

## **Chapter 7: Metal-detector users today**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Following on from the historical context established in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, this chapter analyses data collected from individual metal-detector users (e.g. Figure 7.1) and metal detecting club representatives. The results for this chapter come primarily from the questionnaire surveys, which were carried out in 2006, 2007 and 2008, as well as a small number of interviews, which are all described in Chapter 2. The introductory section briefly deals with potential limitations of the research. The questionnaire formats can be seen in Appendices 4, 5, 6 and 7. Following on from the introduction, the results from the individual metal-detector user surveys are analysed first, and then the results from the metal detecting clubs. A number of extra questions were asked and extra research techniques applied at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally, and to a lesser extent at the Nene Valley rally, due to the unusual circumstances surrounding the former, and these are discussed later in the chapter. Conclusions are then made about the questionnaire results, incorporating the historical and political context introduced in Chapters 5 and 6.



**Figure 7.1 A student volunteer interviewing a metal-detector user at the Nene Valley metal detecting rally, August 2008. Photograph: Gregory Jackson**

Limitations exist with these types of surveys, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, such as non-response. The sample of individual metal-detector users was also taken from participants at specific rallies; hence, metal-detector users not at those rallies, including the ones who never attend rallies, are not, and by definition could not be, included. This group may be important as their views, and backgrounds (for example considering the postcode analysis discussed below) could be different to those of metal-detector users who do attend rallies. For example, there could be ideological reasons why they choose not to attend, such as – possibly – objections to the impact of such events on the archaeological heritage.

Some metal detecting rallies are run as businesses, known as *commercial rallies*, where the organiser and (usually) the landowner make a profit from attendance fees. *Charity rallies* also take place, where the money raised is for a charitable cause. Ultimately, the researcher only visited commercial rallies despite efforts to visit charity rallies (two were targeted in Warwickshire and Cumbria, but external factors – a threatened foot and mouth outbreak and adverse weather – prevented attendance in these cases). Whether the commercial nature of the rallies affected the range of responses gained from the interviewees cannot be known at this stage, although should be an avenue for future research.

The issue of non-response was also encountered in the case of the questionnaire survey of metal detecting clubs. The club response rate, at an estimated 26.2%, (if there are 202 metal detecting clubs as is suggested by the NCMD and FID websites), is significantly lower than ‘ideal’ response rates discussed in Chapter 2. However, it is still over double of that experienced by Dobinson and Denison in their survey (1995: 2), which formed part of an influential report despite its low response rate as Chapter 6 has demonstrated. Therefore, the response rate for the research presented here represents an improvement from 1995. Additionally, as explained in Chapter 2, the estimated total number of metal detecting clubs was based on information from the NCMD and FID websites, both of which have been shown to contain out-of-date information. Given that some responses returned showed that the contact details were out-of-date, it cannot be known, without exhaustive research, how many more clubs did not respond because they no longer existed. In 2006, when the surveys were carried out, PAS estimated that there were 173 clubs in England and Wales (PAS

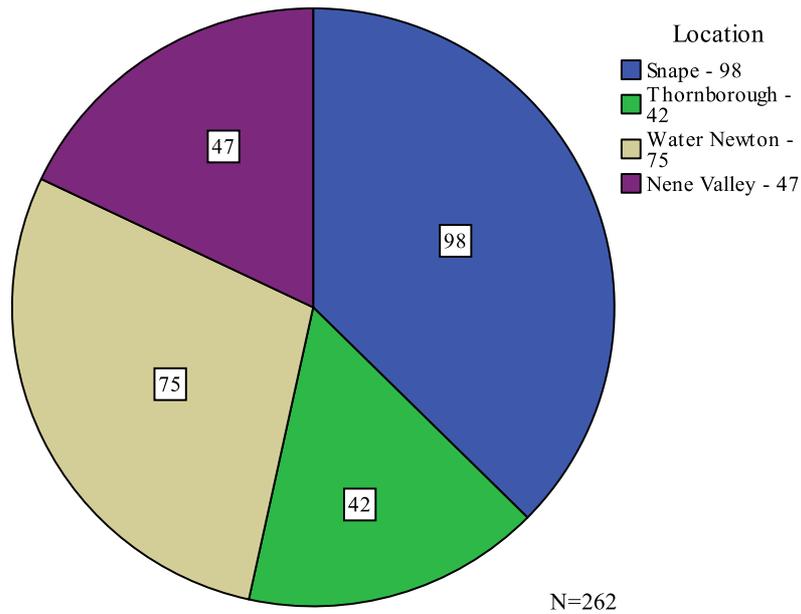
2006d: 120), meaning that it is indeed likely that the NCMD and FID club numbers were inaccurate, although there may also have been clubs that were unknown to PAS. However, a lower total number of clubs pushes the response rate even higher; using PAS estimates for 2006, the estimated percentage rises from 26.2% to 30.6%.

With both sets of questionnaires, there was also the possibility of respondents giving answers that they felt were appropriate, rather than their actual opinions. For example, it may not be unfair to hypothesise that at least some respondents (although certainly not all) did not disclose information about selling finds. This was certainly suspected to be the case in two student fieldnote reports from the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally, discussed later in the chapter.

## **7.2 Analysis of individual metal-detector user survey**

Metal detecting rallies are regular, popular events in the metal detecting calendar, usually taking place over a weekend. Some archaeologists have expressed concern at the effects of such rallies on the archaeological integrity of sites (e.g. Dannell 2008). However, from the perspective of collecting data about metal-detector user opinions and activities, metal detecting rallies were seen as an opportunity to access a large number of metal-detector users from many different places at once.

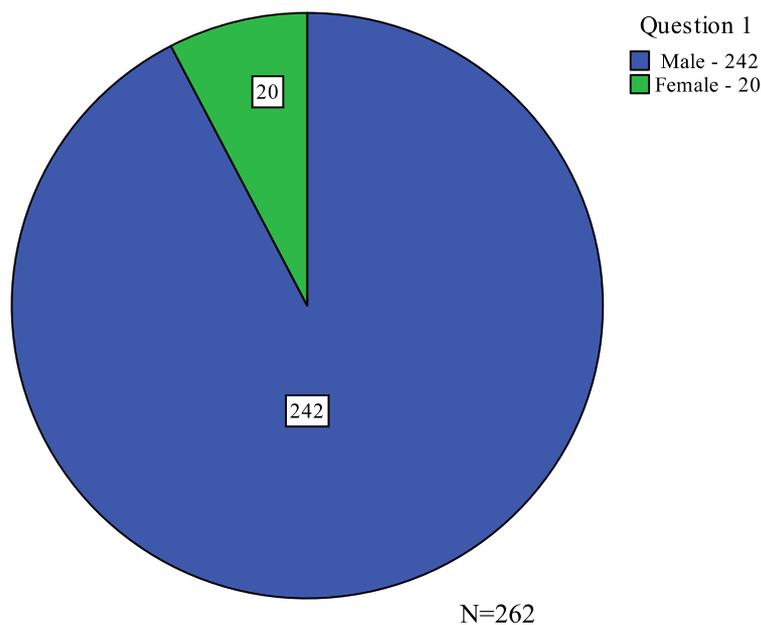
Two hundred and sixty two individual metal-detector users were interviewed at four different rallies. The frequency and percentage result tables for the quantitative questions can be found in Appendix 15. The different rallies attended were Snape and Thornborough, both 2006 in North Yorkshire, and Durobrivae (Water Newton) in 2007 and Nene Valley in 2008, both in Cambridgeshire. Chart 3 shows the number of responses from each location. Each of the questions asked in the survey are then listed with the corresponding results, and cross-tabulations are made between answers where appropriate.



**Chart 3** Pie chart to show the proportion of total questionnaire respondents from each metal detecting rally

The highest rate of responses was elicited from participants at Snape (98, 37.4%) and at Durobrivae (Water Newton) (75, 28.6%), with the lowest from Thornborough (42, 16%) and Nene Valley (47, 17.9%). Variables affecting the response rates included the time spent at each rally (for example only one day was spent at Thornborough, but three at Snape), and the number of people assisting with the data collection.

**Question 1: Your Gender**



**Chart 4** Pie chart to show the gender of individual metal-detector user questionnaire respondents

The majority (242, 92.4%) of respondents were male. As much care was taken as possible to make sure that interviewers did not specifically target men, although the possible interviewing options taken by individual interviewers was beyond the control of the researcher. However, the results reflect more the much lower number of women compared to men at the rallies, rather than any selective bias on the part of the interviewers.

### **Question 2: Your postcode (optional)**

The postcodes were given optionally, and hence some respondents declined or refused to give a postcode (35, 13.4%). Six more respondents were from elsewhere, breaking down to two from Canada, two from the Isle of Man<sup>16</sup>, one from Ireland and one from the USA. In addition, in analysis a number of postcodes (23, 8.8%) were not recognised by the GeoConvert website, indicating that they had been written down incorrectly or deliberately given as false postcodes by the respondents. Of the useable data received, the 26 Scottish results (9.9% of the total) had to be interpreted separately from the 170 English and Welsh results (64.9% of the total), due to the differences in zones assigned in the two separate urban/rural indicators. The 26 Scottish postcodes collected indicated urban/rural zones which are listed in Table 3, shown alongside the metadata definitions for reference.

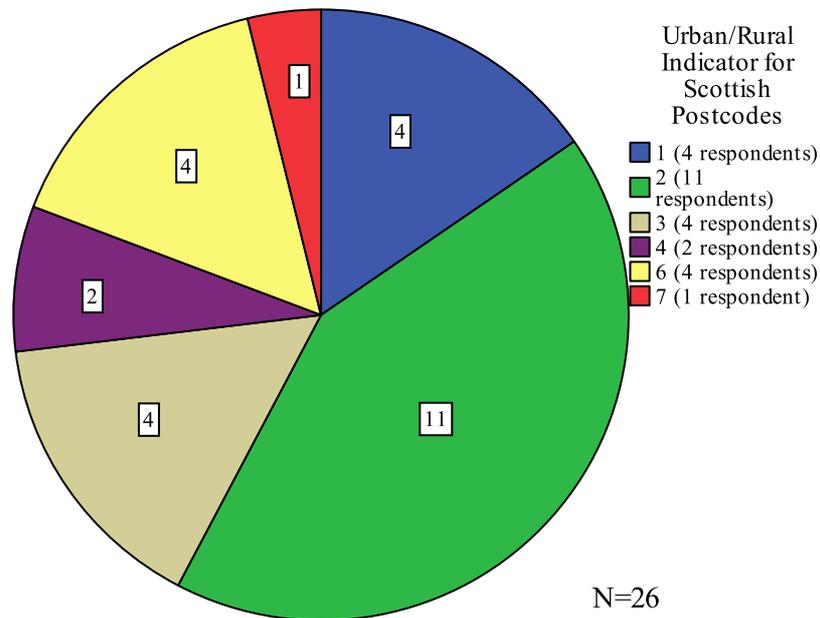
Chart 5, directly below Table 3, shows the proportion of each of the metadata values for the Scottish postcodes given in the questionnaire. The numbers in the pie chart are as defined in Table 3. Although the total number of useable postcodes for Scotland is relatively small at only 26, the majority appear to be from the category of “Other Urban Area” as defined by the Urban/Rural Indicator for Scotland (11, 42.3%). No respondents who had given their postcodes came from the two categories described as “very remote” (5 and 8).

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<sup>16</sup> The Isle of Man does not have urban/rural indicator metadata.

**Table 3 Urban/rural indicator metadata for Scotland with count of postcodes collected**

|   | <b>Urban/Rural Indicator for Scottish Postcodes</b> |
|---|---|
| <b>Metadata Value and Definition</b>  | <b>Count</b>  |
| <b>1</b> = Large Urban Area: Settlement of over 125,000 people  | 4   |
| <b>2</b> = Other Urban Area: Settlement of 10,000 to 125,000 people   | 11  |
| <b>3</b> = Accessible Small Town: Settlement of 3,000 to 10,000 people, within 30 minutes drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more               | 4   |
| <b>4</b> = Remote Small Town: Settlement of 3,000 to 10,000 people, with a drive time of 30 to 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more     | 2   |
| <b>5</b> = Very Remote Small Town: Settlement of 3,000 to 10,000 people, with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more | 0   |
| <b>6</b> = Accessible Rural: Settlement of less than 3,000 people, within 30 minutes drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more                    | 4   |
| <b>7</b> = Remote Rural: Settlement of less than 3,000 people, with a drive time of 30 to 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more          | 1   |
| <b>8</b> = Very Remote Rural: Settlement of less than 3,000 people, with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more      | 0   |



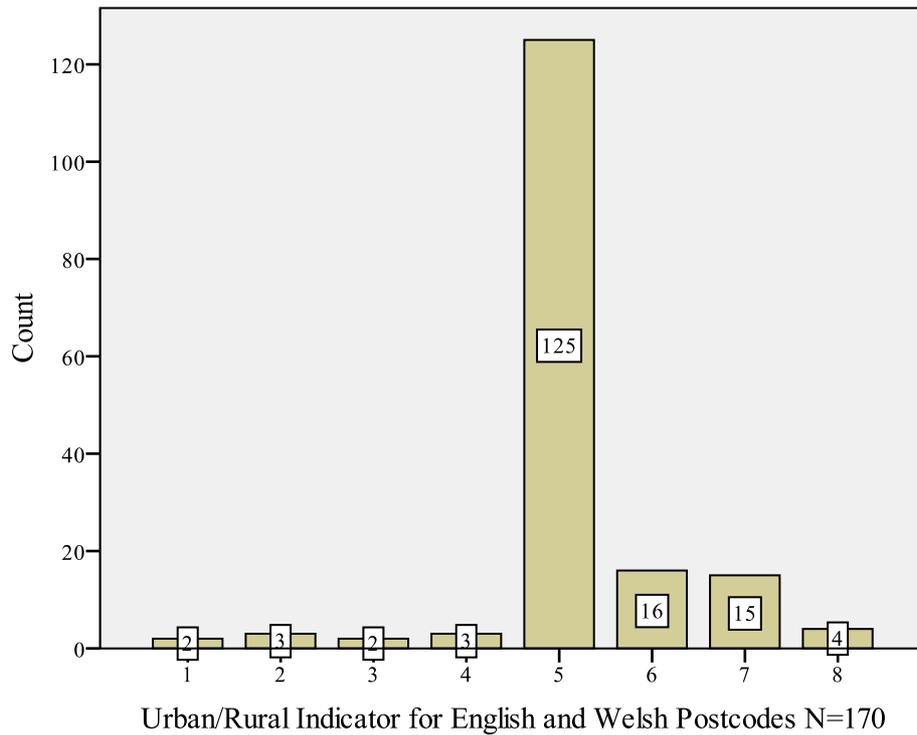
**Chart 5 Pie chart illustrating the proportion of postcodes for each urban/rural indicator zone for Scottish responses**

The 170 English and Welsh postcodes collected indicated urban/rural zones as demonstrated in Table 4, shown alongside the metadata definitions for reference:

**Table 4 Urban/rural indicator metadata for England and Wales with count of postcodes collected**

|   | <b>Urban/Rural Indicator for English and Welsh Postcodes</b> |
|---|--|
| <b>Metadata Value and Definition</b>  | <b>Count</b>   |
| 1 = Urban $\geq$ 10k – sparse: Census Output Area (COA) falls within Urban settlements with a population of 10,000 or more and the wider surrounding area is sparsely populated | 2  |
| 2 = Town and Fringe – sparse: COA falls within the Small Town and Fringe areas category and the wider surrounding area is sparsely populated                                    | 3  |
| 3 = Village – sparse: COA falls within the Village category and the wider surrounding area is sparsely populated  | 2  |
| 4 = Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling – sparse: COA falls within the Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling category and the wider surrounding area is sparsely populated                      | 3  |
| 5 = Urban $\geq$ 10k – less sparse: COA falls within Urban settlements with a population of 10,000 or more and the wider surrounding area is less sparsely populated            | 125  |
| 6 = Town and Fringe – less sparse: COA falls within the Small Town and Fringe areas category and the wider surrounding area is less sparsely populated                          | 16   |
| 7 = Village – less sparse: COA falls within the Village category and the wider surrounding area is less sparsely populated  | 15   |
| 8 = Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling – less sparse: COA falls within the Hamlet and Isolated Dwelling category and the wider surrounding area is less sparsely populated            | 4  |

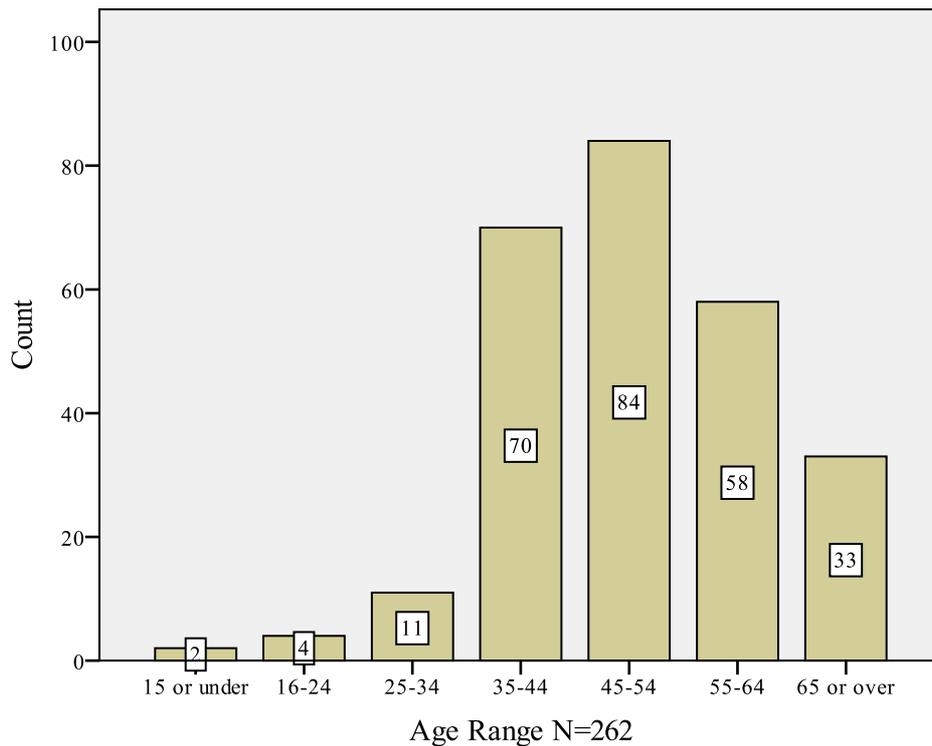
The values shown in Chart 6 (below) are representative of those defined in Table 4.



