Chapter 8: The Portable Antiquities Scheme as an effective system for England and Wales

8.1 Introduction

PAS started in 1997, at first in six English regions, and then in 2003 it was rolled out to cover the whole of England and Wales (Bland, *pers. comm.*, 8th November 2006). Chapter 6 introduced the historical background to the formation of PAS. Since its inception, PAS has attracted commentary from different groups that have an interest in cultural property such as antiquity collectors. For example, the USA-based Ancient Coin Collectors Guild (ACCG) says that:

> "*Britain's Portable Antiquities Scheme is regarded by many as the most viable compromise between the interests of society in general and of individual rights when dealing with objects of antiquity that are broadly defined by UNESCO as cultural property.*"
>
> (ACCG 2008)

Other collectors and dealers of antiquities have also argued for their rights to collect and for the legitimacy of their interest in the past (e.g. Ortiz 2007; Ede 2007). Renfrew, who has argued against the trade in antiquities (e.g. Renfrew 1995; Renfrew 2000), has also been positive about the formation of PAS. He commented that:

> "*The UK Government's role in supporting this scheme is a positive one, in marked contrast to its remarkable and reprehensible inaction over the open sale in England of unprovenanced antiquities from overseas…*"
>
> (Renfrew 2000: 84-85)

Hence, although PAS works predominantly at a 'grass roots' level within England and Wales, its existence is nonetheless part of the wider debate concerning the management of the antiquities market, and the different ontologies applied to artefacts by different stakeholders. These include archaeologists, antiquity collectors and dealers, local communities and treasure

hunters such as metal-detector users (both law-abiding and nighthawk). That PAS has managed to attract praise from individuals within all these different groups (although not all observers are in support) is impressive given the large spectrum of standpoints and motivations involved. Chapter 7 demonstrated, for example, that metal-detector users' motivations to pursue their hobby vary significantly, and while many have an interest in archaeology and history, this is not always their primary motivation. Some, for example, evidently are also involved with selling antiquities and might be classified as 'dealers' as well as 'collectors'.

The remit of PAS is to work with all finders of archaeological material. Aim 4 of their aims and objectives reads: "*To encourage all those who find archaeological objects to make them available for recording and to promote best practice by finders*" (PAS 2006h). PAS is analysed here primarily in terms of its interaction with metal-detector users, rather than the wider public. However, the survey of museum visitors does look at wider awareness of the scheme. The first section of this chapter analyses data from a 2006 survey of FLOs for the thesis, effectively an introspective look at the scheme through data from the practitioners of the scheme themselves. The second section primarily analyses data collected from an exit interview carried out at Newcastle's Hancock Museum when the touring exhibition *Buried Treasure* visited in 2005. In addition, there is a brief evaluation of a conference that was organised to coincide with the exhibition, particularly in relation to the reception that it received from the wider archaeological community. The third section contextualises the data from the surveys by looking at information from literature, interviews, and online sources such as discussion forums both in favour and in opposition of PAS. The most recent developments concerning PAS, including a recent report with recommendations for the scheme's future (Clark 2008) are also discussed and the theoretical parameters of the way in which PAS operates are identified.

8.2 Analysis of Finds Liaison Officers' survey

In 2006, Rob Collins, the FLO for the North East, offered to email a questionnaire (Appendix 9) to all FLOs (and Trust Liaison Officers in the case of Wales) on behalf of the researcher. This was partly to save time as he had the contacts list already, and partly to try to encourage response rates as he was effectively endorsing the questionnaire as a PAS member of staff, as

it was likely that FLOs regularly received questionnaires and similar requests from students. This was followed up some months later by direct email contact from the researcher to FLOs who had not yet responded to try to glean more responses (the initial response rate was low). Eventually 21 of 39 possible responses were received (54%). In a few cases, the non-response was due to vacant FLO positions in some regions, and it did indicate a higher response percentage from the population of FLOs than that from the population of metal detecting clubs (which was between 26.2% and 30.6%).

There have been some changes in personnel since 2006, when the survey took place. This indicates the fluidity of the scheme, but also reinforces the point that the survey results represent opinions and statistics as they were in 2006 and in some ways should be regarded as a snapshot of PAS at that point in time.

The collected results are analysed below, while acknowledging the limitations in terms of recent changes to PAS and the lower than expected response rate. A 'Question 13', ("As part of my research, I will be focussing on specific regions in England and Wales. Would you be willing to be interviewed for this research, if required? (Please tick)"), was also included, but further interviews were not carried out in the end due to time constraints and because a large amount of data had already been collected from other areas of research for the thesis, such as the archives. Focussed interviews or focus groups with FLOs would be a useful exercise, however, for future research.

Frequencies and percentages for the quantitative data are listed in Appendix 21. It is noteworthy that two responses came from the same region (Somerset and Dorset) as there were two FLOs working in that region at that time, and both responded. Both sets of responses are included, since they illustrate the impressions of individual respondents.

Question 1: Name

The names of each respondent are listed in Appendix 22, along with the region for which they were responsible in 2006.

Question 2: Region where responsible as FLO

See above.

Question 3: How long have you worked for PAS?

This question was in two parts.

3a: In your current position?

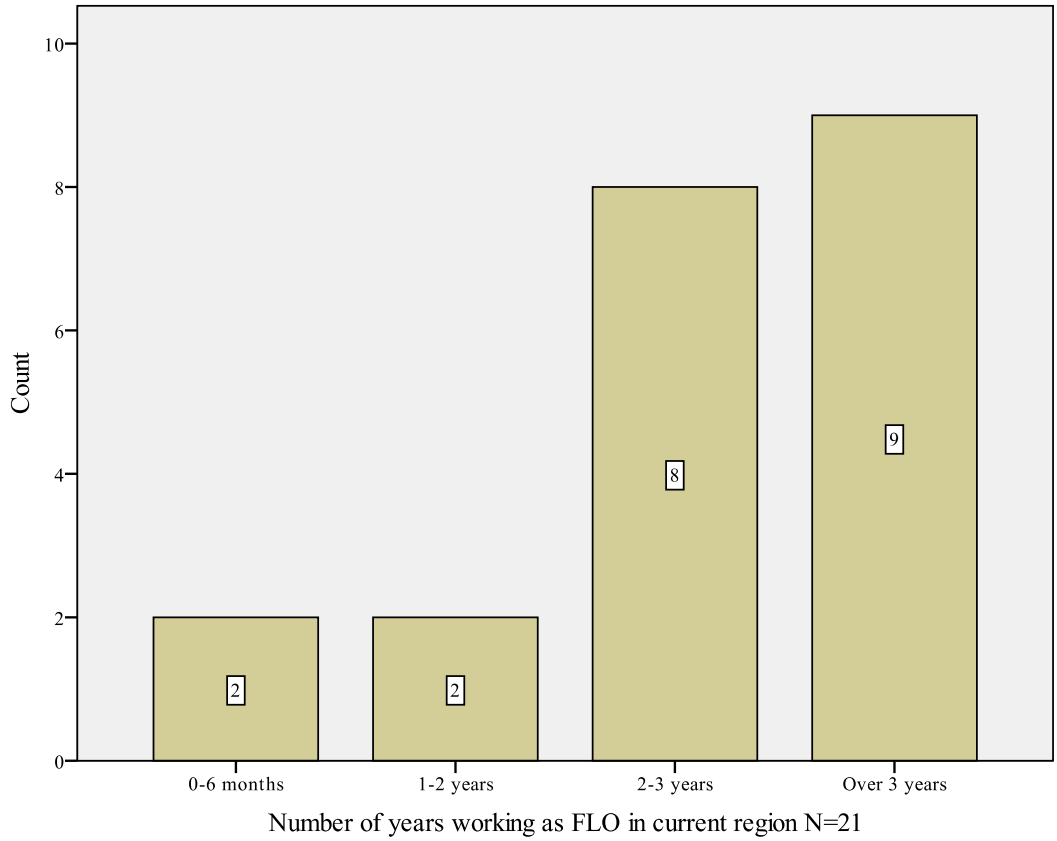

Chart 27 Bar chart showing number of years each FLO had been in current position when surveyed in 2006

The responses indicated that the majority of the respondents (9, 42.9%) had been in their current position when surveyed for over three years. Almost as many (8, 38.1%) had been in their current position for two to three years, while two (9.5%) had been in their current position for one to two years, and two (9.5%) had been in post for six months or less. Three years was selected as the cut-off point for the survey as this was the number of years of national coverage by PAS in 2006. However some staff could have been in their positions, or working for PAS generally, for up to nine years since the scheme's inception in 1997.

3b: In total?

