig. 5:** Reconstruction of the Temple at Bath based on the excavated remains (Lysons 1813: ii: frontispiece). Photograph by Colin Brooks. Image: Courtesy of the Special Collections of the University of Leicester.

ing landscape showing other Roman sites in the vicinity of the villa, further supported his argument that 'there is no situation, in the south-west parts of this island, which could have been more advantageous for the residence of any Roman governors than this place' (Lysons 1797: plates I–III and 19). Map making was an essential 'expression of British national and imperial power' in the eighteenth century, and there was considerable competition between European nations to record their ancient landscapes, as well as their newly discovered territories (Hooek 2010a: 213; Sills 2007; see Hingley 2006 for the mapping of Roman Britain).

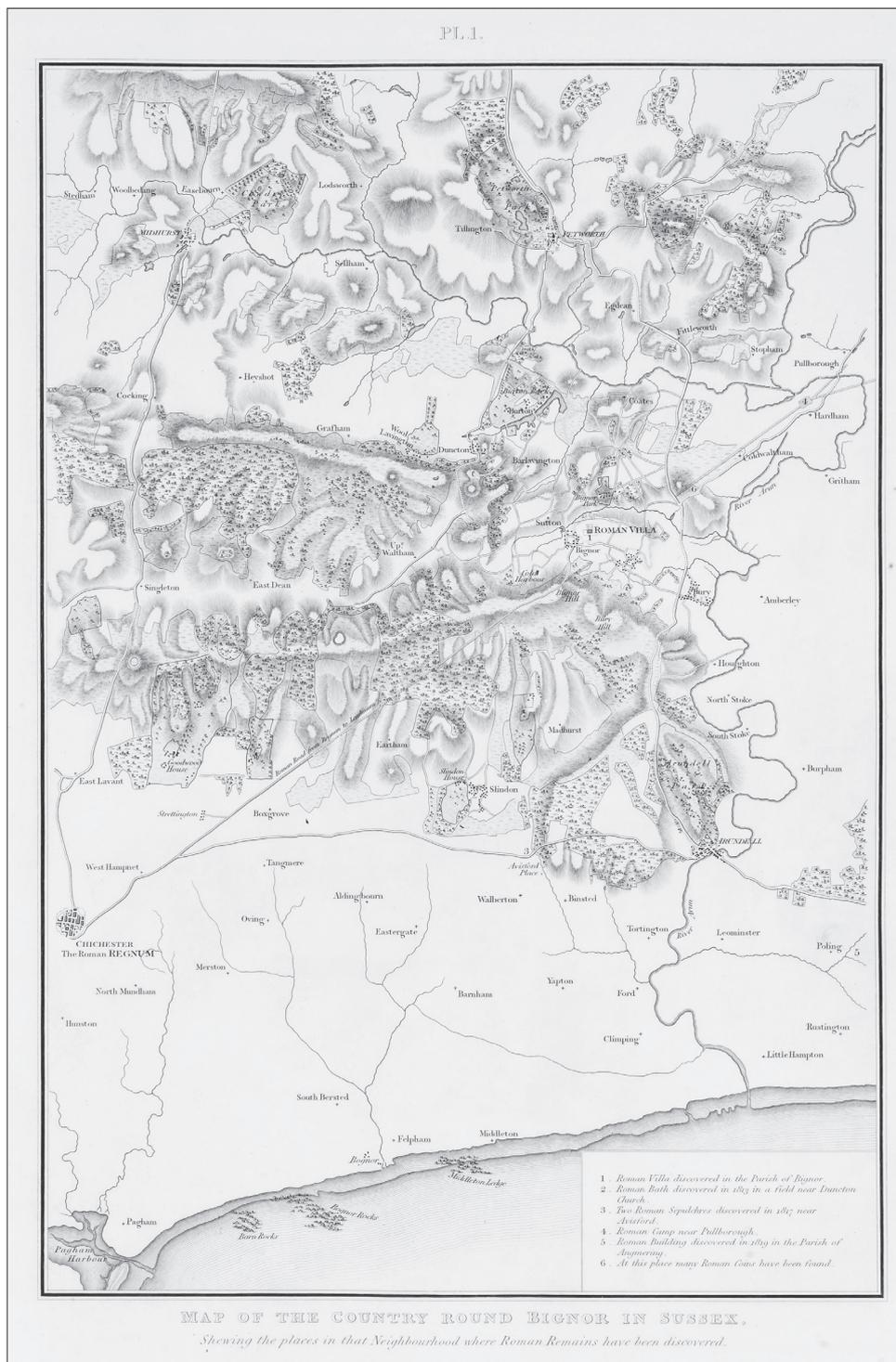
Lysons consistently prioritized the importance and veracity of material remains, and was aware that the form of British archaeological discoveries might differ from descriptions in sources as the result of local circumstances. When he discussed the use of rooms within a villa, and the factors influencing its situation, he based his arguments on careful observation and recording of the surrounding landscape. While he related the evidence to events described in sources, he did not assume that the buildings were constructed by known individuals or as the result of particular events. Sir Richard Colt Hoare also excavated and interpreted Romano-British remains, but his achievements in this field are less impressive than those of Lysons (e.g., his interpretation of the remains of a villa at Pitney, Somerset, in Colt Hoare 1832).