**Chart 6** Bar chart illustrating the proportion for each urban/rural indicator zone for English and Welsh responses

Most respondents belonged to category 5: “Urban  $\geq$  10k – less sparse”. This roughly equates to the Scottish category 2: “Other Urban Area”, and indicates that the majority of metal-detector users interviewed live in areas with a high population. Although it would be problematic to draw definitive conclusions, it suggests that most metal-detector users live in areas that are more often urban than rural. The implications of this are discussed in the conclusions section of the chapter.

### Question 3: Your age range

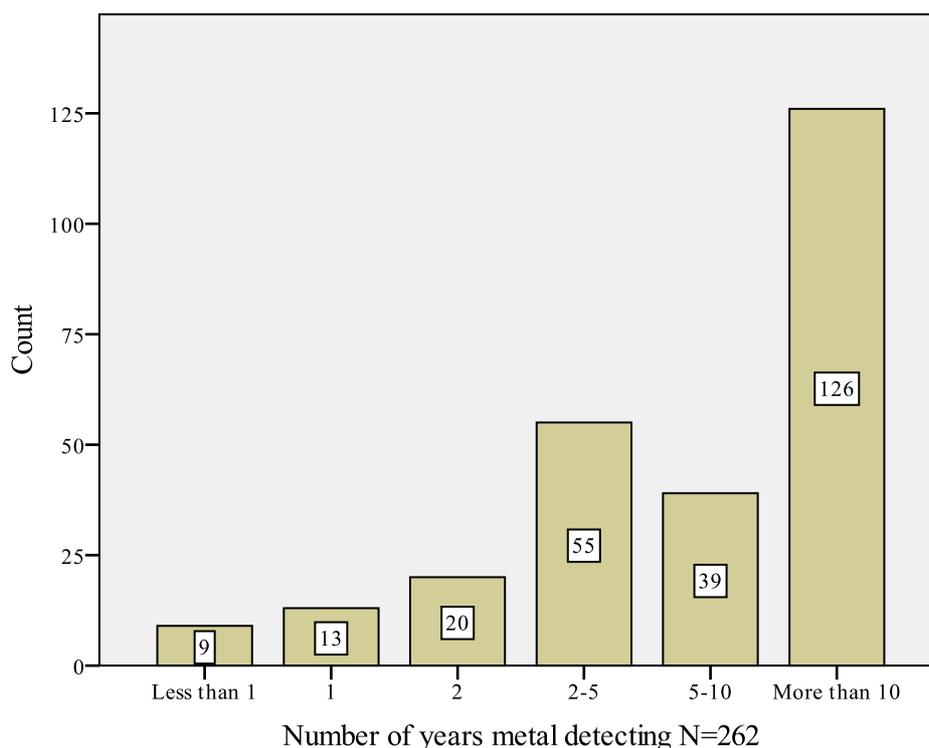


**Chart 7 Bar chart demonstrating the distribution of respondents per age range category**

Chart 6 shows the distribution of age ranges of the respondents. As can be seen, the majority were in the medium to high age ranges, with a dramatic rise in frequency from category 35-44 compared to respondents aged 34 or younger. The highest frequency was for age range 45-54 (84, 32.6%), with the next highest frequencies for 35-44 and 55-64, indicating that the majority of the respondents were what might be classed as ‘middle age<sup>17</sup>’. These findings, with a further 33 (12.6%) respondents over 65, indicate that the metal detecting population seems mostly to be of middle to old age.

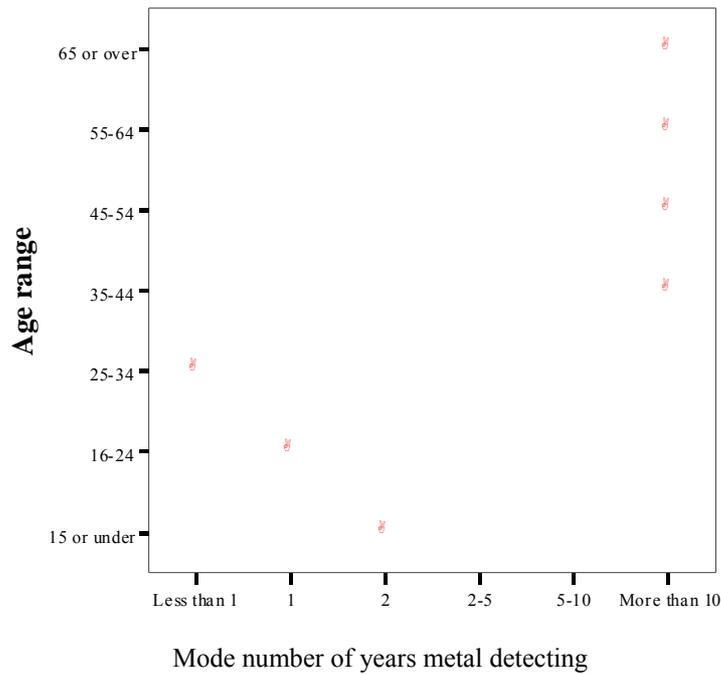
<sup>17</sup> According to Dictionary.com (accessed 14 October 2007) middle age’ is “*the time of human life between youth and old age, usually reckoned as the years between 40 and 60*”

**Question 4: How many years have you been metal detecting?**



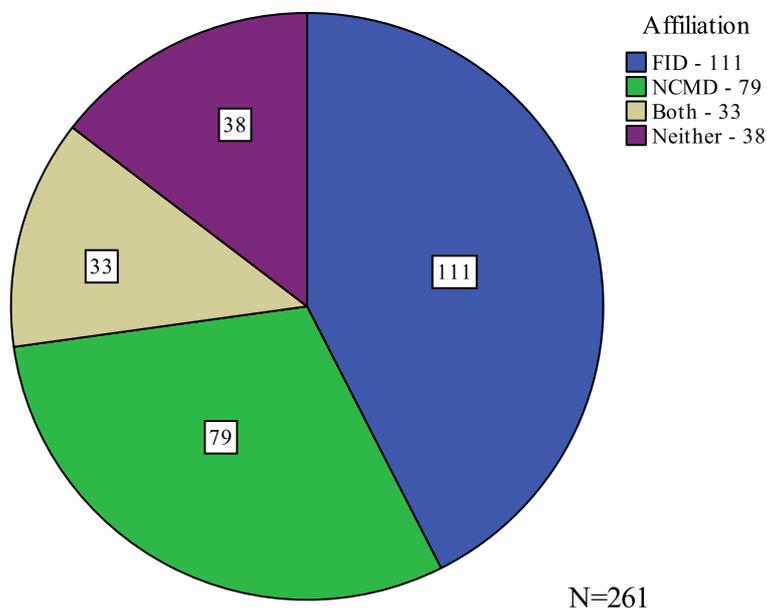
**Chart 8 Bar chart showing how many years that respondents had been metal detecting at the time of interview**

Almost half of the respondents (126, 48.1%) had been involved in the hobby for more than ten years. This implies that many of the metal-detector users have carried on with their hobby for a long period. When the age ranges from Question 3 are cross-tabulated with the number of years spent metal detecting, further observations can be made. While there is some variation, the general trend, is for older metal-detector users to have been metal detecting for longer. The correlation between the age and number of years metal detecting is illustrated in the dot graph below (Chart 9). This shows the mode time spent metal detecting for each age group; in other words, the most common response of how long respondents had been metal detecting for each age range. This is opposed to calculating the average (mean) age. Thus, for example, most respondents in the older age ranges (35-44 to 65 or over) had been metal detecting for ten years or more. However, metal-detector users in the age range 25-34 were more likely to have been active in the hobby for less than a year.



**Chart 9 Dot graph to show the mode age group for each number of years metal detecting**

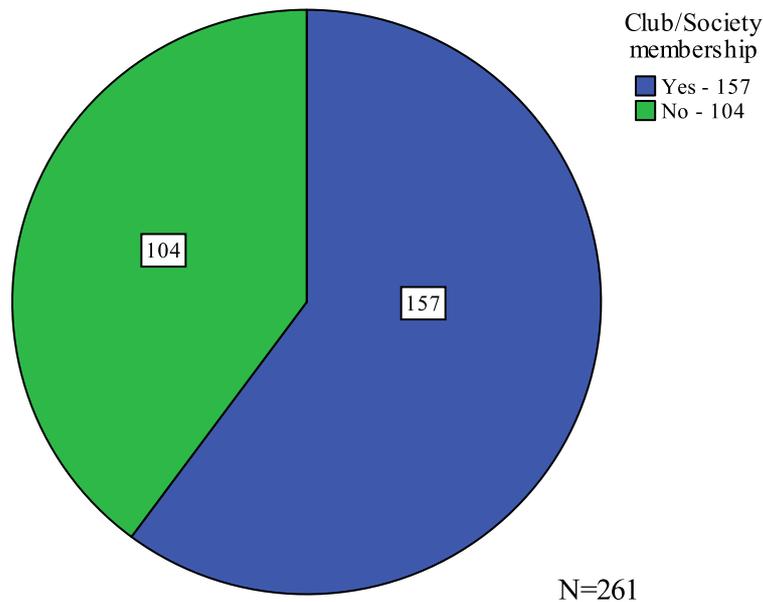
**Question 5: Are you affiliated to FID or NCMD?**



**Chart 10 Pie chart showing affiliation of respondents to national metal detecting organisations**

Slightly more metal-detector users were affiliated to the FID (111, 42.5% FID-only, or 144, 55.1% total including respondents with membership of both). For the NCMD membership seemed slightly lower (79, 30.3% NCMD-only, or 112, 42.9% total including respondents with membership of both).

**Question 6: Do you belong to a local/regional metal detecting club or society?**



**Chart 11 Pie chart showing respondents' membership to local metal detecting clubs or societies**

Since 60.2% of respondents (157) who answered this question said that they did belong to a metal detecting club, this indicated that the majority of metal-detector users interviewed were involved with clubs or societies. However, 39.8% (104) indicates a significant proportion of metal-detector users who are not club members. Some metal-detector users have commented that metal detecting clubs do not appeal to all hobbyists, and that some like the solitude of metal detecting and have no interest in the social aspect (e.g. Wood, *pers. comm.*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2006). However, a small number of respondents also told the researcher and other interviewers that they were not club members because there was not a club near to where they lived.

**Question 7: Please name the metal detecting club or society that you belong to**

See Appendix 16. The responses are listed alongside the club representatives that responded to the clubs survey, although it was clear during the data collection that many respondents were not sure of the exact name of their clubs, and so sometimes only the location is listed. Duplicates are omitted.

### Question 8: What first interested you in metal detecting?

For this multiple-choice question, the respondents were given a variety of options to select as what first interested them in metal detecting. These were: (a) interest in the past; (b) interest in finding items of value; (c) general interest in findings regardless of value/age; (d) exercise; (e) encouraged to take up hobby by friends, and (f) other (please state).

The response rate per option is given separately, with the note that a number of respondents gave more than one reason. The responses are shown in Chart 12, where the popularity of each response option is illustrated:

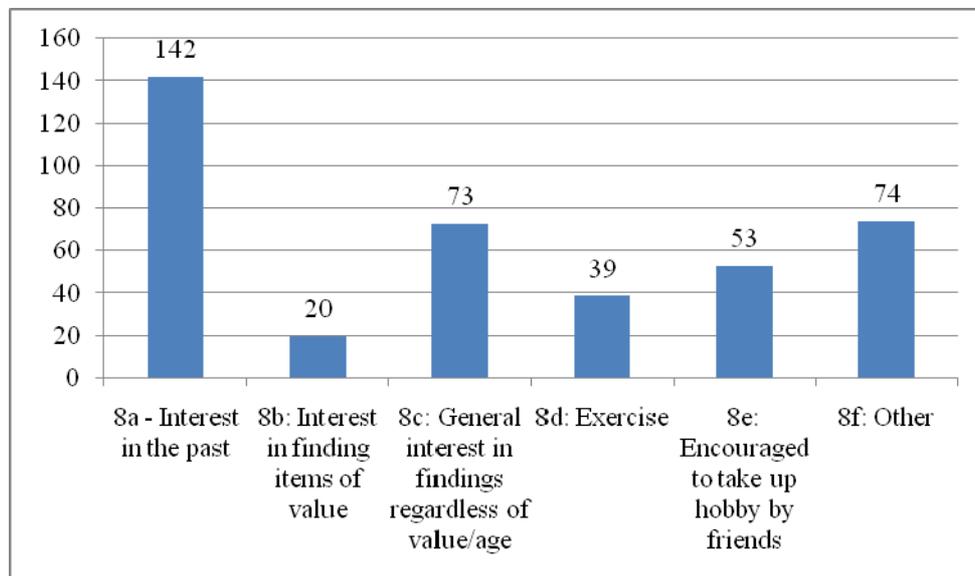


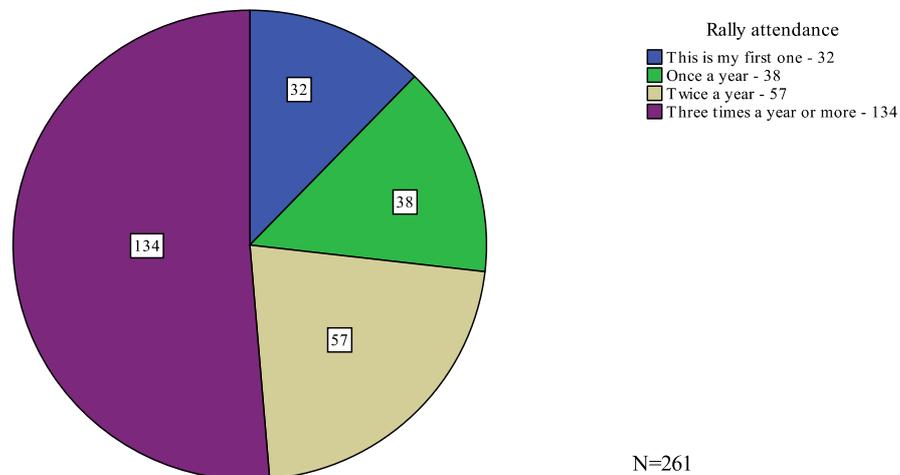
Chart 12 Bar chart showing the count for each response option for Question 8

Response option 8a, “interest in the past” was by far the most popular response option with 54.4% (142) of respondents claiming that this was something that initially motivated them to take up the hobby. One respondent, an avid metal-detector user, revealed that he had also become a member of a local archaeological society (Respondent 6). The least popular response option was 8b, “interest in finding items of value” (20, 7.7%). A little less than a third (73, 28%) of respondents were motivated by the pleasure of finding things, regardless of their age or value, indicating that this ‘discovery’ aspect, which may also form part of the motivation in positive responses for 8a and 8b, is significant for hobbyists.