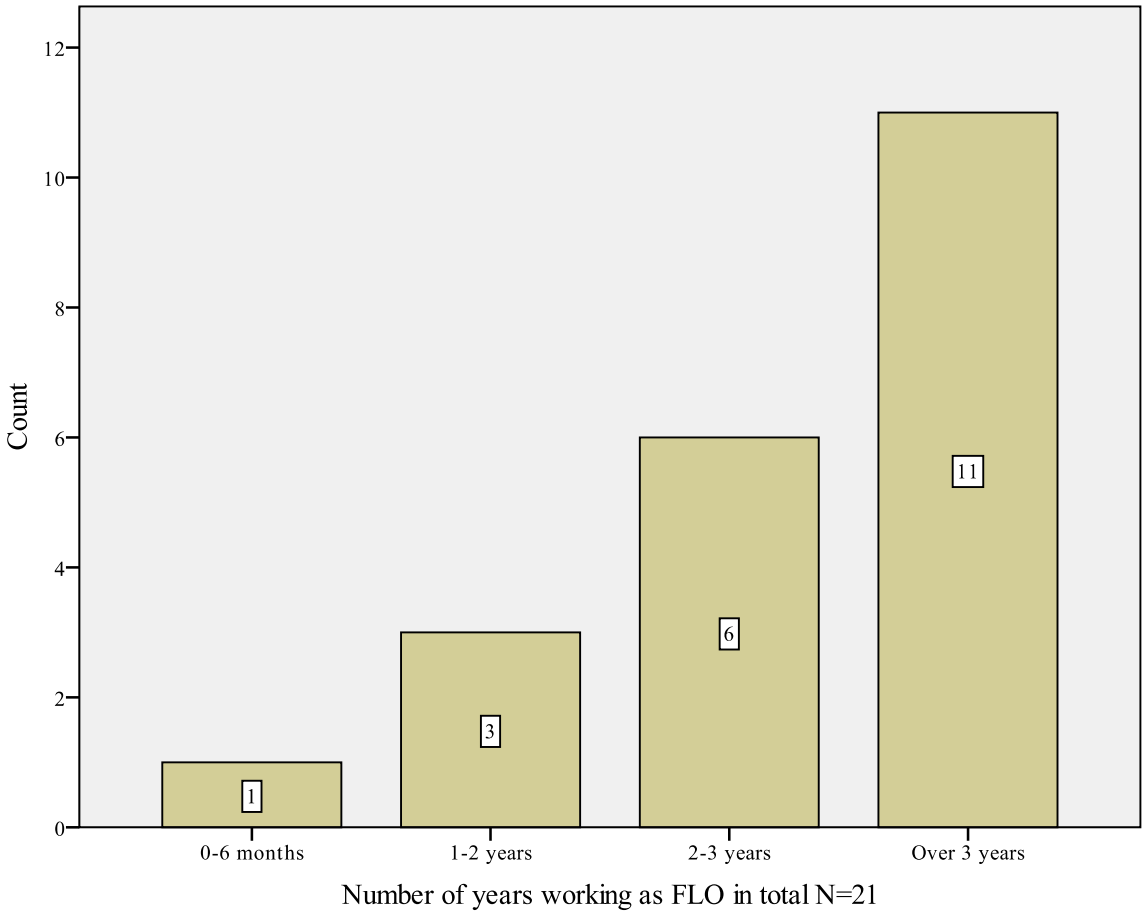

Chart 28 Bar chart showing years FLO had worked as a FLO in total when surveyed in 2006

The slight differences in the numbers between the two questions show that the majority, 11 (52.4%), had been working for PAS as a FLO for more than three years. Only one respondent (4.8%) had worked as a FLO for six months or less, indicating that several respondents had worked as FLOs in different regions before their 2006 post.

Question 4: Number of known metal detecting clubs in your area

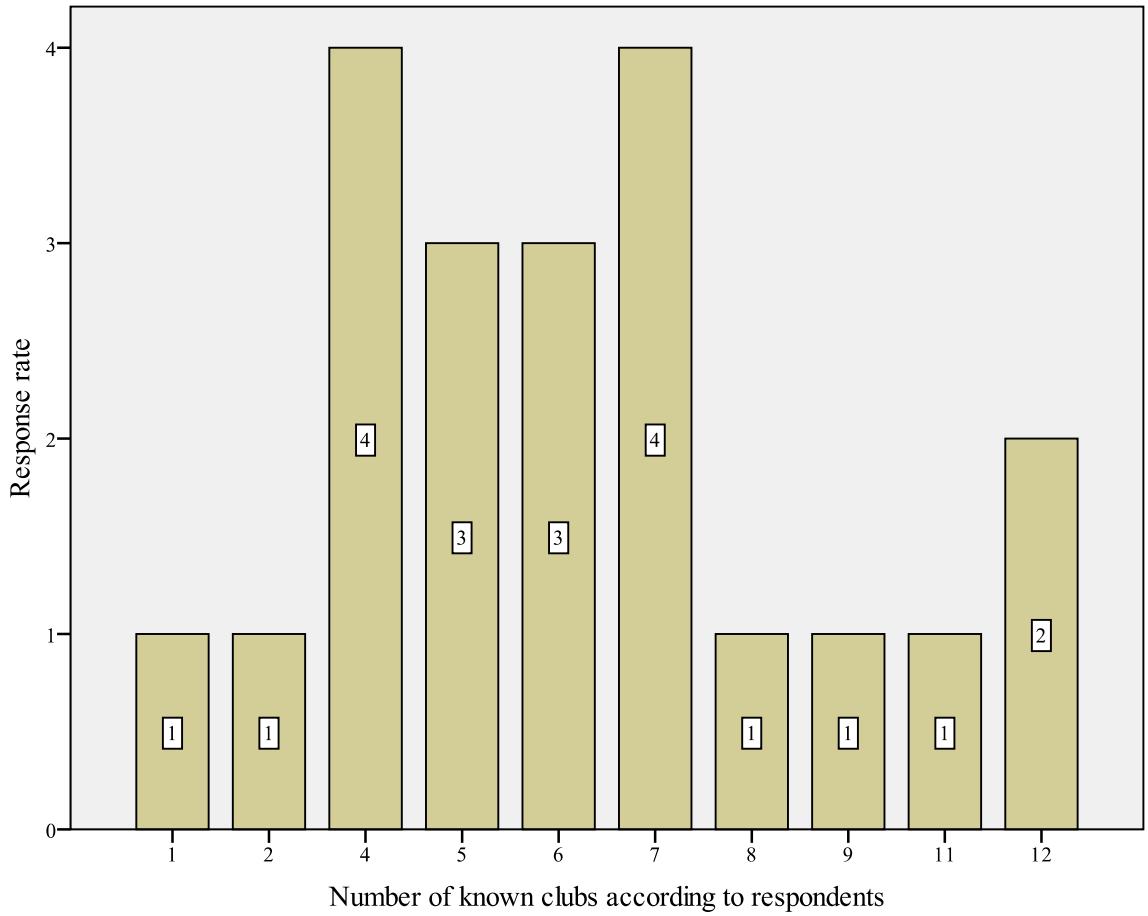

Chart 29 Bar chart showing number of known metal detecting clubs per region according to FLOs when surveyed in 2006 N=21

The results shown in Chart 29 are compared later with PAS data from annual reports.

4a: Number of clubs who responded to contact made by a FLO (you or a predecessor)

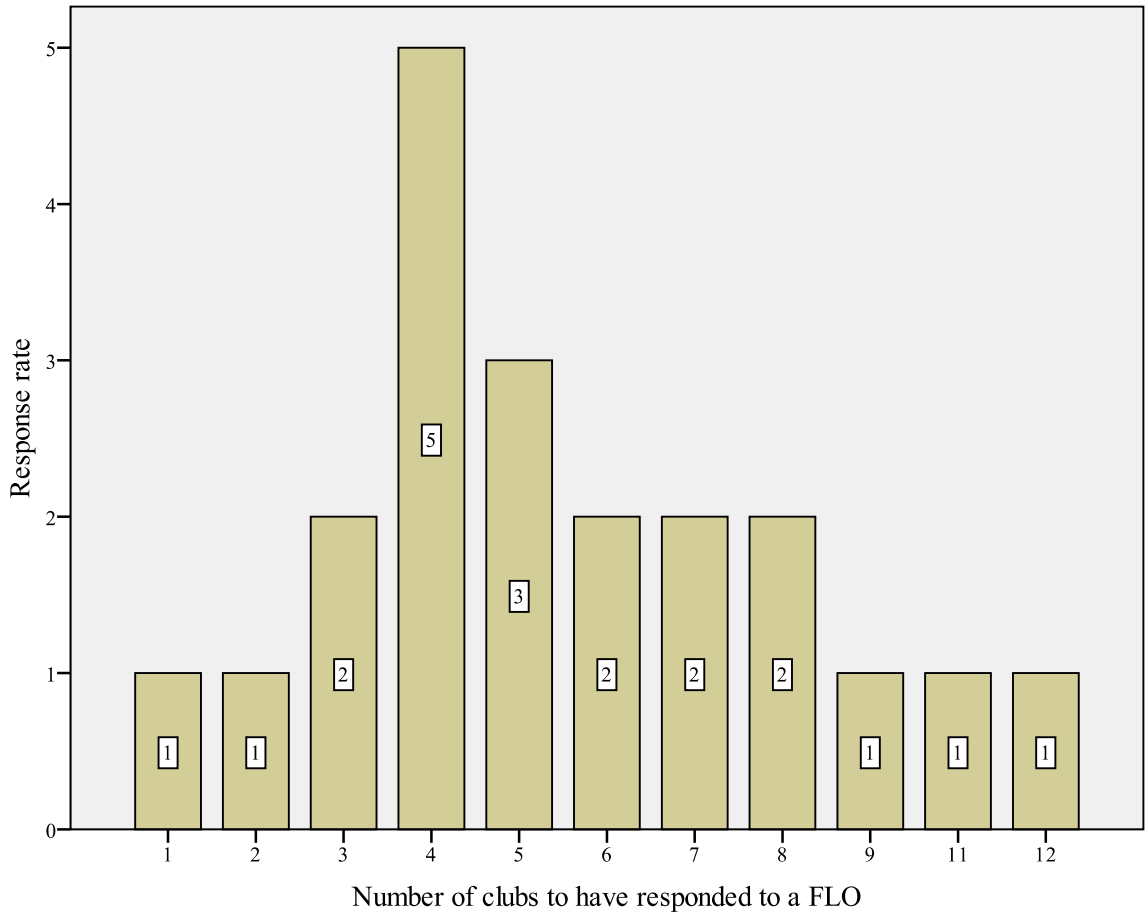

Chart 30 Bar chart to show number of clubs that responded to FLO contact per region N=21

The estimated total number of clubs that responded to PAS, for the sample, was between 113 and 115, taking into account the duplication of regional responses for Somerset and Dorset, and for Wales, and that two of the responses were estimates.

