Oxford Handbooks Online

Archaeologists and Metal-Detector Users in England and Wales: Past, Present, and Future ∂

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The Oxford Handbook of Public Archaeology
Edited by Robin Skeates, Carol McDavid, and John Carman

Abstract and Keywords

This article explores the history of the changing relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users in England and Wales, including the competing political strategies of both groups to influence public opinion and new legislation. It discusses some of the key issues and events, both historical and contemporary, as an overview and introduction to these varied, and arguably still-changing, relationships. The article begins with an introduction to the terms *metal-detector user*, *nighthawk*, and *Treasure*. Following this, it highlights some early concerns about heritage protection. The article then describes some reactions to and from the metal detecting hobby, and presents some conclusions from the works of archaeologists and metal-detector users. It concludes by encouraging archaeologists to maintain more positive and cooperative links with the metal-detecting community.

Keywords: archaeologists, metal-detector user, England, Wales, nighthawk, treasure

Suzie Thomas is the Community Archaeology Support Officer for the Council for British Archaeology: a job which involves researching and supporting the voluntary sector in archaeology in the UK. In this chapter, based on her doctoral thesis, she explores the history of the changing relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users in England and Wales, including the competing political strategies of both groups to influence public opinion and new legislation. Comparisons can be made with two other chapters in this volume (by Brodie and Kersel), which explore the background to the antiquities trade. Following on from the success of the UK Portable Antiquities Scheme, and in line with her current work, Thomas concludes her historical analysis by encouraging archaeologists to maintain more positive and cooperative links with the metal detecting community.

Introduction

The relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users in England and Wales, and indeed the whole of the UK, are a complex result of decades of interactions, both harmonious and acrimonious. Some archaeological authors have described metal-detector users, certainly in England, as 'Janus-like…with, on the one hand, responsible detectorists working with archaeologists but, on the other, nighthawks looking towards the market' (Addyman and Brodie 2002: 182–3), indicating the view that while many do actively communicate and cooperate with archaeologists, there are still some who (p. 61) operate illegally (the nighthawks). Equally, some metal-detector users have been suspicious of archaeologists, claiming that they have at times behaved as:

> closed-shop professionals, card-carriers and guild-members, when faced with the inexorable march of a technology that breaks their monopoly and renders certain aspects of their trade or profession a do-it-yourself job that can now be carried out by Everyman. (Fletcher 1996: 35)

In England and Wales, since 1997, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) has been in operation. First it was delivered through a series of pilot projects and then rolled out nationally from 2003. PAS is, essentially, an outreach service hosted by museums and other partners across England and Wales, which allows and encourages the recording of chance archaeological finds by the public. In practice, the majority of finds reported to PAS come to light via metal-detector users. PAS enjoys widespread support, evidenced by the scale of objection that arose in 2007–8 when its future was threatened by budget cuts (e.g. Haughton 2008; Renfrew 2007). Equally, there are critics of this scheme (e.g. Barford 2008; Brun 2008). However, the fact that PAS has sustained good relationships with a majority of metal-detector users for more than a decade can be viewed in stark contrast to archaeological concerns and reactions to the emergence of the metal detecting hobby years earlier, from its first appearance in the mid- to late 1960s, and culminating in the notorious STOP (Stop Taking Our Past) campaign of 1980.

A recent doctoral thesis by the author investigated the history of the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users, and their impact on the current situation (Thomas 2009a). The questions driving this research explored what attempts archaeologists and archaeological organizations have made in the past in England and Wales to control the impact of metal-detector users on archaeologically sensitive sites, and how these have influenced current legislation, educational initiatives, and parameters for discussion. They asked what effect these actions have had on the metal detecting hobby, and what conclusions can be drawn from the past relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users to inform the development of better communication between the two groups in the future.

This chapter discusses some of the key issues and events, both historical and contemporary, as an overview and introduction to these varied, and arguably still changing, relationships. Furthermore, the chapter does not directly address the issue of the damage

caused by illegal nighthawking, since this has been the focus of other recent reports (e.g. Oxford Archaeology 2009). As with much research into the actions of different groups of people, the historical context is essential for the better understanding of the complexity of current issues.

Due to legislative differences in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the UK Crown Dependencies, the chapter focuses primarily on England and Wales. Furthermore, due to the nature of this chapter as an overview piece, it should be noted that various aspects of the events and organizations mentioned here are analysed in more detail elsewhere (e.g. Thomas 2009b, 2011). In order to introduce the topic, a number of definitions also need explanation. These are *metal-detector user*, *nighthawk*, and *Treasure.*

(p. 62) 'Metal-detector user', sometimes 'metal detectorist' (e.g. Skeates 2000: 55; Merriman 2004: 12; Pollard 2009: 182), is the term used to refer to people who use metal-detectors specifically in the pursuit of metal detecting as a hobby. This is as opposed to, for example, military personnel engaged in the search for mines, or archaeologists using a metal-detector as one of a number of archaeological tools. Both 'metal detectorist' and 'metal-detector user' are in wide usage (PAS, for instance, refers to 'metal-detector users' in its publications—see PAS 2006 for an example of this).

While there are some metal-detector users operating individually without any affiliation, many are members of one or both national metal detecting bodies in the UK: the National Council for Metal Detecting (NCMD), and the Federation of Independent Detectorists (FID). Membership of these organizations provides the metal-detector user with advice, insurance, and, often, opportunities to socialize. The current number of metal-detector users active in the UK is estimated to be between 9,100 and 10,550 (Thomas 2009a: 257).