The extra details given for the response category 8f (“other”) were extremely varied. Therefore, the 74 (28.5%) 8f responses are not quantified here by type, but examples are cited to give an impression of the broadness of information that the “other” category represents. For example, four respondents had moved onto metal detecting after initially being involved in the hobby of bottle hunting (Respondents 201, 228, 231, and 256). Another had become interested because of the electronic technology involved (Respondent 14). Media sources were also cited as motivations to metal detect; one had started metal detecting after watching the television programme *Time Team* (Respondent 66), and two others said they had read newspaper articles about metal detecting (Respondents 171 and 223). In addition, another said that they had looked into the hobby more after coming across the magazine *Treasure Hunting* in a shop (Respondent 13).

It was decided not to cross-tabulate the results in cases of multiple responses to Question 8, since the variety of permutations was too wide. If respondents had been limited to responding ‘yes’ to a maximum of only two options this might have been more feasible, but a decision was made to allow respondents to respond to as many (or as few) options as they felt represented their motivations to metal detect. A distribution of every possible permutation would show so many separate values as to be confusing to the reader and difficult to interpret, since it would have broken the data down to the individual level in too many cases.

**Question 9: How often do you go to metal detecting rallies?**



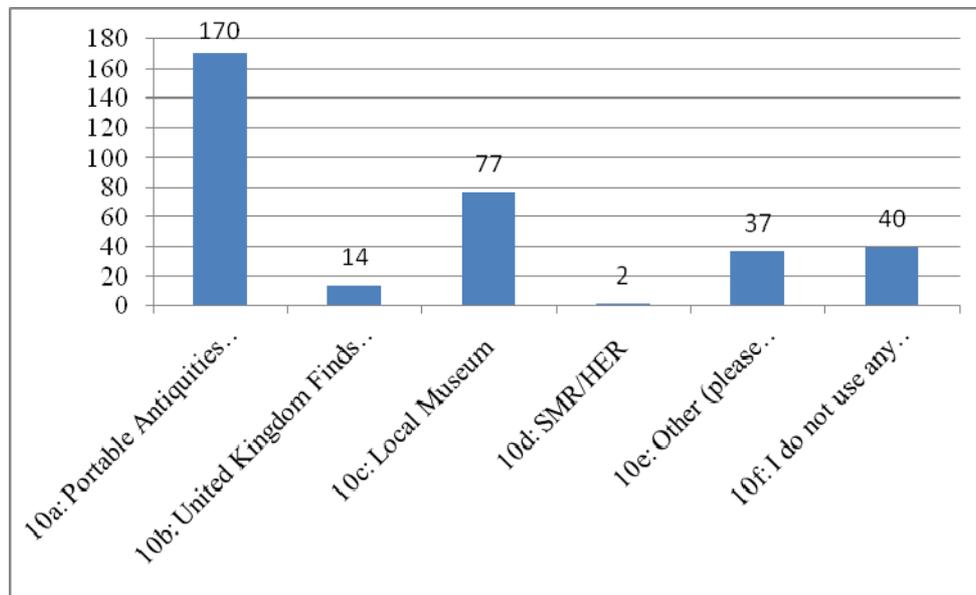
**Chart 13** Pie chart showing frequency with which respondents attend metal detecting rallies over a year

The highest percentage occurred for the response option “3 times a year or more”, at 51.3% (134), indicating that just over half of metal-detector users that attend metal detecting rallies do so on a relatively regular basis over a year. A much smaller number (32, 12.3%), had not attended a rally before. Cross-tabulation with the data from Question 4 indicated that these tended to be respondents who had not metal-detected for as long, as might be expected.

**Question 10: Do you ever record your finds with the following databases?**

As with Question 8, respondents were given multiple-choice answers, and were allowed to indicate more than one response. The options were: (a) Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS); (b) United Kingdom Detector Finds Database (UKDFD); (c) Local museum; (d) SMR/HER; (e) Other (please state/describe), and (f) I do not use any databases for recording finds.

Cross-tabulation for multiple responses was not attempted for the same reasons as in Question 8. Chart 14 illustrates the response rates for each of the response options:



**Chart 14 Bar chart showing popularity of each response option for Question 10**

One hundred and seventy (65.6%), a majority of the respondents, said that they recorded their finds with PAS. Only a tiny proportion, two respondents (0.8%), said that they recorded directly with the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) or Historic

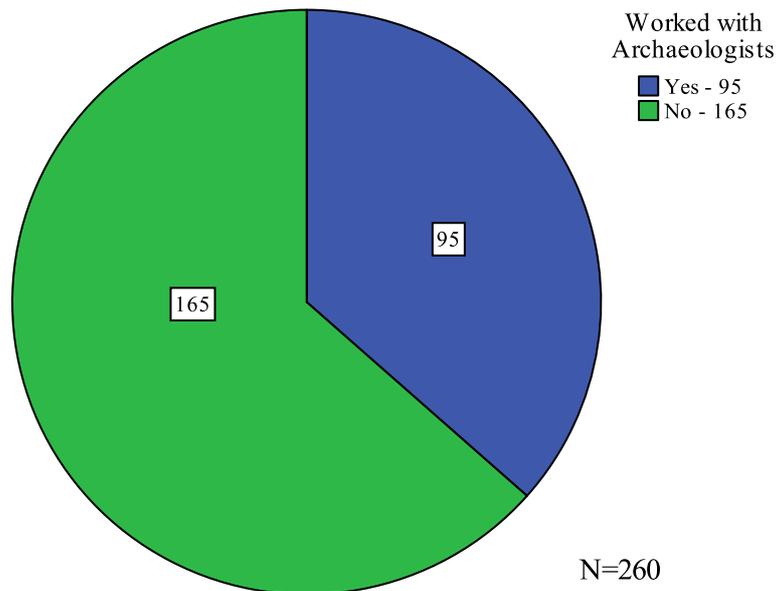
Environment Record (HER). The results showed that a small proportion (14, 5.4%) of the sample had used the UKDFD.

The 37 respondents (14.3%) who selected 'other' (10e) as a response option gave a variety of different reasons, which broke down as: National Museums of Scotland/Historic Scotland (9, 3.4%); within the metal detecting club (7, 2.7%); personal recording system devised (6, 2.3%); coroner or police (3, 1.1%); British Museum (2, 0.8%); Manx National Heritage (Isle of Man) (2, 0.8%); archaeologist other than FLO (2, 0.8%); metal detecting rallies only (no finds recording at other times) (2, 0.8%); deems finds to date as not worth recording, but would record in the future (2, 0.8%); University (1, 0.4%), and unknown (illegible) (1, 0.4%).

As expected, a reasonable proportion of the 'other' responses dealt with finds reporting arrangements in different parts of the British Isles, i.e. Scotland and the Isle of Man (11, 4.2% total). The next highest proportions indicated that some recording takes place at either a club or individual level, without necessarily consulting archaeologists for advice about what information to record.

A further 15.6% of respondents (40) said that they never recorded finds, indicating that a significant number did not yet share their finds information with archaeologists or others. This suggests, dependent upon how representative the sample is, that there may still be a significant proportion of metal-detector users not engaging with organisations such as PAS and the Scottish Treasure Trove Secretariat. It is unclear, however, whether this is a conscious decision not to cooperate, or lack of knowledge of the organisations or the arguments in favour of recording finds.

**Question 11: Have you ever worked with archaeologists?**



**Chart 15 Pie chart showing whether respondents had ever worked with archaeologists**

Just over one third (95, 36.5%) of respondents that answered this question (two did not), said that they had worked with archaeologists before. The majority (165, 63.5%) said that they had not worked with archaeologists before.

**Question 12: Please describe your experiences of working with the archaeologist(s), for example who initiated the contact, how often you have done this, positive or negative experiences, etc.**

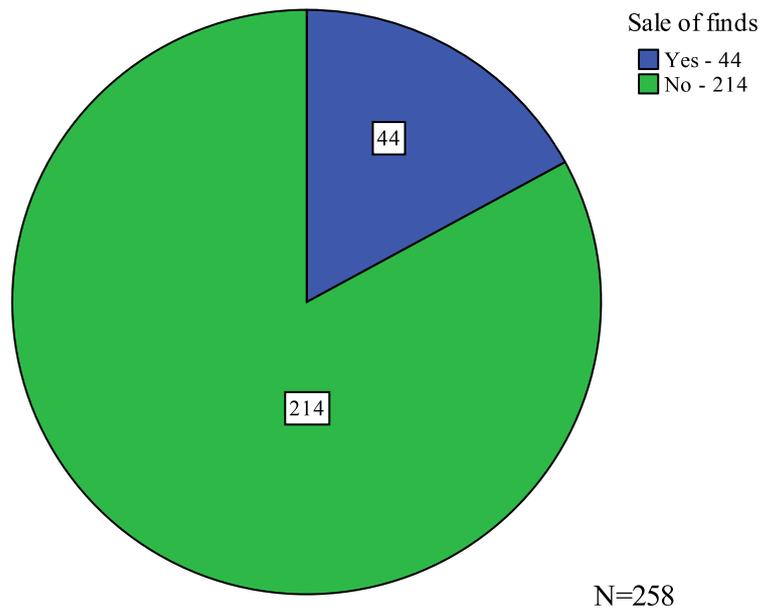
The responses to this question were qualitative, with respondents giving examples of the type of work done with archaeologists as well as comments on their experiences. To summarise, 33 of the respondents who had worked with archaeologists specifically described their experience of working with them as positive or mostly positive. This translates 12.7% of the total sample, or 34.7% of the total that had worked with archaeologists. In comparison, 13 specifically described a bad experience (5% of the whole total or 13.7% of the respondents that had worked with archaeologists). A further 11 of the respondents that had not worked with archaeologists before (4.2% of the total sample) specifically said that would like to do so in the future if there was an opportunity. Further details given by respondents described the type of work with which they were involved, ranging from marking find spots at metal detecting rallies (such as at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally described below) through to metal

detecting surveys, detecting spoil heaps on excavations and even digging work. Most of these descriptions did not specify a positive or negative experience.

The respondents describing positive experiences did not usually elaborate as to why they were good beyond general comments about enjoyment or interest. One respondent described a positive experience working with the crew of the television series *Time Team* (Respondent 13), while three other respondents described negative experiences with the same organisation (Respondents 33, 118 and 142), indicating that all such personal experiences of the same sort of activity can, and do, vary!

The negative experiences tended to elicit more details from the respondents describing them, and tended to deal with issues of negative attitudes on the part of the archaeologists involved. For example, one respondent commented that, “*we are the enemy unfortunately*” (Respondent 75). Another issue that came up with several negative experiences described, but also with one respondent that described their experience as mostly positive, was follow-up contact after the event. Several respondents felt that they were excluded from information about the site or particular finds that they had expected information about. Respondent 2, for example, described one excavation as a good experience, but complained that they had received no contact after the event, so that they never learnt about the results of the project, even though they were interested. Respondent 228 described working on an excavation some years earlier as a good experience, but believed that archaeologists actually found a lot more on site than they were prepared to divulge to the metal-detector users. The results indicated that, while the majority of experiences of working with archaeologists were positive, those who had had negative experiences were more inclined to elaborate on why. That Chitty and Edwards (2004: 44) found similar results, with negative comments more likely to be represented in the responses, even if these were “*not numerically representative of the majority view*”, indicates that this was a phenomenon that could perhaps be expected to appear.

**Question 13: Do you ever sell any of your finds?**



**Chart 16 Pie chart showing whether respondents said that they sell their finds**

Forty four respondents (17.1%) said that they did sell their finds. This number might be lower than the actual percentage that sold their finds, as one respondent denied selling their finds, only to have a family member later tell interviewers that the respondent had actually sold artefacts at that very rally to an antiques dealer. In addition, four respondents chose not to answer the question.

**Question 14: Please state where/how you sell your finds**

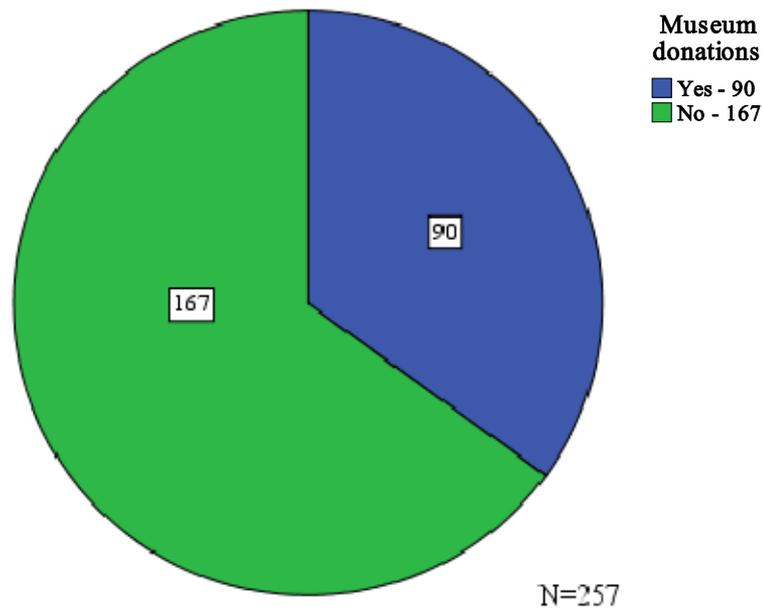
The responses to this question were qualitative, and some respondents gave more than one example of ways in which they sold their finds. A small number of individuals (7, 2.7%) said that they sometimes sold some of their finds privately to friends or to members of their metal detecting clubs, and one respondent said that they had operated in the past as an antiques dealer and had sold their finds in that capacity (Respondent 1).

In addition, three respondents (13, 159 and 238) said that they had sold through Scottish Treasure Trove or the British Museum in Treasure cases, and so perhaps did not belong in this statistic, since these 'sales' were through legal obligation and were actually 'rewards'. They have not been removed from the statistics for Question 13 since they are based on the responses that they chose to give. It is perhaps telling of

respondents' views towards Scottish Treasure Trove laws and the *Treasure Act* 1996 that they apparently interpreted their declaring these items, and being compensated by the museums, as a decision to sell, rather than as something that they were required to do anyway. The responses could also indicate a lack of understanding of the Scottish Treasure Trove and English and Welsh Treasure systems.

Five respondents said that they had used online auctions such as eBay, but the most popular way of selling finds was to coin and antiquity dealers, with 15 respondents. A further three respondents said that they had sold items with a dealer acting as an agent for them (selling *through* rather than *to* a dealer), showing 18 respondents (40.9% of those that said they had sold finds) involved dealers in the process.

**Question 15: Have you ever donated any of your finds to a museum?**



**Chart 17 Pie chart showing whether respondents have donated finds to a museum**

A majority of 167, or 65%, had not donated finds to a museum, although of these six remarked that they would consider doing so in the future. One of these respondents (194) remarked that they were planning to donate to a museum because of a positive experience with a FLO.

**Question 16: Please give details, for example which museums you have donated to, how often, etc.**

This section was asked to the 90 respondents (35%) who had donated finds to museums, and the responses were qualitative. Most responses involved donating different (mostly metal) artefacts to their local museums. Nine of the positive responses were in fact Treasure or Scottish Treasure Trove cases, which would, as noted above, be cases of legal obligation to hand over the find to a museum if requested, most likely with a reward, rather than a voluntary decision to donate an object free of charge. Perhaps this was a misunderstanding of the question.

Alternatively, as with Question 14, it might indicate either that they took ownership of the situation by implying that it was a decision to donate rather than that they were required to do so by law, or it was a misunderstanding of the Treasure and Treasure Trove processes. Respondent 128 said that they had actually donated an item of Treasure to a museum, waiving their right to the reward. They expressed dissatisfaction that a certificate from the museum had not acknowledged this, even though the museum had promised to do so.

On further questioning, three of the donations were actually to cathedrals rather than museums, a further two had been to schools and one was to a “*local cause*” (Respondent 107). Five respondents had loaned rather than donated, although it was unclear whether the metal-detector user or the museum had suggested this arrangement.