4b: Number of clubs that made contact themselves with PAS without initial communication from a FLO

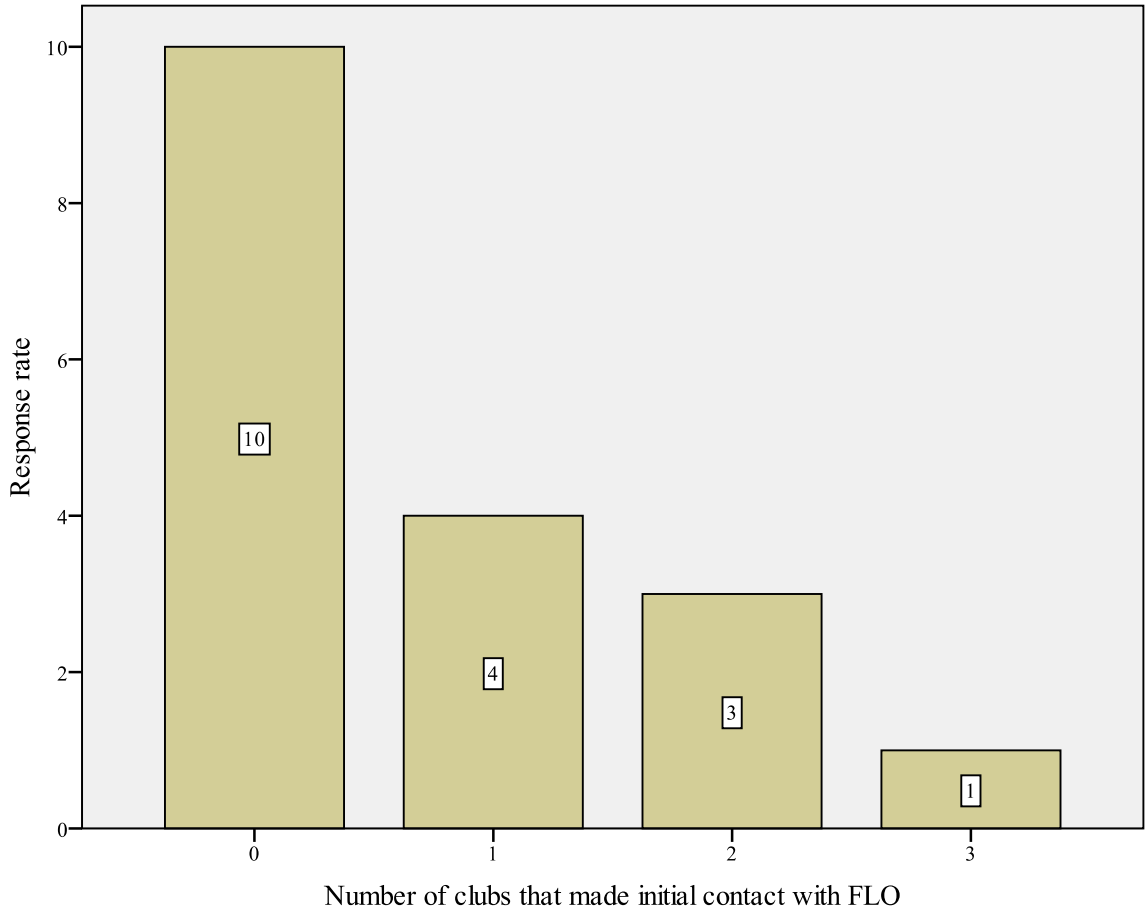

Chart 31 Bar chart to show number of clubs that contacted PAS without initial communication from a FLO N=18

Three respondents did not answer this question. Three respondents said that their answer was an estimate. Thus, the total number of metal detecting clubs that made contact with PAS without initial communication from a FLO was approximately 13.

4c: Number of clubs that have been invited to work with PAS but have declined

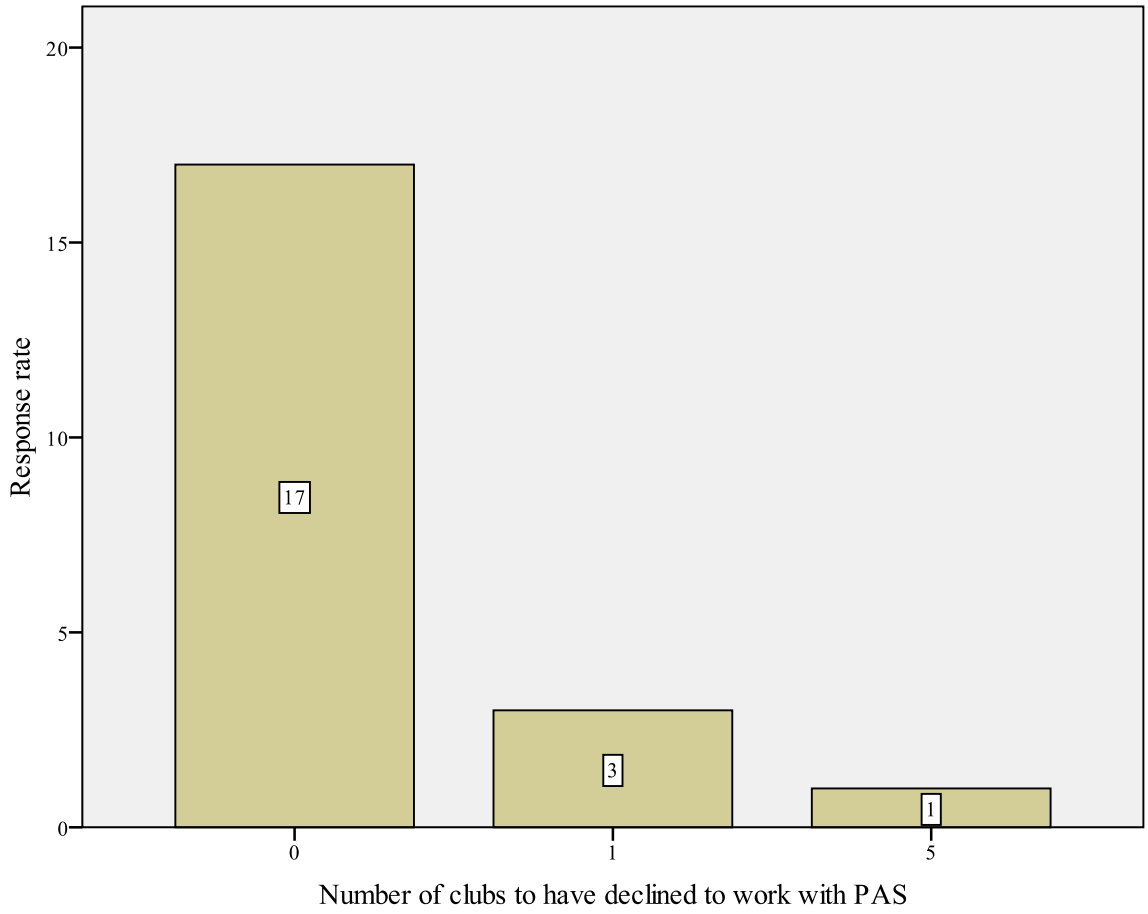

Chart 32 Bar chart to show clubs per FLO response that were invited to work with PAS but declined N=21

Two respondents, including the one that said that five clubs had declined involvement, indicated that their answer was an estimate. The majority of respondents (17, 81%) responded that no clubs that were contacted in their regions had declined to be involved with PAS. Approximately eight clubs seem to have declined in total for the sample of FLO regions shown in the questionnaire responses.

4d: Number of clubs that have worked with PAS

It became apparent from respondents that the definition of 'work' in this context was unclear, leading to various, not very comparable, responses.

4e: Number of clubs that have not been contacted by PAS (and any reasons why)

Only one FLO reported that perhaps 3-5 clubs in their region had not been contacted. The reason given was non-response (perhaps to the current FLO's predecessor) or because the

club had disbanded. Thus, there was no indication of any FLO deliberately avoiding any metal detecting clubs.

Question 5: Number of individual metal-detector users (i.e. non-club members) who you see per annum.

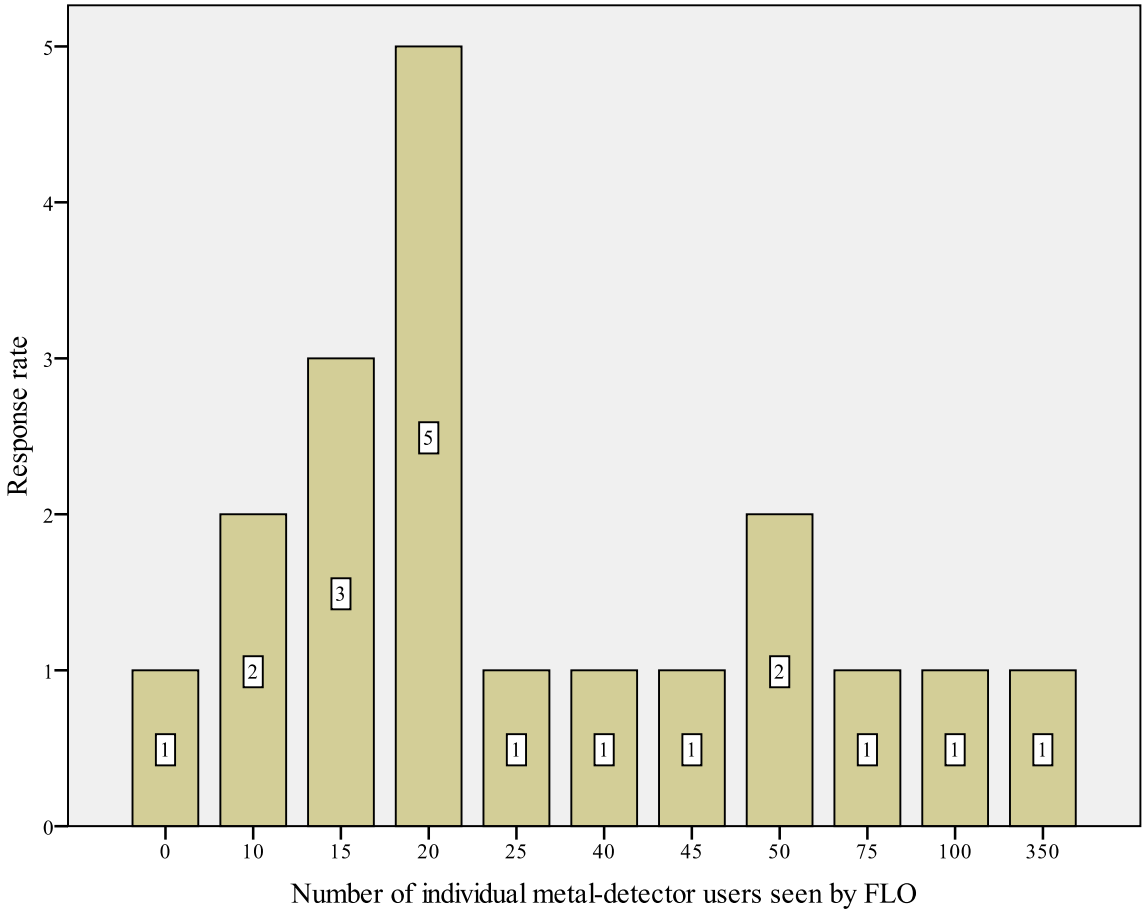

Chart 33 Bar chart to show number of individual metal-detector users (rather than club members) seen by FLOs

The responses were all estimates apart from two. Two respondents chose not to answer. An estimate, taking into account duplicate region responses, indicates a sample total between 855 and 880. The response of 350 may have been anomalous, possibly indicating a large attendance event, such as a metal detecting rally.

