Contested narratives of cultural heritage: Maintaining the integrity of history through recovered local knowledge

Lora Lucas
MA by Research

University of York
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Abstract

This dissertation explores the relationship between heritage professionals and local stakeholders directly connected to heritage sites, specifically focusing on Piercebridge, a former Roman fort and market town, in County Durham, England. The research analyses these relationships through two national heritage schemes: the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project. The case study draws on extensive fieldwork using qualitative methods informed by ethnographic principles. Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including local residents, metal detectorists, scholars, and officials from national heritage organisations.

These interviews revealed the significance of cultivating relationships through sustained, face-to-face interactions as a foundation for building trust, while also identifying challenges, such as decreased budgets and staffing in recent years. However, digital resources emerged as a prominent theme, as a means of facilitating outreach and as a potential obstacle to developing personal connections. This dissertation highlights how digital technologies can support heritage professionals by increasing efficiency and expanding access, while also considering the ways they might distance local stakeholders from direct engagement.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere, nor has any material in the thesis been presented for publication. All sources are acknowledged as references.

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1. Introduction

The location, interpretation, and recording of the archaeological record has often been influenced by the relationships, or lack thereof, between professionals, such as archaeologists and heritage officials, and local stakeholders, such as residents of a town or village and members of a group or club. For clarity in this research, 'local stakeholders' refers specifically to residents of Piercebridge, long-term community members, and metal-detecting club members who maintain regular interaction with the landscape. Within the past few decades, an increased emphasis regarding the relationships and interactions between what is referred to in this dissertation as 'professionals' (archaeologists and heritage professionals) and local stakeholders have influenced the creation of national heritage initiatives in the United Kingdom. One of the primary purposes of these initiatives is to gather and record the invaluable lived experiences of the public, referred to as "local knowledge" (Geertz 1983). In the scope of this research, "local knowledge" refers not only to informal histories and personal memories, but also to practical, site-specific observations, artefacts encountered while metal detecting, and community traditions. Accordingly, this research investigates the dynamics and interactions between these groups through a case study of Piercebridge in County Durham, England, the location of a former Roman fort and civilian settlement that is a modern village today. Although the site's history as a former Roman fort and market town has been of interest to historians and archaeologists for centuries, there is an important perspective that has only relatively recently been acknowledged, that of local knowledge by community residents, amateur historians, and metal detectorists. These local stakeholders often possess specific and unique information obtained through lived experience that is not always recognised or even available to heritage professionals, yet, when included, can play a vital role in the interpretation of heritage sites, thus maintaining the integrity of history.

This research draws on extensive fieldwork, including interviews with heritage professionals and local community members using qualitative methods within the existing framework of two national heritage schemes: the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) and

the Missing Pieces Project. These schemes were chosen because they are among the most widely recognised public-facing heritage initiatives in England, and they also exemplify how national heritage organisations in the UK seek to involve local stakeholders in the documentation and interpretation of the historic environment. Their high levels of public interaction and outreach make them especially well-suited for analysing how different ways of collaborating, particularly digital and face-to-face, shape public engagement. While the intent of both schemes is to expand public participation in heritage documentation, their processes are quite different. The Portable Antiquities Scheme relies on Finds Liaison Officers (FLO) to work directly with metal detectorists and other members of the public to record archaeological finds made outside of formal excavations. In addition to the national prominence of the PAS, its established face-to-face model provides rich context for examining interpersonal outreach and building meaningful relationships of trust. Moreover, its long history of sustained public contact through face-to-face outreach offers an important comparative baseline for evaluating newer, digitally driven initiatives. On the other hand, the Missing Pieces Project is a digital platform under the direction of Historic England that encourages individuals to contribute photographs and information about listed buildings across England. Through this process, information is gathered in one place by members of the community which contributes to the National Heritage List for England (NHLE). Furthermore, the Missing Pieces Project's emphasis on user-generated digital content makes it an ideal counterpart to PAS, enabling insight into how digital participation functions when direct interpersonal contact is limited or optional. The examination of these schemes will reflect the ongoing tension that is often present between professional heritage organisations and members of the public, in particular those who are active in the heritage space.

This dissertation will address the following research questions:

1. What are the levels of awareness and perceived value of national heritage schemes, such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project, between heritage professionals and stakeholders with local knowledge?

2. How does face-to-face outreach compare with digital communication in encouraging local engagement with heritage recording schemes?

3. How do relationships between local stakeholders and heritage professionals, such as metal detectorists and Finds Liaison Officers, affect contributions to these schemes?

Using these questions, this research aims to explore and identify both the importance and fragility of relationships built on trust by conducting semi-structured key-informant interviews with local residents of Piercebridge, a metal detectorist, officials from the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project, and academic researchers. Each participant interviewed addressed the critical nature of consistent, in-person interactions in order to establish the understanding, confidence, and trust that is required to forge a partnership where people are willing to collaborate.

Challenges to building these relationships include reduced funding, frequent decreases in staffing, high turnover, and disagreements that arise concerning the value, tangible and intangible, of heritage artefacts and places, which hinders consistent engagement. Digital technology emerged as a theme to potentially address some of the challenges listed above, as well as a way to facilitate the gathering of information from the younger generation. This type of outreach comes with its own difficulties, mainly as an inhibitor of the face-to-face interactions, which is valued by all participants. Even with these challenges, each participant interviewed acknowledged that there is generally a positive atmosphere and good intent, in particular when heritage professionals took time and effort to be present and listen with concern and respect. This research will also address the concerns that arise over the boundaries that exist between heritage professionals and local stakeholders, including how heritage is valued and who has priority in the current accepted historical narrative.

This research discusses specific heritage concepts, including an examination of meaningful participation, the role of authority within heritage practices, and whose voices included, as well as those excluded, whether purposeful or not. Through extensive fieldwork, conducting key-informant interviews, and a review of the data using thematic

analysis, this dissertation contributes to ongoing conversations regarding the ever-evolving social dynamics between heritage professionals and local stakeholders and their respective roles within national heritage schemes in the UK.

2. Literature Review

Much of our current understanding and knowledge of the history of the Roman Empire in Britain is a direct result of the contributions of countless professionals, including local stakeholders who play a major role in discovering and defining the heritage they are connected to. Accordingly, this study presents the research of relevant scholars on tangible and intangible heritage, the role of community archaeology, and various perspectives surrounding individual and community identity and engagement within heritage. This literature review also focuses on the Roman occupation of Britain, including the presence of a Roman fort and civilian settlement, known as Morbius, which is located in modern day Piercebridge, County Durham (Eckardt and Walton 2021). The discussion of the Roman occupation underscores Piercebridge as an example of an important historical river crossing, with thousands of artefacts originating from the Roman era, and emphasises that this information would not exist without community archaeology or the knowledge of local experts.

2.1 Britain During the Roman Occupation

2.1.1 First contact

Roman Britain was established as a province of the Roman Empire from approximately 43 AD to approximately 410 AD, representing a unique confluence of Roman military, administrative, and cultural influences with the indigenous peoples of the British Isles (Southern 2013). However, research suggests that the people of Britain were already established and even had contact with Rome before they were a province of the Empire, suggesting a pre-existing development and influence of cultures over the previous 1,500 to 2,000 years (Salway 2010). For example, in the south-east of Britain, there is coin-based documentation of an organized social structure with some classical authors referring to “chiefs, military leaders, and kings” (Champion 2014, 155) in the last few centuries of the Iron Age. Within this same time-frame, there is compelling evidence, in the form of ceramic vessels, metalwork, and coins, among other artefacts, that Britain had close contact with

the European continent (Webley 2015). Additionally, there are records from this time that hint of dysfunction or friction of the social organizations between the north and the west of Britain, as well as between the south and the east, although scholars argue that this could be due, at least partially, to the natural landscape (Millett 2000). Southern notes that while the first direct contact between Britain and Rome was documented in the mid first-century BC, it was not until the Emperor Claudius spearheaded the first legitimate conquest in the south-east of Britain in 43 AD that Roman Britain was actually born (Southern 2013). Many of the classical authors who wrote about the people of Britain during the first century AD characterized them as the "'barbarian' peoples of north-western Europe… unsettled pastoralists who wore little clothing and had violent and aggressive temperaments" (Hingley 2017, 89-90). Woolf went so far as to say that Britain was "Rome's permanent barbarian theme park" until Roman Britain was dissolved in the early fifth century AD (Woolf 2011, 94). However, at this time, Hingley found that Britains had already divided themselves into tribes, and although the Roman army did use violent tactics on many of the indigenous peoples of Britain to force them to acquiesce, there were other communities who accepted with little resistance (Hingley 2017).

Julius Ceasar was the first leader of Rome to invade Britain and he did so in the summer of 55 BC (Southern 2013). Salway noticed that this invasion coincided with a key feature that had entered Roman culture – the installation of a permanent professional army (Salway 2001). Salway also found that while the British Isles had much to offer in the way of resources and goods, the acquisition of property, with its inherent accompanying influence, was a key factor in obtaining and maintaining advantageous political positions (Salway 2001). Furthermore, McAlhany notes that at this time in Rome, there were three major candidates vying for political power – Julius Caesar, Marcus Licinius Crassus, and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) (McAlhany 2023). Conquering Britain would be a feat that no previous Roman leader had attempted and Julius Caesar believed that if he could accomplish such a triumph, it would boost his reputation and greatly elevate his political status (Southern 2013). While it is not known exactly when Julius Caesar decided to invade Britain, Salway believes it is an idea that likely formed during the campaign of 55 BC,

knowing that he needed to stand out in this very contentious political arena and keep his name on the forefront of the Roman public (Salway 2001). However, while a few minor victories were celebrated, Julius Caesar's determination to fight alongside and inspire his men on their quest to subjugate Britain was ultimately met with defeat (Salway 2001).

After the failed conquest of Julius Caesar, the British Isles were seemingly forgotten by Rome for nearly a century until the Emperor Claudius sent the Roman army to wage a battle in the south-east of Britain in 43 AD, marking a "transformative period in the island's history, profoundly reshaping its landscape, economy, and society" (Hingley 2022, 256). According to Hingley, the Romans borrowed many Greek ideologies and philosophies including the idea that the waters surrounding the inhabited parts of the world were infinite (Hingley 2022). Hingley suspects Claudius used this belief to his advantage by claiming that he had travelled into dangerous territory to subdue these exotic people and their undiscovered land, bearing proof of his own great power (Hingley 2022). In truth, Claudius had sent legions of armies ahead of his visit to take possession of Britain, with his visit lasting only approximately 16 days, after which he returned to Rome to revel in his seemingly incredible feat (Roncaglia 2019). In fact, just as Julius Caesar had understood the great importance of military victory and power, Roncaglia writes that, likewise, Claudius knew that defeating Britain would not only strengthen the military, but also allow him to be seen as an influential and authoritative political leader (Roncaglia 2019). Along with the ever important defeat of foreign lands, Roman leaders knew that without a sturdy, viable transportation system, the sustainability of those conquered lands would likely be impossible (Laurence 2024). Accordingly, Laurance found that in order to preserve the power of the state and keep the emperor's achievements within the public eye, it was absolutely necessary to continually build and maintain roads, bridges, milestones, and viaducts (Laurence 2024).

2.1.2 Roman military, roads, and bridges

At this time, the Roman Empire integrated a considerable military force of approximately 50,000 men across central and western Britain (Hingley 2017). This military distribution

reflects both defensive priorities along frontier zones and the need to control key transport corridors such as Dere Street and Watling Street. At an estimated two million people, the indigenous tribes of Britain far outnumbered the Roman soldiers, which understandably caused contentions (Hingley 2017). However, the Romans were typically able to keep uprisings to a minimum by incorporating a strong military presence consisting of an extensive network of forts, roads, and bridges, which enabled enable the quick and efficient distribution of supplies and troops (McCulloch et al. 2022). This combination of infrastructure with military logistics is well documented in the archaeological record across the Roman Empire, particularly in the alignment of forts along major roads. In fact, Roman forts were purposefully built to be within a day's ride from each other, which Southern asserts further facilitated the protection of the routes as well as the resources within local villages (Southern 2013). War was a very lucrative endeavour for the Roman Empire and, consequently, significant amounts of economic resources were poured into constructing these forts, bridges, and roads, which Berechman insists were critical to their military success (Berechman 2003). Moreover, Laurence indicates that the maintenance and building of bridges and roads were directly linked to the perceived effectiveness of the emperor, and no expense was spared in the upkeep of these vital lifelines (Laurence 2024). In fact, the transportation network of the Romans was so effective that a vast amount of the thousands of miles of roads that were built during the Roman empire were used well into the Medieval period and continue as the foundations of many modern roads today (Berechman 2003).

Along these roadways were multiple rivers and other waterways that posed a hindrance to the effective transportation of goods, services, animals, travellers, and communication, thereby necessitating a major focus on bridge technology and engineering (Laurence 2024). In fact, excavated remains of stone piers, timber pilings, and associated roadworks at sites such as Piercebridge in County Durham illustrate the engineering techniques employed by the Romans. Similar to the vast network of roads, Laurence denotes that bridges were also a symbol of the emperor's power to conquer the land, and the possibility of having animals or humans swept away by inferior bridgeworks would not be tolerated (Laurence 2024). In

addition to their valuable practical purposes, bridges and aqueducts were a testament to the impressive art and function of Roman engineering (Dymond 1961). However, Dymond believes that perhaps one of the most important functions of reliable bridges was to facilitate communication and supplies between not only the Roman leaders and the soldiers, but as a lifeline for those who were living in the numerous civil settlements (Dymond 1961). Bridges also functioned as ritualistic spaces during the Roman occupation in Britain as rivers were considered dangerous obstacles that required prayers and sacrifices to the river gods for safe passage (Cousins 2014). Sacrificial deposits include coins, personal items, and military gear, highlighting the dual functional and sacred status of bridges. Such deliberate deposits have been found in several bridge locations across the UK, such as the River Tees in Piercebridge, County Durham. The bridges crossing the River Tees in Piercebridge were crucial structures that facilitated a "crossing point on a major communication artery frequented by a wide range of travellers" and "would therefore be a highly appropriate place to make offerings to Mercury" (Eckardt and Walton 2021, 238). This choice of deity, associated with travel and commerce, underscores the socio-economic importance of such infrastructure beyond strictly military utility.

Dere Street, constructed in 79-81 AD and arguably "the most strategically important route in northern Britain", was the "major communication artery" that Eckardt and Walton spoke of (2021). It was a major Roman thoroughfare that served what is today northern England and southern Scotland, connecting legionary forts such as Eboracum (York) and Inchtuthil (Perth) (McCulloch et al. 2022, 508). Dere Street has been called "the Roman Great North Road" and was first established as an important route for military purposes, and later as the primary route for the transportation of supplies from Hadrian's wall, through York, to what was called the Southern "civil zone" (Dymond 1961, 136).

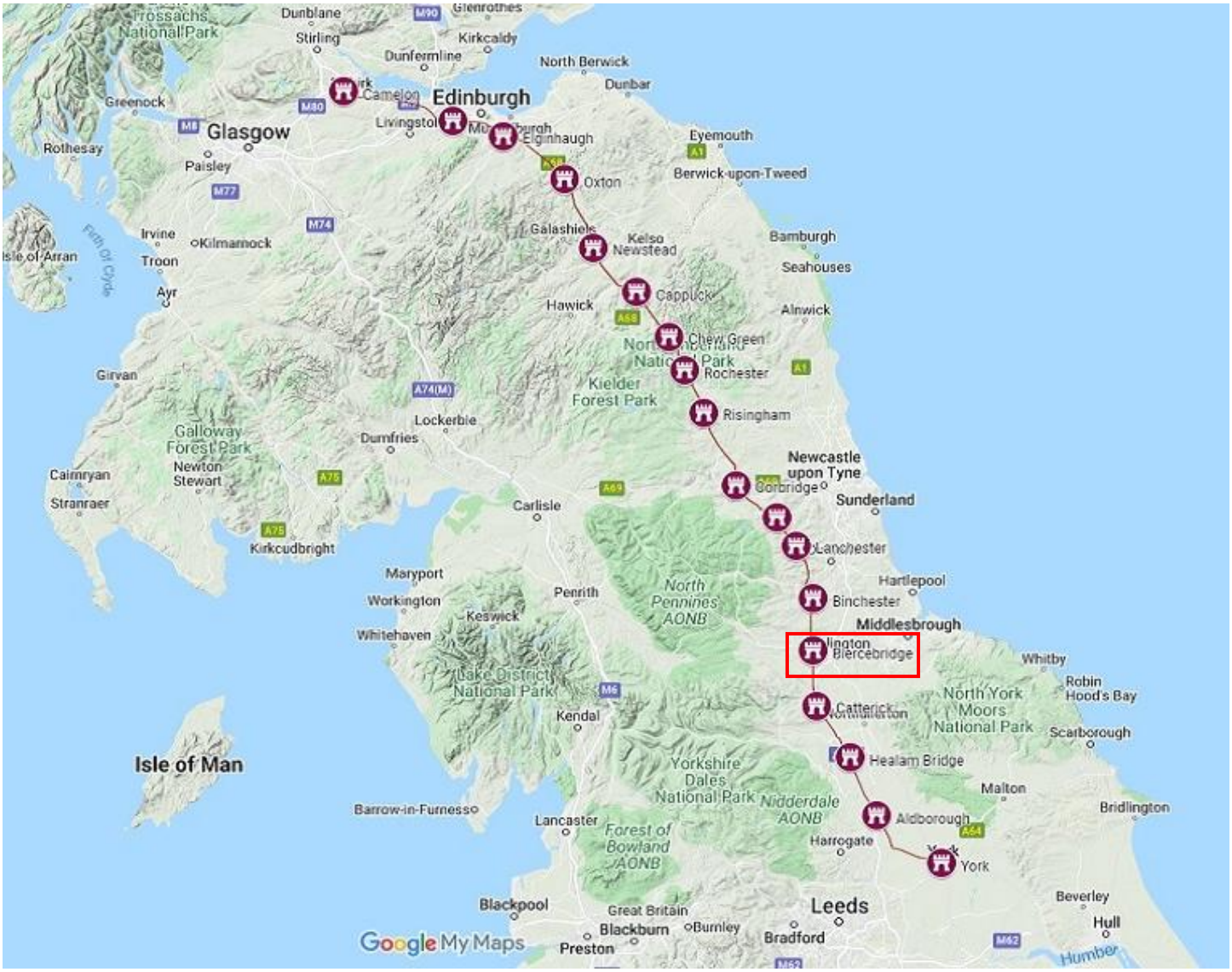

Figure 1: Map of Dere Street during the Roman occupation of Britain, with study area outlined in red (Great North Road 2025). It was a major Roman road that stretched from north of Edinburgh to York.

Along its path were major military outposts and civilian communities such as Corbridge, Lanchester, Binchester, and Piercebridge, provinces that would have depended on the ease of transportation provided by Dere Street for safety and obtaining supplies (Dymond 1961). As previously mentioned, waterways, while absolutely vital for life and, as such, often found next to or within these communities, could also be a hindrance for travel, which is why the building of bridges along the roadways was so critical (Northern Archaeological Associates 2021). Although there were fords that may have existed on various waterways,

they would have become unusable during periods of significant flooding, making bridges the only viable way to cross the many rivers and streams located along Dere Street (Dymond 1961). Significant bridges were built along Dere Street and crossed major rivers including the River Wear and the River Tees (Eckardt and Walton 2021). Because the area was crucial to the military occupation of the North at that time, these bridges would have seen heavy, constant military traffic in addition to fairly continuous civilian travel (Eckardt and Walton 2021). In fact, for more than 300 years, Dere Street was a vital roadway for military troops in their many campaigns into Scotland in an effort to quell the Scottish tribes, which never happened (Hingley 2017; McCulloch, Tisdall and Cressey 2022).

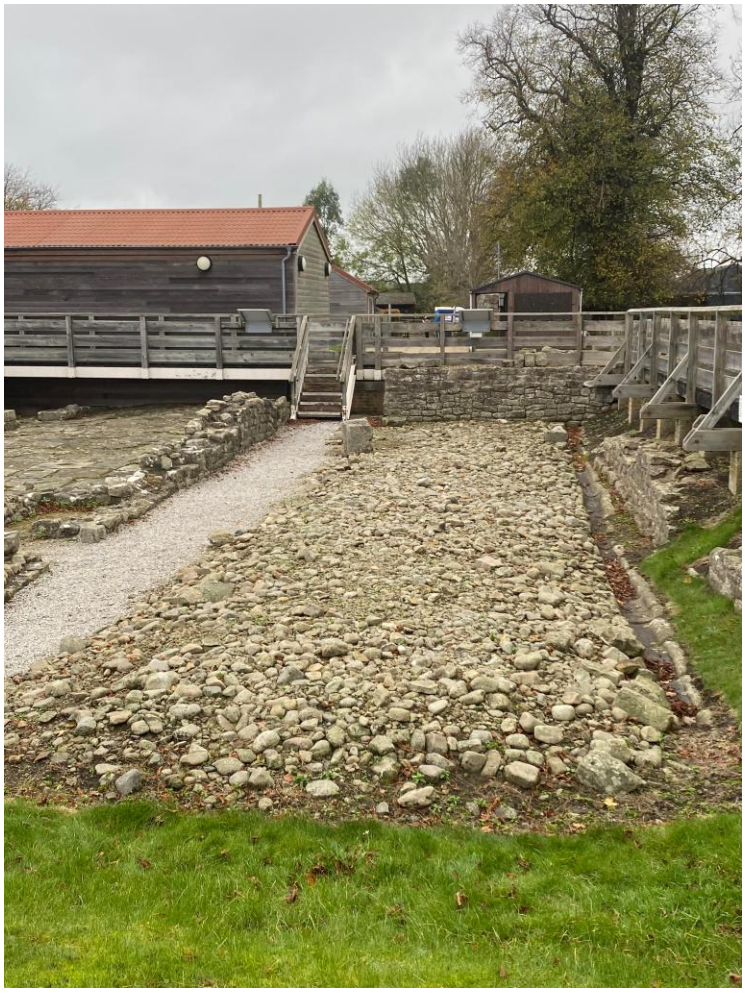

Figure 2: Photo taken by Lora Lucas of excavated portion of Dere Street at Binchester Fort (2024).

2.1.3 Piercebridge

In the North of England lies a charming village nestled within the Tees River valley of less than 120 residents, a place the Romans may have referred to as Morbium, known today as Piercebridge (Eckardt and Walton 2021, 95). This area may not have seemed an obvious choice for a principal Roman military road, but Eckardt and Walton contest that, with a location approximately halfway between Hadrian's wall and York with access to the significant River Tees, it was a practical site with strategic relevance (Eckardt and Walton 2021). With Dere street also being a main thoroughfare into Scotland, Piercebridge, with a fort and a civilian settlement, evolved into an essential military location (Cool and Mason 2016). Scholars generally agree that by 90 AD, one of many Roman Dere Street bridges was already built, crossing the River Tees (Eckardt and Walton 2021). By the late second century, there was a major military presence, a villa, and a large civilian settlement where the modern village of Piercebridge is built today (Cool and Mason 2016). With a vast number of people living in Piercebridge, the acquisition of supplies would have been paramount. Research shows that most of the items used by the soldiers were also used by civilian populations, who often consisted of traders, retired soldiers, and families of the soldiers who were stationed at the nearby fort (Allason-Jones 2014). By 180 AD, Piercebridge was solidified as a considerable settlement for both the military and civilians, with Dere Street providing its residents access to high-status goods, as well as a safe, well established river crossing (Eckardt and Walton 2021).

The first documented reference to the fort at Piercebridge was in 1722, and while minor excavations were carried out at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was not until 1972 when a campaign of excavations unearthed the ruins of a large Roman bridge (Cool and Mason 2016). Due to the area's seemingly undisturbed topography, thousands of artefacts, dating from the British Iron Age to the Medieval period, have been unearthed and subsequently collected by experts as well as local residents over the past several decades (Eckardt and Walton 2021). Each artefact that has been discovered at Piercebridge, including pottery, coinage, rings, leather shoes, and even garbage, reveal that during the first few centuries AD, the residents of this area were not merely surviving, but enjoyed the

best that their modern world had to offer (Fitzpatrick and Scott 1999). Allason-Jones (2014) asserts that such artefacts tell a forgotten story of people living in and around the fort from many parts of the known world, including the relatable life experiences of people "arguing, conducting business on their own account as well as socially, owing each other money, committing felonies and misdemeanours, and complaining of unjust punishment" (Allason-Jones 2014, 474). The combination of ancient artefacts and previously undocumented information held by local residents, or "local knowledge" (Geertz 1983), suggests that Piercebridge was a significant centre of trade along Dere Street until the early 400's AD when the Romans left Britain (Eckardt and Walton 2021). Despite much success over hundreds of years, Hingley reports that the Roman empire in Britain collapsed in the early fifth century AD and as a consequence, much of the Roman influence had vanished by medieval times (Hingley 2017).

The Roman conquest of Britain was more than an extension of imperial reach. Roman Britain represented a dynamic interaction between Rome and an already complex British society that developed long before the arrival of the Romans. Accordingly, the indigenous people of Britain had established a diverse social and economic system, which is evident in the archaeological record as artefacts from the Iron Age have revealed elaborate structures and trade networks found to be pre-Roman. However, Caesar's earlier invasion, as well as Claudius's later conquest in 43 AD, introduced Rome's military might and political power to the people of Britain. With that military and political influence came a vast knowledge of engineering technologies, including a vast network of roads, forts, and bridges that were expanded into Britain. Accordingly, settlements and market towns emerged along prominent roads, reshaping the physical landscape of the island and creating an efficient transportation network that carried goods, soldiers, and even ideas from Rome to Britain. As a result, communities like Piercebridge, founded on Dere Street that connected the modern city of York with Hadrian's Wall, emerged along these routes becoming centres of trade where Roman soldiers, traders, and local populations had daily interactions and often lived within close proximity to one another. Archaeological finds in Piercebridge have added significantly to the history and heritage of that area by telling the

stories of the people who lived there. These finds have been discovered and preserved by local stakeholders as well as by professional archaeologists, allowing history to include a more robust perspective of the identities of the people, the landscape, and the political atmosphere during that time. Such histories can also provide additional contexts to specific areas as local knowledge provides further information about the land, structures, and people who lived in areas across Britain during Roman occupation, such as Piercebridge. These characteristics make Piercebridge an excellent case study to further our understanding of how historical narratives of heritage are developed, presented, and evolve over time.

2.2 Heritage

Heritage has often been associated with collections of objects, sites, and traditions of a specific culture or people that are passed from one generation to the next. However, more recently, heritage scholars tend to include sociocultural processes that connect cultural and political identities, allowing people to engage more with the present (Novoa 2023). Although heritage was often discussed and debated in the nineteenth century, it was not until the 1960's and 1970's that the agreed upon core characteristics of heritage became more solidified, borne of the frustrations of archaeologists and architects regarding the lack of protections of intrinsically valuable tangible culture (Smith and Waterton 2009a). In 1972 there was a turning point in the development and organization of heritage discourse when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (Smith 2006). This document was adopted at the World Heritage Convention acknowledging the dangers facing the deterioration of heritage sites, as well as the urgent need for such sites to be preserved and protected (UNESCO 1972). This landmark convention, together with the recommendations of the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, have brought the preservation of heritage to the forefront, taking it from a local issue to a world-wide one, emphasizing what Smith refers to as the "conserve as found" principle (Smith 2006; UNESCO 1972). The 'conserve as found' principle states

that when an artefact is discovered, it is to be looked at and studied but left untouched, preserving it and allowing it to pass into future unchanged (Smith 2006).

While these developments have allowed the practice of heritage to become more defined and solidified, they have also, intentional or not, marginalized local stakeholders' experiences and contributions, all but ignoring their relationships with heritage (Schofield 2014). In fact, since that time, the definition and purpose of heritage has become even more widely criticised, with some scholars claiming that there is "no such thing as heritage" (Smith 2006, 11). This is due, at least in part, because heritage is more than just "old', grand, monumental and aesthetically pleasing sites, buildings, places and artefacts" (Smith 2006, 11). More traditional perspectives of heritage argue that, while heritage is informed by the anthropogenic past, its values and meanings cannot be universally applied to people today (Smith and Waterton 2009b). However, Schofield argued that heritage is constantly evolving and, as a result, needs to be reinterpreted and redefined on a regular and ongoing basis within contemporary social, cultural, and political contexts (Schofield 2014). Harrison stresses the importance of heritage as an act of gathering and preserving artefacts from the past while simultaneously being "an active process" whereby we hold these objects up as a "mirror to the present" with the aim of taking the associated values with us into the future (Harrison 2012, 4). Accordingly, Dierschow describes heritage as dynamic, rather than a static collection of ancient artefacts and historical sites (Dierschow 2014). As such, heritage should be viewed as "a subjective and political negotiation of identity, place and memory" (Smith and Waterton 2009a, 15), rather than a static or unchanging phenomenon of the past.

Heritage includes more than tangible artifacts and "is most usefully perceived as a cultural process" (Smith 2006, 87) that also includes intangible artefacts such as identity, memory, local knowledge, and social values. As such, heritage is, in many cases, more than just a place or tangible object, but includes a set of practices with connected meanings and values that enable heritage to become more about cultural communication and emotional engagement (Smith and Waterton 2009a). Members of the public are often more motivated to take part in heritage activities that include aspects directly relevant to them such as their

personal culture, interests, and history (McDonald 2011). In 2012, the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) produced a 'manifesto' that calls for heritage studies "to be rebuilt from the ground up" (Association of Critical Heritage Studies 2012). According to the ACHS, this declaration was due to the limitations of Western ideas and excluding the critical aspect of diversity. The manifesto called for the inclusion of marginalised groups of people and their heritage within the accepted historical narrative, a place where many had previously been absent. Such inclusions incorporate the stories, experiences, memories, and other parts of intangible heritage of essential marginalised groups. For example, in Castleford, West Yorkshire, there are Roman deposits that include a partially excavated fort and bathhouse that were not initially recognised by English Heritage as nationally significant (Emerick 2014). However, the citizens of Castleford were anxious to have their story told, which included much more than the tangible artifacts of a Roman fort and bathhouse, but also the "stories, memories, tradition of labour, manufacturing and community and the links between the past and the present" (Emerick 2014, 200). The case of Castleford is a classic example that highlights the importance of preservation and heritage from both a tangible and intangible perspective, as well as the critical importance of the perspective and participation of local citizens in recognizing and caring for heritage.

What may be considered significant or relevant to one group is not necessarily defined as 'heritage' to another. This is often because each place or object will have a particular value, meaning, or level of understanding based on the engagement of that individual, local community, or collective nation, as exemplified by the Castleford case above (Smith and Waterton 2009b). Similarly, Emerick defines heritage as a term used more recently to refer to regeneration, economic growth, and cultural tourism, adding that heritage is "related to power, expertise and the products of that expertise" (Emerick 2014, 6). Novoa believes that heritage can be a political act that favours those in powerful positions, thereby excluding those perspectives from individuals and communities based on gender, class, or minority status (Novoa 2018). As such, heritage could be considered the responsibility of everyone to support and engage in their own personal heritage for the preservation of future generations. However, this concept could be problematic as a major obstacle is the

uncertainty of the future itself. Accordingly, it may be difficult to manage the various forms of legacies if there is a possibility that management is toxic, both literally and figuratively, potentially endangering key values (Wollentz et al. 2020). Although it is commonplace for many to state that a major role of heritage is for the benefit of future generations, some scholars argue that this mentality may hinder the progress that can develop from being able to "alter or change the meaning and value of heritage sites or places" (Smith 2006, 29). For example, an unintended consequence could be a loss of fluidity or integrity in the telling of our past, making it more difficult to tell the most truthful versions of the social and cultural present, thereby affecting the legacies presented to the future generations (Smith 2006). Therefore, it is vital to allow an avenue for future generations to make their own educated choices so they may have the opportunity to construct relevant meanings and values, understanding that they may be different from what we know and understand at present (Wollentz et al. 2020). By prioritizing the preservation of heritage to those in the present as well as the future, an opportunity develops to further examine how to manage heritage responsibly.

2.2.1 Tangible and intangible

Heritage artefacts are often considered by scholars to be invaluable in not only preserving history, but in maintaining the integrity of the stories that are woven within heritage memories and items. Such artefacts are often classified as either tangible and intangible, and include categories such as places, materials, memories, or ideas that societies value and strive to preserve for future generations (Smith and Waterton 2009a). Tangible artefacts can be items such as sites, material objects, or even landscapes. These "crucial markers of heritage and identity" are emphasised by a concept known as The Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), which evolved during the nineteenth century in Western Europe (Smith and Waterton 2009b, 27). Within this context, discourse is not reduced solely to the language of how to do things, but also encompasses the idea that when people discuss and understand a concept, such as heritage, there evolves "a material consequence that matters", a pointed interpretation that further describes "physical and social realities" (Smith 2006, 14). Within AHD, a nation's heritage is valued for its ability to bring people

together through a common identity that focuses on inheritance to promote the idea that "the value of material culture is innate, rather than associate" (Smith and Waterton 2009a, 13). Such a focus ensures that heritage is perceived "as fragile, finite and non-renewable" (Smith and Waterton 2009a, 13), thus aiding in its preservation for generations to come. This motivation assists in placing the care of heritage sites within the stewardship of trained and educated experts such as architects, historians, geographers, archaeologists, and others.

Smith claims that while the AHD strives to be the face of 'common sense', it can very easily come across as a mechanism that pressures social heritage management to conform to what is considered 'normal' (Smith and Waterton 2009a). These pressures can allow negative consequences to unfold including alienating groups of marginalised people such as women, indigenous and ethnic groups, as well as the working class, in addition to giving the impression that the 'expert' is valued over the 'non-expert' (Smith 2006). There are also issues with the assumptions that are potentially made about identity, with the focus appearing to be more on the monuments or other tangible aspects, minimizing or even altogether neglecting the vital cultural meanings (Smith and Waterton 2009a). For those who consider heritage as primarily a cultural practice comprised of a range of understandings and values, the idea of heritage promoting more of an elite Western narrative as universally applicable may be rejected (Smith 2006). In addition, it cannot be ignored that archaeology and heritage have at times been used as political tools by governments to "build a sense of national identity" (Harrison 2012, 96). While it is true that there are many positive ideas that have emanated from the AHD, it is critical to adopt an awareness of the potential negative impacts, including the sanitizing or whitewashing the past (Harrison 2012).

In an effort to protect and preserve both tangible and intangible heritage artefacts, there are many local, national, and international organizations which are tasked with documenting and preserving heritage sites deemed as locally, nationally, or internationally significant. For example, UNESCO identifies heritage sites around the world as 'World Heritage Sites'. For this to happen, designated heritage experts must agree that the site has

attained “a level of national or international importance against a set of agreed criteria” (Emerick 2014, 1). However, there are also criticisms in regards to how UNESCO determines that a certain site or artefact has universal value, especially when it is evaluated with a heavy Eurocentric perspective (Roders and Grigolon 2015). As a result, in the past two decades, UNESCO has made an effort to define and incorporate additional strategies aimed at protecting intangible heritage in particular, with a stronger focus on tailoring each strategy to the communities and cultures within each individual nation (Lázaro Ortiz and Jiménez de Madariaga 2022). This effort supports the movement of changing the dynamics of a top-down approach, which supports a heavy government hand in choosing what heritage is worthy of protection, and puts the power of designating what heritage is in the hands of the local communities, potentially avoiding gentrification (Novoa 2018). The aim is to resolve the contradictions that exist between the reputed “universality of universal cultural heritage” and the way it is actually integrated in establishing identity of local-groups (Lázaro Ortiz and Jiménez de Madariaga 2022, 330). Similar to the international designation of a World Heritage Site are national and even local heritage designations provided by other heritage organisations. For example, in England, English Heritage is a legacy organization tasked with the designation of historical places that have attained an agreed upon level of significance and are then named as an ‘English Heritage Site’ (Emerick 2014). Another example is Historic England, which manages heritage sites at the national level and has offices in various regions throughout England whose purpose is to “champion historic places…identify and protect our heritage…support change…(and) deliver national expertise at a local level” (Historic England 2024). Historians, geographers, archaeologists, and other heritage professionals provide advice to those who manage such designated places (Emerick 2014). The purpose of these designations and conservations is to maintain and share an ever-evolving history as newly recovered information continues to shape the historical narrative, as well as the evolution of our understanding of history today and for generations to come.

2.2.2 Community archaeology: Professionals and stakeholders

Similar to heritage organizations, engaging archaeology within communities plays a critical role in both tangible and intangible heritage and its successful management. To that end, the term 'community archaeology' was coined in the 1970s to frequently describe "any outreach aspect of an archaeological project", although it can also refer to other projects and members of the public (Corbishley 2011, 104). Since that time, there has been a movement to define and grow the concept with a pro-active approach between recognised heritage experts and the local community. For example, in the United Kingdom, there has been a concerted effort of scholars to be involved in community archaeology and heritage with consistent growth year after year for more than two decades (Collins et al. 2023). This growth corresponds with a broader reorientation within British archaeology toward public value, transparency, and inclusive heritage practice, that was incorporated as part of the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage or Valletta Convention (Council of Europe 1992) as it is commonly referred to. As a result, many archaeologists see part of their role as interacting in some way with the public, including educating the public on the industry standard "objectives and methods" to use to ensure preservation of archaeological heritage (Thomas 2015). Such public-facing strategies also serve to mitigate site degradation, increase reporting accuracy, and foster ethical stewardship of the archaeological record. Archaeology is not only the uncovering of artifacts, an aspect with which archaeology is commonly associated, but is also the figurative excavation of understanding the way those artefacts were and are created and used (Lewis 2018). If done successfully, such a practice can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of heritage that acknowledges multiple perspectives and interpretations that align with critical heritage studies approaches that view heritage as a process of cultural negotiation rather than passive transmission (Emerick 2014).

The UK's Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), managed directly by the British Museum, facilitates community archaeology by providing a pathway to record archaeological finds on a national database by anyone who locates any object relevant to the archaeological record. When a member of the public finds an artefact that is potential treasure as defined

by the *Treasure Act of 1996*, they are required to report it to their local Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) within fourteen days (GOV.UK 2025). The FLO then records the find and passes it onto the coroner, who initiates an inquest. At this point, the British Museum's Treasure Team arranges for an expert to assess the potential treasure and then the Treasure Valuation Committee will determine the market value (GOV.UK 2025). This process typically takes 6 to18 months, although it can take longer depending on a variety of circumstances. If a museum or other entity decides to purchase the item, payment will be sent to the finder, and if they do not decide to acquire the item, it is returned to the finder (GOV.UK 2025). Once the artefact is accepted into the Portable Antiquities Scheme's database, anyone can go online and see a photo of the artefact along with the name of the finder, unless the finder has requested anonymity. As of this writing, there were 1,817,461 objects within 1,176,489 records (Portable Antiquities Scheme 2025).

Established in the late 1990's, the PAS expanded nationally in 2003 and includes a vast array of artefacts dating back to prehistoric-worked flint (British Museum, 2025). While the inclusion of such early artefacts highlights the breadth of the PAS database, the vast majority of finds in recent years are located by local stakeholders. For example, according to the most recent data, which includes finds in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, of the 1,377 finds reported in 2022, 1,296 (94%) were discovered by metal detectorists (British Museum, 2025).

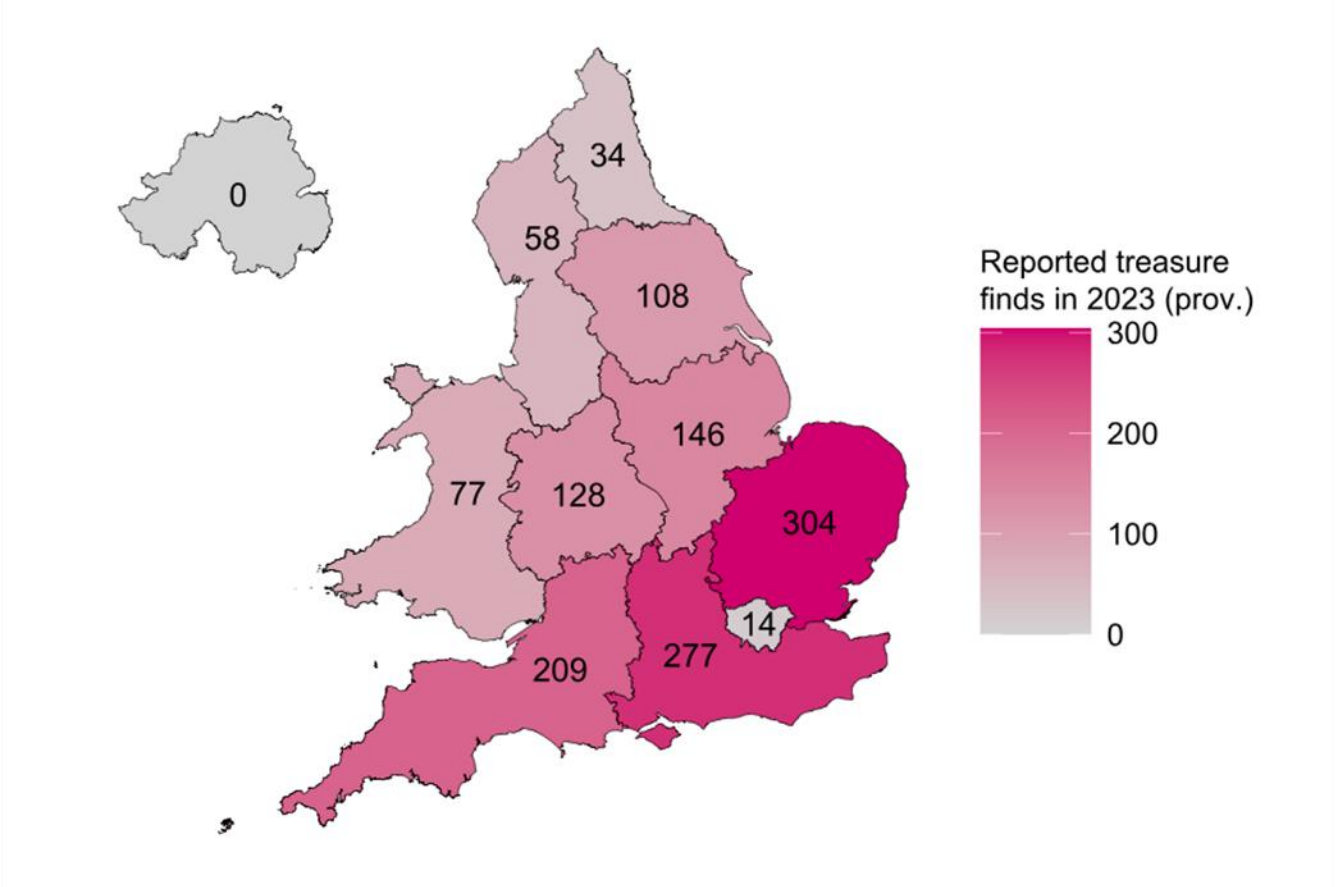

Figure 3: GOV.UK

Although the overwhelming majority of contributors are metal detectorists, all members of the public are invited to document artefacts and access data. As mentioned previously, many times the process of recording and documenting artefacts is facilitated by Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) who work directly for the PAS and are central to its operation (Portable Antiquities Scheme 2023). FLO's not only manage the intake, recording, and reporting of artefacts, but are also a critical point of contact between members of the public and the professional archaeological community (Portable Antiquities Scheme 2023). This collaboration between heritage professionals and the public is often limited by a lack of funding and time constraints, which can be a major frustration and disruption in this important process (Nassaney 2021, 125).

As the use of technology progresses, heritage organisations like the Portable Antiquities Scheme have become more aware of the need to provide tailored outreach to "digital

natives" (Prensky 2001), referring to young people who have never known life without digital technology. These individuals tend to think and process information differently from previous generations, which should be taken into account by FLOs when determining the best outreach methods that are likely to interest them. Similarly, heritage organisations are constantly looking for ways to reinvent their outreach in an effort to reach as many local stakeholders as possible, making online contributions and interactions more user-friendly, and custom designed to the audience they seek to reach out to. The Portable Antiquities Scheme has been critically examined for their outreach strategies and impact on non-expert reporting, including the potential lack and compromise of archaeological authority and methodology when working with the public (Rockman *et al.* 2012). Supporters of the Portable Antiquities Scheme have acknowledged that, while their approaches can entail difficult compromises, the results have been largely positive as "Liaison Officers have acted as a catalyst to bring together organisations that may not have had much contact with each other" (Bland 2005, 446). Such successful collaboration includes regional knowledge sharing between heritage professionals and local stakeholders, serving to bridge gaps between institutional and grassroots heritage initiatives.

While digital engagement offers new pathways to reach younger audiences, Thomas argues that sustained personal contact and shared field experiences create mutual trust and learning between professionals and local stakeholders (Thomas 2017). Accordingly, positive outcomes through face-to-face interactions may be difficult to replicate through purely digital means. These observations suggest that while digital tools can attract initial interest from younger, digitally fluent audiences, meaningful community participation in archaeology still depends on opportunities for in-person collaboration and dialogue. Richardson cautions that, as heritage engagement becomes increasingly digital, there is a need for "increased concern for ethical standards and behaviour within the field of digital public archaeology" (Richardson 2018, 64). As such, while digital public archaeology shows how online heritage initiatives can empower broader audiences, particularly digital natives, it also emphasises the risk of excluding those without digital access or literacy (Richardson 2018). These challenges underscore the need for heritage organisations like

the Portable Antiquities Scheme to balance accessibility and ethical responsibility in their digital strategies, ensuring that online participation does not support or encourage existing social or technological inequalities.