**Question 17: Thank you for taking part, your input is valued. Do you have any final comments you would like to make?**

Interviewers invited respondents to make extra comments about any issues already discussed in the questionnaire, or to bring up any other concerns or comments. Seventy four (27.1%) of the respondents chose to add extra comments. The issues varied, from general comments about the rally that they were attending, for example that they were enjoying it, or that did not seem well organised, through to personal views on selling artefacts, three making the point that they would never sell their finds. Several respondents made general comments about the relationships between archaeologists (or ‘archies’) and metal-detector users. Of these comments, some of the responses demonstrated that while respondents hoped for further cooperation,

relationships were perceived to have improved in recent years. Others highlighted that trust was still an issue on both sides. Some comments are reproduced here to illustrate the range of responses on this particular theme:

*“It is good to see that attitudes towards detecting are changing, and that the 'New Wave' of archaeologists are more understanding and tolerant of the hobby.”*

(Respondent 14)

*“Bad press in the past but Time Team and FLOs have improved things.”*

(Respondent 193)

*“Should be more work between archies and detectorists, and the finds process takes too long.”*

(Respondent 106)

*“We don't seem to trust each other. PAS is trying to get us to find places for them to ban us from - leading to scheduling; this is why people keep quiet about what they have found.”*

(Respondent 122)

*“Archaeologists aren't my favourite people, they should come and see what we're doing, and 90% of museums' collections come from metal detectorists - without us the stuff wouldn't be there.”*

(Respondent 191)

### **7.3 Analysis of metal detecting clubs survey**

Two hundred and eight Metal detecting clubs and societies in England and Wales were contacted. Fifty three clubs from addresses contacted via the NCMD and FID websites' club listings responded to postal and email questionnaires. A further nine responses confirmed that circumstances had changed: four had disbanded in recent years; three were no longer at the addresses listed with a forwarding address unknown; one had amalgamated with another club, and one listed club secretary had passed away in 1999. It is possible then that the survey was sent to more clubs that no longer exist. It also suggests that other clubs that the NCMD or FID websites did not list were missed. The concluding section of the chapter discusses the possible true total number of metal detecting clubs and its implications.

Each of the questions from the clubs survey is listed below with the corresponding results. The frequencies and percentages for the quantitative data are included in Appendix 17.

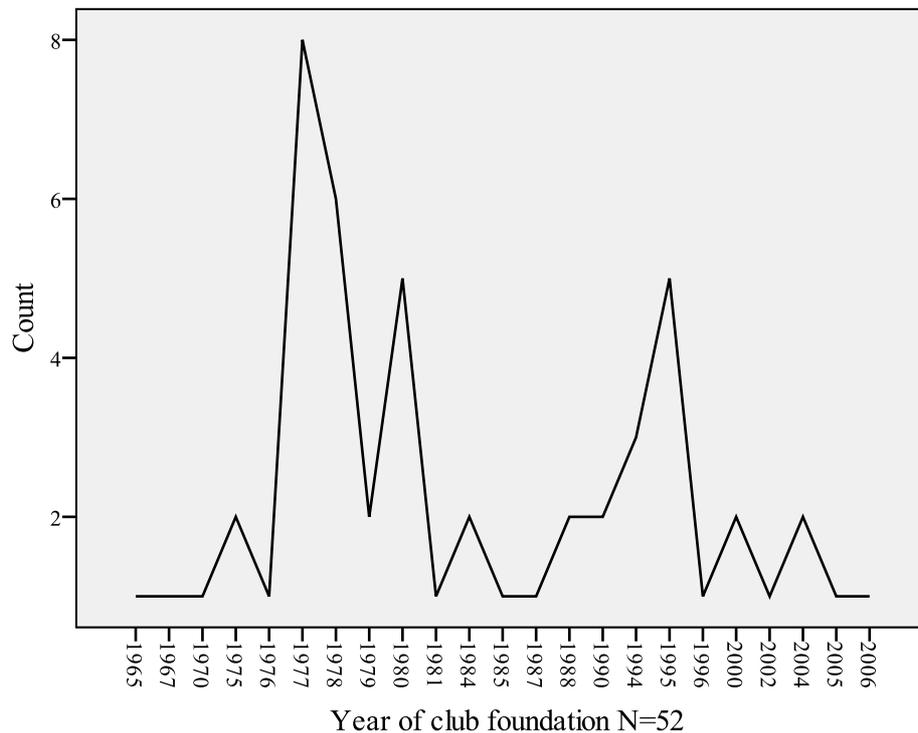
#### **Question 1: Name of Club**

The names of clubs that responded are listed with numbers per club and the year of foundation as Appendix 16, with the ones that requested anonymity listed as "Anon."

#### **Question 2: Your position**

The responses ranged from "*representative for the NCMD*", through to "*club Founder*". However, the majority of respondents were Secretary (29, 53.7%), followed by Chairman (11, 20.3%).

### Question 3: Year in which club was founded



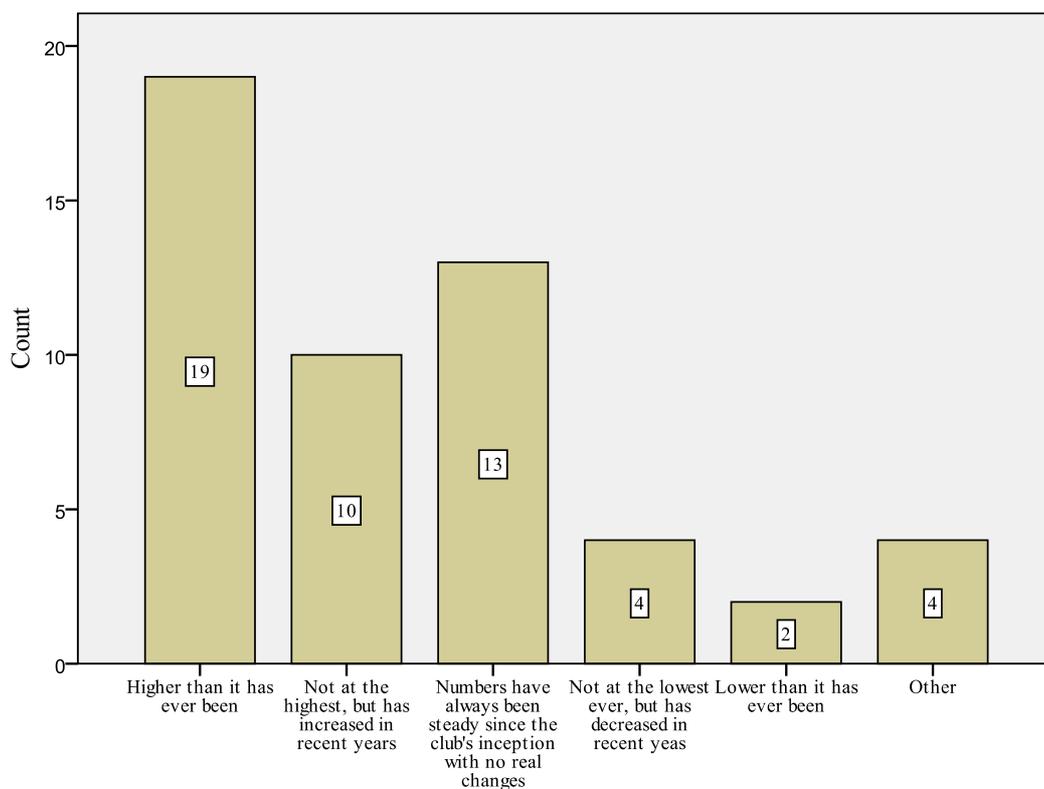
**Chart 18** Line chart showing when responding metal detecting clubs and societies were formed

The results correspond with historical evidence that metal detecting experienced a surge in popularity in the late 1970s, with 26.4% (14) of the clubs founded in either 1977 or 1978. The oldest club (Leicester Search Society) dates from 1965, which corresponds with the metal detecting hobby first emerging in the mid to late 1960s. There is another relative surge in clubs forming in 1995, with five clubs forming then. This corresponds in time with Parliamentary discussions concerning the development of the *Treasure Act* 1996 and the voluntary recording system (later to become PAS), but any connection between this and the formation of the clubs is speculative. One club (History Diggers) formed as recently as 2006 (the year that the survey was carried out), showing that clubs still form in current times.

### Question 4: Number of club members

The number of members per club varied greatly, from five to 140. Most responses were specific, indicating that most clubs had a clear idea of their numbers, rather than an approximation. The average number of members per club was calculated to be 49.5.

**Question 5: How would you describe your current membership numbers?**



Status of current membership levels N=52

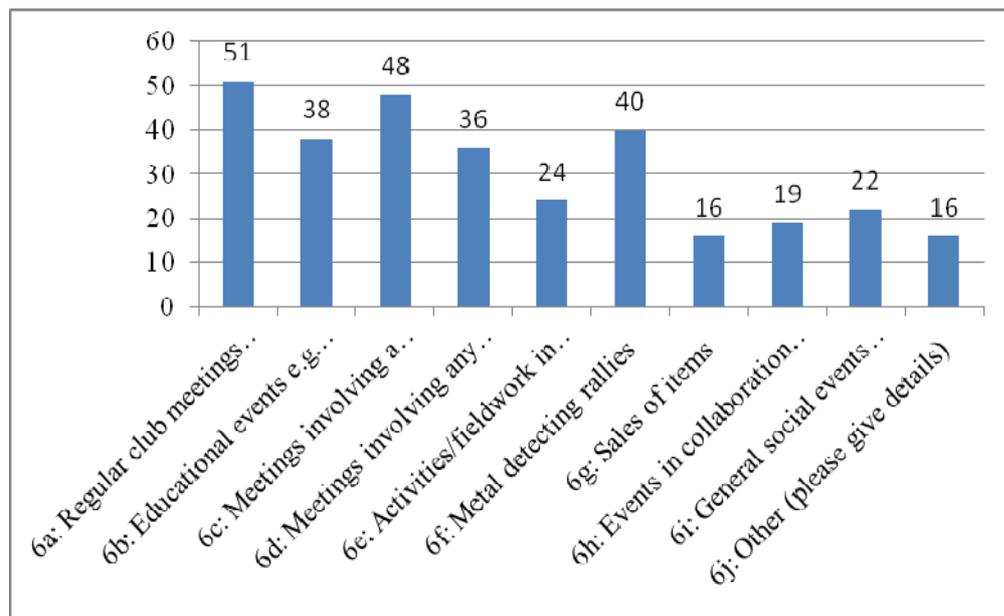
**Chart 19 Bar chart showing responses to current state of metal detecting club memberships**

The majority (19, 36.5%) said that their numbers were higher than ever, with a further 10 (19.2%) indicating recent increase although not the highest numbers ever. The lowest response was from clubs with a lower membership number than ever (2, 3.8%), and only four (7.7%) reported a recent decline, indicating that club memberships overall were either consistent or increasing in numbers. Of the four (7.7%) that responded “other”, three stated that their total was limited due to clubroom space, while the fourth said that numbers regularly fluctuated (Mansfield and District MDC). Waiting lists existed in at least one case (Coventry Heritage D.S.). A further six respondents (11.3%) that had not chosen the response option “other” added to their answers that their membership numbers were either capped or that there was a waiting list.

**Question 6: Does your club organise/take part in any of the following activities for its members?**

As with Questions 8 and 10 in the individuals' survey, respondents had several choices, and could give more than one answer if appropriate.

Response options were: (a) Regular club meetings (e.g. monthly or fortnightly); (b) Educational events e.g. talks on local history; (c) Meetings involving a Finds Liaison Officer from the Portable Antiquities Scheme; (d) Meetings involving any other professional archaeologists or museum workers; (e) Activities/fieldwork in collaboration with an archaeological unit or museum service; (f) Metal detecting rallies; (g) Sales of items; (h) Events in collaboration with other metal detecting clubs/societies (please give details); (i) General social events (i.e. not involving reference to archaeology, history or the metal detecting hobby), and (j) Other (please give details).



**Chart 20 Bar chart showing the count for each response option for Question 6 concerning club activities**

Almost all the respondents said that their clubs held regular meetings (6a), and of the only two respondents that did not, one did not answer the question, and possibly did hold regular meetings. The next highest response of 48 (92.3%) was for response option 6c, “meetings involving a Finds Liaison Officer from the Portable Antiquities Scheme”, demonstrating that almost all clubs that responded were in regular contact with FLOs as part of their regular club activity. This seems to be an accurate

proportion of the wider population, given that PAS reckoned to engage regularly with 165 out of 173 clubs that it recognised in 2006 (PAS 2006d: 121), which would be 95.4%.

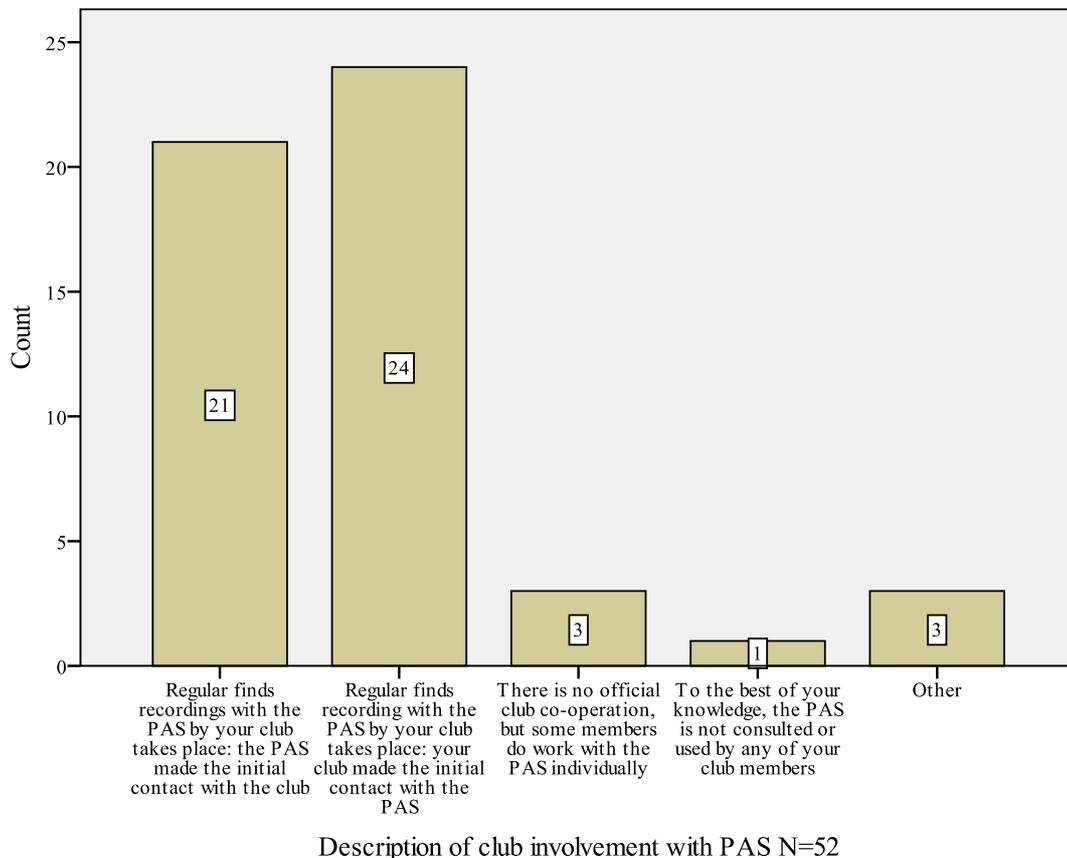
The least popular activity, with only 16 respondents listing it as one of their club's activities (30.8%), was sales of items. One respondent (Cardiff Scan Club) elaborated that this meant sales of "*members' surplus items when upgrading*", indicating that the sales taking place as club activities were not necessarily sales of antiques, but could also be of equipment and other items.

73.1% (38 clubs) arranged educational events such as talks on local history, and 69.2% (36 clubs) said that their club meetings could involve other heritage professionals than FLOs, indicating contact with the heritage sector beyond PAS in more than half of the sample. In addition to this, 46.2% of respondents (24) said that their club activities involved activities or fieldwork in collaboration with heritage professionals.

