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The work of a dilettante or a *grand amateur*? The visual productions of a 19th-century gentleman archaeologist

When it opened in 1882, the prehistory museum in Carnac (Brittany) was named after James Miln (1818-1881), a Scottish aristocrat and amateur archaeologist. This museum, in a place of major importance for European prehistoric megalithism, grew out of his collection which he bequeathed to the town. Miln also wrote two monographs based on excavations he carried out in the area between 1874 and 1880: *Excavations at Carnac (Brittany): A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Bossenno and the Mont Saint Michel* (Edinburgh, 1877), and *Excavations at Carnac (Brittany): A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Alignments of Kermario* (Edinburgh, 1881).

Miln, who was wealthy enough to devote much of his time to various amateur practices, was also a photographer and watercolourist. The archives and printed sources conserving the traces of his activities thus contain an extensive array of images. This article puts forward an original interpretation of them, at the overlap between the social history of science and that of art. It starts by analysing their formal qualities to place them within a broader visual and epistemic context, and then examines their material characteristics, bringing out the human and technical resources used to create them, and the transmission of knowledge within a group of individuals. Taking images as its starting point, this article works back to the social conditions in which they were produced, before finally seeking to characterise Miln's practice as an amateur.

Our technical and epistemic interpretations of the images depict a syncretic figure, at the overlap between several nineteenth-century definitions of what an amateur was. The visual corpus we have assembled, backed up by textual sources, shows that Miln embodied three successive and overlaying types of amateurism. Concerning the first phase, in Scotland, he

transpires as a gentleman dilettante, pursuing elitist practices associated with forms of sociability characterising his social group. On arriving in Brittany in 1874, Miln devoted most of his energies to excavations, becoming an archaeologist and more closely resembling a specialist. Thanks to his financial means, his education, and the social networks he could draw on, he differed from many of the amateur archaeologists then active in European lands, by standing out as a “*grand amateur*”. This figure, slightly different from that of the pre-nineteenth century amateur, was not entirely exceptional at the time, as illustrated in several scientific fields, including astronomy.¹ The *grand amateur* was indeed capable of establishing working conditions comparable to those of the (few) contemporary professionals.

1 A gentleman dilettante

James Miln, the second son of James Yearman Miln and his wife Mary Hay, came from a family of Scottish landowners. As a young man he travelled in the East, China, India, and even New Zealand, first with the Royal Navy and then as a merchant.² He then settled in Scotland where he inherited Murie estate on his father’s death in 1857, which he sold in around 1873, and then lands at Woodhill after his older brother Alexander Hay Miln died in 1877. Census records for 1861 and 1871 list him as a “landed proprietor”, as does his death certificate produced in Edinburgh in 1881.³ The lands he inherited, together with the title of esquire which he appended to his signature, thus situate “James Miln of Murie”, then “of Woodhill”, as a

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Translated from the French original by Adrian Morfee.

¹ Allan Chapman, *The Victorian Amateur Astronomer: Independent Astronomical Research in Britain, 1820-1920* (Chichester: Wiley, 1998).

² Sidney Lee, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1894), vol. 38, 5-6; Alexander Johnston Warden, *Angus or Forfarshire, the Land and the People, Descriptive and Historical* (Dundee: C. Alexander, 1881), vol. 2, 416-7. On Miln’s trip to New Zealand in 1837, see James Miln, “Notes on Cup-Markings and Incised Sculpturings near Guerande, Brittany,” *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 11 (1875): 149.

³ National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, 685/2 58/9, *Census, District of St Andrew* (1861), page 9; 282/4 37/9, *Census, District of St Andrew* (1871), page 9; 685/1 138, *Statutory Registers of Deaths, District of St Georges* (1881), page 46.

member of the gentry of his day. Still, most of his vast wealth, valued at £37,063 on his death, was based on financial investments in British and especially American railway companies.⁴

Miln filled the leisure procured by his rents and investments in various ways, taking a dilettante interest in various scientific and artistic domains, thereby signalling his cultural heritage and social distinction: antiquarian practices, astronomy (for which he devised astronomical lenses), artillery (taking part in shooting competitions and designing rifles), watercolour painting, and photography. In 1859 he became a member of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and of the Royal Scottish Society of Arts dedicated to studying science and techniques. His activities in these associations have left very few traces, however. Apparently Miln was one of the silent majority who took very little part in meetings, for whom belonging to learned circles was more of a social distinction than a context for scholarly pursuit. Before 1875 he is only mentioned once in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, on 13 February 1860, for the gift of a stereoscopic photograph showing a stone cist unearthed on his Woodhill estate, and of a photo showing an urn found inside it.⁵

As for his artistic activities, they are easier to detect. The earliest known traces are a set of photographs in an album now held by the Leiden university library.⁶ This contains 73 prints produced by various photographers, many of which have a caption, and some dating from 1854 and 1857. The album contains more photos by Miln than by other identified photographers, and its title page bears the name of his elder brother; additionally, several images show the family property at Woodhill. The Leiden album enables us to place Miln's practice in the context of

⁴ National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, SC45/31/30, *Wills and Testaments, Dundee Sheriff Court* (1881), pages 513 to 519.