Question 6: Number of metal-detector users known to you who have contacts with other archaeologists/heritage specialists e.g. community archaeologist or museum staff, but no direct contact with PAS.

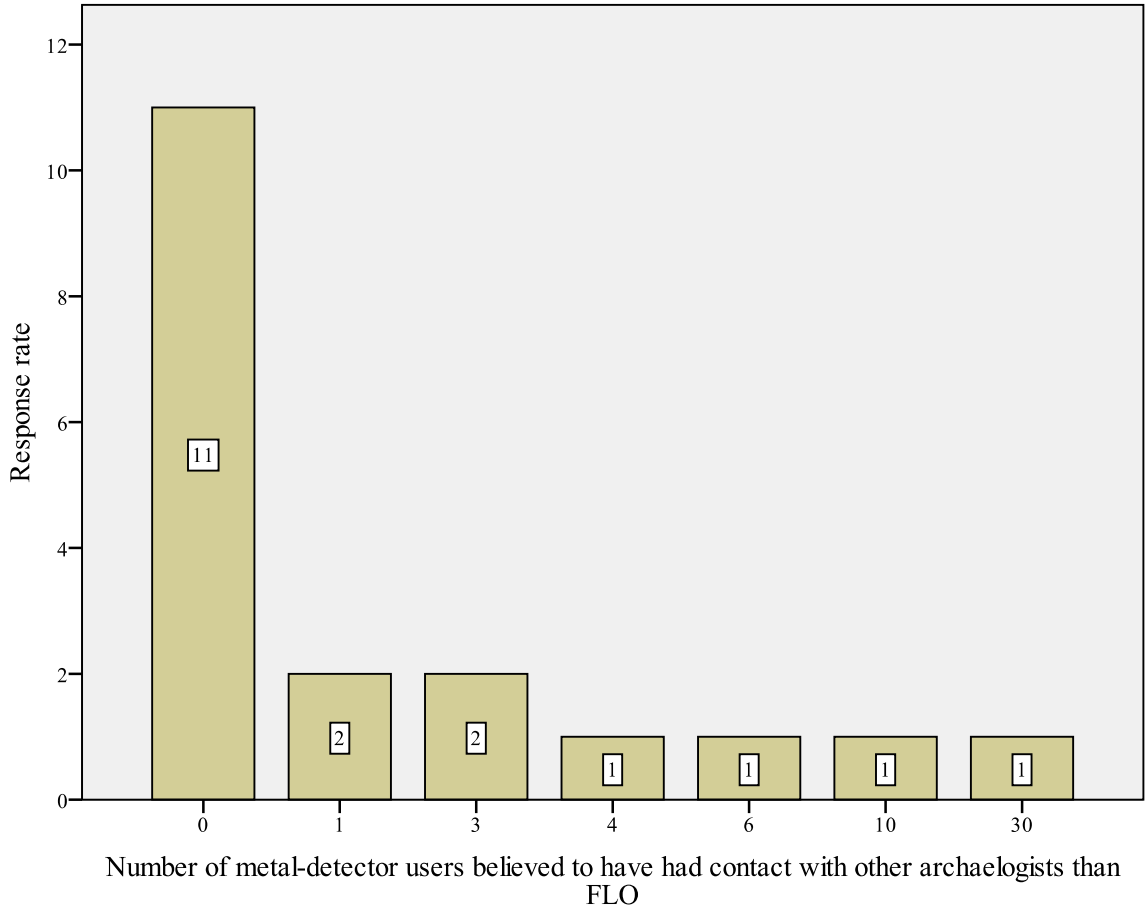

Chart 34 Bar chart to show number of metal-detector users according to FLO responses that have contact with other archaeologists but no direct contact with PAS

The Y-axis shows number of metal-detector users known to have contacts with other archaeologists or heritage specialists, while the X-axis depicts the number of FLOs who gave the answers shown in the Y-axis. 11 answers were estimates, and two respondents did not answer. Most respondents (11, 52.4%) indicated that no metal-detector users in their regions were in contact with other archaeologists rather than the FLO. However, the highest number was estimated to be 30 (by one respondent), with 8 (38.1%) of respondents indicating that at least some metal-detector users in their region were known to be in contact with other archaeologists, but not the FLO.

Question 7: Would you say that there has been an increase or decrease of metal-detector user involvement with PAS in your region in the past three years?

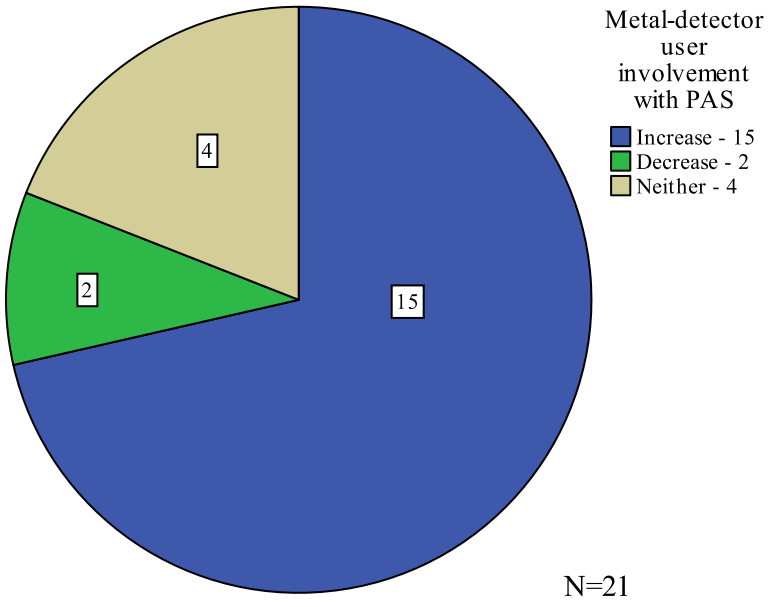

Chart 35 Pie chart to show responses from FLOs regarding whether contact with metal-detector users had increased, decreased or stayed the same

The majority (15, 71.4%) indicated that there was an increase in metal-detector user involvement with PAS. Two respondents (9.5%) indicated a decrease.

7a: What, in your opinion, are the main reasons for this trend?

The majority of these qualitative responses dealt with an increase in contact with metal-detector users. They cited reasons such as metal-detector users appreciating assistance with Treasure claims, the increased promotion of PAS' aims through outreach and publicity, and general interest from metal-detector users in learning more about their finds. One respondent said that the hobby seemed to be becoming more popular, and, in another case, PAS recording seemed to be viewed as a means of increasing monetary value for an item. This can be seen in some eBay entries, where PAS recording is listed as an attribute in favour of the item for sale, and in turn raises questions about the unwitting role that PAS may have in supporting the trade in English and Welsh antiquities. Given the problem of unprovenanced antiquities, perhaps recording an object with PAS is seen as a mark of authenticity. This, in turn, might lend a spurious legitimacy to the items for sale from the point of view of unsuspecting buyers. The most common reason given was that trust between the FLOs and metal-detector users had built up, often over some years.

Of the two reports of a decrease, one reason given was that the FLO had actually cut down on their number of visits to clubs, and as a result, there were fewer metal-detector user recordings, since the metal-detector users rarely came to the FLO's office to report their finds. The other response, with a specific request to remain anonymous, indicated that, in their region, there was very little confidence in the ability of PAS to record finds, and that what finds did come through had been "*filtered*", indicating that there were more finds made than were being reported. Such a response, while in the minority, indicates that there are still serious issues of cooperation between FLOs and metal-detector users in some parts of England and Wales.

Of the four reports of no increase or decrease, these respondents mostly attributed the steadiness of the numbers of metal-detector users to fluctuation. Some metal-detector users, it was reported, seemed to be losing interest in PAS or the hobby altogether, while others newer to the hobby were coming to PAS through word of mouth and effectively taking their places, so that while the individuals involved with PAS might change, the total number did not.

Question 8: Are you aware of any serious incidents of nighthawking in your region?

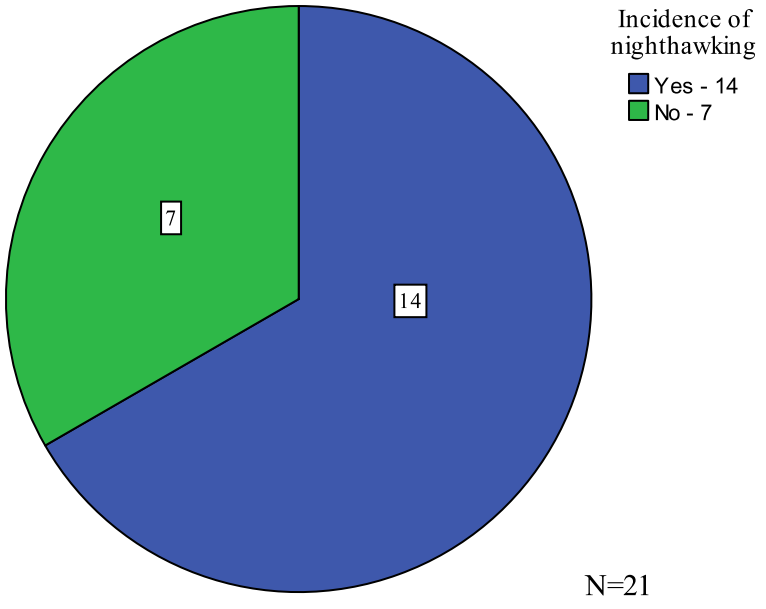

Chart 36 Pie chart showing FLO awareness of nighthawking in their region

Two thirds (14, 66.7%) of the respondents indicated that serious nighthawking took place in their region. One third (7, 33%) of the sample indicated no known serious nighthawking.