Many metal-detector users are assumed to be 'responsible' in their actions in the sense of adhering to codes of conduct, such as those of the FID (1996), the *Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales* (CBA et al. 2006), or the NCMD (2008). However, there is a caveat that the notion of 'responsibility' with regard to metal detecting is itself under current debate between archaeologists and metal-detector users, with differing interpretations as to what actions would constitute being 'responsible'. In spite of this, 'responsible' metal-detector users are in stark contrast to the, rather dramatically named, 'nighthawks'. These are metal-detector users that operate outside of the law. Effectively, nighthawking is a form of archaeological looting specifically involving metal-detectors. In the English and Welsh context, a metal-detector user will have done one or more of the following actions in order for their activities to constitute nighthawking:

- Discovered a find that should be declared as Treasure (according to the Treasure Act 1996 and its subsequent amendments; the required time in which to declare potential Treasure is currently fourteen days), but failed to declare it as such within the required time;

- Searched on private land without permission, i.e. trespassed, with anything found therefore constituting theft from the landowner;

- Searched on a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) without authorization, hence violating the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (AMAAA) 1979, Part III, Section 42 (HMSO 1996);

- Searched on private land with permission from the landowner, but then failed to disclose what had been found, especially items of financial value or items of Treasure, constituting theft from the landowner and/or the Crown.

'Treasure' is a contentious term in archaeology. Legally, it defines the categories of artefacts covered by the Treasure Act 1996 in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, and by treasure trove systems in Scotland and the UK Crown Dependencies. There are difficulties attached to this term from the point of view of archaeologists, in the sense that it suggests financial value, while archaeologists would argue that 'small things forgotten' of (p. 63) relatively low financial value are still extremely important when it comes to their research and informational 'value' to the archaeological record (Hobbs 2003: 11). These concerns are not helped by the high value of some of the more famous instances of declared Treasure. However, in the context of this chapter, Treasure with a capital 'T' refers to Treasure as a legal term for categories of artefacts, and has no ideological connotation beyond that. (See www.finds.org.uk/treasure/treasure_summary.php accessed 3 December 2009, for current Treasure categories in England and Wales. For information on Scottish treasure trove requirements, which are more exhaustive, see www.treasuretrovescotland.co.uk/html/legal.asp accessed 3 December 2009.)

Early concerns about heritage protection

Even before metal detecting emerged as a publicly accessible pastime, archaeologists were becoming concerned with the fate of archaeological sites and objects. The Second World War (1939–45) was significant in changing wider public opinions about the protection of heritage: 'As a result of the war, and in particular the aerial bombardment of Britain, the public began to be very concerned about the preservation of ancient monuments' (Halfin 1995: 8). This was reflected on an international scale by the shock felt at the destruction, during the war, of cultural property, including ancient monuments, fine art, and museum collections (Toman 1996: 20).

In the midst of this *Zeitgeist*, the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) was established in 1944, with one of its objectives as:

> the safeguarding of all kinds of archaeological material and the strengthening of existing measures for the care of ancient and historic buildings, monuments, and antiquities. (Heyworth 2006)

This included the aim of reforming the law of treasure trove, which until 1997, when the Treasure Act 1996 came into force, was the primary legal protection for chance finds of

small artefacts in England and Wales, despite its severe limitations (for discussion of this see Sparrow 1982). Brian Hope-Taylor, who later, in the 1960s, became one of the first 'TV archaeologists' (Taylor 2005: 207), was particularly concerned at this time about information being lost in the form of artefacts that were not recognized as archaeological, and subsequently were not being recorded or declared by the public.

Figure 3.1 Brian Hope-Taylor's 'History in the Ground' poster design. (Photograph by Laura Sole, taken on behalf of Bede's World. Image courtesy of Bede's World and the Council for British Archaeology.)

Among other measures, Hope-Taylor designed a number of posters (e.g. Figure 3.1), including one with a section in which to indicate to the public where to find a specialist to whom to report any discoveries. Unfortunately, not enough resources were available to provide specialists to cover the whole country and take on what would be very similar to the role of a present-day Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) under PAS. However, as Sole (2005: 229) has argued, the initial idea behind PAS could be traced back to Hope-Taylor's proposals some fifty or more years earlier. (p. 64)

(p. 65) In the 1950s, another key concern for the CBA, the Museums Association (MA), and other cultural heritage organizations was the impact of the Waverly Report on the export of works of art and archaeological material. A particular anxiety was not so much that no artefacts should be exported, but that this should not happen before adequate scientific research had carried out on them (e.g. Grimes, CBA, to Bruce-Mitford, British Museum, 29 March 1951). Exacerbating the problem was the apparent sale of archaeological material, including Anglo-Saxon metalwork, to servicemen from the USA based in East Anglia (Clarke, Norwich Castle Museum Curator, to de Cardi, CBA Secretary, 9 June 1952). There were even rumours, never substantiated, that some of these servicemen were actively encouraged to purchase artefacts on behalf of American museums (Clarke to de Cardi, 9 June 1952). Years later, in 1969, a newspaper report suggested that US Air

Force personnel were still operating as 'dealers' of various artefacts from East Anglia, with claims that antiquities were even being sold openly in the departure lounge at Heathrow Airport (Hopkirk 1969).