40 clubs (76.9%) counted metal detecting rallies as one of the activities that their club organises or takes part in. 19 clubs (36.5%) organised events in collaboration with other clubs, and these activities included inter-club rallies, regional meetings, joint social events and joint outings. In South Wales, several clubs worked together in assisting South Wales Police when required (Pembrokeshire Prospectors Society). Twenty two clubs (42.3%) arranged events not themed around metal detecting or archaeology.

Other activities carried out by 16 (30.8%) of the responding clubs were varied, but included general days out, going out to talk to local schools, annual family day with barbecue, detecting holidays and the offer of a lost items recovery service to local farmers.

**Question 7: How would you describe your club’s involvement with the Portable Antiquities Scheme?**



**Chart 21 Bar chart showing metal detecting clubs’ involvement with PAS**

The responses gained for this question (one did not answer) showed that in most cases there was work at club level with PAS (45, 86.5%). Slightly more respondents (24, 46.2%) claimed to have initiated contact with PAS, than to have had PAS make the first move (21, 40.4%). However, the numbers for either response option are very close and indicate that both instances occurred at a similar rate. Only three clubs (5.8%) responded that there was no official club involvement with PAS, but that some members were known to use PAS for recording individually. Only one club (1.9%) reported that there was no interaction at all. It is not known whether the one club that chose not to answer this question was involved with PAS, but given that their general comment at the end of the questionnaire was that, “*archaeologists have never showed any interest or tried to work with any M.D. clubs*” (Anon.) it can be assumed that there was little or no contact. For the three “other” responses, respondents gave the following extra information:

*“Visits by FLO when required/invited. Club made contact in 1998.  
Recording of finds is subject to landowners consent.”*

(Grantham and District Search Group)

*“No significant finds yet, but we would liaise with PAS.”*

(U3A Reigate and Redhill Metal Detection)

*“Irregular meeting with FLO.”*

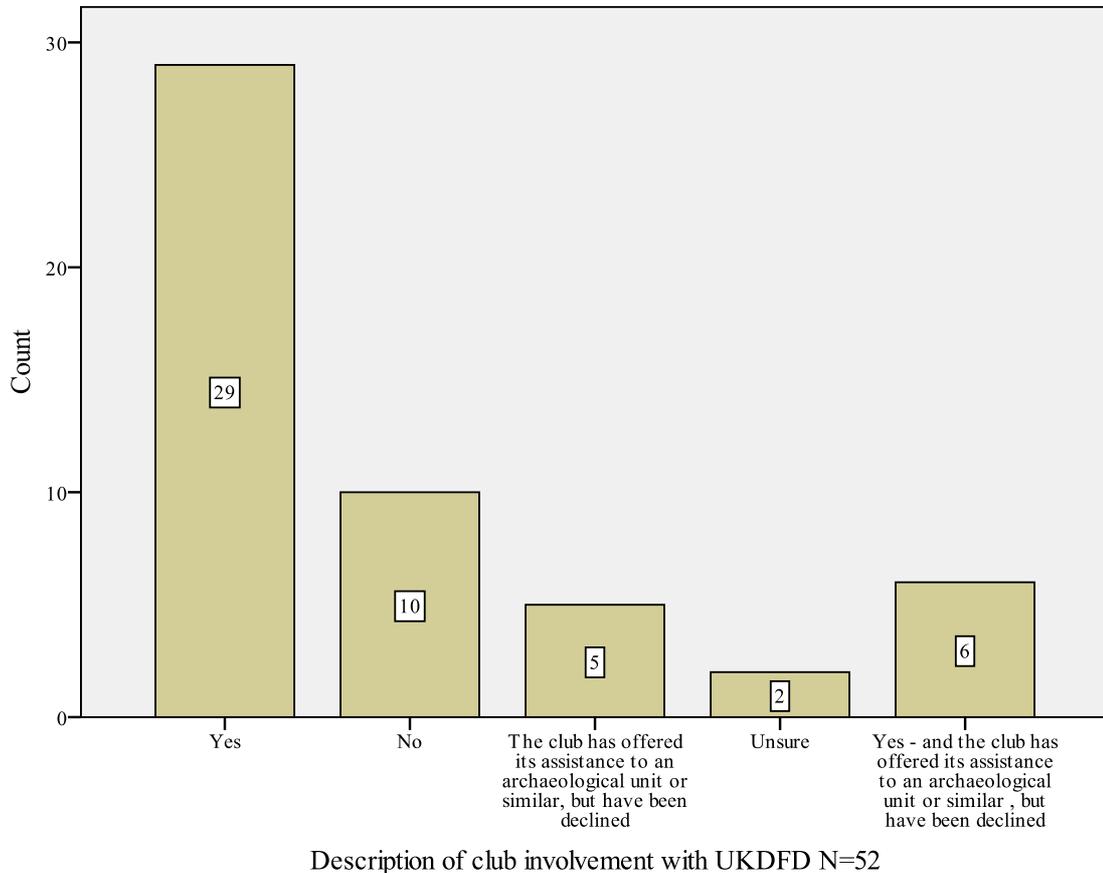
(Tameside MDC)

The Grantham and District Search Group’s response to this question raises the issue of landowners’ consent for searches. The role of the landowner and their view on whether find spots from their land can be disclosed by the searcher is something that other metal-detector users have highlighted as an issue that can affect, and has affected the reporting of find spots (Critchley, *pers. comm.*, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2007). This issue is also reflected in responses to Chitty and Edwards’ (2004: 49) survey carried out in 2003-04 for their review of PAS, in which many finders of archaeological material cited:

*“...the reluctance of landowners to disclose findspots as one of the principle reasons for withholding information about find sites, together with the threat posed by nighthawking”.*

(Chitty and Edwards 2004: 49)

**Question 8: How would you describe your club’s use of the United Kingdom Detector Finds Database (UKDFD) recording system?**

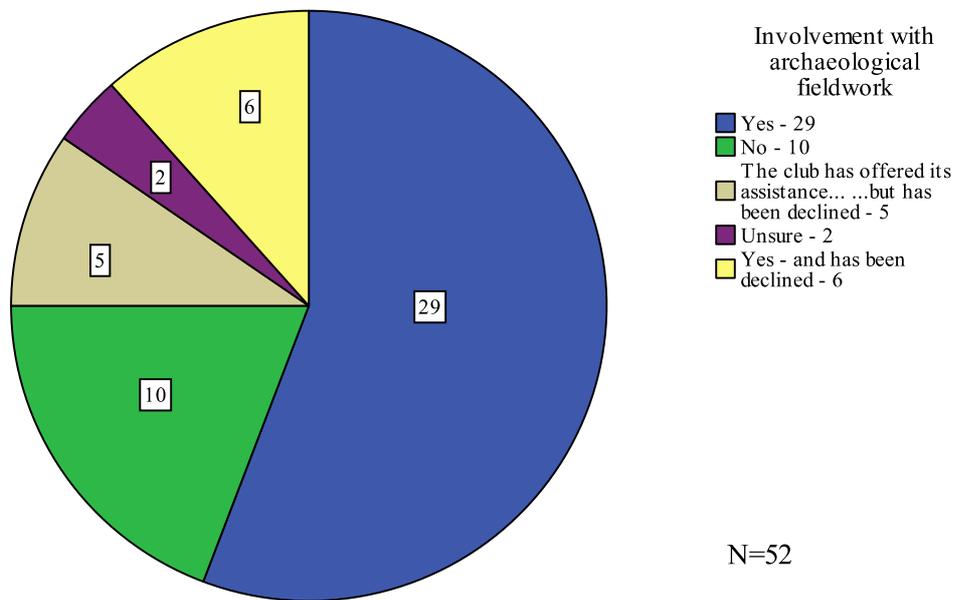


**Chart 22 Bar chart showing metal detecting clubs’ relationships with the UKDFD**

Only three respondents (5.8%) said that the club as a whole used the UKDFD, although a reasonable number (27, 51.9%) indicated that at least some interaction with the UKDFD was known to happen, ranging from the involvement of the whole club through to use of the database by only some members. The highest single percentage, however, responded that there was no known use of the UKDFD by club members (22, 42.3%). Of the three “other” responses: one respondent commented that they might do if they found anything of interest (U3A Reigate and Redhill Metal Detection); one commented that they were not sure what individual members did (Farnham and District MDC), and one commented that there was “*still some suspicion of PAS by some members however on the whole most members are happy to record finds*” (Quakers Acres MDC). As an aside, it is interesting that there is a University of the Third Age (U3A) metal detecting club, although the Reigate and Redhill club seems to be the only such U3A-based metal detecting club in the country. The group’s

web page indicates that it is a relatively small group (eight members), that “*follow the Treasure Act, comply with the Countryside Code and make good disturbed ground*” (Reigate and Redhill U3A 2009), although, curiously, no mention was made of interaction with archaeologists, perhaps reflecting their comment above about finding little that they deem “of interest”.

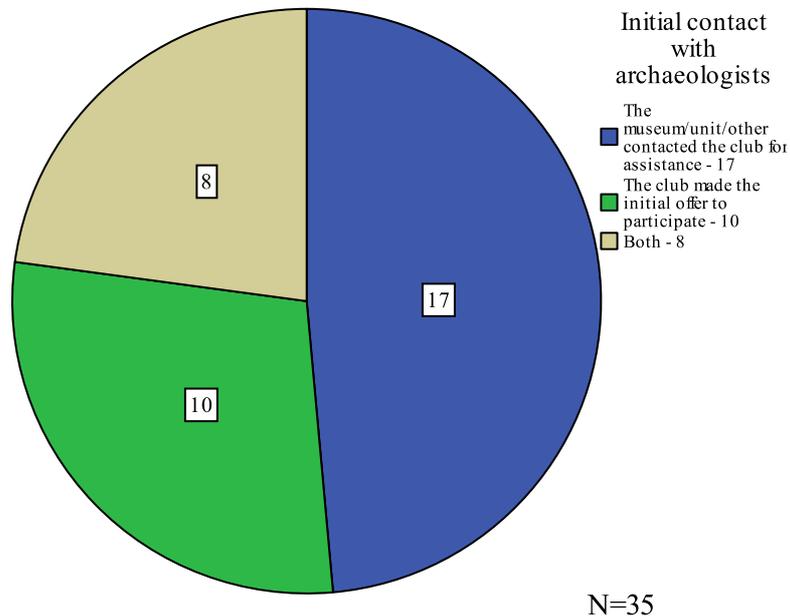
**Question 9: Has this club ever been involved with archaeological fieldwork carried out by an archaeological unit, museum or similar (i.e. an organisation involving the work of professional archaeologists)?**



**Chart 23 Pie chart to show whether metal detecting clubs had worked with archaeologists in fieldwork**

Over half of the respondents (35, 67.3%) reported that their clubs had helped with archaeological fieldwork, and of these six (11.5%) reported that they had also offered to help before on occasion but had been declined. Another 16 respondents (28.8%) said that their clubs had not been involved in fieldwork with archaeologists, with five of these club representatives (9.6%) reporting that their clubs had offered to assist archaeologists but had been declined.

**Question 10: If yes, was the club contacted by the unit/museum for assistance, or did the club make the offer to participate?**



**Chart 24 Pie chart to show the way in which contact was made for metal detecting club assistance with archaeological projects**

The responses to Question 10 indicated that the majority of collaboration between heritage professionals and metal detecting organisations happened only after the heritage organisation had made the initial contact (17, 48.6%). Adding to that the responses that there had been contact from both sides (8, 22.9%), the total number of clubs that had been involved in fieldwork due to initial contact from a heritage organisation was 71.5%. The number of clubs that had made initial contact (10, 28.6%) is a minority but is still significant, especially when combined with the “both” answer to make 51.5%. Thus contact with archaeologists and heritage organisations initiated by metal detecting clubs had also led to a significant amount of collaboration.

**Question 11: If possible, please provide further details of any fieldwork carried out in association with professional archaeologists, for example how often your club or its members have taken part in such work, which organisation(s) have been involved, etc.**

The responses to this question indicated that a variety of fieldwork had taken place, but that the majority of involvement had been through metal detecting surveys, with some clubs (e.g. Stour Valley Search and Recovery Club, White Cliffs MD Club) active over a number of years both in fieldwork and in loaning artefacts to museums. Others, such as Cardiff Scan Club and Anon., reported that interaction had happened years ago, but that while some individuals were known to be involved in archaeological projects, there was nothing arranged at club level at present. Just two groups, Gateshead Detecting Society and Swansea Metal Detecting Club, specifically remarked that they did not interact with archaeologists in this way.

**Question 12: Do you have any further comments that you would wish to make regarding working with archaeology? Please feel free to make any more comments in the space below.**

Most metal detecting club representatives (45, 84.9%) took the opportunity to make a comment in addition to the answers already given. These dealt mostly with issues concerning relationships with PAS and with the wider archaeological community, and represented a full spectrum of views, from positive to negative. Some responses are listed here in order to give a general impression of the types of comments made. In particular, the last two responses featured, from Norfolk and Lincolnshire respectively; reflect how cooperation or antagonism in the past in certain regions can affect the current relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users:

*“I would like to ask why some archaeologist's treat metal detectorist's with sheer contempt. Do they not realize that most of the finds that are found these days are made by detectorists?”*

(Weymouth and Portland MDC)

*“I feel our club is very open to the PAS system and local FLOs as all our members are interested in preserving our history and heritage for future generations and are not in the hobby for financial gain”*

(Farnham & District MDC)

*“Yes I would like to say its nice to know, we are finding and recording more of our history, and making a bigger impact on the visual items that our forebears used, than the very people that spent most of the time and our money slagging us off. Ask the same type questions to the ones that still do this on the sly mainly on channel 4. Now that would be interesting reading. Good luck on your thesis”*

(Anon.)

*“There has always been a good relationship with archaeologists in Norfolk, reflected in the no. of finds recorded in this county. The late Tony Gregory made the first contact with detecting clubs and it expanded from there.”*

(West Norfolk Search & Recovery Group, formerly Kings' Lynn MD Soc.)

*“FLO arranged ventures are for the people and club who record in detail without question. No attempt at proactive outreach made by FLO to club who are wary of detailed finds recording in a county where relations were poor for so long. FLO viewed by some members as run by the same archaeological department and thus suspect. FLO seems unable to deal with this issue and rebuild or in fact build a relationship with the club. Many of the members are veterans of the STOP Campaign, which in Lincs was very divisive, and have long memories.”*

(Grantham and District Search Group)

## **7.4 The Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally**

### **Background of case study**

The Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally, organised by metal detecting rally organiser Norman Smith, which took place in August 2007, was unusual for a number of reasons. In addition to FLOs and their volunteers, that regularly attend many (but not all) rallies, as in Figure 7.2 (taken at Thornborough in North Yorkshire), the rally organisers hired an independent consultant archaeologist, David Connolly, to work alongside them. The rally organiser had hired the consultant archaeologist as a means of incorporating archaeological research into the rally. This suggests that the rally organiser aimed to act responsibly towards the archaeological material likely to be uncovered during the rally, but also that he was probably aware that the site in question could lead to controversy and wanted to be able to demonstrate that the event would include appropriate measures to record the finds to an archaeologically acceptable standard. The hiring of the consultant archaeologist did indeed prove a sensible move, given the political repercussions concerning the rally's intended location, which later became apparent and are discussed below.

A project design was developed to carry out archaeological fieldwork alongside the rally, utilising the metal-detector users themselves (Connolly 2007a). The metal detecting rally also gained a high profile due to featuring on two broadcasts of *The One Show*, a magazine television programme featuring a range of different stories from around the country. This was organised by the consultant archaeologist, as a means of attracting publicity (Smith, *pers. comm.* 14<sup>th</sup> February 2009).



