Archaeological Photography: The United Kingdom

Madeline Scholten

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Archaeological Photography: The United Kingdom

By Madeline P. Scholten
Advised by Dr. Christine Johnston
Abstract

Archaeological photography is an interdisciplinary aspect of archaeological endeavors that is key in allowing archaeological finds to be accessible to a general audience. This facet is key in data collection and distribution within the field as it is to the general public.

Photography is something that people are exposed to, possibly even partaking in, on a daily basis, but photography goes a lot deeper than simply capturing a still image. The history of photography, and the ways photography has improved so many disciplines are things that are just as important as the camera itself, and yet not necessarily needed to partake in photography as a whole. Photography is an important tool in many different disciplines, and archaeology is no exception. Archaeology is the study of past cultures via material remains. That can include huge sites such as castles or villages, as well as small deposits of things like pottery or waste. With this in mind, archaeology is a discipline in which photography is an important tool and data collector, in the present day and in the past. Cameras have become as important of a tool as a spade and brush to modern-day archaeologists. Cameras have become an integral and assumed part of archaeology, and because of this, the photos that are produced are an assumed aspect of field work and not really considered to be optional (Bohrer, 2011). They are used in publications and are useful in documenting the artifacts as tools for documenting change.

The best way to understand how photography and archaeology are connected is to examine this connection through case studies. Within this paper, the sites of Skara Brae and Sutton Hoo, both in the United Kingdom, will be used as case studies in order to show the difference between past and present archaeological techniques and photographic techniques. This includes both changes in the development of various technologies as well as regulations surrounding archaeological digs. The site of Skara Brae in the Orkney Islands, Scotland will show the development of the site (in publication as well as workflow in general), both in the past and present, which is useful to show how all kinds of aspects have changed – from archaeological practices to photography to public awareness by people of site developments and activities. Skara Brae was initially discovered in the 19th century, then excavated first in the early 20th century. The ongoing archaeological excavations at Skara Brae and other archaeological sites around the world throughout the 20th century show the development of sites over time quite well through documentation, which includes photography.

It is important also to understand that developments in archaeology are not necessarily reflected the same at all sites, and to attempt to remedy this, Sutton Hoo in England will be the other focus site within this capstone paper. Like with Skara Brae, photography (and archaeology in general) of the site when it was first excavated and now can be used to see the development of the field. Sometimes, photography can be used to determine if sites are the same as when they were first excavated, if deterioration has happened, or if anything is out of place.

The goal of this paper is to analyze the disciplines of photography and archaeology as separate entities, then connect them in order to understand how photography functions as a tool in archaeology, and understand the importance of archaeological photography in the real-world.
WARNING: Within this paper are images of real human remains. Reader/Viewer discretion is advised.
Those images are in sections: Original Excavation Photographs Skara Brae (Childe 1931) and Original Excavation Photographs Sutton Hoo Ship Burial (Green 1963)

Land Acknowledgement
I would like to begin by acknowledging that we gather today on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples, who have lived in the Salish Sea basin, throughout the San Juan Islands and the North Cascades watershed, from time immemorial. Please join me in expressing our deepest respect and gratitude for our Indigenous neighbors, the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, for their enduring care and protection of our shared lands and waterways.

Messages of Thanks
I would like to express my gratitude to the Association for Washington Archaeology for selecting me for the May 2023 Microgrant worth $100. This was able to help finance the purchase of books that I would not have been able to access otherwise and thus made an important contribution to the research included in this capstone project.
Archaeological Sites and Monuments as Examples.
Photos taken by Madeline Scholten in 2018 and 2022

Stonehenge, England 2022

Doune Castle, Scotland 2018

Roman Baths, Bath, England 2022

Clifford’s Tower, York, England 2022

St Andrews Cathedral, St Andrews, Scotland 2022

Holyrood Abbey, Edinburgh, Scotland 2022

St Andrews Castle, St Andrews, Scotland 2022

Chancel Apse of Norman Church, York, England 2022
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Introduction

Many people have heard of, and possibly even seen, the tomb of Tutankhamen, the famous Maya temples, or the Parthenon in Greece, but do many people stop to think about how the image of something thousands of miles away is able to be seen right in their room? Does the average person understand how that discovery was made then excavated? The fields of archaeology and photography have allowed people around the world to experience discoveries such as that of the tomb of King Tut, though the process of viewing said photographs is often taken for granted and not considered. These two fields developed along their own trajectories and timelines but have come together and benefit one another.

Some of the questions that can be asked regarding this combination of photography and archaeology include: what is the importance of photography in archaeology, and how has it changed over time? How have archaeological practices reflected changes in photography, in the same sites and archaeology in general? All of these questions, and more, are just as important as questions asked about photography and archaeology with regards to their own independent histories.

Within this project, a focused study will be done on two specific archaeological locations and the photography associated with them. These sites are Skara Brae in Orkney, Scotland, and Sutton Hoo in England. These two sites will provide examples as to what actual archaeological photography looks like over time, as well as the sites themselves (such as historical context, excavations, etc.). The Skara Brae site is an example of a Neolithic village in what is modern day Scotland and is preserved enough to provide a lot of information, such as occupation length, materials used, and other similar features that are important in studying past cultures (Towrie, 2021). Sutton Hoo is a site that provides incredible insight into early Anglo-Saxon England, from the discovery of the buried ship to all the treasures inside and includes key artifacts that are from around the world (British Museum, The, n.d.).

Archaeology as a discipline has its origins in questionable practices and goals. In the beginning of modern archaeology, the field was greatly influenced by antiquarianism, so the context of the items was seen as less important compared to the objects themselves and their value (Dorrell, 1994). However, during the 20th century, there was an effort to make archaeology more of a professional discipline (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Rather than a discipline rooted in the desire to bolster one’s own collection, archaeology started to shift into a focus of protection and preservation, as well as appeal of the public and preservation of history.

The development of cameras and more professional photography that started in the 19th century also improved the way things in general could be documented. Photography is inherently unselective, in that when a photograph is taken, frequently more than just the intended focal point is included (i.e., the landscape), which can be beneficial to viewers (Dorrell, 1994). Photography often captures an image that includes features that the photographer didn’t see as important or relevant, such as the current landscape, a passing bird, or features of a site that were previously not noticed. This increases the context of the photograph’s subject, from the modern-day landscape.
to the ancient remains that are present as well. Photography is also a way to preserve and share information across the world, from documentation that can show changes over time (i.e., from weather, environment, people etc.) to comparisons to contemporary societies as well as for those who want to learn about and from sites abroad. Whether via the internet or publications or just printed out photos, cameras allow the user to freeze a moment in time.

The initial invention of photography and cameras developed around the same time as archaeology was becoming a more established and official discipline, and this rough parallel development is shown in the history of both fields. It is important to note, however, that even though the professional field of archaeology developed at a similar time to modern-day cameras, archaeology was more of a discipline prior to the introduction of photography (hand drawn images preceded photos as site documentation). That being said, both archaeology and photography possessed similar interests – the visual representation of the past and history – which allows the two disciplines to function together for similar goals, depending on the research at hand (McFayden & Hicks, 2021).

**Definitions and Specifications**

**Acronyms/Definitions:**

UNSECO = the United National Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Ipswich ware pot = England, middle Saxon pottery type, c. AD 650-850, wider distribution than previous pottery types in this region

Laird = person who owns an estate; term used in Scotland

Skail = From the Bay of Skail, a small bay on Orkney Island on the west coast (Orkney.com, n.d.)

Bitumen of Judea = light-sensitive material, process for photography developed by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1826/27

What is referred to, in this work and others, as modern archaeology is archaeology from the 19th century on (Bohrer, 2011). This means that even early archaeology that does not have the standards of practice that more recent archaeology has is still considered modern archaeology, hence the importance of specification. When talking about archaeology in terms of modern archaeology development, early archaeology and current archaeology will be used to distinguish the two.

For the purpose of this paper, archaeology in Europe will be the main focus. There are differences between archaeology in the United States and Europe which will be briefly discussed, however references to archaeology will be European/Mediterranean Archaeology unless stated otherwise.

And finally, a word on the spelling. This discipline can be spelled two ways – archaeology and archeology. Throughout this paper, the spelling archaeology (with that additional a) will be used. Archeology spelling is used in the United States, whereas archaeology with the a is used in Europe. As with other minute spelling differences between English-speaking countries, the words are essentially the same, but the spelling with the ‘a’ will be used due to the fact that the archaeology being referred to in this paper is largely European.
Archaeology as a Discipline

What is Archaeology?