The American servicemen mentioned above did not necessarily have access to metal detecting devices, and certainly there is no evidence of this from the archival material that was consulted. However, a letter from a British soldier based at Catterick in 1970 demonstrates that certainly in some cases there was military access to metal-detectors, as he had the intention to carry out 'a series of searches in Wiltshire using an Army mine detector' (Coveney to Magnusson, 6 March 1970).

Ultimately, there was little success in influencing the Waverly Criteria or the associated price limits for implementing export licences. (See www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/cultural_property/4140.aspx accessed 3 December 2009, for a list of the Waverly Criteria.) This was in part due to a failure to find supportive evidence for the scale of archaeological material being lost, for example in 1959 through a survey of museum professionals for any evidence of sales abroad of important archaeological objects that had been 'dispersed by dealers without any adequate record' (de Cardi to UK museums, 31 July 1959). As much of the evidence collected was only anecdotal, there was little success in providing support for the argument for tighter export regulations for archaeological material. When metal detecting emerged in the 1960s, while threats were known to have arrived with the new hobby, there was again the same issue of lack of resources and hard evidence to support any action aimed at protecting archaeological sites and material.

Reactions to the metal detecting hobby

There was already awareness, as demonstrated above, of the risk of loss of archaeological material and information through sales but also through unreported chance finds and urban development. However, the emergence of metal detecting drew even greater attention to archaeological material discovered by non-professionals, since it exacerbated this rate of discovery (Renfrew 2000: 84). Between the mid-1960s and the early 1980s was a crucial period for the development—or deterioration—of relationships (p. 66) between the two groups, due to the rapid rise in the popularity of the metal-detector as a commercially available machine in the UK.

Newspaper cuttings archived by the CBA confirm that the metal detecting hobby, imported from the USA, began to become a publicly accessible pastime in the mid- to late 1960s. This is supported by other observers (e.g. Green and Gregory 1978: 161). Other electronic devices, such as mine detectors, could presumably have been developed or applied to treasure hunting if one had the equipment available, as the letter from Sergeant Coveney to Magnusson (6 March 1970—see above) demonstrated.

By 1969, purchasers of metal-detectors were writing to museums, academics, and others, keen to gain advice from archaeologists on where to find items of interest with their machines. This, and the publicity attracted by the new hobby (it even featured in an edition

of *Blue Peter*, a popular children's television programme), led the CBA to undertake a nationwide survey to audit the extent of all types of treasure hunting, metal detecting included. Responses were sought from the secretaries of the regional groups of the CBA, to help establish the facts regarding instances of looting, including metal detecting activities (de Cardi, *c*.1970).

The summarized results of the survey indicated at least some incidents in most regions (de Cardi *c*.1970: 3). Newspaper cuttings from the late 1960s, such as the headline 'Give us our history back, you medieval pot snatchers' in the *Croydon Midweek* (1969), confirm that metal detecting was not the only type of artefact hunting taking place. The formation of local voluntary societies, such as 'a body calling itself the Folk House Arch. Club' (de Cardi *c*.1970: 3), which contractors allowed to undertake excavations during construction of the Keynsham bypass in Avon, seems to have caused major concern. Alongside this 'amateur' group, other members of the public seem to have been involved in 'systematic looting, and local schoolchildren were encouraged to do so by their teachers' (Owen to de Cardi, 7 November 1969).

In another instance, two 'characters' went 'prospecting' at the site of Deganwy Castle, Conwy ('Robin' to de Cardi, 6 January 1970). One of the individuals involved was apparently a member of the Welsh CBA regional group, and had used this membership as a means of looking 'official' in order to gain access to the site ('Robin' to de Cardi, 6 January 1970). In Yorkshire, another metal-detector user had joined the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, much to the dismay of the society's Honorary Secretary, who complained that this individual could now offer his detecting services while honestly stating that he was a member of an archaeological society (Hartley to de Cardi, 4 May 1970).

A letter from the Luton area responding to the CBA survey indicated that an early instance of looting seemed to have been in 1948 or 1949 when *Exchange and Mart* ran an advertisement for 'a large collection of local Bedfordshire flint implements for sale—£10' (letter to Grimes, January 1970). The correspondent had responded to the advertisement as they were interested for research but discovered that an 'archaeological agent' had already purchased the collection (letter to Grimes, January 1970). They did, however, visit the house of the vendor, and found it to be 'a museum indeed', including a lot of things from Verulamium; 'about a dozen Samian bowls, numerous brooches and coins'; flint arrowheads; Bronze Age and Iron Age urns, and so on. 'It was then that I became (p. 67) aware of a ready market for excavated material purchased from, presumably, the excavators' (letter to Grimes, January 1970). The fact that the writer mentioned excavators suggests that archaeologists themselves might have been involved in eliciting sales. This was certainly not unheard of; Sir Mortimer Wheeler, the famous archaeologist who had been in charge of major excavations at Verulamium, had raised funds to support his excavations at Maiden Castle in Dorset in part through the sale of 'insignificant antiquities such as potsherds and bones' (Hawkes 1982: 97).