Another national heritage project in England is the Missing Pieces Project, which is managed by Historic England, the public body responsible for England's historic environment (Historic England 2025b). While the Portable Antiquities Scheme focuses mainly on the reporting of treasure and recording and documenting artefacts, the Missing Pieces Project invites members of the public to share their stories and photos of places on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), or known simply as 'the List', which is a "register of all nationally protected historic buildings and sites across England" (Historic England 2025b). These photos and stories are part of a database that is open to public contributions and is designed to collect and share each person's unique perspective and experience within any of the listed buildings. The first step in contributing a photo to the Missing Pieces Project is to register for a free Historic England account. Once the account is registered, the user may then submit a photo(s) of a listed building, which will then go through a moderation process . If the submission is approved, taking up to two working days, the contributor will receive a confirmation email letting them know that their submission has been accepted and is now online. The photo will include the location of the building as well as the contributors name (Historic England 2025c).

The Missing Pieces Project emphasises that the historical picture of England is not complete without the input of multiple perspectives. They encourage everyone to add to the story of a place on The List with the understanding that "Everyone who visits a place or lives nearby has their unique piece of the picture. The more people add to the picture, the more we can all understand what makes these places unique and significant – to individuals, their local communities, and the story of England" (Historic England 2025b). Historic England intends for the Missing Pieces Project to make the public more aware of places to visit, as well as aid councils and other people in powerful positions to gain a greater understanding of what these places mean to the public in an effort to aid in better decision-making in preserving, restoring, and protecting the listed buildings (Historic

England 2025b). Such efforts reflect the growing emphasis on 'living heritage' approaches, which prioritize ongoing community use and meaning over static preservation alone. If someone is interested in actually registering a building with "The List", rather than contributing a story or photo online, the Missing Pieces Project has Project Engagement Officers and Listing Advisors that are available to help with that process (Historic England 2025a). In addition to the Missing Pieces Project, Historic England funds "multiple community-based and university-based projects undertaken by special-interest groups and academics", which creates data sets and adds information to the heritage of an area (Carlisle and Lee 2016, 131). These partnerships are increasingly used to include local knowledge, allowing community members to act not merely as participants, but as co-producers of archaeological knowledge.

As with the PAS, the Missing Pieces Project faces the challenge of engaging with the emerging population of digital natives. One difficulty is balancing an increase of digital options while simultaneously incorporating the critical aspect of face-to-face outreach. Although interactive technologies can support access and participation, significant barriers such as limited digital literacy, infrastructural access, linguistic and cultural differences remain, strengthening the argument that personal engagement with trusted facilitators remains a key element for meaningful participation (Giglitto et al. 2019). Thomas' (2017) research underscores that sustainable community archaeology depends on shared authority and a collaboration of knowledge between professionals and local participants (Thomas 2017). Together, these perspectives reveal how digital platforms can enhance inclusivity and engagement, but also demand careful reflection on data ethics, representation, and digital accessibility. Such considerations are vital for national heritage schemes like the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project, both of which rely on voluntary digital contributions to expand collective heritage knowledge.

2.2.3 Engagement and identity

While community archaeology often attracts willing volunteers, social barriers can unintentionally exclude or intimidate community members, keeping them from

participating (Thomas 2014). Such exclusions are often reflective of broader social inequalities that have a tendency to limit access to heritage spaces, like those with paid membership, particularly for individuals from the working class or minority backgrounds. One way that professional archaeologists from Durham University have addressed similar barriers by inviting members of the public on a free tour of their active excavation at the Auckland Project in Bishop Auckland County Durham.

The Auckland Project (The Auckland Project 2024) is a regeneration charity in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, that, despite being a heritage site restricted by paid entry, provides an 'Unlimited Pass' to all volunteers that allows them full access to all visitor attractions and sites. The Auckland Project further supports public interactions with archaeological digs overseen by Durham University and also hosts the 'Young Archaeologists Club' once per month (The Auckland Project 2025). Youth-focused initiatives such as this help develop interest in heritage at an early age, as well as promote intergenerational engagement with archaeology, which can lead to and often foster long-term stewardship. In Manchester, England, there is a programme of community excavations called "Dig Manchester" where trenches are open on certain days for the public to dig and explore, while also providing an option to volunteer in long-term projects (Thomas 2014). Such initiatives can serve to address the challenges associated with community archaeology, as well as serve to create additional buy-in from the local community. Community archaeology is not limited to archaeological finds, but also includes a concept which has gained momentum in recent years - social outcomes – or the figurative excavation of understanding and local knowledge. This approach shifts the emphasis from objects to people, reflecting a human-centred model of archaeology that values lived experience and local knowledge as integral to the archaeological record. Research suggests that participating in community archaeology aids marginalised groups or individuals who may feel isolated, to reestablish their identities and "peacefully reclaim a sense of belonging, express non-conformity and reveal injustice" (Kiddey 2018, 291). In addition, there is research to support that involving the community in archaeological excavations decreases crime rates as demonstrated by the previously mentioned Dig

Manchester initiative (Cobb and Croucher, 2020). Accordingly, community archaeology has the power to foster public participation and education, while decreasing anti-social behaviour within a given community, thereby promoting a sense of ownership and empowerment that allows local narratives and identities to coalesce and be more accurately represented across a multitude of generations (Moussouri 2014).

As previously mentioned, the overwhelming majority of contributors to the Portable Antiquities Scheme are metal detectorists. Although they contribute a significant amount of archaeological finds to the PAS and other heritage pathways, there has historically been a divide between detectorists, considered non-experts, and archaeologists, considered experts (Makowska, Oniszczuk and Sabaciński 2016; Thomas and Deckers 2022). According to Thomas (2015), working with groups such as metal detecting clubs, "usually attracts at least a few raised eyebrows from the archaeological community" (Thomas 2015, 314). Because metal detecting is sometimes seen by experts as no more than treasure hunting or looting, many archaeologists are wary to use their skills, which is one reason why metal detecting may be under-utilised in a professional setting (Connor and Scott 1998). While engaging with metal detectorists or other groups "that many in the archaeological community perceive to be problematic" can be an obstacle, it is believed by some scholars "that such individuals can, and often do, have a useful contribution to make to archaeological research" (Thomas 2015, 313-314). There is dialogue within private conversations between archaeologists who admit that they "simply don't get" metal detecting, although they admit that most detectorists are responsible, reporting their discoveries and caring about contributing to heritage (Rockman *et al.* 2012, 55). This points to a potential reimagining of the detectorist as something between a local stakeholder and a professional archaeologist, arguably a type of heritage citizen scientist. Accordingly, scholars agree that using a metal detector can be beneficial and an effective research tool, and is perhaps used by archaeologists more often than is suggested by research and reports (Conner and Scott 1998). Many museum and heritage organisations collaborate regularly with metal detectorists which "serves to legitimize, rightly or not, the material in question as well as the method of procurement" (Rasmussen 2014, 97). Although there are

many facets to consider when discussing whether metal detecting is a legitimate tool for research, including the treasure hunting element, many detectorists are motivated by a connection to history and heritage. One metal detectorist explained that, as she metal detects, she is cognisant of the fact that she is walking the paths that so many others before her have walked and thinks about their lives, and when she finds an artefact, she likes to "imagine the person who dropped it all those years ago" (Oxtoby 2023, 1058). Finding an ancient artifact or relic from the past, no matter its value, creates a personal link to history. This connection makes history feel real and drives many local stakeholders to explore their own heritage more deeply. Archaeology can also engage local people in discovering and interpreting their local history.

Activities like community excavations led by professionals can spark an interest in one's own heritage, increasing local knowledge. This participatory approach may even inspire some individuals to become local experts on their own histories within their communities and is way of increasing inclusivity within heritage practices, which can further validate local knowledge, as well as recognise the contributions of diverse communities, as encouraged by the ACHS. For example, within the modern village of Piercebridge, the significant archaeological finds of Rolfe Mitchinson and Bob Middlemass continue to challenge the published historical narrative of Roman Britain in the Piercebridge area. In the span of over 30 years, these two amateur divers recovered thousands of artefacts from the River Tees (Eckardt and Walton 2021). Prior to their discoveries and long before the Portable Antiquities Scheme existed, riverbed artefacts were mainly thought to be accidental losses or simply rubbish, which is in opposition to what some archaeologists claimed – that most of these objects were deposited intentionally as ritual offerings (Eckardt and Walton 2021). While cataloguing and studying the artefacts found by Mitchinson and Middlemass, archaeologists Hella Eckardt and Phillipa Walton suggested that the bridge crossing the River Tees was much more significant than previously thought (Eckardt and Walton 2021). It is believed that the presence of items like mutilated coins and personal adornments, indicates possible ritual offerings, which were likely deposited in the hope of a safe river passage, challenging previous assumptions that such river finds

were mere refuse or lost items (Bradley 2025). This information was further corroborated by the evidence of two ancient wooden bridges found further upstream from where the known stone Roman bridge is located (Eckardt and Walton 2021). These bridges are believed to have been washed out as a result of flooding, which, if true, would support the findings of Eckardt and Walton that people made offerings for a safe passage across the river. The contributions of Middlemass and Mitchinson shed additional light on the historical narrative at Piercebridge, providing scholars with a broader, more comprehensive prospective and understanding of the ancient peoples who lived in that area during Roman occupation, a prime example of community archaeology in action.

This effective example considers the integral values, needs, and contributions of local stakeholders within the local community at large (Emerick 2014). Emerick also emphasizes how important it is to involve local stakeholders in heritage communities when it comes to interpreting and managing archaeological sites in their area. This involvement requires archaeologists and other professionals to move “beyond posturings” that may create a divide between themselves and the public, instead developing a more “collaborative approach” that will ideally shape “a set of theories and practices for an ethically informed study of the past, history, and heritage” (Atalay 2006, 301). This engagement can help locals better understand a given sites' significance, as well as foster a sense of ownership among residents, which may otherwise be missing (Emerick 2014). If done correctly, outreach in a local community can allow archaeology to connect academic research with community involvement. Such an effort can build relationships of trust between scholars and locals by including their respective local knowledge, understandings of their local history, along with their local perspectives of heritage.

One of the advantages of the public participating and engaging in heritage activities is the opportunity that arises for them to take part in something that “provides social and individual benefits” (Fredheim 2018, 2). Recently, there has been an emphasis on the invaluable way that heritage and culture contribute to the well-being of individuals and communities. One community initiative, called ‘Hospitals in Heritage’, organised a loan box service from the University College London Museum and visited those who were confined

to hospitals and care homes, with each visit lasting anywhere from 15 to 75 minutes (Ander et al. 2013). Researchers involved in this project found that interactions with heritage had a positive effect on the wellbeing of hospital patients who were facing mental health challenges, such as anxiety, uncertainty, depression, and boredom (Ander et al. 2013). After treatment, patients reported improvements in mood, with less anxiety and a boost in overall confidence (Ander et al. 2013). Similarly, research shows that those who engage with heritage often have improved mental health. They share stories that have influenced their lives or the lives of others, which helps them uncover identities and traits that were once hidden or unknown (Kiddey 2014). These memories can also function as a "strong catalyst for behaviour", strengthening an individual's self-esteem and refining emotional resiliency, which not only benefits the person, but the world around them (Kiddey 2014, 295). Metal detecting may be considered a branch of community archaeology that also benefits participants' mental health and well-being. One metal detectorist stated, "There's something mindful about it. I struggle to be mindful at other times but it's peaceful, and I find digging holes therapeutic…it allows you to focus on something just for yourself, and, if you join a club, it can connect you with like-minded people" (Oxtoby 2023, 1058). Continuing neuroscientific research is confirming that the human brain has a positive emotional response when people interact with meaningful places, allowing insight and highlighting the need for more research regarding the connection between heritage and mental health (Gatersleben et al. 2020). When individuals and communities participate in natural and cultural heritage activities such as museums and galleries, as well as heritage sites and stories, there is an overall positive contribution to wellbeing (Thomson and Chatterjee 2022).

While heritage is a nuanced term that is hard to truly define, it is a central part to the story of humanity and critical to maintaining the integrity of the telling of history. Archaeology plays a key role in not only discovering tangible and intangible artefacts but is also a tool to use in inviting the community to take part in uncovering history. In addition to potential increased health benefits associated with individual and community participation within heritage that include improved quality of life and better personal relationships, research

shows that improvements can also be made to groups who have historically been marginalised or otherwise ignored. Heritage is a complex network made up of many layers. As such, it can be challenging to know how best to get involved and find reliable information. For example, some organizations claim they want to protect and preserve heritage sites, however, they may be influenced by political pressures or financial interests. In fact, the UK is unique in that any item found by a local resident that is classified as treasure is, by law, owned by the Crown Estate, rather than the finder or the property owner. Whereas, other countries, such as the United States, have laws in place that protect the finder and immediately provide ownership of the item found when it is located. Such a dichotomy demonstrates how fragile public trust within heritage institutions can be and highlights the need for clear and cooperative actions to build and maintain their credibility.

Research indicates that heritage has changed from a narrow focus on physical objects to a broader view that includes intangible elements like memory, identity, and local knowledge. Traditional views, influenced largely by Western ideas such as the Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), have centred on preservation and expert knowledge while often ignoring local perspectives. Recent critiques point out the evolving nature of heritage, stressing the importance of acknowledging marginalized voices and local knowledge within heritage communities. As a result, national heritage initiatives, like the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project, continue to emphasize and document local knowledge, and many scholars call for a wider, more participatory approach that includes heritage as an active process connected to culture, rather than just a static collection of artifacts.

Although there have been significant advances, gaps in the literature still exist, as there is a need to find a balance between professional, community, and global perspectives. For example, the vast majority of World Heritage Sites as designated by UNESCO are located in Europe, despite the fact that heritage sites are found all over the world. These challenges raise crucial questions about who currently controls heritage narratives, who should control them and who should be involved, how to manage different types of heritage responsibly, and how to balance the competing needs of preservation and change. Moreover, there are tensions between preserving heritage for future generations and

adapting it to present social, political, and cultural changes. Yet, national heritage schemes continue to face serious challenges in outreach limiting their inclusivity, including a lack of funding, the difficulty in building trust with local communities, and navigating effective communication strategies within their given financial constraints.

3. Methodology

Geertz defined local knowledge as a combination of ancient artifacts and previously undocumented information held by local residents (Geertz 1983). This type of place-based knowledge based on a given individual or collective community's lived experience is often overlooked in formal heritage documentation. However, when properly and effectively excavated, it can offer critical insights into long term patterns of landscape use, memory, and meaning. This crucial knowledge provides additional understanding of cultural events and experiences that emphasizes the significance of local stakeholders' contributions (Fredheim 2018). Such withheld or unrecorded information can often provide an alternative historical narrative to that which was previously accepted, as appears to possibly be the case with the Roman site of Piercebridge. This conclusion is based on new evidence provided by two local residents, Rolfe Mitchinson and Bob Middlemass, as documented by archaeologists Hella Eckardt and Phillipa Walton (Eckardt and Walton 2021). This research aimed to specifically and purposefully explicate the perspectives of local stakeholders regarding the value of national heritage schemes designed to document local knowledge, specifically the Portable Antiquities Scheme (British Museum, 2025) and Missing Pieces Project (Historic England 2025b). These schemes, while publicly accessible, often rely on individuals fluent in digital technology with proactive participation. Such strategies may unintentionally exclude certain groups or types of knowledge by leaving out those who are not as familiar with digital technologies. This is an important factor in whether locals are aware of national heritage programs, if they see them as vital for preserving their heritage, and how they feel about the importance of their own local knowledge.

This research acknowledges the importance of understanding the broader digital infrastructure. However, because the technical processes involved in contributing to, managing, or navigating digital heritage databases fell outside the scope of this project, they are not included. Accordingly, this study is primarily concerned with whether the digital options offered by national heritage schemes function as effective points of engagement for members of the public. More specifically, it seeks to understand whether

or not these online mechanisms successfully encourage local engagement with heritage recording schemes such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project, focusing on levels of public awareness, patterns of use, and perceived value of these particular platforms. Interview and survey data indicate that while these digital resources are intended to facilitate wider participation, the general public remains largely unaware of their existence, with face-to-face outreach continuing to be preferred among local stakeholders, thus being more effective than digital outreach.

To examine how national heritage schemes are incorporating local knowledge in order to maintain the integrity of an ever-evolving historical narrative, a primarily qualitative methods approach to this research was instituted. As such, compiling and assessing local opinions, as well as those of industry specialists, allowed the comparing and contrasting of the online historical inventory schemes provided by government entities and their efficacy in incorporating the varied points of view between stakeholders, namely local residents, relevant scholars, and heritage professionals. Table 1 clearly outlines the roles of the participants and highlights the diversity of perspectives represented in this research. In addition, it provides insight into how each individual's role and relationship to the heritage landscape contributes to the overall analysis.

Participants	Roles / Affiliations
Roger Blamire	Resident of Piercebridge
Shirley Chalmers	Mayor of Piercebridge
Elizabeth MacIntyre	Resident of Piercebridge
David Mason	County Durham Archaeologist
Anthony Pickering	Owner / Organiser of North Detecting Events
Gareth Powell	Project Engagement Officer, Missing Pieces Project, Historic England
Caroline Smith	Assistant Finds Liaison Officer, Portable Antiquities Scheme
Phillipa Walton	Lecturer in Roman Archaeology, University of Leicester; Former Finds Liaison Officer, Portable Antiquities Scheme
Benjamin Westwood	Finds Liaison Officer, Portable Antiquities Scheme

Table 1: Interview participants and their roles/affiliations.

The qualitative emphasis was particularly suited to uncovering the nuances of perception, experience, and participation that might not have been visible through quantitative datasets. As such, this research aimed to uncover the level of communication between these respective groups and heritage organisations and determine their understandings regarding the accessibility, relevance, and effective use of government schemes. While the initial research proposal sought to clarify historical narratives through recovered local knowledge, fieldwork redirected the emphasis toward public participation in and knowledge of national heritage schemes, with a particular focus of the nature of relationships between heritage professionals and the local communities. This relational emphasis acknowledged that heritage processes are not solely about material culture, but also about the social dynamics that shape its use and meaning. As a result, the following questions framed this dissertation research:

1. What are the levels of awareness and perceived value of national heritage schemes, such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project, between heritage professionals and stakeholders with local knowledge?

2. How does face-to-face outreach compare with digital communication in encouraging local engagement with heritage recording schemes?

3. How do relationships between local stakeholders and heritage professionals, such as metal detectorists and Finds Liaison Officers, affect contributions to these schemes?

Open-ended interviews were conducted with three local residents of Piercebridge, as well as five scholars who are or were affiliated with one of the two national heritage schemes previously discussed, the Missing Pieces Project and the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Additionally, the owner/organiser of a large metal detecting group consisting of nearly 2,000 members was interviewed. Multiple attempts were made to contact visitors to Piercebridge, not otherwise affiliated with the site, with the intention of having them take part in a short questionnaire, in an effort to gather as many perspectives as possible. However, there were not enough visitors to gather sufficient data that would sufficiently add to the research, which may have been due to this research taking place in the winter/early spring months when the weather was not favourable.

Specific methods included open ended semi-structured key informant interviews, questionnaires, and review of digital data (Flick 2018). These multiple methods were employed in order to address the inherent weaknesses of any given single method, as well as to confirm and validate the findings of the research. Semi-structured key informant interviews are a proven qualitative data collection method that provides a practical approach that aids in the understanding of people's attitudes and perceptions on a given topic (Hay & Cope 2021). This method is particularly useful in heritage studies where stakeholder experiences are subjective, contested, and often shaped by local context. Additionally, this method provided a "two-eyed seeing" (Hatcher et al. 2009) approach through "a framework that calls for a weaving of [multiple] perspectives" (Moorman et al. 2021, 201) in an effort to gather a variety of perspectives that can be further analysed (Clifford et al. 2010). This multi-perspectival approach was valuable in navigating power dynamics between professionals and community members, helping uncover both consensus and conflict.

Thematic analysis is well suited for exploratory research, as it allows patterns to emerge from the data while staying connected to participants' voices (Nowell et al. 2017). After the interviews were conducted, thematic analysis was used to examine the information, identifying and noting themes and patterns found within the data (Braun & Clarke 2006). This research also documented the relationships between all stakeholders, including their various knowledgebases and types of expertise, that specifically included locals' perspectives of national heritage mechanisms, like those discussed above, as a means of weaving local knowledge into the official historical narrative accepted by professional historians and heritage organisations. This helped identify potential disconnects between institutional assumptions about public engagement and the lived experiences of participants.

This research took a qualitative approach to explore the relationship between local knowledge and official historical stories at the Roman site of Piercebridge. By including perspectives from residents, scholars, and metal detectorists, this study considered how local stakeholders viewed national heritage schemes. Furthermore, it provides insight into whether these initiatives support established narratives held by heritage organisations or if such schemes marginalised the contributions of local stakeholders. The study used multiple methods, including semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis, and archival review to ensure a solid examination of different perspectives while addressing potential limitations of each individual method. By investigating how effective national heritage schemes are, such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme and Missing Pieces Project, this study provides further understanding of how local knowledge can be included or even excluded within the historical narrative at Piercebridge, County Durham, England, which can be used more broadly across the UK. Ultimately, this research highlights the important role of local stakeholders in shaping heritage interpretation and emphasises the need for collaborative frameworks that respect and include local community knowledge in broader historical and archaeological discussions.

3.1 Ethics

When contacting participants, every effort was made to keep all interactions positive and supportive, keeping in mind that one of the components of ethics is a concern and appraisal of human behaviour and character leading to "personal and social fulfilment" (Scarre and Scarre 2006, 2). Ethical considerations and behaviour are essential when conducting research that involves human subjects, as it brings integrity to the work, as consistency and keeping promises are fundamental to ethical care (Banks 2012; Caplan 2003). Arguably, these qualities matter even more in community-based research, where relationships can go beyond the research timeline and influence future collaboration. To uphold a high ethical standard, it must be acknowledged that before archaeologists consider themselves ethical, they need to see themselves as good people and act accordingly (Scarre and Scarre 2006). In keeping with the University of York's Code of Practice and Principles for Good Ethical Governance (University of York 2022), when interacting with people, informed written consent is ethically required and must be given voluntarily. Participants were informed of the purpose of the research, along with their rights and option to participate, and each participant signed a consent form. These consent forms and the transcriptions of all participant interviews are included below in the "Appendices" section of this study.

In keeping with the principle to do no harm (Denscombe 2010), the participants were apprised that, if requested, their responses and identities would remain confidential, and that none of the information provided would be published or included without their consent. Participants were also provided with the choice to be named and credited for their contributions, and were given the researcher's contact information to address any follow-up questions or concerns they had about the research after each interview. Such open communication supports participant involvement, allowing them to stay engaged with the research outcomes if they wish. To ensure safety and confidentiality, the interviews were recorded and saved on a password-protected laptop, and they were also backed up on a password protected hard drive.

A major limitation in this research involved the use of relevant digital data. Although social media interactions could have offered direct insight into how digital communication shapes public engagement with national heritage schemes, this material was excluded on ethical grounds. More specifically, informal discussions within online communities, particularly metal detecting groups, contained highly relevant perspectives that would have aided in evaluating the effectiveness of digital outreach. However, because permission from participants was not obtained and the posts could have been viewed as controversial, these posts and their comments could not be ethically reproduced, analysed, or cited. The omission of this data represents a limitation of the study, as such conversations could have provided a broader and more in depth understanding of the public's opinions and responses to heritage schemes. This focus on ethics, inclusivity, and clear methods, not only protects participants, but also strengthens the integrity of the research process, as well as the relationship of the researcher with the participants. The study reflects wider changes in heritage and archaeological practices that emphasises collaboration, accountability, and the respectful inclusion of various types of knowledge.

4. Results

4.1 Grounded Themes

This thematic analysis draws on qualitative interviews conducted with professional archaeologists, heritage professionals, the lead metal detectorist of an organised group of nearly 2,000 metal detectorists, and residents of the village of Piercebridge in County Durham, England to explore their perspectives on national heritage schemes and the dynamics between professionals and local stakeholders. While each person interviewed brought a distinct perspective shaped by their role, their accounts revealed similarities around key themes. Most notably, they emphasized the importance of building trust over time, including the necessity of public outreach, the sometimes-challenging relationship between heritage professionals and local stakeholders, their frustrations regarding lack of resources and funding, and a shared conviction regarding the cultural, archaeological, and historical significance of heritage stewardship. Taken together, these narratives provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics within national heritage schemes in the United Kingdom, as well as repercussions and awareness at the grass-roots level. These insights respond directly to the research questions listed above concerning public awareness, communication methods, and the influence of trust-based relationships on local participation within national heritage schemes.

4.1.1 Building relationships and trust

Key informant interviews were conducted with current Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) Benjamin Westwood, current PAS Finds Liaison Assistant Caroline Smith, and former PAS Finds Liaison Officer Phillipa Walton, Ph.D., who is currently a Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester. These interviews illustrate the multifaceted nature of FLOs, and the fact that the work of PAS is not only concentrated on acquiring artefacts, but building relationships with community members. Gareth Powell, who works for Historic England as a Project Engagement Officer for the Missing Pieces Project, was also interviewed and provided a different perspective to

working with the public within the framework of Listed Buildings. As Powell's work focuses on listed buildings rather than artefacts, he provided a unique perspective and insight to this research that included built heritage and public engagement. Finally, David Mason, the County Archaeologist for County Durham where Piercebridge is located, provided insights from a local government perspective. Each of the heritage professionals interviewed stressed the ideas that relationships built on trust and engaging in public outreach are critical components to gathering data and, thereby, preserving heritage. Accordingly, this section explores how heritage professionals, like those interviewed, navigate their roles through ongoing, long term community engagement, which was a key concern raised as further described in the Results section below.

To connect effectively with the public, all the heritage professionals interviewed agreed that building trust is essential. Smith stressed the importance of developing and practicing soft skills, such as empathy, patience, and active listening. These skills aid in building trust and creating meaningful relationships with potential participants. Smith added that soft skills involve being patient, reliable, and consistent in communication, engaging with participants a way that is relatable. For example, Westwood echoed the importance of soft skills through relaying an experience with a metal detectorist where soft skills were the foundation of their interactions.

> "There was a guy at a metal detector club I know very well now because I've been going for years, and for the first few years, every time I went, he would have to give me an hour long [or] half an hour lecture. And he lectured you when you first went, about how he'd been detecting for years and years and he'd recorded loads of things. He'd never seen anything back. He couldn't understand why we were doing what we were doing…and this would be half an hour. And then at the end of that, he'd pull out a bag of finds, half a dozen things, and record them. But I'd have to go through that every time I went. Nothing you can say because he didn't want to listen. He didn't want to hear what I had to say. He didn't have an argument. He didn't want to have a discussion. He just wanted to get it out, and then when he'd done that, he would be fine [and] he would record his objects. And he did that for about 3 or 4 years, and then it just stopped. And then it was fine."

Benjamin Westwood
Finds Liaison Officer
Portable Antiquities Scheme

Westwood's account shows that building trust-based relationships take a lot of time and can often feel one-sided, especially since people tend to be cautious by nature. However, his experience proves that persistence can encourage more participation, which reinforces the need to be consistent and patient in heritage outreach. Likewise, in speaking of her position as a former FLO, Walton discussed spending much of her time building genuine meaningful relationships with local community members by attending working men's clubs and even making home visits. Following the national expansion of the PAS in 2003, Walton recalled that the early years were characterised by extensive face-to-face public engagement. Smith estimated that, within her assigned region, the PAS engaged with at least 100 finders on a regular basis and observed that their experiences and feedback with these finders were positive overall. Anthony Pickering, the owner/organiser of North Detecting Events LTD, an organised group of nearly 2,000 metal detectorists, has had a great deal of contact with the PAS over the years and his opinion regarding the PAS illustrates the positive attitude Smith described.

> "The Portable Antiquities Scheme, in my view, it's a great thing. It protects the hobby and it gives some, it sets some boundaries for detectorists, because at the end of the day, the nation's treasure doesn't belong to a detectorist, it belongs to the nation, and the story needs to be told…The PAS system, where you can go on and actually look at artifacts and cross-reference is outstanding."
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner of North Detecting Events LTD

The building of trust is an important aspect of outreach that can take the FLOs a considerable amount of time to develop, especially given that delayed engagement is a recurring theme in PAS interactions with metal detecting groups. For example, Westwood recalled how latent interest can increase unexpectedly once sufficient trust is established. Although he had been attending a metal detecting club for more than three years, no one

was willing to record their finds, despite it being an important aspect of the PAS. Consequently, and in an effort to keep from wasting valuable time and energy, Westwood prepared himself to have a difficult conversation with the group about providing them more space and moving on to another club. However, at the next meeting, a couple of members brought in bags of relevant artefacts they had collected over years of metal detecting. Westwood said that he could not think of any reason in particular as to why they brought those items at that time, but "they just suddenly decided they wanted to record." Once that trust was gained through those first couple of group members willing to share their artefacts, other members decided to bring their finds to Westwood in order to record them, and the contacts snowballed from there. This experience illustrates the concept that trust-building is something that can encompass diverse timeframes and may not yield any obvious progress until, at the discretion of the participant, it unexpectedly appears.

Gareth Powell, from Historic England, also recognized that relationships and trust are crucial, especially within data collection. For example, one aspect of his position requires him to reach out to heritage groups and other members of the public to invite them to talk about what they admire about certain buildings, towns, or cities. However, this has often proven difficult, as his experience is that many people shy away from anything that could remotely be considered as "professional."

> "People put the list entry onto a pedestal because it's a legal document, because it's important. One of the problems that we've had is to try to break down the barrier of participation…my role is to go out to talk to people, to say no, the information you've got is pertinent, the information you've got is relevant, the information you've got is important…suddenly that pedestal that people get put on, it suddenly lowers down, and we're all kind of approaching it from the same point of view."
>
> Gareth Powell
> Project Engagement Officer
> Missing Pieces Project

Powell's insight suggests that demystifying heritage processes is critical to increasing public involvement. His approach of decentralising expertise aligns with broader efforts to

include local knowledge into accepted historical narratives and cultural landscapes. Powell suspects such evading by some members of the public is linked to a lack of understanding of the relevance and importance of their direct local knowledge linked to a particular site, place, or building. Within his role, he strives to bring confidence to the participants and their contributions, helping them to build a sense of belief that what they are contributing is vital to the bigger heritage picture. Like Westwood, Powell emphasised the great importance of Missing Pieces Project officials building relationships of trust, particularly in local tightknit communities. Powell also noted that first impressions were powerful, especially as the majority of people had never heard of the Portable Antiquities Scheme or the Missing Pieces Project. When speaking to participants, Powell attempts to create a safe environment for trust to begin by helping them understand their role and the importance of their local knowledge.

> "I openly say I'm not an expert. I openly say I am not the listing advisor. I will happily talk everyone through the process of listing. I've got nothing to hide, but I am not approaching this from, I'm telling, therefore you're doing…I will always go in and say I am not the expert, you are. I'm here to learn."
>
> Gareth Powell,
> Project Engagement Officer
> Missing Pieces Project

Powell's concern highlights the fact that formal heritage language can sometimes unintentionally alienate local stakeholders, making approachable, conversational strategies, like Powell's more effective. While Powell emphasised informal outreach and empowering local voices, David Mason, the County Archaeologist for County Durham, offered an approach with the public that varied from those previously mentioned in that he takes a more formal and organised method to outreach. Mason explained that he primarily focuses on publishing a magazine, coordinating day conferences, hosting guided walks, operating visitor centres, and welcoming school groups at heritage sites, rather than direct interaction with local community members. From his point of view, heritage professionals have overall good relationships with the public, including metal detecting groups. As

resources are extremely limited within government heritage schemes, Mason noted that they must rely heavily on volunteers, which ideally fosters a “win-win” between the schemes and the public. As these examples show, trust is essential for local stakeholders to participate in reporting. Without it, artifacts and other important historical items may go undocumented, which can weaken the integrity of history.

4.1.2 Challenges

Even with consistent effort from heritage professionals, there are times when relationships cannot be sustained due to ongoing challenges, which directly affects the level of reporting to the PAS. Even when trust has already been established, changes within the structure of the organisation, such as budget cuts and decreased staffing, can undermine public confidence in the schemes, as well as how comfortable local stakeholders are with participating.

This perspective is shared by both professionals and local stakeholders and clearly identifies the barriers that impact involvement in national heritage initiatives like the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project. Westwood noted that since government jobs usually pay less than private sector jobs, there is often high employee turnover. This turnover can hinder the development of lasting trust, as employees leave and new ones join the team. One reason for this is that some professional heritage positions are supported by temporary grants, which can make building relationships more difficult as those staff members move on once the grant has expired. Unless there is a conscious effort to turn over the relationship in a meaningful way to someone else in the organisation, that relationship can easily be lost. Walton developed a very close relationship with two divers from the Piercebridge area, Rolfe Mitchinson and Bob Middlemass, working with them and the thousands of artefacts they had found over decades of diving. When she moved on from her role as FLO, she made an intentional choice to continue contact with the divers, stating that:

> “I counted Bob and Rolfe as my friends. You know, they came to my birthday party. I knew them so well, and I went to Rolfe’s

> funeral…you do create really strong relationships with people you've worked with. Some brilliant relationships."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Even within the scope of heritage professionals who work for the schemes for years, it is evident that there are potential roadblocks to developing the long-term connection necessary to build trust. While Walton remarked that she had created some very strong relationships with people that she had interacted with over the years, she also admitted that there are "some not so good relationships." Similarly, Westwood explained that a strong "Libertarian" streak within metal detecting groups in particular can be challenging, sometimes making it difficult for metal detectorists and other finders to trust anyone affiliated with the government. He remarked:

> "That Libertarian streak runs through quite strongly where they enjoy what they do and don't feel they should be told what to do, and that's fine. I have absolutely no issues with that. However, I think you still have a responsibility to share knowledge."
>
> Benjamin Westwood
> Finds Liaison Officer
> Portable Antiquities Scheme

Ultimately, Powell from Historic England explained that "making people feel heard, respected, and involved in something meaningful" is a priority, facilitating the ability to discuss difficult topics and successfully tackle challenges within those often-taxing dynamics.

When discussing challenges with the heritage professionals interviewed, a common concern was their lack of financial resources. They collectively expressed that this challenge often leads to insufficient staffing and adds pressure on those working as government heritage professionals. Participants from all groups interviewed, including Finds Liaison Officers, archaeologists, and local stakeholders working with heritage schemes, consistently mentioned this issue. Such pressures can significantly hinder the

development and maintenance of trust-based relationships between heritage professionals and community members. This aligns with findings in the Results section below, where professionals recognized that communication gaps, often due to understaffing, can have unintended consequences, which can further undermine public trust and confidence in heritage schemes. This is exemplified by the experience of Durham County Archaeologist David Mason, who noted that while expectations remain high, his team has shrunk from four employees in 2009 to just two full-time and one part-time by 2024, with “still more [cuts in staff] to come”. Despite these cuts, Mason and his team are expected to accomplish the same or even additional workload that was expected before the cuts, which he described as an insurmountable task.

Funding constraints are also experienced within the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Pickering, a metal detectorist who has frequent interaction with the PAS, is aware of this lack of funding, but has concerns about the possible solutions. His dual role as both a metal detectorist and owner of a large, organised group provides an insightful perspective on how PAS policies are perceived from within the detecting community.

> “[Regarding] funding, I get their frustration…I'm kind of defending them in a way. It needs to work, but suggestions of regulating the hobby to the point where every detectorist needs a license and archaeological training, which was suggested a few years ago, is never gonna happen, because no [detectorist] is ever going to sign up for it, and all I think it would create would be a divide.”
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

This concern suggests that, while detectorists acknowledge operational issues within the PAS, they are wary of policy changes that could introduce restrictions or fees to the hobby, which could diminish interest. Likewise, within the Missing Pieces Project, Powell acknowledged that, “a lot of the hindrance, a lot of the issues are down to things like resources and funding.” Walton echoed similar frustrations from her time as a Finds Liaison

Officer, describing how limited staffing often leads to strained relationships between the public and PAS.

> "The Portable Antiquities Scheme is also sort of a victim of its [own] success because when the scheme started, we had more funding in 2003 than the scheme does now. And yet the detectorists have grown to know that it exists and want to engage with it and want to record [their finds]. But then they complain that it takes a very long time for their finds to be recorded, the FLO doesn't respond to their emails, you know, all those things. And that's all about resources, not about interest."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Walton's comment reflects a common misinterpretation among local stakeholders, that a lack of engagement signals disinterest, but rather it is often a matter of overcapacity and insufficient funding. Walton further explained that since its inception more than 20 years ago, the PAS has experienced multiple cuts in funding and, with fewer employees, has had a difficult time keeping up with processing public finds. Such delays cause significant backlogs in getting back to the community members that made the discoveries, meaning that they may not be compensated or have the find returned to them for years. Such delays can damage public perception of the scheme's reliability, especially when expectations for turnaround are not managed. Pickering noted:

> "An area, which I'm sure comes from a funding perspective, where things can be a little bit frustrating, is the time between reporting an item of treasure, or non-treasure, and the time it takes for that to go through the Portable Antiquities process is what can be frustrating, and I think frustrates a lot of detectorists. And sometimes it's two years before we even get that item recorded on the system."
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

The frustration spoken of by Pickering can cause reluctance among metal detectorists and others to report their finds, despite it being required by law, which has the potential to undermine the scheme's goals for voluntary public engagement. This delay has created frustrations among finders, limiting perceived open communication and participation between the public and heritage professionals. However, when asked if these delays could potentially discourage people from reporting their finds, Pickering said that he did not think that was necessarily an issue. Instead, he emphasized understanding the pressures that FLOs face, and offered a broader view of increased participation since the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, Pickering showed an awareness of the challenges the PAS faces in regards to lack of resources.

> "You've got to look at it from [the perspective] of a hobby. It's boomed since lockdown, like most outdoor hobbies have. So, the number of detectorists that are entering the Portable Antiquities Scheme has probably gone [up] tenfold in the last five years, but the resources are still at the level that they were at pre that five-year period."
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

Although there is understandably some frustration with the backlog of recording and returning items through the PAS, Pickering also voiced concerns over the potential solutions and how that could affect metal detecting in particular.

> "My fear is, if we make too much noise, updating that system could then detriment the detectorist by bringing more regulation in. So, it's a little bit of a buy-off, really. Do we really want to push down the route of, we need this done faster and more efficiently?...I think the problem that we would have if we started putting pressure on the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the British Museum to speed up the process and make the process more unified, [and] I think the fear that we would have then is, that funding would need to come from somewhere, and I fear that funding would actually come from the detectorists. Kind of like a fishing license is what I would fear, where

> detectorists may pay a license fee to actually just conduct the hobby."
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

This illustrates the delicate balance between advocating for institutional improvements and maintaining the accessibility that makes PAS participation possible. Caroline Smith also discussed the unpredictable and sometimes lengthy process of evaluating and returning finds, noting that within the PAS, there are many steps, especially where items defined as treasure under the *Treasure Act 1996* are concerned. Within these processes, Westwood added that even within formal processes, delays can occur at multiple levels, noting that finds can easily get 'held up.'

> "The coroner (will) hold a full inquest so that the object can be legally declared as a treasure find. That can take a while, depending on what the coroner's got going on and, and how they prioritise it, and, whenever they've got time to do it...Things just stick in the system, unfortunately, things that shouldn't take that long, do. And it can simply be something we need, [such as] an e-mail from a certain somebody to chase something up, and I haven't chased it up, but neither has treasure, and so it just sticks in that process where we're both waiting for each other."
>
> Benjamin Westwood
> Finds Liaison Officer
> Portable Antiquities Scheme

4.1.3 Motivation and intent

Smith stated that finders are sometimes hesitant to disclose exact locations of where the artefacts are found. As previously discussed, the involvement of multiple parties in the documentation process often results in delays, with no guarantee of a fixed timeline. Likewise, Mason mentioned that there have been instances where members of the public have found potential archaeological sites but, unfortunately, there simply are not enough staff to physically go out to every site to determine its significance. Mason also stated that

those sites are added to a long list of things they hope to get to when they have time, which again, can be a contributing factor to the deterioration of trust. This echoes concerns raised in the discussion that uneven response times and delays, though often practical, can still be perceived by finders as indifference or bureaucratic inefficiency. Walton agreed that, “with limited budget, there is only so much one FLO in one particular area can do.”

Along with the issue of depending on multiple agencies to complete their part of the recording process, there is a concern with finders regarding the value their finds receive. PAS Finds Laision Officer Westwood acknowledged a common discrepancy regarding the valuation of finds, “If you talk to metal detectorists, they will think it's lower” than it should be. On the other hand, Finds Laision Assistant Smith noted that, “If you talk to museums, they will think it's too high.” This contrast highlights the tension between institutional frameworks for object valuation and the subjective expectations held by finders, in particular, metal detectorists. Pickering suggested this misalignment reflects a failure to update valuation models to current market realities and fails to take into account what an item might sell for if sold at private auction.

> “I think sometimes the system is a little bit low on the valuing. So, maybe that just needs looking at, just the final stage of using more relative data and actually doing a bit more research. Because sometimes, and I think where it falls down is, let's say, a Roman fibular brooch was found in 2005, which is quite rare. And it's sold for X amount, so they've used the data from 2005, not taking into consideration inflation, growth in the hobby, [or] people buying antiquities. So, they use the 2005 price bracket rather than a 2025 price bracket. I think that sometimes where it falls down, as well.”
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

Pickering’s example underscores a broader concern that valuation procedures within the PAS may lack sufficient responsiveness to continuously evolving markets, as well as collecting dynamics of private collectors, rather than museums. Pickering further emphasised that, ideally, collecting and recording artefacts should be about the telling of

history and preserving heritage, with each person taking into account what their motives are.

> “I dare say the majority of detectorists, 70% bracket, are in it because they like the history, they like the passion, they like the storytelling, and they like collecting. But then you're always going to have 30% who don’t play by the rules, or see the rules as a boundary.”
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

He goes on to suggest that finders must ask themselves, “Are you in it for the money or is the money just a bonus? Or are you in there telling the story?” These questions capture the underlying philosophical divide between different groups of metal detectorists and others searching for finds based on the economic incentive versus a passion for history.

Those motives vary significantly across different geographic areas of the UK, as well as among various socio-economic groups and education levels. Pickering noted that, “You're going to get a different view from every person you speak to on that.” Walton also examined how these different motivations, often influenced by regional and socio-economic factors, can make it hard to maintain consistent participation in the reporting process. Walton pointed out that differing motives, shaped by various socio-economic groups and education levels, can further complicate participation in the reporting process.

> “In the North East, the socio-economic background of metal detectorists is very, very working class...there were a huge number of metal detectorists who want benefits. There were, particularly disability benefits, and there was an idea that it would be a potential way of making money. There wasn't the same focus on archaeology and history and engaging with the class. And I know that's a generalisation, and it very much depends on the people you're working with, but there was more of an emphasis as a potential way of making some cash. Whereas in Cambridgeshire, I very rarely had that attitude from detectorists, and in Hertfordshire, where I was FLO, not really at all, there's a different sort of demographic.”

While Walton acknowledges this as a generalisation, her extensive experience suggests that regional demographics play a significant part in influencing motivations, expectations, and practices among detectorists.

Because of the variety of people and experiences, it can be a challenge to come to an agreement on compensation, particularly when the valuation is given to the finder with a "take it or leave it" attitude. Although finders may appeal valuation decisions, Pickering suggested that providing a transparent breakdown of the valuation process could reduce disputes. This in turn could alleviate some of the already stretched resources by reducing the number of appeals and facilitating a more positive pattern of interaction between detectorists and officials. By reducing uncertainty and clarifying the basis for valuations, such documentation could build greater institutional trust and reduce the administrative burden of national heritage schemes.

4.1.4 Awareness and communication

Powell, who also discussed the lack of funding and resources, stated that he covers the entire south-west of England for the Missing Pieces Project. Despite the challenge of managing such a large area, especially given the resources available, he is of the opinion that they are effective overall in getting the word out to the public. A testament to that claim is the fact that last year was a record-breaking year for contributions with around 53,000 submissions (Historic England 2025b). On the other hand, Powell noted that according to YouGov, while 43% of the public were aware of Historic England, only 3% were aware of the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), sometimes referred to simply as "The List", creating an additional barrier for the Missing Pieces Project to discover and incorporate local knowledge. This contrast suggests that even within successful outreach campaigns, public recognition may be concentrated around the institutions rather than the tools or registries they promote. It reveals a gap in translating organisational identity into actionable public knowledge. While public awareness of heritage schemes appears to be growing, the

disproportionate familiarity with institutions like Historic England, versus specific initiatives like the NHLE, may continue to limit the full potential of public engagement.