When people hear someone talking about being an archaeologist, there are different kinds of reactions. Those reactions can be assumptions like that archaeologists work with dinosaur bones (paleontologist), castles, finding gold every other day, and other similar categories of discovery. Many people also respond with a pause and some sort of comment like ‘well, what jobs are there for that degree?’ A short response to these assumptions would be that an archaeologist studies past cultures via studying stuff, material remains, (rather than people/texts) and helps to protect the sites related to the cultures. These include aspects of life like buildings, cemeteries, trash piles and other cultural remains (Trash Pits and Site Formation, 2016), and there are plenty of jobs related to the field if you know where to look.

Archaeology, as defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the “scientific study of material remains … of past human life and activities” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The term ‘archaeology’ actually comes from two Greek stems – *archaia* meaning ancient things and *logos* meaning theory or science (Daniel, 2023). The definition given by Merriam-Webster is a definition that is extremely helpful in understanding what archaeology is and is useful in general conversations.

In a broad sense, archaeology looks at the physical remains of the past rather than just the written records in order to study and learn from past human life (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Different disciplinary subfields come with that, from historical to cultural resource management, prehistoric, classical, and so many other subcategories of archaeology (Institute for Field Research, n.d.). Archaeological practices also vary vastly from country to country, with some having more stringent guidelines, while others are not protecting archaeological sites at all, as well as the goals differing – conservation, protection, data collection etc. (UNESCO, 1956). However, UNESCO does provide some recommendations for member states regarding archaeological and conservational practices, in which all the terminology is defined, and suggested methods are laid out fairly plain and simple in order to at least encourage countries to properly identify and protect important archaeological and historical locations (UNESCO, 1956).

Archaeology in the United Kingdom has a variety of methods that are deemed important and various ways in which archaeological sites are handled. Within the UK, archaeologists work for a variety of entities, such as universities, museums, groups like the National Trust, Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, and others (Roberts, 2019). These groups then work with the public and other sectors in order to train people on heritage protection (one of the key important features of UK archaeology) as well as in commercial situations where buildings and other construction work occurs (Roberts, 2019). When archaeological finds are discovered during construction or in situations of erosion in the UK, the importance for education, research, leisure,
tourism, and the economy are all considered when individuals have to determine what to do about the find (Gov.uk, 2021).

In longer-established nation-states that have long histories of human inhabitants, archaeological finds during construction processes are relatively common (Siti Archeologici d'Italia, 2023). In regions around the Mediterranean, for example, the discovery of archaeological sites in construction – such as the 63 Roman-era identified graves discovered in Gaza during construction work – is relatively frequent, and steps to catalogue and established protocol when it does happen are in place (CBS, 2022).

Why is Archaeology Important?
Some may argue that archaeology is an inherently destructive, colonial, and extractive discipline. There are also some people and institutions that are that artifacts, remains, and buildings should remain undisturbed from the past they come from, rather than being dug up and disturbed. Unfortunately, the world as it is does not always allow that. One of the key aspects of archaeology as a discipline in its predominant form is that it preserves and protects sites that could be damaged or destroyed by various means – people stealing from them, damage from walking around them, damage/destruction in construction processes, erosion etc. (Imam, 2023). Part of archaeology is conservation, which means that archaeologists not only excavate the sites to study, but they also work to figure out the best methods of preservation/mitigation for the situation (Archaeological Project Services, n.d.). On paper this is a practice that is idealistic, however in practice archaeologists or those they work for are not always the most careful when excavating (damaging other artifacts to find the ones they want, mishandling the artifacts, ignoring artifacts to make the job go faster etc.) (Pannier, 2020; Henderson, 2000).

Early Archaeology
From early on in modern history, people have been fascinated with antiquity. Individuals from all over Europe have been known to travel around to places known to be ancient in order to see for themselves the history that is present there, with a lot of this travelling happening during the so-called “grand tour” of Europe (Chaney, 1998). There was a fascination in the early years of archaeological pursuits with foreign cultures, such as Greece, Rome, Egypt and more. This was particularly prominent in the era of the ‘grand tour’. The Grand Tour was a time in which European individuals – mainly young, well-off men – travelled to places like Naples, Rome, and Venice in order to discover the cultural, artistic, and historical aspects of the regions (Chaney, 1998). This brought many young individuals to the regions, and in the process of learning about the area they were in, they decided to acquire antique items as memorabilia to take home (Sorabella, 2003).
For example, a man by the name of Thomas Hoby documented his sightseeing journey in the 1500s, from Naples to Sicilia, Malta, and other stops along the way (Chaney, 1998). His sightseeing was spurred on by his desire to be away for a while and explore the sights, which represents and is an example of the early interest in ancient monuments/locations by wealthier men interested in the past (Chaney, 1998). Early travelers were not just interested in seeing things themselves – they were also interested in documentation and acquisition of artifacts to bring back with them (Chaney, 1998). An example of this is James Stuart and Nicholas Revett’s Antiquities of Athens, the first and more accurate documentation of Greek architecture that was original published in 1762 (sketch example above) (James Stuart, 2008).

The initial spur of archaeology was less to preserve archaeological artifacts and more to acquire antiquities, which meant there was less of a focus on good practices and more on collecting cool old artifacts for personal gain/prestige (Dorrell, 1994). In fact, the broad idea of archaeology has been a pursuit of people for a long time. This was a pursuit of interested individuals from as far back as the medieval times in the UK and Scandinavian countries, where the term ‘field archaeology’ came about to describe what they were doing – wandering around the European countryside looking for potential archaeological sites (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). These early searches for archaeological sites consisted largely of wanderings – a gentleman wandering around the countryside of Europe looking for visible sites such as mounds, artifacts on the surface, and other evidence of something under the surface of the earth (Durrani & Fagan, 2022).

In addition to the grand tour interest and during the time of the Renaissance, there was a dramatic boom in collection of classical antiquities, in the form of items taken from ancient sites/archaeological sites (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). One of the locations that was of particular interest to early archaeologists was that of Pompeii in Italy. Beginning in 1738, Italy’s King Charles III commissioned secret excavations/probing of the area Herculaneum, a neighboring area to Pompeii (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). These excavations were done with the use of gunpowder in order to blast through the layers created by the volcanic explosion and get to the buried city below (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). This kind of excavation practice does more harm than good, and can cause unnecessary damage to the sites, possibly destroying sections of the site. In terms of documentation, even though these excavations were technically done in secret, an individual involved in the excavations named Johann Winckelmann did make sketches (predating photographing sites) of the excavations (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Because of this, there is documentation of the site to some degree (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). He later published his book History of the Art of Antiquity in 1764, documenting some of this excavation as well as other art, and is the main source of information from this explosive excavation (Durrani & Fagan, 2022).
Early Archaeologists Working in the UK

In the 1920s to the 1950s, the idea of archaeology really began to develop into more of a professional discipline (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Post World War I, Mortimer Wheeler (1890-1976) in Britain is credited with the development of scientific excavation in his area, with his efforts dramatically changing archaeological practices (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Wheeler was a trained archaeologist who took it upon himself to meticulously excavate his sites, rather than following the methods of the time which consisted of crude excavations that were aimed to be fast and only save the interesting artifacts, leaving or even throwing away the rest (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Wheeler dramatically influenced British Archaeology, and his work helped to make the discipline respectable and professional.

One of the earliest archaeologists working in the UK was O G S Crawford (1886-1957) who was the first archaeology officer in Britain’s Ordnance Survey (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Crawford was a trained geographer by trade who, in the early years of his personal career, surveyed earthworks and ancient landscapes (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Crawford was also an important part in the development of aerial archaeology from his experience flying over and observing sites from the sky (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). In addition to the aerial work he did, Crawford was involved in photographing the site of Sutton Hoo in England (more details here Sutton Hoo) a royal ship-burial from the 6th/7th centuries (Green, 1963).

Another important early archaeologist in the UK was Vere Gordon Childe (1892-1957). Childe spent much of his adulthood traveling around Europe looking at archaeological sites and museums (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). Unlike most of his contemporaries, Gordon was an extremely skilled linguist, and thus could communicate with the archaeologists he came into contact with, regardless of their mother tongue or country they were in, which allowed for much more open and willing discussions (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). In addition to his linguistic capabilities, Gordon also had an incredible memory, to the point where he could see an artifact and compare it mentally to other sites he saw – for example, he traced a quite distinctive round-based clay vessel type from its origin in the Danube River Valley, made by the earliest farmers, all the way up to the Netherlands (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). After his European travels, Gordon went to the United Kingdom and, from 1928-1955, carried out more than 15 site excavations in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Durrani & Fagan, 2022). V Gordon Childe was not only an important archaeologist in the world of professionalizing the discipline, but he specifically contributed to British archaeology, including his excavations and his teachings to others as a professor at the University of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, University of, n.d.). Though archaeology has progressed much further, V Gordon Childe made important contributions to archaeological history during his time (Durrani & Fagan, 2022).