The inadequacy of treasure trove to protect finds of archaeological interest doubtless exacerbated the apparently growing trend in buying and selling artefacts. For example, in

1969, one of many attempts to reform treasure trove took the form of an Antiquities Bill, which was drafted by Charles Sparrow, the legal adviser to the CBA, and sent out to 370 different bodies, including CBA regional groups, museums, county societies, and even a selection of individuals, for feedback (unpublished summary of comments received in a survey of specialists and CBA member organizations for feedback about the draft Antiquities Bill, 1969). The 1969 Antiquities Bill also aimed to extend legislation to cover material found during development or demolition, almost a precursor to Planning Policy Guidance 16 (PPG16), which since its 1990 inception has provided advice for archaeological recording in urban and rural planning processes (DoE 1990: 1). A CBA report in 1968 (Alexander and Christie 1968) had also identified this concern for the provision of 'emergency archaeology' in redevelopment cases. The Antiquities Bill was broad and ambitious, however, and had advanced as far as the House of Lords when the government changed, and the Bill automatically lapsed (Daniel 1982: 199).

The question remains of whether, in the 1960s and 1970s, when metal detecting was still relatively new, better communication with these groups and individuals might have proven effective. For example, in the case of the Deganwy Castle 'prospectors' mentioned above, efforts had been made to explain to them the importance of recording their finds, with the realization that: 'too severe an attitude does not deter these people from their activities, but merely stops them from telling anybody about them' ('Robin' to de Cardi, 6 January 1970). However, when a Mr Allen contacted Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society for their views about a proposed Gloucestershire branch of the British Amateur Treasure Hunting Club, the society was advised to 'have no truck' with him (Fowler, CBA, to Ralph, 1973).

As early as 1970, too, Michael Beach, the director of ML Beach Products Limited (an early British metal-detector manufacturer), had contacted the CBA suggesting collaboration (Beach to CBA, 25 October 1970). The proposal included the suggestion that the CBA endorse a code of conduct to be included in a leaflet distributed with ML Beach metal-detectors (Beach to CBA, 25 October 1970). The CBA did not act upon Beach's suggestion, partly due to a suspicion about his motives for including apparent endorsement from an archaeological organization (de Cardi to Fowler, 30 November 1970). Eventually, they informed Beach that collaboration was not an option, beyond possibly pointing out the legal situation for metal detecting (Fowler to Beach, 12 December 1970). Peter Fowler, then Honorary Secretary of the CBA, added that he did not see why his organization: (p. 68)

> should enlighten those relying on your advice when a few successful prosecutions would support our arguments more strongly than appeals to a conscience presumably lacking in the market at which you are aiming. (Fowler to Beach, 12 December 1970)

By the later 1970s, metal detecting had reached a peak in popularity. In 1975–6, as a response to the rise in metal detecting, the CBA and the MA formed a joint working party—the Treasure Hunting Working Party (THWP) (Green and Gregory 1978: 161). At one point a THWP statement was discussed that acknowledged that 'total opposition' to metal

detecting would have 'unfortunate results', recommending instead a 'constructive partnership' between archaeologists and metal-detector users (CBA and MA 1978). However, executive councils of both organizations rejected the statement, and smaller anti-treasure hunting campaigns throughout the 1970s (e.g. Fowler 1972) culminated in the nationwide STOP Campaign in 1980. STOP—'Stop Taking Our Past' (Figure 3.2)—was aimed at persuading public opinion that the growing use of metal-detectors constituted a major threat to the archaeological heritage, which should instead be safeguarded 'for the good of present and future generations' (CBA 1980: 1). STOP is regularly cited as a defining moment in the history of the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users (e.g. Addyman and Brodie 2002; Bland 2005; Addyman 2009). It experienced some success, in that the AMAAA 1979 came into force during its period of activity. This included Section III, Clause 42, prohibiting unauthorized use of a metal-detector on a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and which was included specifically due to the emergence of the metal detecting hobby (HL Deb, 5 February 1979, cols. 462–3). In addition, the campaign enjoyed support from at least thirty-two organizations, including the National Trust, the Association of District Councils, the Country Landowners Association (CLA), and the United Kingdom Institute of Conservation.

However, there were also letdowns, such as the failure of the Abinger Bill in both 1979 and 1981, which would have reformed treasure trove had it been successful (see Thomas 2011). As is discussed below, contemporaneous campaigns led by the metal detecting community arguably enjoyed more success than STOP, which may instead have added to social divisions between archaeologists and members of the public (Hodder 1984: 29). The views of the latter were assumed, possibly wrongly, to be the same as those of the archaeologists.

Not unlike Hope-Taylor's draft proposals in the 1940s, the emphasis of the message of STOP seemed to be that particularly professional archaeologists (although voluntary archaeological societies were not excluded) were placed in the position of 'guardian' of the archaeological heritage on behalf of the wider public. This also reflects early approaches to cultural resource management, with the professional archaeologist effectively acting as custodian and interpreter of the archaeological resource *on behalf* of the wider public (Merriman 2004: 3; Carman 2005: 55). In more recent times the advent and enhancement of the concepts of public archaeology has shifted 'ownership' of and participation in archaeology towards the wider public. In some ways, the more recent engagement with metal-detector users on a national level through initiatives such as PAS has mirrored and formed part of these developments.

Figure 3.2 One of the STOP Campaign posters. (Design by Bill Tidy. Image courtesy of the Council for British Archaeology.)