8a: If yes, how many incidents in the past 12 months?

Due to the clandestine nature of nighthawking, many responses were estimates. The highest figure cited was five, while five respondents said that they could not quantify.

8b: Are there any specific sites/areas that seem to be particularly vulnerable to nighthawking?

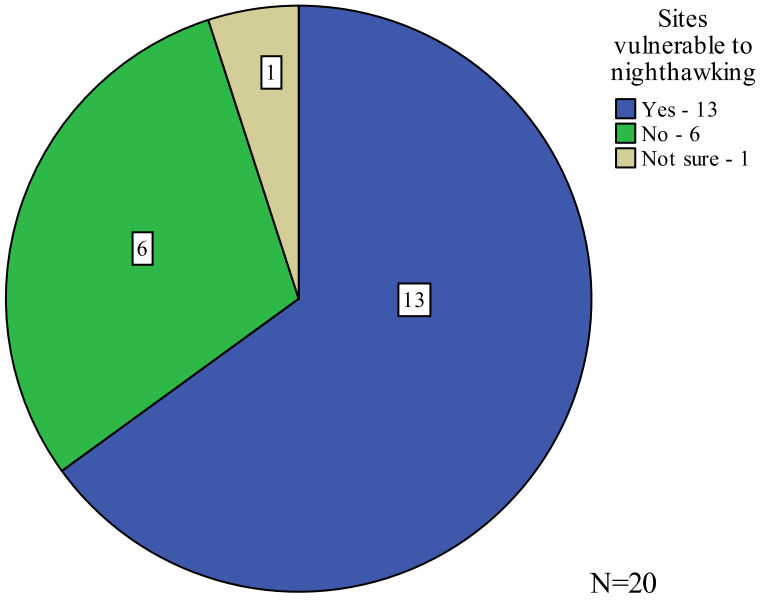

Chart 37 Pie chart to show whether specific sites were known as vulnerable to nighthawking

In some cases, specific sites were named as vulnerable to nighthawks, such as the Roman City of Wroxeter, Lancaster Castle, Porchester Castle and Llanmartin Roman settlement. In total, respondents specifically named 20 separate sites or areas. Other general types of sites were named, such as SAMs and city centre excavations. The general impression gained was of sites, which indicated the possibility of finds by their status. SAMs, areas associated with periods known to yield metal finds (such as Roman or Anglo-Saxon), areas that had been looted before, or places of current archaeological interest such as excavations, were the most vulnerable. However, not all areas had known, quantifiable, nighthawking, as shown by the previous question.

Because responses were not received from every region, and potentially as the data was gathered in a different year, it is not directly comparable to the results of the report on nighthawking prepared by Oxford Archaeology (2009a; 2009b). However, for the 10 areas identified by Oxford Archaeology (2009a: 103) as having the highest incidences of

nighthawking, or where nighthawking on scheduled sites has increased, five were represented in the FLO responses. Of these, four reported that sites were vulnerable to nighthawks. This suggests that these particular results are, for the most part, consistent with the findings of Oxford Archaeology (2009a). However, a further nine areas not singled out in the Oxford Archaeology conclusions reported sites vulnerable to nighthawking. Oxford Archaeology may have noted these regional instances as well, but not then singled out for mention in their conclusions if the rate of nighthawking did not appear to have increased or to be noticeably high.

8c: Have there been, to your knowledge, any convictions or attempted convictions for nighthawking in your region in the past three years?

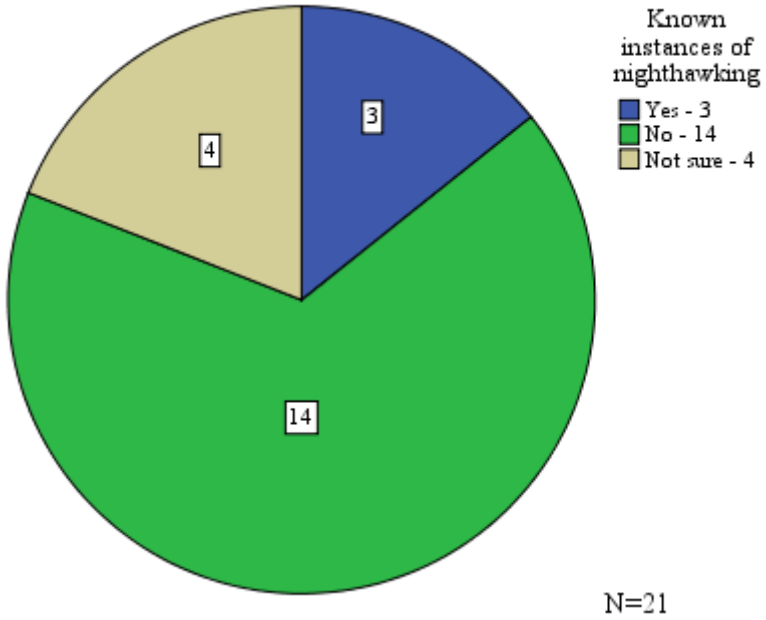

Chart 38 Pie chart to show whether any convictions (or attempted convictions) were known

The majority (14, 66.7%) of respondents indicated that there had been no convictions for nighthawking over the past three years to the best of their knowledge. Only three respondents (14.3%) did know of any convictions, while four respondents (19%) were unsure.

Question 9: What, in your opinion, are the key challenges regarding engaging metal-detector users faced by FLOs in general?

The key issues brought up in this section concerned the different types of values assigned to portable antiquities by metal-detector users and archaeologists. One FLO commented:

> "*The main challenge is that detector users come from a completely different philosophical background to FLOs. Many detector users simply do not see artefacts and detecting the same way that FLOs (and archaeologists in general) do.*"

Another FLO observed similarly that it was key to move "*…detectorists beyond a basic interest in finds to a more rounded archaeological interest in what finds can tell us about past societies*". Other comments were on educating metal-detector users about the importance of all finds, for example, "*persuading them that we want to see all their finds, not just the good conditions or rare items.*"

Some respondents mentioned the quality of find spot information. This is known to be an issue for some metal-detector users, suspicious of giving too much information to FLOs in case this affects access to finds-rich areas (see Chapter 7). The most significant issue brought up seemed to be that of trust (or distrust). This included suggesting the FLOs use continuity in their approach to change attitudes towards PAS gradually. In other words, that their continued presence and their interaction with metal-detector users over a period time might lead to a change in attitudes and an increase in trust. Essentially, it relates to the development of social and cultural capital between the FLO and the metal-detector users.

Question 10: What, in your opinion, are your own key challenges?

These responses indicated specifically local challenges (although one FLO commented, "*I think we all face similar challenges…*"). Seven respondents brought up the issue of balancing the workload, especially concerning backlogs of finds recording. Clark's (2008) report on PAS, discussed later in the chapter, also mentioned the issue of the demanding workload. One respondent elaborated that, due to the necessary focus on recording data and a lack of time for further research, potentially significant discoveries might go unnoticed:

"*Our database is full of really important information which if it was in academic journals would be extremely valuable. Often we as a group concentrate on the finds and seldom have a chance to analyse the data in a meaningful way at either a regional or local landscape view. Publication in peer review journals is often not available due to the time constants of putting papers together.*"

It was also clear from three responses that memories of earlier antagonisms between archaeologists and metal-detector users were still relevant. One FLO cited the challenge of:

"*Continuing the outreach aims of the scheme when there are still so many detectorists that still believe in the 'urban myths' about archaeologists and do not recognise that the 'old animosity' is more of a memory than reality. Ideas are very entrenched in the detecting community.*"

It is also significant that, when contacted in 2008 regarding their inclusion in the thesis' appendices, several of the FLOs specifically requested that if their comments were to be used, it should be anonymously. This was especially the case for those from areas where tensions with metal-detector users seemed apparent from their responses. This suggested that the potential to damage relationships through the FLO's connection with negative comments was something that respondents felt keenly.

Question 11: What could happen (in an 'ideal world') to improve any of the challenges/issues described in Questions 8, 9 and/or 10?

This question elicited a wide variety of suggestions. They included: more formal training of metal-detector users in archaeological practices; a greater awareness from the police and the public about the problem of nighthawking; an increase in resources for PAS and the heritage sector as a whole; simplification of the Treasure system; greater regulation of antiquity sales, and greater integration of metal-detector users into the wider amateur archaeology community.

Question 12: Any additional comments?

Most respondents chose not to make additional comments, but the main themes covered by those that did concerned the continuing suspicion and apathy of metal-detector users towards PAS, and the need for increased resources, especially through extra personnel, to help promote and increase the coverage of PAS. One FLO added that, "*more work needs to be done on following-up important discoveries and on researching the huge amount of data collected by PAS*". The more recent funding of several PhDs researching PAS database material (incidentally some of these candidates are former FLOs) indicates that this is increasingly happening. Comments in Questions 11 and 12 indicated concern at the way in which PAS operates in Wales in particular, where low staffing and financial support seemed an issue. This is discussed later in the chapter.