Another challenge involves the lack of maintenance and communication regarding heritage sites found within local communities. For example, Roger Blamire, a resident of Piercebridge in County Durham, mentioned the lack of upkeep of the site of a Roman fort in the village, particularly the need to replace and bolster the stones that have been damaged or fallen over. While this refers to a visible, physical manifestation of funding gaps, it also raises broader concerns about institutional presence and responsiveness in local contexts. Blamire's understanding is that, while the government is aware of this need, "they've got no money." Likewise, when discussing the need for restoration at the same Roman fort, Shirley Chalmers, the Mayor of Piercebridge, stated that there was talk of putting up a fence to preserve the site by keeping people out. While this is a potential solution to preserving the fort, it would also greatly limit the public's interaction with history through heritage sites. These shared frustrations, though shaped by resource scarcity, also reveal a public often left without clarity on institutional priorities—fuelling disengagement. These shared frustrations, resulting from a lack of resources, also reveal a public left without a clear understanding of institutional priorities. This can further increase disengagement as these challenges have the potential to unwittingly influence those who are anxiously waiting for their finds to be processed and returned, as well as members of the public who are concerned with the maintenance of local heritage sites. Additionally, this can unintentionally create additional distrust of the national heritage schemes, which has the potential to further harm heritage schemes by causing finders to hesitate to report their finds in the future.

Another concern is that, although some communication does occur between heritage organisations and the public, it is often fragmented or indirect. Chalmers, who is the Mayor of Piercebridge, mentioned a few instances where she had heard that there were going to be improvements or changes to the heritage sites in Piercebridge by government officials.

> "They're supposed to be coming and doing something because when they did all of it, it's not the right, they used concrete

> instead of lime mortar and concrete. If you notice all the stones, the concrete is absolutely rock solid... but they were gonna break, they were supposed to be coming and doing it...they were saying at one point, though, that if they don't, if people don't respect it, they're going to fence it off."
>
> Shirley Chalmers
> Mayor and Resident of Piercebridge

This layered account of 'supposed' actions, with shifting timelines and unclear plans, reflects not only operational delays but also a perceived breakdown in institutional accountability. The lack of communication and action, which is partly to do with lack of funding and resources, has the potential to cause rifts where there could otherwise be an opportunity for FLOs and other government employees to work together with local communities. Harkening back to the critical component of trust, there is a precarious balance of nurturing those invaluable relationships in the face of obstacles such as adequate staff who incorporate the necessary soft skills to make and keep those relationships. This reinforces findings in the discussion that interpersonal, engagement utilising soft skills is often the keystone of ongoing community trust, yet it remains largely undervalued. The unintended consequence is that those opportunities to build trust end up becoming major roadblocks to the very trust they seek to build, creating the exact opposite result that is desired.

4.1.5 Ethics, perception, and misconceptions

Speaking of public finds, Walton mentioned ethical concerns as "another tension within the Portable Antiquities Scheme."

> "Ethically speaking, when we're encouraging people to go out metal detecting to find these treasure finds, and then they do find them, and we reward them for that. And the museum has to pay the rewards to acquire these nationally, internationally important objects."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Walton underscores a central paradox, the fact that public participation is incentivised, but also promotes the commodification of heritage. Such ethical concerns raise difficult questions about the role of state funded schemes in driving the demand for finds. This places financial and ethical strain on acquiring institutions, which are left to reconcile public engagement with shrinking acquisition budgets and private market value of finds. Likewise, Westwood articulated the tension between ethical ideals and operational pragmatism that defines the PAS's approach to heritage participation.

> "The Portable Antiquity Scheme, above all else, is a pragmatic organisation that we're not taking a position on ethicality... I mean, we are, because obviously we are taking a position on it in that we think that things should be recorded. But we always have to part that so that we can do the work that we do just to record that data and recover that data and make that data available. So, in terms of selling finds, there's obviously a huge market for antiquities, but that's not our concern, really...Our work is about recovering that data and recording that data and facilitating."
>
> Benjamin Westwood
> Finds Liaison Officer
> Portable Antiquities Scheme

This illustrates the PAS's position as a neutral, record-keeping entity that is simultaneously committed to ethical stewardship and pragmatic engagement, yet attempting to strategically distance itself from market dynamics surrounding finds.

Along with the lack of resources and public knowledge about national heritage schemes, as mentioned previously, there are misconceptions that often arise from those who do know about them. Piercebridge, County Durham, is a small village where many residents have lived most or all of their lives. Piercebridge has the benefit of an English Heritage site consisting of a Roman bridge, and a Roman fort, among other things. Piercebridge residents Shirley Chalmers, Roger Blamire, and Elizabeth MacIntyre, were not aware of either scheme previously mentioned, and Blamire even noted that he could "take you to every house in this village...and you'd be lucky if one person's ever heard of them." Blamire's comment underscores the limitations of national outreach efforts thus far,

especially in rural areas connected to historically significant places, like Piercebridge, where engagement is assumed but not actively facilitated.

Because of their presence over the years on the Piercebridge Roman sites, the residents were very familiar with English Heritage and had basic knowledge of the *Treasure Act of 1996*. However, according to the residents interviewed, English Heritage, and the other government agencies who have worked in Piercebridge, have been seen as organisations that come in and oversee projects, telling the residents what they can and cannot do on their own property. Such interactions may unintentionally reinforce the notion that heritage schemes are forms of surveillance or control, rather than collaboration. This can understandably create an environment of suspicion and mistrust, which is what Walton experienced many years ago as a new FLO. Her reflections as a former heritage scheme official reveal how mistrust is not only rooted in policy, but within the dynamics of field interaction. She stated that there was a lot of suspicion and rumours that the PAS "was set up as a way of monitoring metal detectoring to enable it to be banned."

Furthermore, Walton noticed a particular lack of trust and cooperation with metal detectorists in the North-East of England:

> "There was significant problems at Corbridge Roman town with people illicitly metal detecting. And that's the obvious reasons [for the lack of trust], which angered quite a lot of people, and I know that in some of my clubs in the North East there were clearly illicit metal detectorists present in those clubs who are not following the law, so there was that difficulty in liaising with the clubs where you know there are nighthawks within them working."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Walton's comment reflects the broader challenge that even legitimate clubs may unknowingly harbour individuals who breach the law. This obviously complicates outreach and strains trust within professional relationships. Pickering's observation confirmed Walton's experience, "There's clubs out there doing it right, and then there's clubs out there

where, I'm not saying they're not doing it right, but they're not playing by the UK tax system either." While the majority of metal detectorists are legally detecting and providing invaluable contributions to the national heritage narrative, there is an understandable frustration with those who are not.

Smith explained that while many members of the public, including metal detectorists, believe that "heritage should be open for all", there is a "disconnect" in understanding that the intention of the PAS is to document finds, telling a collective history and preserving heritage. This disconnect is central to many misunderstandings about the role of schemes like the PAS, where the focus is on documentation, rather than ownership. Powell agreed that it is sometimes difficult to get people to engage because of "misconceptions" and "preconceived views." Toward the end of the interview, MacIntyre mentioned that she interacts with visitors to Piercebridge on a regular basis who have questions about its history:

> "It's been an awareness for me because I had no idea that [the heritage schemes] existed, because sometimes, it doesn't happen often, but I'll get stopped if I'm out with Charlie [her dog]. It's only in the summer months, and people will stop and say, '*Oh, are you from the village?*' Or people that have a question about the George [Inn]. They want to just extract that information and…I had no idea really, but it's nice that you can kind of pass on that and say, '*Oh, do you know, why don't you look up Missing Pieces or look up the Antiquities Scheme?*"
>
> Elizabeth MacIntyre
> Piercebridge Resident

MacIntyre's role as an informal ambassador of her historic community suggests that with even modest awareness, local residents can become effective intermediaries between the public and national schemes, but only if they are aware of them and have confidence in them. Her ability to direct people toward local heritage schemes like Missing Pieces Project or the Portable Antiquities Scheme additionally highlights how residents themselves become interpreters of local history. This example also illustrates the potential for collaborative engagement, despite the fact that interactions between heritage organisations and the public have sometimes been perceived by the locals as an unequal

partnership. As such, local community residents seem generally open and willing to learning about and contributing to the aforementioned schemes.

4.1.6 Technology and outreach

While Westwood and Smith both agreed that their personal interactions with the public are generally positive, they expressed concerns about the growing gap between helpful in-person exchanges and the often divisive and misleading discussions that happen in online forums. Although social media has been a useful tool for promoting heritage projects and sharing discoveries, it has also caused problems. "The wider discourse we see online is often very negative towards the PAS. I don't think that's because of dealing with us. I think that's dealing with other FLOs and also misinformation spreading online…The result of [the negative online discourse] can be that people who maybe haven't engaged with us before, decide they're not going to, and they will instead resort to online forums, Facebook, other official media platforms, YouTube videos that deal with people who will tell them what their finds are, which may or may not be correct. "And they think, '*Why do I need to bring these things in to be shown to us or our colleagues for the scheme when this person online is telling me what it is*?" Smith's experience highlights the main challenge of decentralizing authority in digital spaces. This allows unverified sources to influence public understanding. Unfortunately, this often leads to a lack of clear, vetted interpretations. Similarly, Westwood described the often conflicting and complex dynamics that are prevalent when finds are shared online.

> "Someone posts a picture, '*I found this today*,*'* and then some of the replies are, *'it might be treasure*.' Say it's a gold ring or something, people are, you know, '*Well found mate, lovely find*'. And then you'll get people who will say, '*Oh, what, what does the FLO think?*' Because they're hinting at, '*Well, this is treasure, you need to report it*.' And you get people who say, '*This is treasure and you need to report it,*' and then you'll get other people saying, '*Oh, just don't tell anybody. Stick it in your pocket, mate, don't bother.*' So, you can see on Facebook all those different complexities."
>
> Benjamin Westwood
> Finds Liaison Officer

The multitude of responses exemplifies how social media forums can simultaneously promote legal compliance and encourage non-reporting, which only reinforces the ambiguity around public expectations.

According to Westwood, one of the ways to combat these difficult issues is by being involved in the public eye as much as possible. The PAS encourages their employees to, not only forge relationships in local clubs, but also write articles in prominent metal detecting magazines and host annual conferences that include the PAS, metal detectorists, and members of the public. These efforts confirm the broader discussion which finds that ongoing, sustained visibility can build relationships and increase public trust. The PAS has been working on their online usability for years in an effort to give, as Walton put it, more "agency to the finders" by allowing them to "record their own objects on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database" rather than giving them to a Finds Liaison Officer. However, with the ever-present lack of funding and limited resources, Walton said there is a challenge in having enough professionals to vet the contributions and moderate discussions. On the other hand, the argument could be made that if the public is already using social media platforms as a means to identify their finds, it may be useful to have an online space within the national heritage schemes for people to discuss finds in a more fact-based capacity. Such a platform could serve to bridge the gap between open forums and expert-only accessible databases, fostering a more collaborative digital space between professionals and local stakeholders. These spaces could provide a safe and reliable forum to further communicate about archaeological artefacts, whilst encouraging the connection between local and professional knowledge. Establishing such structured forums may not only improve knowledge exchange but could also strengthen the delicate trust that often underpins heritage collaboration.

Another issue that was mentioned multiple times was the kind of language heritage professionals use. This can be a barrier to the public's interest and willingness to participate as professionals use jargon often misunderstood or unknown to the general

public. This theme connects with larger concerns about inclusivity and how professional communication styles can unintentionally push people away. Smith explained that it's easy to sound patronizing, even when that is not the intention. Westwood agreed that, with an academic background, it is easy to take certain words, phrases, or meanings as "a given", so it is vital to know your audience. An example of this was given by Powell in regards to the Missing Pieces Project's previous name – Enriching the List. "Enriching" is a word that Powell stated that he had not used, and very much doubted wording such as this would be useful in public outreach. Conversely, the phrase "missing pieces" is a common part of puzzle building and problem solving and is an idea that most people are likely to already understand. This simple example of rebranding shows how using the right words can have unexpected social and cultural outcomes, including discouraging or encouraging public involvement. By making small and subtle changes, heritage organizations can be more approachable and achieve increased public awareness. Powell recognized that sometimes tough conversations need to happen with people who have strong feelings about a specific place or artifact that matters to them, which can often be emotional.

> "If a building is not listed [or] protected within a community, that can be an emotive subject because it's seen as an important building, you need to protect it. The problem is that with our remit, [it] has to be of national importance, so there could be a community centre that has played a huge part within a local community, but it doesn't hold national importance. Therefore, we can't designate it so, the problem is that we can't please everyone, and we definitely don't."
>
> Gareth Powell
> Project Engagement Officer
> Missing Pieces Project, Historic England

Powell's remark speaks to the emotional dissonance between national priorities and frameworks of heritage and those of local communities that often hold deep personal and community significance, the source of local knowledge. Powell further recalled conversations with the public and organisations who have not agreed with the decision to list, or not list, something that is deemed as important:

> “You'll have people that are incredibly passionate about a building and will be annoyed that another building takes precedent over their building. So, this is one of the biggest issues with local expertise is getting everyone together and to agree on an approach.”
>
> Gareth Powell
> Project Engagement Officer
> Missing Pieces Project, Historic England

Such situations underscore the difficulty of balancing expert frameworks with grassroots narratives, especially when they are connected to places of heritage that is an inherent part of the community’s identity. These emotionally charged interactions reveal how critical sustained trust is to successful heritage collaboration between professionals and local stakeholders. According to Walton, putting forth the effort of interacting with a variety of people who have a variety of education and experience is “an important way of engaging with people that you would never ever necessarily meet otherwise.” Her observation reinforces the idea that heritage work is as much about interpersonal skill and technical expertise, as it is about personal relationships. Such relationships can turn into important connections personally as well as professionally. This awareness can be a major benefit in building a healthy relationship and help combat the development of an ‘us versus them’ mentality, which heritage professionals acknowledge as a common obstacle between archaeologists and members of the public.

> “My role as Finds Laision Officer…in the North East involved establishing contacts with metal detecting groups, who go out detecting, find archaeological objects while out detecting, but didn't really have a very good relationship with archaeologists in the North East. And there's been quite fraught relationship between metal detectors and archaeologists for a very long time. So, the Portable Antiquities Scheme, when it went national back now 20 years ago, the real impetus was to encourage metal detectorists to record their objects and that was about 90% of my role in the North East.”
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

This move signified a shift from enforcement to collaboration, redefining metal detectorists not as antagonists but as potential citizen-scientists. Pickering offered a complementary perspective, noting:

> "There's always been a segregation of archaeologists versus detectorists…they've (archaeologists) gone through a degree to look at these things, and their extraction process is completely different from a hobbyist's extraction process. So, I think it's just about marrying the two together in unison without having a crossover of any animosity, and I think that's got to be done respectfully, whichever way it's looked at."
>
> Anthony Pickering
> Metal Detectorist
> Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

Pickering's comments show that metal detectorists are ready to collaborate with professionals, as long as there is trust and respect between the formal experts, like archaeologists, and informal experts, such as metal detectorists. Westwood and Smith also shared worries about misunderstandings and negative views. Westwood commented:

> "In the 70s and 80s when metal detecting started, and you've got academics and archaeologists on one side and the metal detectorists on the other and they're butting heads and, you know, it was terrible. There are some detectorists and archaeologists that would like to think it's still like that."
>
> Benjamin Westwood
> Finds Liaison Officer
> Portable Antiquities Scheme

It is important to understand this tension within the context of the 70s and 80s. During this time, many archaeologists were unpaid volunteers and heritage discussions focused less on 'experts versus non-experts' and more on different viewpoints. Westwood went on to further emphasise that it is a "much more complex picture." Smith agreed and surmised that the divide could be, at least in part, related to an "anti-expert movement" where some people "just don't believe that they should take things to an expert simply because they're an expert." Smith's comment underscores a broader concern of the socio-political trend of anti-intellectualism, a term coined in the 1960s by Richard Hofstadter, which he defined as

“resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition constantly to minimize the value of that life” (Hofstadter 1963, 7). This movement challenges not just archaeology but public institutions more widely.

Throughout all of the challenges discussed, all interviewees expressed the belief that if relationships are not carefully built on trust and consistently nourished, there tends to be a divide between the professionals and the local stakeholders, which is part of what is inhibiting the growth of these heritage schemes. While tensions have sometimes shaped these relationships historically, all participants acknowledged a steady improvement in dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect over time.

4.2 Emergent Themes

4.2.1 Heritage

While the perspectives, opinions, and experiences denoted a variety of challenges and obstacles between the various groups, all of the participants agreed that heritage should be for everyone, and local knowledge is critical to maintaining the integrity of history. In fact, despite their differing roles and level of expertise, all participants echoed the belief that access to heritage should not be merely an institutional concern, but a public right rooted in place-based knowledge. Residents of Piercebridge expressed a strong sense of pride in Piercebridge’s unique heritage as a Roman fort and market town, grounded not in just an abstract history but also in its immediate and visible presence as an important site of historical significance. For example, Blamire, a longtime resident of Piercebridge, provided several instances of his view of heritage as a tangible thing. Blamire mentioned that heritage is a regular part of his life. He specifically noted the Roman hand-fettled stones in his fireplace that were taken centuries ago from the fort to build his home. He also referred to the Roman-era rubbish pit just outside the fort, along with local residents who have original Roman baths and toilets in their gardens. These examples raise questions such as who decides what is meaningful and valuable, as well as where the boundaries are between public and private heritage practice.

Chalmers, the Mayor of Piercebridge, remarked that she often interacts with visitors who come to the church in the village looking for the graves of their ancestors. “We have people coming at the church and, um, and saying, do you know where the grave is of so-and-so? They're related to me…they're looking for the family thing.” Referring to informal tours of private property with Roman features, Blamire suggested that if anyone is interested in seeing the Roman latrines, “Speak to the farmer and he will let you see the toilets.” He also talked about a resident who has Roman baths in his rear garden. “You can just knock on the door and ask him. He'll let you through to see it.” These acts of openness and trust show that heritage in Piercebridge is more than just a historical record. It is a living resource that residents are eager to share, even with outsiders. These examples of local knowledge highlight how heritage flows into informal networks of access, memory, and storytelling. Such small, social acts demonstrate how heritage is often navigated by locals through relationships of trust, rather than official signage or curated exhibits placed by heritage organisations. This mirrors previously discussed themes of trust and perception, suggesting that successful engagement often depends on personal relationships more than institutional visibility.

Powell also emphasised this point in his outreach role, noting the importance of legitimising everyday historical narratives and making heritage accessible to all.

> “Some people say, ‘*I have a story, it's not that important.*’ And my role is to go out to talk to people, to say no, the information you've got is pertinent, the information you've got is relevant, the information you've got is important…When I was talking to people, it was kind of like they thought that things like Buckingham Palace would be listed, not things in Lewisham…There are over 400,000 list entries on, on the NHLE (National Heritage List for England). Immediately, we've got a story that is unique to that one list entry. So that, to me, is invaluable…this is where we need you.”
>
> Gareth Powell
> Project Engagement Officer
> Missing Pieces Project

Powell's experience underscores the role of the public as keyholders of local knowledge and the significance of that information. Furthermore, this affirms a core argument of this research, that heritage is co-produced through mutual recognition between professionals and local stakeholders of the value of local knowledge in maintaining the integrity of history.

4.2.2 Local knowledge

Powell recognised that residents often see different things than outsiders do: "There will be something that, I will approach it and go, oh, that's really interesting. You'll go, no, that's not the interesting bit. The interesting bit is this." Walton confirmed Powell's observation:

> "[Local knowledge] is absolutely fundamental to understanding the archaeology of an area…[Locals] have quite significant levels of engagement and understanding with the landscape that archaeologists do not necessarily have. So, somebody's been brought up in a particular area, walked those fields and been out detecting there. Quite often they'll have experience of that landscape. They'll be able to say, *'I know that an early mediaeval settlement will be on that hillside*', and '*I know a Roman villa would be situated*', in a way that perhaps an archaeologist who is trained at university and done a lot of theoretical study, doesn't have that same engagement with the landscape."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

This kind of place-based knowledge comes from years of direct interaction and first-hand experience with the land. It adds to archaeological theory by including the lived experience of everyday people or local stakeholders, creating an opportunity for co-interpretation of the historical narrative. Such insights are often only accessible through deep familiarity with a place, something held by local community members that often evades outsiders and institutional experts.

Piercebridge residents Chalmers and MacIntyre independently mentioned the old Village Hall, which used to be the old Schoolhouse, and how such buildings played a key role in

their local memories from childhood up to and through the recent past. In fact, MacIntyre remembered, “It was a lovely little building that we had the kids’ birthday parties in there and it was nice because we got together, we had bingo in there, we had Curry nights, we had quizzes.” Chalmers also discussed the personal loss felt when the Village Hall/Old Schoolhouse was sold, which she had attended as a child. Although she understood that cost was a barrier to keeping it, there was an obvious attachment to the building and the memories it held for her as a significant place of her childhood. This highlights the distinction between officially designated heritage sites and places of personal and communal memory that carry cultural weight despite lacking formal recognition.

Blamire discussed the local business he owns, which his great-grandfather began in 1898. He lamented never asking his father or grandfather about the history of the business. In fact, Blamire reflected on how significant it would be if there were some type of historical record detailing events that happened at various times and to various people within the business. Blamire’s regret over these undocumented histories suggests a potential role for national heritage schemes in safeguarding intangible, intergenerational knowledge that is at risk of disappearing. Whether Historic England would be interested in listing such a building is debatable, but this example illustrates the emotional attachments that are present when discussing potential listings with the public. Such attachments, while deeply significant to communities, often fall outside the scope of institutional criteria based on national significance, raising questions about the inclusivity of heritage frameworks. However, the national schemes have a responsibility to determine how they will define what places are culturally important at a local level, as well as whether or not they are deemed appropriate for protection at a national level. According to Powell, the Project Engagement Officer for the Missing Pieces Project, “As long as it doesn't break the T&Cs (terms and conditions), everything's open to discussion…it’s just trying to open the list to as many people as possible.” By extending heritage recognition to places across the UK, like Piercebridge, along with the stories of the people who live there, schemes like the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project become tools for inclusion by providing local residents with a voice and an opportunity to share that voice through the

recording of their very personal local knowledge and histories. Simply put, as Blamire stated, “Local knowledge is so much better.”

MacIntyre described the Piercebridge community’s relationship with its past in emotional terms: “We’re really proud…we want to showcase where we live, because we are proud of it.” As previously discussed, this feeling of pride was often tied to many specific tangible elements, including buildings, ancient Roman and Medieval ruins, as well as communal spaces, which provide a seemingly tangible structure to local community residents’ sense of identity and their personal ties to the respective place. However, as described by many of the participants, this sense of pride also included a degree of apprehension. More specifically, the residents appeared to struggle with the idea that sharing their local heritage publicly could create some unintended consequences. For example, MacIntyre voiced concerns over the growing exposure that Piercebridge is already experiencing: “You do worry, don’t you? The more people that know about us…” However, conversely, Chalmers expressed hope that greater access could be achieved in the future, in particular wanting “to promote the Roman side more.” However, she was careful to mention that the best situation would not involve busloads of tourists - "Just people in cars would be quite happy." These conflicting thoughts show that, while there is a desire to share local heritage with outsiders and within the community, there are also concerns about the potential negative effects those changes could have on the local area. This underscores the delicate balance heritage professionals must maintain to encourage public involvement without harming the identity of local communities. Tangible and intangible heritage is not just something to share, but also something fragile that needs to be protected. This reflects earlier ideas about trust and communication, where good intentions without proper safeguards can increase local concerns instead of promoting cooperation.

The heritage professionals interviewed agreed that local knowledge is a crucial and irreplaceable part of the development of the historical and cultural landscape. However, according to these professionals, the general public's lack of awareness of these initiatives seems to be their biggest obstacle. In fact, while all of the local residents of Piercebridge interviewed knew about English Heritage, since the Piercebridge Roman bridge is an

English Heritage site, none were familiar with the PAS or the Missing Pieces Project. This highlights a significant gap in outreach that needs to be addressed one way or another. When asked if Blamire planned to use the national heritage schemes, he commented, "Yeah…now I know it's there, because before if I didn't know about this, where do you go to? The university? You don't know where to take it to." This statement emphasises a crucial element of this study which is that there are often missed opportunities of engagement and collaboration between stakeholders and heritage professionals. However, even with the limited resources mentioned earlier, the heritage professionals interviewed were determined to raise public awareness of these national heritage programs through consistent outreach.

4.2.3 Outreach

Increasing the public's awareness of local knowledge and heritage of sites like Piercebridge was not the only challenge faced by heritage professionals. Increasingly, outreach is becoming more focused on getting the word out to younger generations, commonly described as 'digital natives,' who engage with information differently than many older generations. As mentioned in the literature review, "digital native" is a term coined by Marc Prensky to describe individuals who grew up immersed in digital technology (Prensky 2001). Mason, the County Archaeologist for County Durham, discussed the nuanced dynamics that play into the active interest in heritage, including digital natives, and how it seems to follow a particular pattern of engagement. This reflects broader challenges discussed earlier, such as trust-building and relevance, particularly when working with younger groups who may have little exposure to heritage institutions. Speaking of outreach to school-age children, Mason commented:

> "Get them interested in archaeology because there's always that demographic thing about public interest in that you might get quite a lot of interest when people are quite young, and when they become quite mature, when they retired. But then, the people in the middle are so busy with their working lives or families…That they rarely have time to devote to other things. So one is, if at all possible, making more visits to schools and actually taking objects out with you so they can handle

> them…And the other one is a possibility afforded by the story building, in that they have already had a number of archaeological workshops during the summer holidays, where children can go along and do exactly the same thing, they can handle real archaeological artifacts and learn about them."
>
> David Mason, Ph.D.
> County Archaeologist
> County Durham

Mason's approach demonstrates that tactile, experience-based learning deepens memory retention and engagement, especially in younger learners, including multifaceted outreach programs that incorporate not just excavation, but also complementary skills like finds recording, photography, and interpretation. In fact, Mason's experience with public outreach events detailed that "some just want to dig…others wanted to get the skills of photography and drawing and interpretation…[and] finds processing." His comprehensive vision reflected a belief in participatory learning that extends far beyond the traditional classroom, taking participants into a controlled fieldwork type environment. Such strategies align with participatory heritage models, which emphasize co-creation of meaning between professionals and local stakeholders.

Within Historic England, there is also a constant effort to engage with and bring awareness to school-age children concerning the Missing Pieces Project. This initiative reflects an effort to normalise heritage, challenging the perception that it is only concerned with elite histories or monumental architecture. Powell explained, "We have a Heritage Schools Department, so they will go to schools and part of what they teach is Missing Pieces Project". In addition to that outreach, the Missing Pieces Project goes even further.

> "We make a conscious effort to go to under-represented communities…I always love to say that there's under 300 listed palaces, but there's over 11,000 listed factories. So, working class heritage is vast. There are more people that have worked in the factory, more relatives that worked in the factories than have lived in palaces…there's more stories to gather from those people."
>
> Gareth Powell

By highlighting sites of everyday labour that include local knowledge, such as factories, Powell reframes the scope of heritage to include spaces long overlooked in official narratives. As a heritage professional, Powell is deliberate in his undertaking to ensure the outreach by the Missing Pieces Project is open and inclusive with the understanding that that will look different depending on the participants. Local communities consist of many residents and groups. To develop more inclusive outreach strategies, it is important to understand the power dynamics, communication styles, and trust building processes that influence how local stakeholders and heritage professionals interact. This focus on understanding context reflects earlier findings about local knowledge, emotional ties to specific places, and the need for heritage programs to encourage inclusive, two-way conversations between these groups.

4.2.4 Piercebridge

An example of the dynamics between different groups of specialists and local stakeholders is the interaction between Walton, when she was a Finds Laision Officer (FLO) with the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), and two local divers, Rolfe Mitchinson and Bob Middlemass. Mitchinson and Middlemass were members of the Northern Archaeological Group who were, at the time, investigating the archaeology of Piercebridge and the River Tees. The area's significance stems from its Roman occupation, and the riverbed is believed to contain remnants of structures related to the Roman bridge and associated settlement activities. According to Walton, although the divers were originally diving "to record bridge and other structures on the riverbed at Piercebridge," they kept coming across artefacts which they subsequently collected and stored. Walton goes on to further state that Mitchinson and Middlemass had taken some of the objects "to the county archaeologist since the 1980s, but nobody had had the time to really focus on the material." Because this was pre-PAS, there had been photographs taken, but nothing officially recorded. Once the PAS was created, these objects were brought to the attention

of Walton and eventually over 3,000 items were brought in and recorded. Mitchinson and Middlemass understood that these finds could potentially add to or change the historical narrative of those sites in Piercebridge, which is why they reached out to Walton.

> "I went to talk to them about the importance of recording, and archaeological objects and what the Portable Antiquities Scheme could offer, and Bob and Rolfe then subsequently phoned me up and said that they had some things that they would like me to look at, that they'd shown to the county archaeologist since the 1980s, but nobody had had the time to really focus on the material. They said these objects had been photographed and would I take a look at them and record them in the Portable Antiquities Scheme?"
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Little did Walton know, they had accumulated thousands of artefacts over a 30-year period from the River Tees at Piercebridge.

> "They took me to the garage of their house and opened the garage door, and there were lots. I thought they were exaggerating about how much stuff they collected, but there were bags and bags of pottery and animal bone and then all the finds all in, either in ice cream or margarine tubs, labelled with the year and the area of the river where they found them."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Although they did not have formal training, the self-developed cataloguing methods of Mitchinson and Middlemass showed great care and focus on archaeological context, which was enhanced by their skills as divers and their active roles within the local archaeologist's club. Their concerted effort to document the ancient items located in the River Tees increased their personal local knowledge and aided professional archaeologists in studying and documenting the artefacts. This example supports the idea that local community members can and often do serve as protectors of cultural heritage. Walton

worked on recording these items for many years, in addition to her other responsibilities as a Finds Liaison Officer, with the entire Piercebridge assembly eventually being purchased by Durham University. Walton acknowledged that it would have been almost impossible for experts to be afforded the resources to have completed this project on their own.

> "Bob and Rolfe had significant knowledge of diving and of water flow and Bob used to be a carpenter, so he could make quite detailed plans of the underwater wooden structures that they were finding, than I would have been able to make. They were amazing."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

The work of Mitchinson and Middlemass shows how informal stewardship can lead to institutional engagement. This is a type of grassroots heritage curation that questions traditional top-down preservation models. In fact, this example further illustrates the complementary nature of expertise, where formal academic knowledge and practical, place-based skills intersect to produce outcomes neither group could achieve alone. This collaboration connects with broader trends in community archaeology. Shared authority and mutual respect are seen as important for effective heritage management. The interactions between Walton, the 'expert,' and Mitchinson and Middlemass, the 'non-experts' from a local archaeological group, show the complex relationships between heritage professionals and local stakeholders. This supports scholarship that challenges binary definitions of expertise by recognising situated knowledge and lived experience as legitimate forms of heritage insight. Moreover, this example epitomises the critical nature of how local knowledge contributes to not only maintaining the integrity of an ever-evolving historical narrative but also adds to the heritage of a specific place, in this case, the Roman community of the past and the Piercebridge community of the present.

Without the contribution of community archaeology, and metal detectorists in particular who may or may not be involved in formal groups or clubs, there would be significant gaps in the telling of humanity's story.

> “I think it's fundamental, not just for Piercebridge, but more generally, engagement with metal detecting and archaeology because these people who detect quite often do have significant levels of [local] knowledge. And just in terms of identifying objects at a level far beyond what most archaeology graduates will be able to do, metal detectorists will know what they're looking at.”
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Such recognition pushes back against long-standing academic hierarchies that often undervalue the local knowledge of those considered to be ‘non-experts.’ Trusting these informal experts, and legitimizing their insights through schemes like the PAS, may be one of the most effective ways to sustain public engagement in heritage, as demonstrated by Walton’s experience with Mitchinson and Middlemass.

4.2.5 Metal detecting

Without the time and resources given by metal detectorists, many artifacts found in recent years would still be hidden. As metal detectorist Pickering pointed out, “It would not be in the nation's hands.” Pickering’s comment indicates that without community involvement, important parts of the archaeological record would stay mostly unknown, hard to reach, or threatened by environmental or development issues, such as degradation. Metal detectorists offer a valuable historical view and understanding that is not limited to just scholars and other professionals. When asked about his knowledge and experience with metal detectorists, Piercebridge resident Blamire stated:

> “Metal detectorists are pretty knowledgeable people. I've spoken to two or three of them and they're very, very knowledgeable. They know what they're looking for and what they're likely to find in any particular area as well, more so than people at the university because they're used to going around all these fields and they know what to find.”
>
> Roger Blamire
> Piercebridge Resident

This contrast reveals the practical and intimate relationship and knowledge that metal detectorists have with the land that institutional archaeologists and other specialists may lack. Blamire's statement reinforces one of the key themes of this research, that expertise is a continuum, and that repeated embodied engagement with the landscape yields interpretive insight. Pickering also confirmed the need to incorporate stories and contributions from scholars and professionals as well as the public. In his experience, there has been a great effort by both groups of people to work together and develop respect for their respective expertise, adding that, "I think there's definitely efforts from all sides to make it fit for purpose" while explaining that efforts could be made in "working together in cohesion a bit better." Pickering further suggests that they "step into my world and actually speak to my guys, that would be the more accessible approach." This shift, from inviting public contributors into academic spaces to professionals entering community gatherings and events, marks a reversal of the usual power dynamics in heritage practice, which can serve to bridge gaps and break down barriers in heritage discourse.

This desire for cohesion speaks to the underlying theme that heritage is everywhere and is for everyone (Council of Europe 2005). In the case of metal detectorists or others who are pro-actively involved in discovering artefacts and oral histories, the presence of heritage in their lives may be evident. Even if it is not evident, Powell stressed that heritage exists within all people, despite the fact that they may not know what it means or may feel that it has no direct influence in their lives. Powell provided a compelling illustration of 'latent' or 'passive' heritage, where people engage with heritage spaces meaningfully, even without consciously identifying them as such.

> "[The public] would take lessons in Brixton Community Centre, which has got a pool, which is listed. So, if you think about their interest in heritage, it would be nil. However, within this listed environment, they have learnt to swim, conquered a fear, met amazing people, and had a great time. So, are you interested in heritage? Well, yeah, because all of these amazing things happened in a listed building. Missing Pieces Project is an avenue for us to capture, it's this idea of people are interested in heritage, but they just don't know they're interested in heritage."

Gareth Powell
Project Engagement Officer
Missing Pieces Project

Understanding that heritage does not fit into a specific mould or definition can help those who promote or contribute to heritage through collecting stories and artifacts. This shows an inclusive approach to heritage, as institutional gatekeepers take on roles as facilitators rather than decision makers. As evidenced in these interviews, there is a solid foundation of eagerness within government programs and public interest to discover and preserve heritage through record keeping. Although there are many challenges, there is also noticeable progress in the journey to unite each group, thereby continuing the telling of the ever-evolving stories of our past with a focus on including local knowledge that enhances the historical narrative.

5. Discussion

This research builds on the previously conducted literature review, which demonstrates that UK heritage schemes, such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project, have been critically examined for their outreach strategies and impact on reporting by local stakeholders. Using the village of Piercebridge in County Durham, England, formerly a Roman fort and market town, as the case study for this project, extensive fieldwork, using qualitative methods informed by ethnographic principles, was conducted to answer the research questions stated in the introduction. More specifically, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including professionals from national heritage organisations and stakeholders, including local residents and a metal detectorist who manages a local club of nearly 2,000 detectorists.

5.1 National Heritage Schemes: Purpose, Awareness and Perception

To better understand the implications of public participation in heritage recording, it is first necessary to understand the purpose of national heritage schemes and consider how aware relevant groups are of these schemes that are designed to support heritage work on a national level. The accepted historical narrative of any location from any given point in time often depends on the archaeological evidence located and analysed by professional scholars, including archaeologists, historians, and others. Additionally, further contexts are often provided by stakeholders with local knowledge, such as metal detectorists and community residents living within a heritage site. This is most certainly the case across the United Kingdom with regard to Roman Britain (Teather 2022). Much of this documented history is owed to the rich anthropogenic deposits left by the Romans (Eckardt and Walton 2021; Emerick 2014). However, as additional excavations take place and more artefacts are located by professional archaeologists and local stakeholders alike, the historical record of the Romans in Britain continues to develop and evolve (Fulford and Holbrook 2018). Many of the artifacts crucial to the development of the accepted and published historical narrative have been found by members of the public. In fact, some of the heritage professionals and local stakeholders who were interviewed estimated that more than 90%

of finds are located by local stakeholders. These individuals, often regarded as 'non-experts', often have important local knowledge, which was evidenced by the information provided by the key informant interviews conducted with residents from Piercebridge and the owner/organiser of a local metal detecting group consisting of nearly 2,000 metal detectorists. For example, in 2019, a metal detectorist found a 16th-century necklace and pendant linked to King Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon (Solly 2023).

Figure 4: 16th century necklace located by a metal detectorist (Historic England 2023)

As required by law when an item deemed to be 'treasure' is located, this remarkable find was reported to the local Finds Liaison Officer (FLO) of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Subsequently, the item was moved to the British Museum, where it is available for the public to view. This artefact highlights the relevance that finds of local stakeholders can have on evolving historical narratives, but it is not uncommon for such items to be found by members of the public. Metal detectorists in particular find thousands of historically significant artefacts each year, many of which are classified as treasure and must be reported to their local FLO (GOV.UK 2025).

Despite national laws requiring everyone to report any item deemed to be 'treasure,' according to those interviewed, there are members of the public who do not always record their finds. This is due to a variety of reasons from lack of knowledge and understanding of respective laws to an unwillingness to disclose finds due to fear of them being taken by the crown. This presents a significant challenge for the national heritage schemes in accurately and comprehensively documenting the historical record, as it is impossible for historically

significant items to contribute toward the evolution of history if they are unaccounted for, which has the potential to compromise the integrity of history (Lewis 2018). In order to address the challenges of public awareness, multiple government schemes have been implemented to facilitate the reporting and recording of historical artefacts, stories, and events, including those of local stakeholders (British Museum 2025; Historic England 2025b). However, as demonstrated by interviews conducted with local community members of the village of Piercebridge, few members of the public may be aware of national heritage schemes, such as the Portable Antiquities Scheme or the Missing Pieces Project. In fact, none of the residents of Piercebridge that were interviewed were aware the heritage schemes existed, despite being directly connected to a significant Roman site managed by English Heritage. This revelation was even more surprising due to the substantial outreach programmes engaged in by national heritage scheme organisations, including English Heritage.

5.2 Face-to-Face Engagement and Emerging Technologies

While levels of awareness and perceived value shape who participates, the means through which outreach occurs also has a significant impact. Therefore, it is crucial to evaluate how communication strategies, such as face-to-face engagement and digital outreach, influence the extent and quality of public involvement. The findings of this research assert that face-to-face engagement is the most effective approach to building relationships of trust and encouraging participation within the national heritage schemes, a vital element of inclusive and accurate historical narratives. Examples include scheme officials making home visits and attending social club meetings often outside of business hours, as recounted by Phillipa Walton and reinforced by Anthony Pickering. Furthermore, it is suggested that community members who were directly connected to a heritage site were potentially more inclined to contribute to heritage schemes than non-locals or visitors. However, additional research would need to be conducted to confirm this finding, as interview constraints contributed to this research limitation, as further described below.

Some stakeholders interviewed indicated a frustration at the lack of communication of heritage scheme officials, despite indicating a clear interest for partnership and collaboration with the heritage schemes and their respective officials. Unfortunately, according to heritage scheme officials, the limitations of human and financial resources within the heritage schemes sometimes make public face-to-face outreach difficult, a common challenge discussed by Nassaney (Nassaney 2021). For instance, the budget cuts over the past several years within the PAS has caused the number of PAS staff in County Durham to drop from approximately four to two and a half in the past decade. Such constraints have limited their ability to have direct face-to-face contact with the public, which directly impacts the depth and quality of their relationships with local residents. One idea to combat the lack of staffing could include organising streamlined, consistent group presentations focused on educating local residents who live and work in places connected with heritage sites that could be presented to the community as a group, rather than attempting to contact local residents one at a time (Thomas 2014; Emerick 2014). Such a presentation would still provide face-to-face interaction to develop strong personal relationships within the community while maximising the limited time available to heritage organisation professionals. On the other hand, heritage professionals are finding innovate ways to streamline the process to free up some of their time to continue the personal interactions with local stakeholders. However, with the budgetary constraints in mind, electronic communication from heritage organisations is better than no communication at all, which is what Piercebridge residents have experienced thus far. Accordingly, Pickering mentioned that his metal detecting group has benefitted from the ability to submit finds information and photos electronically. Yet, Pickering still stressed the importance that in-person outreach events and meetings can have in building relationships of trust. This insight further confirms the assertion that when heritage professionals go beyond the appearance of collaborating and choose to genuinely engage with the public, a more well-informed historical narrative is given space to evolve (Atalay 2006). Being aware of relatively recent budget cuts to national heritage schemes, Pickering voiced additional frustrations over the two-year backlog of items classified as treasure that members of his

groups are still waiting to either get back or be compensated for, with many of them waiting well past the typical 6 to 18 months window (GOV.UK 2025). However, Pickering also voiced concerns over potential increased costs to metal detectorists to compensate for faster processing that could deter participation in the hobby.

With the technology to disseminate, collect, and analyse data readily available, there are likely more solutions to increase public awareness and understanding of the importance and relevance of the national heritage schemes. In fact, every heritage scheme official interviewed emphasised the importance of developing and maintaining ongoing relationships of trust with local residents and clubs, a significant effort that takes time and patience (Atalay 2006). Although heritage organisations often emphasise digital modes of outreach to engage younger 'digital natives', the research suggests that this practices is not necessarily effective. Accordingly, research has found that community groups still value personal contact and trust-building rather than simply being offered digital tools (Giglitto et al. 2019). Likewise, as in the case of Piercebridge, the aforementioned findings explain why local residents responded more positively to the suggestion of a "hard-copy letter" or a personal talk rather than an email link. Additionally, FLO's found that home visits with metal detecting groups had greater success in motivating individuals to record and report metal detecting finds. For example, as a former FLO, Walton recalled spending entire evenings in local men's social clubs and even making home visits with detectorist groups in order to build personal relationships, some of whom she continues to maintain contact with, despite not having worked for the PAS for many years. Walton's experience underscores how vital in-person contact can be for recording both historically significant objects and their stories.

5.3 Trust and Collaboration among Local Stakeholders and Heritage Professionals

This research asserts that the presence of ongoing relationships between heritage professionals and local stakeholders plays a decisive role in whether knowledge is shared, finds are reported, and heritage engagement is sustained over time. A major focus for the

heritage professionals interviewed was at the grass roots level, as their primary contacts were made through metal detecting clubs and schools. Although the research pointed to a more accepting and collaborative relationship between heritage professionals, archaeologists, and local stake holders, there are still, as Thomas (2015) described, "raised eyebrows" within the archaeological community when it comes to interacting with the metal detecting community (Thomas 2015, 314). While many scholars argue that heritage is everywhere and should be for everyone, many people are not actively engaged in heritage activities and may not have a desire to do so (Council of Europe 2005; Ireland et al. 2025; Schofield 2014). However, the key to involving more people in heritage may be as simple as informing them of the difference they can make by sharing their local knowledge. For example, when residents of Piercebridge were informed of the aforementioned heritage schemes, they not only wanted to know more about them, but were interested in contributing the knowledge they had about their local community to them. However, in this case, the desire of Piercebridge residents to engage with national heritage schemes could also be linked to their inherent interest and direct personal tie to the community that they live in, which is a heritage site. In fact, as previously mentioned, their homes are built with stones hand fettled by the Romans. There are also undocumented relics and artefacts seemingly everywhere, as Roger Blamire stated that he is hesitant to dig in his garden for fear of disturbing ancient Roman antiquities. Likewise, Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officer Ben Westwood estimated that approximately 98% of recorded finds come from local stakeholders with an interest in heritage or history, with the vast majority of those coming from metal detectorists.

> "The finds recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme have been found by everyday people (not archaeologists), mostly by those enjoying their hobby of metal-detecting. These finds, if recorded, are making a massive contribution to archaeology and (as in the case of the Henry and Katherine pendant) helping to transform our knowledge of Britain's past."
>
> Michael Lewis,
> Head of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and Treasure
> The British Museum

Taking into consideration that many heritage schemes in the UK have been in existence for less than a decade, it makes sense that the general public does not yet have a high level of awareness of the relevant heritage schemes available to them. However, given the fact that the PAS has been in existence for almost thirty years, there is room to question why they are not more well-known to the general public. Informal interviews with people who were from outside the area that were visiting Piercebridge were conducted, but due to the weather and other factors, only four participants were questioned. Each participant had no knowledge of the heritage schemes mentioned (Missing Pieces Project and Portable Antiquities Scheme). Regarding knowledge of local heritage sites, an informal meeting of community members from areas within County Durham but outside of Piercebridge indicated that none of them had ever visited Piercebridge, and some of them had never even heard of the community, despite each of the participants having lived in County Durham their entire lives. These discussions suggest that interest in heritage and local knowledge, as well as awareness of heritage schemes, may be limited to those with direct connections to heritage sites (McDonald 2011). Furthermore, Piercebridge residents were not opposed to or disinterested in the national heritage schemes prior to being interviewed, rather, they were simply unaware of their existence, which is important considering one of the main goals of these schemes is to include the public (Rockman *et al*. 2012).