Figure 3: A photo of Vere Gordon Childe
Click here to read about one of his sites featured in this paper, that of Skara Brae in Orkney, Scotland. Swan Watson, Andrew, Public domain, Wikimedia Commons
Though many of the discoveries have been subsequently superseded, this does not make the discoveries of the past less important. This is due in part to photography because when photographs are captured of sites, all of the data, including the information that was included accidentally (i.e., background features in the photographs, landscape, workers etc.) has been helpful as practices evolved over time.

**Invention of Photography**

**Camera Development Timeline**

Before a true camera came to be, there were much earlier attempts at capturing still images. As early as the 5th century BC, the camera obscura was used to essentially project a picture onto a wall, which isn’t the same as a photograph, but the desire to capture an image was there (Andrews, 2018). However, though this invention could display pictures, permanent pictures on a physical object were not achieved until the 18th and 19th centuries (Andrews, 2018). When the processes started to be discovered to achieve photography, the developments happened rather rapidly.

An important figure in the history and development of photography was Joseph Nicéphore Niépce, a French inventor who is credited with producing the world’s first official photograph in the 1820s and 30s (Andrews, 2018). He used a camera obscura along with a pewter plate covered in Bitumen of Judea to essentially create a physical photograph of a courtyard – it took eight hours to capture and is considered the world’s first photograph (Andrews, 2018).

France was home to several stages of camera development over the years. In 1839, another French inventor named Louis Daguerre teamed up with Niépce (until he passed away in the late 1820s) to improve upon that ‘world’s first photograph’ (Andrews, 2018; Kurnick, 2022; The Daguerreotype Medium, n.d.). This resulted in the daguerreotype camera, named, of course, after Louis Daguerre (The Daguerreotype Medium, n.d.). The daguerreotype camera consisted of a sliding box design where the lens was at the front, a second box slid into the first box, and the focus was controlled by moving that smaller box forward and back, visible in the image to the left (The Daguerreotype Medium, n.d.). Daguerre discovered that when he exposed iodized silver plates to light, a faint image could be developed when exposed to mercury fumes - This technique created not only a sharper and more refined photograph, but also brought the exposure time requirement down from several hours to just 10-20 minutes (Andrews, 2018).

In 1839, Daguerre agreed to make the Daguerreotype public in exchange for the French government giving him a pension (The Daguerreotype Medium, n.d.). Due to this agreement, Daguerre altered the camera so that the exposure time was less than a minute, the invention of the Daguerreotype then became accessible all over the world for the first
time (Andrews, 2018; The Daguerreotype Medium, n.d.). Though an important step, this type of camera was not entirely useful for photography that needed to happen at a rapid pace (i.e., portraits) due to the exposure times in the early versions taking up to fifteen minutes (The Daguerreotype Medium, n.d.). Also, in theory the images created by the daguerreotype were unique (not reproducible), though there were ways to make a near copy and reproduce it that way, so if the original photograph was damaged, lost, or destroyed, there wasn’t another version of it to replace it (The Daguerreotype Medium, n.d.).

In 1841, William Henry Fox Talbot also came out with another camera invention (Andrews, 2018). He called his process the calotype, with the main difference between the daguerreotype and this version was that the calotype used sheets of high-quality photosensitive paper rather than metal plates to cast the image onto (Andrews, 2018). The benefit of the calotype and the different photo material is that the images could be reproduced with a single negative – as many copies of the original as wanted, which has all kinds of benefits in terms of preservation of the photographs (Victoria & Albert Museum, n.d.; Andrews, 2018). Though the calotype images were a bit fuzzier than those of the daguerreotype, the possibility of easy reproduction later becomes a basic principle of photography, and thus was an extremely important development (Andrews, 2018). This calotype camera was the first real example of what cameras of the modern era evolved from (Getty, n.d.). His photo capture method was actually sparked due to his struggle with drawing – he was a master in many fields, such as math, optics, chemistry and more, but couldn’t manage to master the art of drawing, and wanted something to overcome that struggle (Victoria & Albert Museum, n.d.). In 1844-1846, Talbot published his book The Pencil of Nature, which is the first book published commercially that had photographs in it, consisting of 24 calotype prints with captions (Getty, n.d.).

In 1851, the inventions of the calotype and daguerreotype were overtaken by another new camera development. Before the 1850s, being able to use a camera meant that the user needed to have some degree of understanding regarding the chemistry involved in photograph production (Andrews, 2018). This changed when Robert L Maddox, and others, perfected a photographic plate called a dry plate, which made the processing stage bit easier to manage and understand (Andrews, 2018). Essentially, these plates used silver salts in gelatin that retained their light-sensitivity, as well as being able to be prepackaged and mass produced (Andrews, 2018). This meant that photographers didn’t need to prep their own wet plates, and they had a quicker exposure time, which eliminated some of the chemistry knowledge required to make the photographs work that had been needed before (Andrews, 2018).
Until the 1880s, photography still wasn’t really available to amateur photographers, though cameras were technically available to the public. That changed when the inventor George Eastman brought film into the industry (Andrews, 2018). The benefit of using film is that it was lightweight and much less breakable compared to the glass plates and an entire roll of film allowed multiple photographs to be taken in succession (Andrews, 2018). In 1888, Eastman marketed his first Kodak camera with the ability to take multiple photos in a row as a primary focus, although the quality of the photographs produced was fairly low (Andrews, 2018). Of course, as with any invention, this downside of film was improved upon drastically, all the way up until digital cameras started to become popular (Andrews, 2018). As one can imagine, the existence of an easier to use camera allowed more and more people to use cameras – and photography started to be used to document more, such as families, special events, politics etc. (Photography at the Turn of the Century, n.d.).

At the turn of the century, the Eastman Kodak Co. came out with a hit – a small, easy to use camera that only cost a dollar (Schewe, 2018). The Brownie camera sold ten million units in just five years, which was not only an impressive success, but also a representation of how many more people were able to obtain a camera (Schewe, 2018). The name also plays an important role in how the Brownie camera was marketed. The Eastman Kodak Co. intentionally used a character that many children and families were aware of, a series of Brownie books for children, as a draw for the cameras – the characters were used for all sorts of advertising campaigns for this reason (Schewe, 2018). Aside from its name, this camera was an extremely important step in getting cameras into the hands of the general public, and it worked so well that the company realized that
adults were not upgrading to more expensive cameras because the Brownie worked so well (Schewe, 2018). Kodak is largely credited with the creation of mass-market interest in amateur photography (Clay, 2020).

A feature of photography that had not yet been developed to this point was the feature of color pictures. A viable way to achieve this, called Autochrome, arrived in 1907 (Andrews, 2018). Two French brothers, Louis and Auguste Lumière, who were pioneers in cinema, found that when “tiny parts of dyed potato starch were added to a panchromatic emulsion”, images were produced in color unlike anything seen before (Andrews, 2018). This film format would be the way to produce color film up until 1935, when Eastman Kodak Company came out with the well-established Kodachrome film (Andrews, 2018). This film, like the Brownie camera before it, was immediately an impressive success, and was a hit with photographers as well as Hollywood filmmakers (Clay, 2020). This film lasted up until 2009, when the company unfortunately announced they were retiring the product due to the spread of digital photography that made film unnecessary/not marketable (Writer, 2009). Though the company does still exist to the 21st century, they didn’t jump on the digital camera trend soon enough, and though they have started to sell 25mm film again, they had to sell most of their assets in order to do so (Clay, 2020). That being said, Kodak was one of the most influential and important companies in early camera development and the growth of public interest in photography.

The field of photography changed dramatically with the introduction of digital photography. A familiar brand was the first to start this development – Kodak. In 1975, the first digital camera was created by Kodak – an experimental blue and silver box that actually put the images on a cassette (Science + Media Museum, 2021). Though this was experimental, it was the first step in obtaining what we see today as a digital camera. Sixteen years later, the AP NC2000 was released as the first digital camera available for the public, and although it was expensive, it opened the field for who could participate in photography (Science + Media Museum, 2021). This camera also had a viewfinder, where the photographer could see through an eyepiece, which helped to make sure the potential image is in frame (Science + Media Museum, 2021).
Early Photographers of Ancient/Archaeological Sites

One of the key figures in the field of photography and antiquity is a Frenchman by the name of Joseph-Philibert Girault de Prangey (Bohrer, 2011). The figures above are examples of the photography work that de Prangey did on his more than two-year long trip through Italy, Greece, Asia minor, Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, documenting ancient sites with his daguerreotype camera (Lyons, Papadopoulos, Stewart, & Szegedy-Maszak, 2005). Because of the conditions and treatment that the photographs received during his travels and afterward, including storing them in wooden boxes and rarely handling the original products, almost all of the daguerreotype photos from this expedition survive in very good condition, which is incredibly useful both for documenting sites through time as well as being a part of the history of photography (Lyons, Papadopoulos, Stewart, & Szegedy-Maszak, 2005). As can be seen in de Prangey’s work, though, some age can be seen on the images, including wear around the edges, discolored spots throughout the images, and other forms of aging. However, considering the age of the photographs, the fact that they are still able to be identified is worth a lot in itself. De Prangey was not an archaeological photographer, however the images of ancient sites are good examples of these locations and demonstrate the capabilities of the cameras in the 19th century.