No other scholar, working on Romano-British remains in this period, equalled Lysons in terms of his systematic and critical application of such a wide range of knowledge. Like Colt Hoare, who famously stated the importance of working from fact, not theory, Lysons methodically worked from a detailed description of the evidence, apply-

ing techniques of scientific analysis whenever possible. His recognition of the potential of archaeological material as a source of evidence in its own right does indeed place him at the forefront of archaeological scholarship during this period, and undoubtedly inspired his efforts to preserve Romano-British remains for posterity.

### Preservation and Presentation

Prior to the 1890s the preservation of ancient monuments in Britain was largely due to the efforts of 'amateur pioneers' such as Charles Roach Smith. Britain did not pass any heritage protection legislation until 1882 (*Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882*). The fact that there was no gallery of national antiquities in the British Museum until the 1850s is also indicative of the lack of state support. However, the efforts of nineteenth-century pioneers, most notably Roach Smith (1848, 1859), were preceded by those of antiquarians, such as Gough, who strongly asserted that British antiquities were as important as those of Greece and Rome because they were part of the 'continuum of British history' (Sweet 2001: 187, 2004b; on the practice of heritage, see Lowenthal 1985, 1998). Gough thought that the recording and publication of national monuments and antiquities was essential for promoting 'public spirit' and for enhancing Britain's status overseas (e.g., on English Gothic architecture: *Monumenta Vetusta* (intermittant from 1771); *Sepulchral Monuments* (1786: volume 1; 1796: volume 2; 1799: introduction to volume 2)). However, the Society of Antiquaries did not take an active role (Sweet 2001: 189, 2004a: 109, 2004b). While Gough and Lysons did not always agree on the most effective way to preserve or restore monuments, Lysons nevertheless shared Gough's genuine belief in the national



**Fig. 6:** Map of the country round Bignor in Sussex (Lysons 1817b: plate I). Photograph by Colin Brooks. Image: Courtesy of the Special Collections of the University of Leicester.

significance of antiquarian endeavour and the importance of disseminating this to the widest possible audience (see Sweet 2004a: 104, 2004b; for a discussion of the disagreements between Banks and Lysons and Gough over the architect James Wyatt’s alterations to the fabric of cathedrals, which resulted in Gough’s resignation, see Evans 1956: 206–213).

Lysons’ *Magna Britannia* volumes are a testament to these ideals, as are his attempts to generate interest in a gallery of national antiquities at the British Museum. Lysons assembled a collection of material from the villas at Woodchester, Bignor, Withington and Frampton, and

presented it to the British Museum in 1808, 1810, 1811 and 1816 in the hope that it would be displayed in a dedicated gallery (Fleming 1934: 37). His concern with preservation and presentation of archaeological sites can be observed in work at Woodchester and Bignor.

At Woodchester, the Great Pavement was carefully reburied in order to avoid it getting damaged. At Bignor, considerable care was taken over the preservation of the archaeological remains, and the most effective ways of achieving this were discussed at some length between those involved. For example, in a letter to Lysons, Hawkins describes a conversation with Tupper, the farmer:

I mentioned to him your idea of a low wall but he thinks that even a 5 foot wall will be found to darken the pavement unless it were covered by a roof that could be raised at pleasure. This he thinks might be effected by means of Poles sustaining a Paper Roof & I have just written at his request to the Manufacturer of this new sort of Roofing to enquire prices. ... He complains of the Earth worms doing much injury by raising the Tesserae but this evil would be removed by keeping the place dry. (John Hawkins to Samuel Lysons, May 25, 1812, in Steer 1966: 3)

John Hawkins described the building of walls and planned roofing over pavements, and noted that windows and doors were to be positioned in order to illuminate the pavements to best advantage (Hawkins to Lysons, June 26, 1812, in Steer 1966: 3). This concern with lighting may have been influenced by the contemporary concerns of collectors and connoisseurs, such as Townley, who devoted much time and effort to the aesthetics of display, but it was innovative in the context of Romano-British archaeology (see e.g., Jenkins 1992: 41–55).