⁵ "Monday, 13th February 1860," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 3 (1860): 364. It has not yet been possible to track down these two photographs, which might be held in the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland. On archaeology in Scotland at this period, see David V. Clarke, "Scottish Archaeology in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Scottish Antiquarian Tradition: Essays to Mark the Bicentenary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 1780-1980*, ed. A. S. Bell (Edinburgh: J. Donald, 1981), 114-41.

⁶ Leiden University Libraries, PK-F-61.935. This album has been digitised: <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:2309801>. See Tineke de Ruiter, "Oudheidkundigen en fotografen," *Omslag* 8, no. 1 (2010): 14-5.

the early days of photography in Scotland, for it contains photos by several members of the Photographic Society of Scotland, founded in 1856.⁷ The frontispiece pays tribute to chemist George Wilson (1818-1859), who was professor of technology at Edinburgh University and brother of the famous Scottish archaeologist Daniel Wilson (1816-1892).⁸ The album also demonstrates the interest of James Miln and his family circle for works produced or exhibited by the Photographic Society of Scotland. The page before last has a torn fragment identifiable as a print of Oscar Rejlander's famous *The Two Ways of Life*. This work, a technical and artistic feat showing bare female figures, deemed immoral by some, had sparked a local controversy in late 1857 after being censored at the Photographic Society of Scotland's second exhibition. But it would seem Miln never formally joined this association. Still, the album indicates the more informal relations he built up through his photographic practice, such as his friendship with a certain Henry Francis. Several portraits of the latter and works by him included in the album indicate that the two men shared, at least on occasions, the same staging, and no doubt their photographic equipment as well.

Another type of relationship was characterised by exchanges of photos. This is particularly illustrated by a series of images relating to archaeology and monumental history. The Leiden album contains several photos of monuments probably taken by various photographers, including Joseph James Forrester (1809-1861), likewise of Scottish ancestry.⁹ Of the thirteen prints we may attribute to Forrester, three have a caption indicating they were printed by James Miln, who must thus have had access to the negatives. Forrester was a well-known pioneer of photography in the United Kingdom, and came from circles with a joint

⁷ On Scottish photography, see Sara Stevenson and Alison D. Morrison-Low, *Scottish Photography: The First Thirty Years* (Edinburgh: NMS Enterprises-Limited Publishing, 2015).

⁸ Hulse, Elizabeth (ed.), *Thinking with both hands: Sir Daniel Wilson in the old world and the new* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999).

⁹ On Forrester and his presence in the Leiden album, see Filipe Figueiredo, "Forrester, an Amateur of Photography in Portugal," in *Baron Forrester: Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Isabel Cluny (Peso da Régua: Museu do Douro, 2009), 120-33.

passion for archaeology and photography, two worlds with extensive overlap in the years around 1850, as shown by Grace Seiberling.¹⁰ These groups experimenting with the possibilities for representation offered by new technologies formed clubs to exchange photographs, printed in limited numbers for their members. Forrester himself was a member of the Photographic Exchange Club, founded in 1854, with links to the Antiquarian Etching Club. These closed circles, comparable to the early bibliophile clubs that favoured the production of luxury editions for their small number of members, helped fashion an elite sociability based on a shared taste for the past, a new artistic and technical practice, and exchange.

In Edinburgh, James Miln was in contact with exchange networks of amateur archaeologists and photographers, though unofficially and on the sidelines. The Leiden album shows his concomitant taste for the sciences and the arts. Alongside photos demonstrating his skill in composing picturesque and artistic images, and others extensively enhanced by colours which we may associate with his practice as a watercolourist, several photos show his curiosity for the historical past and geographical elsewhere. In addition to other people's pictures of monuments, the final page of the album has a photo by Miln of the doorway of Rouen Cathedral in 1856. Memories of his trips in the East also transpire in three photos taken in London in August 1855, showing Chinese sailors selling curios and playing traditional instruments. The Leiden album thus presents an interest in the past alongside anthropological observation, two fields which Miln went on to explicitly combine in his archaeological works, in which his analysis of vestiges draws at times on ethnographic and folklorist comparisons, a common approach at the time.¹¹ Bringing his gaze, photographic equipment, pencil, or brushes to bear

¹⁰ Grace Seiberling, *Amateurs, Photography, and the Mid-Victorian Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-17, 47-51.