In light of the fact that the participants live in a village that is closely linked to an English Heritage site, the lack of residents' awareness of the heritage schemes was unexpected, especially given the outreach efforts of those national heritage schemes. However, that lack of awareness was not limited to Piercebridge residents. An email exchange with a heritage professional, conducted as part of this research, indicated they were unaware that the Roman bridge in Piercebridge is owned and managed by English Heritage. Likewise, another heritage professional interviewed had never heard of the Missing Pieces Project. As several heritage professionals that were interviewed explained, being familiar with the sites under their organisation's stewardship is nearly as important as developing relationships

with local stakeholders, who are, in many cases, the custodians of invaluable local knowledge.

According to those interviewed, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) is built on strong, ongoing relationships between Finds Liaison Officers (FLO) and local stakeholders, primarily those belonging to metal detecting clubs. As a result, metal detectorists, including the one interviewed, often know more about the schemes than the average person, as metal detectorists often interact with PAS staff to record their discoveries (Portable Antiquities Scheme 2023). However, the significance of metal detectorists within PAS reporting raises additional questions regarding whose voices are most prominently represented within national heritage schemes. Unlike other local stakeholders, metal detectorists often gather artefacts and collect local knowledge at multiple farms through a number of counties. This mobility, combined with their diverse backgrounds, means they do not always possess the intimate, place-based forms of 'local knowledge' found among localised residents. While their contributions to archaeological records are substantial, their collective perspectives may not fully align with those of the communities who live within the respective landscapes. Therefore, it could be argued that while the hybrid nature of metal detectorists allow them to be considered as 'local stakeholders', they also serve a purpose and gather knowledge aligning with heritage professionals. Such dynamics serve to complicate the representation of the 'local' voice within national heritage schemes. As PAS has been relatively successful in their outreach efforts with metal detectorists, it may now be appropriate to focus awareness efforts on other underrepresented groups, such as the residents of places connected to heritage sites, like Piercebridge. Notably, Blamire, a resident of Piercebridge, stated that, while he doubted anyone in the village was aware of the schemes, he believed that there would be a significant amount of interest if direct contact was made with residents by heritage organisation professionals. In fact, Blamire explained that there are already a handful of residents who do their own local heritage work, increasing their local knowledge, who he believed would greatly benefit from the support of national heritage schemes and the expertise of their officials. This confirms Schofield's (2014) finding that because heritage is constantly evolving, it is advantageous

for both professionals and local stakeholders to engage with each other in a variety of cultural and social contexts.

David Mason, the County Archaeologist for County Durham, suggested that Finds Liaison Officers' positive personal relationships with metal detectorists directly impacts the level of reporting to the national heritage schemes. As stated in the literature review, 94% of PAS finds in 2023 were submitted by metal detectorists, highlighting the strong outreach conducted by FLO's to the metal detecting community (British Museum, 2025). This statistic further demonstrates that face-to-face contact breaks down barriers between professionals and stakeholders, leading to increased utilisation of the national heritage schemes. Piercebridge residents also confirmed that they prefer a means of communication other than electronic, which they described as impersonal. In fact, when they were asked what they thought about the national heritage organisations sending them an email with a link to the schemes' websites to bring awareness to local residents, Blamire stated that "a hard copy letter would be the best bet, through everyone's door." Likewise, MacIntyre, also a resident of Piercebridge, was interested in learning more about the schemes and wondered if staff from the PAS or Missing Pieces Project would be willing to personally "come and do a talk with the people." There appears to be a greater desire for face-to-face outreach, rather than electronic communication, especially in a place like Piercebridge that has an established population of mature residents who are less likely to use technology as a primary means of communication. Another challenge is that, while metal detectorists and local residents often have different ways of gathering and processing historical artefacts and local knowledge, heritage schemes may risk over-representing the interests and interpretations of the metal detecting community. The reason for this is because, due to the nature of metal detectorists regularly finding items classed as 'treasure,' they tend to have more interaction with heritage schemes' professionals. In contrast, local community residents do not generally have the same regular and ongoing interactions. As a result, meaningful relationships of trust are often built between national heritage scheme officials and metal detectorists, while local community residents may not even know who to contact if an item of historical

significance were located. This can cause an under-representation of local residents who maintain and understand the heritage landscape on a daily basis, which emphasises an important yet complicated relationship dynamic that would benefit from further research.

There has been a significant amount of research linking heritage hobbies with improved mental health, and many FLOs witness this first-hand (Ander et al. 2013; Gatersleben et al. 2020; Oxtoby 2023). When Westwood and Smith, current FLOs in County Durham, were interviewed, they connected one of the most common forms of public heritage engagement, metal detecting, with mental health. Smith noted that within metal detecting in particular, "there's a lot of chatter about mental health" with an especially noticeable uptick of the hobby observed during COVID. Pickering confirmed that the number of participants in metal detecting has "boomed since lockdown." Westwood commented that a good portion of their interactions with the public focus on well-being, and that FLOs "end up sometimes being a bit of a social worker…we listen to people's problems and issues, and then record their finds." As mental health makes its way to the forefront, it is becoming increasingly important to recognise the benefits of and give support to the wide array of heritage activities available to the public (Fredheim 2018; Thomson and Chatterjee 2022).

Even when heritage officials are successful in developing meaningful relationships with local stakeholders, the challenge remains of determining the best way to inform the general public of the heritage schemes, how they work, and, subsequently, how to convey the importance of registering artefacts classified as treasure by the *Treasure Act of 1996* (GOV.UK 2025). Even more difficult is conveying the significance of recording items to document local knowledge that are not required by law, such as non-treasure artefacts, photos, documents, and even memories of past events and places, along with a means of recording them. However, according to Portable Antiquities Scheme Finds Liaison Officers Westwood and Smith, conversations regarding the recording of archaeologically significant finds not classed as 'treasure' as defined in the *Treasure Act of 1996*, along with their origins and values, are already taking place in online forums and social media platforms. Criticisms of such discussions are that they function with limited, if any, engagement from qualified professionals and without consistent review mechanisms. Additionally, such

online comments often lack any type of mediation or vetting process, like the ones already included in the PAS scheme. Westwood and Smith both discussed that this lack of oversight often creates an online platform for the spreading of false information that ends up working against the public use of heritage schemes. Walton, a current scholar and former Finds Liaison Officer, believes that one way to address the inaccuracies perpetuated through online forums could be through the implementation of an online open-source database. Likewise, Anthony Pickering, the owner/organiser of North Detecting Events LTD that has nearly 2,000 members, suggested "a non-licensed central database specifically for detecting clubs to actually come forward and say, this is North Detecting Events, this is where we detect, and have a register of actual clubs." While his suggestion speaks directly to metal detecting, the UK government could create and oversee a nationwide, online public database specifically for sharing heritage, including metal detecting information, artefacts, oral histories, and buildings (Prensky 2001). Walton further explained that the idea of a non-licensed database accessible to the public had been discussed several years ago when she was a Finds Liaison Officer with the PAS: "There was an idea to create county pages where people would be able to discuss their objects and what they meant for the archaeology of the local area." According to Walton, presumably due to a lack of funding, the programme was never implemented. However, other places both within and outside the UK have been successful in implementing and maintaining open sources databases, such as Know Your Bristol and the Atlas of Living Australia.

The Know Your Bristol initiative is a project developed by the University of Bristol, Bristol City Council as well as Bristol community groups, allowing "people to explore, research and co-create Bristol history, heritage and culture using digital tools" (Know Your Bristol 2025). From the Know Your Bristol initiative emerged Know Your Place, a web-based mapping tool that allows users to overlay maps from the 18th through 20th to compare them using a 'peel' or sliding tool, enabling visual comparisons of urban development over time (Know Your Place 2025). Know Your Place also includes historic images and listed buildings that are overlayed across any map chosen. The aim of Know Your Place is to access the

local knowledge of Bristol residents who “know what the academics cannot know, because it is not located in the local archives or press” (Bickers et al. 2012, 3) and document it within the Know Your Place database, making it accessible for all. Know Your Place was built through the efforts of ‘Bristolians’ that shared their “memories, photographs, and documents, as well as souvenirs, maps, medals, and other artefacts” to recall “decades of Bristol’s unwritten history” (Bickers et al. 2012, 3).

The Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) is another successful example of an open source database that records local knowledge, similar to Know Your Bristol, but on a national scale (Atlas of Living Australia 2025). The ALA is an effective public online database where everyone is encouraged to contribute and share the location and category of their finds, which can even include photos of the items located. While the ALA is not specific to archaeological finds, it exemplifies an open-source database that demonstrates how existing heritage schemes in the UK could allow members of the public to share their finds (even those not classed as treasure), photos, documents, local knowledge, and oral histories of a specified area. The ALA has been in operation since 2010 and “is a collaborative, digital, open infrastructure that…helps to create a more detailed picture of Australia’s biodiversity for scientists, policy makers, environmental planners and land managers, industry and the general public, and enables them to work more efficiently” (Atlas of Living Australia 2025). The ALA provides opportunities for specialists to collaborate with stakeholders. For example, Nat Raisbeck-Brown, a spatial science professional, manages a project called the Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Project that is focused on capturing and preserving Indigenous knowledge of the ecological landscapes of respective their local areas by recording this information into the ALA (CSIRO 2025). As a result, Raisbeck-Brown works closely with a handful of organisations that also promote a similar ideology through in person outreach. In fact, she recently received a grant to travel to universities throughout the United States and Canada to bring further awareness to the ALA, making the information therein even more accessible to scientists and others around the globe. In fact, she emphasises the importance of effective communication:

> "Communication is at the base of everything we do in both work and life and through good communication we can do great science…people will contribute to discussion and share their knowledge when the communication is open, clear and inclusive."
>
> Nat Raisbeck-Brown
> Experimental Spatial Scientist
> Indigenous Ecological Knowledge Project, ALA

As found by this research, the 'open, clear and inclusive' communication spoken of by Nat-Raisbeck-Brown is strengthened through in person or otherwise personal contact that builds relationships of trust, especially when collaborating with local community members (Atalay 2006). Because there can be a tendency within the professional heritage sector to hyper-focus on researching and preserving what may be considered typically valuable, this type of communication is particularly important when engaging with groups that include marginalised people (Smith and Waterton 2009b). However, in order for such communication to improve the existing schemes, heritage professionals must be willing to work together with local residents living and working in areas connected to heritage sites (Rockman *et al.* 2012). Likewise, local community members would have to be willing to work with heritage professionals, which can only be done as personal relationships are built and nourished over time through effective, personal, and ongoing communication. Even if the public and heritage professionals are willing to come together to corroborate on a free, public, open source, online database, there is still the ongoing challenge of where the funding would come from. Furthermore, even if these changes were implemented, the lack of funding and insufficient staffing would make it difficult, if not impossible to vet public contributions to such a database. However, innovative funding mechanisms can be found to fund such endeavours. For example, the Atlas of Living Australia receive their funding "from the Australian Government through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy and is hosted by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation " (Atlas of Living Australia 2025).

If a way is found to tackle these challenges, especially those related to funding, an open-source database has the potential to lessen the workload on heritage scheme staff. This

would enable professionals to focus more on direct outreach, which they have explained is essential to the success of heritage initiatives. While digital tools like electronic communication can sometimes weaken relationships between professionals and stakeholders, technology might also provide solutions to help overcome these issues. Walton suggested that one potential solution lies with the relatively recent wide availability of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

> "Who knows what will happen with AI and the ability of AI to moderate, to validate and check finds records and create backing and all sorts of amazing things in the future."
>
> Phillipa Walton, Ph.D.
> Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester
> Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

While not yet a perfect system, the collaboration of professionals utilising AI as a tool to include local knowledge within historical and archaeological contexts could be a significant step forward in not only heritage contributions and local knowledge, but also with regard to public awareness and outreach. Furthermore, by streamlining data entry processes using AI, such tools could enable heritage professionals to engage more meaningfully with communities, even amid constraints on staffing levels, in addition to the outreach work that they already do with schools and other organisations with young people that are already familiar with technology.

These young people, who Prensky (2001) referred to as "digital natives", are a crucial element to the preservation and contribution of heritage (Prensky 2001). Powell, a Project Engagement Officer for the Missing Pieces Project, explained that digital natives tend to interpret and interact with the world around them in a different way than those who were introduced to technology later in life. While some heritage schemes, such as the PAS, are active on certain social media platforms, it may also be worth exploring an outreach scheme centred around engagement through social media outlets like TikTok or YouTube in order to specifically target digital natives in a way that they would better understand and be likely to identify with. Lack of deliberate outreach to this group, which could happen even if an easily accessible online database were implemented, as digital natives might still be

unlikely to use it, could potentially create even greater gaps between heritage professionals and stakeholders, resulting in further unintended consequences. However, further research would need to be conducted to determine if this would be the case.

Additional research could also determine if heritage officials believe that opening their current databases would improve or hinder their ability to obtain and record local knowledge. Additional research could also determine if professionals believe that an open-source database would actually make the information more available and accessible to a wider audience, along with identifying the unknown strengths, weaknesses, and challenges. The results of this study demonstrate that in-person, face-to-face engagement substantially increases the depth of the relationships of trust built between national heritage scheme officials and community members. Furthermore, while the use of electronic communication by professionals can create barriers with the stakeholder, resulting in decreased public confidence in the heritage schemes, other technologies, such as AI and social media platforms, could potentially be used to continue outreach efforts, especially with the digital natives (Prensky 2001). Such an initiative could provide additional time to heritage scheme staff members, increasing their level of outreach, deepening existing relationships, fostering new ones, and repairing those previously damaged by a lack of communication.

This study also found that, despite being well established, national heritage schemes are underutilised by members of the public, particularly those who are unaware of their existence. As referenced in the literature review, this includes community members directly connected to heritage sites that are often keepers of local knowledge (Schofield 2014; Novoa 2018; Lázaro Ortiz and Jiménez de Madariaga 2022). One of the reasons for this includes relatively recent budget cuts, inconsistent outreach that is often limited to school age children and metal detectorists, limited visibility, and overly formalised forms of communication. For example, local residents of Piercebridge were generally unaware of the national heritage schemes, suggesting that outreach efforts of national heritage organisations, thus far, has not been sufficient to reach the wider public. On the other hand, metal detectorists, who are more likely to be aware of the schemes, were often

frustrated by delayed responses, as well as concerns regarding over regulation resulting in a backlog of finds waiting to be recorded before they can be either returned to the finder or compensated for.

These findings show how modern heritage management can be improved by prioritizing personal engagement, building local relationships, and respecting local knowledge as valid and meaningful information (Thomas 2015). Although digital tools and online platforms have the potential to improve accessibility and efficiency, this research shows that personal, face-to-face engagement is still the most effective way to encourage community involvement and cultivate shared stewardship of heritage. Ultimately, the relationships formed between heritage professionals and local stakeholders are foundational to ensuring that local knowledge and artefacts are recorded, valued, and preserved. The research suggests that national heritage schemes could benefit from investing further in people, which includes hiring more staff and reaching out to stakeholders involved with local heritage. This approach has the potential to be part of the solution to these ongoing challenges.

6. Conclusion

This research examines the nuanced relationships between heritage professionals and local stakeholders, with a focus on the dynamics between members of the public and two national heritage schemes in England, namely the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) and the Missing Pieces Project. Using the village of Piercebridge in County Durham, England as a case study, this research discusses the interactions and relationships between heritage professionals and local stakeholders involved in the preservation and interpretation of archaeological heritage. Although the residents of Piercebridge were not aware of these national heritage schemes, there was not only interest in learning about the schemes, but a willingness to participate in the future. Their responses indicate that their lack of engagement is not from disinterest or apathy, but rather from a lack of exposure and outreach. In fact, due in large part to the work of Finds Liaison Officers in the Portable Antiquities Scheme, metal detectorists were the only members of the public with high levels of awareness and participation in the PAS. This gap in awareness highlights some of the challenges faced by heritage professionals in particular, such as insufficient funding, increased workloads, and the need to address misconceptions. These resource constraints risk further extending participation gaps, especially among local communities who may have a potential wealth of local knowledge, but remain largely disconnected from national heritage schemes.

This research additionally highlights the vital role that face-to-face contact plays in building relationships of trust, which is a key element in encouraging the public to participate in heritage schemes. When efforts are made to engage the public through personal contact, there is a greater likelihood that the public will engage with heritage schemes, reporting finds and adding to the historical narrative of any given place. This creates an atmosphere of credibility and trust where local knowledge is valued and integrated into formal heritage records, as was demonstrated by the successful examples of relationships between Finds Liaison Officers in the PAS and metal detectorists. While technology and digital communication in particular are an important part of recording finds and encouraging

public contributions, it is argued that nothing can replace the invaluable connection that is forged through in-person interactions. By investigating the challenges often found between heritage organisations and communities, such as public awareness and outreach, this research has contributed to a deeper understanding of the intricate strengths and weaknesses in the relationships that shape participation in heritage.

This research also points to the many changes taking place within the heritage sector as a result of technology. While face-to-face interaction is irreplaceable, the addition of technological pathways to interact and contribute to heritage, such as Know Your Bristol and the Atlas of Living Australia, opens up another level of participation, especially within the group of digital natives. Carefully designed and moderated open-sourced online databases could offer new opportunities for more extensive public participation while potentially alleviating some of the impediments heritage professionals encounter. Artificial Intelligence is another branch of information technology that offers new possibilities for data management, verification, and outreach. It is noted that these types of tools need to be implemented in ways that complement rather than replace personal engagement. Because digital natives will make up the majority of working adults in the near future, it may become necessary to purposefully incorporate outreach strategies that include the use of social media platforms popular with younger audiences, such as Instagram, TikTok, and others. Although this idea may seem unappealing to some, social media platforms are an effective means to engage with new and younger audiences quickly, which is a key consideration for heritage professionals who want to continue to develop meaningful relationships in the future.

Essentially, this research asserts that effective heritage management, particularly when addressing engagement with the public, hinges on relationships built on trust between heritage professionals and local stakeholders. This trust must be created and nurtured through personal, sustained, and respectful engagement, the cornerstone of successful public participation within national heritage schemes. While the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project have made significant progress in engaging certain sectors of the public, their outreach has yet to fully embrace the wider communities.

Addressing current difficulties in the levels of awareness and participation will require heritage organisations to reconsider the effectiveness of current outreach strategies, and a commitment to listen to and value local knowledge as an essential component to our collective history. By constructively combining both personal relationships and innovative technology, heritage organisations will be able to expand and enrich their engagement with local communities. Continuing to include as many perspectives as possible ensures that the ever-evolving historical narrative continues to reflect not only the findings of scholars, archaeologists, and other professionals, but also the lived experiences, memories, and knowledge of local stakeholders who are directly linked to sites of heritage.

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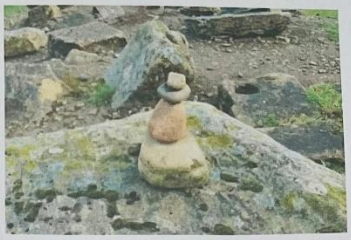
8. Appendices

8.1 Consent forms

Consent Form v1 – All participants



Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	☑	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	☑	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	☑	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	☑
Would you like to take part in the project?	☑	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☐	☐

If yes, please provide your email: _____

Name of participant: ROGER BLAMIRE

Signature of participant: [signature]

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: [signature]

Date: 13/03/2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Consent Form v1 – All participants

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	☑	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	☑	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	☑	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	☑
Would you like to take part in the project?	☑	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☐	☐

If yes, please provide your email: _____

Name of participant: Shirley Chalmers

Signature of participant: S. Chalmers

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: Lora Lucas

Date: 13/03/2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	☑	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	☑	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	☑	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	☑
Would you like to take part in the project?	☑	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☑	☐

If yes, please provide your email: info@vanilladesign.co.uk

Name of participant: Elizabeth MacIntyre

Signature of participant: EMacIntyre

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: Lora Lucas

Date: 12/03/2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	☑	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	☑	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	☑	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	☑
Would you like to take part in the project?	☑	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☑	☐

If yes, please provide your email: david.mason@durham.gov.uk

Name of participant: David Mason

Signature of participant: David Mason

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: Lora Lucas

Date: 10.06.2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	☑	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	☑	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	☑	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	☑
Would you like to take part in the project?	☑	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☐	☐

If yes, please provide your email: caroline.smith@durham.gov.uk

Name of participant: Caroline Smith

Signature of participant: Caroline Smith

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: Lora Lucas

Date: 10/06/2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	x	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	x	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	x	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	x
Would you like to take part in the project?	x	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☐	x

If yes, please provide your email: _____

Name of participant: ___Gareth Powell_____

Signature of participant: _____Gareth Powell__(electronically signed)_____

Name of researcher: _____Lora Lucas_____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____13/02/25_____

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	☒	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	☒	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	☒	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	☒
Would you like to take part in the project?	☒	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☒	☐

If yes, please provide your email: _____

Name of participant: Philippa Walton ..... _____

Signature of participant: ..... _____

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: 11/02/2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	Y	
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	Y	
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	Y	
Do you wish to remain anonymous?		N
Would you like to take part in the project?	Y	
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	Y	

If yes, please provide your email: Pickering.Anthony@icloud.com

Name of participant: Anthony pickering

Signature of participant: _____

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: 16/06/2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

Piercebridge Roman Bridge

Consent Form

Please read and answer every question. Thank you!

	YES	NO
Do you understand what the project is about, and that it involves the gathering of data through questionnaires and/or recorded interviews?	☒	☐
Do you understand that you do not have to take part and that if you do, you can leave the project at any time without giving a reason?	☒	☐
Do you understand that the information you share will be used to write a dissertation about Piercebridge and may be included in future conferences and/or publications?	☒	☐
Do you wish to remain anonymous?	☐	☒
Would you like to take part in the project?	☒	☐
Would you like to receive a copy of the dissertation?	☒	☐

If yes, please provide your email: benjamin.westwood@durham.gov.uk

Name of participant: Benjamin Westwood

Signature of participant: _____

Name of researcher: Lora Lucas

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: 10/06/2025

Lora Lucas - vdj511@york.ac.uk

8.2 Transcriptions

8.2.1 David Mason, Ph. D. – County Archaeologist in County Durham

Lora: Okay. First of all, thank you so much for taking time out of your busy schedule. I know you're very busy.

David: That's all right.

Lora: I appreciate that. If it's...

David: One of the more pleasurable aspects of the job.

Lora: Oh, good, good. Um, so, we'll just start. If you wouldn't mind telling me what your job is, in a nutshell.

David: Right, okay. Um, I had a small archaeology team at Durham County Council. Um, most of our work is concerned with monitoring planning applications and development proposals of all types that are going to disturb the ground in any manner, shape, or form. And then ensuring that we put in process, a system whereby a site is, what they call evaluated, if it's thought, if it's known or thought to contain archaeology, so then we have a process of evaluation, which is basically geophysical survey and trial trenching, to see if there's any archaeology there. If there isn't, then fair enough, they can go ahead and do what they want. If there is, then, um, it will probably be a condition on the planning permission, which states that they have to commission archaeological investigations before their development starts. There's another condition which will state that they have to have all the information recovered, analysed, and reported. So, that's, that's about 80% of our work, I would say. Um, we provide the same service to Darlington Borough Council. For both areas, we maintain the Historic Environment Record, which you're probably familiar with, and, and we also try and do as much outreach work as we can in the time remaining. So we, over the years, we produced a range of publications. We have an annual archaeology magazine, which is, sort of, popular articles to keep people abreast of what archaeology has been happening in their area. We have an Archaeology day conference along the same lines. Uh, we also manage Binchester Roman Fort Visitor Centre. So, that has, I don't know, what, 6,000, 7,000 visitors a year. We have an increasing number of school groups who visit the site. I mean, this week, for example, we have a school group in on four consecutive days, and the same

next week. So, by the time Easter arrives, the visitor assistants are going to be really exhausted.

Lora: It sounds like! So, you have a lot of different things that you're doing at any given time, although the majority of it is going out to sites and places that, where people want to build or disturb the ground in any way, just to make sure that there's not anything important there, in a nutshell, right?

David: Yeah, I'm assuming you're familiar with the organization of archaeology, you know, in, um, that there are, um, column planning archaeologists or curatorial archaeologists who are based most in local authorities. We say what should be done, and then the developer, or whoever, then commissions, uh, an archaeological company to do the actual work. And they have to submit, um, what we call written schemes of investigation which set out everything they're going to do, how they're going to do it, and then they send it to us for approval. And if we approve, then they can go ahead and do the work and we'll monitor it, if it's a fairly large site.

Lora: Okay, so within the scope of all that you do, do you ever come in contact with the two schemes I had mentioned, which is the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project? Do you have a lot of contact and interaction with them or is it pretty limited?

David: Well, I have to confess I wasn't aware of the Missing Pieces Project until I googled it and found out It was an initiative by Historic England, which, you know, and it makes sense to gather, um, everybody's stories, concerns, interests about, um, designated sites, which is what they're concerned with. Um, but, um, regarding the Portable Antiquities Scheme, um, this authority has hosted Finds Liaison Officers ever since the scheme was initiated way back in, I don't know, 1997, possibly? Um, so, over the years, it's fluctuated a bit in that sometimes we've hosted Finds Liaison Officers that cover the entirety of the northeast, um, because there was no other body that was willing to host them. Um, but then, eventually, it became a bit more sensible and the Great North Museum took on responsibility for the Finds Liaison Officer that covers Northumberland, Newcastle, Tyne and Weir, whereas ours covers County Durham, Darlington, Stockton, Hartlepool, etc. So, we have, with an increase in funding from the Portable Antiquities Scheme for the last, what, 18 months or so, we've had a Finds Liaison Officer and a Finds Liaison Assistant. So, the Officer is full-time and the Assistant is four days a week and that's split two with us and two with Great North Museum.

Lora: Okay, so you work very closely then with the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

David: Yeah, Yeah.

Lora: Okay, that's good to know.

David: Yeah. And of course, the benefit is that all the discoveries that they come across, or are reported to them, if they are of any interest, they get added to the Historic Environment Record. So, for example, if a metal detectorist recovers a lot of objects from a relatively small area, and that will flag up to us that there's a potential archaeological site there, so we can put it as such on the HER.

Lora: Right. Yeah, that's really great. It sounds like they've got a good connection. between all of those different, um, pieces of the puzzle.

David: Yeah, we try.

Lora: Right. Well, I'm sure you have the same, um, issues and challenges as far as funding and resources and just, manpower and all of those things that kind of seem to be...

David: Oh, yes. More and more as every year goes by. I mean, 2009, I think it was, I managed to get funding from the then Historic England, or English Heritage actually, to employ a full-time Historic Environment Record officer. So, that meant we were up to four staff. 2015, we were cut down to three staff, and last year we were cut down to 2.5 staff.

Lora: Wow.

David: Yeah, yeah. And there's still more to come.

Lora: And you're still expected to do the same amount of work...

David: Of course.

Lora: And, kind of, do the same with less. That's definitely a challenge I've heard.

David: Yeah. But over the years, we've tried to streamline what we do to save time. For example, once upon a time, and when contracting archaeology, I suppose, was a bit not really fully developed, uh, my staff used to produce, um, specifications for archaeological projects, and then the contractor would write back with a written scheme of investigation. And then we thought, well, really, this is wasting so much time because, after a number of years, the specifications are pretty well, um, you're just duplicating.

Lora: Right.

David: So instead, we cut out producing the specifications and just said, right, contractor, you produce the written scheme of investigation, and we'll say it's fine or not. So, that cut down the workload quite a bit.

Lora: Yes, and I suppose you have to get creative with all of the different cuts and changes that are constantly happening, for sure.

David: Yeah.

Lora: Um, while we're kind of on, you mentioned the HER, the Historic Environment Records. Do you want to...if you want to tell me, I've obviously researched it a little bit, but would you like to kind of give your overview of what it is?

David: Right. Um, our Historic Environment Record is, um, a bespoke one designed in-house, for better or worse, rather than the HBSMR, which is, about half the authorities in the country use. Um, which is, I mean, it's a good system, but it does come with significant cost implications for maintenance. Whereas, if we need maintenance, we might have to wait, but at least it's free. So, Historic Environment Record is basically a, uh, an index, to, containing information about all the archaeological sites, listed buildings, schedule monuments, you name it, it's in there. And then there are different sections within it which will be sources of information. So, that would be all the reports on excavations or articles about a particular aspect. Then there's an events section which will list, um, all the evaluations, for example, and investigations. And then we have...I've done sources, events, consultations, because the way we have evolved over the years is that we, to simplify matters, we ended up producing a list of criteria to give to the planners to say, if you get an application in and it meets any of these criteria, you need to consult us. So, we still check what they call the weekly lists of planning applications just in case something has slipped through the, you know, uh, so, yeah, so we do that. So, all the consultations are listed in the Historic Environment Record as well. So, that's all our, um, advice to the planning authority. Uh, it's linked to Geographic Information System, so it's all displayed on maps. So, they're the main elements, I guess.

Lora: So within, you're saying it's an index and it's a gathering of information, archaeological information in particular. Who is, I don't know if allowed is the right word, but who are the main contributors? Who is allowed to contribute to that index?

David: Um, editing rights are restricted to my team alone.

Lora: OK.

David: But we have, um, other officers who can look at it but they can't edit it.

Lora: OK.

David: And then we also have, um, it's undergoing a bit of a change at the moment, but we also have a publicly accessible version, which is called Keys to the Past. And that goes back about 20 years to an HLF funded project, which was Durham and Northumberland. But because, um, our IT side of things is changing, it's now going to separate off from Northumberland, and it's all connected with a new, um, facility called The Story, very original, which is essentially the new record office. Um, and it's also, it's located in a historic manor house, which has been extensively renovated and has had a new wing added to it for all the storage that the record office requires. It also incorporates, um, the, what are they called? Registrars - births, marriages and deaths, and they have wedding ceremonies there as well. And on the ground floor, there is a small, well, it's not that small, but a modestly sized exhibition space which has elements from the county record archives. It has some from the Durham Light Infantry Archives and collections, and also some archaeology.

Lora: Okay, that's really interesting. I didn't know a lot of these specifics, so this is very, very interesting to me. Within the HER, um, library, are, is there an avenue for, what I will call local experts, local stories, local findings, to be added? Or, is there any way for them, for local people, local knowledge to be incorporated into that index?

David: Yeah, there is. Um, we do, sort of, periodically have people getting in touch with us and they've been studying LiDAR, for example, in the area of the village or what have you, and they say, oh, I think there's an archaeological site there, there's some interesting shapes appeared in LiDAR. So, um, we haven't got the resources to go out and check everyone, just add them to a long list of things to do as and when. So, what we'll, we'll, if it's not immediately obvious that it's nothing, or we know it's, it's a modern phenomenon, we will add it to the HER, but with the caveat that, you know, it's only possible, it's only possibly an archaeological site, has yet to be proven. So, it's flagged up and it will be taken notice of, for example, if there's a planning application nearby. So, yeah.

Lora: OK.

David: So, we might get it, we might get some of those things checked out in that way. If we haven't got the resources to do it, it might be the case that a planning application is, covers that area, and we can get it incorporated into that side of things.

Lora: Okay, so as far as, um, my research is really focused on local knowledge and how important that is to, kind of, tell a greater historical narrative, which is always changing, as we know. Um, so, I'm wondering, you mentioned outreach. So, do you want to tell me a little bit about what you do with outreach, in particular with the public?

David: Yeah, yeah. First of all, um, I don't know if you're aware of the local listing project?

Lora: Yes.

David: Right, okay, so that's one way local people can, you know, suggest things that go on and we have a set criteria that things have to meet to warrant being added to the list. But our outreach, um, as I say, we do the magazine, we do the day conference, we do guided walks around archaeological sites, um, we operate the Visitor Centre at Binchester, um, where we have reenactment events. We also have a facility for school groups and I think last year was our highest number of school groups ever at 44, I think it was, which equates to, I don't know, about 1200 school children.

Lora: So when you're talking about these walks...

David: Yes.

Lora: And these conferences, are those things specifically geared toward the public? Is that something, how would someone find out about that?

David: Oh, yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Lora: How would someone find out about those things?

David: Well, um, the magazine and the day conference are both actually something I introduced way back in 2005 because, where I worked before, which was in Cheshire, they didn't have a magazine, but they did have an annual archaeology conference. So, I thought, well, that's just the sort of thing we ought to do in Durham because it gets the public interested and informed. So that's why we did that. And we used to have them at county hall but our

county hall is scheduled for demolition in the not too distant future. So, we got moved down to council offices, a place called Spennymoor about 18 months ago. Um, so, our new venue for that is the Town Hall Conference Centre in Bishop Auckland.

Lora: I live in Bishop Auckland, so that's good for me to know.

David: Do you? Ah, right, right. Ah, well. Unfortunately, our conference this year was on March 22nd.

Lora: Oh, I just missed it.

David: So, it's. it's not as big a venue, but they are geared up to be an event venue, so they can do all the ticketing and taking of monies, which is something we had to do before, so we can forget all about that now.

Lora: Yes

David: It makes life a lot simpler.

Lora: It's nice whenever you can get some help whatever aspect or capacity.

David: Yeah. Yeah. So, we do, we do guided walks from quite a few U3A groups, you know, University of Third Age, local societies, um, we coach trips that come to the area, we do those as well. So, we, we try and cover as much as possible.

Lora: Are you, do you have a lot of contact within the metal detecting groups and... because I know when I've talked to, I interviewed, um, Ben Westwood over at PAS.

David: Oh, right. Oh, well, there you go then.

Lora: And he talked extensively about metal detecting. So, when you're, again, when you're talking about the conferences and the annual and all these things that you do, do you find that it is kind of that certain niche of people, metal detectorists, maybe local historians, or do you find more of just, kind of, general public being involved and interested?

David: Uh, I would say all of the above.

Lora: Oh, that's great!

David: As far as metal detectorists are concerned, there are always going to be some who don't want to be a member of the group and they want to go off

and do their own thing, you know, it's the same all over. But, um, I think generally in our area we, you have pretty good relationships with the metal detecting groups. And Ben and, uh, his assistant Caroline, they go out to group meetings, um, and encourage them to behave responsibly and report all their findings. Um, it works, yeah, it works fairly well.

Lora: Yeah. That is really great. Um, so, in talking about local knowledge, have you seen over your years of being involved, in whatever capacity it may be, that there has been a improvement or um...so, changes, either positive or negative, of the interactions between what I will call experts, which are, you know, could be academics and scholars and it can be, um, you know, Portable Antiquities Scheme, you, as the county archaeologist, between the experts and the non-experts, the local people? I know there's been a, historically, a divide, especially in the archaeology world, um, and there has been, in particular with these things like Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project of, kind of, trying to bridge that and to say, let's work together. Because the experts are going to have information and skills and knowledge, um, that the non-experts don't have and vice versa. So, they're both really important and critical - that's my opinion. So, I kind of want to know your opinion on that, and if you've seen any change over time.

David: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: Of that interaction and if it's been positive or negative.

David: Um, yeah. Um, I'll describe that in a sort of slightly roundabout way, in that, another thing we did, um, which we did in the area of work previously, um, and I wanted to get initiated here, was community archaeology excavations. So, one of the first things I did when I came up to Durham was to go around the main archaeological contractors and say, you know, I'm interested in putting together a scheme whereby we can enable local people to get actively involved in the investigation of their archaeological heritage. Um, and it won't surprise you when, um, the most likely partner was Durham University's archaeological section.

Lora: Yes.

David: So, way back in 2005, we had the first season of excavation of the site known as, um, East Park near Sedgefield, which is a Roman site. It's unique in the Northeast so far in that it is a sizeable civilian settlement but without any military connection, apparently. Um, and it's, um, Sedgefield, so it's quite

close to Durham, so that meant the advantage for the university was they didn't have to pay for overnight accommodation for their students, so therefore there was more money to go into the excavation.

Lora: Yes.

David: Um, the area is owned by Durham County Council, so we didn't have to pay anybody, you know, to, permission to excavate. And it provided training for their undergraduates in archaeological techniques. But we also enable local people to come along and volunteer. So, some of them just want to dig and find things. And because it's a Roman site, there's always a lot to find. Other people were interested in digging, but they also wanted to get the skills of, um, photography and drawing and interpretation, um, finds processing. So, all varying levels of interest and skills. Um, and we did that, as I say, for four years, 2005, 2008 and then 2009 we started an international version of the same thing at Binchester. So, there was, um, County Council, Durham University, Stanford University...not sure of a bob or two. Uh, and a number of other American universities who didn't have their own field projects, but they wanted their students to get some experience. So that, for example, there was a Texas Tech University, whose professor should have been called Tex, but he wasn't. Um, so, uh, yeah. Some of the, quite a lot of local people, certainly from Sedgefield got involved as volunteers, um, people from Bishop Auckland digging at Binchester, and then he went on to do, um, participate in the excavations at Auckland Castle, or Auckland Palace, as we should now call it.

Lora: Yes, I do that, actually. I volunteer over there, so, it’s really great.

David: Yeah. Right. And some of them had information about features in the local area, which we weren't particularly aware of. So, again, they've been added to the list of things to do as and when. Um, and then some, um, some of the more skilled, uh, individuals, uh, went on to establish their own archaeological society. Um, yeah, I should have mentioned, by the way, that we also involved the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham Northumberland in those projects. So, the, the people who went off to set up their own archaeological body, um, which is now called Altogether Archaeology. So, you may have come across them or not, anyway.

Lora: I haven't, but that's a great thing. I'm going to look that up. That's great.

David: So, they've got a couple of projects, um, which they've been running for a number of seasons now. Yeah, so they'll be going, going to those sites again in the summer.

Lora: That's great. So, are you seeing, as all of these things are, kind of, progressing that there is a, it's an overall positive, would you say, that people are starting to work together and it's, accepting each other and the different...?

David: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I'm, I'm not claiming any credit for it, but over the last 20 years, I think people have, I mean, the profile of archaeology has been raised, and a much broader spectrum of people have got involved. Um, which is, which is good for us because it means we have that much more support.

Lora: Yes, yes.

David: Which is not a bad thing.

Lora: Absolutely. There's always going to be challenges. There's always going to be things, but if the overall theme is positivity and, especially with such limited resources, like you said, if you can use the volunteers, people who want to volunteer, then it ends up being kind of a win-win, hopefully. That's ideally what, what would happen.

David: Hmm. Yeah.

Lora: Um, so, I think the last thing I want to just ask you about is, again, with your experience and all of these different capacities, um, do you have any ideas or suggestions of ways, maybe there's a void or a gap here or somewhere where you could build a bridge to improve the relationships between, not, not even necessarily just the experts and non-experts, um, but just, kind of, that is part of it, but also just making the public more aware of these different programs and these different conferences and magazines and all of these wonderful things that you're putting your time and energy to. Do you have any ideas or suggestions of how that could maybe be improved?

David: It's difficult because it all comes down to time.

Lora: Yes! That is the very...

David: There's only two and a half of us, but, um...

Lora: Right, right.

David: There are a couple of developments recently, I think, which may, which may go some way to, um, adding even more to that is that, um, Ben and Caroline, for example, have gone out have made a number of visits to schools in the last year or so. So, you know, catch them young...

Lora: Yes.

David: Get them interested in archaeology, um, because there's always that demographic thing about public interest in that you might get quite a lot of interest when people are quite young, and when they become quite mature, when they retired. But then, the people in the middle are so busy with their working lives or families...

Lora: Right, right.

David: That they rarely have time to devote to other things. Um, so, one is, is, if at all possible, making more visits to schools and actually taking objects out with you so they can handle them. And, you know. And, and the other one is a possibility afforded by the story building, in that they have already had a number of archaeological workshops, um, during the summer holidays, where children can go along and do exactly the same thing, they can handle real archaeological artifacts and learn about them. And, as I say, there's some archaeological artifacts on display downstairs, but there's also a temporary exhibition element in that, which, depending on what happens, um, we could insert, you know, a story in that temporary exhibition. It could be an important discovery on an excavation, um, it could be about, I don't know if Ben mentioned this, about the East Gate Horde. It's a Bronze Age hoard.

Lora: Yes, he did.

David: He did, yeah, yeah. I mean, that, to me, would make a good story in it, it, sort of, disappearing for 70 odd years or whatever it was, and then being rediscovered. And hopefully the owners are likely to donate it. So, there's a nice, sociological stories of that, as well as the actual archaeology.

Lora: Yes, that's another thing I'm kind of hearing across the board, exactly what you said about the ages.

David: Hmm.

Lora: How a lot of times it is the more mature people that have the time or the interest, or archaeology wasn't something that maybe they got a degree in or they had their career in, but they are interested in it.

David: Hmm.

Lora: And so being able to do public archaeology is a great, a great benefit for them. And then also hearing that, with the younger kids, to get them excited and interested, because there's kind of that feeling, I think, that we all have it inside of us, to one degree or another, to know about our heritage and the world around us and, in particular, maybe where we're from. And to navigate that with the younger generation and particularly, you know, the whole digital native conversation is another thing too that I know is being, um, addressed. So that's really great. I think that's key.

David: Yeah.

Lora: That younger generation. Do you have anything you want to add? Anything that I might not have asked about that you think is important?

David: Let me just consult my notes.

Lora: To mention about. Yes, definitely. Take a minute. That's fine.

David: No, I think we pretty well covered it, actually. Yeah.

Lora: Oh, good. Yeah, you just gave a lot of great information. I'm going to be looking up, uh, these different things that I hadn't heard of, or I just didn't know very much about. Because I think that's also important, as we're just living in our communities, um, we have our careers and we have our families and we have all these different things, but to be as involved as we can in, uh, preserving this heritage and telling, telling the story of history over and over again in different ways, as it changes and evolves, so.

David: So, what's the time scale for your research?

Lora: I'm doing a Master's by research, so it's only one year.

David: Nice.

Lora: And so, I started July 1st. I'm, kind of, my interviews and all of this type of, uh, aspect of my research is, kind of, getting wrapped up at this point so I can, um, get my final dissertation turned in in June.

David: Now comes the hard part.

Lora: Yes, yes. It's also interesting. I just want to kind of stew in it, but, you know, this work has got to be done. But, um, I'm specifically using Piercebridge, which I know you're familiar with, as, um, kind of, one of the main case studies of, um, why local knowledge is so critical in archaeology and in the telling of the historical narrative. Um, with the divers, I'm sure you know the divers that found...

David: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: Thousands of Roman artifacts. And again, talking about how there's just not that time and energy and resources from the official professional people to be able to do any of that. So, how critical that is.

David: Yeah.

Lora: Otherwise, all of those things would still be in the water. So, it's a very fascinating, um, case study about why all of this, all of what you're doing and what Ben and Caroline, and Gareth over at the Missing Pieces Project, what everyone is doing is really fantastic work. It's exciting so, thank you so much.

David: That’s alright.

Lora: I will be emailing you this transcript, um, at some point in the next week or so. And then if...

David: OK.

Lora: If I have any follow-up questions, I'll probably pick your brain on that, as well.

David: Yeah, fine.

Lora: All right. Thank you so much for your time. I appreciate it.

David: That's all right. Nice to chat to you.

Lora: All right. Nice to talk to you as well. Okay, bye-bye.

David: Okay. Good luck. Okay.

Lora: Thank you. Bye-bye.

8.2.2 Anthony Pickering - Metal detectorist, Owner/Organiser of North Detecting Events LTD

Pickering: I think I've got my, sort of, um, my own form view of the system processes within the Treasure processes in the UK, um...sort of experienced it through 5 years of running, sort of, North Detecting Events and in other areas, so I've seen different, different processes within the system. So, yeah, I think I've got a formed view of it. Maybe that might not be everyone's view, but certainly, um, certainly first-hand experience of how it all works, so I can possibly help you out with that, and give you my view.

Lora: Great! That's exactly what I want. Um, so my first question is, if you wouldn't mind, kind of, telling me your experience with, in particular, I think we're going to focus on the Portable Antiquities Scheme. So, if you just want to tell me, kind of, what your experience, kind of, when you first heard about them, or how you heard about them, you know, how they even came up, and any kind of interactions you've had with them.

Pickering: I think, um, there's two, there's the avenue from Portable Antiquities, um, it advertises itself and represents itself well, um, in the last few years compared to, sort of, it's grown in representing itself as a body, um, which detectorists get to know about. Fundamentally, the National Council for Metal Detecting probably is the key source for any detectorist in the United Kingdom, um, and of making you aware of the rules and regulations that exist within the hobby. Um, so kudos and credit to them, um, for doing that. The Portable Antiquities Scheme, in my view, um, it's a great, it's a great thing. It protects the hobby and it gives some, it sets some boundaries for detectorists, because at the end of the day, the nation's treasure doesn't belong to a detectorist, it belongs to the nation, and the story needs to be told.

Lora: Right.

Pickering: So having a process whereby there is a means of anything declared as treasure, within those set boundaries needs to be declared, within a certain period of time. That's, that's great. It builds a picture. The PAS system, where you can go on and actually look at artifacts and cross-reference, um, is outstanding. I like that one, I think all of us do, not a problem. But an area, um, which I'm sure comes from a funding perspective, where things can be a little bit frustrating, is the time between reporting an item of treasure, or non-

treasure, and the time it takes for that to go through the Portable Antiquities process is what can be frustrating, and I think frustrates a lot of detectorists.

Lora: Yes.

Pickering: And sometimes it's 2 years, um, before we even get that item recorded on the system.

Lora: Yeah. Do you think that that could possibly be a, something that is a detriment to metal detectorists claiming treasure, or...?

Pickering: No, I don't think it's a detriment. I think the, you've got to, you've got to look at it from, from a sort of, you know, you've got a hobby which is, it's boomed since lockdown, like most outdoor hobbies have. So, the number of detectorists that are entering the Portable Antiquities Scheme has probably gone tenfold in the last five years. Um, but the resources, um, are still at the level that they were at pre that five-year period.

