

the skill of the makers. The archaeology they present is one type of archaeology, as the paper by Bruce Norman shows. The magazine Popular Archaeology is an attempt to bridge the gap between professional and amateur, and despite one or two inconsistencies its continued existence is a good sign.

The problem of archaeology and the public is not a new one, as is shown by the historical perspective in Chris Chippindale's paper. The modern 'establishment' view of protecting our ancient monuments seems to have started with a member of the public protecting Stonehenge from the establishment! Similarly, long held views of ley line hunters, as discussed by Williamson and Bellamy, should awaken us to a different way of interpreting the past.

To quote from an American book on the subject, "No individual or organisation (public or private) has the right to act in a manner such that those actions adversely affect the weal, in this case,...archaeological materials and data" (McGimsey 1972:17). This includes archaeologists as well as selective hunters (e.g. those people who choose to dig for metal objects only). The conflict arises because archaeologists are seen as 'spoilsports' in not allowing destruction to take place and because they have a monopoly on excavation. The archaeologists should be at pains to show the public that it is not the objects themselves they want, but the information those objects contain. Haphazard digging and poor recording destroys the context of an artefact.

The purpose of this journal is to provoke discussion on important topics such as these. We might ask 'Why should archaeology try to communicate with everyone and not cut itself off (even more), as some other disciplines do?' The answer is simply that the information which archaeologists require for their reconstructions of the past is available, even accessible, to everyone. Unlike molecular structures which have to be teased out with scientific gadgetry, the raw material of archaeology exists all around us. Thus it is important a) to protect it from our own forces of destruction and, b) to allow its excavation to be done under 'controlled' conditions. This means that anyone interested in the past has a duty not to destroy potential information.

This Utopian ideal can only be achieved if the needs of archaeology and the desires of the general public are understood more widely.

#### References

- Gregory, A. 1983 Archaeology and treasure hunting. A view from the other side. Treasure Hunting. April:45-8  
 McGimsey, C. ILL. 1972 Public Archaeology. Seminar Press, New York.

#### THE IMPACT OF METAL DETECTING ON ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE PUBLIC

Tony Gregory

Archaeology is now, and always has been, a largely middle class pursuit; no matter what our origins, the fact that we have been through the higher streams of secondary education and have gone on to study an academic discipline at University means that we are now firmly cast in the middle class mould. The same is generally true of the amateur side of archaeology; the county societies, which began life as a pastime for gentlemen, now aim at the skilled professional groups in modern society where academic interests are strong. The Rescue groups which have appeared in the last decades as amateur auxiliaries to the professional Units are drawn from the same groups. This has now become a closed circuit, as professional and academic archaeology becomes more specialised. As research and rescue projects become more particular, the amateur societies either follow suit or branch off into related fields. This tendency is visible in the county societies whose journals, bereft of the excavation reports which filled them in the 1960s, now carry large numbers of papers directed far more to the documentary side of local history than to the archaeological. Those amateur groups which follow the professional lead are too often regarded as popular support for the direction which archaeology is travelling today.

This direction is that of increased academicism; as the discipline of archaeology develops, so do its resources and its capability of answering questions. The result is often a series of priorities for research and excavation which enable archaeological problems to be posed and solved. Thus we begin to acquire specialised and invaluable knowledge of, for example, late Iron Age and Romano-British agricultural patterns and the tenorial patterns which supported them. These data, fed in by excavation units and interpreted by period and topic specialists, are the vital raw material for analysis and explanation for those more interested in theoretical questions. Seen from within, this is work of the greatest importance. But seen from without, what does it signify?

This is a key question, for the great problem is that archaeology has been developing in its own way, answering its own questions for several decades, with little regard for the public at large. That is not to say that we should reorientate and slant our studies to what the public want, but this should, and must be considered.