**Figure 7.2 PAS staff and volunteers recording finds at Thornborough metal detecting rally, September 2006**

Due to concerns raised by local and national archaeological organisations, there had been discussions concerning the precise whereabouts of where the rally was to take place. These discussions largely dealt with concerns that the archaeologically sensitive area, although not then scheduled, potentially contained significant archaeological data due to its proximity to the Roman settlement site of Durobrivae. Some of the fields earmarked for the rally had been considered for scheduling in the 1980s and although they met requirements to warrant scheduling, had not been scheduled, according to the County Archaeologist, “*on a technicality*” (Poppy, *pers. comm.*, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007). When the rally plans began to take shape, there were “*suggestions by English Heritage that the area would be scheduled immediately*” (Connolly 2007b: 4). Once the intended rally fields were changed for others, slightly further away from the settlement site, this made the archaeological organisations less apprehensive “*with the principle of the rally*” (Poppy, *pers. comm.*, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007). Extensive correspondence between the rally organiser, the county archaeologist, PAS, English Heritage, and other organisations indicate the significant tension building up in advance of the planned rally (Smith, *pers. comm.*, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2007). At one point during the negotiations, the rally organiser commented to colleagues that:

*“The Portable Antiquities Scheme employs around 40 people in secure, well paid jobs that exist because of metal detecting and it is a scheme that is not pro-metal detecting but merely tolerates it and they are the first to admit how*

*unpopular with the archaeological world they have become as a result of that toleration.”*

(Smith to Barclay, Hanson and Connolly, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2007)

Smith's comments indicated his personal frustrations with his perception of the interference from archaeologists with his rally plans, and his view of PAS at that time. This suspicion about PAS and its “*true aim*” (Curran 2008: 46) to limit the places at which metal detecting can take place is reflected in comments from other metal-detector users. Respondent 122's comment about scheduling occurring as a result of reports to PAS, also supports the existence of this viewpoint, despite assurances by PAS that scheduling does not occur as a result of reporting finds with them (Resource 2003). That this viewpoint regarding the pitfalls of reporting finds was around even before PAS, is demonstrated in the 1987 tongue-in-cheek glossary of “*Detectorspeak*” published in *The Searcher* in 1987 (Mole, reproduced in *British Archaeological News* 1987: 79). This included the phrase, “*I'd like to see closer cooperation with the hobby*”, which was translated as “*You find it and we'll schedule it*”.

Although the discussions were complex, and for a large part confidential and unavailable to the researcher, the rally took place, in the end, although, as cited above, the location had to be changed from the original planned area. This chapter revisits the politics surrounding the rally later, but these were not the primary focus of this case study.

It was hoped by Connolly that the land that was eventually selected for the rally could potentially reveal a lot of information about the area surrounding the known site of Durobrivae, now the village of Water Newton on the outskirts of Peterborough, through the recovery of metal artefacts from disturbed plough-soil (Connolly 2007a: 3). The project report (Connolly 2007b) dealt with analysis of the archaeological data. The aim of the case study evaluation here instead focused on the individuals involved, aiming to measure the extent to which the metal-detector users felt they were engaging with archaeologists, or indeed, whether they were aware of what was being attempted with the unusually high-level archaeological presence. In addition, the farm manager, the finds specialists (the County Archaeologist and two employees of PAS),

and the consultant archaeologist brought in by the rally organisers were interviewed. Student volunteers from Newcastle University were encouraged to keep field notes, recording their observations and reflecting on their experiences. They are not named in the chapter, but are listed in the Acknowledgments and in Appendix 18. Given the history of tensions between archaeologists and metal-detector users, it was of interest to record the perspectives held by the metal-detector users about the rally and the archaeological methods being employed, as well as about more general points concerning working (or not working) with archaeologists. The researcher produced a conference paper on the evaluation of participants (Thomas 2007).

### **Find spot recording and participant observation**

The method used to record find spots was simple, but potentially effective. The plan was to issue metal-detector users with numbered plastic bags and corresponding flags, so that each time a find was made it could be bagged and the bag's unique number written on the flag, which was used to mark the find spot. Archaeologists, many of whom were the student volunteers from Newcastle University mentioned above, followed where the detector users had been searching, collecting the flags, and recording their locations using global positioning system (GPS) devices (Figures 7.3 and 7.4), noting the flag's number. Then the metal-detector users were to hand over their finds, still in the numbered finds bags, to the team of identification specialists, including the County Archaeologist and PAS staff, to be returned to them after the identifications had been made and noted. Using the GPS recordings gave a more accurate distribution of the finds than would normally be possible in cases where metal-detector users estimate their find spots on a map, as is the custom at most metal detecting rallies.



**Figure 7.3 David Connolly showing Newcastle University students GPS devices in the marquee at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally, August 2007**



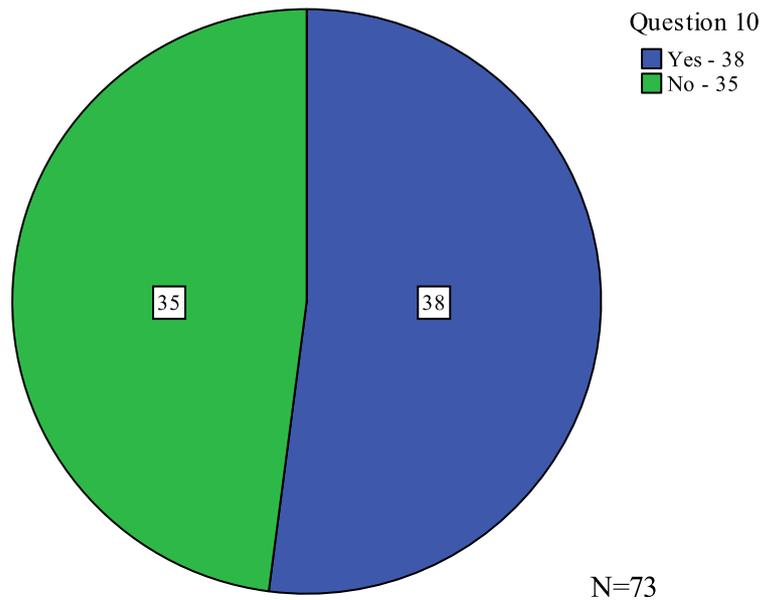
**Figure 7.4 Metal-detector users searching at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, with student volunteers (in high-visibility jackets) recording find spots, August 2007**

A number of ethnographic methods – questionnaires, informal interviews, and field observation – were employed, to ensure triangulation (Hammersley 1990: 84). These research methods were described in Chapter 2.

In addition to the survey questionnaire used at all four rallies attended, extra questions were added specifically to the Durobrivae (Water Newton) questionnaire. The results of these extra questions are reviewed below. Out of 324 rally participants, 75 were interviewed using the questionnaire. This gave a sample of 23%, all that was possible due to time constraints over the weekend. The quantitative results were tabulated and the qualitative results were used to illustrate viewpoints more extensively. The responses were sorted by type, but have been also individually cited where appropriate. The four extra questions, which appeared as Questions 10, 11, 12 and 13

in the Durobrivae (Water Newton) questionnaire, can be seen in Appendix 5. Appendix 19 shows frequencies and percentages for quantitative responses from the Durobrivae (Water Newton) extra questions.

**Question 10: Do you view this rally as particularly different to others that you have attended?**



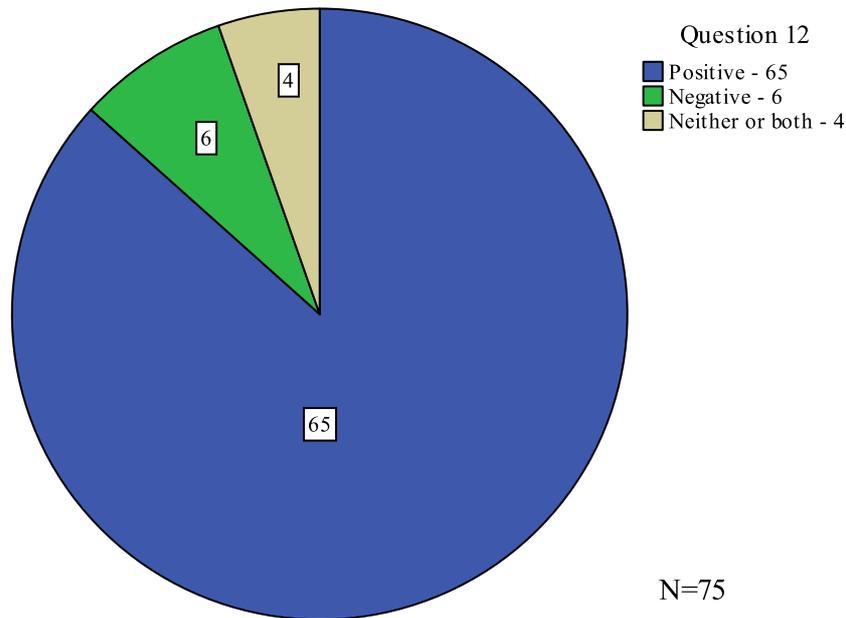
**Chart 25 Pie chart showing whether participants noticed anything different about the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally**

This indicated a close split in the sample interviewed, with slightly more respondents (38, 52.1%) viewing the rally as different to others. Two respondents did not answer the question. The respondents that answered, “yes” were then asked Question 11.

**Question 11: If yes, in what ways do you think it seems different to other rallies?**

Eleven (30% of “yes” respondents, 15% of the total sample) identified the higher archaeological presence with the enhanced recording system as the reason why they felt that the rally was different. Other reasons cited included general comments about the size or organisation of the rally in comparison to other metal detecting rallies, and a small number of respondents (six) commented on the short notice change in location of the rally area and the surrounding controversy as a problematic aspect.

**Question 12: Do you regard the presence of archaeologists here as positive or negative?**



**Chart 26 Pie chart showing whether participants regarded the archaeological presence at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally as positive or negative**

The “neither or both” value signified where the respondent chose not to answer, or saw both positive and negative aspects to the archaeological presence. Some 87% of the sample (65 respondents) regarded the archaeological presence as a positive aspect to the event, while only 8% regarded the archaeological presence as negative, and 5.3% were indifferent or felt that there were both positive and negative aspects.

**Question 13: Please explain your answer to 12.**

When asked to explain their answer to Question 12, 36 (48%) gave qualitative answers referring to the importance of working together with archaeologists as the main reason why the presence was positive. A further 18 (24%) felt that the archaeologists were useful to them to help identify and record their finds. Of the few negative responses, the concerns raised by archaeologists regarding the location of the rally and the possibility of emergency scheduling immediately beforehand was seen as a problem, and some felt that archaeologists had been attempting to interfere with the rally.

Informal interviews were carried out with nine metal-detector users, the farm manager and four archaeologists. The interviews with the metal-detector users revealed that some were still suspicious of the motives of archaeologists (and thus potentially reluctant to co-operate extensively for fear of losing access to land through scheduling, for example). Yet the metal-detector users interviewed also revealed that they regarded the event as an opportunity for archaeologists to learn more about metal detecting, rather than for themselves to become better acquainted with archaeological techniques. That said, many of the archaeologists interviewed did comment on the fact that more finds were recorded than would normally be expected at a rally of that size. However, it was unclear initially whether this indicated more metal-detector users recording finds, or just the same proportion as usual bringing forward more finds rather than being selective in what they showed the archaeologists.

None of the participants reported to the researcher that they had specifically seen nighthawking take place, although the researcher was presented with a 'nighthawk torch' that one of the metal-detector users had discovered in an adjacent field. This torch was illustrated in Chapter 1. The interview with the farm manager also revealed that nighthawks had raided the fields in the area in the past, and that he saw staging the rally as a nighthawk deterrent.

The field notes kept by the students reflected the issue of selectivity concerning the finds reported. A number of students observed metal-detector users in the fields who were unsure of whether to bother marking the find spots for small artefacts such as musket balls or, occasionally, flint artefacts when some metal-detector users, perhaps the more experienced ones, noticed flint that they thought might have been worked. The importance of recording musket ball locations accurately is significant to the sub-discipline of conflict archaeology (Sutherland and Holst 2005: 27-8), however PAS rarely records these apparently common artefacts (Ferguson, *pers. comm.*, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008), a practice certainly observed at this rally. Two students observed a negative incident between the consultant archaeologist and two particularly hostile metal-detector users, who seemed completely uninterested in engaging with the archaeologists (or with the concept of archaeology), and were unimpressed with the organisation of the recording system (Students 1 and 2). However, another student noted how some metal-detector users that had been unwilling to take part in the bags

and flags system at the start of the rally were eagerly using the method by the last day (Student 3). All the students, echoing comments from the archaeologists interviewed, noted the practical drawbacks with the bags and flags system, which were largely a result of preparation problems ahead of the rally's start. Certainly, some aspects could have been better organised, for example making sure that participants were better informed about what they were meant to do with the bags and flags that they were given, and making sure that they had sufficient equipment, such as pens.

Student 4's observation that the female students were probably treated with a more friendly attitude by many metal-detector users than some of the male archaeologists who also attended as volunteers, seemed to reflect a comment by one metal-detector user to the researcher about it being a pleasure to work alongside such "*lovely ladies*". Student 1's observation about the hobby being a predominantly male activity also reflected this, as do the researcher's wider research findings. There are some female metal-detector users, but they are very much in a minority. Only six of the 75 questionnaire respondents in this case study, and 20 of the 262 metal-detector users interviewed at all four rallies attended, were female.

Different metal-detector users also told the students at different times that they were appreciative of the fact that the students were camping on site with the metal-detector users. In comparison, some of the other archaeologists either lived nearby or decamped to different accommodation in the evenings. The efforts to socialise with the metal-detector users in the evenings seemed to break down barriers and encourage the metal-detector users to interact more openly as the weekend progressed. The researcher certainly noticed this in a number of the interviews carried out. For example, one metal-detector user who had been borderline abusive at a previous rally was now comfortable being recorded talking openly about nighthawking. Students 1 and 4, however, noted that in conversations regarding selling and recording finds, it was possible that they were not receiving completely honest responses in all cases. This is certainly a factor to be taken into account with research in this area by archaeologists, especially concerning sensitive issues such as the sale of finds, and highlights the importance of gaining trust within the metal detecting community.

Ultimately the reflective experiences of the students and the majority of the interviews of individual metal-detector users indicated that the event was largely successful in increasing the amount of material recorded when compared to other similar rallies (certainly according to the PAS staff interviewed). In addition, most metal-detector users could see the merits of involving archaeologists and archaeological methods in a metal detecting rally. Certainly too, a wide audience was reached through the television coverage, although this in itself caused tension in the way in which it was presented. The rally featured in two editions of *The One Show*, with the first edition on the Friday of the rally creating an impression that the event was predominantly a research project led by the archaeologists, with the metal-detector users acting as *their* assistants. As a result, the Monday broadcast had to include an explicit reference to the fact that the event was primarily a metal detecting rally, to which the archaeologists had been invited as a gesture of cooperation and support by the rally organiser, addressing the issue of ‘ownership’ of the weekend.

The attitudes of many of the metal-detector users reflected this issue of ownership, both observed through the students’ field notes, and through a number of the ethnographic interviews. Corinne Mills, an active metal-detector user and regular contributor to the United Kingdom Detector Net (UKDN) newsletter, wrote a review of the rally, reinforcing the point that it was “*first and foremost a detecting rally – not archaeology*” (Mills 2007: 16).

In the months following the rally, it became clear that there were still issues concerning the land used for the rally, which had almost led to emergency scheduling to try to prevent it from taking place. Meetings continued between local archaeologists, PAS and the rally organiser, and discussions were started that have reinvigorated existing discussions to develop a code of practice for metal detecting rally organisers and participants (Heyworth, *pers. comm.*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008). This was finally agreed in the form of a Guidance Note in early 2009, with support from the CBA, PAS, the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA) and English Heritage. Additionally support came from “*the two largest commercial rally organisers, who have promised to run their rallies in line with the Guidance Note in the future*” (CBA 2009).

## **Nene Valley**

In 2008, a metal detecting rally took place in the same area, with the same camp base but different search field locations. The rally was named the Nene Valley rally, perhaps to avoid too much association with the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally of 2007. Unlike at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, the bags and flags method of find spot recording was not in use at Nene Valley. The researcher conducted extra research alongside the regular questionnaires, as had happened at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, but not on the same scale. Twenty five interviewees who had also attended the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally were asked additional questions (see Appendix 6). The results of this questionnaire are shown in Appendix 20, and are summarised briefly here. As the response sample is very small, the results can only be treated as illustrative. In addition, Norman Smith, the rally organiser, and Lizzie Gill, the recently appointed Cambridgeshire FLO, were interviewed.

Seven respondents observed that fewer archaeologists were present in 2008. One respondent commented that the “*rumour is that because of items found, there has been a change to what land will be searched - are we meant to work together or not?*” This reflected another respondent’s recollection of the land dispute in 2007, and both comments seemed to suggest speculation among participants about what discussions had taken place ‘behind the scenes’. One respondent commented that they did not notice any difference between the two years. The majority of respondents (23, 92%) had participated in the bags and flags method at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, compared to 8% (2) that had not. The results from Connolly’s (2007b: 44) Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally report suggested that the majority had recorded their finds (at least 65%, with an estimate of a maximum of 87% of participants); although not all of these had used the bags and flags system. In addition to this, Connolly (*pers. comm.*, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2008) suggests that around 60% of participants had specifically used the bags and flags method for recording, indicating that a small number did not use this method but did record their finds nonetheless.