Lora: Yeah.

Pickering: And over, having reduced, um, some extra Finds Laision Officer assistants to help with that backlog, um, but the system is probably just a little bit outdated. My fear is, if we make too much noise, updating that system could then detriment the detectorist by bringing more regulation in. Um, so it's a little bit of a, a little bit of a buy-off, really. Do we really want to push down the route of, we need this done faster and more efficiently? But actually, what could faster and more efficiently bring to the detectorist, does it come to the point where actually the hobby, you lose those artifacts that you can keep, um, as part of your hobby.

Lora: Right, because I know recently they did lower the amount of, um, value to report, if that makes sense. It used to be over a certain amount you had to report it, and now I think it's 100 pounds.

Pickering: And so, with the way I understand the Portable Antiquities Scheme, um, is that an item is declared as treasure if it's, um, precious metal. Or, if it's a coins spill, two or more coins found in a hole.

Lora: Okay.

Pickering: Or, if the item falls under something of significant interest, which is the new rule. So, for instance, I think, if you take the Humble Hole, which was bronze artefacts, um, because of their makeup and DNA of metal that didn't fall

under, sort of, treasure guidance, um, so, a few things have come to light. Um, which has then changed and then forced that rule. But I think the problem that we would have if we started putting pressure on the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the British Museum to speed up the process and make the process more unified, I think the fear that we would have then is, that funding would need to come from somewhere, and I fear that funding would actually come from the detectorist.

Lora: Oh, okay.

Pickering: Kind of like a fishing license is what I would fear, where detectorists may pay a license fee to actually just conduct the hobby.

Lora: Yes.

Pickering: That's where I fear it would lead to.

Lora: Yes. And I think, from talking to people in the Portable Antiquities Scheme, that funding, like you said, is a major obstacle. And it is frustrating on their end as well, because they develop relationships, and they want to be able to keep their word and get things moving, and there's so many other people that are involved in the process that they don't have any say in, so I understand what you're saying. Um, so...

Pickering: I think the fact of the matter, what we've got to look at, and don't quote me on the numbers, but I think I read somewhere that, I think, 90% of all UK treasure and finds now come from metal detectorists.

Lora: Yes, it's more than that, yeah. Which is, which is great.

Pickering: But then there's always been this, um, there's always been this, sort of, segregation of archaeologists versus detectorists, (unintelligible) and pillagers.

Lora: Right.

Pickering: There is, um, I think an archaeologist sees their, well, rightly so. You know, they've gone through a degree to look at these things, and their extraction process is completely different from a hobbyist's extraction process. Um, so I think it's just about marrying the two together in unison.

Lora: Yes.

Pickering: Without having a crossover of any animosity, and I think that's got to be done respectfully, whichever way it's looked at.

Lora: Yes, that is a main part of my research, is kind of, seeing, um, that bridge obviously needs to, you know, there needs to be a bridge built over that gap, and to see if that's actually happening. I think, according to the perspectives of those in the Portable Antiquities Scheme right now, it is happening. It's a slow process, but it is happening.

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: And one in particular who, she was involved in the process when the Portable Antiquities Scheme was first brought to the public a couple decades ago, and she said at that point there was really a divide, that there was a lot of, kind of, especially, I think...well, I don't know, I guess on both sides. Um, but that over the years, there has been more of a coming together and a connection and an understanding. Because both, like you're saying, you have the archaeologists who have the degree and the training, more the formal training. That's very important, but it's really not a complete picture without that local knowledge, and the, the things that they bring to the table, and in my conversations with them, they seem, in theory anyway, which I hope it's in practice as well, but they seem in theory to really feel passionate about the fact that that their, you've got, everyone is so important to this puzzle. There's not one side or one person that brings more to the table than the other, so...

Pickering: No, I don't think there is, and I think the problem with a hobby, um, from the hobby side of it, to look at it from a recording and, the process. You're always going to have people in hobby for different reasons, so...

Lora: Right.

Pickering: I dare say the majority of detectorists, 70% bracket, are in it because they like the history, they like the passion, they like the storytelling, and...

Lora: Yes.

Pickering: They like collecting. But then you're always going to have 30% who don't play by the rules, or see the rules as a boundary. Maybe some do want to play by them, but obviously, they see those rules as a boundary, and I think that bit is the bit where more work needs to be spent to give assurance as that, actually, we're not there to take things from you, that we're there to tell the story. It's more about the storytelling.

Lora: Yeah.

Pickering: Um, and how the detectorist can actually build that picture. I think it's just where a little bit more work needs to be done.

Lora: So what would be your suggestion for those, you know, the Finds Liaison Officers, for example, to build those relationships more and to get that message out more? Is it visiting the metal detecting clubs? Is it emails? Is it, you know, what do you think would be the best way for them to get that message out?

Pickering: I think a non-licensed, a non-licensed central database for detecting clubs to actually come forward and say, this is North Detecting Events, this is where we detect, and have a register of actual clubs, um, for the Finds Liaison Officer to make means with, maybe via newsletter. I mean, everybody learns and everybody's educated in different ways, so some people, it will be a face-to-face value. Um, reaching out, just reaching out and get more of the clubs... because I know they do do things, so it's not about them not doing things, it's about how they communicate that. So, Metal Detecting Events is a limited business, it's set up officially, it pays its tax. It would be nice if that, you know, the British Museum, Portable Antiquities came to us and said, we can see you're trying to do things right, you're playing by the book, this is what we've got going on, we'd like to share these bits of information with you. Their platform just needs to be widened a bit more, more accessible. Theirs is accessible, but the two just don't marry up. Sure, I can go and find that, um, there's an event on in Kirkleatham for a finds drop in, um, there in Kirkleatham Museum, but without me proactively going and promoting that to my guys...but, you know, I would like them to step into my world and actually speak to my guys, that would be the more accessible approach.

Lora: Yes. Okay.

Pickering: Um, it's hard for them, and I think it's hard, and I think there's a boundary, because there is clubs out there. Well, there's no tax getting paid by the club organizer, it's, it's a hobby group. There's money being made financially from the hobby group to the really... it's really a fine line and a crossover, because there's clubs out there doing it right, and then there's clubs out there where, I'm not saying they’re not doing it right, but they're not playing by the UK tax system either.

Lora: Right.

Pickering: So, it's really, it's a fine line. You know, from my point of view, and hand on hearts here, I'm a limited business, I pay any dues. If a license fee come in as to run a club, that would be fine. I would be happy with that. And then you can have members of your club, but, yeah, the club thing with the Liaison thing, I think, is where the fall down sometimes comes.

Lora: Right. Yeah, and I think that's their, they have kind of that same perspective, where they just feel like they don't have enough people...

Pickering: Control of it.

Lora: Yeah, and it's difficult, because right now, in this area, I know there's only two Finds Laision...there's two, and an assistant, or there might just be...but, you know, in a whole area, that's not very many to go out there and, and make connections.

Pickering: No, not really. Because, I mean, I can give you an example. So, for instance, I've got guys that come down in North Yorkshire, so are predominantly digging in North Yorkshire, um, 60% of my, sort of, customer base, we'll call them, come from Northumberland. So, if they find something in North Yorkshire, rightly so, that should go to the Finds Liaison in Yorkshire.

Lora: Right.

Pickering: But for them to then travel down to an appointment to hunt treasure over, which can take two year in Yorkshire when they live in Northumberland, their view is, why can't they just access the Northumberland FLO? And they can, but then that creates crossover, because that Northumberland FLO realistically needs to send that treasure to the North Yorkshire FLO. So, I think the shortage at their end is where the problem lies, and the number of finds going through, um, but then it comes back to, where does that funding come from?

Lora: Right.

Pickering: And, that funding, I get their frustration, where do they get their funding from? I'm kind of defending them in a way. It's, it needs to work, but suggestions of regulating the hobby to the point where every detectorist needs a license and archaeological training, which was suggested a few years ago. It's never gonna happen, because no one's ever gonna sign up for it, and all is I think that would create would be a divide.

Lora: Yeah.

Pickering: Maybe, maybe's making the clubs regulated, as in the club organisers...would I be open to that? Yeah, I wouldn't, I wouldn't stand away from it. I think if you're running a club and you're financially profiting from it, and there's a treasure process, as a club organiser, is that something that you should do? I'm not opposed to it, and I'd be open to it, to work more in line with and help and support the Finds Liaison team? Yeah.

Lora: Do you think of the other metal detectorists, people in your positions would also be willing? Do they seem to have that, more of an open mind of working together?

Pickering: I'm not too sure. I kind of, I see, I see clubs from different perspectives, I see clubs where it is a case of they just enjoy the hobby, they're getting people out and made a little bit of money from it off the side. Find the fail sort of approach. Um, longevity-wise, if, if you were to sit down and ask them that question, I think they could see the value in it. Um, I wouldn't like to answer for anybody else.

Lora: Right, right.

Pickering: But I, I do feel that, long-term, if you ask me in 10 years' time, how do you see the treasure process? I think if nothing's done for it, and we don't work together, then it will be in a negative view of the detectorist. If no one stands out to, to sort of create a back cohesion together.

Lora: Yeah. That is part of the concern, I think, is, yeah, shared. They don't want to, um, the people at, that I talked to at the Portable Antiquities Scheme, they really want to work on keeping that cohesion, like you said, and, but yeah, there's a lot of different...And they've said the same things, like you're saying, you know, there's different personalities, there's different experiences, there's different expectations from the different metal detector groups and clubs...

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: And individuals, and so you can't really speak to just one group or just one, because they're such a variety of...

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: Of, of that, so, um. So, how do you feel about local knowledge? Particularly, um, as a metal detectorist, and how that contributes to the telling of history? Like, do you have any examples of things you've found? Or experiences,

maybe things you've heard of, that speak to how critical that local knowledge is to the official histories.

Pickering: Yeah, I think there's an archaeological studies done, and I'll just give you an example in a place called Fulton-Le-Moor, which is in, um, Northallerton, North Yorkshire. Um, so Fulton-le-Moor has, um, some old paths and roads go through it, and if you look at the actual, um, history, there's the, there's the debate within there that suggests that they're, sort of, early medieval and some have comparisons that they're actually Roman. Um, but the finds that we find, so we found early BC, um, Roman denarius, we found Celtic staters, which we think were use for trade with the Romans.

Lora: Wow.

Pickering: So, it kind of paints a picture, and it builds that picture of history, so, those finds going in, which I know that have gone into the Portable Antiquities Scheme, sort of, just narrow that research that's been done from, from the archaeology team. Um, our database actually just builds on the picture and sort of leads it down a different road. So, I think the two actually, you know, it's fundamental that that's in place. I am an absolute advocate of making sure that things are on that PAS system.

Lora: Yes. Yeah, that's really important. Um, so, do you have any other, do you have anything else you want to add, as far as your, uh, regarding maybe the challenges or some of the, um, experiences that you've had? Either dealing with the PAS or, um, metal detecting or any of those things?

Pickering: I do think metal detecting needs its rules, it needs its boundaries, um, and I think those that are set in place by Portable Antiquities, um, are absolutely fine for the modern day. I think the treasure process speaks for itself. I think the only downside is just the time scale, um, of the treasure process.

Lora: Yeah.

Pickering: Now, also being an advocate of having the knowledge of, um, that doesn't just come from pumping more money into it. That money's gotta come from somewhere.

Lora: Right.

Pickering: So, it's about finding balance, and it's about working out where that comes from, working with us and not against us when those decisions are made. I think that's the only bit I'd like to add. Um, my only downside with the, the

treasure process is the end result sometimes, is the actual, um, treasure valuing committee. So, when something is declared as treasure, um, the price that the treasure valuing committee sometimes gives, compared to actually what that item would fetch on the open market....

Lora: Oh, yeah.

Pickering: I think that can sometimes be a little bit unfair towards the detectorist. Um.

Lora: Yes, that was mentioned with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, um, Liaisons that I talked to. They said a lot of times when it comes down, and they feel, they're kind of in the middle a little bit, the middleman, and I know that they feel sometimes that there is a big discrepancy, and that can cause, that can affect relationships between, um, you know.

Pickering: I can see why things are valued at the lower end, because obviously the, uh, the antiques market, the private antiques market, it's a different ballgame altogether to what something's relative value is.

Lora: Right.

Pickering: Something's only willing to be paid what someone's willing to pay for it. I think the process of how that treasure value and committee's decision is actually being formed, could be more open to, sort of, ease why things have become lower than what it would be on the open market. Where they get the examples from, and where, where the actual...

Lora: Okay.

Pickering: Thing it was derived from, I think that is what would help a detectorist understand it more.

Lora: Yes, because when they come to you saying, this is worth a certain amount, they're not giving you documentation of how they got to that number?

Pickering: No, they’re just giving you a number.

Lora: Okay, so yeah, that would be helpful. What you're saying is to, kind of, give the person insight into the process and how they came up to that.

Pickering: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: Yeah. Oh, that's good to know. I don't think I understood that it wasn't, that they didn't tell you that, that they just kind of...

Pickering: Well, they kind of just say we've come to the conclusion of, um, and it's valued at this much. And then you can appeal it by handing in some external valuations, um, then, you know, that's then back to the detectorists to do that. Why is it that that figure's coming out so low anyway?

Lora: Right.

Pickering: So, for instance, let's just give gold coin as an example. It could sell said gold coin on eBay, or to an auction house for a value of 9,000 to £10,000. I'm just using the example, I'm not giving a specific coin.

Lora: Right, right.

Pickering: British Museum come out, declare it as treasure, and say, we've declared it, and we will give the coin a value of £1,200, and you think, well, hang on. That sells on the open market for £10,000, where are you getting £1,200 from?

Lora: Right, that's a big...

Pickering: And then it becomes, to the detectorist, here's another stumbling block that I've got to deal with and actually prove what me coin's worth. Um, that's how a detectorist would probably see it. Where, actually, if they give a detailed, this is how we valued it, and this is the data we've used to value it, you can now challenge that decision. You could actually say the value a little bit more and go, no, actually, that's where they've derived that from, that's fair enough.

Lora: Yeah, I think that's very critical, that, kind of, missing link of communication, and that's a fair thing, in my opinion, to expect when you have taken your time, and to, not only find the artifact, but then to report it, which is what they want you to do. And so, I think there needs to be a little give and take there. If they, you know, want people to report and to, uh, be responsible within the system, there does need to be some accountability there. I don't think that's unfair.

Pickering: Again, it's a fine line, you know, because you've got to look at it as it's the nation's treasure at the end of the day, so...

Lora: Yes.

Pickering: It's a hard one, because if you're arguing about the value of something, then you've got to question your morals, are you in it for the money, or...

Lora: Right. And I think there's a mixture there.

Pickering: (Unintelligible) I think that's where, I think that's where the boundaries come in

Lora: Yes.

Pickering: Of, of the fine line between, are you in it for the money or is the money just a bonus? Or are you in there telling the story, and does the actual amount really matter? And I think that's the bit where everyone's gonna have a different opinion.

Lora: Yes, absolutely. And like you said, understanding, which I'm sure almost everybody, if not everyone, understands that when you do find a treasure here, it is the property of the Crown. And it's not yours, and see, that's a different thing, too, with being from the United States. It's very much finder's keepers over there.

Pickering: Yeah. Building relationships In one sense, you can see it as a reward, and you shouldn't really look at the value of it. But then, if you sat 10 people in a room, everyone would have a different opinion. Well, no, I've gone out and found it. If it wasn't for me, it wouldn't be in the nation's hands.

Lora: Right.

Pickering: You're gonna get a different view from every person you speak to on that. So, it's about finding the fine line, but I think sometimes the system is a little bit low on the valuing.

Lora: Yes.

Pickering: So, maybe that just needs looking at, just the final stage of using more relative data and actually doing a bit more research. Because sometimes, and I think where it falls down is, let's say, a Roman fibular brooch was found in 2005, which is quite rare. And it's sold for X amount, so they've used the data from 2005, not taking into consideration inflation, growth in the hobby...

Lora: Right.

Pickering: People buying antiquities. So, they use the 2005 price bracket rather than a 2025 price bracket. I think that sometimes where it falls down, as well.

Lora: Yeah, that makes sense, to be able to keep their prices updated as much as possible.

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: To be fair. I mean, it is trying to find that balance. Like you said, there's always gonna, you can't please everybody, but at least if there's some transparency and they're able to say, this is how we got to this number. I think that would be... I can see how that would be really helpful, and encourage people to continue to, um, and maybe those people in the middle, you know, like you said, there's some people who have a, feel like they have a moral duty, and they're in it for the history, and, you know, all of that. And then you've got the other people who are more worried about the, how much it's worth...

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: And, you know, what they're going to get out of it, and so there's probably some people in the middle, and maybe if they made these processes more transparent, and maybe, like you said, a little bit quicker, which is difficult with the funding. But any of those little things might, kind of, maybe impress those people kind of sitting in the middle...

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: To report and to contribute to that local knowledge, because I mean, the experts, so to speak, that I have talked to have, sang the praises of local knowledge, saying, we don't have the time, energy, resources. There's no possible way we can go out there and find the things that they find and record the things that they record. And, like you just said, if not for them, it would still be in the ground, you know? So, um, there is some awareness there, and I'm hoping, it seems like it from my little perspective of this research that I'm doing, it does seem to be going in the right direction, however slow.

Pickering: Oh yeah, it definitely is. I think it's, um, I think it's just, it's, it's a, it's a big growth of, um, of people taking the hobby up, that's sort of created a lot of noise. And the part of the system just isn't fit for purpose is possibly where it, in a nutshell, is actually what it's all about. But I think there's definitely efforts from all sides to make it fit for purpose, so that's not a negative I'm putting across there.

Lora: Yes, right.

Pickering: It's just about making that system work in a, in a boom. And, you know, does that investment, is that investment warranted? Um, and is that boom in the hobby actually gonna continue, or will it fall off and, and form back to normal levels? I don't know, and I don't know the answer to that meself.

Lora: Yeah. And that is part of another thing that I heard, um, the lady who I talked to who was at, in the, because the Portable Antiquities Scheme, I mean, you think about it, it's only a couple decades old, which isn't very...

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: You know, it's all pretty fairly new, but she said the same thing. They've kind of been a victim of their own success,

Pickering: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: And so, while things have grown, especially during COVID, they do not have the funding and the resources to keep up with it, and so there is that, kind of, difficult balance.

Pickering: Yeah. It's a hard one. Because it's not...but I think that's sort of my view. I don't think I've got a negative view.

Lora: No.

Pickering: Um, I think it's just more of a, um, working together in cohesion a bit better, and, um, yeah. That is my view. Have you got any more questions for me, or...?

Lora: I don't think so. You've just had a really, I really appreciate your perspective, and, and also your awareness. I mean, I don't know, because again, I'm new to the country, and I don't go around just talking to random people or metal detectorists or anything, but I appreciate that your view, you are considering the other side, which sometimes is hard to do either way.

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: Um, sometimes the archaeologists and all that have a hard time seeing, um, the local side, but, um, I, you seem to be very aware and very understanding, and the things that you have mentioned that could, um, you know, be on the road to improvement are very logical things

Pickering: Yeah.

Lora: And very acceptable things, and there is that give and take, and you seem to be very aware of that, so that's really great.

Pickering: Oh, yeah, definitely, definitely.

Lora: Thank you so much.

Pickering: No. Absolutely fine. If you have any other questions or anything you want to speak to me about in the future, I'm more than happy to jump on a call...

Lora: Okay.

Pickering: And have a chat with you, or respond by email, so...

Lora: Okay, I might do that as I...

Pickering: Good luck with your research.

Lora: Yeah, thank you so much, and I will.

8.2.3 Piercebridge Residents - Roger Blamire, Shirley Chalmers, and Elizabeth MacIntyre

Lora: OK. So, the first question I want to ask is, are you familiar with the schemes, namely the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project? Have you guys ever heard of those schemes?

Roger: I'll be honest, I've never heard of them.

Elizabeth: I haven't, no, no.

Shirley: No.

Lora: OK, so. Um, we talked a little bit about what they were and, is there any, kind of, do you guys feel like you have an understanding of what they are? Or do you want me to kind of explain a little more about what they are, just for my follow up questions?

Roger: If you wouldn't mind please, yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah, just a little bit more. Yeah.

Lora: OK. So, the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project are organizations, they are national government organizations, and they're both fairly new, within the last 20 years. And their aim is to gather local knowledge, to integrate it into their historical narratives, the English Heritage sites, National Trust sites, all those things, all over. Um, and so, their goal is to go out, they do a lot of metal detecting groups and clubs, and, basically, if you have something you want to contribute, whether it be a story, a history, an artifact, you can go online - you can also call or they have offices, but

online is probably the most common and the easiest - to report your find, and then they integrate it into what they already have for that area and they can vet it to, kind of, see, like, does this match with history, you know? Is this something? Um, for example, Mitchinson and Middlemass, who did the diving over here, they did go through the, contacted the Portable Antiquities Scheme. And they had 30 years' worth, about, of artifacts that they had gotten out of the river. And, so, what happened was one of the representatives for the Portable Antiquities Scheme came to them, came to their garage. She said they opened the door and she was just shocked. She thought they might have a few little pieces here and there, and there were tubs and labels and it was a pretty, like, memorable, uh, thing for her. And she just, kind of, bit by bit, took these artifacts, documented them and then give them back. There's also the Treasure Act, which I don't know if you're familiar with that either, but basically, if you find something that is gold, silver, something valuable, you have to turn that in. It technically belongs to the Crown, and so you have to turn that in and then, there's different time frames depending on what it is. And if they decide they want it, they will keep it and give you the amount, reimburse you for it. And if they say, well, we don't really want this or we don't need it or we have fifty of those or whatever the case may be, they will give it back to you. So, these are ways for them to, kind of, document, keep track of local things, because, like we were saying, there's no way any kind of organization or university has the time, the money, the resources, the funds.

Elizabeth: That's a good idea.

Lora: And so, to be able to have these organizations, their, their goal is to, kind of, bridge that gap.

Elizabeth: How do you know that something's valuable, though? How do you know it's not just something that somebody's dropped only 20 years ago rather than it being...do you know what I mean? Something precious, I mean.

Lora: Yes. So, usually people who do this are metal detectors or they have some kind of interest in archaeology...

Elizabeth: (Unintelligible)

Lora: So, they can kind of have an idea.

Elizabeth: Right.

Lora: And basically, don't quote me on this, but I think it's if you think it might be worth £100, I think, there's like a limit to where, if you feel like if it's something where, you know, you're thinking, OK, it's probably a £20...

Elizabeth: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: Then you don't worry about it, but, um...and, and when in doubt, you just go on, you know, take a picture and you upload that and send it online or send it in the mail or however you want to do it. Um, and then they tell you. So, a lot of their job is to go through these things, because a lot of people don't know or, or they say sometimes people give them something and think, oh, this is worth a lot. And then they have to go back and say it's not really worth a whole lot, but, you know, you, you keep it, you treasure it.

Elizabeth: Aw.

Lora: Because it's meaningful, meaningful and valuable.

Roger: I think these metal detectorists are pretty knowledgeable people, aren't they?

Lora: Yes.

Roger: They seem to know, I know, I've spoken to two or three of them and they're very, very knowledgeable. They know what they're looking for and what they're likely to find in any particular area as well, more so...

Lora: Yes.

Roger: Than people at the university because they're used to going around all these fields and they know what to find...

Lora: Absolutely.

Roger: Where to find them.

Lora: And that's a big point that they are kind of realizing is that...

Roger: Yeah. Local knowledge is so much better.

Lora: It is because it has, there's a foundation of that area and that history that reading it on books or online is just not going to give you. And so that's why the Portable Antiquities Scheme in particular, also, um, has, considers stories and other things that aren't artifacts, aren't tangible, whereas the

Missing Pieces Project, my understanding is that they are more about things that are listed, um, more of the tangible side.

Roger: Right.

Lora: So, kind of, hearing about that - if you have any questions, just pop in – but, if you were to find something, would you, would you be willing...would that be something you would do, when you find your artifact or you have a story? Are those schemes something that you feel like you would use, personally?

Roger: Yes.

Elizabeth: Yeah. Yeah.

Roger: Yes. Now I know it's there, because before if I didn't know about this, where do you go to? The university? You don't know where to take it to. You find something, I mean, I've found things in the garden. You don't know where to...

Elizabeth: I would probably, because I've only heard of English Heritage so that would probably be, I'd go direct to them. I'd probably Google it and, sort of, have a little look from there. So, now, knowing that they're available, yeah.

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Elizabeth: I probably would.

Lora: Yeah.

Elizabeth: My first port of call.

Roger: You don't do any digging anymore, Shirley?

Shirley: No, we had, when, when they did this draining out here, it was interesting. It was a massive thing, you know. The, we just had it done this last six months. Well, something like that.

Roger: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: Drainage ditch, drainage pipe was put in.

Shirley: Yeah, and so...

Roger: But it didn't usually...sorry, Shirley, you can...

Shirley: No, it’s...

Roger: It's, um, what they usually do if there, if there's anything going to be dug up or someone's gonna build an extension in this village, you have to let English Heritage know and they some, send someone out who sits there and you pay them £200 a day, or whatever it is...

Shirley: Yeah, yeah.

Roger: To sit and watch you dig your hole, just in case you come across something.

Elizabeth: (Unintelligible)

Roger: But because of this mole that they used...

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: It didn't actually break the service, surface.

Lora: Oh!

Roger: So, they didn't have to come out.

Shirley: Oh! But they did, they had this massive, it was as big as this.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: Oh, yeah, the, oh, it was a big thing, yeah.

Shirley: Yeah, that...

Roger: But, uh...

Shirley: It was brand new, that, you know, like the...

Roger: Yeah, but the, the English Heritages didn't have to watch.

Shirley: No. Ah, no. Because there was nothing there. There...

Elizabeth: So, what happens if it, sort of, churns something up to the surface, when it's come back out? I mean...

Shirley: No, the, the...

Roger: It wouldn’t, it’s down, it’s deep.

Elizabeth: Is it? Is it really? How deep then, ‘cause, I mean, imagine what is deep down - (fire crackled) oop! - right under where we are.

Shirley: But it was surprising how many stones, it's all stones cause the river originally, it must have come down here. It was absolutely, well, I, I kept one as a souvenir, there's one in the church about that big.

Roger: There's, there's stones in here. And that was, this fireplace was, when I bought this house, it was all behind a wall. It was all buried.

Elizabeth: Yeah, you took it all out, didn't you?

Roger: And I dug it all out and there's hand fettled stones amongst this, which obviously have been pinched from the Roman fort. There's loads of them. You can see where it's being hand fettled on the edge.

Lora: Wow! That's fantastic!

Roger: You know, so a lot of, a lot of the houses in this village were stone. The stone was stolen up there.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Right! And that was very common.

Shirley: Yeah, yeah, there are a lot of them to use cobble, cobbles, you know, like.

Roger: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Shirley: Especially out 27, 27, 26 and 27 are not.

Roger: Yeah. Yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah, right.

Shirley: It's, yeah.

Lora: So, Shirley, would you use the schemes if you found something or you had a story to contribute?

Shirley: Uh, I don't know. I never really thought about it. Um, yeah, I suppose so, yeah, if I found something. Yeah.

Elizabeth: You know, I think when we live in the village we have, because you're the, it's the councillors, you, I, I would probably come to somebody like you if I found, because it's the person that you know knows more about the village and the font of knowledge and you kind of are that...

Roger: Shirley, I'll just tell you, Shirley (unintelligible) there. She's the head of the Parish Council.

Lora: Ok.

Elizabeth: She's head of the...so, if I found something being newer...

Roger: (Unintelligible) don't we, Shirl?

Shirley: Yeah. Yeah. Good.

Elizabeth: I would kind of say, Shirley, what should I do here? Do you know what I mean? Or even we, we have Liz and Chris at the farm shop. I mean, I don't know how long they've been there.

Roger: Chris has been here all his life.

Elizabeth: Yeah, and...

Shirley: No he hasn't.

Roger: Well, (unintelligible).

Elizabeth: So, if anybody who comes in the village, yeah, whether it's for, like, a delivery...

Shirley: He came in the 60s.

Elizabeth: Or whatever...did he?

Shirley: Yeah, he was only young then.

Elizabeth: People sort of go, go and check with Liz, or go and check with...you know what I mean?

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: But, yeah. So, it's just, I think...

Shirley: Well, in my garden, I'm finding a lot of blue and white and, but, you know, like digging up in the soil, you know, I keep all them bits but, like I said...

Elizabeth: What do you do with them?

Shirley: They are just in the garden, you know, like in a little...

Elizabeth: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Shirley: But you see, you know, like. Well, I don't know whether you know where that digged up, dig that bit in where you come over from the middle road. All them bits is what, you know, that came up, that's come up to the top, they're all.

Roger: All Roman, yeah.

Shirley: Yeah, well, no. There, they're all like, yeah, things that's been buried. But you see a lot, a lot of things are buried, you know, that, 'cause, like, they're rubbish and all that. They haven't, like, aren't there?

Lora: Yeah, a lot rubbish pits and, yeah, things...

Shirley: There's this one...

Roger: There is this one next to Yvonne and Mark's, isn't there?

Shirley: Yeah, yeah, there's one there.

Roger: There's a big rubbish pit there. Where, it's just outside the Fort.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Yeah, that was very typical.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Yeah.

Roger: Because John Wayne came across it, didn't he there.

Shirley: Yeah, it in there on the corner...

Roger: Not your, not your John Wayne, another John Wayne.

Lora: Oh.

(Everyone laughing)

Shirley: Not your John Wayne!

Lora: That's who I thought. I'm like, oh, John Wayne came here, ok.

Elizabeth: Oh, dear!

Roger: Well, he was a cowboy builder.

Lora: He was! And I can see that he would be interested in, you know...

Shirley: Yeah, and all like the...

Lora: Lots of things.

Shirley: It's when they find all these, you know, a lot of them. I mean, obviously like, um, you know, like how my parents before them, all the bottles and nuts that's in there. Obviously they're not Roman, but there is obviously Roman underneath and all that.

Roger: Yeah.

Shirley: But you wonder what's underneath.

Elizabeth: I do wonder.

Roger: I mean, I, I did have a tree planted here in the middle of the garden. Now, I decided to take it out, just couldn't hold the sunlight. And I went down and I hit Roman walls underneath. So, I, uh, I whipped the tree out and filled it in quick because you get a lot of people if you're digging that come and, ooh, ooh!

Lora: Oh right.

Roger: Yeah. I've had, I've had two or three offers to dig my garden over...

Shirley: Yeah, 'cause Mark, opposite me, he's got a bath in his, haven't he.

Roger: That's right, it's a Roman bath, yeah, yeah.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: He's got a Roman bath?

Roger: In his back garden.

Lora: Wow.

Roger: Which, uh...

Shirley: And it is open, that one.

Roger: Yeah, you can just knock on the door and ask him and he'll let you through to look at it, won't he?

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Oh.

Shirley: Just trying to think of (unintelligible).

Elizabeth: Did he know that when he purchased the property there?

Shirley: No.

Elizabeth: Is he took, alright, OK.

Shirley: We was went, um, when Time Team were here and they dug up, so...

Elizabeth: Oh.

Roger: I think the Bath house, since it's been there for a long time, hasn't it? I think they knew about that a long time ago.

Shirley: Yeah, maybe it was, because...

Roger: There's the toilets as well. You've seen the toilets, yeah.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Yes, yeah. We peek over and look at the latrines.

Shirley: Yeah. When our, when our, that was the only...

Roger: You can go and speak to the farmer...

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: He would more than, he would let you go over...

Elizabeth: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lora: Oh, OK. Where does he...?

Roger: He's the farm over there, the yellow building over there.

Lora: What's the address?

Elizabeth: So, you know when you, you know where you're parked, right? So, when you came up our path here, instead of coming up here, can you see there's a path just down there where it's got, there's a sign where that says "Piercebridge Organics", can you see...

Lora: Yeah.

Elizabeth: There's a green sign on that white wall?

Lora: Uh huh.

Elizabeth: If you go through there...what hours are they open, Roger? Is it, um, till 4:00?

Roger: Oh, the shop?

Elizabeth: Yeah, 9:00-4:00?

Roger: Uh, half three.

Elizabeth: Half three.

Lora: OK.

Elizabeth: And then on a weekend, they are open Saturday 9 till half three, and then the full Sunday?

Roger: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sunday, they're open till 1:00.

Elizabeth: Open till 1:00, that was it, yeah.

Roger: Half ten...(Unintelligible)

Elizabeth: Yeah. So then if you say, if you've been talking to Roger and Shirley, um...

Roger: Shirley.

Elizabeth: Shirley. You're talking to Shirley, um...

Lora: Name drop.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Shirley: When, when I was a kid, it was like, it was pristine round there, cut, edged, everything, the stone and everything.

Roger: Ohh, just, yeah, I mean...

Shirley: Yeah, it was, it was.

Roger: To be honest, if you go around there now, I could take you round there, they would, they wouldn't mind. It's getting quite overgrown.

Shirley: Yeah, and it, it was.

Lora: Oh, is it?

Shirley: And that was the only thing...

Roger: The wall fell in.

Lora: Right.

Shirley: That, that was the only thing that was dug when I was two, and then Mr. Richardson, who lived in Ivy House, he did that, he dug all, all, uh...

Roger: Did he dig it out, did he?

Lora: Did he?

Shirley: Yeah, he did that.

Lora: So, a local person went over there and was doing archaeology, basically?

Shirley: Uh, yeah.

Roger: Yeah, well, that's right, cause the bottom of his garden is the, the...

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: The easement.

Shirley: Yeah. He used to...there was a gate and he used to go in and, but it was, it was like a, you know...

Elizabeth: People came to see it.

Shirley: Like, cut pristine, round edged and everything. And all the stones were all lovely. But I know it's got a bit, and then you see when, um...

Roger: Harry used to put his, well, he used to put his shape into it.

Shirley: It was when they were going to build houses behind us there was, like, buildings and all that, like farm buildings, massive, big barn that Mr. Kathric, before Hodgins came, had all the implements in. And then the council came and had it surveyed, and that when they found, that's when they found, and there's going to be 20 houses in there.

Roger: Yeah.

Shirley: And, and that's when, in 1970...

Roger: Have you heard that, that there were gonna, that is how they found the Roman Fort? They were going to build some houses on that land.

Lora: Ahhh.

Roger: So, they came along and surveyed it and found the Roman Fort. That was it. No houses.

Lora: In the 70s.

Elizabeth: The 70s.

Roger: Yeah.

Lora: Yeah.

Roger: No houses could be built.

Shirley: Yeah, it was in the 70's, I think it was '77. Something like that, were doing it there, but there were, the twins were only little then, and they, you know, they used to go down and help and all that, but...

Roger: We've got a lot to thank the Romans for. So, now no one could build on this area.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: Right, right!

Roger: So it couldn't get any bigger.

Lora: Which is nice. Yeah.

Roger: Yeah. Because there is stuff that side as well, isn't there? On the other side.

Shirley: Well, it's all...

Lora: Yeah, it's all around this whole area.

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: My understanding is that it's just all over this area, there are things.

Shirley: Well, yeah. So, and Peter's got, uh, from the, the bench in the dig, that's, that was his, well...

Elizabeth: Oh, right.

Shirley: You know, like, but, he's passed away now.

Roger: He's the one that did the work?

Elizabeth: Is that why the bench is there?

Shirley: Well, he's the one who, you know, was in charge of everybody, but it, it was just non-stop. It was, um, everybody came every day. They all come and digging and digging and digging and all that.

Elizabeth: (Unintelligible) A bit to sort of muck in.

Shirley: But we've just had, um, they're supposed to be coming and doing something because when they did all of it, it's not the right, they used concrete instead of lime mortar and concrete. If you notice all the stones are all, the concrete is absolutely rock solid.

Lora: Right.

Shirley: And that, that was the wrong thing to use and all that. And the, and somebody's pushed all the stones in. So, they're going to do all that and do it and make it, make it tidy. But I don't know when because, we had a meeting with Paul Bellis and all these, um, was, there was three or four women, but, with purple hair and all that.

Roger: Ah, they belong as well, Shirl. I didn't think, 'cause we, I was at the meeting as well. And then...

Shirley: Oh, did you? When, when the, when Paul was there?

Roger: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Shirley: Well, when was that then?

Roger: Oh, there wasn't that long ago. It was only probably a year, a year and a half ago. Something like that.

Shirley: Yeah. Yeah, but they were gonna break, you know, they were going to come and do all this and...

Roger: The problem is there, there is a lot of damage there and a lot of it's caused by public because, you know, everyone comes to the village with the dogs, everyone walks the dogs and they jump all over it and that's what ends up breaking it. And it was getting in an awful state. A lot of the drainage ditches are actually falling in.

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: Um, so, we got these people out to try...

Shirley: Yeah, but...

Roger: And get them to replace it, to repair it. They've got no money.

Shirley: Yeah. So...

Roger: That's the problem.

Shirley: They are going to do it. They were supposed to be coming and doing it, well, they, there was three women, but I can't remember what, what...

Roger: Yeah, the, the, the lady with the purple hair, she had great ideas, didn't she?

Shirley: Yeah, she was going to put (unintelligible).

Roger: Oh, we'll change the grass, that'll help, OK, yeah. That'll...

Shirley: Yeah, I forgot you were there. Yeah, yeah.

Roger: Yeah.

Elizabeth: So, why is the lime mortar better than the concrete?

Shirley: Because...

Roger: It's not as hard.

Shirley: Yeah. Concrete is a set like thing.

Roger: (Unintelligible)

Shirley: If, you know, if you go down, the stones have all, the concrete there and the stones all have sunk in or whatever with the bends and that going over and stuff.

Elizabeth: Oh, right.

Roger: And lime mortar can breathe, whereas concrete, it doesn't.

Elizabeth: It's just, yeah. More porous.

Roger: Yeah. So these, all these houses are high mortar.

Shirley: But, they were saying at one point, though, that if, if they don't, if people don't respect it or anything, they're gonna, like, fence it off, weren't they? Do some, you know, if, weren't there?

Elizabeth: And of course, COVID, we had droves of people here. The attraction of this little village where no, nobody, the only thing you could do in, when we had all the lockdowns, was walk.

Roger: You were allowed to walk your dog, so...

Elizabeth: So, people, the amount of people that came here.

Roger: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Was just (unintelligible).

Shirley: But it it's still not gonna affect now.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: They’re still coming now.

Elizabeth: Yeah, they are because people have now got to know the village because of COVID and then they still come back ‘cause they love it.

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: There's people coming from America and all sorts...

Lora: I know! Shame on them! What are they thinking?!

Shirley: Can, can you not remember that bit where they said if, if, you know, like, they could fence a bit off and then that, like, so you could look at it or something? There was some, some...

Roger: Yeah. Yeah, she did mention it.

Shirley: And there, and there was a, there was a woman in there, I was watching her, she was down in the trench looking to see if there was, um, any, um, animals, you know? But, you know, like, ones that...

Lora: Bones of?

Shirley: No, no, no. People, uh, little ones that live in, you know...

Lora: Oh, right.

Shirley: I can’t...

Lora: Critters or something?

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: Yeah.

Shirley: I can't remember what?

Roger: It wouldn't be bats.

Shirley: No, no, it was...

Roger: Because, oh God, this country is protective of bats. You can't do anything with bats.

Shirley: No, it wasn't that. But they, they had, she had all these meetings and all that to see through, you know. Oh yes, it was all very technical.

Elizabeth: Got all sorts of gadgets now, aren't there?

Roger: But it, it would be good. I mean, I didn't realise they were still gonna go ahead with it, but it needs...

Shirley: Oh, yeah.

Roger: It is gonna, it's gonna fall apart if they don't do something.

Shirley: Yeah, well, it's got damaged worse since we've, since they were here because...yeah.

Lora: So, what are your feelings about living...so, you live here and this is your home. What are your feelings about people coming in? You want to be welcoming and have people come and walk their dogs, but there, then there is that, kind of, preservation, conservation part and I think that's what...

Roger: Yeah, it's just respectful.

Lora: People...

Roger: Basically, it's our back garden at the end...

Lora: Right. Do you think, overall, people are respectful, or do you think it's getting more, um...

Roger: I think most people are...

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: But there's always that...

Shirley: If everything goes to plan, when we get our church up and running, there is going to be things, like, we are going to promote the Roman side more, you know, and get people interested in, and eventually there might be like, so that people can go in and look at it, you know. If everything, that's one of the plans it's gonna be.

Roger: We've got a guy in the village. He's an ex, um, Army guy, he is so knowledgeable about it all. He loves it. He actually did a talk for us, didn't he?

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: What's his name?

Elizabeth: Ah, Steve.

Roger: Steve Regan.

Lora: OK.

Roger: Steve Regan.

Elizabeth: Oh, I've met Steve, yeah.

Roger: Yeah, he's, um, he's our local...what do you call it, astronomer?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Roger: And historian.

Shirley: Did, did you say that the, the, this last week you've seen this, um...

Roger: Yeah, the pinwheel.

Shirley: Pinwheel. And the amount of numbers it is...

Elizabeth: Lightyears or something, isn't it?

Shirley: Yeah. And I was thinking, how, how do you, how do you get that into perspective, that bit, like that? It's, it's, it's interesting, but it's amazing that you can see that far.

Roger: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Whatever he puts his mind to, he's very good, isn't he?

Roger: He is. He has one of these, uh, drones he sends up and he, looking down on it, and he, he uses it to point out where everything was.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: And he knows where everything is. You can see it.

Lora: That's amazing.

Roger: There's certain, you'll have seen that picture down that back lane there where in the, in the summer when everything started to dry out, you can see where the tracks were and everything. So, he goes in with his drone and does the same, and other places around this area, as well.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: That's fantastic (unintelligible).

Roger: He's very, he's a very knowledgeable guy. Very knowledge...if you went down there and started talking to him, set two or three days aside.

Elizabeth: Probably 9:00 in the morning, just so you can get home for tea.

Lora: Right. Yes, that's right. Have somewhere I have to be.

Elizabeth: He would have a lot to offer, wouldn't he?

Roger: Yeah.

Elizabeth: And he's passionate, that's the thing.

Lora: Yeah. Yes.

Roger: Very, very passionate about it, yeah.

Elizabeth: So passionate about it. And it was just as like Shirley was saying, we're, like, really proud. And when the, the church is open, when we want to showcase where we live, because we are proud of it, aren't we?

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: Yes.

Elizabeth: But you do worry, don't you? The people, the more people that know about us.

Shirley: Yeah, that, that, that's the other side of it, you know, like, um, we don't wanna be going over, like, over the top. You know what I mean? Everybody, like busloads and that, coming. Just people in cars would be quite happy, you know?

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Shirley: But, and, and especially on the children's side, we have, you know, like the, take the, you know, like, they do go to the farm and all that and see where we do the (unintelligible).

Roger: Oh, God, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: (Unintelligible) loves Chris.

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: It's when they, there's a lot of, you know, families bring the kids and they don't keep...I know kids will be kids and they'll climb.

Lora: Yes.

Roger: That's when the damage can be done...

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: The kids jumping all over it, as well. It's just a little bit of a lack of respect, to be fair.

Lora: Yeah. And whenever you open anything up to the public, unless you have someone working there to, kind of, oversee...

Roger: Yeah.

Lora: There is going to be that. Some people damage on purpose, but a lot of it is people accidentally or, you know, kids climbing. And there is that balance. Like you said, you want it to be, it's an important part of history. I mean, this place, and I know I only know very little, and what I know is mind blowing. So, you want to be able to share that. It's a thing to be proud of and it's so interesting.

Roger: The amount of hours and time that's been put into that Roman fort, you don't want to disappear and it will if...

Lora: Right.

Roger: Yeah.

Lora: I know in Binchester...I don't know if you've been to the Binchester.

Roger: I have, yeah, yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: So, they, kind of, have built, some of it is built inside of a building, um, which would obviously be very expensive to do.

Roger: Yes.

Lora: But then that's the way, I guess, that they preserve it and still allow it to be open to the public. And, just, it being in a building I think gives it a more formal, so, you know...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: You can't climb on things and maybe people would be more respectful of it. But, um.

Roger: On the bridge, which you like, they can't do any damage to that. The stones are too big.

Lora: Right. Yeah. The bridge is incredible too.

Roger: That (unintelligible).

Lora: Just, yeah. The whole thing is really...and I know my kids, when I bring them, they love, we talk about the narrative that they have, you know, that English Heritage has. Um, we read that and we say, but can you spot these things and what would this drain be for? And we've peeked over to look at the latrines. And so...

Roger: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lora: So, um, there's some great educational value. Do you know if, do schools come here? Is this something that is on the radar?

Roger: They were here just last week, were...oh, no, that was something else though, wasn't it?

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: It was...

Roger: Queen Elizabeth College.

Elizabeth: Well, no, it was sixth form.

Roger: But that was part of the DLE thing, wasn't it?

Elizabeth: Oh, I think they were just doing a, a...not a rumble...what's it called? Expedition through, wasn't it?

Roger: They do come through though.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: Our daughter, when she was, (unintelligible) up here, that came down here and they were showing the fort.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: So that, schools do use it. Definitely. Colleges? Have you seen any colleges here yet?

Shirley: Yeah, well, yeah, that's what I'm saying. We're gonna, like, we'd like schools to come and then go into the church. And then to, you know, like to get a bit more, we're obviously, there's all the boards around and they've just been renewed this year. They're, they're all new.