Observations

Question 4 looked at the clubs known per region, and the ways in which contact had been made. The number of clubs varied per region, as does the geographical size of regions (for example, Lancashire and Cumbria is around three times the size of Northamptonshire), as well as the relative frequency in the archaeological deposit of metal artefacts. Thus, calculating average numbers would not be helpful, for example, for how many clubs were in each region. PAS itself monitors centrally the total number of clubs per region, as well as the number that decline to work with PAS, and publishes the statistics in their annual reports. The *PAS Annual Report 2005-6*, and the forthcoming annual report for 2006-7 (PAS *in prep.*) both cover the period when the survey was carried out. Therefore, the PAS figures from both reports covering 2006 for the regions in the survey sample are reproduced below (Table 5) for comparison with the results collected here, including columns showing the variations between the results of this survey and the 'official' PAS data.

Table 5 Comparison of survey results and official PAS results for 2005-6 and 2006-7. Only the regions that responded to the thesis' questionnaire are included. North West Wales is shown in grey for information, as it is included in the total for Wales, and so not included separately in PAS statistics. Differences between PAS results and the thesis' results are shown in italics

Region	**Number of metal detecting clubs according to this research (clubs that declined to participate in brackets)**	**Number of clubs according to PAS Annual Report 2005-6 (2006d: 121) (clubs that declined to participate in brackets)**	***Thesis result minus PAS (2006d) result***	**Number of clubs according to PAS Annual Report 2006-7 (*in prep.*) (clubs that declined to participate in brackets)**	***Thesis result minus PAS (in prep.) result***
North East	12 (5)	15 (0)	*-3 (5)*	13 (2)	*-1 (3)*
Cornwall	4 (0)	3 (0)	*1 (0)*	3 (0)	*1 (0)*
Hampshire	2 (0)	3 (0)	*1 (0)*	3 (0)	*-1 (0)*
Leicestershire and Rutland	4 (0)	4 (0)	*0 (0)*	4 (1)	*0 (-1)*
Somerset and Dorset	5 (1) or 4 (0) – two FLO responses	4 (0)	*-1 (1) or 0 (0)*	4 (0)	*-1 (1) or 0 (0)*
Kent	12 (0)	11 (0)	*1 (0)*	12 (0)	*0 (0)*
Lancashire and Cumbria	4 (0)	5 (0)	*-1 (0)*	5 (0)	*-1 (0)*
Northamptonshire	6 (0)	6 (0)	*0 (0)*	5 (1)	*1 (-1)*
Herefordshire and Shropshire	5 (0)	3 (0)	*2 (0)*	4 (1)	*1 (-1)*
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	7 (0)	3 (0)	*4 (0)*	5 (1)	*2 (-1)*
Buckinghamshire	7 (0)	3 (0)	*4 (0)*	4 (0)	*3 (0)*
Cheshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside	7 (0)	8 (0)	*-1 (0)*	8 (0)	*-1 (0)*
Wales	9 (0)	9 (0)	*0 (0)*	10 (0)	*-1 (0)*
(NW Wales)	1 (1)	N/A	*N/A*	N/A	*N/A*
Sussex (East and West)	11 (0)	11 (0)	*0 (0)*	8 (0)	*3 (0)*
Essex	6 (1)	6 (0)	*0 (1)*	7 (1)	*-1 (0)*
Lincolnshire	4 (0)	4 (0)	*0 (0)*	4 (0)	*0 (0)*
Surrey	7 (0)	8 (0)	*-1 (0)*	6 (0)	*1 (0)*
Gloucestershire and Avon	6 (0)	5 (0)	*1 (0)*	6 (0)	*0 (0)*
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire	8 (0)	8 (0)	*0 (0)*	7 (0)	*1 (0)*
TOTAL	**126 (8) or 125 (7)**	**119 (0)**	***7 (8) or 6 (7)***	**118 (7)**	***8 (1) or 7 (0)***

Only one of the regions, Lincolnshire, showed no change between the FLO survey and the results for both annual reports. The FLO survey also suggested between six and eight more clubs in total than are indicated in the annual report data. The survey results indicated that between seven and eight clubs had declined to become involved with PAS in the sample regions, compared to none in the sample regions for the 2005-6 report, or seven in the 2006-7 report. Thus, survey results indicated potentially more clubs than PAS centrally estimates, but also a higher number of clubs not in contact with PAS, certainly according to the 2005-6 report. The annual report for 2006-7 (PAS *in prep*.) seems to suggest an increase in the number of metal detecting clubs not working with PAS since the previous annual report for the regions in the sample.

In some cases, there was quite a dramatic difference between the sets of results. For example, in two instances (Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire) the survey results indicated more than twice as many clubs in the two regions than the 2005-6 statistics suggested, with the increase in the 2006-7 report still not as high as the figures given in the questionnaire carried out for the thesis. In addition, the Trust Liaison Officer for North West Wales suggested that one club did not participate in that region, compared to none suggested by the FLO for the whole of Wales and PAS official data. It is possible, however, that the club in question was in contact with the FLO in Cardiff, but not with the North West Wales Trust Liaison Officer.

Although none of the respondents indicated that their answers for the total number of clubs in their region were an estimate, it is possible that they were estimating. This would be a possible explanation for the two different answers from the FLOs responsible for Somerset and Dorset. In addition, as some FLOs may work with clubs across county boundaries, indicated in the regularly-updated reference list kept centrally by PAS of known metal detecting clubs (PAS 2008), it is possible that some clubs were counted in the sample regions for the survey that were actually accounted for in different regions in the PAS annual report. In the cases where results correlate, it is also possible that FLOs were referring to the central results for their regions, although further investigation would be required to test this theory. Comparing the results gathered for the thesis with ‘official’ PAS data may highlight questions over how reliable any statistical data is concerning PAS interaction with metal detecting clubs. This would be particularly significant if it is the case that clubs are being counted more than once (if active in more than one FLO region), or that the natural

fluctuation in numbers is in fact quite dramatic even over the space of one year. After all, as the previous chapter has shown, the exact number of clubs seems unknown, even on official metal detecting websites. The fluctuating number of clubs welcoming or not welcoming PAS involvement might also be indicative of changing attitudes. Vomvyla (2008), for example, demonstrated the impact of the attitude of the chair of the metal detecting club towards PAS on the club's likelihood to be involved with the scheme:

> "*Clubs with enthusiastic chairmen towards having their finds recorded have the highest proportion of members making finds available for recording. Chairman's enthusiastic attitude also contributes in recording finds at a greater findspot precision. The majority of finds recorded at eight figures concern clubs with enthusiastic chairmen towards making their finds available for recording.*"
>
> (Vomvyla 2008: 21, *sic*.)

Interestingly, despite an apparent rise in clubs not inviting FLOs (if one looks at the PAS data in Table 5), most FLOs reported an increase in contact with metal-detector users generally.

The annual reports do not describe the methodology used for recording the numbers of clubs and interaction with FLOs, although Bland (*pers. comm.*, 24th November 2008) confirmed that the data is collated from information provided by FLOs, as was the survey data discussed in this chapter. Thus, the discrepancies may also indicate the application of approximations, to the researcher's questionnaire, and/or to PAS central statistics, as well as the natural fluctuation of total clubs. Hence, while the responses collected for the survey here differ from the 'official' statistics, they are no less likely to be accurate, and point, together with the data collected centrally by PAS, at the apparent difficulty that can occur in attempts to quantify the existing number of metal detecting clubs.

The rest of Question 4 indicated that the vast majority of metal detecting clubs in the sample regions were involved with PAS following initial contact by a FLO. While some may have made contact themselves later, it is indicative of the significance of initiating contact on the part of the FLO, but equally of the receptiveness of metal detecting clubs to such contact. However, this contradicts the results of the metal detecting clubs survey, in which slightly more clubs had claimed to initiate contact with PAS, than to have responded to PAS contact.

This possibly indicated estimates on the part of the FLO respondents. Comparisons are problematic, however, as the sample of metal detecting clubs does not always represent the same range of regions as the FLO respondents. In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 7, the results may have skewed in favour of clubs that are proactively involved with archaeologists and more likely to have favoured making contact themselves.

Comments were collected for the thesis such as the one collected from the South Ribble Metal Detecting Club, in Lancashire, that no club member "*would have any objections to assisting or working alongside archaeologists.… …and would certainly welcome the opportunity should it ever arise*". This type of response indicates that some clubs would respond positively to invitations to participate and that perhaps no proactive contact from a FLO or other archaeologist had taken place yet. This tendency for metal detecting clubs to be reactive rather than proactive was also reflected in the results in Chapter 7 that indicated that the majority of work with archaeologists by metal detecting clubs had resulted from invitations by heritage organisations, rather than from initial contact made by the metal detecting clubs themselves.

The estimated numbers of non-club members are roughly comparable with the PAS figures of 1350 independent metal-detector users (Bland 2008a). For the selected regions, the total looks to be 750, as compared to 855 and 880 in the FLO survey undertaken for the thesis. As mentioned earlier however, this figure might be higher than it should be due to the anomalous response of 350 from one FLO, which might have indicated a rally or similar large scale event in their region.

The results of Question 6 indicated that only a relatively small proportion of metal-detector users were known to be in contact with an archaeologist other than the local FLO. 15.1% of respondents to the metal-detector users' survey in Chapter 7 had contact with archaeologists other than those employed by PAS for the recording of their finds, but this had included those using the Treasure Trove systems in Scotland and the Isle of Man.

Question 7 indicated that in most regions there seemed to be an increase in communication with metal-detector users, and that the majority of FLOs felt that this was because of increased trust on the part of metal-detector users. This supports suggestions in Chapter 7 that metal-detector users are starting to receive PAS more positively in most regions. It does not

support recent news reports that the hobby is growing (e.g. BBC News 19th November 2008; Dixon and Hoyle 2008), as only one FLO felt that this was a reason for the increase in communication, and statistics from PAS and the data gathered for this thesis suggest that certainly metal detecting clubs seem to be decreasing in numbers.