(p. 69) A key opportunity for archaeologists seeking the reform of treasure trove law in England and Wales emerged in 1983 when a Romano-British site on the outskirts of Wanborough, Surrey, fell prey to nighthawks (Thomas 2009b: 153). Other documented cases where illegal actions are considered to have taken place include Corbridge in Northumberland (Dobinson and Denison 1995: 55–6; Addyman and Brodie 2002: 181), and Donhead St Mary in Wiltshire (Cleere and Marchant 1987: 73; McKie 1996). Two other hoards of bronze coins discovered in 1994 in Dorset and Buckinghamshire, both legally dispersed or sold on before any archaeological recording could be made, further highlighted the need for the reform of treasure trove (Bland 1994: 81). The significance of Wanborough in particular was not so much in its importance as an archaeological site, but in the opportunities taken to politicize the looting of the site, and also the subsequent trials. The Surrey Archaeological Society, outraged by what had happened at Wanborough, is credited as the source of the initiative that led to the Treasure Bill (Graham 2004; Bland, pers. comm., 8 November 2006; Addyman, pers. comm., 30 November 2006).

Nonetheless, the Surrey Archaeological Society was supported greatly in achieving their goal of reforming treasure trove by influential heritage organizations and bodies, such as the British Museum and the recently formed Portable Antiquities Working Group (PAWG) (Addyman, pers. comm., 30 November 2006). The political connections (p. 70) that some members of the Surrey Archaeological Society had were also significant. For example, Lady Hanworth, then the President, was the wife of the peer Viscount Hanworth, and had personal contacts within the House of Lords (Addyman, pers. comm., 30 November 2006). It can be guessed that, had similar looting occurred in an area where the local archaeological society had had less political influence, or even somewhere where there was no such archaeological or historical society to take up the cause at all, the outcome might have been rather different.

Although it took more than a decade for the law to change, it is clear from Hansard that Wanborough was consistently cited as a reason for the law to be reformed (e.g. HC Deb, 8 March 1996, col. 554). Thus the site was an opportunity, as well as a tragedy, for British

archaeology. Even so, it was not the only example of problems with treasure trove cited in the debates around the Treasure Bill, but it was clearly significant given the involvement of Surrey Archaeological Society members in the development of the Treasure Bill, who were even mentioned in the debates (e.g. HC Deb, 8 March 1996, col. 556). Other cases of treasure trove mentioned in parliamentary debates included the discovery of seventeenth-century coins by an electrician working in a house in the Leicestershire village of Burton Overy. The decision was made to reward the electrician rather than the homeowners (HC Deb, 8 March 1996, col. 560), highlighting the concerns surrounding the often-used principle of 'finders keepers'. This also reflected the ownership concerns raised on the part of the CLA, whose support had been considered from early on as essential to the success of the Bill (Ayres to Morris, 11 March 1991).

The first attempt by Lord Perth to promote the Treasure Bill (sometimes referred to as the Perth or Surrey Bill), in 1994, failed. However, another attempt in 1996 met with more success, for a number of reasons. A significant publication available after the first attempt to pass the Bill was *Metal Detecting and Archaeology in England* (Dobinson and Denison 1995). Commissioned by the CBA and English Heritage, the report was an attempt to establish the impact of metal detecting on English archaeology. The report had its limitations; for example, the survey responses from metal detecting clubs were extremely low, and the background information on the history of the development of metal detecting was in places inaccurate (Fowler, pers. comm., 16 October 2007; and see Thomas 2009a). However, it was significant for bringing tangible data to the debate. For example, it provided an estimate of how many unreported portable antiquities were discovered in England each year for Baroness Trumpington to cite in her argument in favour of both the Bill and a voluntary system for recording non-Treasure artefacts (HL Deb, 5 June 1996, col. 1340).

Crucially, in 1996, the Treasure Bill gained government support, whereas before it had been a Private Members Bill, with less time allocated for reading and debating than for other types of bills (House of Commons Information Office 2008: 2). Indeed, the time taken after the failure of the 1994 Bill, to reassess the goals that any reform of treasure trove should aim for, also allowed for time to consult with metal detecting organizations. For example, the Secretary of State for National Heritage had affirmed this in a Written Answer, when he was asked whether he would 'now consult the National Council for Metal Detecting concerning treasure trove' (HC Deb, 14 June 1994, col. 452).

(p. 71) Both the Treasure Act 1996 and the complementary PAS, then, came about in light of consultation that included not only archaeologists and heritage professionals but also the metal detecting community. The Department of National Heritage (DNH) issued a discussion document in 1996 to put forward the two options for dealing with non-Treasure artefacts that complemented the Treasure Bill: '(a) for a voluntary Code of Practice on the recording of archaeological objects and (b) for legislation requiring the reporting of such objects' (DNH 1996). Bland summarized the responses received to the consultation, that:

the metal detectorists all, to a man, said they would strongly oppose a compulsory requirement to report all finds. But they didn't object to a voluntary scheme. The archaeologists and museums, most of them…would have liked a compulsory requirement to report finds, but they did say that they would be prepared to cooperate with a voluntary scheme. So, it was pretty obvious that that was going to be the way forward. (Bland, pers. comm., 8 November 2006)

A *Statement of Principles* issued by the CBA, the MA, and the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1993 (1994: 188) had nonetheless recommended the adoption of a legally obligatory approach towards the reporting of antiquities, as taken in Scotland. As of yet, however, there are no further plans to pursue this sort of legislation for England and Wales, particularly as PAS, nationwide since 2003, has demonstrated a substantial increase in the number of objects reported, implying an improvement in relationships with metal-detector users.

The effect of the looting at Wanborough, as well as at other sites as identified by Dobinson and Denison's (1995) report, was to highlight the need for legislative change. However, it also highlighted the need for greater opportunity to be available for the recording of portable antiquities, and for the delivery of education about the effects of 'irresponsible' metal detecting, particularly nighthawking, on archaeological heritage. Many more factors were also significant in influencing why the Treasure Bill and PAS came to fruition where earlier attempts such as the Abinger Bills failed. These included the determination of the Surrey Archaeological Society, the involvement and support of major heritage organizations such as the British Museum and the CBA, and, in what was perhaps a turning point for the fate of the planned Bill, the discourse with metal-detector users that was employed.