¹¹ James Miln, *Excavations at Carnac (Brittany): A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Bossenno and the Mont Saint Michel* (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1877), 12-3, 16-7, 20-1, 40-2, 47, 77, 98-101, 159; James Miln, *Excavations at Carnac (Brittany): A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Alignments of Kermario* (Edinburgh: D. Douglas, 1881), 85, 102-3. The illustrations contained in these two works are available online, having been digitised by the Getty Research Institute. See respectively: <https://archive.org/details/excavationsatcar00milniala>; and <https://archive.org/details/excavationsatcar00miln>. See too Miln, "Notes on Cup-Markings and Incised Sculpturings near Guerande, Brittany," 149.

on monumental or folkloric curiosities, Miln later stated that it was precisely this curiosity which led him to Brittany in 1873, after having “drawn and photographed a great number of these curious monuments” in Scotland.¹²

The Leiden album—both a paper museum and a collection of memories of family and friends—thus illustrates a practice, together with the social relations in which it was grounded. It thereby enables us to establish an initial portrait of the amateur. Its visual productions, combining forms of scientific and artistic amateurism, exhibit the panoply of talents that a member of the Scottish gentry was meant to cultivate, with the assistance of friends and peers sharing his tastes. It shows how Miln built up relations of sociability relating to his amateur practices, and characteristic of Victorian elites, without these necessarily being within the formal framework of societies. Before becoming an archaeologist and excavator, Miln embodied the figure of the dilettante, of which the aristocratic ideal—a legacy of the eighteenth century—¹³ was reinterpreted in the following century, at which time the emphasis was placed on the capacity to use one’s talents in a wide variety of fields, without focusing exclusively on any one with the seriousness associated with the supposedly bourgeois exercise of such professions.

2 From dilettante to specialist: the birth of a *grand amateur*

On arriving in Carnac on the south coast of Brittany and conducting his first digs there in 1874, Miln became a different sort of amateur. From being a dilettante, antiquarian, photographer, and outdoor painter, he became a specialist “archaeologist” devoting most of his time and means to carrying out digs, building up a collection, and publishing his discoveries. He thereby forged new sociabilities.

¹² James Miln, *Fouilles faites à Carnac (Morbihan): Les Bossenno et le Mont-Saint-Michel* (Paris: Didier, 1877), 11. These sentences do not figure in the English version.

¹³ Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

We may observe this transformation in the archives and Miln's visual productions. Although the sources differ in volume—a few scattered instances in Scotland, and more complete coherent sets held in Brittany—the documentation indicates a change, described by Miln himself in the preface to his first monograph in 1877. He mentions his interest over the previous fifteen years in Celtic monuments and sculpted crosses in Scotland, without describing himself as an archaeologist. He refers to works by a scholar more actively involved in specialised research, “Doctor” John Stuart (1813-1877), secretary of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland since 1854.¹⁴ Stuart was also a member of the Spalding Club, a circle of antiquarians working to promote the study of and publications about local vestiges, and had written a reference book on Scottish prehistoric and mediaeval sculpted stones.¹⁵ As for the way Miln presents himself, he says he is a curious individual “on a tour”, situating his trip to Brittany in summer 1873 in the direct wake of his earlier activities.¹⁶ He travelled along the coast of the peninsula, from Saint-Malo to Brest, then from Quimper to Carnac, comparing Scottish and Breton monuments. During these travels he made drawings of sculpted crosses, some of which are included in his 1877 work as engraved vignettes, despite being unrelated to the subject of the book, as he admits.¹⁷ Miln was accompanied for part of this trip by his friend the French painter Théodore Valerio (1819-1879), whom he perhaps met at Carnac where the artist regularly resided in the 1870s.

Several encounters in this small town transformed the curious sketcher of antiquities into an enthusiastic digger. Miln stayed at the Hôtel des Voyageurs, as he did on subsequent visits, the only hotel in the village and a key meeting place for archaeologists and artists drawn by the picturesque and enigmatic megalithic alignments. He met Henri Raison du Cleuziou (1833-1896), tasked by the French government with conducting measurements of the megaliths.

¹⁴ Miln, *Les Bossenno et le Mont-Saint-Michel*, 11. The term does not figure in the English version.

¹⁵ John Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (Aberdeen: Spalding Club, 1856-1866).

¹⁶ Miln, *A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Bossenno and the Mont Saint Michel*, v.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

Raison du Cleuziou apparently mentioned several mounds at a place called Bosseno (or Bossenno), then accompanied Miln and Valerio there.