The issue of contemporary nighthawking is the topic of the recent report by Oxford Archaeology (2009a; 2009b), which has already been discussed in the thesis. The indications from their survey are that, while much evidence is still based on anecdotes, there are sites that are known to be vulnerable to nighthawking, especially in certain counties (Oxford Archaeology 2009a: np), something reflected in this chapter. A conversation between the researcher and a metal-detector user at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally also suggested that unauthorised metal detecting on private land, i.e. trespassing, in his opinion, was occurring more than people realised. In practice, a FLO is unlikely to come into direct contact with instances of known nighthawking since metal-detector users are unlikely to report finds that were made illegally, or perhaps more likely, they may record the find, but with a false find spot. The researcher actually saw one instance of detecting on a scheduled site at the Snape metal detecting rally in 2006. In this instance, the metal-detector user recorded the location of a particular find as the scheduled area in and around Snape Castle, but it became apparent that she was relatively new to the hobby, and not aware that she had broken the law. This is similar to Saville's (*pers. comm.*, 19th October 2006) observation that only those who were unaware of the law reported unlawful finds to the Scottish Treasure Trove Secretariat. The intentional nighthawks still seem to continue their activities unnoticed and without police intervention for the most part; apart from exceptional (and rare) cases such as Wanborough (see Chapter 6). The very low proportion of convictions or attempted convictions of nighthawks reported in the FLO survey supports this.

In Questions 9, 10 and 11, a number of FLOs mentioned the current Treasure process; particularly that it was a complex and time-consuming process. Since the completion of the survey, a planned *Coroners Bill*, which would have allowed a single Coroner to deal with all cases of Treasure and thereby simplified the process (Bland, *pers. comm.*, 8th November 2006), was dropped (BBC News 6th November 2007). However, the administration of the Treasure system was subsequently absorbed into the British Museum, to become centralised with PAS and make it work more effectively (Bland, *pers. comm.*, 8th November 2006). Since the survey, administration is now all carried out in one place rather than split between the

British Museum and DCMS (Bland, *pers. comm.*, 8th November 2006). Thus, while the system is simpler than it was, there may still be concerns with how long the processing of Treasure can take, something the researcher has heard about in informal visits to metal detecting clubs in the North East of England. More recently, the *Coroners Bill* has been picked up by the current 2008-9 Parliament (e.g. Politics.co.uk 2009) and hence, depending on its progress and modifications during debates, may soon lead to a simplification of the Treasure process. As already mentioned, by far the most significant response in this section of answers was to do with the building up of trust and cooperation with metal-detector users.

In 2008, a placement student working with the PAS' headquarters in London carried out a study of the relationships between FLOs and their local metal detecting clubs. Vomvyla (2008) issued questionnaires to all FLOs concerning the level at which metal detecting clubs were engaging with them, such as how frequently the clubs had visits from the FLO, the proportion of club members that recorded with the FLO, and the degree of accuracy of find spot information disclosed. The findings of this report concluded that, of the 153 clubs identified by Vomvyla at the time of the survey, nine did not welcome FLOs (Vomvyla 2008: 21). Further research could confirm such factors as the attitude of club chairs, mentioned earlier, on the level of PAS interaction at metal detecting clubs by carrying out further survey work with metal detecting clubs.

When compared to the results of the FLO survey for the thesis, it is clear that Vomvyla's direct involvement with the central headquarters of PAS had an impact on the response rate, at 100% rather than 54%. The development over the summer months of 2008 of an important consultancy report on PAS, commissioned in order to help inform decisions about PAS' future (Clark 2008, see below), may also have engendered willingness to participate in the survey. Since Vomvyla's report was developed centrally, it is very possible that it was anticipated that the results of the report would be passed on as evidence to the consultant.

8.3 Analysis of wider public opinion: the *Buried Treasure* exhibition feedback

Introduction to results

A sample of visitors to the *Buried Treasure: Finding our Past* touring exhibition during its period at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle (12th February to 26th June 2005) were

interviewed for an exit survey. The researcher carried out the majority of the questionnaires, with some additional ones carried out by students from the ICCHS. Additional data was sought from a visit to the British Museum to analyse feedback from other stages of the touring exhibition, which also visited London, Cardiff, Manchester, and Norwich. Unfortunately, the data found at the British Museum was scant and sporadic; illustrating a lack of evaluative planning built into the British Museum's and partner museums' strategy for touring this exhibition. It meant that there was no data directly comparable with the survey carried out in Newcastle. This section first describes the exhibition, and then the presents and analyses the survey. Appendix 10 shows the questionnaire.

The Exhibition

British Museum staff designed the *Buried Treasure* touring exhibition, which was developed to contribute to the delivery of the strategic aims of the British Museum, one of which stated that:

> "*The Museum has a further responsibility to work more widely across Britain; both with and through the museum community but also through the education sector, broadcasting and new media to realise fully its national remit.*"
>
> (British Museum 2005: 2)

Thus, *Buried Treasure* constituted one of several touring exhibitions delivered through the 'Partnership UK' scheme (British Museum 2004) delivered primarily through regional museum hubs.

Buried Treasure aimed to demonstrate the types of 'treasure' that had been found by ordinary members of the public, many of who were metal-detector users, and to demonstrate the contribution that they have made to archaeological knowledge (Thomas 2006: 253). It included some of the most famous finds in Britain, such as the Mildenhall Treasure (Figure 8.1); highlighted the implications for archaeological heritage when items are not reported properly, such as at Wanborough, and described the role of PAS to a wider audience. Professional critiques have been made of the success of this exhibition to deliver its message (e.g. Saville 2004; Price 2004), and countless more archaeologists have made their views

known via the informal route of the Britarch Discussion Forum[21] and similar online discussion facilities. *Treasure: Finding our Past* (Hobbs 2003) was published to complement the exhibition and to elaborate on the issues that it presented.

Figure 8.1 The famous Mildenhall Treasure, as displayed at the *Buried Treasure* exhibition at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle 2005

The Questionnaire Survey

The exit survey devised for the thesis aimed primarily to assess the level of awareness of museum visitors concerning issues surrounding metal detecting and archaeology, and particularly PAS. In addition, the survey included market research questions. Due to seeking permission to carry out the questionnaire from the Senior Curator of the Hancock Museum, Questions 1-7 were included to assist the Hancock Museum, the North East Regional Museums Hub, and the British Museum. In addition, Question 13 was included directly as a request of the Hancock Museum, and has little relevance to the thesis but relevance to their required evaluation of the exhibition and of visitors' awareness of British Museum involvement in certain touring exhibitions. Thus, the results of Questions 1, 4, 6, 7, and 13 are omitted here. The total number of questionnaire responses collected was 195. The corresponding frequency and percentage tables are shown in Appendix 23.

[21] See www.britarch.ac.uk for email discussion archives, particularly May and June 2005 for discussions of *Buried Treasure*.

Question 2: Gender

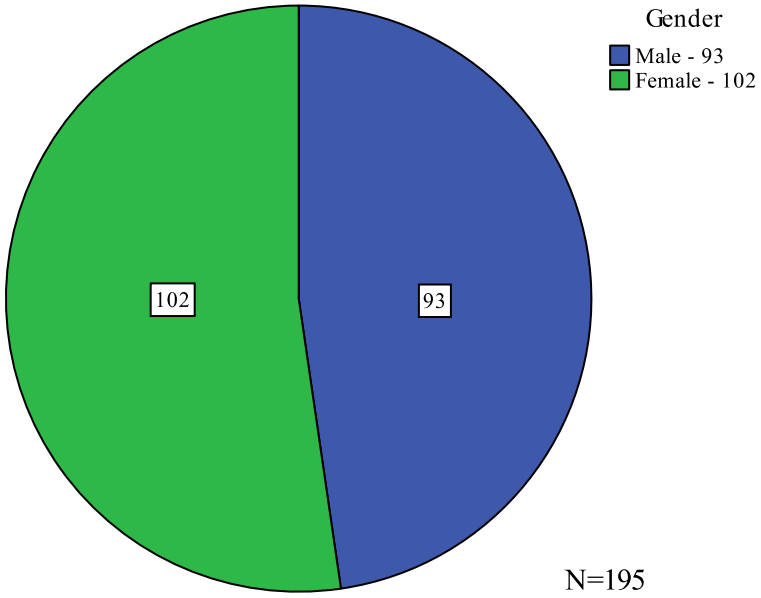

Chart 39 Pie chart to show the gender of the respondents

The results were fairly even, although slightly more respondents (102, 52.3%) were female. These results are cross-tabulated later with other results.

Question 3: Age range

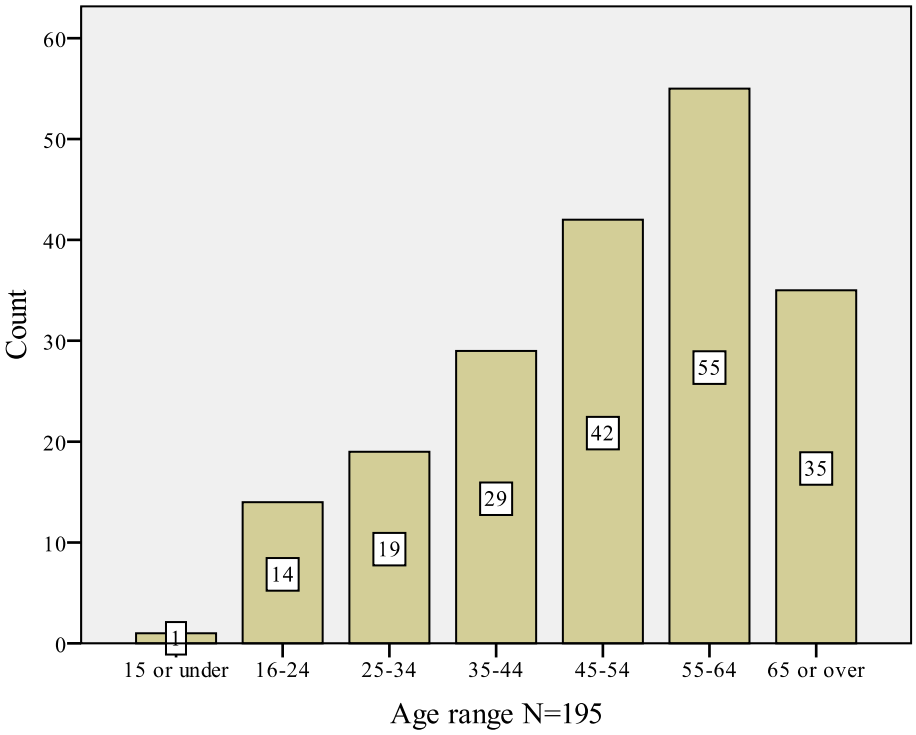

Chart 40 Bar chart to show the age ranges of respondents

The majority of respondents were middle aged or older; with the highest percentage (55, 28.2%) in the age range 55-64. Reluctance to interview very young visitors, especially if parents or guardians were not present, slightly skews the results away from responses from this age group (the one response for 15 or under was taken in the presence of, and with permission from, the young person's legal guardian).