As is visible in the image of the Erechtheion, the photo itself has some damage in several locations. Though not so much as to completely compromise the photo in its entirety, there is particular damage to the edges and discoloration in places. This damage could consist of water damage, general tears, and other similar environmental causes, and is one of the down sides of only being able to have one copy of a photograph – if it is damaged, there isn’t another original or another image with the same quality.

Another influential figure in the history of photography is Francis Frith (1822-1898) from Chesterfield, England. Frith had various other jobs before he became interested in photography in the 1850s, but his interest quickly took off. In 1853, Frith co-founded the Liverpool Photographic Society, and in 1856 he went on a trip to Egypt with the intent of photographing ancient sites.
Scholten 19

(Hostelter, n.d.). His photographs were produced in a portable dark room, where he used wet-plate collodion on glass negatives as well as the albumen process of printing (Hostelter, n.d.). The images he produced were incredible, and he later did nine publications with his photographs, after returning to the Middle East to obtain more photographs of ancient sites (Hostelter, n.d.). Frith’s photographs were so popular that he went on to found F. Frith & Co. in 1859, where he specialized in landscape and architectural views of Britain and the Middle East on postcards (Hostelter, n.d.). Though the later intentions of Frith’s photographic work were more commercial, he still toyed with exposure times and vantage points in order to get the best photograph, which shows his deeper interest in the subject (Hostelter, n.d.). He published many articles on the subject of photography where he argued that photographs are able to communicate to the general public ‘divine truth and aesthetic awareness,’ touching on the importance of context and extras within photographs, the unbiased nature of photography (Hostelter, n.d.).

Below is an example of Francis Frith’s middle eastern photography from the mid-to-late 18\textsuperscript{th} century. This one shows Gaza.

![Figure 14: Francis Frith, Faza (The Old Town)](c. 1870 Getty Museum Collection, Public Domain, Wikimedia)

Photography changed quickly, and it was soon able to be in the hands of everyday people. This development allowed anyone who wanted to take photos, document events or places, and in general participate in the accumulation of photographic knowledge. Every step of the process is just as important as the next since developments in photography leaned on past experiments to develop up to the modern mirrorless or DSLR cameras that are in use today. These early photographers played extremely important roles in introducing people to photography as well as commercializing the industry by selling their photographs. These early photographers also were some of the first to include photographs in published books, which in modern times is just as easy to do as type up a page. In terms of antiquities and sites, early photographs and photographers set the stage for an increased desire and ability to document sites. In general, the influence that early photographers had on the discipline was extremely important and influential for their present and the general future of photography. This is particularly important with documentation of sites.
because once cameras became more accessible, photographing everything also became easier, including things like archaeological and ancient sites around the world.

**Photography and Archaeology**

*How are photography and archaeology connected?*

As stated previously, archaeology and photography developed as separate entities around roughly the same time in the 19th century (McFayden & Hicks, 2021). Though seemingly not necessarily related to each other, both photography and archaeology share similar interests at the base of their existence – representation of the past and visually providing evidence of the past (McFayden & Hicks, 2021). They are used in tandem, with photography working to document the past as archaeology unearths it, which allows the images of the sites and finds to be shared among stakeholders – which includes members of the public and other specialists – around the world (Bohrer, 2011). This can be seen explicitly in situations of monumental discoveries of general interest, with the photography of the artifacts and sites used to keep not only the interested public in the loop, but the whole archaeological enterprise – sponsors, practitioners, the public etc. (Bohrer, 2011). Photography has greatly enhanced the ability for documentation of archaeological sites.

**Equipment**

In general, all archaeological photographs should have a scale of some sort present (Dorrell, 1994). A scale is a tool that is used to allow the viewer of the photograph to get an idea of the size of the object, and that includes both large building-type site photography as well as individual artifacts being photographed (Dorrell, 1994). Early on, the scale that is used for sites that include things like buildings or large structures was frequently a person – typically, people understand the proportions of and can picture the size of a person, so using a commonly understood size as a comparison scale can be very efficient (Dorrell, 1994). That being said, just like with a mathematical scale in centimeters, anything being used as a scale needs to be placed strategically so as to be useful as a scale, but also making sure that the scale does not block anything of importance on the site/artifact (Dorrell, 1994).

Though humans are a useful scale, the typical scale that is used for site photographs is a red and white two-meter-long pole that is marked in 50-centimeter sections, and depending on the size of the site, poles with measurements marked at 25 cm and 1m are also used (Dorrell, 1994). The positioning of the scales in the photograph is just as important as having scales themselves. For example, they should always be placed exactly horizontal or upright within the frame of the photograph – a tipped scale looks less professional, and can hinder the measurements (that being said, it may seem useful to angle them with a wall or something similar, but still should not be tipped) (Dorrell, 1994). Sites that have depth, such as a room, a pit, a trench etc., need to have scales in at the front and the back of the area (Dorrell, 1994). This is particularly important because, depending on the type of lens on the camera being used, like a wide angle or long lens, the depth of the image frequently can be warped, and the relative size/depth can be altered – having a scale...
at both ends helps to show the actual measurements and proportions of the site that could have been altered by the lens (Dorrell, 1994). Often, a 3D scale is used for human remains because they would be more informative, though this is time consuming (Dorrell, 1994). Finally, scales can be made extremely small for small objects, down to 0.5 cm scale intervals for the smallest of finds (Dorrell, 1994). The size of the find determines the interval for the scales. Importantly, scales are helpful when institutions or individuals wish to develop 3D modeling or GIS for the sites – having scales allows for accurate representations of and depictions of key features within these models.

Similar to scales, in some archaeological digs an information board is also included in photographs (Dorrell, 1994). These information boards include data such as the location, level, identification of what is being photographed, compass directions, and other information like this that would be useful when studying the object via the photograph, especially for publication (Dorrell, 1994). Information boards are commonly used with sites such as graves, where a lot of the sites may look the same and context is harder to decipher (Dorrell, 1994). When photographs are taken with information boards, though, they are frequently quite cluttered, so it is important for photographers to also capture the site with minimal information – this is particularly focused on when photographs are needed/wanted to be included in a report, where cluttered images are less ideal than simple ones visually (Dorrell, 1994).

One of the many steps that must be completed before a site or object can be properly photographed is making sure nothing is obscured (Dorrell, 1994). For example, anything on or around the object (i.e., markings, distinguishing features, things like that) that was used to draw conclusions needs to be featured (Dorrell, 1994). The object or site needs to have been properly excavated and cleaned to achieve this since any sort of contamination or distractions in the photos can take away from or even alter the take aways from a photograph (Dorrell, 1994).

Archaeological Photography
As stated by Stanley South in his journal article regarding photography in archaeology, the camera of an archaeologist is just as important of a tool as their shovel and trowel (South, 1968). By the end of the 19th and early 20th century, photography was standard practice for excavations and the documentation of artifacts (Dorrell, 1994). As with any invention, cameras over time developed to be better than the last, and an important step in this development was the change from lithographs to actual photographs (Dorrell, 1994). This was exceptionally helpful in archaeological contexts because the lithographs were more or less unique images that couldn’t be exactly duplicated – engravings could be derived, but they had the risk of being flawed or not exact, so they were less ideal than the original lithograph (Dorrell, 1994). The benefits of being able to replicate photographs include the ability to publish original photographs in journals and books, as well as not being worried about losing the only copy or only true original copy as was the issue with lithographs (Andrews, 2018). Manually copying photographs, or simply not being able to replicate them at all, meant that the photographs would only be able to be seen by people who could afford to or were close enough to view the originals, which was drastically limiting
(Andrews, 2018). It was also especially limiting from a data management perspective because managing photos as they degrade can be difficult (ACR, n.d.).

Photography of ancient sites from an archaeological context provides a unique and important perspective in many ways. One of the ways that is important to consider and that makes archaeological photographs even more useful is including the landscape and surrounding area in the image – often times intentional but can be an unintentional benefit as well (Dorrell, 1994).