Miln's account moves directly from this visit to the first dig conducted in 1874. He states that it was made possible thanks to the advice of more experienced scholars and better field experts than he, namely Raison du Cleuziou and Valerio, as well as Alexandre Gressy (1831-1885). Gressy—a medical doctor, mayor of Carnac, then member of the Morbihan General Council—was an amateur archaeologist and member of a renowned local learned society, the Société Polymathique du Morbihan, and owned a private collection, of which the inventory drawn up after his death has survived.¹⁸ Miln also points out that the following year he was sufficiently seasoned to excavate without the help of these auxiliaries, carefully mentioning that Raison du Cleuziou was “wholly foreign” to the digs carried out in 1875 and 1876, which he directed himself, henceforth positioning himself as an archaeologist.¹⁹

Thus in the space of a few months Miln acquired enough expertise to present himself as a specialist. He no doubt drew on the skills and know-how acquired during his studies and activities in Scotland. As a former Navy officer, he knew the techniques of military topography, which were useful for drawing up cross sections, views, and exploration maps. Hence Miln may be considered as an example of those military officers who transferred their skills to archaeology, at home and overseas, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, such as his more famous compatriot Augustus Pitt-Rivers (1827-1900) among many others.²⁰ Like most

¹⁸ Archives départementales du Morbihan, Vannes, 6 E 9329.

¹⁹ Miln, *Les Bossenno et le Mont-Saint-Michel*, 12. “I then undertook the work, which I superintended and carried on at my own expense”. Miln, *A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Bossenno and the Mont Saint Michel*, vi.

²⁰ Christopher Evans, “Soldiering Archaeology: Pitt Rivers and ‘Militarism,’” *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 24 (2014): Art. 4, 1-20, <http://doi.org/10.5334/bha.244>; Nadia Bayle, “Quelques aspects de l'histoire de l'archéologie au 19^{ème} siècle: l'exemple des publications archéologiques militaires éditées entre 1830 et 1914 en France, en Afrique du Nord et en Indochine” (PhD diss., Université Paris 4, 1986); Nadia Bayle, “Armée et archéologie au XIX^e siècle: éléments de recherche sur les travaux archéologiques des officiers français publiés entre 1830 et 1914,” *Revue d'archéologie moderne et d'archéologie générale*, no. 3 (1984-1985): 219-30. See too Ann Bermingham, *Learning to Draw: Studies in the Cultural History of a Polite and Useful Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 83-5.

amateurs, he also trained mainly in the field, in contact with more experienced scholars than he. Unlike certain, however, he did not receive any structured training from a learned society after his arrival at Carnac.²¹ Apart from his relatively tenuous links with the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland mentioned earlier, after 1873 Miln was only in fairly distant contact with the Société Polymathique du Morbihan, even though it was very active and by this date had mainly specialised in prehistoric archaeology.²² It had organised major digs in the Morbihan since the 1850s, and its members included recognised experts. As a seasonal resident in Carnac, some 20 miles from Vannes, Miln could only join as a non-resident member. But above all, his social origins set him apart from the members of this provincial association. In the nineteenth century it was run mainly by representatives of the local bourgeoisie, most of whom had roots in the printing industry, the army (Vannes was a garrison town), and the clerical elite (Vannes being the seat of a bishopric), plus “professional capacities”, especially doctors and lawyers. This association admittedly included members of the local landowning aristocracy and of the national and departmental political and administrative elite in its ranks, but they did not constitute its core. Thus the world of the Société Polymathique du Morbihan was not that of Scottish gentleman antiquarians of the time, and Miln had few counterparts. Additionally, he was able to benefit from a sufficiently learned environment in Carnac, made up of national and international experts and artists who visited the site, and that of the small local, religious, and economic elite of the town, who were keen on archaeology and had good knowledge of the field. Thus Miln is only listed among the corresponding and honorary members of the Société Polymathique du Morbihan from 1875 to 1878, and did not publish any articles in its bulletin. His election as vice president in January 1881 a few days before his death is no doubt

²¹ On the role of associations in training amateurs, see Robert A. Stebbins, *Amateurs, Professionals and Serious Leisure* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), 68-92.

²² Christophe Le Pennec, “La Société Polymathique et la naissance de collections archéologiques en Morbihan,” *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l’Ouest* 118, no. 3 (2011): 73-96.

attributable more to the local museum's interest in potentially being gifted his collection, than to the scale of his activities within the association.²³

Nevertheless, the archives indicate closer contact with certain specific members. In particular, Miln wrote several letters to Antoine Léon Davy de Cussé (1823-1886), which soon became amicable in tone. Davy de Cussé had been a member of the Polymathique since 1863, and was the curator of its archaeology museum. He was a landowner from the same social milieu as Miln, and was able to converse with him in English. He also shared Miln's original interest in ancient sculpted monuments, and in 1865 published a fairly similar compilation to Stuart's.²⁴ The archives also mention contact with Comte Michel Louis François Marie Chanu de Limur (1817-1901), with an identical social profile, who was a member of the Société Polymathique and of the Société Géologique de France, and had put together an important mineralogical collection in his townhouse in Vannes.²⁵ There are also instances of more formal exchanges with Gustave de Closmadeuc (1828-1918), a doctor and pillar of archaeological activity in Vannes.