Reactions from the metal detecting hobby

Early metal-detector users had been aware of the effectiveness of using 'archaeological credentials' in order to encourage permission to search land. For example, Edward Fletcher, a metal detecting author, even advised other metal-detector users to use terms of reference implying archaeological expertise in order to gain credibility when looking to secure access to areas for searching (Fletcher 1978: 32). That he himself utilized this (p. 72) technique is supported by a 1971 *News Shopper* article that referred to Fletcher as a 'historical researcher'.

As mentioned above, Michael Beach himself had approached the CBA concerning collaboration on a code of practice for metal-detector users in 1970, but this was met only with suspicion from the CBA. Nonetheless, the hobby continued to enjoy rising popularity: in 1969, *Coin Monthly*, a numismatic publication, had even predicted that treasure hunting would be 'hobby of the year in 1970' (cited in Wheatley to de Cardi, 23 November 1969). There were also formations of metal detecting clubs, such as the Amateur Treasure

Hunters Association, formed around 1970 (Barley to de Cardi, 9 November 1970), and the British Treasure Hunting Association (Critchley, pers. comm., 13 January 2007).

However, it was in the late 1970s, reactive to the formation of STOP, that the Detector Information Group (DIG), and then, in 1982, the NCMD, took shape. DIG was particularly active in encouraging media releases undermining the work of STOP, drawing attention to positive news stories concerning metal detecting, and even encouraging individual metal-detector users into action. For example, readers of *Treasure Hunting* magazine were urged in one article to investigate the fate of archaeologically excavated material in their local museums (Hunter 1981: 25). Hunter (1981: 25) hypothesized that, if his readers were to enquire as to whether finds from archaeologists were 'carefully and painstakingly preserved and cared for in museums', this would often be shown not to be the case. He asked readers not only to send the information that they collected to 'the headquarters of the DIG Campaign', but also to keep it for use locally 'when next the subject of "archaeologists-v-treasure hunters" becomes "news"' (Hunter 1981: 26).

Where STOP supporters may have felt that there had been success in the enactment of the AMAAA 1979, DIG proponents must also have felt their own sense of legislative achievement when the metal-detector licence requirement of the Wireless and Telegraphy Act 1949 was repealed in 1980. Perhaps one of the most significant legislative victories of the metal detecting lobbyists still cited decades later (e.g. DIG 2003) was their successful petition against Clause 100 of the Kent Bill. Clause 100 intended to grant Kent County Council new powers to control metal detecting.

The formation and deployment of the STOP campaign, then, had a major role in the political mobilization of metal-detector users. Twelve years after the formation of the NCMD, something of a schism developed. The FID, a part of the NCMD that had dealt with individual memberships (metal-detector users not affiliated to a local club), became a separate organization in 1994 (Wood, pers. comm., 20 November 2006). As mentioned above, consultation with metal-detector users was an important factor in the development of the eventual Treasure Act, as the FID and the NCMD were both active in representing the interests of their members. At the present time there is continued communication of metal detecting organizations and individual users with politicians and archaeological organizations to ensure that their views are heard.

The NCMD, the older of the two bodies, has perhaps also had slightly more engagement in discourse with heritage professionals and other related organizations, based on the comments to the author from individuals from both the NCMD and the FID. It is certainly apparent that, although both organizations submitted responses and recommendations regarding the development of the Treasure Bill and PAS in 1996, the NCMD was more actively involved, attending regular meetings and making often detailed comments about the wording of the Act and the associated Code of Practice (Austin, pers. comm., 25 November 2006).

Archaeologists and Metal-Detector Users in England and Wales: Past, Present, and Future

As the second Treasure Bill made its way through Parliament in 1996, under the guidance of Sir Anthony Grant in the House of Commons, there were a variety of points raised. These included an observation that the very antiquity of treasure trove (something criticized by many) might in fact indicate that it actually worked very well having stood the test of time (HC Deb, 8 March 1996, col. 557). However, as with the question to the Secretary of State for National Heritage mentioned above, the concerns of metal-detector users was also raised, indicating that metal detecting constituents had contacted MPs. For example, Patrick Nicholls, the Conservative MP for Teignbridge, stated that a metal-detector user had told him 'of his concern that Parliament would introduce legislation that would weigh heavily against detectorists' interests' (HC Deb, 8 March 1996, cols. 561–2). Hence, the involvement and engagement of metal-detector users was necessary to ensure the success and acceptance of the Treasure Act 1996 and PAS.

In more recent years, one of the most vocal organizations to come out of the metal detecting community in the UK is the United Kingdom Detector Net (UKDN), which hosts online discussion forums and produces regular newsletters. Its, at times, vocal support for PAS and largely positive attitude towards archaeologists demonstrate the acknowledged need for cooperation, which in turn suggests an understanding for the potential of metal-detected finds to make a significant contribution to knowledge about archaeology, if recorded appropriately. This was particularly significant when, in 2007, serious questions were raised about the future of PAS by the Museums, Libraries, and Archives Council (MLA), with speculations arising that the scheme would at the very least experience the loss of its central unit (British Archaeology 2008: 7), if not worse. Funding issues led to the loss of the Learning Coordinator post as well as two Finds Assistants. In fact the proposal was to freeze funding altogether (HL Deb 28 January 2008, col. 5), but, as Bland argued, this freeze, in light of inflation, was effectively a cut as other costs continued to rise (ACCG 2008).