The financing of the Bignor project was a pressing concern, owing to the lack of state funding. While the Royal Family were keen to visit the excavations, financial support from them was not forthcoming: 'I almost despair of any assistance from the Prince Regent towards the permanent conservation and exhibition of our Roman Villa' (Hawkins to Lysons, December 19, 1813, in Steer 1966: 14), writes Hawkins, reporting with some amusement on the Prince's rather miserly donation on visiting the site: 'You will smile when I inform you that notwithstanding all the interest which the Prince appeared to take in the sight of the Pavements, the Royal Bounty to Tupper amounted to only two one pound notes' (Hawkins to Lysons, November 2, 1813, in Steer 1966: 13). Lysons and Hawkins were both therefore concerned to encourage the farmer, Tupper, to take responsibility for the preservation of the pavements (Hawkins to Lysons, September 20, 1813, in Steer 1966: 12).

Proceeds from the sale of guidebooks and engravings were put towards the construction of buildings. These *cottages ornées* represent some of the earliest examples of purpose-built structures to protect archaeological sites in Europe, and are the longest-surviving examples in Britain. The construction of buildings over mosaics in Britain was attempted less successfully elsewhere; e.g., a cover was erected for the mosaics at Weldon, Northants (see Hingley 2008: 173; Neal and Cosh 2002: 7; see also Rooke 1787: 316, on covering of mosaics at Mansfield Woodhouse and on plans to construct buildings over them; see Roby and Demas 2012 for a detailed review of literature relating to mosaic shelters). The Horkstow Pavement was also covered by a building, and Lysons noted that 'the greater part of this pavement is likely to be preserved, Admiral Shirley having erected a building over the most perfect and interesting parts of it' (Lysons 1813: iii, 3). While some of the mosaics at Bignor have required

conservation in recent years, in general the structures have proved very effective in both preserving and allowing access to the mosaics down to the present day (Henig 1995: 178; Stewart 2008).

While preservation and presentation were seen as important undertakings, Lysons and his associates were also genuinely concerned with the dissemination of the discoveries to a wider audience, and with this in mind they produced pamphlets and copies of engravings, and made sure that their excavations were widely publicized; advertisements were placed in national and local newspapers (e.g. *Woodchester* (1797) in *True Briton*, Thursday, February, 15, 1798: issue 1606). The engravings proved extremely popular. The impressions of 'Winter' from a mosaic at Bignor proved especially desirable (Hawkins to Lysons, September 20, 1813, in Steer 1966: 12).

There was also a considerable demand for guidebooks on the part of visitors to Bignor and John Hawkins was acutely aware of the potential impact of smaller publications:

I have reason to think that this little book has materially contributed to the *renommée* of the Roman Villa and that it will continue to have this influence and make it better known & understood. Your great work will be in the hands of a few, but your little one will, through our Sussex Bathers, be dispersed over the whole kingdom and by offering a new object of enquiry may lead to many interesting discoveries. (Hawkins to Lysons, November 22, 1815, Steer 1966: 30)

Lysons' and Hawkins' concern to ensure preservation and promote wider access puts them at the forefront of a growing movement asserting the importance of archaeological excavation and preservation of antiquities to be in the national interest, although this interest was to remain rather *ad hoc* until the latter part of the nineteenth century (Hook 2010a: 209; Gaimster 2007: 201). Their efforts to publicize and generate resources in order to fund the preservation of the remains at Bignor, and their concern with displaying the mosaics to their best possible advantage, in context, were exceptional in the context of Romano-British archaeology, and indeed, in comparison with Classical archaeology on the Continent (See e.g., Ramage 1992; Parslow 1998: 199–232, on Winckelmann's view of the excavations at Pompeii and Herculaneum). The production of guidebooks and pamphlets for a wider audience, with a view to stimulating further interest in Romano-British remains, heralded the beginning of a new era; Romano-British archaeology in the nineteenth century was to develop in the hands of the educated middle classes and local archaeological societies (see Hoselitz 2007; Levine 1986).

## Conclusions

The support that Lysons received, and utilized so effectively, was due to a growing enthusiasm for British forms of cultural and intellectual achievement, fuelled by inter-

national rivalry in the wake of conflict in Europe. His excavations and publications of British 'Classical' archaeological remains attracted significant attention at a time when access to the Continent was severely restricted (on visitor book at Bignor see Steer 1966: vi; subscribers are listed in the *Woodchester* (1797) volume).