Today, digital photography and improvements in the quality of photographing and technological tools have allowed for even more precise and detailed photographing of archaeological artifacts and sites. A field within archaeological photography is digital photography, where things like virtual reality tours of archaeological sites (like tombs in the Valley of the Kings, Egypt) have made access to archaeological data more widely available (Team, 2022). The actions of data collecting as well as data sharing are key in the modern era of archaeological practices and photography.
Case Study: The United Kingdom
Skara Brae, Orkney, Scotland, UK

Introduction

An archaeological site that has been known about and excavated for over a century is that of Skara Brae on Orkney Island in Scotland, UK (c. 3200 BC – 2200 BC). Skara Brae is actually a part of what is called the Heart of Neolithic Orkney, which in its whole is a world heritage site, consisting of the Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness, Maeshowe and, of course, Skara Brae (UNESCO, n.d.). This site has a high level of authenticity from UNESCO as the “state of preservation at Skara Brae is unparalleled” compared to any other similarly dated sites in northern Europe, and the site is deemed to “remain largely in-situ” (UNESCO, n.d.). As stated by the UNESCO page on this location, Skara Brae and the other sites are representative of the farming culture that was taking place in the region from before 4000 BC, one of a 5000-year-old culture that no longer exists (UNESCO, n.d.). The village itself was deemed to have been inhabited from c.3100-2500 BCE (Towrie, 2021)

Excavations

The years of approximately 3200BC – 2200BC is when most of the Skara Brae village was built and occupied, and thus much of the finds are from that time period (Towrie, 2021). Thus, the excavations in the early 1900s took place approximately 4100 years after the occupation ended.

Skara Brae was excavated initially in 1851-1868 then again in 1913, and then finally from 1925-1930 (Towrie, 2021). The various attempts at excavations started largely due to damage from storms, which happened several times and caused or had the potential to cause damage to the site (Towrie, 2021). At the time that Skara Brae was being excavated in depth, there were very few
examples of ancient houses that survived ‘north of the alps’, and the few that had been found were not generally in great condition (Childe, 1931). Skara Brae was a rarity in that there were huts, lanes, walls, implements, ornaments, and vessels present – enough to establish to some degree what daily life was like in the village (it is presumed that the people of this village left in a hurry, thus leaving behind an abundance of preserved items) (Childe, 1931).

Skara Brae was known for some time before an official excavation was done by V Gordon Childe, having been exposed around 1850 when a great storm came through (Childe, 1931; Towrie, 2021). In 1861, a poor method of excavation essentially “opened up… some chambers and passages” by the then-laird of Skail William Watt, but it was not documented except for a letter to the local paper (Childe, 1931). Much of what happened, what was excavated, or what damage was done is relatively unknown, though can be inferred (Childe, 1931). By 1868, a large number of artifacts as well as four structures were confirmed to be there, but the excavation was done by a local who lived nearby, not by an archaeologist with the proper tools, procedures, and knowledge to proceed properly (Towrie, 2021). There was a break in time where very little was done at the site, but then, in 1913, some sort of ‘excavation’ took place again (Towrie, 2021). This, however, didn’t appear to unearth anything new, just uncovering the sections that had already been excavated but taken over by the elements, yet this was a step towards proper excavation of the sites that would take place later (Towrie, 2021).

Aside from the damage done by poor excavation techniques, in the 1920s storms did even more damage to the site, including causing exceptional damage to Huts 2 and 3 in particular (Childe, 1931). These storms, and the required preservation of Hut 2 that was thereafter required, showed the guardians of the site that proper excavation and conservation was required, and from 1927 to 1930, V Gordon Childe was called in to do supervision and excavation of the site (Childe, 1931; Towrie, 2021). Initially, the site was deemed to be from the Iron Age based on some carved stone balls and a Pictish symbol stone, however the pottery was later dated much earlier, and Skara Brae was deemed to be a Neolithic settlement, two millennia earlier than initially thought (Towrie, 2021).

The main structures uncovered at the site were deemed to be domestic structures, built using flat stones, as can be seen in most of the photographs of the site, and were linked with covered passageways (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.) The houses were also all relatively similar, with each one being a single room with a central hearth, some beds, some structures that can be interpreted as being furniture (like a ‘dresser’), small insets in the floor (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.). There is a structure at the end of the village that had a different hearth and no beds, so likely had a different use such as a workshop (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.). In addition to structural finds, artifacts were also uncovered in the site. These include tools, pottery, jewelry, carved stone objects, and possible gaming dice (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.). Based on these finds, archaeologists were also able to determine that these inhabitants were likely farmers, hunters, and fisherman, and that they lived a peaceful life since there were no weapons found at the site (Historic Environment Scotland, n.d.).
Hut 1 in Skara Brae is the largest structure, as well as the best preserved, with walls over eight feet tall (Green, 1963). Unfortunately, the northern part of the structure was badly damaged in the storms that spurred on the need for excavations at the site, so amateur reconstruction was done by Mr. Watt (the then-laird) that wasn’t entirely accurate (Green, 1963). Details such as beds, dressers, storage slots in the walls, a drain for what could have been a privy, as well as other things that Mr. Watt likely didn’t record were found in this well-preserved hut, which can be helpful in understanding parts of other huts throughout the village (Green, 1963).

Seen before with other Orcadian Neolithic settlements, this site had houses that had been built, lived in, abandoned, and then rebuilt, which means that the later settlements are what is initially visible (Towrie, 2021). As can be seen in the photo below, the village appears to be somewhat underground, and certainly taken over by nature (Towrie, 2021). However, this was not always the case. Due to the age of the settlement and the environment around it, these houses were once above ground, and have been slowly covered by earth over the thousands of years of inactivity at the site (Towrie, 2021).

Some of the less-than-ideal practices include the possibility that archaeologists excavating the site may have ignored important features. For example, Childe describes finding “scraps of bone and shells… sometimes masked by broken slates laid down like steppingstones over the morass” in some of the structures (Towrie, 2021). This was an interpretation of what was found, and ultimately for Childe what was deemed to be the use of the “broken slates” (Towrie, 2021). However, at the site of Ness of Brodgar that was excavated later in time but nearby and chronologically close in time to Skara Brae, rectangular sheets of stone were found that have been determined to be fallen roofing materials, which could indicate that what was thought to be unimportant pieces of stone at Skara Brae may have been the roofing materials from the original stone structure (Towrie, 2021).
This replaces the original theory of Childe that assumed the roofs were probably made from organic materials in a beehive-like shape and shows how archaeological expertise and practices over time can impact the results of any excavations (Towrie, 2021).

Photography of the Site
The earliest photographs that were taken of this site (once it was archaeologically excavated) are below, with some more modern photographs that are there for comparison. The sites now are not only excavated, but they are displayed to attract visitors as well as to protect the site from damage that comes along with being a tourist attraction.
The photographs of this site document a lot of different things. The ones that were taken in the 1930s excavation show all kinds of features of the site as it was being excavated, including individual huts, furniture like dressers and beds, hearths, remains of the original walls etc. In addition to the excavation features that were being documented, the images can also contain things such as the modern-day landscape and the archaeologists working, which are interesting features because not only do they put the site into the context of the current era, but they can also serve as a reference point for determining the dimensions of various aspects of the site.
In addition to the original excavation photographs, the site is currently open as a world heritage site for visitors. This means that there are photographs of the same site over almost a century showing the same excavated areas. This is another reason why photographs are so useful – when comparing photographs of the same location over time, observers can identify important features such as deterioration from the ocean, visitor traffic and weather, and this can be used to plan conservation actions for the site.

Figure 17 Hut 7 shows a view looking down into a hut featuring a hearth, a dresser, and some beds.
Figure 17 Hut 5 shows a view of a hut looking at some cells and a dresser.
Figure 18 left image is a more recent image of Hut 5 (Figure 17 Hut 5)
The images that depict the same hut are especially useful because approximately 40 years have passed between the two images, and any changes (or lack thereof) can be easily noticed. For example, it appears as though the grass does not reach as far down the ancient stone walls in the 1970 photograph when compared to the 1931 photograph. This could demonstrate erosion of the landscape that could in turn cause erosion of the structures if not properly conserved and it is an example of a noticeable feature when comparing the two images. In addition, some of the stones are no longer on the ground in the same place in 1970 compared to 1931. There are many reasons why aspects of the site may change over time, and photography can serve as a way to document such changes, whether intentional or not.
Original Excavation Photos: Skara Brae 1931
The following images are from V Gordon Childe’s published work on the site of Skara Brae titled *Skara Brae a Pictish Village in Orkney* (1931).