Elizabeth: But you would hope that it being the schools, that the teachers are there to kind of control them...

Shirley: Oh yeah.

Elizabeth: And it's a sort of a, it's just, it would be a bus. Do you know what I mean? It's the...

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Whole bus load of school kids, the idea, isn't it?

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: That sort of...

Shirley: Yeah. And you see there would be something, you know, like, sit down and have the, the meal, you know, like a, a picnic and all that, you know, and make it...

Elizabeth: Yeah, like a little experience.

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: That they'll go home and tell Mum and Dad about.

Shirley: And we'll have a toilet, you see, which will be a big thing.

Lora: Yes, that is one of the things when I come here. I'm like, because, everyone use toilet before we go because I don't know where you're gonna go. But...

Shirely: Yeah.

Lora: Um, so, yeah.

Roger: The farmer's shop.

Lora: That's the more practical thing, isn't it?

Roger: The farmer's shop has toilet.

Shirley: If you go to the farmer's shop...

Lora: Oh, the farm...see, there we go. Now we know.

Shirley: Yes. But, we will have our own. That's...

Lora: Yes, practical things that like...

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: The facilities and, right.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Yeah, those are another thing. And all those things cost money and I know there are grants, but then it's like you need to hire somebody to apply for the grants, because that's a full-time job.

Shirley: Oh, we, we've got, we've got our own, um, at the minute. Liz.

Elizabeth: She is proactive, isn't she?

Roger: Yeah. Well, Liz, Liz Hodge is the farmer's wife, the farmer's wife.

Lora: The farmer's wife.

Shirley: Yeah. 'Cause I'm church warden, as well.

Lora: Ahhh.

Shirley: And so...

Roger: Yeah, Shirley is on that committee as well, so the pair of them have been chasing...

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: This thing through.

Shirley: Yeah. So, we're on guarantee, the minute.

Lora: And see, that is a perfect example of local...because if you are waiting on government agencies, whatever their intentions are, however good they may be to get the money, get the funding, get the grants. That was one of the things I talked about, um, the lady I talked to who had been on the Portable Antiquities Scheme, she said there's so much to do and the funding, and it's particular, you know.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: You can't get funding if it's this, this or this, but you can't...and she said it's just a mess. And so, this is another perfect example of, you guys are local and you're, you know, you care about the area.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: And so, you're taking that which is invaluable.

Roger: It's, how many years has been?

Shirley: Uh, it was the, 2011 when we sold the village hall.

Roger: 2011. So, this is the amount of time it's taken. It's ridiculous.

Lora: Yes.

Roger: And jumping through hoops just...

Lora: Oh, yeah.

Roger: Absolute, and, you know, one of the biggest problems is, to what I understand, is the church. The church are seriously difficult to deal with.

Lora: Hmmm.

Roger: You've got some old farts sitting at the top who have no idea what reality is.

Lora: Historically, that seems to be the issue, doesn't it?

Roger: Yes.

Lora: Oh, yeah.

Shirley: Don't tell us about it.

Elizabeth: I know.

Shirley: It's just horrendous. Poor Liz, I feel sorry for her. She’s, yeah.

Elizabeth: She’s persevered though, hasn’t she?

Shirley: Oh yeah.

Lora: And you're trying...

Elizabeth: And you just seem like...

Lora: You're trying to do something great.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: And so, it is kind of that feeling of, why is there so much resistance?

Shirley: ‘Cause it, obviously we don't want, you know, we don't want it sold. We want it to be a community, you know, because obviously we sold our village hall, which, thought it was a good idea at the time.

Roger: Which used to be a school where Shirley was at.

Shirley: School, where I, I went.

Lora: Yeah.

Shirley: Yeah, I'm about the, well, I'm the only one left that went to school there. Yeah.

Roger: Your sister, your sister, was she, your sister?

Shirley: Oh yeah, she was. Yeah. Oh, well, she's in town now. She's thinking, you know, like.

Elizabeth: Yeah. Oh.

Shirley: But, yeah.

Roger: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah, that house, as you come into the...which way did you come in, this way? Past the Fox?

Lora: Mmm-hmmm.

Elizabeth: Yeah. So, just as you come in, it's the, after the house on the corner on the left-hand side, it's the, the little house, isn't it? Which has got the open, sort of, gateway. That's where the village hall, well, the school, was.

Shirley: Well, you can tell it's a school where the bell is.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: It’s got the bell on it.

Shirley: You’ve got the bell.

Elizabeth: Yeah, it’s got the bell. You’ve probably noticed it.

Lora: Yeah. It’s down this way?

Elizabeth: No.

Lora: Or that way?

Roger: That way.

Elizabeth: That way, as you're coming in, past the Fox, and then it's on the left-hand side.

Lora: Oh! OK.

Roger: Right-hand side.

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Oh, yeah, that's my right, yeah. So, it's, it was a lovely little building that we had the kids' birthday parties in there and...

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Aww.

Elizabeth: It was a lovely little village hall.

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: It was nice because we got together, we had bingo in there, we had Curry nights, we had...

Roger: Yeah, that was...

Elizabeth: Quizzes.

Shirley: Yeah, yeah.

Roger: Yeah, that was, all sorts went down there.

Elizabeth: We did (unintelligible).

Shirley: They all said it was, it was gonna cost too much.

Elizabeth: I know.

Shirley: But I didn't want them to sell it. But obviously I was, you know.

Elizabeth: I know, we couldn't...

Shirley: But, uh...

Lora: It's interesting hearing you guys talk about it because you're talking about things that are not tangible. You're talking about birthday parties and...

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Things that you went to. So, these are things that a lot of people talk about, but do you find them valuable? Would you get online to the Portable Antiquities Scheme or, uh, Missing Pieces Project and would you say, here's a picture, you know, take a picture of this, this old school, for example, and say these are, because those are the stories they're documenting.

Elizabeth: Really?

Lora: And so, I'm wondering, do you guys find that valuable? Would you, now that you know that, that those are things that are valuable...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: I talked to, the guy that I talked to at the Missing Pieces Project, he had example after example. He was also very passionate about people's stories, and he had example after example of things you guys are talking about, and he would just, kind of, come up on these stories and he would ask the people, do you realize this is valuable information? And most people are like, no, they're just my memories. They are...

Roger: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lora: They're just what we did. And so, one of his things, and of course, it's a very small group that are trying to do this big project. But he said, this is why we want to get the word out, because those stories are valuable. And he, in particular, is very passionate, especially when it involves a building. Like I said, Missing Pieces Project is more focused on buildings. It doesn't necessarily have to be listed, but...

Roger: There you go, Shirley. You should get your...

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: Get your members of the church.

Lora: Another project.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Like you need, like you need one more thing.

Shirley: I was, I, you know, I'm, I'm not upset about the village hall, but I know it's getting the church...but it's still not, it's, it's, it's still a church, but I know it's going to be nice that we've got a toilet and stuff like that. And you know that we can. But the village hall, to me, was just spot on. It was exactly the right size and everything for what we wanted.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: Oh, yeah.

Shirley: And you see, we've even lost our Chapel now. That's the house.

Elizabeth: Yeah, oh, yes, it was a Chapel. Uh huh.

Shirley: And now, you know, that, that was a, well, it's still...

Roger: A Methodist building, a Methodist chapel.

Shirley: It's still a lovely building, isn't it?

Elizabeth: Ah, Methodist, yeah, yeah.

Roger: Methodist chapel.

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Which is just across...

Shirley: It's in the middle over there. Yeah.

Elizabeth: Ah, OK.

Shirley: Yeah.

Elizabeth: It is such a shame, isn't it?

Roger: Just to, going back to the, you know, these stories, just, I know this is digressive. I have a business which was started in 1898 by my great grandfather. Now, I, I've run it now. I never asked my grandfather anything about the story...

Shirley: Well, you see, yeah.

Roger: About the shop. What happened here? What happened there? Who?

Lora: Are you still in the same shop...

Roger Yeah.

Lora: That he was...?

Roger: Still in the same shop. I'll never get that. I'll never know.

Shirley: Yeah. It's like, like mine, mine...

Roger: So, this is the serious sort of thing, you need to get these things, yeah.

Shirley: Yeah. Like me, daddy. See, he died when he was 61. He had a stroke. I mean, he'd be...he was in the army, you know, and all that. And he used to do the fire for the church and stuff like that. But he had a, you know, he didn't have a very nice childhood, you know, like, obviously.

Lora: Yeah.

Shirley: The, you know, like that. But, you know, he used to tell us all things, but of course he forget things. But, um, you know, it just, it was just a shame that he was only 61, I mean. And when you think 61 now...

Elizabeth: That's no age, is it? I know.

Shirley: That's no age. But I mean, like, you know, a lot of people died early because of the way, you know, lifestyle and stuff like that, you know...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Shirley: In some places that, you know, the...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: And I think sometimes, like you're saying, you know, you never asked your grandpa.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: That's another thing that can be kind of a byproduct of this, the Missing Pieces Project, and these government schemes is...

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: If you put that on there, you have a picture of it, you never know who's gonna to come and say, hey, I met your grandpa, and we talked about....

Elizabeth: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: Do you know what I mean? So it's, there's a...

Roger: All the little jigsaw pieces.

Elizabeth: It is bits and pieces.

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: Yes! And there are things that might be historically important, or things like that, but then there's also that personal aspect, which is limitless. I mean, you just never know what can come from those things.

Shirley: Yeah, well, we have people coming at the church and, um, and saying, do you know where the grave is of so-and-so? They're related to me, and all that. And then they get all, you know, they're looking for the family thing and all that and it's, you know, I'm interested in that side.

Lora: Yes.

Shirley: ‘Cause, ‘cause me, my, my family's in the church, yeah. In the church.

Lora: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: So, like you're saying, these missing pieces.

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: It’s kind of what their, what that, where that name comes from, is kind of putting these together to build these historic, or these stories that are important to the history, just in general, but also kind of personal, personal stories. So, is there anything you guys want to add, um, about, in particular focused on the schemes or, um, interacting with gover…I mean, you've had, maybe if, even if you didn't know about the schemes, any interactions you've had with, like, you're talking about with government agencies, English Heritage, um…

Roger: If we've got any questions about them.

Elizabeth: Do you know, it's been an awareness for me because I had no idea that this existed, these, um, initiatives existed, and I think that now, ‘cause sometimes, it doesn't happen often, but I'll get stopped if I'm out with Charlie. It's only in the summer months, and people will stop and say, oh, are

you from the village? Or people that have a question about the George and they just...

Lora: Yeah,

Elizabeth: They want to, like, just extract that information and, I mean, I know nothing really, like, oh, I asked Roger, Roger (unintelligible). I have no idea really, I mean. But, and it's nice that you can kind of pass on that and say, oh, do you know, why don't you look up Missing Pieces or look up the Antiquities, Antiquities, um, Scheme, because it's nice, isn't it?

Roger: I think it would be a really good, yeah...

Elizabeth: To know that other people have come to the village, they're not local.

Shirley: 'Cause, when...

Elizabeth: They come to the village to...

Roger: Yeah, yeah, Lora, you've given us this information about these two groups who are wanting information, I can take you to every house in this village...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: And you'd be lucky if one person's ever heard of them.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: Ah, that's interesting.

Roger: They, I think, if you want to go back to them and say, look, this place where you're trying to get information know nothing about you.

Lora: Yes.

Roger: Whether it's an e-mail or just, well, it would just be, a hard copy letter would be the best bet, through everyone's door...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: There would be stuff that, there are people in this village who've been here a long time, same as Shirley, who will actually, they will pass some information on. They will do it.

Elizabeth: I mean, (unintelligible).

Roger: They will have found things which haven't been...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Shirley: Well, yeah...

Lora: Yes.

Roger: You know, so, get a letter out to everyone in the village.

Elizabeth: Well, would they come and do a talk with the people that you've been talking to? You know, like when we (unintelligible) nice hall?

Shirley: Yeah, 'cause it...

Elizabeth: Is there like a little welcome, this is our lovely hall and (unintelligible).

Shirley: We did have a museum when, when, I can remember it.

Elizabeth: Was there? Oh.

Shirley: Yeah. Where, uh, Jojo's Garage is.

Elizabeth: Ah ha. Really?

Shirley: And there, yeah, there was like, and he had big windows, you couldn't see in it and all that, like, frosted. And then, but I never went in, but when it closed, cause Mr. Kaley...

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Shirley: Built that bungalow. He, he got permission and then obviously knocked it down. But that, that's where the Jojo's Garage is.

Roger: Where is, where did the artefacts go then? (Unintelligible)

Shirley: They went up to, uh, Bowes Museum.

Elizabeth: Oh, right.

Roger: Oh, right, OK.

Shirley: And if you go in the dungeons, they're all in, well, most of them are there. But, you know, yeah. And that's what Mr. Richardson found that was, it was through him. That's...

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: So, I know that the Portable Antiquities Scheme has, um, liaisons in different areas, and so I talked to the person who is the one for County Durham. And, again, their main connection to the public is through metal detecting clubs. So, they'll go around, but I think that's some feedback, not that they'll listen to me, but I'll get it out there anyway, that some of that could be coming to places, especially something like Piercebridge that already has a very rich, established history, and going, contacting the mayor or the, anybody in there, in town, who would know, and say, do you have a Historical Society? Do you have...the different meetings that you mentioned, you know...

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: Where you get together and talk about things. Because he's very, my impression of when I was talking to him was that they are looking for places, people, and sometimes on their end they're, they don't know who to talk to, so I can give you that information. Um, his name, you just send him an e-mail next time you have a meeting and say, we have a meeting on the second Tuesday at 6:00 and this is the post code because...

Roger: That's good, possible for, in the church.

Elizabeth: Yeah, it might get you in the diary as well, Roger, for missing the meetings on a Monday night. What's he, like...

Roger: Do you know...

Shirley: I didn't have my phone with me tonight.

Roger: Do you know it was Willow's birthday on Monday as well.

Shirley: Oh, was it?

Roger: I had to take her into town for half six or whatever. Quarter to seven.

Elizabeth: Surely, let me know when the meetings are, I'll put them in the diary.

Roger: Well, I usually put it down. Sorry I missed parish councils.

Elizabeth: Missed a parish council.

Roger: I missed the meeting on Monday. So...

Shirley: And I usually follow him up but I didn't have me phone with me. I left it in the windowsill. I'd put my coat on it and put it and...

Roger: I'm going to be, I'm going to be burned at the stake next month.

Lora: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: Yeah. You'd better prepare yourself. But that is something that can be done because it's so, my impression, again, talking to these people, is there are so few of them trying to cover the whole country...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Roger: Yeah.

Lora: And, but the other thing that I got from them is that they are passionate and they want, you know, they're not just checking boxes. I didn't get that impression at all. So, if you want to reach out to them...

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Lora: Um, I think they would be thrilled to come here, especially a place like this, and be able to say what they do and get the word out, because the rich amount of history here, when these people pass or, you know, things, life moves on, like your grandfather, those stories are going to be lost unless they get documented.

Elizabeth: I know.

Lora: And to document them in a place where you can come back to them and other people can access them. And that database is pretty invaluable.

Shirley: It would be, it would be nice to see the dig, like, put back all them, all them stones and all that that's gone. It would be nice to see, like...

Roger: Of course, yeah, yeah.

Shirley: Not pristine, but in good condition, wouldn't it?

Roger: Yep.

Lora: And that might be a byproduct of getting in contact with these people, I don't know.

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: But it would shine a light on that and, potentially, you might be able to get more resources, more attention.

Shirley: Yeah, because that's what...

Roger: Well, you were touching on before about these grants, there are hundreds of grants out there.

Lora: Yes.

Roger: It's finding the right one for (unintelligible).

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: They're so particular, right.

Roger: Yeah.

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: There will be one there, it's just...

Shirley: Oh, yeah, it's just, yeah. Well, they did say, when I think about it, they did say that it's a money problem, isn't it?

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: Even the Portable Antiquities liaison who was over the divers and all their thousands of artefacts, she said, even just to get the funding, which seems like an obvious thing when you've found thousands of Roman artefacts.

Shirley: Yeah.

Roger: Yeah.

Lora: She said, even getting the funding for that was challenging because, just the loopholes you have to jump through, particular...and she did eventually obviously find one and, and was able to go through with that, but that was very time consuming...

Shirley: Yeah.

Lora: And she's trying to do her job at the Portable Antiquities Scheme, so she was juggling a lot at the time, but, um...

Roger: It'd be easy if they just did all these lottery grants and everything was in one big lottery area - bang!

Lora: Yes!

Roger: You just go to the (unintelligible) and now you have this department, which you go to, it'd make life a lot easier.

Lora: Yeah, somehow organize it...

Roger: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: And then you can just, kind of, pick which one fits what you need.

8.2.4 Gareth Powell – Project Engagement Officer, Missing Pieces Project, Historic England

Lora: Get that set up there.

Gareth: Yeah. I wouldn't expect you to...

Computer: Recording in progress.

Gareth: To from, from memory, write all the notes there, that's fine.

Lora: Scribbling notes madly, misquoting. Thank you so much for taking time. I'm sure you're very busy.

Gareth: No, it's no worries.

Lora: And I really appreciate it. I don't know a whole lot about the Missing Pieces Project. Um, just, kind of, what I've read online and so I'm really excited to learn about it. These schemes in England are extremely unusual and pretty amazing, so I've been very impressed up to this point. So, I don't know if you just want to get started with, kind of, what your connection is. Maybe your job role and then a little, um, like in a nutshell, what the Missing Pieces Project is.

Gareth: Yes. My name is Gareth Powell. So, I have worked on the project since it's inception. So, it started in 2016. Um, so, it was the first time that people could attach a photo to, to a statutory list entry, so, um, without being too, um, kind of niche about what it is, so the statutory list entry is the legal document that confirms something's listed. Um, so, it was the first time that people could, um, add, um, photos to it. So, it started off as something for heritage professionals to add additional information to a list entry that was written by a Heritage Professional. And then it kind of evolved into a, a way to document social history as well as, kind of, additional information.

Lora: OK, so the basis, the foundation of the information with the Missing Pieces Project is by the, I'll call them the experts, the heritage professionals who have kind of laid a foundation of, these are particular sites - or does it include culture, cultural experiences or traditions or anything like that? It's strictly physical sites?

Gareth: Yes, it's, it's the physical thing that has to be protected. So, um, the problem that we have as an organisation is that, imagine something important happened at a site, but if the site isn't worthy of protection...So, say if you had, um...trying to think of the top head, something, so a really important document was signed in a room, but the room itself has been modernised, it's been changed, it's been, so absolutely no elements or features remain of when the important thing happened, then it wouldn't be worthy of listing or designation, as we say, but listing. Um, so, how, how much do you know about the listing process?

Lora: I know a little bit about it.

Gareth: OK.

Lora: I did audit a class last semester, a heritage class, and they talked about the different um, levels and tiers...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: I can't, um, right now, get all the terminology right, but the listing, um, so I do have a very general frame of reference.

Gareth: Ah, brilliant. Yeah, yeah. I just, I didn't know whether to, yeah. It was, I figured you would, but I just didn't want to, um, so, yeah. So, I mean, it's essentially, there has to be elements of the building remaining for it to be protected. So, otherwise we can't list it, so it's, it's, the, the, the fundamentals is always going to be the, kind of, the thing that you can see rather than the thing that happened.

Lora: OK, that's good. That's a great explanation. So, when you have this, um, I keep calling a foundation - if there's a better word, let me know - of places that are listed on the site. And so, you said they were initially only open to heritage professionals adding to it or?

Gareth: It was. Yeah, it was open to everyone, but the encouragement was it would be additional information added by a heritage professional. Um, I think one of the issues that we have today that remains is that the, it can, sorry, I use my hands to talk. So, I always realise...

Lora: Me too.

Gareth: That I'm kind of like, yeah, so, um, now I'm trying not to. But, um, is that thing of, um, people put the list entry onto a pedestal because it's a legal document, because it's important. One of the problems that we've had is to try to break down the barrier of participation, so things like language as a barrier to participation. So, if you, if I start to say designation, so that is a designated building, rather than, that's a listed building, it's a barrier to participation because people don't feel it's, kind of, for them. So, my role is

to go out to talk to people, to say no, the information you've got is pertinent, the information you've got is relevant, the information you've got is important. So that's where I come into it.

Lora: I think that's a really important point because that's been a dialogue that I've had through heritage is that perspective of what we think is important, what someone else might think is important, and getting that understanding out to the public that it is important whatever you have to say about this area or whatever it may be. It is important and maybe having them realise that that's important, that they need to speak up or add to these different schemes. So, with, the scheme is fairly new. I mean, in the, in the scheme of things and so have you noticed, have, you said you've been in since the inception in 2016? So, have you noticed, even though it's only been about nine years, an increase in the public's awareness, knowledge, participation?

Gareth: Yeah. So, with, with our, so, with my job, anything that, so there's a, there's a lack of understanding in terms of, again, going back to terminology. So, we've got the National Heritage List of England, which is sometimes called “The List”, but, uh, I think the last YouGov, YouGov polling said that 43% of people were aware of Historic England, but of that 43%, only 3% were aware of the list. So again, it's this, this barrier to participation. Most people would have heard of a listed building, but most people wouldn't know that we're the people that designate that building protected. So, there is this issue of, we are this unknown, kind of, civil servants that go around denying people to changing their windows and things like this, and we're the people that don't. So, it's this, it’s this idea of opening up what we do. There's no, there's no mystery. There's no, you know, there's no, kind of, um...oh, God, yeah. There's no mystery to what we do. Like everything that we do is open and available to the public, and I think in recent years, we've made a real effort to kind of put a face and a name to what we do. So, if it means that we have to have difficult conversations with people, because it is emotive, so going back to the local, there, there is emotive things or something. If a building is not listed. So, say if a buildings not protected within, uh, a community, that's, that can be an emotive subject because it's seen as a community, say, right. This is an important building. You need to protect it. The problem is that with our remit has to be of national importance, so there could be a community centre that has played a huge part within a local community, but it doesn't hold national importance. Therefore, we can't, we can't designate it so, the, the problem is, is that we can't, we can't please everyone, and we definitely don't, you know, some people say there's too many listed buildings. Some people, they say there isn't enough, so that's, that's the, that's that middle line that we try to, kind of, to make available, but at the same time we can't please everyone.

Lora: Right. And I've heard, just as I've talked to other people within different schemes that that's kind of a common thread is just a nuance of backgrounds, personalities. Like you said, they might think this particular place is relevant and important because it is to them and their community, and, kind of, having to navigate a lot of, there's, there seems to be a lot of personal, um, social skills that are a big part of this. I think working with the public, kind of in general, has that tone. But especially like you said, when there's emotion involved, and, and sentiment and things that you kind of have to tread lightly. But at the same time, there are, there's an order and there are, um, restrictions or rules or...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: You know, there's a better way to put that, but, um, so generally speaking, and I know this is such a hard question to answer because of all the nuance, um, aspects, but when you are working with the public, in your experience, what is their overall, once they kind of do understand what the Missing Pieces...what is their, um, reaction or, um, yeah, what is their reaction? What is their feeling? What is their participation? Are they excited about it?

Gareth: Yeah, I see. It can be boiled down into who you're talking to. So, if you think about like, um, someone who's much younger than me, so there'll be a digital native that, kind of, they expect this, they expect there to be instant gratification when they upload a photo. They expect there to be a certain amount of views and the photo is kind of like, well, what do I get out of it? That's one element. Um, and then if you go to people that are kind of slightly older than myself, there's this idea of, like, they are incredibly grateful and they can't believe that their photo is going to be added to the list entry. Which, then again, is a barrier because they've, they've, kind of, one of the problems is, is, um, "I have a story, it's not that important". And my, my job is to say no, it is. It's, it's as valuable and it will be put on exactly the same page as anything else. So, you could have the architect, the original architect, kind of, could add additional information. Your story is going to be put on exactly the same page. So, that's one of the barriers but, it, so, you know, it, with each, with each, kind of, community, you know, however you want to define community, with each community there is a barrier to participation. So, I think, with a younger, kind of, digital native, it's still, "What's in it for me?" And for me, that's kind of, like, wow, I've got a huge interest in repurposed buildings. So, the greenest building is the building that's already built. So, if you knock down a building, you know, the amount of CO2 that gets released into the atmosphere. So, retrofitting and repurposing buildings, it's something I've got a massive passion in. So, if you think about the average, if you're walking around a big city, kind of, these cultural hubs, they will tend to take place in places that have been, for want of a better word, abandoned by other communities. So, you know, there's always that kind of swing of

where's, where's fashionable? And then, you know, you want, somewhere's been kind of left, another group can come in, so, that's my big interest. So, what, one of the things that I, one of the messages that I always try to, to really hammer home is the idea of, like, how have you helped this building, this community? The Missing Pieces is a, is a brilliant chance for you to showcase what you've done and be an inspiration to others. So, there's that, that, that kind of, that, "What's in it for me?" Well, you can inspire other people. And then, part of my role then is to showcase these great examples of repurposing.

Lora: That's fantastic. Um, so, with, have you noticed, um, and again, this is kind of one of those not really direct questions or a question that might be hard to answer. Have you noticed through your years, you're talking about the different ways that you're, kind of, trying to engage people. Um, and then you have, and I'll use the words expert and non expert. Just, you know, those aren't my favourite words, but they...

Gareth: No, uh, yeah, yeah, yes.

Lora: Tell you what you need to know, what I'm talking about. Um, have you noticed there to be any kind of divide or obstacle between, um, professionals or experts working with the public? Obviously there's going to be some, um, differences and, but, I don't know. I guess I'm talking more about socially, is not really the right word, but there is the stigmas, I guess, sometimes that can happen with experts and non experts, and have you noticed, I guess tell me about the, that connection or lack of connection.

Gareth: Yeah. So, it's, that, there definitely is. I, I think so. Again, this is just my personal experience, but there is a kind of "Why is that photo being added? It adds nothing, it's just a..." And, and my, my answer always is, "It's unique for that person." So, it's, so if you, you can, I have encountered experts, um, who say this has no place on the list entry, and my answer is always it does, because... I've got some examples lined up that I could show you. I can pop them into the chat if you want.

Lora: That would be great.

Gareth: So. God, it's, you know, when you don't use zoom and you're like where is...

Lora: Yes.

Gareth: Everything? So, here. So, I'm going to pop a list entry into the chat. And, then so this is a prime example of something that someone thought shouldn't be added to, which, so, essentially it's a story of a former owner of the Barnes who, um, shot his leg off with a shotgun whilst riding a horse. So, it's no, it's no kind of, um, yes, you go into the comments and photos section, you can see it there.

Lora: Yeah.

Gareth: So it's no, it's not intrinsically linked to the building. It doesn't. That story will not make the building a Grade 2 star or grade one.

Lora: Right.

Gareth: However, that, to me, is a slice of social history that I presume will never be repeated, was never repeated and is completely individual to that, to that person. So, that story can't be retold by anyone else. I hope.

Lora: Yeah. With that kind of story, you hope it's a one off.

Gareth: Yeah. But, but that makes, so without that story, that, that is just a title, so, farm buildings attached to Ranscomb farmhouse. So, you may know the location of that, of that place, but a farm building can be anything. Immediately, that story then brings a connection, so I've personally never shot my leg off of a shotgun, whilst riding a horse. However, you can picture the scene. You can, you, it is it, it, it brings back the idea of them getting annoyed with their wooden leg so they've thrown it across the field. So it is this story that can never be told by anyone else. It is a completely unique story. So, I'm always of the opinion that if you can build a connection, so again, if I tell, so I always use this as example in my, in my presentations because that makes that story unique to that list entry. It makes that list entry less forgettable. There are 400,000, over 400,000 list entries on, on the NHLE. Immediately, we've got a story that is unique to that one list entry. So that, to me, is invaluable. And then I'd say the other end of the scale when we're talking about experts adding additional information. So, one of my favourite architects, um, added, um, additional content to the list entry of the building that they designed. So, um, Peter Arlington, um, just did this off, off his own back, so this is like, kind of the, the very upper end of expert add-in addition information that no one else will know. So immediately that, that kind of adds to the list entry. The thing is I see the value in in both and I can, I can, I can explain the value in both. One slightly more obvious, but the other one is, is apparent. Like, they're both completely unique and can't be repeated, but they please different audiences.

Lora: Yes. And I think what you've done is key, or what you've explained is key. We need everybody's story...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: To paint the best picture of, um, not just history. Things change when narratives come along, it's very fluid. But to be able to have a much fuller picture, I mean, I'm sure you kind of feel the same way. Like, where's the negative in that, you know? Just, every story is going to have its importance and relevance...

Gareth: Yeah, exactly.

Lora: No matter which way. So, really quickly, you talk about, if a heritage professional comes to you and says, “I don't think this should be on the list”. What is the process there? Are you, like, does someone have the final say or is it a discussion or is it just if somebody....Yeah, just if you want to....

Gareth: I mean, if it, if it doesn't break any of the terms and conditions...so, every single contribution will go through a moderation phase. So, you know, that, that there are the obvious, so, don't speak negatively about a third party. Like, keep it positive. This isn't the avenue for you to complain about, insert, insert general complaint.

Lora: Bob, or whoever.

Gareth: Yeah. Yeah. So, this isn't the avenue for, for you to complain about this. So, please, if, if, if you say, “ I can't believe the local authorities have allowed this”, we're not, it's not the avenue. The avenue for that discussion is with the local authorities. It's not somewhere where you can talk about your neighbours painting their door a different colour that you would like. It's just not. So, it's a positive environment. So, we try to keep everything positive as long as it doesn't break any of the T&Cs. Then I am, I am steadfast in saying no, this has a place. So, um, the farm building's contribution, people didn't want that added. And I argued and said no, it has to be added, and it was probably the only time where I've really put my foot down and said there is a affinitive reason that it needs to be added and it's for this. So, as long as it doesn't break the T&Cs, everything's open to, to discussion. So, I'm slightly more liberal when it comes to what I feel should be added. Other people within the organisation, kind of feel that there should be a, a tone, a limit, a, but it's all open to discussion, but I'd say the only one time I've ever put my put my tiny little unimportant foot down is on the farm buildings one.

Lora: Yeah. That's great. I love that you're an advocate for that and that it seems to be a healthy environment as far as being able, like, with the moderation and to be able to respect each other's opinions.

Gareth: Yep.

Lora: And that is definitely going to add to, not just the list itself, but to, um, our culture and traditions and histories and just making it a more fuller picture.

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: So, that's really great. You added another....

Gareth: So, this is a telephone box. So, I did a, um, presentation to, um....so, it was a community team in Lewisham. So, it was, it was me saying that there's, off the top of my head there’s, I think there's about 268 listed buildings in

Lewisham. So, when I was talking to people, it was kind of like they thought that things like Buckingham Palace would be listed, not things in Lewisham. So, it was my way of saying well, no, actually what we've got is a vastly more, kind of, I mean...in its nature, the list isn't inclusive, because things that were built in 1850 were, they wouldn't have been owned by working class families doing working class jobs. They would be of a stature, hence, why they're still standing today. So, in its very nature that it wouldn't have been an inclusive environment. What the, the, the discussion I try to have is, actually, let's make it that way so you can tell me the stories of your, of what's close to you. So, I've never seen this telephone box in my life, but it turns out that it's now free public lending library. So, for me this is the middle ground between the architect adding additional information and the person adding a story that's completely, uh, independent to them. It's that middle ground. It updates the list entry, it gives relevance to what the phone box is being used for now, but also it's, it's a really important social story. So, phone boxes, we've all got our mini phone box in our pocket. We don't really necessarily need them. However, a free lending library is a magnificent use of a listed building. So again, it's that repurposed building. So again, it's local to, to that area, so it's something now I wouldn't know about and it's informed me, but it's also showcasing how great it is of a repurposed building.

Lora: Right. And to tell the story of the phone booth itself, it has its own little life. And to also, I mean, there's so many components to it, but to also show that as we progress or move forward or as time passes, we are able to, um, still keep those important things that were, like you said, right now, we just have a phone in our pocket and....

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: But it wasn't that long ago. I mean, I'm old enough to remember pay phones, you know, in the United States, the pay phones which were not near as pretty as the beautiful red. Um, but that was a huge part, if you were out and about it was such an important part of life for decades.

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: And then to be able to repurpose it into something that is still really important.

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: Um, and keeping all of...I'm just, telling multiple stories, right, with one small example. Um, I think that that's really great. So, what are some challenges to, that you've kind of faced. I know you've talked a little bit about when, you know, there's a disagreement, maybe about if something should be listed or not. What have been some particular challenges working with the public? I guess we kind of covered that a little bit, um, so maybe I want to go more

into, I don't know if outreach is the right word? But what do you do to make people aware of this project? 'Cause you said earlier that, what is it 3%?

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: And so, I mean, what, what are the proactive things that are being done?

Gareth: So, our contact, uh, local heritage society, so, where I am at the moment, so I'm in Swindon. Um, so, our, the town was built on the railways, so, um, where it's a working class industrial town, blue collar, I imagine you'd say America. Um, it's, it's, it's a...I can say this because I was born here, but it's quite, it's a rough town and people, uh, people will leave and they come for work. They don't come because it's a wonderful place to live. Um, so, what I would do is I will contact local heritage groups and members of the public, and my goal is for people to showcase what they love about a building or a town or a city. So, um, so, at the moment I'm working with, um, a couple of heritage groups within Swindon. I'll go into the challenges of that in a minute. Um, so I've worked with, um, kind of local groups in Brixham, in Devon. So Brixham's the largest fish in, um, the, or at one point was the busiest, largest fishing village port in the UK. So, again, it was kind of talking to local people because, um, we've got, uh, I don't want to say it's a problem, but there is a, a, uh, again, I don't want to say problem, issue with, say, um, second home ownership within Cornwall and Devon. And, and in, um, yeah, Wales and Scotland. So, the project that I worked on was local people. So, local people can be, if you bought your house 2 weeks ago or you were born and raised on Four Street 68 years ago, you're a local person, and your, um, knowledge levels and your appreciation and your, however you want to classify it, will be different. But there is still a reason why you've moved to a lovely place in Devon. So, my, my goal was to capture all the stories. So, we didn't want to alienate people. Um, I've worked with, um, so there used to be an organisation called the Steven Lawrence Transport Trust which changed its name to Blueprint For All. So, I'm not entirely sure how much you know about Steven Lawrence. So, he was a young black male that was murdered in London. His dream was to become an architect, so his parents set up a charitable trust to get, uh, members from, um, lower socioeconomic, uh, groups into architecture. So....

Lora: Oh, that's great.

Gareth: Yeah. To be, to be an architect from the, from day one to the point where you can be employed costs roughly 130-140,000 pound. So, you can imagine, um, the people that that is open to isn't necessarily to, open to everyone. Like, I, there's no way my parents could have afforded for me to go to Uni for, for that long. Um, so, they set up the trust. It wasn't, it wasn't just for members of Black, Asian or minority ethnic groups. It was for, open to everyone. So, I've done projects with them. So, it's essentially, it's just trying

to open the list to as many people as possible. That's my, that in a nutshell, in a very long winded way is my job.

Lora: Yeah. So, when you go into a community and you get, find these historic groups or that, you know, whatever, the heritage groups, do you already have a list of the listed buildings in that area and present and say, “Do you have any stories of...?” You know what I mean?

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: Or asking them to add something new, or is it more of a contribution of what's, the list that's already in existence?

Gareth: So, I'll go in and I'll, and I'll break it down. So firstly, I explained who we are. So again, people, people are unaware of who we are. They, they, there is an element of mystery and I think it's, I think it's historically it was, it was done on purpose. We didn't want to justify who we are. Like, it is that very 1950s civil servant approach of, like, we will tell you what's important and you will jolly well enjoy it. So...

Lora: And you will be grateful.

Gareth: And you will be grateful for us doing our job. So, I go in and I say exactly who we are, what we do. I explain that the process to get something listed is open to everyone, so anyone can apply for a building to be listed, and I will go through exactly how you find all of the buildings that are listed in your area. So I will, I'll do a presentation and essentially I will put in, I will nominate one person who's happy to give a post code, not their post code, but a post code. I’ll pop it into our map and I'll showcase exactly what's listed. And then that's when the mystery comes in, where they're like, I can't believe that telephone box at the end of my road is listed. So then I'm saying right, good. So, already we've surprised you in a good way to say that more than you would think is listed in your area. And then I will say, right, this is where we need you. So, I've built the subject, I've built the, I've built who we are. I've built how a list entry comes about, and then that's the important part is where they come in. So I whenever I do a presentation, I always try to include just general members of the public as well. Otherwise, when it's heritage profession, well, local historians and things, that can always be a disagreement. So, this is one of the biggest barriers between local expertise is there never seems to be a, uh, conclusive agreement as to any subject. So, in Swindon we've got a huge problem with, uh, different organisations. So, one, so, the birth place of the NHS is Swindon. Not many people know this, but there's a, yeah, there was a building called the Health Hydro. Um, all of the workers paid the same amount of money into the fund and they were all given the same, uh, level of, um, care. Nye Bevan, uh, saw this, saw it as on the scale that it was, and said this could be done nationally. So, that, it was the birthplace of the NHS.

There will be an organisation that cares solely about that building, don't care about any, any other building. Uh, the canals trust will only care about former canals, none of which are listed, so they don't want to talk to me at all. You're, and that's the problem. So, you'll have people that are incredibly passionate about a building and will be annoyed that another building takes precedent over their building. So, this is one of the biggest issues with local expertise is getting everyone together and to agree on an approach, so...

Lora: And to be able to step back and look at it, kind of, in an unbiased way, which is difficult...

Gareth: Exactly.

Lora: When you're, it's close to your heart...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: Or you have something, a connection to it, right?

Gareth: Yeah. So, whereabouts in the states are you from, if you don't mind me asking?

Lora: California.

Gareth: So, I've never been to California in my life. I've been to the airport. I flew to Hawaii. I had no idea where Hawaii was. I genuinely thought it was about 1/2 hour flight from, from California, from LAX. So, yeah, little did I know that I was going to be on that plane for another six hours. So, there will be, I, I will have a surface knowledge, not even a surface knowledge of, of anywhere in California, and I know California's massive. So, there will be something that you, I will approach it and go oh, that's really interesting. You'll go, no, that's not the interesting bit. The interesting bit is this. So, it's like, and, and that's the, that's the problem that I've got is the fact that there's so many interesting stories that sometimes we get blinkered, and I do it myself. Like, there are buildings that, so, I've got a massive interest in 20th century art as, uh, architecture. If you start talking to me about Edwardian, Victorian, I can appreciate it, but I'm not, I'm not dialled in. And so, we're all guilty of it. But it's this thing about the local expertise. It can be so granular. So, I am an expert on that one terrace building in a row of 50. And I just want to hear about that one terrace building. I just want to talk to you about one terrace building and everyone else should. So, that's one of the issues with the local knowledge. So, when it comes to a national approach, you've got like, a, a broader view. When it comes to local it’s so granular.

Lora: So, how do you navigate that, when you have somebody who's very passionate about a particular place? How do you nav...because you don't want to turn them off to this...

Gareth: No.

Lora: Project entirely because you never know how it's going to progress. But at the same time, like you said, there are certain criteria, and if it doesn't meet that criteria, you know, you can't be making exceptions right and left. So, how do you navigate that?

Gareth: Yeah. Well, luckily, because of the 400,000 list entries, it can't, I can't, you can go to a granular level. So, I can say, this can appease you. The canals trust, no, they, they are off. They don't want anything to do with me. But it's like I can say, right, so you're interested in the Mechanics Institute. There is a single list entry to that. You're interested in the Health Hydro, there is a single list entry to that. However, can we all agree that this is a great avenue to, to put down your thoughts, feelings, memories, opinions? So, luckily, we can grant, I can take it to a granular level, but it's, it's hard to get, to get people through the door because they come with misconceptions. They come with preconceived views, as we all do.

Lora: Right.

Gareth: Um, they will come in and they will, they will have their blinkers up, so it's getting people through the door. And then the other thing that I, I think I do quite well, is that I openly say I'm not an expert. I openly say I am not the listing advisor. I will happily talk everyone through the process of listing. I've got nothing to hide, but I am not approaching this from, I'm telling, therefore you're doing. It is, I will always go in and say I am not the expert, you are. I'm here to learn. And I think that's the, as soon as, a lot of the time, as soon as someone...so, if I walk in and I've got my name badge on so, so I'll hold this name badge. Oh, God, goes blurry. So they, they will see that I work for Historic England and they think immediately preconceived views.

Lora: Right.

Gareth: They're gonna, and I'm saying no, this is completely the other way. Like, I can show you how to use the, I can show you how to create an account. I can show you how to take a photo but everything that counts is up to you. Like, I don't, I don't know what you know. And I think that goes so far to appease people because sometimes people just want to be heard.

Lora: Absolutely. Yeah, that's a fantastic approach. And I think that is, from what I'm kind of gathering with my research, that's kind of the path that experts are, um, realising. We have to have that kind of understanding. We have to have that kind of open mindedness in that area to understand that there are different kinds of experts. There are academic experts, there are local experts. And to give value validation to those different experts and so that approach, I can imagine that the barriers would topple, you know, and you'd

be able to get in there and really get some good information, because it is just about, another word I've kind of heard across the board is “trust”.

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: To get people's trust, even just initially, something small, a little tiny opening, is the foundation for getting the information. The information is kind of the end goal, but it's not really attainable without that initial connection, trust.

Gareth: Yeah

Lora: So.

Gareth: The, the other thing that, so, it's taken me, so I'm 45 now, so it's taken me, I would say, up until I was 35. So, it's only in the last 10 years where it's like, it's OK to admit, uh, weaknesses. So, like, I, I will go in and I'd say one of the things I love about the Missing Pieces Project is that someone such as myself, who's heavily dyslexic, so I, I struggle to read, struggle to write. However, if you show me a picture, I mean...and I think, that's the other thing, is that if I can go in and just be honest and say look, I can't, I can't understand what someone meant when they wrote a list entry in 1953. Like I don't, I don't get the terminology, I don't understand the terminology. Show me a photo, I mean, and I think that's the other thing that people like, the idea of, like, oh, like, suddenly that pedestal that people get put on, it suddenly lowers down, and we're all kind of approaching it from, from the same point of view. And I think the listing advisors that I work with are completely, um, amenable and as much as like, you know, mistakes have been made, I don't know everything, I'm one person covering the whole of the southwest. So, it's just this kind of, like, you can go in and say government or government funded organisation telling us what is important or, uh, Gareth and Sam, two people talking about buildings in my area. So, I think it's that element of trust that people buy into.

Lora: Yeah. And sharing, yeah.

Gareth: Yeah, I'm not saying I'm special, like I anyone could do my job. Honestly, anyone could do it, and I'm amazed that they haven't figured that out yet. But like, don't put that in, but like, it's that, it's that thing of like, like, it's just simply talking to people and understanding what they...and then putting that trust out there.

Lora: Yeah. And I think you downplay that a little bit. I mean, obviously I don't know you very well aside of the Zoom, but there are a lot of people that don't have the skills and/or the patience, because it does take a lot of patience as well. So, for you to be able to go out there and be an advocate and be honest and be relatable to the public, I think it's actually a difficult thing, in particular it

can be in the academic field where research and numbers and papers are more comfortable, maybe...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: For a lot of people. So, you're, you're doing some really great work. Um, so, when it comes to, is there any place there for the younger generation? I know there is in general, but as far as your outreach or the things you're doing to be proactive of getting the word out. Do you ever, kind of take, maybe primary school, secondary schools or are there other ways that you're, kind of, um, introducing yourself to the, the rising generation?

Gareth: Yeah. So, uh, within, uh, HE, we have a Heritage Schools Department, so they will go to schools and part of what they teach is Missing Pieces Project. So, it was kind of like, I showcased what we could ask of people and then better people than myself go out and do it. So ,it was kind of like, it's like, tell us this is a listed building and the kids will draw a picture of the listed building, or they're asked their, like, family if they've got any memories of the building. So, it's a case of, of saying to school kids, like, this is something that is accessible. It's not hidden, it's on the Internet, which they're a lot more, so, you know, like a digital native now is getting younger and younger and younger.

Lora: Right.

Gareth: So, you know, my nephews who are nine and so, wow, the oldest is 18, the youngest is six. They're going to be able to find a list entry far more easier than my 75 year old mum. So, um, that's one thing we do. So, we're, we're going out and saying, like, this is here, this is accessible, this is, this is where it is. Um, the other thing we do is we make a conscious effort to go to, um, under-represented communities. So that can be anything, so it can be, so Swindon would be like a working class kind of community. So, like, one, once that...I always love to say is there's under 300 listed palaces, but there's over 11,000 listed factories. So, working class heritage is vast. Like, there's more people that have worked in the factory, more relative that worked in the factories than have lived in palaces.

Lora: Right.

Gareth: So, there's more stories to gather from, from those people. So that's what.

Lora: And when there’s, it's something so relatable - factories...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: Working class, I think they are more inclined to be interested and to ask questions and to be involved.

Gareth: Yeah, exactly.

Lora: All right, um, let me look at my notes here. Um, so, with all of the different things you're doing, what...do you see any...I know there's always things that can be done, but is there, are there one or two things where you think, this is kind of a gap that we could fill or any ways, um, to reach out, make it more accessible to others maybe?

Gareth: Yeah, I think, I think so. We, as an organisation, made a great effort to change our language. So, two years ago, uh, two years ago, three years ago, we...it you used to be called Enriching The List.

Lora: Yes.