The patronage of scholars such as Lysons simultaneously enabled the aristocracy to benefit from an association with British talent and intellectual endeavour at a time when aristocratic lifestyles were being criticized in many circles as cosmopolitan, degenerate and superficial (Colley 1992: 169; Newman 1997; Hooock 2010a: 216). However, the popularity of Lysons and his work cannot be seen as part of a straightforward shift from cosmopolitanism to cultural nationalism; as Hooock argues, 'it is important to appreciate a moment of cultural change when no one orthodox pattern prevailed' (Hooock 2010b: 567). Cosmopolitanism did not disappear, and indeed it was still essential for Britain to be seen as a leading player in the shared European Classical Renaissance (Craske 1997: 141; Newman 1997: 17–18, 45; on the persistence of cosmopolitanism).

Lysons' publications, the most impressive of which were also aimed at a Continental audience, asserted British cultural achievements under Roman rule while showcasing British skills in the recording and interpretation of antiquities. However, the ways in which publications of 'local' Classical antiquities were employed in the negotiation of national identity during this period, merits further examination.

Lysons made excellent use of his Classical education, and fully exploited all of the resources at his disposal, including the expertise of many members of his eminent social and intellectual circle who shared his belief in the national significance of the discoveries and the importance of accurately recording and preserving these. While a concern for accuracy is evident in earlier influential volumes on Roman remains in Britain, such as those of Horsley, the value of those writings was limited by a lack of interest in their broader significance (Horsley 1732; Hingley 2008: 156). Lysons took great pains to describe and explain archaeological discoveries carefully and accurately, drawing on a vast range of ancient sources, established reference volumes, and contemporary Classical scholarship and collections. In this respect his work was more sophisticated than that of his contemporaries working on Romano-British remains, such as Rooke, and is equal to that of Colt Hoare and Cunnington's excavations and recording of antiquities on prehistoric sites in Wiltshire. Lysons' work, therefore, represents a significant advance in methodology and understanding. In many ways the volumes that he produced surpassed those of famous contemporaries working on Classical antiquities.

Between the 1820s and 1840s many impressive private libraries were sold, and copies of Lysons' works were acquired for private, public and university collections, both in Britain, Continental Europe and the United States. However, the scale and cost of the volumes undoubtedly

limited their readership during the nineteenth century, and perhaps as a result his achievements were not rivalled for more than a century after they were completed. Nevertheless, his work did serve as a model for some Romano-British villa excavations and publications (see e.g., Hakewill (1826) at North Leigh, Oxon, and Artis (1828) on Roman remains in Northamptonshire and Leicestershire). The exemplary tradition of British mosaic recording that exists today, and the approaches employed in the description and identification of subject matter, likewise owe much to his efforts (e.g., Morgan 1886; Buckman and Newmarch 1850; Cosh and Neal 2010; Neal and Cosh 2002, 2005, 2008). Further evaluation of the wider impact of his work on the development of archaeological scholarship in Britain and on the Continent, and in particular, of the ways in which knowledge was exchanged, filtered and disseminated, would provide a more nuanced understanding of how archaeological thought developed in the nineteenth century.

The national significance of the study of Romano-British art and archaeology was not championed again until the mid-nineteenth century, and Lysons' collection of Romano-British antiquities was not displayed in the British Museum until the second half of the nineteenth century. Collections of national antiquities were not taken seriously until much later (Fleming 1934: 37; Toynbee 1962, 1964; Potter 1997: 130–135). In Britain, the Hellenic ideal predominated, and the pursuit of this ideal, particularly through the acquisition of sculptures for the British Museum, meant that Roman provincial forms were almost completely overlooked (Jenkins 1992; Whitehead 2009). As British imperial interests developed to include Egypt and the Near East, and during a period of intense rivalry with other European nations, the antiquities of Roman Britain were further neglected (Moser 2006; Whitehead 2009; Hooock 2010a: 208).

As a result of these changing priorities in the nineteenth century, which in some respects have endured until the present, Lysons' wider contribution to the development of archaeology as a discipline, has not received the recognition that it deserves (Henig 2004: 134). In his own day Lysons was a celebrated and highly influential figure, supported by a number of talented and enthusiastic acquaintances, whose contributions similarly deserve greater recognition. Their endeavours underpinned the development of Romano-British archaeology, by providing a model for the excavation and recording of the remains of Romano-British villas and mosaics. Their assiduous and collaborative approach, and their genuine belief in the value of preserving, recording and explaining all forms of evidence with 'scrupulous fidelity' for the widest possible audience, deserves far wider appreciation and recognition (Lysons 1813: 1).

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