![Image of Hut 8: Eastern Alcove](image)

*Figure 19: Hut 8: Eastern Alcove*

Childe 1931 Plate XVII

In this image, you can see both the archaeological site that was being photographed as well as the contemporary landscape in the background. Having the landscape included in the photograph is helpful in that being able to visualize both the modern day and archaeological landscape context for the object being photographed (Dorrell, 1994). This also helps enhance one's understanding of the site, the conditions, and the existence of the object in situ (Dorrell, 1994). The intention of the photograph was to document the eastern alcove of Hut 8 at the site of Skara Brae, and that is included in the photograph, but so are the unintentional features of the background, modern day settlement etc. The photographer successfully documented the alcove as was intended, but the angle of the photograph also allows the general landscape as well as other features at the site to be included and visible.
This is an example of one of the images of Skara Brae with people that can be used as a rough scale for the viewer. While these individuals in the photo may not have been intentionally placed in the frame of the image to be as scales, viewers will inherently understand the size of the average person and be able to use that to figure out how big a structure is being photographed (Dorrell, 1994). As with the previous photograph, the feature Roof of Passage B was properly photographed in that it is obviously the vocal point of the image, but other features within the image such as the other site features and workers can be just as informative and useful.
Figure 21 is one of the rare outdoor images of the original photographs with an intentionally placed scale. On the left-hand side, you can see the ruler-like tool. While the numbers are hard to read in the image, this is still an important tool featured within the image. Including scales in images of structures is beneficial for the viewer of the image to get an understanding of the size of the building. Without a scale, it can be extremely difficult to estimate the height, depth etc. of a structure. It is interesting that there are no other images with a scale such as this one included. That being said, this scale is only measuring the intended photographing target, which is the outer wall of Hut 4, so only that wall has a definite measuring tool. This can be helpful as well in understanding the size of the stones used in the wall and transferring that knowledge to figure out sizes of the other images that have no size reference. Aside from the scale, this image is a good wide-angle view of the site beyond the desired image and shows where the wall is in relation to other walls. This also shows in the distance the modern-day landscape, which is helpful in understanding and figuring out the size of the buildings featured.
Figure 22 also features a person among the archaeological remains. In this photo, the object being photographed is a vast space that covers a wide 3D range, so having a person within the space can help the viewer understand the depth of the space as well as the relative size. This is useful in this situation because a scale would likely be stretched so far in the distance that a viewer may struggle to interpret it. The image itself allows the viewer to see into the distance of the site, and see how each of the parts (e.g., walls and hallways) fits into the greater village.

In terms of the content of this photo (fig. 22), this viewpoint of the photographer, looking over the site rather than directly in the site, allows the viewer to see beyond the hut photographed. This is a beneficial perspective because it allows the viewer to place the hut within the context of the village itself – see how it connects to other huts, where it is on the map etc. This view can allow observers to understand on a deeper level how the huts were associated with each other.

Figure 23 is another example of people within images that can be used as a scale. This photo also shows the landscape from a different perspective – that being the ocean. The site of Skara Brae was discovered largely due to its proximity to the ocean, and erosion has contributed to parts of the site becoming exposed. Erosion is included as one of the main causes of damage to the site, and understanding the proximity of the site to the ocean helps viewers understand this threat visually (UNESCO, n.d.)
Figure 24 is difficult to interpret without any sort of scale. The photograph is of an end of a passage, but that is hard to distinguish if not for the title of the image. Without previous knowledge regarding the size of the stones, it is extremely difficult as a viewer to estimate the size of this passage and doorway. This is why it is important for photographers to include a scale or other reference point in images.

Figure 25 contains a large amount of the modern landscape in the background, which can be helpful for several reasons. Primary among them is understanding the modern context of the site, which in turn allows viewers to place themselves within the context of the area. This kind of context is also beneficial in the professional field because in the future, as people still studying this site can look back and understand how the current state of the site has changed and what kind of restoration or damage has been done (i.e., from weather, people, construction etc.). Understanding any changes that occur can provide a structure for how to prevent further damage, for example erosion control or something similar.
Figure 26: Hut 8 - Door through Gap in North Wall
Childe 1931 Plate XVII

Figure 26 provides a different perspective of one of the doorways, seen through a gap in the north wall. A series of walls and other stones around the door in the foreground allows the viewer to understand the size and distance from one end of a hut to another. This photo is also quite useful because it shows the size of the stones that were hauled in and used to build the structure. This helps the viewer and researchers understand the work that the original people put in to building the structure and helps them to be able to estimate how much time it would have taken to construct.

Figure 27: Three-Spiked Object
Copyright National Museum of Antiquities, Edinburgh, from Childe 1931 Plate XXXIX

Figure 27 depicts a ‘three-spiked object’ that was found in Skara Brae, and is an important artifact because it is an example of a non-essential but intentionally created object. This object was photographed without a scale present, and thus the size is hard to determine, especially because the photo was not taken in-situ (no other objects are around for reference). That being said, having such a close-up image of the specific artifacts found at Skara Brae helps the audience understand the full scope of the objects found. This three-spiked object could have been a tool, or maybe a decoration, and someone took the time to carve precise designs onto it.
These skulls were found at Skara Brae. They provide an insight into what kinds of animals the people of the village were in contact with, whether domesticated or wild. Photographs of ephemeral objects are important given that objects, such as bones and other natural materials, can decay over time. This is tied into the issue of conservation because sometimes, all that is left of objects is a photograph.
This object is a flagstone hammer. Not only was this object identified by its purpose, but there is also a scale present to show the size. Though scales were present on some site photographs, scales on objects are just as important and key in understanding the object. This hatchet was grinded to be shaped, and those markers are still visible on the object. This gives good insight into the methods that individuals in the past used to construct tools and weapons. It is important to note that items like these have been deemed to be locally sourced – there are no indications that this village did any long-distance trade or traveling. This is important when thinking about the materials that would have been readily available in the region, and when thinking about how far away from other groups this village would have been. Photography of objects like this is also important for comparison between other similar sites. For example, this site is an example of a Neolithic village, and there are other similar villages in the Nordic regions of Europe. An image is much easier to share and compare, so researchers can view images from a site that is a great distance away.
Figure 30 above shows a human skull that was found at Skara Brae. There were several bodies found at Skara Brae, and all of them were women. The skull, in addition to the body itself, was very well preserved, and thus the bones were intact. As can be seen in the photos above, the skull is very nearly complete, with many of the main features such as the brain cavity, the zygomatic arches (side of skull), the eye sockets etc. being easily definable and unbroken. Photography of human skulls has a similar importance to photography any other organic materials in that organic materials can decay or be damaged if handled too frequently. Having a photograph preserves the object to a certain extent and allows for minimal handling if that is deemed to be necessary.
The figure above shows the capstone of the grave. The grave was found behind the right bed and directly under the west wall of hut 7 and was a double grave (two bodies). Within the grave were tons of limpet shells and some slimy midden material, likely having seeped into the grave from the crack that was located on the capstone. One of the bodies in this grave was positioned with its head to the north and its legs drawn up to the chin, the left arm extended underneath the body, and the right arm bent at about 45 degrees with the hand in front of the face. Both of the skeletons in the grave were women, both of normal stature (about 5’2 and 5’1), and both showed that the individuals suffered from osteo-arthritis, which is common in damp environments. Though Childe describes these important features of the body position in his publication on the excavations, there is not a photo featuring this. Depending on others to capture all of the important information is a down side with relying on photography, since these kinds of things are hard to replicate once they are disturbed.

The location of the grave gets into the spiritual beliefs of the people at the time – that a wall cannot stand unless there is a spirit to hold it up, or a body buried beneath it. Understanding where the grave is in a certain site gives insight into the cultural traditions and practices of the people living there, which is extremely important and useful in understanding other aspects of their life and death. Photography can help capture this information by documenting the grave immediately and in-situ, which not only helps capture the information in the moment, but also allows researchers in the future to use photographs of sites that are excavated to compare and study things like death.
Figure 32 shows one of the skeletons that was found within the village of Skara Brae. Grave goods, graves themselves, and of course the people in them can provide a great deal of information for researchers, both in the physical remains themselves as well as the context surrounding the bodies. Different cultural traditions are distinguishable between each other because of the grave goods, grave locations, body location etc. Capturing this image of the body still within its grave is important for documentation both at the time and in the future because features of the grave (e.g., position of the body, features of the grave, construction of the grave etc.) can be used for information gathering after the fact. For example, if a site is found with similar characteristics to Skara Brae, a photo of the burial could be used as a reference to determine if the sites are from the same cultural group or time period. There is a lot of information as well that may not be realized in the moment, such as small features that are significant, and photos will preserve the in-situ site for future reference.
At the site of Skara Brae, though pottery shards were found in all levels of midden, an actual pottery pot has never been able to be reconstructed. However, vessels of stone like pictured above were found relatively intact. The ones photographed above were thought by initial archaeologists as being used for holding paint, as red coloring is often found in them. The vessels in general are presumed to have been used as a mortar of sorts, especially given the oval shape of the cavity in the stone. These pots, or ones like them, have been found in other Iron Age settlements in Scotland, even though Skara Brae was relatively remote and separate from the mainland. Photography of these bowls allows for easier comparisons to other iron age settlements, and provides an alternative to transporting the actual artifacts.
Improving Access with Modern Technologies

The archaeological site of Skara Brae is in far north Scotland, and thus for many is not easily accessible, due to the cost and distance. With modern technologies, this obstacle for interested viewers is lessening, if only for some. Historic Environment Scotland has created a 3D model of the village of Skara Brae that allows users to have a relatively good view of the village. Users are able to click around to certain sections of the village and get a closer look at the details that are present (Historic Environment Scotland, 2021). Historic Environment Scotland has been able to accomplish this by using laser scanning that overlaps hundreds of images of the site, combining it with the 3D data, and thus creating a ‘photorealistic model’ (Historic Environment Scotland, 2021). This is really an important development because some areas of Skara Brae, such as Hut 7, are closed off to the public and thus only able to be seen with this 3D recreation (Historic Environment Scotland, 2021). In addition, this model also serves to show the user the damage and repairs that have been done due to erosion and extreme weather, such as a sea wall installed in the 1920s and improved over the years (Historic Environment Scotland, 2021). Unfortunately, this still limits who can view the site since access to the internet and a device is required, but this is a start in breaching the gap of information availability around the world.