Gareth: So, then we changed it to Missing Pieces Project because, um, “enriching” is a term that I've never used. The List is something only 3% people know about. So, and also, once someone said, um, “enlisting the rich” to me and I was like, oh, God, yeah. Quite like the idea of it but, um, cut that.

Lora: I won’t put that in.

Gareth: So, yeah, it was just like, it was this, it was this idea that language is a barrier. So, the Missing Pieces Project is, it's this idea of whatever you've got, blueprint from original design, story about Grandad shooting himself in the foot, they're both pieces that are missing. So, it's, if you're talking about sells, it's just easier to sell the Missing Pieces Project because it's so much more open. The other thing that we did is, um, I can try and get an old list entry, uh, but we, um, redesigned our, um...you'll notice now that I can't do two things at once. We redesigned our list entries, so I try and get an old one and then share my screen. So, there's a really good website called Wayback Machine. Um, so, again, going back to, so, my inability to read a chunk of writing, like, I, I'll just get, I will just switch off. I will just get bored. None of the information will soak in. So, what we did is we redesigned our, um, websites. So, our list entries, so they were put into, um...I'll send you one.

Lora: OK.

Gareth: I'll try and find one. I'll send you one. So, it used to be one big block of writing and at the end, used to say, um, “Your contribution” and then photos appeared at the end. So, we know from, um, from just using Google Analytics, how many people scroll down to the bottom of the page, so you're looking at maybe like 2% of people will scroll down to the bottom of the page. So, again, barrier to participation. If you can't get through that, that bulk of text, you're not gonna scroll down to the bottom. So, we put into tabs, so it's kind of like, uh, overview, so that's the legal bit. Official description, so that would be the bit that was written when it was listed, which could be two lines or it could be paragraph after paragraph. And then third tab copings photos. So, that was one thing that we did as an organisation to make it more accessible. And then the other thing we did is that we made a targeted, um,

we made an effort to target certain audiences. So, um, the younger digital native. So, recently we did a project with the RNLI. So, RNLI, huge organisation, massive reach. They talked about putting they, they talked about adding photos to list entries on their channels. So, because they are a multi, kind of like, the, the reach of them was huge. So, we will target certain people with certain kind of approaches. So, at the moment I'm working on, have you heard of the organisation called Finisterre, they make clothes?

Lora: No, I haven't.

Gareth: So, they're kind of a B Corp, um, organisation. So, um, you use recycled, um, uh, cotton whenever they can, organic cotton whenever they can. Like, and they did something about, um, fisherman's jumpers. So, I've, um, kind of scrolled through ancestry.com, got the birthplace of these fishermen that they fo, that they featured in one of their articles, and I'm building a project. So, then I'll go to Finisterre and say, “Look, I've done this. Is there any chance we could work together to promote each other's?” So, again, it's that idea of someone who I've, I've got a massive thing about people that are interested in heritage, but they just don't know they’re interested in heritage. So, there's, um, there's an organisation called Swim Dem Crew. So, it started off, its aim was to get young black males swimming. So as, as I'm sure you're aware, there was a study done in 1950’s America about bone density saying that, uh, black, uh, African Americans would have a thicker bone density than the average white American. The problem, so, my background was in sport, so I, my, my degree was in sports therapies and then my masters was in sports coaching. So, the problem is that if you do manual work or you work out, your bones will get denser. So, if you're taking fifty African Americans that work in construction and then fifty white Americans of European descent that work in an office, and then measure bone density, it's not their genetics that play a part, it's their lifestyle. So, already it's flawed. And then if you take segregation into it as well, so, were, were bodies of waters considered safe spaces for Black, for, uh, African Americans, I say Black males and Black females, but I, I get mixed up with terms...hopefully I don't confuse the terminology. So, if I say Black males, Black, I mean African Americans.

Lora: Yes.

Gareth: Is it considered a safe space for African Americans at the time? No, because of segregation, because of, uh, the divide in wealth, uh, the average African American would not have a pool in their back garden. So, there was this huge stigma about, uh, uh, young African American, male and females, learning to swim. So, um, an organisation, so that, that did actually, so those, uh, falsehoods travelled across the pond. So, it was a genetic reason why Black males can swim. Rubbish, it’s a fallacy. So, Swim Dem Crew is an organisation that, it was to get everyone into pools, everyone to learn to

swim. So, if you think about, so they, uh, they would take lessons in, uh, Brixton Community Centre, which has got a pool, which is listed. So, if you think about their interest in heritage, it would be nil. However, within this listed environment, they have learnt to swim, conquered a fear, met amazing people, and had a great time. So, are you interested in heritage? Well, yeah, because all of these amazing things happened in a listed building. Missing Pieces Project is an avenue for us to capture, um...the problem is, is that when I went to approach them, they're, kind of, they, they kind of blew up, so it got really popular. It got, which is great. I don't, I don't care that, like, I can't get hold of them anymore. That's not, a small fry, like, I'm delighted that more people are aware of them. So, it's this idea of people are interested in heritage, but they just don't know they're interested in heritage. So, sorry, I am a talker. So, like, my, my mum and dad got, their wedding reception was in a pub in Swindon. The pubs listed. Now, anyone that attended the event doesn't care that it's got a Flemish brick bond and sash windows. They care that their brother, their son, their daughter got married, and that's where the reception was. So, it's this idea of like people love heritage, they just don't it.

Lora: Yes. I agree with that. That's kind of one of the driving forces is heritage is everywhere, it's everything, it's for everyone, but that's not the common, um, conception in the public, really.

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: It's kind of this elevated thing that you, kind of, the experts do and I might contribute. So, it is connecting and linking, um...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: Because it's, and it's just, it would be never ending.

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: All of the stories and, and all of the different things. No, that is really great. Do you have anything you want to add? Anything, um, about the project or your role or your experiences?

Gareth: I think, I think, in an ideal world, so, we've done loads, so, we've, we've changed our language, we've changed our approach. It's not been easy. There's still debate internally about what is, what we should be doing. So again, the farm building contribution, so, there is still a debate as to how we approach things. For moderation, I know, uh, the team, so, I will occasionally moderate, but there is a team that moderates, so there's a lot of discussion as to what should and shouldn't be included. Um, again, so there's, we're not perfect. There's still lots that we can do, but I think also there's lots that we can do as an organisation, and a lot of that, a lot of the hindrance, a lot of the, uh, the issues are down to things like resources and funding. So, if you

want to apply for a building to be listed, you need to find the form, fill out the form, submit it. Um, now, someone like myself, like, I'm not going to find the form. I'm going to run out of energy and steam before I filled out the form and I'll probably forget what I was doing anyway because, there's, my mind isn't linear, like, it will be all over the shop. Um, now, I've always had this idea that, wouldn't it be great if we could do an oral presentation? It makes it a bit more accessible for everyone. It means that, so, say if, like, uh, you know, I, I hate writing things. I put, you probably might notice my emails are quite, sort of like, they're one line or two lines. There's not like a huge spiel because it's just not my thing, whereas I can talk for Britains. So, it's just like, it's, it's this idea of, like, as an organisation, like, I think we could do more. But I understand that, you know, people want our website to be Google. We don't have the R&D of, of, you know, of Google. So, there's more we can do, but I understand why we can't. But I think with what we're doing, we're doing well. We just need to keep going.

Lora: Yeah, I agree. I think it's just fantastic, and it is a young organisation, I mean, you think about 2016. It wasn't really that long ago and it's gaining momentum and, um, awareness, which is really important, so...

Gareth: Yeah. Well, I mean, we've, we've made great strides. So, we do, we segment our audience. So, like the younger digital natives would be, would be a segment. So, in 2018, our awareness amongst that audience was 2%. Since then, it's gone to 18%. So, we've made huge strides. So, last year, so then coupled with that, last year was our record-breaking year of contributions. So, last year we had 53,000 contributions alone. Previous year was 2008...the previous highest was 2018 with 52,000 contributions. So, you know, it's, there is a correlation between more people are aware of us, more people start to submit.

Lora: Yeah. And that's the key, isn't it?

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: Getting the word out and you're doing really great. I'm very impressed. I, it's exciting and it's good for me as well, obviously not being from here and having very limited knowledge, but I'm interacting with my friends, my family, people I'm meeting here, and just having it be a part of the conversation, um...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: It's the grassroots.

Gareth: One, one final thing I'll, I'll say is that this is, this has not been me alone, like, there is a team of, like, people that...so, previously, um, I feel that the ownership of Enriching The List belonged to one, um, team within Historic

England. Now it's across the board. So, so, someone from marketing, someone from public engagement, people from the social media channels are all bought into it. So, it's, you know, like, it, it, it is a team effort and it's, it's done, the success is down to the team, not any one individual. So, I think it's, I'm a firm believer that, you know, you can't, ownership shouldn't belong to one person. It is a community, it's a team that make things thrive. So, I think with The Missing Pieces Project, it's a cooperation that's made it what it is.

Lora: Yes, that's really important to note as well. Um, with all of the different aspects and just, also, just having more hands...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: And more resources, um, because it is very labour intensive...

Gareth: Yeah

Lora: To go out there and it can be a very slow process and, um, patience and all of those things you mentioned before. So, it's really fantastic.

Gareth: I'll, I'll leave you with one final, um, contribution. So, this was from...

Lora: OK.

Gareth: This was from my time in Brixham and Devon. So, um, I did a talk and then we went out, uh, with a local expert. And it was this local expert that (technical interruption) used to be one pub. And, it was the fact that, they pointed out that one window is bigger than the other window because that was the window they used to sell fish from when it was a pub. So, again, this isn't mentioned in the list entry...

Lora: Wow.

Gareth: But it's that local knowledge.

Lora: Yes, and it's invaluable. I mean...

Gareth: Absolutely. Yeah.

Lora: There, that's not something, like you said, that's not something you can look up. It's not, with all of our wonderful technology and Google and all those things...

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: Those personal stories are not on there.

Gareth: Exactly.

Lora: Until we get to the Missing…so, you're, it's filling a huge heritage void and historical traditions and cultures and things…

Gareth: Yeah.

Lora: That can get lost over time…

Gareth: Yep.

Lora: If they're not documented. So, I am going to go back to all of those links because I just find all the, I find that, obviously you can probably tell from my project that I'm very interested in local people, local stories, and so I find all of it just extremely fascinating, so I appreciate that. Thank you so much for your time and for sharing, I really…

Gareth: Sorry if I talk too much.

Lora: No, not at all. There's always things that are going to come out that I wouldn't have thought to ask.

Gareth: Right.

Lora: Um, so it was really great. I feel like I just got a really, um, substantial amount of, like, important information, information that's useful.

Gareth: Brilliant.

Lora: And, and I learned a lot, so I appreciate it. And if it's OK, I might, as I'm going through things, um, email you if I have any other questions or…

Gareth: Yeah, no worries.

Lora: Anything. OK, that would be great.

Gareth: No worries.

Lora: Alright, well, thank you so much. It was good to talk with you.

Gareth: Brilliant. All right. Thank you so much.

8.2.5 Phillipa Walton, Ph.D. – Lecturer in Roman Archaeology at the University of Leicester, Former FLO with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

Phillipa: Through my consent form.

Lora: Yes.

Phillipa: Um…got that and that's.

Lora: I did. Thank you. I…

Zoom: Recording in progress.

Lora: There we go. OK. Yes, I'm, I appreciate your patience. This is my first official interview, so I appreciate it so much. Um. Yeah, I'm really interested in your work. And, um, so if it's OK with you, we'll just dive right in.

Phillipa: Yes, yes, go ahead. I, I did have the questions up on the screen somewhere and now I've lost them. So maybe you tell me what you want me to answer, I'll go ahead.

Lora: Yes, yeah, I'll just kind of go down and then anything you want to add, I am interested in all of this. So, um, in fact, it was the, um, video, we visited Piercebridge a few times, but it was the video on, was it "Time..."?

Phillipa: "Time Team", yes.

Lora: I just want to say time travel.

Phillipa: Yep. Yep.

Lora: And that's not right, but, um, that kind of was the catalyst. I just thought it was really fascinating, but um, so I guess the first thing is just to kind of explain what your connection is to Portable Antiquities Scheme, um.

Phillipa: Okay.

Lora: What your role was, kind of explain that.

Phillipa: So, I, um, have the record I think for roles within the Portable Antiquities Scheme. So, started working for them, scheme, not long after it was, um, established. So, it was established in the late 1990s and it didn't go national until 2003 and at the time it went national, instead of just being a few pilot areas, I was appointed as Finds Liaison Officer for the Northeast. So that was covering the counties of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham and Teesside. Subsequently, the role has been, um there's several Finds Laision Officers in that area, but when I was first in post I covered quite an extensive area all the way from North Yorkshire, back the border with North Yorkshire, to the border of Scotland. So um, so I've worked in the Northeast from 2003 to 2005 and then I went on to be Finds Liaison Officer in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. And then I went and did my PhD, which involved working on, I continued to work on the material from Piercebridge while in Cambridgeshire, and I went to do my PhD and it formed a case study in my PhD, looking specifically at the coinage. And then I went on to be Finds

Advisor for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, um, for, for doing some of these maternity leaves, working on the objects and also Finds Advisor alongside Sam Morehead working on coins. So, throughout all that time, despite moving around quite a lot and doing a PhD., there was some continuity of work on the Piercebridge assemblage because I was the Finds, I had to be the Finds Liaison Officer, so that's where it all started. It took a significant amount of time to get funding to work on it full time, but you'll probably ask me a little bit about that in a moment.

Lora: Yes, I can imagine that it's, that seems to be kind of the common thread as I am, kind of, researching is just the funding and trying to find the money, the time, the resources, um, to do all of these really important things. So, within your role in the Portable Antiquities Scheme, did you have a lot of interaction with the public, one on one?

Phillipa: Yes.

Lora: Or was it more administrative?

Phillipa: No, no, so, um, as a Finds Liaison Officer, um, in the North East, my role of Finds Liaison Officer and for the Portable Antiquities Scheme, um, the, the role is to encourage members of the public to record archaeological objects that they find during their everyday lives. That, so, not in part of an archaeological excavation, and that essentially or fundamentally in the North East involved establishing contacts with metal detecting groups, who go out detecting, find archaeological objects while out detecting, but didn't really have a very good relationship with archaeologists in the North East. And there's been quite fraught relationship between metal detectors and archaeologists for a very long time. So the Portable Antiquities Scheme, when it went national back now 20 years ago, the real, um, impetus was to encourage metal detectorists to record their objects and that was about, I would say, about 90% of my role in the North East was going to working men's clubs in mining villages where the metal detecting clubs met and, um, recording their objects there. Um, a lot of passive smoking because it was before the smoking ban.

Lora: Right.

Phillipa: And there were, and I was quite often the only woman in, in a working men's club of an evening, but it was relatively successful in starting off this idea of working with archaeologists, working where archaeological objects came

from. On, on top of that, I also did some sort of engagement work with local societies, um, so there are quite a few local societies, particularly around Durham, um, working on the archaeology and history and social history of County Durham. And that's where I met Bob and Rolfe. Bob Middlemass and Rolfe Mitchinson, the divers at Piercebridge. They were working with the Northern Archaeological Group, who were a local society headed up by, um, a man called Ray Selkirk, who wrote a book about Piercebridge, "The Piercebridge Formula", about, about a dam and all these things. So, slightly off the wall, um, but they had very good intentions of investigating the archaeology of Piercebridge and the river and thinking about where Roman roads cross the river and Piercebridge and the relationship of the two bridges, dams, whatever. You know, the interpret, your interpretation wants to be, and trying to work out what's going on. So, I went to talk to them about the importance of recording, and, um, archaeological objects and what the Portable Antiquities Scheme could offer, and Bob and Rolfe then subsequently phoned me up and said that they had some things that they would like me to look at, that they'd shown to the county archaeologist since the 1980s, but nobody had had the time to really focus on the material. They said these objects had been photographed and would I take a look at them and record them in the Portable Antiquities Scheme? And I said yes. And they took me to the garage of their house and opened the garage door, and there were lots.

Lora: That must have been quite a moment. I imagine that, you know, with all of that, come look at my few items and then thousands of items.

Phillipa: I, I thought they were exaggerating about how much stuff they collected, but there were, there were bags and bags of pottery and animal bone and then all the finds all in, either in ice cream or margarine tubs, labelled with the year and the area of the river where they found them. And then it was, they just started to feed me this stuff and I worked through, I think, most of the coins relatively quickly because some of them have been looked at by John Casey in the 1980s, like 100 of them, but they, then there were more. I can't remember, there were 1600 coins in the end, so I've worked through those and photographed those, and because they're relatively discrete category of material. And then I started to work on the other objects, but obviously this is quite a big job. This was quite a big job and I couldn't use my, I could have spent my whole job as a Finds Liaison Officer just recording their objects and nothing else, but obviously that wasn't appropriate for my job role, so I was

doing that, I would just set out maybe half a day a week to work on their material. And I worked on it on the weekend, on the weekends and the evenings, holidays as well. But it, it really wasn't going as far as it should go because there was just so much to look at. So basically from 2003 to 2014, I was working on the material as part of my job, but as not a full-time part of my job.

Lora: Right. So, when you met them, you met them through the, um, metal – it, was it a metal detecting or archaeology?

Phillipa: No, an archaeological group run by Ray Selkirk. So, more than looking at the, they want, the Northern Archaeological group were really focused on proving Ray's ideas about Piercebridge. So, the divers were diving in the river looking for the structures on the riverbed to record those and while diving on the riverbed, they started to find objects and pick them up and collect them. So, it wasn't originally, the primary aim wasn't to look for Roman material culture, it was to record bridge and other structures on the riverbed at Piercebridge. And then once, once they found them, they, they started finding objects around it and that became more of the focus because it was, they, it's so exciting, what they were finding, so.

Lora: Yeah. It's absolutely incredible. So, your first contact with them was you showing up to a meeting or did they contact you prior to that?

Phillipa: I think they called me and saying, they said that they had some things that I would be interested in recording. And then I think I, I, they had a meeting in the pub which I think is now closed in, in Piercebridge along the Riverside, um, run by Ray Selkirk and I went to that and met them. And then we, I went round to their house to look at the objects and then it started from there, you know, and that, quite a lot the PAS, at least in its early days, there was a lot of home visits, okay, so, now might, you might feel is a little bit.

Lora: Yeah.

Phillipa: I think a lot of it's done online and there's not so much the emphasis on visiting metal detecting clubs or visiting, um, finder's homes that most of it is, they photograph the objects and then they're recorded online. But in the old days it was a lot of face to face, public engagement. Yeah.

Lora: Yeah, that's really great. Um, so I want to kind of talk a little bit about the metal detectorists. Um, it's interesting to me just because my son and my husband do metal detecting and they have for years and years, um, I think my

son was, like, six when he became interested. But it wasn't until I came over here and really got into the archaeological side that I realised there was this divide. And I understand both sides, quite honestly. You know, um, having the metal detectorists and kind of, the, it's not real streamlined or, um, there's not a lot of oversight. Uh, it just can depend on the group as far as ethics and things like that. And then obviously on the expert, kind of archaeological, like it's a really great, um, dynamic for me to, like, look at between, kind of, the expert, what I kind of call the experts and non-experts. So, when you are going through, um, these different metal detector groups and just, kind of, your perspective from when you first started doing that into, kind of, you know, maybe that first, like you said from 2003 to 2014, I don't know if you were doing metal detecting, kind of looking at that the whole time. But, from whenever you started looking at it, um, how, did you notice that there was more of an integration, that there was more of an acceptance? Or do you feel like there's still quite a divide there?

Phillipa: It, uh, it depends, but there's various answers to that question. So, in the North East, there have been very little liaison between archaeologists and metal detectorists before my arrival as a Finds Liaison Officer. Um, so that there was quite a lot of suspicion, um, there were these, there were rumours going around that Portable Antiquities Scheme was set up as a way of monitoring metal detectoring to enable it to be banned, you know. So, they wanted to collect, it was a clandestine way of collecting the names of all the metal detectorists and what they were finding to enable a legal change in the law or a permit system. So, it, there was quite a lot of, um, misinformation and just general, uh, suspicion to get through there. But in different areas of the UK where there's been substantial liaison since the 1970s, so in East Anglia, Norfolk and Suffolk, there's not that same level of education, wasn't that same level of education necessarily. And when I went, went to Cambridgeshire to be Finds Liaison Officer, which was only two years after being in the North East, there was a very different relationship between metal detectorists and archaeologists. So, I'd say it was both a chronological but both, also geographical, and also their social background of the metal detectorists. So, in the North East, the socio economic background of metal detectorists is very, very working class and so very much, or at least it was when I was FLO there, I don't know now, but it was very working class and also, um, there were a huge number of metal detectorists who want benefits. There were, particularly disability benefits, and they, there was an idea that it

would be a potential way of making money, and that is not the same - there wasn't the same focus on archaeology and history and engaging with the class. And I know that's a generalisation, and it very much depends on the people you're working with, but there was more of an emphasis as, as a, as a potential way of making some cash. Whereas in Cambridgeshire, I very rarely had that attitude from detectorists, and in Hertfordshire, where I was FLO, not really at all, there's a different sort of demographic. So, again, it's hard to generalise, but that's the sort of feeling I had. And, and that's likely changed in 20 years as well, so.

Lora: Yes, OK, that's, that's good information. I'm not, obviously, I'm not from here and so, um, just, kind of, with my husband and son getting back into metal detecting here and getting in a club, and then my research and, kind of, I just, I've been very curious about the dynamics, so that's very helpful. Especially because, my husband and I have this conversation a lot, um, that they're just like, we were talking about earlier with the funding - there's just not enough of people, resources, funding to go around, and so to be able to connect and work with metal detecting groups or something similar, archaeological groups, something maybe a little more official? I don't know if that's the right word, would be a huge boom for archaeology because there's just so much everywhere.

Phillipa: And the Portable Antiquities Scheme is also sort of a victim of its success because when the scheme started, we had more funding, I think in 2003 than the scheme does now, and yet the detectorists have grown to know that it exists and want to engage with it and want to record. But then they complain that it takes a very long time for their finds to be recorded, the FLO doesn't respond to their emails, you know, all those things. And that's all about resource, not about, um, interest. So yeah, sort of quite...but I think the problems with engagement are just about lack of resource, um, um, over, and it's decreased over time, I know that, so.

Lora: So, did you find, um, and I'll probably ask this again with the Piercebridge Roman Bridge example, but even with metal, within metal detecting, have you found, again just with your experience, that experts were open, generally speaking, to like, you know, validating and recognising the legitimacy of metal detecting groups?

Phillipa: Yeah, I think so. I think there was, there's anger about nighthawking on a particular site. So, on Hadrian's Wall, when I was there, I worked a lot with

the community policing, um, the rural policing and they had, they, there was significant problems at Corbridge Roman town, with people illicitly metal detecting. And that's the obvious reasons, um, was quite, angered quite a lot of people, and I know that in some of my clubs in the North East there were, there were clearly illicit metal detectorists present in those clubs who are not following the law, who are not, so there was that difficulty in liaising with the clubs where you know there are nighthawks within them working. So, yeah, but I think everyone was very keen for the Portable Antiquities Scheme to develop and, um, with, and to think about the data that's coming out of it, and really engage with detectorists to get as good find spot information, because that's one of the things they are very, very reticent about providing was all the (unintelligible) reference...

Lora: Yes.

Phillipa: And trying to get across why that was important. Um, yeah. So, I think, I think there was a degree of, um, caution about the usefulness of the scheme and also about engaging with criminal ethics, but...

Lora: Yes, I, I was gonna say and rightfully so. I mean, I can see, um, obviously the club that my husband and son are part of, they just kicked out a member for doing the nighthawking, and it was a big thing and they said this is not tolerated. They, you know, like, it's a very big deal. So, but again, on the other end you do have, there's the range, right? There's the spectrum of

Phillipa: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: of their morals or...

Phillipa: Yeah, yeah, right.

Lora: Or whatever it may be, but, um. That is, so, maybe you can tell me a little bit about when you do have the finds, um, what is the, kind of, in a nutshell, what is the process of when you go to that garage and you open it up and you see all the things, what is the process of taking those things and basically, um, putting them into the PAS system.

Phillipa: Okay, Okay, so I would, so when Bob and Rolfe showed me all the material, I decided to, I, I, some of it, um, was already pre-sorted into categories of material, like repository or coins. So, I took some of those object types and I, I signed, they signed them over to me so I kept them in a safe at Newcastle University and I worked on those. And the process is really to identify,

catalogue, put them on the database, things like measuring, weighing and, you know, identifying parallels, um, photographing the material. And basically, I did all that, put them all on the PAS database using their data standards, and returned them to the finder and then got the next batch and worked on those. And that's pretty much what I did until I had received research funding for the material, and then I managed to have all the objects brought together and, and because they were deemed to be potential treasure, um, under the Treasure Act, they all came to the British Museum. And then I was able to get both myself and a intern to work on them in more detail, in more detail as a treasure case. Until they were deemed to be a treasure case, it was more, just, I will take 50 objects and work on whatever's in this box and, and it would, after the coins and the pottery and things like that, which was set object type, so just mixed boxes of finds and I would just go through them, photograph, record, and then return them in a bag with a, with a small find number and the object report as well, so an identification of what that object is for Bob and Rolfe. Bob and Rolfe didn't always understand what a small find number was because quite often they took a brooch out of a bag and put it back in another bag. Um, because it said brooch on the bag, they didn't understand that that brooch had a particular number in a particular bag. So, quite often, later, when I was re-engaging with the material, making sure I'd recorded everything, we'd find objects in different bags and they were very good at going out to local communities and doing displays. And that, the objects came up, bags when they've been recorded and got mixed up in, so anyway, um, yeah.

Lora: So, when you've done the cataloguing and you have them on the system, on the PAS system, you are returning, you are always returning them back to the owner and then it’s their responsibility to report it through the Treasure Act or, or?

Phillipa: Then they can, so, so in the beginning that we were, they weren't deemed to be potential treasure back in 2003. And it was only, um, later, with ongoing discussions that it was, um, with the treasure registrar at the British Museum, that it was deemed that it was likely that we could make a case for them being potential treasure, that they'd been deliberately deposited in a single act. Because they seemed quite, in the beginning, they seemed to have quite a range of dates, they came from a variety of locations, you know, a relatively discrete location, but it was, I had some very long, detailed discussions of treasure registrar in 2011-12 and so about them being potential treasure and

we decided that was the best way to deal with the assemblage there. So, originally I was just recording the objects and returning them, you know, and, and, yeah, and there was no talk of the Treasure Act then. Some of the objects had been recorded individually as treasure trove, pre the Treasure Act, 1996. So, individual gold objects had gone through treasure trove and been disclaimed, um, previously. So, it's complicated because the divers have been working since 1986, and I was only 8 in 1986.

Lora: Yeah, I was, I was young myself. Um, so, now Durham University has a lot of the Piercebridge items.

Phillipa: The whole assemblage, the whole assemblage.

Lora: The whole assemblage. So how does that work from, does that go through PAS to Durham or is that a separate thing?

Phillipa: That went through the treasure process. So, and so, because it was a deemed to be a potential treasure find, all that, everything went to the British Museum for a report to be written. So, it was a both, basically, we had to make sure every single object had been, in some way, catalogued. So, both myself and an intern at British Museum, when I was working there as Finds Advisor for Portable Antiquities Scheme, did that process. But they had to be reported to the coroner and then, um, there, there was an inquest and they were deemed to be potential treasure. And then the Durham Museum, Archaeology Museum, is offered the opportunity to purchase them and, and, uh, a reward equivalent to the value of the objects, which wasn't great - I don't know, 15,000 pounds or something like that - and was divided between Bob, Rolfe and the landowner, who was Lord Ray, Lord Ray...

Lora: Raby?

Phillipa: Lord Barnard.

Lora: Oh, Okay.

Phillipa: Raby estate. Lord Barnard at Raby estate. Um, and, yeah, so that's what happens with the treasury process. So, um, so basically Durham had to find the funding to acquire those objects, which is another tension within the Portable Antiquities Scheme. Ethically speaking, when we're encouraged, maybe encouraging people to go out metal detecting to find these treasure finds, and then they do find them, and, and we reward them for that. And the

museum has to pay the, the rewards, you know, to acquire these nationally, internationally important objects. Yeah.

Lora: Right. Yeah. There are a lot of different dynamics going on. I can see how it's not a real straightforward. Kind of, going into it, I think I just kind of had it, you know, like we do sometimes when we don't know. So...

Phillipa Yeah.

Lora: This is all really interesting. Um, so, what are your personal, kind of, views or opinions about incorporating local knowledge? Um, obviously there's some challenges and we've kind of discussed a little bit about that. Um, and so, kind of the pros and cons.

Phillipa: Absolutely fundamental to understanding the archaeology of an area. So, with metal detectorists, I've always, often noticed they have quite significant levels of engagement and understanding with the landscape that archaeologists do not necessarily have. So, somebody's been brought up in a particular area, walked those fields and been out detecting there. Quite often they'll be able to say, and have experience of that landscape, they'll be able to say, I know that an early mediaeval settlement will be on that hillside, and I know a Roman villa would be situated, in a way that perhaps an archaeologist who is trained at university and done a lot of theoretical study, doesn't have that same engagement with the landscape. With the particular case of Bob and Rolfe, they had significant knowledge of diving and of water flow and of, and they, and they were, Bob used to be a carpenter, so could make quite detailed plans of the underwater wooden structures that they were finding, than I would have been able to make. And also to make interpretations of what about what they thought those structures were, whether they're correct or not, sometimes. But you know, but had, they had really interesting ideas that they wanted to share, and sets of really useful skills, um, that, that really fed into all, both my work and Hella's work as well. Because Hella worked with me, Hella Eckhart worked with me on the project when we got funding for it. So yeah, I think it's fundamental, not just for Piercebridge, but more generally, engagement with metal detecting and archaeology because these people who, um, who detect quite often do have significant levels of knowledge. And just in terms of identifying objects at a level far beyond what most archaeology graduates will be able to do, metal detectorists will know what they're looking at.

Lora: Right.

Phillipa: And perhaps not know that, um, the context and the theoretical ways that you might use that object, object to understand identity or geographical distribution or ethnic diversity or whatever you want to look at, but they'll know, they'll, they'll know that that's a trumpet brooch and it dates to, you know, 120 AD or whatever, you know, that sort of level of knowledge, so...

Lora: Yeah, um, you. So, we talked a little bit about funding. So, when you and Hella Eckhart were doing, or, I guess, what was the process there as far as, you kind of got into it, you knew that there were finds, and then you've got to find funding.

Phillipa: So, so I recorded the finds as part of my post as an FLO for more than 10 years and I present, I was presenting my ongoing work at the Roman Finds group conference in York, I think, in 2014 or 15, and Hella was, I knew Hella relatively well already. Hella was there and saying, what, have you applied for funding for the, to do your project on this, and I had applied for the small bits of funding, but without an academic job. So, as a Finds Liaison Officer, you can't access quite a lot of the research grants in the UK. So, I could only apply for like Roman finds with small bodies of groups of funding, or Society of antiquaries I think up to 10,000 pounds. So not enough for a three-year research project, and I hadn't always been successful in getting those grants because I wasn't familiar with the way you write grant applications. And Hella said, this is, this is great, we can win a research grant as long as I am the principal investigator. So, Hella, because I didn't have an academic post I couldn't apply for the grant, but I trusted Hella. You know, we get on very well, we work really well together. So, Hella was able to put an application into the Leverhulme trust for a major research project, looking at the objects and what they mean about red line deposition, with me as the main post-doctoral research on the project. And we won that research grant in 2017, I think, 2017-20. So, it's Hella and myself working on the project. Most of the objects have been completely recorded, so it's more a case of contextualising and, um, interpreting what the assemblage meant at that point. And the result of that was our, the volume that's Open Access, you've got access. You have that, you know.

Lora: Oh yeah, yeah, I have that. That was one of my, one of my first purchases with Piercebridge.

Phillipa: And then, subsequent to that, Hella and I thought we need to do more work on Roman rivers in Britain, so we applied for AHRC funding alongside German partners who wanted to think about redline deposition in Germany. So, along with the DF Getty, which is a big research grant, um, people in Germany, and we've got, apparently, got a project. Um, so basically, the University of Holland, the University of Trier, the University of Reading and the University of Leicester, comparing with Roman redline deposition in Britain and in Germany. So, it's a much broader project. It's time, at the moment we're trying to record all instances of objects found in rivers in Rome and Britain. And they're trying to do a similar thing in Germany and look at objects found in the mosel in Triad, where they found 110,000 objects next to the bridge in, in the mosel in Triad, dating to the Roman period. In the past, in Germany, there's been a real resistance to seeing those as deliberate deposits and they want to see them as rubbish. But it's clear that there's a significant ritual element to the material, as the scholars are finding out that they're looking at it in detail. So yeah, so that's where we are with funding.

Lora: Yeah.

Phillipa: But it's not simple to get funding, particularly for projects where there's a data recording element. So, nobody wants a project, nobody will fund, no big funding body would fund a project to record a big assemblage of material. They will, they will, um, fund something where you're looking at the interpretation and the contextualization of assemblage within a research question, but getting to the stage of recording all the material, it was quite difficult. Although the Portable Antiquities Scheme did exist, the scheme did exist which helped us get there, but we had to do quite a lot of preliminary work in our own time to make sure the assemblage was complete. Again, helped by the Treasure Act, as well, to get to the stage where we could apply for a research grant to look at this, the context and the interpretation of the assemblage at Piercebridge.

Lora: That's incredible. That's really incredible. Um, so within, so English Heritage, Piercebridge Roman Bridge is an English Heritage site. Was there any interaction? Was there...did you have any interaction with English Heritage and what was that like?

Phillipa: So that, that's the English Heritage, the Roman Bridge, the stone bridge, which is downstream of where the, um, material was found in the river, so we had a lot of interaction with English Heritage from 2005, 3, 4, 5? And from the

time the objects were found, um, both discuss, discussing the structures on the river beds and we applied, um, they, the structures on the river beds, the wooden ones are not scheduled. Yet the archaeology on either side of the river is, and the bridge structure further downstream is, but that, that material is not. So, we did have quite a discussion about scheduling the river beds and that was deemed not to be appropriate, I think, because the structures, um, I, I just think, I think, I can't, I don't even know why it was deemed to be inappropriate in the end, but it was never scheduled, that area in the river. And we, um, so we had relatively, um, detailed discussions with Historic, um, Monuments in the, the Monuments have eyes affair, English Heritage, Historic England throughout, because English Heritage became Historic England at some point within, within the process. Um, yeah. So, we were always in contact with them. And the, the object, the divers have been in contact with the county archaeologists from the 1980s onwards. But they didn't have, again, they didn't have the resource in the 1980s to do more than just they took photographs of all the material in group shots that, that had been found there and let them, the divers, go off and I'm sure they told the divers not to go diving and not to pick anything more off the riverbed, but they have selective hearing.

Lora: Right.

Phillipa: So even now, Rolfe sadly died, um, just before the COVID pandemic. But Bob, who is in his late 70s, I saw him in November and he said, “I couldn't resist it. I went diving. It was very cold, it was 2° and I went in and I found these objects”, and he found another 100 things in the river...

Lora: Oh, wow!

Phillipa: Which needs recording and reporting. So yeah, but he, that, so there, there's a level of enthusiasm Bob and Rolfe always had which, yes, overrode any sensibility about, you know, preserving our cultural records.

Lora: Yes, there is that balance, right? You want to have that excitement and obviously their, the work they're doing is fantastic and, um, but yeah, it's a matter of recording and, kind of having some type of organisation, I would think within the objects.

Phillipa: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: And with that. Um, let me see.

Phillipa: I'm just conscious of the time. I have to be in another meeting relatively soon, so, yes.

Lora: No, you're but yeah, that's I was looking at the time as well and kind of just going over. Um, is there anything else that you want to say about, in particular working with local people? Um, I love that you said earlier that it's, they're fundamental. That's a really, that's kind of along my own line of thinking. Um, and maybe even more specifically, kind of, to end to say, after your experience and kind of as you've gone on, are there, did you find any holes or voids? Or things that maybe, ideas that you had, where we could say, you know, Portable Antiquities Scheme maybe could do this a little bit differently in this way, which might be more beneficial or more, do you understand what I'm saying?

Phillipa: Yeah, yeah. There have been a lot of initiatives to engage with the communities with the Portable Antiquities Scheme. So, they've had county pages that, there was a PAS explorer program where they tried to engage with local finders who, that they could then record their own objects on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database rather than having to, um, give them to a Finds Liaison Officer. So, giving agency to the finders, which was a really important step. But then again, with lack, limited resource, all these records need to be checked and validated. And there was an idea to create county pages where people would be able to discuss their objects and what they meant for the archaeology of the local area. But again, with resources, that is quite difficult to moderate and, so, yeah. So, there are all sorts of things I'm sure that the Portable Antiquities Scheme could do, but I think they're doing a fantastic job on a very constrained budget already. So, I don't have any criticisms of the Portable Antiquities Scheme because I just know they are doing the best they can. Of course, with more money the world is your oyster, you know.

Lora: Yes.

Phillipa: And who knows what will happen with AI and the ability of AI to moderate, to validate and check finds records and, um, create backing and all sorts of amazing things in the future.

Lora: Right. Yes, that's a really great perspective because again, on the outside looking in, it's easy to make suggestions and have all the answers, but with your perspective of being in it and understanding, just, the resources, lack of

resources, funding, lack of funding. And how the actual dynamics function in reality is a really, it's important.

Phillipa: Yeah. I think people look very critical, saying, “Oh”, of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, saying it's not reaching everyone and people aren't getting the message and the Portable Antiquities Scheme need to do more. Really, it's been 20 years of us, of quite a lot of that time of me really pushing that message, and some people just don't want to hear, don't, you know? And, and also if they do hear, but with limited budget, there is only so much one FLO in one particular area can do. Um, yeah.

Lora: Yeah. And I think too, which I didn't realise again because my focus is so limited right now and I'm learning, but that these things like the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the Missing Pieces Project that is, they're actually very unusual. There's not a lot of these types of programmes going on in other countries and so I think too there's, it would benefit the public to understand, like you said, it's a pretty young programme and it's very progressive and it's, so, there's going to be things that we're learning, but overall it's really a privilege to have...

Phillipa: Yes.

Lora: These kinds of programmes.

Phillipa: Yes. And Bob and Rolfe, I counted Bob and Rolfe as my friends. You know, they came to my birthday party. You know, I knew them so well, and I, and I went to Rolfe’s funeral, you know, so, yeah. Yeah. So, you know, you do create really, you know, strong relationships with people you've worked with. Some brilliant relationships. And some not so good relationships.

Lora: Right.

Phillipa: There you go. But that. Yeah. Bob and Rolfe were amazing, you know? And just such characters as well. So, that, I think that's important as well, that you, it's an important way of engaging with people that you would never ever necessarily meet otherwise and yeah. So, I think yeah, it's very important, the PAS and what they do and the engagement they do is fantastic.

Lora: Yeah. Thank you so much. I know you're busy and I appreciate you taking time.

Phillipa: No problem. I’m thinking, am I going to finish in time to get to the next meeting? Yes, but I hope, do always come back to me. If you've got any more

questions or any clarifications or anything, I'm happy to, um, to read through anything and just to make sure that we're, that you've, you've, I've managed to express myself appropriately and you've managed to pick up on what you need.

Lora: Yes.

Phillipa: So, don't worry about that. Occasionally I'm very bad at responding. If I don't respond immediately, then I get so far down my e-mail, then I, then I forget to do so. So, if not, if you don't hear from me within a week, just prod me. Another student at Durham has just asked me about the River Weir and I didn't respond immediately. And it was in my head, I need to respond to that student, and I forgot. And fortunately, she prodded me rather than thinking I was just ignoring her. It just got. Yes. So, and I've responded the moment she wrote to me saying I'm so sorry. So do, do try. But yes, as you're probably aware working in HE is not the most stress free.

Lora: Yes.

Phillipa: So, I'm very, very busy. Yeah.

Lora: Yeah, I think, I can imagine. Well, thank you. I appreciate that. I will follow up if I, kind of, come across things.

Phillipa: If you have any questions or things you need to clarify, but it's lovely to speak to you. And good luck.

Lora: Same to you. Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Phillipa: No problem.

Lora: OK, bye.

8.2.6 Benjamin Westwood – Finds Liaison Officer, Portable Antiquities Scheme Caroline Smith – Finds Liaison Assistant, Portable Antiquities Scheme

Lora: OK. So I think we're first going to start if you would like to tell me your connection to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, what your job is? Um. Just any other different parts that you've had in that scheme.

Benjamin: Right. Just for PAS in particularly, or?

Lora: Yeah, yes. In particularly, yes.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah. So, I'm, I'm, do you want our names or assignment or? You know, I'm Ben Westwood. Um, so I'm the Finds Liaison Officer for, uh, County Durham, uh, and that includes within that sort of ceremonial County Durham, sort of. So Hartlepool, Teesside, Darlington. And we sort of go over the River Tees a little bit as well. And, and I've worked for the scheme for eight and a half-ish years, so 2016.

Caroline: And, and I'm Caroline Smith, and I'm the Finds Liaison Assistant. So, I work basically with Ben and also, um, the Finds Liaison Officer for Newcastle, Northumberland, and, for four days a week, and I've been working here for...

Benjamin: Two years?

Caroline: About two years almost exactly, like...

Benjamin; Yeah, almost two years, yeah.

Caroline: Like, right now, yeah. Aw.

Benjamin: Aw. Happy anniversary.

Caroline: Thank you.

Lora: Within your job in the PAS, what does that entail as far as working with the public? Kind of walk me through what you do.

Benjamin: Do you want to...So the, the primary aim of the Portable Antiquities Scheme is to record archaeological objects that members of the public find and to provide a, kind of a permanent record of those objects that are available for, uh, researchers and public alike via our publicly accessible database, um, which you can find online. Um, so, um, most of our work is recording objects that are brought into, that people submit to us for recording. Um, so that mostly, it's something like, I forget exactly, but it's like 98, 99% of the people that bring in finds that were recorded are metal detectorists, and that's what schemes, that was the first place is to record those artefacts that were being found by hobby (unintelligible) companies, commerce, um, metal detectorists. Um, alongside that, so that's, so that's our kind of bread-and-butter work is to record those metal, usually metal, then record some pottery and flints that people find as well out and about, um, so, so our primary work is to record those. Alongside that, we also help facilitate, um, the, uh, Treasure Acts, um, the recording of objects that meet the criteria of

"treasure" according to the Treasure Act 1996 and, and by that we, so, all treasure has to be reported by law to the coroner and a determination is made whether it meets the criteria or not, and then there's an opportunity for museums to acquire and for those objects to go into collections. Um, our role in that is that the coroners like, uh, objects to come to us first because we have the expertise to identify and, uh, make that determination as to whether we think they're treasure or not and can call on a, a sort of a bank of experts to help us with that determination. And then we can submit all that information to the coroner and to the local museums and to the treasure registrar in London in the British Museum and, and sort of connect those, those parties up and, and help those objects in, to go into museums or for objects to make their way through the process and be returned to the finder if there's no museum that wants it. Um, and that's, yeah…anything else really? Yeah?

Caroline: Basically…

Benjamin: We do, sort of, outreach around that.

Caroline: We do do outreach around that…yeah.

Benjamin: To, to sort of publicise our role and what the PAS can do and, uh, um, and…

Caroline: Yeah, and highlight what's been found and then communicate that back again to people as well.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: Complete that circle.

Benjamin: Yeah. What, what underpins everything really is that we're, we're about advancing and it says it our mission statement or, uh, vision statement for 2020, we want to advance archaeological knowledge, and that underpins everything we do.

Lora: OK, so I'm a person who has found something, cool, valuable. What is the process when I call you on the phone, is that usually how the contact first happens is a phone call? And then what, how does it go from there, as far as the actual object?

Benjamin: Can be a phone call, can be a e-mail.

Caroline: We generally like e-mails…

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: Because people can send photographs of the objects...

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, that's true.

Caroline: Because we get a lot of people who find things which are not archaeological objects. Um, often things people find in rivers. Sometimes it's stones that look a bit like they, they are something but they're not. Um, so we like to get photographs. Ideally, if it's a finder that we haven't, um, met before we, we know there isn't already an active detectorist who hasn't (unintelligible). Generally, emails...

Benjamin: Generally, e-mails, but, yeah, that first contact will come through with a variety of means comes from...

Caroline: Sometimes people just come up to you at events and say...

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: I've been detecting for 30 years. Do you want to see the stuff I found? It happens, yeah.

Benjamin: Oh my gosh. Yeah. Let's, let's try and record that. Yeah.

Lora: So, as a person having this object, let's say it is valuable and it is something that you would like to record and, kind of, go through the Treasure Act process. What can I expect as somebody who is, timelines, I'm sure those vary depending on the artefact and how fast things are going and how, um, how busy things are. What can I expect? So I'm bringing you the object. If you tell me, yes, this is definitely something that needs to be checked out. Do I bring it to you? Do you come to me? And then what happens to that object?

Benjamin: So, if you find an object that may meet the criteria for treasure, so there's certain.

Caroline: There's kind of two phases there, right?

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: Because if it's treasure or if it's not treasure.