The threat posed to PAS by government spending plans revealed the scheme's widespread support. An e-petition to Number 10 (the Prime Minister's Office website—see www.number10.gov.uk) was devised, 'to preserve and invest in the Portable Antiquities Scheme' (Haughton 2008). This petition was signed by 2,080 individuals, while a similar petition, with a smaller signatory of 556 individuals, was also submitted around the same time (Connolly 2008). While administrators of UKDN initiated the petition, concerned at the implications for metal detecting, signatures came from professional archaeologists and also the wider public. A group set up on Facebook, the popular social networking website, called 'Save the Portable Antiquity Scheme', attracted around 700 members. In addition, there was an Early Day Motion (EDM) in Parliament on 12 December 2007:

(p. 74)

> That this House recognises the great contribution of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) to transforming the archaeological map of Britain by proactively recording archaeological finds made by the public; celebrates the fact that in 10 years the scheme has recorded on its public database more than 300,000 archaeological finds, which would not have otherwise been reported, for the benefit of all;

expresses concern at the likely impact of funding cuts proposed for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), following the recent Comprehensive Spending Review, on the PAS; and urges the Government to ensure that the scheme is at least able to maintain its current levels of activity and to consider urgently whether MLA offers the best home for the PAS or whether another body, such as the British Museum, would not be better placed to provide PAS with a long-term sustainable future. (Loughton 2008)

The EDM attracted 229 signatures, making it the eighteenth most popular EDM of the parliamentary session (out of 2,727 EDMs).

Archaeologists and metal-detector users in the early twenty-first century: some conclusions

At the same time that PAS was under threat, a consultation document (Clark 2008) was commissioned by the MLA to provide an unbiased account of the effectiveness of PAS and to make recommendations in order to assist government decision-makers, in light of the considerations being given to spending options at that time. The report came to positive conclusions that PAS 'appears to be well-liked, delivering genuine partnership and good value for money' (Clark 2008: 38), and that, if anything, support should be extended rather than reduced or frozen. However, it also made recommendations to improve the scheme, such as changing its aims to reflect its relationship with museums, and developing more of a community-based recording capacity (Clark 2008: 6). One of the recommendations was that 'advisers should focus outreach on involving finders and other volunteers in the work of the scheme, including recording, education and promotion' (Clark 2008: 6). This implies that (at least some) finders may eventually be encouraged to record their own finds to the PAS database, taking ownership of this process themselves rather than necessarily having to leave this to PAS's Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs).

The success of PAS, and the apparent high regard in which it is held by the majority of metal-detector users, implies a significant shift in relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users compared to the 1970s and 1980s. This is not to suggest that all metal-detector users in the past were knowingly 'irresponsible' (although definition of this term is itself open to debate), or even that they did not necessarily understand the implications of their actions. Evidence from counties such as Norfolk and Leicestershire demonstrates that metal-detector users have a relatively long history of cooperation with archaeologists in some regions. In addition, evidence from some interviews carried (p. 75) out by the author suggests that many more were willing to record their finds in previous decades, but found that local heritage professionals were unwilling to communicate with them (e.g. Austin, pers. comm., 25 November 2006).

Certainly the educational role of PAS has been vital in helping to increase awareness among finders of the informational significance of archaeological material, and this has been commented on in reviews of the scheme (e.g. Chitty and Edwards 2004: 3). Howev-

er, the foundation of the metal-detector user-run United Kingdom Detector Finds Database (UKDFD—and see www.ukdfd.co.uk), which in some ways rivals PAS as a database where metal-detected material can be recorded, has caused concern among some (see Britarch e-mail discussion list, 'UKDFD—What does it mean?' thread, 2005). From another perspective, the fact that some metal-detector users may feel empowered sufficiently to establish 'their own' finds database may in fact be an indirect result of the efforts of PAS and other organizations to educate metal-detector users about the importance of recording information.

Recent research by the author (Thomas 2009a) suggests that the majority of metal-detector users do record their finds with PAS, with a much lower proportion recording with the UKDFD. The UKDFD (2005) claims that it provides 'an additional facility that will cater for those detectorists who would not otherwise record their finds', presumably due to feeling uncomfortable with engagement with any archaeologists, even FLOs. Clark (2008: 15) supports this hypothesis by stating that the UKDFD 'aims to promote a recording ethos and encourage detectorists who would not otherwise record their finds to do so'. She adds that the UKDFD 'also allows members to record post *c*.1650 finds, which are less of a priority for the PAS database' (Clark 2008: 16). Since one of the UKDFD database recording fields asks the recorder whether the artefact is also recorded elsewhere (e.g. PAS), it would be interesting to make a study of the proportion of finds only recorded with the UKDFD. This would test the argument that metal-detector users recording with the UKDFD perhaps would not record elsewhere.

It should not be thought, however, that because PAS (and perhaps even UKDFD) are engaging with metal-detector users and encouraging the recording of finds, there is no need for other archaeologists or organizations to attempt engagement. The majority of metal detecting clubs and individual metal-detector users that responded to questionnaire surveys issued by the author (Thomas 2009a) indicated that, if they were not already involved in archaeological fieldwork, they would be interested in being so in the future. While this already happens in many cases, for example at the East Heslington community excavation run by the University of York (Figure 3.3), at which members of Central Yorks Metal Detecting Club participate by searching spoil heaps and marking out where signals have been detected along the areas being excavated, there are countless more instances of fieldwork where this could be encouraged, particularly in light of the current focus on community archaeology.