In addition to testifying to relations based more on class belonging than on being a member of an association, these few letters show that Miln henceforth assumed the general attitude of an archaeologist. He goes into details about his techniques, invites Cussé, Limur, and Closmadeuc to come and visit the excavations conducted in the Kermario alignments in December 1877,²⁶ gave certain items found at Bosseno to the Vannes Museum,²⁷ and discussed

²³ This is strongly suggested in Gustave de Closmadeuc, "Carnac: Fouilles et découvertes de M. James Miln," *Bulletin de la Société polymathique du Morbihan* (1878): 102-13

²⁴ Léon Davy de Cussé, *Recueil des signes sculptés sur les monuments mégalithiques du Morbihan* (Vannes: impr. de Galles, 1865).

²⁵ Damien Gendry, "100 ans de géologie au sein de la Société géologique et minéralogique de Bretagne," *Bulletin de la Société Géologique et Minéralogique de Bretagne*, no. 18 (2020): 63.

²⁶ James Miln papers, Archives de la Société polymathique de Morbihan, Vannes. Letter from James Miln to Léon de Cussé (15 December 1877).

²⁷ James Miln papers, Archives de la Société polymathique de Morbihan, Vannes. Letter from James Miln to Léon de Cussé, Carnac (25 October 1876).

technical points about forms of dolmen burial.²⁸ In addition to reading specialised literature, especially the bulletins of the Société Polymathique of which he owned the entire series, Miln became an author, publishing two monographs about his findings, which came out in France and the United Kingdom in 1877 and 1881.

These publications firstly indicate Miln's independence from the local *société savante*, since he did not publish his findings in its bulletins but directly in these two works. The quality of both, published by reputed editors and in two languages, with numerous illustrations and colour plates, is also typical of a certain type of amateur whose financial means, skills, and networks enabled him to work in conditions similar to those of the very few professionals of the day, or the more numerous individuals whose excavations were financed on a case-by-case basis by the public authorities. It is this figure of the "gentleman amateur" that may also be described as a "*grand amateur*".²⁹

3 The images produced by a *grand amateur*

We may observe this shift from a dilettante to an archaeological specialist not only in his texts, but also in the images Miln produced, as hand-drawn and printed imagery took a central place in his scholarly work. However, the scholar's new visual production did not wholly displace earlier practices, occurring alongside that of the watercolour landscape artist, while photography seemed to occupy only a secondary place after Miln reconfigured his activities.

The fact that there is only a single photo, a print of which is held in the Vannes and in the Carnac archives, suggests that he made only marginal use of this medium for his archaeology. It shows Miln at the foot of an alignment of menhirs at Kermario, and acts more

²⁸ James Miln papers, Archives de la Société polymathique de Morbihan, Vannes. Letter from James Miln (11 December 1880).

²⁹ Allan Chapman, *The Victorian Amateur Astronomer: Independent Astronomical Research in Britain, 1820-1920* (Chichester: Wiley, 1998).

as a memento than a document of the excavations carried out there (Fig. 1).³⁰ The reasons behind his turning away from photography were perhaps technical, for photos were difficult and costly to reproduce in archaeological publications, but also perhaps epistemic, for mediocre reproductions of photos were often reckoned to be less accurate than drawings. The specific evolution of non-monumental (especially prehistoric) archaeology in mainland France differed in this respect from other fields of archaeology.³¹ The years when Miln was active coincided with a period when photography was not yet part of the scholarly habitus of the provincial amateur archaeologist, even though its use was expanding on major state-financed digs. Still, the period saw the beginnings of this shift, with photography spreading locally as of the early 1880s. For instance, Félix Gaillard (1832-1910), the owner of a hotel near Carnac, who was carrying out digs at the same time as Miln, produced photos whose quality was acknowledged by his Parisian counterparts;³² the sub-committee for megalithic monuments even commissioned a photographic inventory from him.³³ Zacharie le Rouzic (1864-1939), who trained in archaeology in Miln's entourage and went on to become the central figure of local archaeology at the end of the century, was also a keen photographer.³⁴ Thus although Miln made little use of his photographic know-how for his archaeological research, he may well have transmitted it to the team working on his digs.

³⁰ This photo doubtless acted as a model for a drawing published in Miln, *A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Alignments of Kermario*, plate facing page 20.