There is a huge potential public interest in archaeology in general; the Mary Rose project, the number of visitors to ancient monuments all over the country, and the interest in any excavation are evidence of this. But it is interest of a specific

(Archaeological Review from Cambridge 2:1 (1983))

sort. If you take average people from the streets of a small town in Norfolk and show them around an excavation, then you will very soon see where the interest lies. A tangible object or structure which they can relate to will hold their interest: a timber-lined well with preserved timbers, a building with surviving walls, floors, doorways and window embrasures, a prehistoric flint tool or a medieval jug. But start to talk about evidence for continuity of tenements, or the reaction of Romano-British field-system layouts to rising water levels, and eyes begin to glaze over. And of course they will: if everybody was interested in questions of this sort, everybody would want to be a professional archaeologist. The fact is that there is a level of interest beyond which the average Thetfordian cannot be pushed, or can only be pushed very slowly; and yet within that level of interest, there are many people who want to be involved - with the tangible rather than the abstract.

The result we all know very well - the great upsurge in the last 15 years of metal detecting and collecting of objects. Metal detecting has become a cheap and accessible means of collecting archaeological material. Its popularity is motivated as much by a desire to find and own something old as to make a fortune. Many detectors still go out into the field with a fond hope of turning up the big one -- a new Waternewton hoard or Mildenhall Treasure -- but it is only the thrill of finding which keeps people out there. In this I deliberately exclude the small number of professional treasure hunters and those who disregard the law of ownership and property in search of antiquities to sell. These constitute the greatest threat to archaeology, but are a separate problem from that under consideration in this paper.

My contention is that metal detecting's success is a measure of archaeology's failure. Deliberately or not, archaeology has turned away those whose interest does not go as deep as that of the amateur societies, and there is no place for them in archaeology. Neither is there sufficient information for them. Archaeologists produce reports and papers which are as meaningful to people in the street as a report on metal fatigue in engine end-bolts; they do not want to know what makes a bolt shatter - they want to know whether the engine will fall out of their Cortina 1600GL.

So here are the two fields of breakdown - Involvement and Information.

**Involvement:** most people's contact with archaeology is through excavation, and many want to look and to be told about what is happening. Very few excavations can be understood by just looking - you have to show people round. Used as we are to breezing onto other people's sites and expecting a guided tour

and detailed discussion of how far the results of this particular site will rock the earth on its axis, we forget how intimidating a site with offices, hairy youths with shovels and busy-looking supervisors rushing round with drawing-boards and note-books can be to an outsider. It takes a lot of courage for average members of the public to go in and find out what is happening, and very often they are met with barred gates, stony stares and 'Oh, I'm sorry we haven't the time to show people round', or even worse, 'I'm sorry our insurance won't allow anyone but Unit employees past the fence'. So, very easily, we lose another interested soul. Our responsibility to the public on an excavation is far greater than anyone is prepared to admit: after all we are spending public money. It is insupportable to turn any visitor away; are we really ever that busy?

In precisely the same way there is a huge interest in actually digging. I have lost count of the number of times people have said 'I've always wanted to have a go, but I've never had a chance' or 'I'm not clever enough to do it right'. No matter how professional we have become in our excavations, no matter how avidly we swear that one well-paid experienced digger is worth six inexperienced volunteers, we must still find room and work for the six, or lose all credibility for being interested in the public.

Those who are already 'lost' to metal detecting can also be involved. The use of detectors in excavation and fieldwork is sadly underrated and will be the subject of an article to be written by Andrew Rogerson and myself for publication in 1983.

**Information:** we stand or fall on our publicity. It is in this field that archaeologists have really let themselves down. The present state of archaeological publicity can be divided into the 'respectable' and the 'popular'. The 'respectable' is made up of the learned journals, BBC TV's "Chronicle", Radio 4's "Origins", reports in the Times, Guardian and the Telegraph, and Current Archaeology: all very worthy, very good for communicating with each other and with amateur groups, but no good outside the readership of the 'quality newspapers'. This really is the level of most media coverage of archaeology. The 'popular' field is tiny with local newspapers, occasional one-off TV shorts (usually from the independent stations), occasional news reports on local radio and TV, and Popular Archaeology, which is the nearest archaeology gets to a magazine with any appeal outside the professional and amateur circle. Yet there is a demand - witness the addiction of so many people to the TV coverage of the ascension of the Mary Rose. I suspect that once the TV companies are convinced that there is an audience, they create their own demand. This is the space archaeologists must fill -- which is now filled by Treasure Hunting -- providing information and entertainment at the level of the Sun and the Daily Mirror.