Nighthawking and other illicit activity remains an issue, as the publication of Oxford Archaeology's (2009) report, and even recent news reports, demonstrate (*The Times*, on 11 May 2009, reported the conviction of a metal-detector user for selling fake coins: 'He used legitimate digs to "discover" fake items before passing them off as genuine antiquities' (p. 76) (Brown 2009). That Oxford Archaeology (2009: 103) concluded that nighthawking is decreasing, however, may be further evidence of a change in attitude from metal-detector users themselves. It will also be interesting to observe over the next few years whether the nighthawking report will have any impact on the nature of the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users, given the suspicion that

some metal-detector users have voiced about the report and the ways in which the results were presented.

Figure 3.3 Metal-detector users and archaeology students discussing field methods at the Heslington community excavation. (Image courtesy of the Archaeology Department, University of York.)

There are still attempts to control, or at least influence, the impact of metal detecting on the archaeological heritage, but collaboration is now considered vital. A key example of this is the *Code of Practice for Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales* (CBA et al. 2006), which included involvement from representatives from both archaeological and metal detecting organizations. However, there is still an element of suspicion among some metal-detector users towards archaeologists, as the author encountered during her doctoral research. Certain interviews carried out by the author, and some of the contributions on e-mail discussion lists, such as Britarch, suggest that this wariness is reciprocated by at least some archaeologists. It is also possible that use of metal-detectors in (p. 77) archaeological fieldwork has been limited due to the connotations associated with it. However, the majority of current interactions seem to indicate that a more inclusive approach is taken now than at any time before. This is perhaps indicative of changes brought about in archaeological thinking by considerations, inspired by post-processualism and postcolonialism, of 'other' interpretations for archaeological material and places, and by the assertion of public and community archaeologies.

Therefore, the improvement of relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users may also be symptomatic of other shifts in archaeological perspectives, the discipline, and practitioners' greater awareness of a need to consider the importance of public involvement and inclusion in archaeological activities and archaeological debates. As some have commented, however, there could still be improvement in the balance of relationships between heritage professionals and the wider community (e.g. Smith and Waterton 2009: 139). Some of the comments collected by the author from metal-detector users also suggested that the fact that relationships were more troubled in previous decades have led a few metal-detector users to continue to consider archaeologists as 'the enemy', despite the existence of organizations such as PAS. Clark's (2008: 7) review of PAS

also suggested that more could still be done to improve the communication skills used in some areas of the scheme's work.

This chapter has introduced some of the more key events affecting metal detecting and archaeology in England and Wales. The story has not simply been one of influential archaeologists and high-profile looting cases. The severity of tone taken by STOP may have underestimated the public perception and understanding of, and hence sympathy for, the archaeological point of view concerning metal detecting and heritage protection. Yet, it also arguably triggered the coordination of metal detecting manufacturers and hobbyists into organizations such as DIG and the NCMD, lending their cause a more convincing voice, as far as politicians and the media were concerned, than that which they had had before. Archaeologists attempted to maintain a significant political influence through prominent politicians, as well as high-profile organizations such as the British Museum and the National Museum of Wales (e.g. HL Deb, 8 February 1982, col. 30). Meanwhile, metal-detector users became increasingly able to organize their own political lobbying, often at a grass roots level: through the encouragement of metal-detector users to write to their MPs, and through the national coordination of regional groups through the NCMD. In such an environment, it is arguable that the development of an outreach-based organization encouraging involvement on a voluntary basis, such as PAS (rather than more stringent action through enactment of new legislation), was the only logical way forward.

Nonetheless, interaction and discourse with metal-detector users by archaeologists must not be perceived to be limited to occurrence through PAS alone. Indeed, working with metal-detector users ought to be regarded as part of a wider need for archaeologists to become more inclusive of the public in their work and in the way in which they communicate their activities. As one archaeological resource manager commented in response to a 'User Survey' distributed as part of a review of PAS: (p. 78)

> Whether we like it or not metal detecting is a legal hobby and it is unlikely to change. Therefore the whole archaeological community needs to promote best practice, not just the PAS. It will take time to build relationships, and change attitudes and practices. However in my experience when this happens there is every chance that we all benefit, learning more about the archaeological record and so having the opportunity to understand and preserve it better. More generally we must all do more to provide opportunities for the public to become involved in archaeology. (Survey respondent, cited in Chitty and Edwards 2004: 47)

Data from questionnaire interviews with metal-detector users carried out by the author at metal detecting rallies from 2006 to 2008 (Thomas 2009a) seemed to indicate at that time that metal detecting numbers may have been in decline. However, the effect of the recent discoveries of the Staffordshire Hoard in the West Midlands and the Stirling Gold in Scotland may cause a surge in numbers once more, due to the media attention that they attracted, and the news of the high financial value placed on these discoveries (the Staffordshire Hoard, for example, was recently valued at over £3 million). Whether metal

detecting increases or decreases over the next few years, history has demonstrated that open, transparent communication has elicited cooperation, and even active support, for archaeological initiatives from the metal detecting hobby. When wider inclusivity is considered critical to the development of public and 'community' archaeology, there are still opportunities to engage even more closely with the metal detecting community.

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