³¹ Gabrielle Feyler, "Contribution à l'histoire des origines de la photographie archéologique: 1839-1880," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Antiquité* 99, no. 2 (1987): 1019-47; Philippe Collet, "La photographie et l'archéologie: des chemins inverses," *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique* 120, no. 1 (1996): 325-44; Serge Lewuillon, "Positif/négatif. Les antiquités nationales, l'estampe et la photographie," *Les nouvelles de l'archéologie*, no. 113 (2008): 37-45; Frederick N. Bohrer, *Photography and Archaeology* (London: Reaktion books, 2011); Anissa Yelles, *Aux origines de la photographie archéologique: de Rome en Afrique* (Paris: Mergoïl, 2020).

³² Gaillard's photos are held in the photo archives of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris. Archives de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris, Muséum d'histoire naturelle, Paris, SAP 155 (10), *Album n. 10. Monuments préhistoriques*.

³³ Félix Gaillard, *Monuments mégalithiques du Morbihan. Plouharnel* (1880). See Howard Crowhurst and Gaillard Philippe, *Mémoire de pierres à Plouharnel: photographies et textes inédits, 1870 à 1895, de Félix Gaillard* (Plouharnel: HCom, 2004).

³⁴ Gérard Bailloud and Gwénaëlle Wilhelm-Bailloud, *Zacharie Le Rouzic: archéologue et photographe à Carnac* (Carnac: Blanc et noir, 2014).

The largest set of traces concern Miln's continuing activity as a sketcher and watercolourist. The archives contain his drawings and watercolours, several of which were used in his publications. His monograph on the Gallo-Roman villa at Bosseno starts with a "View from the Bossenno, before the excavations", with the French edition specifying that it was engraved "from a watercolour by James Miln". The volume on excavations in the Kermario alignments is also introduced by a general view of the menhirs. These carefully situate the places but do not provide any archaeological information; they are conventional picturesque representations, portraying megaliths and peasants beneath a large skyscape. Miln refers to their artistic quality in his 1877 preface, describing them as "landscapes".³⁵ These watercolours display his proximity with Valerio, who was exhibiting paintings of megalithic landscapes at the Salon de Paris at the same time, illustrating the dual artistic and scientific attraction presiding over the production of images in the region.³⁶

Thus on becoming an amateur archaeologist, Miln continued to pursue his activities as an outdoor watercolourist and sketcher; but some of his work took a clearly scholarly turn. A few notebook pages held at Vannes depicting monuments show that he placed his talents at the service of archaeological prospection and analysis.³⁷ He also produced plans and elevations of the sites he excavated. The many other technical drawings illustrating his monographs were however entrusted to others.

Typically for a *grand amateur*, Miln had the means to pay auxiliaries to help work on his digs, his collection, and his publications. Among these assistants Louis Cappé (1840-1886), the son of a carpenter and parish beadle, played a key role. He was selected by Miln to act as his supervisor or "director" of excavations, being placed in charge of them whenever Miln was staying in Paris or went back to Scotland. Miln also drew on the help of a "servant", the

³⁵ Miln, *A Record of Archaeological Researches in the Bossenno and the Mont Saint Michel*, vii.

³⁶ Denise Delouche, "Les peintres de la Bretagne avant Gauguin" (PhD diss., Université Rennes 2, 1975).

³⁷ Archives de la Société polymathique du Morbihan, Vannes, Dossier "Miln, 39".

aforementioned Zacharie Le Rouzic, a young boy from a very modest family, who started working for Miln at the age of about ten, initially carrying Valerio's and then Miln's painting equipment.³⁸ Archives held at the Carnac prehistory museum and at Vannes show how carefully the team carried out digs and recorded findings. A daily log was kept, with the site map growing day by day, in which finds were listed and often sketched. Items were listed after the description of each sector of the excavation, with all of the information being carefully reproduced on a final general site map (Fig. 3). The items were then presented in a summary table. This makes it possible to precisely follow the discovery of each vestige, such as the small bronze ox found at Bosseno, the masterpiece of the collection (Fig. 2 and 4). These archives, using drawings at every step, show that Miln thought of himself primarily as an excavator, not simply as a collector of fine pieces. This attitude and care were highly exceptional within the field of French provincial mainland archaeology.