Figure 34: Skara Brae 3D Model
A still image from the interactive tour made by Historic Environment Scotland of Skara Brae
Sutton Hoo, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK

Introduction
Sutton Hoo in Woodbridge, Suffolk is an archaeological site of several mounds from around the 7th century AD (Green, 1963). Sutton Hoo was excavated starting in 1938, with excavations ongoing (Green, 1963). This site represents many aspects of archaeology and photography over time. This site has been investigated and rifled through over many centuries, and thus provides an example of a site that has been through changing archaeological practice and photographic inventions. In addition, the site is exceptionally preserved, and thus provides a representation of the historic era in which it was built or from which it comes. All of this means that the site is important in terms of understanding the history of the period of occupation, history of archaeology, and history of photography. In regard to preservation, documentation, and other aspects of archaeological photography at this site, Sutton Hoo was a stunning find in 1939 and remains fascinating to this day for people of all interest groups (National Trust, n.d.).

Dating of the site was able to be done because within the burial was a rim fragment of Ipswich ware pot which was extremely important in dating the site (Green, 1963). That being said, though, the significance of the small fragment was not seen as vital at the time, and the other finds had not been publicized quite yet, so the significance and connection was not determined until a bit later when an individual made that connection between the fragment and other pieces of Ipswich ware found elsewhere (Green, 1963). Widespread sharing of data through photography helps to draw these connections because it allows for widespread access to artifacts that may not be accessible otherwise.

Within the burial site are all kinds of burial goods. Unfortunately, there is not an actual body in the chamber, and experts have determined that this was likely due to the fact that the acidic soil in which the burial was located likely ate the remains away (British Museum, The, n.d.). Included in these burial goods are silver bowls in the chamber where the body most likely was from the Byzantine Empire – all the way from the Eastern Mediterranean, found in a burial in England (The British Museum, n.d.). This type of international find within the burial implies that the individual was able to finance getting something like this to them, so they had the resources to do so, and it also shows how interconnected the world was even during the 7th century. Another find, which is one of the most fascinating pieces in this burial, is the well-known helmet of Sutton Hoo. This helmet, though in pieces, had enough surviving that “covered a good-sized table,” which allowed for the helmet to be reconstructed (Green, 1963). This was a huge find considering the other helmets from this era, Swedish in style and ~600AD, were not usually found with this many surviving pieces, and in this good a state (Green, 1963). Due to the important contents and wealth in the burial, the findings were not publicized right away in order to prevent people from stealing and trespassing like what was done in the past (Green, 1963). However, word eventually got out, and since people started coming around to the site it then required a police presence over the excavations in order to keep people away (Green 1963).
Excavations

1938/39 was when official excavations started taking place at the site, however this was not the first time the burials at Sutton Hoo were unearthed after they were buried around 600 AD. In the Tudor period (roughly 1600s), treasure hunters looted several of the mounds at the site, with what was found likely being melted down by the Crown and thus not surviving in its original form (National Trust, n.d.; Green, 1963). If only due to luck, the majority of the site at the time was not disturbed nor was the ship identified by the treasure hunters, though a significant amount of damage was done to the parts that were excavated (National Trust, n.d.).

In the 1860s, more individuals were after objects to take for their own gain rather than archaeological histories got into the burial mounds (National Trust, n.d.). These individuals took some of the rivets off the ship and used them for horseshoes, though it is presumed that the full extent of the ship burial was not realized at the time since that is all that was dug up and taken (National Trust, n.d.). Due to this, and the previous intrusions of the mounds, a significant portion of the site was damaged or disturbed, but the implications of a ship burial still were not realized, and thus the rest of the site was left alone.

Finally, in 1938, official and intentional archaeological excavations began on the site, marking the start of the incredibly informative and important find (National Trust, n.d.). The excavations were first started upon request of the landowner, Miss Edith Pretty (Green, 1963). She insisted that there was something here worth investigating, and brought in Mr. Basil J W Brown among other local historians (Digging the dirt at Sutton Hoo: The true story behind The Dig, n.d.) (Green, 1963). Initially, there was doubt about the site, since pieces of iron disturbed by previous robbers were identified as being from ship rivets by the archaeologists, but since they were initially moved by the robbers, this didn’t fully indicate or associate with a ship burial – at least, not yet (National Trust, n.d.). However, there was enough evidence found during those initial excavations to support and plan for another season of archaeological excavations, which would ultimately lead to the famous discovery of the ship burial at Sutton Hoo (National Trust, n.d.).

Once it was determined that there was a ship in the largest barrow at the site, and that it was likely an untouched burial with the imprint of a ship, the archaeological excavations were handed over to several other professionals – Mr. W F Grimes, who removed the grave goods, Mr. Stuart Piggot and his wife, Mr. O G S Crawford who made a complete photographic record of the burial chamber, Miss M K Lack and Miss B Wagstaff who
also did photography work, and other individuals who helped with the manual excavation of the site (Green, 1963).

![Figure 37: Sutton Hoo ship excavation](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sutton_Hoo_Archeological_Excavation.jpg)

![Figure 38: Mound 2 at Sutton Hoo](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mound_2_at_Sutton_Hoo.jpg)

The figure above shows two archaeologists working on the tedious excavation of the Sutton Hoo ship imprint at the site. All of the mounds at the site were burial sites with impressive amounts of wealth within them, however the mound that contained the famed Sutton Hoo Ship was the most interesting, since the occupant was buried with a 90-foot-long ship, also filled with all kinds of artifacts (Urbanus, 2014). This ship had been made of wood, thus much of the original ship had rotted away, however there was still non-wood items from the boat (i.e., rivets) as well as the impression from the wooden frame left in the dirt (Green, 1963). Figure 38 shows what the mounds at Sutton Hoo looked like before they were excavated.

![Figure 40: Findings from the ongoing excavations at Sutton Hoo](https://collections.nationaltrust.org.uk.GeneratedValue%20Images%20%26%20Resources%20-%20Darren%20Olley%20-%20Findings%20at%20Sutton%20Hoo%20-%20DSC01244.jpg)

![Figure 40: Excavation Pit from Sutton Hoo](https://collections.nationaltrust.org.uk.GeneratedValue%20Images%20%26%20Resources%20-%20Darren%20Olley%20-%20Excavation%20Pit%20at%20Sutton%20Hoo%20-%20DSC01045.jpg)

This site is still actively being excavated. The hugely important finds of the ship and untouched burial within the ship get a lot of media attention, which is justly so, but objects and information is still being found to the modern day. The figures above are more recent images of the ongoing archaeological excavations that are actively going on close to the famous Royal Burial Grounds at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk, England. Even though the ship and other hugely important discoveries have already been made, there is more yet to be discovered at the site, which is why archaeological digs are still taking place.
Original Excavation Photos Sutton Hoo Ship Burial
Photos and information from (Green, 1963).

This is an original excavation image from the Sutton Hoo excavations that started in 1938. The image above features the famous ship portion of the burial. There are several key features within this image. The perspective of which the photograph was taken shows a view looking down the ship, which is important both for understanding the scale of what is being photographed, and also important when considering the wood frame of the ship was actually not present, so this is an impression in the earth. There are also other archaeologists/workers in the background of the photo. While they were not the focus of the photo, people next to the ship can help the viewer understand the size of the ship.