Nearly half commented (12, 48%) that they preferred the method used in 2008, which reverted to the more usual practice of metal-detector users reporting their finds to archaeologists stationed in the marquee, and indicating the rough location of find spots on a map provided. They felt that it encouraged more people to hand items in

for recording. A slightly lower majority than had said that they participated in the bags and flags method (16, 64%) felt that the bags and flags system had been an acceptable method to use. However, while some respondents seemed happy with the methods used at both rallies, only one respondent specifically stated that the bags and flags method was preferable. Some of the participants interviewed had regarded the flags as too difficult to carry around with them while searching. Some also noted that the use of a map at the recording table for metal-detector users to estimate the area where their finds were made was the more usual procedure for a metal detecting rally. A further three (12%) respondents made no comment about the methods. Lizzie Gill's observations (*pers. comm.*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2008), as one of several FLOs present at the rally, confirmed that not only were the participants happier with this system, but that they were proficient at estimating on the map with a high degree of confidence the area where they had discovered their finds.

When asked to make general comments about the Nene Valley and Durobrivae (Water Newton) rallies, six (24%) of the respondents were generally positive, enjoying both rallies. Five respondents (20%) expressed dissatisfaction with the archaeological involvement at the rallies, two (8%) expressed annoyance at what they regarded as interference from archaeologists in changing the land that was to be searched in both 2007 and 2008. They referred, perhaps, to the scheduling planned from the previous year that finally came into force in June 2008, a few weeks before the Nene Valley rally took place (Smith, *pers. comm.*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008, Poppy, *pers. comm.*, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009). Another respondent commented that they preferred to see the archaeologists out in the fields alongside the metal-detector users, as had happened at the 2007 rally, as they felt that the archaeologists were more available for advice and guidance as artefacts were being unearthed. They said that they felt separated as the archaeologists stayed in the marquee at the 2008 rally, although this happened because the archaeologists present in 2008 were there primarily to record finds, and hence had to stay in the marquee to staff the finds table, rather than be out in the field taking GPS recordings as in 2007. There were also fewer archaeologists, due to the absence of a consultant archaeologist and student volunteers, although the FLO had a small team of volunteers helping her record the finds including PAS staff from other regions.

Although the sample asked to compare the two rallies was very small, the results are of interest. While most of the metal-detector users seemed to have participated in the bags and flags system, and over half of them felt that it had been effective in recording finds, the qualitative comments seemed to indicate that they preferred to follow recording procedures similar to those at other rallies. This reluctance to use the bag and flag system is supported by Norman Smith's (*pers. comm.*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008) comments that an online forum vote beforehand showed that the rally participants themselves wished to revert to a system of recording finds by showing the finds recorders the location of their finds on a map in the marquee or field.

Lizzie Gill (*pers. comm.*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2008) agreed that, although the system used at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally was preferable from an archaeological point of view, it would be "*pointless*" to pursue if participants were not supporting this system and less data was being collected as a whole.

In addition to providing maps for metal-detector users to locate their find spots when recording their finds, a further step was taken to assist with recording at the Nene Valley rally. Each field that was to be searched during the rally was signposted with canes bearing letters, and participating metal-detector users were issued with a sheet of corresponding letters that could be torn off and added to finds bags to indicate the field from which the different artefacts had been removed (Gill, *pers. comm.*, 25<sup>th</sup> August 2008). Gill also observed that, while this means of reference helped some participants, many others showed even more accuracy, either through using their own GPS devices to record their find spots, or by demonstrating a high degree of confidence and skill in remembering accurately where in the fields their artefacts were found. This system is not necessarily verifiable, since it relies purely on the word of the metal-detector user, and on the accuracy of their memory. It also relies on the honesty of participants, as there is no safeguard to ensure that the *real* find location is disclosed, and that the rally is not being used as an opportunity to create false find spot locations and provenances for artefacts from more dubious origins, for example a different (possibly illegal) source such as a scheduled site. While possibly unlikely, the threat remains that this could happen. On the other hand, the practice may demonstrate the experience developed by many metal-detector users in using such a system at many metal detecting rallies, along with the map reading skills employed in

related tasks such as locating and searching land, for example through a club-organised search or on an individual basis.

Smith (*pers. comm.*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008) added that if anything was found that seemed to be of archaeological significance, participants had been told to leave it in situ and notify the archaeologists immediately. Such a claim could be met with scepticism by archaeologists, who may question how a metal-detector user at a rally would necessarily recognise when an artefact qualified as ‘significant’. In addition, there is the question of how likely it would be in practice for a metal-detector user to abandon their search and return to the marquee, potentially several fields away, the moment that a ‘significant’ discovery was made. In addition there is the argument that all artefacts, regardless of monetary value, are significant if their original context in the ground is known and recorded (Renfrew 2000: 19) and that by definition metal detectors are limited anyway in the types of artefacts that they can find (e.g. Fowler, *pers. comm.*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2006; Alexander, *pers. comm.*, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007). However, the fact that some metal-detector users at Water Newton seemed to be picking up flint, suggests that in practice metal-detector users may sometimes also collect non-metal objects that attract their attention, rather like field walkers. The assurance from the rally organiser concerning the notification of the archaeologists in the event of a significant find also assumed that cooperation from all participants would be forthcoming. However, the statement concerning participant diligence did at least display a degree of acknowledgement at the organiser’s level that the archaeological material uncovered at a rally had the potential to reveal significant information when extracted carefully.

The majority of metal-detector users did seem to participate in using the bags and flags system at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, if Connolly’s (2007b) calculations are accurate, although this does not automatically mean that every individual find was marked with a flag, even by the more supportive participants. Responses regarding how metal-detector users felt about the bags and flags system at the Nene Valley rally, coupled with the fact that a television crew was not on hand recording the participants’ activities (which may have encouraged compliance in 2007), suggest that the participation rate might have fallen if the same technique had been attempted for a second year running. On the other hand, it could also be argued

that by continuing with the same system, it may have become more accepted in time, especially if more effort was made both to explain the method more clearly and to explain its benefits to the quality of the archaeological data recorded. One could also add practical ways of making this system more manageable for the metal-detector users, such as providing flags that were smaller and thus more portable. Encouraging more metal-detector users to use GPS devices themselves at rallies would also negate the need to issue flags but allow for the same level of accuracy of find spot recording.

### **7.5 Conclusions**

There continues to be concern expressed by many archaeologists about the effects of metal detecting rallies such as the 2006 Snape rally shown in Figure 7.5, have on the archaeological heritage. When large numbers of metal-detector users all search a specific area over a number of days, the volume of material recovered is likely to be high. This can cause major concern in terms of the effect on the contextual non-metal material that is inevitably not recovered, even in ploughed contexts, and due to the lack of accuracy regarding find spot information.



**Figure 7.5 Metal-detector users search a field at the Snape metal detecting rally, August 2006**

It is also clear that the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally in particular attracted more controversy than most. In addition to the disputes over the emergency scheduling, it became increasingly clear in conversations and developments after the

rally that there were other personal agendas at play for some of the individuals involved. These do not relate directly to the central issues concerning archaeology and metal detecting, but relate, as noted, to inter-personal issues between individuals. The tensions that they produced can be symptomatic of many organisations where personalities come to the fore, but have no direct bearing on the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users in general. The sensitive nature of many of the exchanges, and the fact that the researcher was not privy to all of the events leading to the controversy, means that it would be unprofessional and inappropriate to include them in this discussion.

Further debate has continued as to whether an archaeological code of practice is necessary for metal detecting rally organisers and participants. As of January 2009, a Guidance Note has been released for use by rally attendees and organisers (CBA 2009). The development of this note occurred only after lengthy discussions between the interested parties. Archaeological representatives were concerned that a code developed by or in partnership with heritage organisations should deal exclusively with archaeology (Heyworth, *pers. comm.*, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2008). Meanwhile metal detecting rally organisers seemed to feel that any code of practice should be broadened to cover “*every aspect of a public event*” such as health and safety and notification of local police forces concerning large social gatherings (Smith, *pers. comm.*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008). Such issues might not appear relevant to a code of conduct for metal detecting rallies in relation to archaeology, the key concern of heritage organisations. However, Smith (*pers. comm.*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008) observed that in the event of an accident due to a metal detecting rally organiser’s negligence, the organiser might use the defence that they had followed the guidance note, devised and recommended by leading national organisations such as English Heritage and the CBA. The final Guidance Note has not covered these broader issues, but has instead made it clear in its introductory text that it relates specifically to archaeological elements of a metal detecting rally, and not to general event planning issues. It is clear that the publicity and controversy that the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally attracted brought this already existing issue to the forefront of discussions between archaeological organisations and metal detecting representatives (Heyworth, *pers. comm.*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008), and perhaps meant that an agreement was reached sooner than would otherwise have happened.

Current expectations are that the resultant code of practice would likely be a prerequisite for rallies taking place on Countryside Stewardship Scheme land in England<sup>18</sup>, but that it would be voluntary elsewhere, although this is yet to be agreed with Natural England (Heyworth, *pers. comm.*, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2008). In fact, the Countryside Stewardship Scheme currently allows metal detecting on (unscheduled) land “*providing that there is written consent from DEFRA*<sup>19</sup>”, providing too that metal-detector users abide to NCMD or FID codes of conduct (Clark 2008: 17). However, codes such as the collaborative code involving the CBA and other archaeological partners, especially where voluntary, can have varied success, as with the *Code of Practice on Responsible Metal Detecting in England and Wales* (CBA *et al.* 2006). Interviews for the thesis have shown that the FID, for example, has circulated the 2006 code amongst its members, but has at the same time made it clear that it is merely optional and not a FID-produced code (Wood, *pers. comm.*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2006).

Norman Smith, who had been so opposed to PAS in 2007 as to have worn a t-shirt at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally bearing the phrase, “*Block the PAS – Don’t go with the FLO*”, perhaps influenced by his frustration at the threat of emergency scheduling, had changed his opinion dramatically about the scheme just one year later. At the Nene Valley rally, he was prepared to state in recorded interview (Smith, *pers. comm.*, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2008) that he took back all that he had said about PAS in the past, and that much of his antagonism had come, it turned out, from misinformation and lack of communication. Such a case demonstrates again, the importance of clear communication between involved parties, especially where suspicion exists.

### **Survey observations and suggested future research**

In the individual metal-detector users’ survey, the findings regarding the gender bias towards males reflect other literature that has implied the male bias in the metal detecting hobby. For example, all of the metal-detector users featured in Faulkner’s

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<sup>18</sup> “*Countryside Stewardship was introduced as a pilot scheme in England in 1991 by the then Countryside Commission and operates outside the Environmentally Sensitive Areas. Payments are made to farmers and other land managers to enhance and conserve English landscapes, their wildlife and history and to help people to enjoy them.*” Text taken from Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), available <http://www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/schemes/css/default.htm#2> [14 February 2009].

<sup>19</sup> Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.

publication on metal detecting (2003) were male. In informal conversations during the research for the thesis, and in observations from the students at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, again the male bias was often acknowledged. The significance of this may indicate an appeal of the hobby more specifically to males, which in turn, given the age of many of the participants, as well as the length of time that many of them had been detecting, may say something of gender roles and hobbies. It may even be related to an engendered interest in the sciences (bearing in mind the technological dimension of operating metal detectors), with research suggesting a gender bias in achievement at schools in the sciences towards males (Murphy 2002: 190). The fact that many metal detecting clubs convene their meetings in traditionally male-dominated environments such as working men's clubs may also account for the male domination of the hobby, with the 'social capital' for entering such an environment, i.e. the resource of networks of common values (Field 2003: 1), stacked in the favour of males. This notion of social capital, incorporating "*mutual acquaintance and recognition*" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 119), would apply particularly in this case if it is combined with or related to the role of gender in creating social networks.

Gender may also have been an issue in affecting the results collected by the researcher and student volunteers. Comments from student volunteers and reflections by the researcher after attending the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally all indicate that all felt that the level of friendliness, and possibly the inclination to share information, may have been increased by the fact that the researcher and student volunteers were all female and, relative to the majority of the metal-detector users encountered, reasonably young. This was also experienced on informal club visits in the North East, where the gender and age of the researcher may also have had an effect on the level of interest taken in the research project and on the willingness to offer information. This again has implications in terms of social capital, suggesting that it may be easier for a young, female researcher to enter an environment dominated by older men, since certain social etiquettes concerning politeness, and even chivalry, may come into play. Thus, greater social capital may have been bestowed upon the researcher than had they been an older male. However, this can only be merely speculation at this stage.

The urban/rural indicators for England, Wales, and Scotland showed a bias towards respondents coming from more densely populated areas. One could hypothesise from this that perhaps metal-detector users are in part attracted to the hobby as an opportunity to leave their urban environment, for example on rally weekends. However, is the high proportion of urban metal-detector users indicative of such a statement about metal-detector users, or is it simply a feature of the UK population as a whole, given that the highest proportion of residents in the UK would be expected to live in more urban settings as this is where the “less sparse” areas are?

Another limitation to consider could be that the survey sample is from metal detecting rally attendees. This leads to the question of whether metal-detector users from the rural and sparsely populated zones are not represented as highly in the survey as they have less need for metal detecting rallies, having a closer proximity to, and understanding of, the countryside already. Hence, the results are far from conclusive. Other demographic data that could be collected from postcode analysis include the electoral ward, and even details about an area’s relative affluence. Such research would move into human geography, which is not a key theme of the thesis. However, it should perhaps be considered as a potential future avenue for research, particularly if more postcode data can be collected from metal-detector users through further questionnaire surveys.

The age ranges of the respondents in Question 3 indicated that the majority were ‘middle aged’ or older. When this was cross-tabulated with information from Question 4 about how long respondents had been metal detecting, the results indicated that most of the metal-detector users interviewed were not only middle aged or older, but also that many of these had been metal detecting ten years or more. However, this information may be misleading. In Question 4, the numbers of years vary in each answer category, and with hindsight, the questionnaires should have allowed for more specific response options going beyond the ten-year mark, as this potentially skews the results. For example allowing response options such as “10-15 years”, “15-20 years” and so on, would have yielded results that were more detailed. However, the statistics from Charts 7, 8 and 9 imply that there are relatively few younger metal-detector users. This, combined with the fact that the majority of the older metal-detector users were not new to the hobby, would suggest that the hobby as a whole

may be in decline, rather than just that it is something that appeals to older people, since they evidently have not just taken up the hobby at a later age. There seemed to be few new or younger metal-detector users coming through, regardless of whether they then decided to continue with the hobby. John Fargher (2007: 24), a regular contributor to *The Searcher*, has made a similar observation, asking his metal detecting readership: “*where is the next generation of detector users going to come from?*”

More detailed research could also help verify or challenge hypotheses about the periods in time in which metal detecting was most popular. In future research, for example, if the exact years in which individuals took up metal detecting could be plotted from enough respondents, indications of the years in which the hobby was most popular could be more clearly mapped. Such a study would ideally also include individuals that no longer metal detect but that did in the past. It is hypothesised that there would be a peak in people taking up metal detecting in the late 1970s, which would correspond with archival evidence already discussed in Chapter 5, and with the results from Question 3 of the results from the clubs questionnaire (see below).

The possibility that the number of metal-detector users is in decline seems reinforced by the potential total number of metal detecting clubs, mentioned earlier in the chapter. From the responses gleaned, the total number of clubs in England and Wales may be 202 at most, if the unknown addresses indicated a move of the club representative rather than the closure of that club. Some NCMD representatives also estimate there to be around 200 clubs, if one includes online clubs and informal smaller groupings that regard themselves as ‘clubs’ (Critchley, *pers. comm.*, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008). This figure is lower than Dobinson and Denison’s (1995: 2) estimate of 231 clubs just in England in the early 1990s, but higher than estimates by PAS of 173 clubs in England and Wales in 2006, when the clubs survey took place (2006d: 121). More recent annual report data suggests that this number has now fallen to 169 (PAS *in prep.*), as compared to 190 known clubs a few years earlier, in 2003-04 (Chitty and Edwards 2004: 13). A recent unpublished survey analysis for PAS by a university student suggested that there might even be only 153 known clubs in England and Wales (Vomvyla 2008). It is possible too that the NCMD estimates given to the researcher, as well as online representations on both NCMD and FID

websites, have an interest in representing the club population as higher than it actually is. It is clear that, along with estimates regarding the current population of individual metal-detector users for the UK, any estimates of clubs also have to take into account the possibility of unknown clubs and metal-detector users, and has to acknowledge that the total population probably fluctuates. In addition, some metal-detector users are members of more than one club, while some are not members of any.