These qualities also transpire in his publications. Few provincial amateurs published their excavations as fine illustrated monographs, more reminiscent of publications from explorations overseas financed by the state or by other major bodies. Only a few wealthy amateurs had the means to produce such publications individually, such as Heinrich Schliemann who published accounts of his digs in the Peloponnese at the same period. The 1877 monograph about Bosseno is a luxury project, intended for a readership who were economically and culturally similar to the author. Illustration plays a major part, directly impacting on the sale price of 42 shillings in the United Kingdom and 50 francs in France. Reviews on either side of the Channel praised the quality of the images.³⁹ In the *Bulletin monumental*, Léon Palustre noted

³⁸ Cappé is described as a “director” and Le Rouzic as a “servant” in the letter by Miln's brother Robert to the Société Polymathique du Morbihan announcing his death. Archives de la Société polymathique du Morbihan, Vannes, Dossier “Miln, 23”. On Cappé, see Cyrille Chaigneau, Nathalie Richard, and Hadrien Viraben, “Louis Cappé (1840-1886), un travailleur de l'ombre de l'archéologie carnacoise”, *AmateurS – Amateurs en sciences (France, 1850-1950)* [research blog], 16 avril 2020, <https://ams.hypotheses.org/1474>.

³⁹ W. C. Lukis, “Fine Art,” *The Academy*, no. 280 (15 September 1877): 276-7; “Book Review,” *The British Quarterly Review* 66, no. 132 (October 1877): 496-7; “Illustrated Archaeology,” *Saturday Review* 46, no. 1197 (5 October 1878): 438-9; “Reviews,” *Archaeologia Cambrensis* 11, no. 42 (April 1880): 156-7.

that “an excavation has never been so magnificently illustrated”.⁴⁰ Substantiating the figure of Miln as a *grand amateur*, he states that producing such a work was entirely due to the disinterested act of “rich and generous foreigner”.

This publication was in fact a collective work, for which Miln was both author and commissioner. As was the case for his digs, he put together a team. The French text was revised by a member of the Société Polymathique du Morbihan, Abbé Jean-François Luco (1835-1895), a learned priest who went on to organise the posthumous publication of several manuscripts after Miln died prematurely. As for the illustrations, they were the work of several artists, some of whom produced images prior to the publication process, with others then being commissioned to turn these drawings into reproducible prints.

Two who were close to Miln and worked directly with him on enhancing the visual aspect of his works were Louis Cappé, who became an expert in reconstituting ceramics, and Henri Raison du Cleuziou, as a peer and external observer, who produced a series of watercolours at Bosseno held by the Médiathèque de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine.⁴¹ Both produced the drawings of the vestiges dug up, apart from the bronze ox which was drawn by Miln (Fig. 2). A second category of assistants then prepared the work for publication. Thanks to his financial independence, Miln was able to employ qualified engravers, each selected to produce a certain type of image, both for inclusion in the body of the text and as separate plates, either in black and white or in colour. Richard Taylor, a wood engraver who worked on *The Illustrated Review*, was specifically tasked with Miln’s watercolours. Emile Nicolaÿ worked alongside Taylor, and was additionally in sole charge of the drawings by Cappé and by Raison du Cleuziou. Émile Morieu looked after the plans and elevations produced by Miln. The latter also used the services of a Paris printer, Leroy & Pichon, specialised in chromolithography. Finally, Miln negotiated with specialised publishers: David Douglas in Edinburgh, who edited

⁴⁰ Léon Palustre, “Bibliographie,” *Bulletin monumental* 6, no. 44 (1878): 103.

⁴¹ Médiathèque de l’architecture et du patrimoine, Charenton-le-Pont, 04R04718 to 04R04729.

the *Proceedings* of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and Didier in Paris, the publisher of the *Revue archéologique*, the main journal in the field.

Particular attention was paid to the plans and elevations drawn by Miln himself, and entrusted to Morieu, an engraver specialising in scientific illustrations, who had been specially recruited in France, reputed as better for this type of images than the United Kingdom.⁴² In conjunction with the landscapes engraved from Miln's watercolours, the elevations indicate a wish to move beyond the plane imagery produced during the archaeological explorations. The issue of three-dimensionality, as crystallised in images produced by Miln himself in 1877, played a broader role in visual simulations concerning the Bosseno dig. The issue also transpires in illustrations selected by Raison du Cleuziou in 1882 to accompany his historical overview of French art. For Bosseno, he chose virtually the same viewpoints as those selected by Miln.⁴³ One may note the same wish to move beyond two-dimensionality, particularly in the oblique aerial perspective of mound C, replacing the elevations preferred by Miln.⁴⁴

The clear ambition to produce three-dimensional images in the 1877 work is also found in the five plaster scale models representing sectors excavated at the Bosseno Gallo-Roman villa (Fig. 5). These are typical of the active contemporary tradition of archaeological models, which were often made and used by learned societies. They are three-dimensional renderings of the planes and perspectives which appear in the monograph, and provide a way of keeping a visual trace of the architectural structures unearthed after Miln, having been unable to purchase the land, was compelled to fill in the sites after excavation, so that these remains were no longer visible in the field. These models were intended to complement the items held in the collection, emphasising the context of the dig, and, like the technical illustrations, were not produced by

⁴² See "Illustrated Archaeology," 438-9.