As stated previously in the paper, the actual ship itself did not survive. What is seen in photos like this one is the imprint that the ship left behind, after the wood rotted away. This was due to the nature of the soil in the area, and any other wooden or natural items would have also rotted away. However, having such an exact imprint in the dirt of the ship is the next best thing for researchers and archaeologists because it allows for imprints to be taken, actual measurements to be taken, and realistic representations of what the ship may have looked like to be made. This is where photography plays a vital role – photographs of the impressions and the details last as long as the photographs last, so if there is any question about an aspect of the reconstructions or a detail that was missed, the photographs can be referenced.
The figure above is another original excavation photo of the Sutton Hoo Ship, this time looking aft rather than forward. This is important, as is the previous image, because these images show what the ship shape looked like while being excavated, which is an in-progress view of the excavation. Archaeological finds photographed in-situ provide a different platform for understanding the site and allow the viewer to see what the ship looked like as soon as it was uncovered. This also helps with reconstruction and recreation of finds and proper dimensions.

Unlike Figure 41, Figure 42 is taken from the edge of the ship site and does not feature any workers or landscape in the background. Both perspectives have their advantages – people provide an informal scale, landscape allows the viewer to place the object in a real-world setting, and isolated photographs allow the focus to remain on the desired object/site. That being said, without references for size, this photograph alone makes it difficult to estimate the size of the ship since there are no reference points or scales present.
This artifact photographed above has been identified as a ceremonial whetstone. Though called a whetstone, this artifact does not show any evidence that it was actually used to sharpen any blades, hence the ceremonial aspect. This whetstone is actually extremely unique, since no other whetstone as large as this has been found, though two others with similar engravings have been found. This artifact is a supporting piece of evidence that the person within the burial chamber of Sutton Hoo would have been wealthy, and likely royalty, what with having non-utilitarian items such as this whetstone. Contextual pieces like this are vital in understanding the who, what, and when behind burials such as these. Photographs of pieces like this are also important because as time goes on, the likelihood that items will be lost or stored away increases. Photographs allow for the objects to survive at least as an image.
These photographs above are of the shield that was found next to the helmet in the burial chamber. The shield was made of wood which decayed along with the ship, however metal fittings and other embellishments that were on the wood survive. As was done with the Sutton Hoo helmet, the pieces that survived of the shield were studied and enough was present to reconstruct the shield. This reconstruction showed that the shield was circular, slightly concave inwardly, and that the wooden shield itself would have been covered with a thin layer of leather. Around the edge of the shield were twelve gilt bronze dragon heads, of which three survived and nine were recreated earlier out of gilded gesso. Some of the decoration materials included iron, gilt bronze, tin, niello-inlay (black metallic alloy of sulfur and silver, copper, or lead; used to fill designs that have been engraved, usually on silver (Britannica, n.d.)), garnets. Many were of zoomorphic design, including dragons, some even in gold foil. Though there are questions about the perfection of the reconstruction, having the original reconstruction photographs will help later reconstructions as references at the very least. Photography plays an important role in reconstruction because photographs of, for example, the artifact in-situ can provide clues as to how it may have looked before it was excavated and an attempt at reconstruction was done.
This photograph above shows the large hanging bowl that was found in the burial chamber. The looped handles that can be seen along the top edge of the bowl are parts of what are called escutcheons (piece of ornamentation for protection around things like handles, keyholes – at handles to the hanging pot for Sutton Hoo (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)). On the inside of the bowl is another escutcheon, with a bronze rainbow trout decoration on it. All of the escutcheons are heavily decorated, as well as decorated with what is called millefiori glass (glass from the Near East, made by fusing many thin rods of different colors together into one, rod cut into parts to show the many colors (Green, 1963)). This bowl is also decorated with zoomorphic designs, like other pieces found in the burial. This bowl is one of about a hundred or so of its kind that exist, some only in fragments, but it stands out because of its extensive decoration and quality. This type of bowl, when its associations are clear, are typically found in pagan Anglo-Saxon graves, sometimes in urns, and all are of the Celtic West in design and craftsmanship. The photographs of this bowl are extremely useful when comparing bowls across different regions and from different sites because they allow for close up examination of multiple pieces at once. This again is useful for situations where access to the artifact may be limited or inaccessible. With this bowl as an example, there are similar bowls that have been found and determined to be similar to this one, but with differences, so having photographs to compare and contrast specific features is beneficial for researchers.
Probably one of the most recognizable finds from the Sutton Hoo excavation site is that of the Sutton Hoo helmet. This helmet is one of only three or four in existence from the time period. The images above are how the helmet was first reconstructed when the pieces were first found. A more recent reconstruction, done in 1971, is shown next to the original. There are several differences, including the eye holes, shape of the chin plate etc. This is an example of an archaeological find being reinterpreted later on. However, the original reconstruction was widely distributed, which could cause issues such as it being used as a reference for other finds, assumptions made based on the helmet etc.

As can be seen above, the helmet was essentially just a hemispherical iron cap with a visor, cheek pieces, and neck guard, all also made of iron. Though it doesn’t survive, the inside of the helmet shows space that was likely for padding. There are various types of adornments on the helmet, such as on the eyebrows and the crest on the top. Various decorations of silver, niello-inlay, and bronze were also present on the helmet. Though it does not look shiny and new now, the original condition of the helmet would have likely been ‘an object of burnished silvery metal’ with gold and silver detailing, along with gilded ornaments – a very expensive, high-status item (Green, 1963). Though the reconstruction of the helmet has been redone over time, photographing and distribution of the photos of key artifacts within sites help both researchers and the public make connections with other sites. With Sutton Hoo, this helmet was in fairly good condition, so photographs of the surviving pieces can serve as models for reconstruction of other similar helmets or help to identify whether or not a find is a similar helmet to this one. Photography allows the widespread distribution of information that can help archaeological site excavations in the future, as well as in the present.
Improving Access with Modern Technologies

Sutton Hoo as a site is not accessible to everyone, just like Skara Brae. England itself is rather far away from mainland Europe and the rest of the world, and the site is located more or less off the beaten path. In order to make understanding the site more widely available, the British Museum and Google Arts & Culture established a virtual tour that users can take of the finds from Sutton Hoo, as well as the rest of the museum and related time period. This virtual tour allows people all over the world (though it does require access to a computer and internet) to view the artifacts that were found at Sutton Hoo, which is an improvement in improving access to archaeological finds.

While this virtual tour is incredibly interesting and helpful in allowing more people to view the artifacts, there are some drawbacks. For one, the actual written description of the objects that one can view, such as the famous Sutton Hoo Helmet, are not able to be accessed on the virtual tour. This is a drawback because being able to read about what is being viewed is extremely important in understanding the context of the object. One of the biggest downsides with that is that featured in the section on Sutton Hoo is the original helmet, as well as a replica. However, since the viewer cannot read the description, the viewer would have to go in with the knowledge that a replica is on display or else there may be a misunderstanding in which the viewer may think the whole helmet survived. Another downside to this form of tour is that the viewer can see the artifacts, but not the site. While there are lots of photos of the site, a virtual tour of the artifacts out of their location draws away from their context and meaning. With that being said, this virtual tour that the British Museum has created does allow for a much more diverse audience and is a step in the right direction for improving access to sites like Sutton Hoo.

Figure 47: Sutton Hoo Display British Museum

A still image from the virtual tour at the British Museum of the artifacts found at Sutton Hoo

British Museum, London, United Kingdom — Google Arts & Culture
Where To Next?

In terms of the future, archaeological photography has many uses. One such use is the use of archaeological photography in conserving and documenting sites before they are either destroyed or forgotten about and cataloging them. While ideally archaeological sites would be preserved in situ and not disturbed, that is not always possible in the current world. A way to help mitigate that is making sure to excavate and document the important archaeological artefacts and place them somewhere safe. This is where photography is really important. Artefacts placed in a storage facility are of no use to anyone, no one can see them or learn from them. But, since the practice of documenting artefacts and sites using photography is becoming commonplace, the artefacts would still be viewable and not forgotten.

Another use of archaeological photography in terms of the future and why it is important is the importance of allowing people across the world access to virtual viewing of said archaeological sites. Making access to sites across the globe easier for more people allows more people to have the opportunity to learn from and study these sites. This can also be beneficial for preservation as access around the world can reduce tourist traffic that can damage the site.

An example of work towards future conservation is a field school focused on conservation of churches in Sofia, Bulgaria. Every year, the country hosts a field school where students and individuals from around the world can come and learn conservation techniques via photography, while also developing an online database of photographs of medieval churches (Balkan Heritage Field School, 2023). Participants in the program get to participate in documenting four to six medieval churches/chapels in western Bulgaria that are Christian Orthodox (Balkan Heritage Field School, 2023). Due to the lack of effort that is being put in to preserve these kinds of sites, many suffer damage from weather and vandalism, so this program hopes to at least raise awareness to the public of the issues at hand (Balkan Heritage Field School, 2023). This field school is essentially creating a digital record of the sites with photographs and other information that can be gathered and is a phenomenal example of what can be done to start preserving archaeological sites in Bulgaria and around the world.
Bibliography


