

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86419-0 - The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850

Sarah Tarlow

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
IMPROVEMENT IN BRITAIN,
1750–1850



In this innovative study, Sarah Tarlow shows how the archaeology of this period manifests a widespread and cross-cutting ethic of Improvement, one of the most current concepts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain. Theoretically informed and drawn from primary and secondary sources in a range of disciplines, the author considers agriculture and the rural environment, towns and buildings such as working-class housing and institutions of reform. From bleach baths to window glass, rubbish pits to tea wares, the material culture of the period reflects a particular set of values and aspirations. Tarlow examines the philosophical and historical background to the notion of Improvement and demonstrates how this concept is a useful lens through which to examine the material culture of later historical Britain.

Sarah Tarlow is Senior Lecturer in Historical Archaeology at the University of Leicester. The author of *Bereavement and Commemoration* and co-editor of *The Familiar Past? Archaeologies of Later Historical Britain*, she has published on a wide range of topics and is a member of the editorial board of *Archaeological Dialogues*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86419-0 - The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850

Sarah Tarlow

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF
IMPROVEMENT IN BRITAIN,
1750–1850



SARAH TARLOW

University of Leicester



Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-86419-0 - The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850
 Sarah Tarlow
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521864190

© Sarah Tarlow 2007

The publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Tarlow, Sarah, 1967–
 The archaeology of improvement in Britain, 1750–1850/Sarah Tarlow.
 p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-86419-0 (hardback)

ISBN-10: 0-521-86419-4 (hardback)

1. Historic buildings – Conservation and restoration – Great Britain.
2. Historic sites – Conservation and restoration – Great Britain. 3. Great Britain – Historical geography. 4. Material culture – Great Britain
- History – 18th century. 5. Material culture – Great Britain – History
- 19th century. 6. Great Britain – Social conditions – 18th century.
7. Great Britain – Social conditions – 19th century. 8. Cultural property
 - Protection – Great Britain. I. Title.

DA655.T37 2007

363.6'9094109033 – dc22

2006023794

ISBN 978-0-521-86419-0 hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet Web sites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such Web sites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86419-0 - The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850

Sarah Tarlow

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TO RACHEL, ADAM AND GREGORY

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86419-0 - The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850

Sarah Tarlow

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS



<i>List of Illustrations</i>	page ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
ONE: INTRODUCTION	i
TWO: AGRICULTURAL IMPROVEMENT	34
THREE: THE IMPROVED RURAL LANDSCAPE	67
FOUR: TOWNS AND CIVIC IMPROVEMENT	90
FIVE: IMPROVING THE PEOPLE	124
SIX: THE RIGHT STUFF	163
SEVEN: FINAL THOUGHTS	190
<i>References</i>	202
<i>Index</i>	215

ILLUSTRATIONS



1.1	Contexts in which the words ‘Improvement’, ‘Improved’ and ‘Improver’ occur in the titles of books published between 1600 and 1900, from the catalogue of the British Library	<i>page</i> 15
1.2	Total volume of published literature from the catalogue of the British Library	21
2.1	Reversed-S shape preserved in field boundary, Derbyshire	43
2.2	Drainage ditches separating fields in Lincolnshire	44
2.3	Parliamentary enclosure in Leicestershire	45
2.4	Stone ‘one-night house’ in Ceredigion	49
2.5	Lime kilns on the quay, Solva, Pembrokeshire	55
2.6	Lime kiln from Ravenstonedale, Cumbria	56
2.7	Drainage tiles	61
3.1	Croom Farm, Sledmere	69
3.2	Hafod, Ceredigion	77
3.3	Ice house at Helmsdale, Sutherland	84
3.4	Caledonian canal	85
3.5	Croft at Bettyhill, Caithness	86
4.1	Edinburgh New Town	93
4.2	Public buildings of Manchester, from <i>The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction</i> vol. 20, p. 177 (1832)	98
4.3	‘Before’ and ‘after’ views from Humphry Repton’s cottage	104
4.4	London’s rookeries, from Stamford’s Library map of London and its suburbs (1862, corrected to 1869)	107
4.5	Tunbridge Wells, from <i>The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction</i> vol. 18, p. 225 (1831)	108
4.6	London Bridge, from <i>The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction</i> vol. 27, p. 225 (1836)	109

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-86419-0 - The Archaeology of Improvement in Britain, 1750-1850

Sarah Tarlow

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ILLUSTRATIONS

4.7	New Walk, Leicester	110
4.8	Derby Arboretum	111
4.9	St Leonard's-on-Sea, from <i>The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction</i> vol. 16, p. 169 (1830)	112
4.10	Satchwell Buildings, Leamington Spa	117
4.11	The Parthenon, Leamington Spa	118
5.1	Parish burial ground, St Peter's Church, Lampeter	144
5.2	Lincoln Gaol Chapel	152
5.3	Huntingdon County Gaol and House of Correction, from <i>The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction</i> vol. 28, p. 376 (1836)	154
6.1	Verrerie Anglaise, from Diderot and D'Alembert <i>Encyclopedie</i> , 'Verre'	174
6.2	Sherd with 'Old Mortality' motif	180

P R E F A C E



The writing of this book was supported by a Research Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust and a period of study leave granted by the University of Leicester. I am most grateful to both institutions for giving me this opportunity.

The ideas expressed here have taken shape partly through discussion with sharp-minded colleagues and friends. I would particularly like to thank Dave Edwards, Terry Hopkinson, Deirdre O'Sullivan, Marilyn Palmer, Mark Pluciennik and Richard Thomas. Outside my own institution, conversations with John Robb, Andrew Fleming, Chris Cumberpatch and Eleanor Casella have been very useful. Dave Edwards and Marilyn Palmer both read and commented on the entire text at a time when they had plenty of better things to do – I owe you each a large gin. The readers for Cambridge University Press – Matthew Johnson, Peter Mandler and Mary Beaudry – provided very helpful suggestions and comments. Peter Mandler especially gave a historian's view on the text, and his recommendations have helped immeasurably. Many thanks to Simon Whitmore and Beatrice Rehl at Cambridge University Press for being such helpful editors. Finally to Mark Pluciennik I am infinitely indebted for the moral, intellectual and logistical support without which this book would not have been written; thanks also to my two older children Rachel and Adam for their patience, and to the youngest one, Gregory, whose arrival proved a powerful enforcer of deadlines.

All figures are copyright of the author, except where otherwise stated. The cover illustration shows a 'prone couch' for the correction of poor posture, from G.B. Childs *On the Improvement and Preservation of the Female Figure*, 1840.