⁴³ Henri Raison du Cleuziou, *L'Art national: Étude sur l'histoire de l'art en France* (Paris: A. Pilon, 1882), vol. 1, 335, 337. For the comparison with Miln, see respectively *Excavations at Carnac* (1877), plates C4 and C2. The illustrations in Raison du Cleuziou's work have been digitised and are available on the Bibliothèque nationale de France website: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k203819f>.

⁴⁴ Raison du Cleuziou, *L'Art national*, vol. 1, 338-9.

Miln himself, though, like several engravings, they stemmed from translating his drawings into another medium. Material examination enables us to date them to late 1880.⁴⁵ They were either commissioned in the United Kingdom, or produced by Cappé, who was recompensed for comparable works presented at the Vannes artistic and industrial exhibition in 1883.⁴⁶ Making the Bosseno models was thus a continuation and culmination of a graphic continuum placed in the service of archaeological excavations, their printed dissemination, and the public display of the resultant collection.

Miln's research, entirely dedicated to solving an archaeological problem that looked susceptible to explanation by very careful excavations—the chronological sequence running from megalithic vestiges to the Gallo-Roman period—, thus established him as a specialist whose practices were remarkably rigorous for the period. The monographs produced during his lifetime to disseminate his findings were just as remarkable, both for minutely reconstituting the stages of the digs and for the abundance and technical quality of the illustrations. The cost of excavations and publishing relied on the author's financial means and his capacity to draw on a series of experts. And so, after becoming an archaeologist, it was henceforth primarily as an excavator that Miln presented himself. These qualities not only established him as a specialist, but also as a nineteenth-century *grand amateur*.

On becoming a specialist archaeologist and author, Miln drew extensively on his skill as an illustrator, both for his activity as an archaeologist and in communicating his findings, for which images played a dominant role, though he did not totally relinquish the habitus of a dilettante. On the contrary, he was sufficiently wealthy and well-connected to do away with the conventions prevailing in local and national learned societies, and could authorise himself to place his personal works in his scholarly publications. Breton landscapes and drawings of

⁴⁵ This dating is based on identifying the newspapers used to stuff the models.

⁴⁶ *Exposition artistique, industrielle, archéologique et horticole à l'occasion du concours régional et hippique, mai-juin 1883, catalogue des œuvres exposées* (Vannes: impr. F. Grébus, 1883), 12.

mediaeval crosses were included in his monographs, despite being loosely connected to their scientific content. The pre-1873 amateur artist thus reappears alongside the excavator of Carnac. Hence his monographs ultimately reflect an original figure, one might oxymoronically call a *specialist dilettante*.

4 Conclusion

Material traces of artistic and scholarly activity, images, and archives have enabled us to follow the evolution of a gentleman dilettante, who became an archaeologist and *grand amateur* without entirely abandoning his initial identity. Though admittedly singular, the case of James Miln enables us to formulate some more general conclusions about learned amateurism in the nineteenth century.

First, his case brings out how, throughout the century, the categorisation of the amateur was caught between two poles of contrasting social figures and sets of values. On the one hand was the aristocratic promotion of the figure of the dilettante, inherited from the eighteenth-century and valuing *otium* as opposed to professional activity, together with the capacity to display one's talents in varied fields in the sciences, arts, and sports. On the other was the increasing bourgeois promotion of the values of work and serious pursuit, associated with a profession and specialisation, in opposition to what were deemed as the superficial ventures of the dilettante. These two sets of values coexisted for a long time before the latter put an end to the former, as Western societies moved through global shifts and aristocratic elites underwent accelerating social, economic and political decline during the first half of the twentieth century.

Second, Miln's case illustrates the major dynamics at work in amateur worlds, relating to training by peers and reproduction. The archaeological enterprise of this Scottish amateur was thus a forum in which skills were forged and graphic traditions invented. For example, Louis Cappé, after the death of his first employer, carried on supervising archaeological digs,

especially on behalf of another local amateur archaeologist, Félix Gaillard; he also continued making models. Zacharie Le Rouzic, the son of a rag merchant, owed his exceptional career to the time spent working for Miln. For obscure reasons relating to local politics, he was selected over Cappé to run the Miln Museum in Carnac in 1882. This position brought him into contact with more educated visitors, some of whom were more learned than he was, and nearly all of whom were his social superiors. He was able to establish himself in their eyes as a field expert, as an excavator, before his skills as a self-trained archaeologist were recognised by the state, when it entrusted him in 1900 with major excavations and overseeing site restorations. Throughout his career, Le Rouzic continued to use photography, both for archaeology and to publish postcards for commercial purposes. One may legitimately suppose that this skill, together with his initial archaeological knowledge, was rooted in the time he spent in Miln's company.