Benjamin: Yeah, that's true. Yeah. So, if, if we think it's treasure, so that, I mean, you can look these up at your leisure and the Treasure Act, it's all, you know, it's on our website. But if it's gold or silver, if it's a coin reward, if it's a hoard of base

metal prehistoric material. Or as of 2023, if it's something really, a significant find that doesn't meet, but really nationally or, or, you know, very unique that doesn't meet other criteria, it may be declared treasure as well. If we think that it could meet those criteria, then we, we get a treasure...the first instance you, you bring it in, so, all, sorry, all treasure at the moment that you realise that it may potentially be treasure, no longer belongs to you or the land owner but belongs to the crown. That's an important thing to, to understand. As such, then, the, the Treasurer Act kicks in and says well, these are your legal responsibilities, it must be reported to the coroner within 14 days is what the law states, and it must now go to a Finds Liaison Officer, it says in the guidance that accompanies the law, so that it can be properly assessed and recorded. And so, we can make that determination. So, the first thing that we do when you bring something in, if we think it's treasure, we take that object in, uh, for safekeeping, we get a treasure number to, like a tracking number from the treasure registrar, who's based alongside the Portable Antiquities Scheme in the British Museum. Uh, and then we then inform the coroner of the find using that tracking number, the Treasury one, and then from that point on, we then have 90 days to write a full report on the object saying why we think it is, or sometimes, it may be that it is not treasure, and the research that we do, sort of, might prove that something's not treasure. But if we, we have 90 days to write that report. Once that report's done, we send a copy to the British Museum, to the Treasury team, um, and then it will be approved usually by a curator in the British Museum, will sort of, uh, approve that report. They might make corrections or small edits, there'll be a specialist. If it's a, I don't know, a Bronze Age piece of Bronze Age gold, then the Bronze Age specialist will curate and may look at that and may make edits, may be happy with the report, but they would approve it. And, and a draft or unapproved copy of the report also goes off to the local museums where, uh, from where the, it was made. So, if it's in County Durham, we'll send a copy to the University Archaeology Museum and to Bishop Auckland, um, Faith Museum because they're the two collecting museums in, in our county. Um, they then, once they receive that report, they have 28 days to make a decision on whether it's something that they would like to acquire through the treasure process. Um, and they have to then, if it's something they do want, they...Can't escape the building work, can we? Uh, if it's something they do want, then they have to write back to us within 28 days, uh, stating, giving why they think, why they want it, why it fits with their collective policy, and also giving a sort of, giving an idea of how

they're going to fund the acquisition. Whether they're going to fundraise for it from private donations, whether they've got pot money set aside or whatever. Um, so, if they do want it, then they inform the Treasury registrar, and then the Treasury registrar will then request that the coroner hold a full inquest so that the object can be legally declared as a treasure find. Um...that can take a while, depending on what the coroner's got going on and, and how they prioritise it, and, and just when, you know, whenever they've got time to do it. Um, once it's been, while it's going to inquest and, and waiting for inquest, usually the British Museum treasure team will, uh, commission an independent valuation, usually from a specialist auctioneer, um, who will give, uh, their sort of approximate price that they think the object would get at auction. Um, that valuation then, once it's been to inquest and been declared officially treasure, that valuation forms the basis for the Treasure Valuation Committee to begin their deliberations over what value they think that the object should be valued at. Um, the Treasure Valuation Committee is a group of about ten people, ten, twelve people?

Caroline: Something like that, yeah.

Benjamin: Who are, uh, all independent of either the, the Treasury registrars of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, and of any particular museum, or they're, they're appointed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport at ECMS. Um, and they, there's museum curators, uh, specialist collectors...

Caroline: Academics...

Benjamin: Academics, all sorts of people make up this committee. They consider that, that independent valuation and then set their own valuation. This is just my personal opinion now, this isn't the law, but I kind of think that whether the auctioneer will put a kind of a, a, a, a monetary valuation that they think it would achieve at auction, the Treasure Valuation Committee considers, I guess, a bit more the cultural value and social value of these objects. So, their valuation may be, I mean, if you talk to metal detectorists, they will think it's lower.

Caroline: If you talk to museums, they will think it's too high.

Benjamin: Talk to museums, they'll think it's too high. I personally, again, personal opinion would say that most of the time it's...

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: It's in the right kind of area, but they'll give it more consideration for, like I say, that cultural value and particularly for that lo...you know, if it's going to a local museum perhaps, in that local context of what the value might be, they set their valuation anyway. They then contact all the parties concerned, landowner, find a museum, put that valuation forward and then all the parties have the chance to either agree or disagree with that valuation. If anyone disagrees, they can submit evidence as to why they feel that it should be worth, usually worth more, or if it's a museum worth less, that, then it goes back to the Treasury Committee until eventually, when everybody's happy, the value everybody agrees to it, um, the museum then has, I forget how long they've got now. It is set out in the, in the law. I can let you know. I forget what it is, 'cause we're not really involved in that side of things very much.

Caroline: Yeah, (unintelligible)

Benjamin: We're just getting notified, but, uh, they have a certain amount of time. I think it might be three months to pay.

Caroline: Except in some instances where the value might be extremely high.

Benjamin: Yeah. If it's really big-ticket items, then it might be well, yeah.

Caroline: Yeah. Yeah.

Benjamin: In fact, that applies to the whole process. If it's a big, important, unusual discovery, all of these time frames are approximated.

Caroline: Or it's, like, a big discovery.

Benjamin: Or a big, like, a lot of coins...

Caroline: Like, thousands of coins.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: We can't do that in three months.

Benjamin: Yeah, we've got a big hoard in at the moment that's certainly taking more than three months because it takes time. But yeah, when everyone is happy, then the museum pay the money to the treasure team, uh, or treasury registrar. Treasury registrar then pays out half to the landowner, half to the finder. Um.

Caroline: That is supposing that neither of those two parties have waived their...

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: Right to reward, which they are free to at any point.

Benjamin: Yeah. And we do get that. In fact...

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: Um, you've just had a early mediaeval silver hand pin donated.

Caroline: Have we? I didn't know that.

Benjamin: To, yeah, and so you know that hand pin, that...

Caroline: Yeah, yeah, yeah, the hand pin. Yeah.

Benjamin: The hand pin. So, the early mediaeval hand pin that's just been donated, the finder has donated their reward...

Caroline: Oh, that's nice.

Benjamin: Or, their half of the reward, so that it's going into the museum in Newcastle.

Caroline: How excellent. That's nice.

Benjamin: Yeah, it's lovely, isn't it?

Caroline: That's good to know.

Benjamin: (Unintelligible) Um, uh, yeah, so, uh, but that's in cases where things are acquired. Where museums don't want things, the, the Crown disclaims interest in that treasure find, and in that case, provided there's no objection for the landowner, usually the finder will come back and the, the coroner will write to the landowner to check there's no dispute, and then the finder will come and collect it. And then the finder and landowner are free to, to do whatever they will with it. Sometimes the finder will buy out the landowner. Sometimes the landowner doesn't really care and the finder will keep it. Sometimes the landowner might have an agreement where if it's a valuable thing or has a bit of value they'll want to sell it and they'll split the proceeds and...

Caroline: And the finders have kind of a (unintelligible) ...if an object

Benjamin: Yes, particularly clubs.

Caroline: Over a certain value then the (unintelligible) seller.

Benjamin: That's with treasure finds. With non treasure finds, we just record them and return them to the finder.

Caroline: Normally within 3 months. Except if they have a lot of finds.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: Some will bring in hundreds of...

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah. People came in, in November and brought in 20 years-worth of finds that they've been collecting, so there's several hundred objects, so that will take us a while to work.

Lora: That's fantastic. Wow.

Benjamin: Is that alright? Sorry, it's a long-winded thing, but...

Lora: That's really great. No, it's good for me to understand the process and to see it maybe from...

Benjamin: I mean, I should have said so...

Caroline: There is a flow chart.

Benjamin: Yeah, there is a flow chart.

Lora: Sorry.

Caroline: Which is sometimes easier to find.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, which I can send you a copy of. Um...

Lora: That would be great.

Benjamin: I think it's available on the website as well, but sorry timeframes, I was gonna say, if an object is not being acquired by a museum, we generally would expect to see it run-ish for between six months and a year. If it's going to be acquired, then you're probably looking at a year to 18 months minimum and if it's complicated, often longer. There is a legacy in the system as well where there are objects in there about, or cases that go about, several years. In 2023 the law was changed slightly and this new significance bit was added, which was the headline. But the underlying thing was that these time frames that, you know, in terms of we have 90 days, museums have certain amount of time, they were added as well. We just helped to speed things up, but actually we still have things that are going through from before 2023. In fact,

I've just seen one of them this morning from 2022 that's just completed. It's, it's been disclaimed, but it's completed its process through so...

Caroline: They can get held up at any process.

Benjamin: Yeah, they can.

Caroline: Generally it's coming through our offices relatively quick.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: It's things like...

Benjamin: Of course, it's, uh...

Caroline: Sorry, it is quick, but you know things like, coroner's might decide not to hold inquest for a while.

Benjamin: Yeah, that can hold things up.

Caroline: Treasure inquests, they try to save them up. This is happening in our area.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: And another area, so sometimes things can get held up.

Benjamin: Yeah. Sometimes you get, just get, I think just get stuck and there's no...

Caroline: Yeah. The areas just get overwhelmed sometimes.

Benjamin: Yeah, and things just stick in the system, unfortunately, perhaps, so that, things that shouldn't take that long, do, end up doing. And it can simply be that something, you know, we, we need an e-mail from a certain, from somebody to chase something up, and it, and I haven't chased it up, but neither has treasurer, and so it just sticks in that process where we're both waiting for each other.

Caroline: Sometimes it can be finders who won't supply us with...

Benjamin: Yes, sometimes we're waiting on details. Yeah.

Caroline: The landowner details. Um, they don't understand that they need to give them, we ask them. That can take a while. (Unintelligible)

Benjamin: So, anything, anyone...and there's so many different parties involved that can get held up at any time. But, usually, it's not that bad, and I think since 2023 cases that we've had since then are certainly moving through the system faster, but there's still a bit more (unintelligible) of stuff. Sorry.

Lora: No, that's really great. I understood all of that. So, I mean, as much as I can, you know, but it does make sense and it's good for me to have kind of the logistics of it and the specifics kind of even if I don't get it all right in this moment. Um, the processes...

Benjamin: Well, that's only, obviously treasure is only part of the work that we do.

Caroline: Yes.

Benjamin: I guess, as an end, would you reckon, twenty percent, thirty percent of the work we do is probably treasure related?

Caroline: Probably. Treasure (unintelligible) take a lot more time...

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: Just because we have to produce more...

Benjamin: Yeah, in terms of the, yeah.

Caroline: And we spend more time doing records because...

Benjamin: In terms of the number of finds, it's, it's a small fraction of the number of finds, but the paperwork is a lot more than, um, other...

Caroline: Then the rest of them are finds which are (unintelligible) that don't meet the qualifications of treasure. Not just for metal detectorists, but...

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: Most of the time. Um, and we tend to, about, about three months...

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: Yeah, is, is how long it takes. (Unintelligible) seen the volunteers that will work through those and we'll check them, um, those records as well, and anything that's really complicated or difficult or tricky, we, we'll do those too.

Benjamin: Yep, it's a team effort.

Caroline: A team effort. Yeah.

Lora: It has to be a lot. So, I want to talk a little bit, you mentioned outreach, and obviously you're working with a lot, you said a lot of metal detectorists, obviously other members of the public. So, I kind of want to get your perspective on the relationship between, what I am kind of naming non-experts and experts. There's a dynamic there, um, within archaeology, I know

there's kind of been a trend of, um, incorporating non expert activities, opinions, perspectives, which is one of the main things I, I feel like if I'm understanding correctly, the Portable Antiquities Scheme is prime for. So, what has been your personal experience as you have done outreach programmes as you have interacted with the public? Overall, do you see that a lot of people are aware of these schemes, that they have a positive feeling about these schemes? And, kind of, maybe over time, I know that's a lot, but just kind of those experiences.

Caroline: Um, I think the people we engage with regularly, and we probably have fifty, sixty finders maybe? Or is it more?

Benjamin: I think it's more than that...

Lora: So, you have your...

Caroline: We have a whole map that we engage with...

Benjamin: I added them up recently. I can't remember what it was now, but there's over 100 of them.

Caroline: Over 100? Wow. OK, that we engage with routinely, as in at least once a year, often more than that, keep coming back to us and saying a positive experience. And, and for, and, and, I mean, the work I've done before this is in community archaeology as well, and I find that the motivations for a lot of them, they vary. Some people, I think probably really love archaeology and in another life might have engaged in archaeology but haven't had those opportunities and detecting is an easy way for them to engage in archaeology. They like that moment of discovery.

Benjamin: It's an important point.

Caroline: Yeah. Um, they like that moment of discovery that obviously, that's achievable in detecting. Um, and, uh, and we have finders that like to write down what they think the artefacts are, bring them in and then we tell them what they are, and they really like that process of getting those reports back and go, "I was right!" or, "I need to learn more about that." They go away and learn by themselves, which is great. Um, you know, some people who detect, who only like certain types of artefacts, which is quite interesting. So, they like to collect a full set of coins of a particular (unintelligible), say.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: And, um, they kind of almost don't really care that much about other things, but they'll find things along the way. Um, we get people who engage because they enjoy the social aspect of it. So, they like being outside, they like meeting up at club meetings every few months, and that's part of it. And for them, detecting is a hobby, but it could just as well be something else. Um, and, uh, but yet in general, I think, the experience I have is of most people who engage with us enjoy engaging with us and they have a positive experience. That being said, I think you'll be, agree the wider discourse we see online is often very negative towards the PAS. I don't think that's because of dealing with us. I think that's dealing with other FLOs and also misinformation spreading online. Uh, and the result of that can be that people who maybe haven't engaged with us before, decide they're not going to, and they will instead resort to online forums, Facebook, other official media platforms, YouTube videos that deal with non-experts who will tell them what their finds are. Which may or may not be correct. And they, they think, why do I need bring these things in to be shown to, to us or our colleagues for the scheme, um, when this person online is telling me what it is.

Benjamin: Yeah. It's a challenge sometimes to communicate that idea that, that what we do is not just about IDs and collect, you know, there's a lot of collectors who are detectorists, not all of them, but a lot of who are building collections and communicating the idea that this is about, sort of, information exchange and knowledge sharing and, and data, not just about collecting is, is a challenge sometimes.

Caroline: Yeah. And a lot of, I guess...

Benjamin: No, no...

Caroline: I guess they don't easily see the output of what we do.

Benjamin: No.

Caroline: Despite the fact that I think quite a lot of information is put out there, um, they may not see that, so...

Benjamin: See, this is what we talked about quite a lot on the schemes as well, that, that the way that we disseminate information should be (unintelligible) so that, and the way that we, to, to, so other experts, I guess, if you could use those terms, but, you know, academics and researchers will be, if they're in those kind of material cultures, kind of fields or it impacts on their research

or what they do, will be aware of PAS, um, even, even if it's not directly connected, they'll be aware of it, having awareness of it, so that if they needed to use data, they would, like, all experts would know how to approach that and use it. But, communicating what we do to non-experts is more of a challenge and to that end, you know, we, there's like two big, for instance, there's two big magazines in the metal detecting world: “The Searcher” and “Treasure Hunter”. Um, uh, and we are encouraged, or being encouraged, by the kind of people who run the scheme, by our big bosses, Michael Lewis, that to, not, not having to, but, you know, to, to, to write for these magazines or write small articles or columns or, or posts for these magazines is a good idea, because then we could share this information. This has come across from detectorists as well, where we've had conference, because we have an annual conference every year, and the detectorists, you know, it's a mixture of PAS people, detectorists, public and, um, and academics and, uh, they'll come along and see how it defines, that the discoveries that they make, how they impact on research and when they see that, they're always, “Oh, I haven't realised that, that, you know, how that would work and what that could mean”. And, you know, so we're encouraged to, kind of, to share our information in better ways. But finding how you pitch that is, it’s a challenge.

Caroline: It's incredibly variable to different people as well.

Benjamin: I think that's one of the things with the scheme is that we, we're pitching to all different sorts of audiences.

Caroline: Yeah. Yeah.

Benjamin: Sometimes at different times of the day, you know.

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: You know, that...

Caroline: We have very, very different...

Benjamin: We had, I ...

Caroline: Socio-economic backgrounds...

Benjamin: Exactly. Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: Educational backgrounds.

Benjamin: Yep, yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Caroline: I mean, one thing that we got quite involved in lately is, uh, defaced Elizabethan coins.

Benjamin: Oh yeah.

Caroline: Which is quite interesting. We think we, the fact that they're defaced is, is, is...

Benjamin: We're interested in it.

Caroline: Is very interesting. When we actually spoke to the detectorists, we find that a lot of them that have them, they don't see the point in recording them because they're like, they're not, they're just knives.

Benjamin: They're just tatty old coins.

Caroline: As a, as a...

Benjamin: There's no point.

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: You know, they only want to see the good examples, and communicating that idea that we don't just want to see the perfect examples of things, but we want to see the broken is...

Caroline: Yeah, yeah.

Benjamin: Is our mission, you know, in all conditions so that you get a good representative spread of your data.

Caroline: And when you explain that to people and say, "Actually, the reason they're defaced is part, is the thing that's interesting about them". You know, generally people have responded really well and gone, "Oh. I didn't realise", and, but, it's just, how do we get that through to people?

Benjamin: And we have to think carefully about how we do it as well because it's not, you know, you come from quite an academic, you kind of...

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: Research based background, you kind of take a lot of things as given.

Caroline: Yes. Yeah.

Benjamin: And you, you, and, and, so, you have, kind of, have to take a step backwards and think carefully about your audience, you know.

Caroline: Not be, it's, it’s easy to accidentally be patronising.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: So, there's, a lot of them are hugely...

Benjamin: Yeah, knowledgeable.

Caroline: Knowledgeable about what they find.

Benjamin: And you'll find, you know, you get people who are very knowledgeable in a particular area, whatever it is, you know, short cross, Henry Short cross.

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: Henry the third coins or something or long cross coins or something like that.

Caroline: Everything there is to know.

Benjamin: But won't have a clue about, you know, buckles or...

Caroline: Yep.

Benjamin: You know, or Roman coins or whatever. So, you know, you, you need to have a talk and that's what we do, talk to people and find out, you know, where their interests are and what their knowledge is, and that's kind of part of the role. That's why we're liaison officers, I guess.

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: And it's a bit hard, because you know, that's what, what was it, the other Friday? We had a couple of Bronze Age specialists from, from Durham University to look at a horde that we've had recently and that was kind of, you know, the, the, one of the specialists is a particular specialist in a particular type of object of which we have in this horde and that's like, you know, incredibly granular focused specialisms. To, on the other hand, in the afternoon I was having a conversation, you know, via text with someone who's, you know, found some rather out, sort of, you know in (unintelligible).

Caroline: Yes.

Benjamin: You know, I've turned off, you know, a nice potential mediaeval treasure finds, you know, so it's kind of, we're all over the place (unintelligible).

Caroline: How to contact people? Because sometimes, often we go to clubs, which is great cause you get to meet people, a lot of people face to face...

Benjamin: Yep, yep.

Caroline: And that's, and you can build those personal relationships, people, people come into the office, but increasingly people are not joining clubs in the way they used to. They, I reckon, they're joining Facebook groups and they're going out as groups, they're meeting there, you know, before they go detecting with them. And, um, it's really hard to contact people there and communicate with them. Um, but yeah, basically you can't build those relationships in the same way.

Benjamin: It's different. Yeah. And I think it's all about relation, what we do is all about relationships...

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: And building, building trust. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It is very important, building trust. And we'll find out that because, well, cause I've been here quite a while now, so well, the best example I was think is that, so, there's a club that I go and visit in Durham. So, it's like, when I say club, they're like traditional clubs where they'll, they have regular meetings with the, you know, biannual, bimonthly or monthly meetings where they sit down, usually in a social club or a pub, the minutes are read from the last-minute meeting and, um, they have a proper meeting. They've got a treasurer and a chairperson and all that kind of stuff, you know, like a proper club, you know? So, there's club officers in, in in, our area and, uh, I've been going there for about three years, four years, and nobody had ever recorded, you know, maybe taken a handful of objects in that through. Most clubs you go to there's, uh, a regular flow of take the thing, gives them out. Not everybody in the club might record. Maybe it's just certain people, but generally there's a sharing of stuff. This club, nothing. I'd, I'd had, I could count on one hand the amount of objects that I've had over the period of about four years, and it was, I was literally coming to the point where I was thinking this is just, this is just pointless going, you know, it's a waste of my time. It's a waste of their time. I'm going to have to have a difficult conversation, say I don't think it's worth me coming anymore and have a very difficult conversation because people that run the club are very enthusiastic for me to be there, wanting to be doing the right thing, and seem to be doing the right thing as they saw it, but it was just pointless.

Caroline: (Unintelligible) for months and months.

Benjamin: No. But then, all of a sudden, uh, one week I went and, uh, a couple of people just pulled out big bags of finds, stuff that they found over several years that they just suddenly decided they wanted to record. And, and that happened and I forgot that doing it took a while because it was, like I said, big stuff. It took a few months, but got that done. And then there was more stuff that came from that. And then other people were recording as well. And so, now, actually, that club is, I mean, I still, it's not the most prolific in terms of recording, but there is a steady, there is that steady churn of every time I go return stuff and bring stuff in, certainly enough to keep us busy for that club. But it seemed to take, with that particular, other clubs, the first time I went that it started the, that club, it seemed to take that 3-4 years to build that level of trust so that they knew that when I said I was coming back, I would be back and I'll be back and I'll be back. To build that level of trust and, and then, I think other people seeing other, you know, they saw other members being, trusting me with their finds that they would do it as well, that makes sense. So, it's kind of weird, you know.

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: But, but, it, trust is really important and I think in other areas of the country where perhaps things have gone wrong, or maybe you've got a quick, you know, sometimes these posts can, you know, you might have someone in post for a couple of years and it changes and it changes again a year later. It might be a quick churn of people. That trust is really difficult to, you know...

Caroline: Yeah. It takes years for it to build up, and it is about routine and consistency.

Benjamin: It is, yeah. And like all jobs in heritage, you know, it's still not particularly well paid, so, so people are going to move on to better pay jobs, you know, a lot of the time so, it’s, it's tricky. I think trust in the institution depends on trust in in, in the institution, in PAS, depends on trust in the individuals. But finding that kind of, getting those two to kind of match up is, is, is tricky, I think.

Lora: Yes, that was very insightful because, like you said, the trust and the relationship, and that's not something you can do over an e-mail or, I mean, it's a different level of interaction, right? Especially when you're used to, like you said, the more academic side of, kind of, having your pool of people and you're all kind of on the same page, you've got all these different demographics and you've got to juggle all of that. But that was a great example. Um, so, over the time that you have been in PAS, I know, you've been doing it for a couple of years and you said 8, have you noticed, maybe a little bit of bridging that gap between the relationship of what we're calling

the experts and the non-experts? Like, you give a great example with that metal detecting club, um, of, kind of building that trust. Have you seen that kind of as an overall arching theme of the trust being built with something like this and it becoming, I don't know if easier is the right word, but, um, maybe more of an understanding between the groups and, or is it still pretty separate as far as like, us versus them? Does that make sense? Have you noticed a difference?

Benjamin: I, I don't think the, the, the problem is, is that it's...it's a very nuanced, it's a grey area. It's very nuanced really. The, you can talk to people who will very much see it as an us versus them. But then, at the same time, they'll still give you finds to record so, it's, it's, it's a real difficult there. There was a guy at a metal detector club I know very well now because I've been going for years, and for the first few years we go in there, every time I went, he would have to give me an hour long, half an hour lecture. And he lectured you when you first went, about how he'd been detecting for years and years, he'd, he'd recorded, you know, loads of things. He'd never seen anything back. He couldn't understand why we were doing what we're doing. And da da da da da, and this would be half an hour. And then at the end of that, he'd pull out a bag of finds, you know, half a dozen things and record them. But I'd have to go through that every time I went. And it was draining, but...

Caroline: There's really nothing you can say either.

Benjamin: Nothing you can say because he didn't want to listen. He didn't want to hear what I got to say. He didn't have an argument, he didn't want to have a discussion. He just wanted to get it out, and then when he'd done that, he would be fine, he would record his objects. Uh, and he did that for about 3 or 4 years, and then it just stopped. And then it was fine and he would, he's quite elderly now, so he just detects as much as he used to, so he doesn't really report that much anymore. But he would, you know, it was fine then and the relationship with him now is fine. Yeah. And I thought, oh, perhaps he's just softened as he's got older. But then I took Caroline to the same club when you've been, I don't know...

Caroline: He had not softened.

Benjamin: Here six months and he, and he literally took her aside and gave her the same lecture, and I could see you on the side of the river and I felt sorry for you (unintelligible).

Caroline: But also, there's nothing you can say. Just nod.

Benjamin: There's nothing you can do. He, he just, he doesn't want to...

Lora: It's part of his process.

Benjamin: It's so odd because, yeah, because at the same time, he was still willing to record, and still record all his things. But I think that's a good example to show that that kind of opposition is, I guess he's still there in some ways, with some people. But at the same time, there's still a working relationship that goes on. And I think that under, underlines how the scheme works really, that, and, and, has always been the way. When I, when I give a talk, I was giving a talk last week to a group of volunteers in archaeology in a different area about what PAS does. And you sort of talk about, oh, you know, in the 70s and 80s when metal detecting started and you've got academics and archaeologists on one side and the metal detectorists on the other and they're butting heads and, you know, it was terrible. But actually, when you dig below that surface a little bit, you're actually in, in Norfolk, you've got kind of a proto PAS working where detectorists there were taking their finds to the Norwich Castle Museum and have them recorded and they got it all on record cards. Here in Durham, um, because we have involvement with the, um, you know, the archaeological archives for the county that are stored and we were doing some, moving those recently, in recent years and I came across, uh, in the paper archives a record of a metal detecting kind of project that happened about in the mid-90s, so pre PAS, and I can see names that I recognise from clubs that I go to now. On this, they were working with, um, archaeologists to do big stuff with them and a list of the coins they'd found. Somebody was showing me, uh, uh, uh, at a club, that same club, was showing me their membership card from, from the early 80s of some Durham or NE Archaeological Historical Society or something (unintelligable). I've got a picture of it somewhere, I can show it, but on this, he was showing me the members list inside and I could see there was, there was academics from Durham University, Philip Long.

Caroline: Oh, really?

Benjamin: And, and, and a few others that are recognised and detectorists that I recognised still from, you know, other names on you. So, although on the surface in the 70s and 80s and 90s you've got, you know, detectorists and archaeologists, and there are some detectorists and archaeologists that would like to think it's still like that. Actually, it, it, it's a very much a...

Caroline: It's a more complex picture.

Benjamin: Yeah, it's a much more complex, yeah. That's what. Much more complex picture. And I think it, it, it still is today, you know, if you go, I don't know if you looked at them, you've been on Facebook and looked at any of the metal detecting groups on there. Yeah.

Lora: Yes.

Benjamin: So, you'll, you know someone posts a picture, “I found this today”, and then some of the replies are, you know, and it might be treasure. Say, it's a gold ring or something, people are, you know, “Well found mates, lovely find”. And then, then you'll get people will say, “Oh, what lovely. What, what does the FLO think? What does the FLO think?” Because they're hinting at, well, this is treasure, you need to report it. And you get people say, “This is treasure and you need to report it”, and then you'll get other people saying, “Oh, just don't tell anybody. Stick it in your pocket, mate, don't, don't bother”. So, you can see, on Facebook, you can see all those different complexity.

Caroline: Yeah, yeah.

Benjamin: Yeah, of,

Caroline: It’s a good barometer.

Benjamin: Yeah, of views of the people that we deal with and people who say things, but actually in practise would never behave that way.

Lora: Right.

Benjamin: It, it's a really grey area I think, and, but...

Caroline: I wonder how much of it...

Benjamin: Ah, no. Carry on.

Caroline: I want to say, I wonder how much of it, at the moment with those kind of people who come through Facebook, who have never been part of clubs, you're looking at a wider, kind of global (unintelligible) towards the anti-expert movement.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah. That's probably (unintelligible). You're right, yeah.

Caroline: Who just don't believe that they should take things to an expert simply because they’re an expert, and that probably applies to (unintelligible) past their life, I wonder how much of that we are caught up in.

Benjamin: Yeah. I think also, as well, you get this, the thing about detecting, and maybe it's true for the special interest groups that are (unintelligible), but certainly you see in detectorists, is a very strong, um, libertarian streak.

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: Uh, I think amongst them, um, of, of all different educational levels, and you do get all different education, there's certain, that, that Libertarian streak runs through quite strongly where they enjoy what they do and don't feel they should be told what to do, and, and that's fine. I have absolutely no issues

with that. However, I think you still have a responsibility to share knowledge where, where you're discovering that (unintelligible).

Caroline: Yes, and what's quite interesting is many of them believe, at least some mentally, that heritage should be open for all.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: And any, anyone could be, could go detect and should be able to.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: Um, but yet also don't seem to understand or fully appreciate that what we're doing is trying to make that heritage successful...

Benjamin: Yeah, right, yeah.

Caroline: By recording it, so there's that real disconnect that, uh...

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, there is.

Lora: That's interesting.

Caroline: It would be an interesting question to pose someone about Historic England or National Trust, or any organisation that's trying to make these things available (unintelligible) go to those sites and enjoy them, I think, or they don't because they, they might find that, um, style of presentation difficult.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: To some people, certain groups.

Benjamin: Like, like you said, they like that, that sort of discovery element of things.

Caroline: They do. That...

Benjamin: So, they like to find things for themselves and...

Caroline: Yeah. There's a lot of chatter about mental health as well.

Benjamin: Yeah, there is. I mean...

Caroline: Really picked up on mental health. That's a...

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because I think there's that big idea, you know, get out in the outdoors.

Lora: Yes, especially during COVID. Probably that was big...

Benjamin: Well-being. Yeah, yeah, all that well-being kind of stuff is, is very much a part of it. And so...

Caroline: (Unintelligible) understand.

Benjamin: So, we, we end up sometimes being a bit, sort of, social worker, you know, that we listen to people's problems and issues and, and then record their finds.

Lora: You wear many hats.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, it's important.

Caroline: So many hats I didn't think I'd have to wear. Yeah.

Benjamin: But yeah, definitely. There's that streak of libertarianism that runs through.

Caroline: Absolutely. Yeah.

Benjamin: And so, you, I think you need to understand that in order to work with people and, and respect that, I guess, you know. I don't have a problem with it at all. Um, there's, you kind of, you say you wear hats, you kind of, you, you, it's a pragmatic, kind of, the Portable Antiquity Scheme, above all else, is, is, is a pragmatic organisation that we, we, we're not, we're not taking a position on, in some ways, on the ethicality...ethicality, is that even a word...ethicalness?

Caroline: Ethics.

Benjamin: Ethics. (Unintelligible.) I mean, we are, because obviously we are taking position on it in that we think that things should be recorded. But we, we always have to part that and, a little bit, and, and, so that we can do the work that we do just to record that data and recover that data and make that data available. So, in terms of selling finds, there's obviously a huge market for antiquities and, but that's not our concern, really. We, we can't, and if asked about it, we might take a position on it, but that's not what our work is about. Our work is about recovering that data and recording that data and facilitating.

Caroline: Well, detecting is legal. It is our job to...

Benjamin: Exactly. Yeah.

Caroline: Record that data.

Benjamin: I have a lot of heritage professionals working in that same, kind of, development-led archaeology, it's exactly the same.

Caroline: Exactly, exactly.

Benjamin: And, basically, you're not really taking the position on what's the, the, the circumstances that have led to that archaeology or heritage being recorded. You're pragmatically just trying to record it, you know.

Caroline: Yes, as efficiently as possible, yeah.

Benjamin: And, and accepting that, at the same time, that all archaeology is a sample of, of what is actually out there, you know, so we don't record everything. We can't record everything, and you accept that there's lots of objects that we're not seeing, but we're getting a decent sample. And I think that's, that's where the discussion should hinge, really, on whether the sample that we get is enough or whether we can increase that sample, I think. Rather than saying, which are, some archaeologists do take that viewpoint that the PAS shouldn't exist, metal detecting shouldn't be allowed because it's, it's very effectively destruction, which is, you know, you can take that view, but that's not, the Portable Antiquities Scheme isn't there to argue for or against that. It's there just to deal with the situation as it exists, you know.

Caroline: And on that, a lot of detectorists would say that they, they feel very strongly that they are saving archaeology...

Benjamin: Yep.

Caroline: Which in a sense...

Benjamin: There's a case to be made, yeah.

Caroline: If they are detecting within ploughed, the ploughshare, that stuff's already been removed from it's...

Benjamin: Yeah. They are in the plough zone, that's, you know, heavily ploughed and, and agri-chemicals and all that kind of stuff...

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: It is a good case to make and...

Caroline: Their view is that this stuff isn't being recovered by archaeologists.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: Um, so they're, they're doing it and they're legally allowed to. That's, that's true. We just would like them to record with us.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Lora: It is, kind of, I, I hear that it's kind of about picking your battles, right? Like, kind of focusing on what's really important because there's not enough time, resources, budget to officially have professional archaeologists go out and find all of these things, and so to be able to have, kind of, merge the expert and the non-expert, it does open up those samples, right? The, the number, just, kind of, the sheer number of samples that you wouldn't be able to get otherwise. Um, I think that is all on my end. Is there anything you want to add about? Maybe something that we've missed that you want to share or an experience? It's been a really great overview.

Benjamin: I don't think so. Nothing in particularly. Um...

Lora: I appreciate it.

Caroline: I mean, I think the other thing to say is that we do have volunteers who work with us as well.

Benjamin: Yeah. Yeah. And our outreach size. Yeah. Yeah, that's very important, actually. Yeah.

Caroline: Yeah. They are non-experts, although many of them have degrees in archaeology...

Benjamin: Yep.

Caroline: Many have gone on to jobs in archaeology or have, um, come to archaeology later in life, um, and are very capable and, um, and they really enjoy recording the finds, they enjoy going away and researching, and they enjoy the process of it. They come here every week and do it with us and they get (unintelligible) and things from PAS, so they, they go to training sessions and so that's (unintelligible) to us. So, we aren't just dealing with detectorists and people who find things who want...

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: Who want to record those. That means they cannot, they cannot detect and be, record with us.

Benjamin: No, no, that's a separate thing. But you do have other detect, if you want to record, and if you record, self-record or record where you have some detectorists who make their own records in the database and then a specific subset of detectorists who record their own objects, that we call self-recorders and...excuse me (unintelligible).

Caroline: And on that, many of the, some of the detectorists that we work with, that record with us are also prolific in the Amateur Archaeology Committee of Northumberland (unintelligible). And, um, yeah, and they're people who will go to volunteer excavations when they're available. There aren't enough of them to satisfy their demand. Um, they're so expensive to run and time consuming (unintelligible). And so they detect and that's the way they can enjoy archaeology. Um, but they also, they would go, going to museums and looking at things and display them. People often give their finds to museums. The Faith Museum has donated objects.

Benjamin: So really...

Caroline: So you engage with people...

Benjamin: Like I've said before, it's a really, kind of, broad, there's no, when, when, it's when, it...Like I said before, when the argument is characterised as, you

know, us versus them, it's, that's, it, it's such a grey area. It's a really grey area and there's lots of different strands to it and different sorts of people and different archaeologists who take different points of view. And it's just really, yeah, broad and deep.

Caroline: Yeah, it is.

Lora: Yeah.

Caroline: It is broad and deep.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: And constantly facing new challenges.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: And I think one way of dealing with it, not just here but in the PAS in general, is around that, kind of, digital club.

Benjamin: Yeah. Yeah.

Caroline: And also people going to detect, um, far away, that could be a problem. So, they've gone to big rallies of, you know, maybe thousands of people.

Benjamin: Yeah, these big commercial rallies are a big problem, well, are a big problem in heritage at the moment, I think. Do you know about those?

Lora: I don't.

Benjamin: So, you have, so, so, OK, terminology. This is the other thing that, there's that terminology.

Caroline: Yeah, we have our own detectorists (unintelligible).

Benjamin: So, the detectors have a set of, there's a set of, yeah, hobby terminology. So, they'll call a dig, a dig is what, not what archaeologists would necessarily call a dig. A dig will be when they go out at the weekend, an organised dig, where somebody's, you know, got permission to be on a land that they can take a club in there. So, the clubs will have permission. This is the other thing, permissions, where they've got permission to go on a particular landowner's field or group of fields or whatever, so they go out and have a dig on a weekend and a club might...

Caroline: We would call it a rally, I think.

Benjamin: We would call it a rally. Well...

Caroline: Well...

Benjamin: Well, that depends. But, yeah. I guess you could. But a club might have ten, twenty, thirty, fifty members and, not all of them will go out the same time,

but they might take out a few members on a weekend and go on a club dig. And then you have rallies, which generally allow, when people turn up, well, at some...An event's been organised, a dig, when you turn up and you pay your, whatever your subscription on it, or pay your payment on the day, you go on the land. These can vary in size from, you know, we have a few locally maybe that have run where there's 40 or 50 people, maybe up to 100 people, which is quite big. But, and those are generally smallish affairs, I would say, you know, I would say, would you say, yeah.

Caroline: Yeah, maybe a few hundred people.

Benjamin: But then there are these big commercial rallies, things, if you look them up on your phone, like, Detector Con, the Radley Cook...

Caroline: Rodney Cook.

Benjamin: Rodney Cook Memorial Rally and various other ones. You Google them, you'll find them.

Caroline: Crusade with a Spade.

Benjamin: Crusade with...they're, they're a club? (unintelligible)

Caroline: Oh, there's, um...

Benjamin: Um, but also the detecting clubs are great now so. Coil to the Soil.

Caroline: Coil to the Soil.

Benjamin: Quakers Acres. Anyway, as I said, but you get these big commercial rallies that have ruined, and then they are, and they can be...

Caroline: Yeah, like festivals.

Bejamin: Yeah. They're like festivals. Yeah. They can have over several thousand acres over huge areas of land, you know, fields, massive. Groups of fields.

Caroline: People pay a lot of money.

Benjamin: People pay a lot of money to go for a weekend. They camp. There is...

Caroline: Entertainment, food...

Benjamin: Just, like, entertainment. All of the sort of, like, industry, kind of, metal detecting manufacturers may have stalls and stands and sales and things like that on. You may get coin dealers and people like that who will go to these things as well.

Caroline: People think they've actually recorded finds, that they've actually taken them to another person who's not (unintelligible).

Benjamin: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. So, you get there...these are huge and these can have, you know, 1000 or more people that go on these, or more indeed, that go on these events. And you get people flying in from abroad, from the states, from Europe, all over to go on these things. What happens to the finds afterwards? Some, you know, if you've got a local club going out reasonably locally, you know, we have a lot of those in North Yorkshire, the stuff's kind of staying, generally locally, and the finders are, you've got people come from all over. It's important to record all these things, and if it's, if a treasure, say, a hoard of Iron Age coins is found or something like that, you know, that will qualify as treasure. But you've got ten or more different finders who live in different parts of the country...

Caroline: Or world.

Benjamin: Or worlds. But all those coins should come in to be recorded and be recorded as treasure. It's just too problematic and this is something that government in, well, this is in the Parliament, the All Parliamentary Archaeology.

Caroline: ACPA? APPAG?

Benjamin: Yeah.

Caroline: All Party...All Person Parliamentary Archaeology?

Benjamin: Yeah, I think so, yeah. APAC are beginning to look at and consult about, um, to think about, should these be more regulated? Which, again, you talk to some detectorists and they hate these massive rallies. They think they're, they're awful things that, you know, they would never go on because it's horrible, that's not why they do it. They go out to, sort of, get fresh air and to enjoy seeing a few friends, but, that kind of, you know, that...

Caroline: And the last thing that's important...

Benjamin: Headspace and the landscape.

Caroline: They like to find the things in the place they know.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Caroline: Because they want to get a deeper sense of...

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, a deeper...

Caroline: Of the place that they either live in or they detect in regularly because it's significant to them.

Benjamin: Most times the landowner, that's really, well, actually they're invested in that. Other people just want to find stuff, more stuff, and valuable stuff.

Caroline: And post it online.

Benjamin: And post it online and get the kudos from that. And then you get the people in between. We've got club members who go on some of these bigger rallies and love it for a weekend a year. But, um, that, so, but anyway you see that there's, there's issues there as well, so...

Caroline: I think that people who, I think, just want to detect and they think it's the easiest way of doing it because it's kind of all set up for them.

Benjamin: Yeah

Caroline: They don't have to go out and find permission. They, they, they, maybe they need to (unintelligible) hobby, so that it's easier for them to go to one of these events because they know that they're going to meet other people.

Benjamin: And that, actually, that's a point I was gonna make as well. Sorry, is that, you've touched on it earlier, is that there's a lot of people who are interested in heritage, or interested in history, but have not had the same educational opportunities. Not everybody, but there's a lot of, kind of, um, sort of, lower socio-economic classes, working class people who take up metal detecting as a way to, to further their interest in history and heritage, and it's a very accessible, easy entry, right? There's no judgement. You know, you join a local, you know, your local Historical Society or archaeological society and it's full of middle-class people, educated to degree level or above. Even if you, if you're very welcoming and open, the people may feel those barriers to...you know what I mean? Whereas this, they just go. It's people that they know at the same, kind of, do the same kind of jobs as them and, you know, and it's a very easy way. But it's about history and it's about heritage and they, it takes a very, and I think we can overlook that sometimes that, particularly as "experts", that you, you forget that sometimes. And that, it's a really easy way for people to explore those interests.

Caroline: And I think there's a lot of people as well who don't want to engage in amateur archaeology in the kind of...

Benjamin: No.

Caroline: Going on an excavation that's ran for them because they might physically not be able to, because of work demands, or they just don't want to be told what to do.

Benjamin: Yeah, that libertarian streak again. Yeah, yeah.

Caroline: They just simply, they work all week and they don't want to go on a weekend to an excavation where someone is going to be like, "Oh, can you dig that a bit more carefully?" They just...

Benjamin: But they might to go find Elizabeth sixpence...

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: (Unintelligible)

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: Read up about it and put it in their collection.

Caroline: Yeah. Exactly.

Benjamin: Because they can do it all themselves, more or less.

Caroline: Yeah.

Benjamin: So, yeah, it's, so yeah, it's a really.

Caroline: There isn't something at the moment which exists, that's...

Benjamin: No, I don't think there is.

Caroline: Not metal detecting that fills that niche. Um...

Benjamin: I didn't mean to make those, I think it's a really important point, actually. Anyway, sorry, I don't have time with this rumbling.

Lora: No, that's really great. You've brought up a lot of really, um, important viewpoints and perspectives and stories that I think are gonna be really...I'm seeing this connection, this web, and I just think my perception of what you guys do, based on my research and talking to other people that have this conversation, has really broadened my...

Caroline: Oh great.

Lora: Yeah. And it's really, I appreciate what you guys do because it is a very multifaceted...And it's important. It's important to have those connections and that trust and that patience and all of those things while still, like you said, focusing on what PAS is needs to be doing.

Benjamin: Yeah, the core of what we do is about recording the data.

Lora: Yeah. And balancing all the outer things to get that data. So, it's really important.

Caroline: I think one thing I didn't appreciate as far as staff and the job, was how much that personality aspect of it. That there are people who are great at finds, who, who can identify anything, in that, they know a lot, just aren't the best at doing this job because so much more of it is about engaging with people and building those relationships and...

Lora: Yes.

Caroline: And just doing that over a long period of time and being reliable and consistent and all these sorts of things which I think are skills that should not...(unintelligible) metal detecting, that's true at all, but um, perhaps aren't

as appreciated in other jobs in heritage sector as they are...soft skills, I guess, basically it's just a set of soft skills.

Lora: Yeah, that's a great point. Yeah.

Caroline: I think a lot, a lot of archaeology's about excellence in, how quick can you identify something? How well can you dig it?

Benjamin: Yes.

Caroline: It's a very solo, an activity, often. Whereas this job is, uh, is absolutely not that most of the time.

Benjamin: Yeah. We have to reach out to a lot of other experts, specialists to check and learn and...

Caroline: Yeah, yeah. But it's nice.

Benjamin: And double check.

Caroline: And double check.

Benjamin: Again, always...I had an e-mail this morning from a finder who disagrees with our identification of his coin and, and...

Caroline: It mattered by only a year.

Benjamin: He's, he's, he's checked it with a coin, I think there must be a dealer or something, or specialist, and they've identified it, for example as a type 1C of this particular money, and we've identified it as a type 1D of this particular money. It's fine mar...really fine margins, but it's really important to this detectorist that it's right.

Caroline: Yes. But sometimes it could be either because these coins are not in mint condition when they're found.

Benjamin: No, they're not. Yeah.

Caroline: So, you make a judgement call based on what you can see, right? Somebody else can make a judgement call that (unintelligible).

Benjamin: Because archaeology, there's, you know, I think for a lot of these, they think it's black and white. It is or it isn't. But that's beyond the...archaeology is not like that. And the moment you say it is, somebody else will come along and write a whole article...

Caroline: Yes.

Benjamin: Telling you why isn't, so, yeah.

Caroline: Yes.

Benjamin: Yeah.

Lora: Thank you so much.

Benjamin: Yeah, yeah.

Lora: I appreciate it because obviously you guys are very busy.

Benjamin: Well, you know.

Lora: With so many different things, so I do appreciate it. Really great information.

Benjamin: You're very welcome.

Lora: So, and thank you for what you do. It’s so important.