If archaeologists shrug this off, as most have done for years, we will allow the anti-archaeology lobby, notably a certain element in Treasure Hunting and the 'Boudicca' element, a completely free field not only to disparage archaeology, but also to alienate the interest which is there. Every local newspaper, TV and radio station will fall into your arms if you offer them the right sort of story. We cannot have many more Mary Roses, but at the local level, almost any archaeology is news. Only look at press cuttings from the 1950s and 1960s and see the number of photographs and reports of the discoveries of what we might regard as insignificant items of information: rotary querns, a handful of medieval pottery or half a dozen Roman coins. Put together the thrill of the finder of any of these, with the interest that they were found locally, and you have still got a good newspaper story. We may sometimes want to cringe at the puns of the headlines, the apparent naivety of the story or the cuteness of the photographs, and we may well regard them as unsuitable for archaeology - but they are unsuitable for the Times, not for the Sun. The style of local journalism is one that works and one that gets its message across, and we must be prepared to use it, or give journalists the material to use it. Feed your local papers with every little titbit you can and they will soon start to bite. Then the comeback starts and reports of finds like those in the papers start to come in.

Local TV and radio are pretty much the same, except that there, the stations have the added incentive of being able to entertain their audiences with a real archaeologist, and TV audiences have the time of their lives writing letters of complaint about scruffy hairies with shaggy beards putting them off their teas, but it makes archaeology stick in their minds.

These are the fields which archaeologists must now exploit, as a matter of the greatest urgency, or we run the considerable risk of losing popular, and I mean popular as opposed to elite, support for archaeology. If we once lose popular support we will eventually lose official support at its present level, and that will be the end of archaeology. Do not underestimate the opposition; the anti-archaeological campaign of 'Boudicca' is a serious challenge. It is well-conceived and well-written - it is a fine piece of journalism of its type. The archaeological establishment will take a decade to react, so it is up to us to react locally to create a new level of public involvement and public interest in archaeology.

## SWORDS TO PLOUGHSHARES: A NATIONWIDE SURVEY OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS AND TREASURE HUNTING CLUBS

David R. Crowther

### Introduction

In the spring of 1978, the author distributed questionnaires to every provincial museum in Great Britain (plus two in Northern Ireland), a selection of archaeological Units, and every metal detecting club then known, in order to generate data for a dissertation examining what was then a booming new hobby called treasure hunting (Crowther 1978). Since then much has changed: we now have revised ancient monuments legislation (HMSO 1979), a STOP campaign (Cleere 1980) entering its fourth year, and a heightened awareness amongst the protagonists of the academic and social issues that are at stake (Fowler 1977:188). Whether or not this greater awareness has yet been infused into the public consciousness is open to question. What is certain, is that the problem is not limited to Britain alone, nor is the hobby likely to be a passing fad like yo-yos, skateboards or dietary roughage. An EEC quango has recently reported on the whole issue of "Metal Detectors and Archaeology" (Council of Europe 1981). In its 133-page report, the Committee on Culture and Education has recommended greater legislative protection of sites and control of metal detector use, including the introduction of licensing or registration of metal detector owners, and the wider dissemination of information in the form of publicity campaigns, new education policies and liaison. To pay for this, it recommends that greatly increased resources should be allocated to archaeology, together with the establishment of a rational career structure for its practitioners. One awaits its implementation with interest. As a more modest contribution to the debate, what follows is a summary of the 1978 survey. The dissertation is lodged at the Institute of Archaeology, London.

### Survey Distribution

A total of 292 questionnaires was distributed to 192 museums and 38 Units derived from the Archaeologists' Yearbook 1975 and 62 treasure hunting clubs recorded on a national list as published by Treasure Hunting magazine in 1978. Responses were received from 114 museums (59%), 26 Units (68%) and 27 clubs (43%).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of museums (circles) and Units (triangles) that were consulted; those which replied are represented by filled symbols. The responses are geographically diverse enough to offer information from most regions of the country.