Using the possible number of metal detecting clubs as a guide, if there are at most 202 metal detecting clubs in England and Wales, this could lead to an estimation based on the mean number of members per club being 50 (a rounding up of 49.5 – see Section 7.3). This would give a maximum of 10,100 active metal-detector users in clubs or societies in England and Wales alone (but more likely less, as some are members of more than one club). Using PAS' lower estimate of 173 existing clubs in 2006 would make the maximum total number of individual club members approximately 8,650. Scottish, Northern Irish, Manx, and Channel Island clubs, that are known through the FID and NCMD websites, gives a further nine clubs for the UK. If they also have an average membership of around 50, this would take the highest total estimates of club members in the whole of the UK up to between 9,100 and 10,550 (the higher estimate based on the higher estimated total of metal detecting clubs, the lower based on PAS club numbers).

However, these estimates exclude non-members, and as 39.8% of respondents to the individual survey said that they did not belong to a metal detecting club or society, this might represent a significant figure. It could be that the non-member percentage recorded in this survey may be higher here than for the entire population. If one speculates that metal-detector users who are not in a club may be attracted to a metal detecting rally as an opportunity to search, since most clubs organise their own weekend searches with permission from landowners, something which might be more difficult to arrange regularly outside of a club, it might make sense for more non-members to attend. Further research, perhaps through more extensive survey work, would be necessary to verify this theory, and it may not turn out to be true; the percentage in this research may be accurate or may even be lower than proportion of the whole population.

If the survey's results regarding membership of clubs or societies are actually indicative of the total population of metal-detector users, then the estimated club membership of 10,550 or 9,100 is 60.2% of the total number of metal-detector users for the whole UK. Thus an absolute total number of all UK metal-detector users might then be estimated to be somewhere between 15,116 or 17,525. For England and Wales, the total figure might be at most between 14,368 and 16,777, indicating that the majority of British metal-detector users are active in England and Wales. However, several of the individual metal-detector users interviewed were members of more than one club, something also acknowledged by PAS in their statistics (2006d: 121). Further research would be needed for verification, but a very rough estimate based on the percentages of club members and non-members suggested by the survey might thus put the current population of regular metal-detector users in the whole of the UK at around 12,000 to 14,000. This estimates an allowance for duplicate club numbers, with the majority of metal-detector users operating in England and Wales. If compared to PAS estimates that there may be between 8,000 to 10,000 for England and Wales (Bland, *pers. comm.*, 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008), even this estimate may be higher than the true figure. The estimate of 12,000 to 14,000 is roughly half of Dobinson and Denison's (1995: x) estimate of around 30,000 eleven years earlier. The PAS estimate suggests a total closer to a third of the 1995 estimate. Thus, even the most optimistic of estimates for the current metal-detector user population still suggests that the number has fallen from what it may have been in previous decades. If this was combined with research into the points at which metal detecting was at its most popular, more could be said about the growth, decline or fluctuation of the metal detecting population over time.

While the total number of clubs does seem to be lower, survey results also indicate that clubs are still being formed, such as History Diggers in 2006 and Gateshead Detecting Society in 2005. The reasons for setting up new clubs can vary and do not necessarily indicate an increase in people taking up metal detecting. For example, the East Surrey Metal Detecting Society was set up after dispute between members of an existing club to which the founders had previously belonged (Mintey, *pers. comm.*, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2006). Roger Mintey, one of the founders, did not in the end return a questionnaire, but took the option of telephoning the researcher as invited to do so by the questionnaire's cover letter (Appendix 8). He informed the researcher that, after

feeling concerned about the irresponsible behaviour of some of the originating club's members, he and others had left and set up their own club. The setting up and disbanding of metal detecting clubs, as well as the occasional fracturing of clubs due to differences in opinions, mean that the absolute total number of clubs and societies is in constant flux.

With regard to the affiliation to either FID or the NCMD of rally attendees, the numbers are relatively close. The slightly higher FID membership (42.5%, plus a further 12.6% of respondents with membership of "both") may represent factors such as the rally organiser for all four rallies attended being a member of FID (rather than the NCMD). The NCMD-supported Fosse Way charity rally in Warwickshire, had it not been cancelled due to a suspected foot and mouth disease outbreak, might have affected the results by yielding a higher NCMD affiliation. The NCMD, whilst not against metal detecting rallies, rarely endorses any (Austin, *pers. comm.*, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2006; Critchley, *pers. comm.*, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2007), whereas the FID "*actually are in the position of endorsing commercial rallies*" (Critchley, *pers. comm.*, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2007) – the NCMD taking the stance that it is not part of their remit to actually organise commercial rallies themselves. This might account for slightly more FID-affiliated attendees in the survey results as the researcher attended four commercial rallies, although it is equally possible for NCMD members to have also seen the event through the relevant advertising or word of mouth, or through joint membership.

As with all the individual metal-detector user results, the extra caveat applies that only metal-detector users attending particular rallies were surveyed. There is the possibility that different information would come from non-attendees of rallies particularly in terms of the number of respondents not belonging to a club, which may have given a higher percentage than is representative of the whole population. The suggestion in Questions 3 and 4 of the individuals' survey of a decline in metal-detector user numbers also contradicts a recent news report (BBC News, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008) that the popularity of metal detecting is in fact growing. Indeed, responses to Question 5 of the metal detecting clubs and societies' survey (below) also imply that membership numbers had increased to some extent in 29 out of 53 cases. This possibly contradicts the information from Questions 3 and 4 of the individuals' survey. However, even the

most generous estimates of metal-detector users in the UK are significantly lower than Dobinson and Denison's results, and this may raise questions about the accuracy of the 1995 estimate, or else indicate a fairly dramatic decline in numbers.

There has certainly been an increase of finds reported in recent years, as reported in the above BBC News report and others, and an increase in the number of metal-detector users engaging with organisations such as PAS, demonstrated by the results shown in PAS annual reports. This does not necessarily indicate that the individuals that are new to working with PAS and other organisations are also new to the metal detecting hobby. It most likely indicates instead that PAS is becoming more successful in engaging with the existing metal detecting community. The results from the questions concerning recording finds (Question 10 in the individuals survey) and club relationships with PAS (Question 7 in the clubs survey), also support the suggestion that PAS engages with a high proportion of metal-detector users.

The rate of response (perhaps as much as 30.6%) received for the clubs survey could indicate that metal detecting clubs may be becoming more receptive to assisting with research carried out by archaeologists, especially when compared with Dobinson and Denison's (1995: 2) much lower response rate of 12.6%. Recent unpublished research about the relationship between PAS and metal detecting clubs (Vomvyla 2008) is discussed further in Chapter 8, but this also indicated widespread enthusiasm for PAS from most chairs of metal detecting clubs, which would also suggest a greater willingness to assist with research, and certainly to cooperate with archaeologists. In the eleven years since the Dobinson and Denison report, when the surveys were carried out in 2006, PAS had been in operation for nine years, and so may well have had an impact on motivations to cooperate with the research. However, four of the metal detecting clubs that responded had no formal involvement with PAS (7.7%), but were still responsive to the questionnaire survey, perhaps seeing it as an opportunity to express their views. The higher response rate experienced for this study than for Dobinson and Denison's study (1995) might also be indicative that more metal detecting club representatives were willing to assist an unaffiliated student from a Cultural Heritage Studies Centre than there had been to support a study supported by the CBA and English Heritage. The CBA had, after all spearheaded STOP, and the student researcher (who was not obviously from an archaeological background due to the Cultural Studies tag) may have been perceived as less threatening and less likely

to have a hidden agenda. That senior members of both the FID and the NCMD endorsed the questionnaires distributed for the research may also have helped the response rate, as well as being a further indicator of the metal detecting community's willingness to cooperate.

Both sets of questionnaires suggested that the UKDFD is used less frequently than PAS. UKDFD administrators estimate that there have been 934 individuals adding information to the database since its inception in 2005 (Brun, *pers. comm.*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008). This suggests that a slightly lower than average number of metal-detector users interviewed in the individual questionnaire used UKDFD according to the statistics gathered, as the UKDFD's own total would represent around 9.34% of metal-detector users if Bland's (2005b: 441) estimate of 10,000 metal-detector users is accurate. This drops if the total number is actually higher, as is suggested above.

The total number of individual metal-detector users using PAS for 2005-6 is 3,439 recording as individuals, and 5,702 recording through their clubs (PAS 2006d: 120-121). Although the total population of metal-detector users is unknown, even the lower-end estimates of there being around 10,000 metal-detector users in the UK implies that the actual proportion using PAS may be lower than half of the total population, given that the clubs contact numbers in the PAS report (2006d) are very approximate<sup>20</sup>. This implies a positive skew in the survey results, where 65.6% of individual metal-detector users and 86.5% of club representatives said that they recorded with PAS. If one allows for the number of UK metal-detector users who are not resident in England or Wales (for example an estimated 340 in Scotland – based on averages from Question 4 from the metal detecting clubs survey below), the proportion grows. Interestingly, a number of the Scottish respondents in the individuals' survey (13) said that they used PAS, even though it does not operate in Scotland. The assumption would be that they record with PAS when they attend metal detecting rallies in England or Wales, although there is also the possibility that they interact with FLOs whose regions of responsibility border Scotland, namely the FLOs for the North East and for Lancashire and Cumbria. The Lancashire and Cumbria

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<sup>20</sup> PAS (2006: 121) note that many metal-detector users are members of more than one club or not members of a club at all. Exact numbers are not given for each club contacted by PAS. It should also be added that not all club members will opt to record their finds when FLOs make a visit to their club.

FLO has speculated that there may be an issue of finds being reported with her, in England, which in fact originate from Scotland and hence should be subject to different legislation (Boughton, *pers. comm.*, 12th February 2009).

The financial motivation of finding something valuable, including the sales of finds, was another theme explored by the questionnaires. As this is a sensitive question, in terms of its potential connection to the arguments made against treasure hunting and its links with sales of antiquities and damage of the archaeological heritage (e.g. Skeates 2000: 39-56; Hobbs 2003: 18), the reluctance to respond honestly to archaeologists asking them about their hobby might be understandable. It ties in with observations regarding how individuals might respond to questionnaires, such as Oppenheim's barriers to accurate responses including the "*barrier of self-incrimination*" (2003: 211-212). In relation to the question of what motivated metal-detector users only 20 (7.7%) had responded that they were interested in finding items of value, which is less than half of the number of metal-detector users who admitted to selling artefacts. This might indicate reluctance to admit to financial gain being a motivation, but may also indicate that a metal-detector user might well go on to sell finds without this being a primary motivation for taking up the hobby. Since most artefacts found in the UK are not very valuable financially, the occasional sales of cheaper artefacts do not necessarily reflect "finding items of value" as a motivation to metal detect.

The high frequency of respondents who sold finds through processes involving coin and antiquity dealers mirrors Montalbano's (2007: 78) findings regarding the sale of unreported Treasure, that many more metal-detector users may be increasingly using this "*real world*" selling method rather than online facilities such as eBay. That said, accessing [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk) on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009 showed 2,841 lots in the "*Ancient Coins*" category alone up for sale, and even if one allows that some lots are not from metal detecting sources, it indicates that the online market is still considerable.

The most popular response concerning motivations to metal detect was "interest in the past", which, rather than indicating a financial motive, demonstrates that a large proportion of metal-detector users instead have a desire to access heritage in a hands-on manner. This fascination with accessing the past through the artefacts that they



*“...to be able to drive out into the country... ...and go onto the field, put my headphones on, forget all the troubles I’d had during the week, forget all the stress and all the arguments, to walk along and watch the hares jumping about on the field, see the various birds, smell the country smells, and every now and then the machine would make a noise, and you’d move a little bit of earth with your fingers or a small trowel, and you’d find something and you’d look at and you’d think, “now what’s that? It’s a Victorian Shilling, now good heavens I wonder who was the last person who held it in their hands?” And you’d sort of just clutch it and you’d think to yourself, “yes, it could have been, a shilling was quite a lot of money...it could have been a rich landowner, could be a young man going to meet his girl, going to take her somewhere”, and you get that tremendous link across time. You come home refreshed, at peace with the world and suitably worn out having had a nice bit of exercise.”*

(Wood, *pers. comm.*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 2006)

This interest in connecting with the past, the “*tremendous link across time*”, held by so many metal-detector users also demonstrates the potential to increase inclusion within archaeology, and community archaeology in particular, commented on elsewhere (e.g. Thomas 2009: 9). In fact, the amount of cooperation with archaeologists by both individuals and metal detecting clubs appeared to be relatively high. Over half of the respondents representing metal detecting clubs said that their clubs had worked with archaeologists, although this again might indicate a skew in that it was possible that the clubs that had done so may have been more likely to respond to the survey than those that had not. Further details indicated mixed experiences, although the majority of interactions appear to have been successful from the point of view of the respondents.

In addition, the rate of donations of finds to museums, while not something that a majority of those interviewed had done, indicated a reasonable number of metal-detector users had nonetheless been involved in this way, yet another type of interaction with heritage professionals. The issue with a small number of individual respondents of classifying Treasure cases as an example either of a sale or of a

donation has already been discussed in the presentation of the results. Possibly, it indicates either a deliberate misinterpretation of the situation to give them ownership of what happened, or else a misunderstanding of the compulsory nature of Treasure cases. In terms of future museum donations, the anticipated bequests of metal-detector user collections to museums in years to come may cause storage capacity issues. This issue has been discussed at conferences such as the *All that Glitters* conference in Cardiff in 2004, as well as in informal conversations between the researcher and some museum professionals. That metal-detector users may eventually leave their collections to museums rather than to family members may display a popular notion that ultimately the artefacts should be in museums. On the other hand, it could also indicate apathy towards metal detecting in younger generations, which would support the findings in this chapter that metal detecting numbers are in decline. As Fargher (2007: 24) paraphrased his wife commenting on what will happen to his collection of metal detected finds if he decides to leave them to his children:

*“What shall I tell the kids to do with all your metal detecting junk when you pop your clogs?” ... ..“They don’t have any idea what’s in all those boxes and cases of yours, and they certainly won’t want any of it.”*

(Fargher, 2007: 24)

The general comments in both of the questionnaire results were more mixed, with comments, as demonstrated above, showing a range of opinions concerning archaeologists, and in particular trust issues. The research into contemporary metal detecting necessarily draws on sociological techniques such as ethnography and questionnaire survey, and demonstrates several issues that are relevant from a theoretical point of view. The notion of ‘social capital’ was briefly mentioned above in relation to gender, but also has wider implications for the inclusion of metal-detector users in archaeological projects, as well as for metal-detector user behaviour at metal detecting rallies. It would follow, according to Field’s (2003) exploration of social capital and the importance of personal networks in making “*things happen*” (Field 2003: 2), that extending the interactions between archaeologists and metal-detector users would increase the opportunities of interested metal-detector users to work in archaeological contexts, as well as to understand better archaeological

research objectives. This is a two-way process, as increased exposure to the metal detecting community and its behaviour increased the researcher's ability to enter into reliable discourse with metal-detector users in club and rally contexts. This included knowing the language and terminology (for example, archaeologists are 'archies', and finds 'come off' a field), as well as accessing 'gatekeepers' as discussed in Chapter 2. The increased understanding of the metal detecting community through contemporary contact as well as through historical analysis forms part of the *hermeneutic circle* discussed in Chapter 2 (e.g. Denzin 2001: 74), which Shanks and Tilley (2005: 104) suggest may be more aptly described as a "*widening spiral*".

The attempts at rallies to record finds as accurately as possible has the function from the archaeological perspective of recording data for the archaeological record, but it also serves as a means of increasing metal-detector user contact with archaeologists. This is something that, in time, might help to increase awareness about the importance of archaeology and to change public opinion with regard to portable antiquities, which Renfrew (2000: 92) has argued is essential if the protection of archaeological heritage is to improve. The arguments about professional archaeology creating barriers to "*active participation in history*" (Shanks and Tilley 2005: 25) may also be challenged by this increased interaction with metal-detector users, supported by the high frequency of metal-detector user involvement with archaeological projects, as well as a professional archaeological presence at metal detecting rallies. The implications of these results are further placed in context in particular with regard to the role of PAS in the next chapter.