Question 5: Why did you visit this exhibition today?

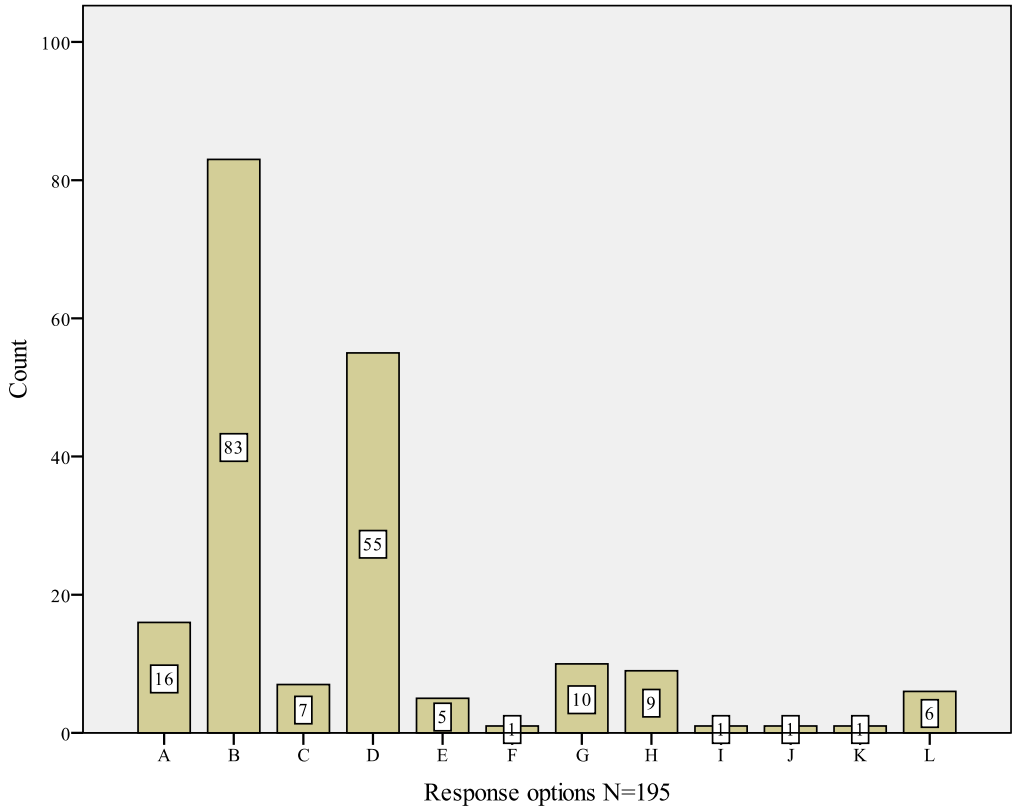

Chart 41 Bar chart indicating why respondents had visited *Buried Treasure.*
Key: A=Visiting Museum; B=Archaeology; C=PAS; D=Other; E=Visiting Museum and Archaeology; F=Visiting and Other; G=Archaeology and PAS; H=Archaeology and Other; I=PAS and Other; J=Visiting Museum and Archaeology and PAS; K=Visiting Museum and PAS and Other; L=Archaeology and PAS and Other

As a number of responses were possible for this question, and some respondents gave more than one reason, the results above include combined answers. The majority (109, 55.9%) cited archaeology as one of the reasons for wanting to visit the exhibition, with 83 (43.6%) citing it as the only reason. Only 16 respondents (8.2%) included PAS as a specific reason for visiting the exhibition. The 71 "Other" responses were varied, but 14 (7.2%) respondents specifically said that they were interested in seeing 'treasure', while six (3.1%) were interested in seeing metalwork or jewellery. Three respondents (1.5%) had visited after a

friend recommended it to them, and one respondent (0.5%) wanted to find out more about metal detecting.

Question 8: How would you rate the Buried Treasure exhibition?

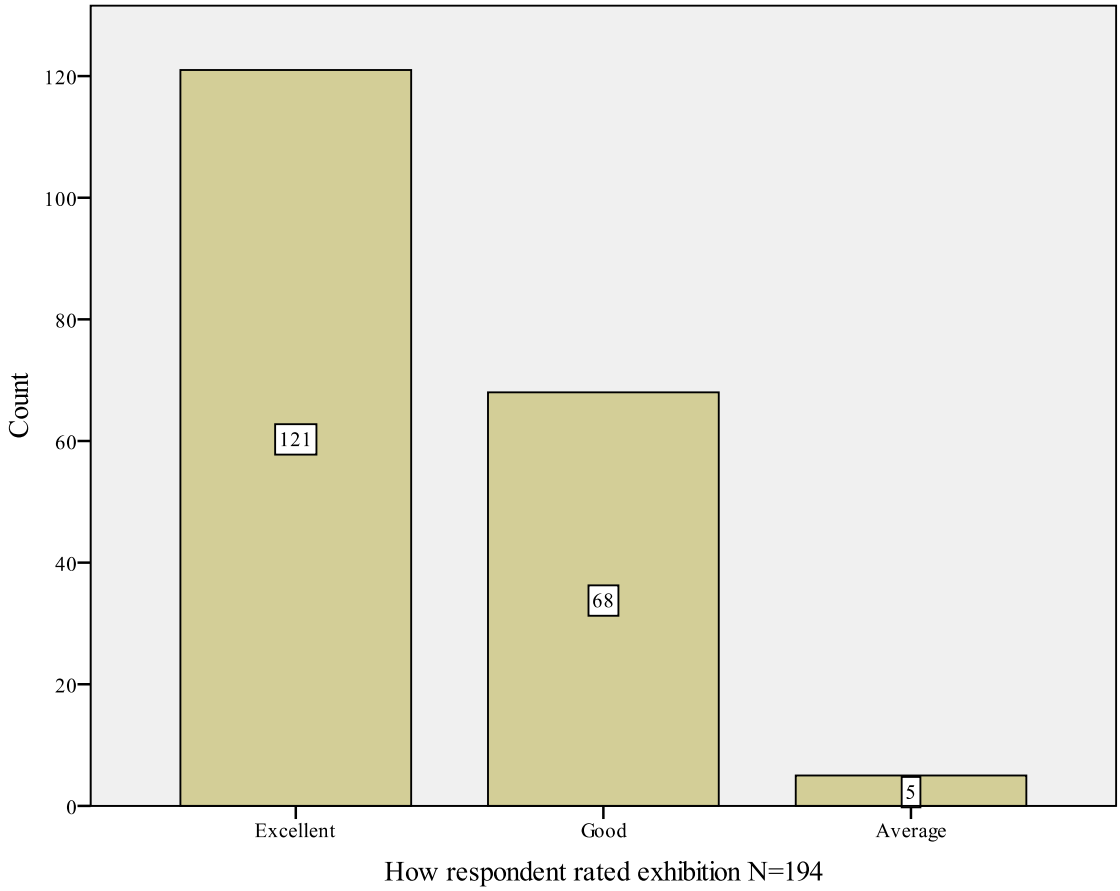

Chart 42 Bar chart showing respondents' ratings of the exhibition

The majority (189, 97.4%) found the exhibition “Excellent” or “Good”. Five respondents (2.6%) said “Average” and none said “Poor” or “Disappointing”.

Question 9: What was your favourite section of the exhibition?

The answers varied, with most respondents choosing a favourite object or object type, although 23 respondents (12.8%) said “*everything*”. The most popular exhibit was the Mildenhall Treasure, although several respondents chose the object handling section. Respondent 94, for example, commented that, “*it was good to be able to touch and feel actual objects, as well as seeing replicas*”.

Question 10: Had you heard of the Portable Antiquities Scheme before visiting this exhibition?

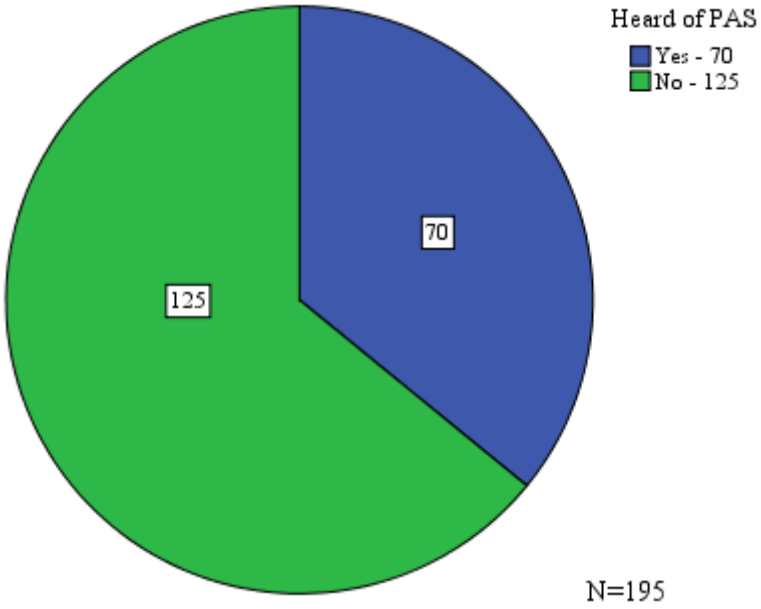

Chart 43 Pie chart showing whether respondents had heard of PAS before visiting the exhibition

One hundred and twenty five (64.1%) of the respondents, just under two thirds, said that they had not heard of PAS.

Question 11: If yes, have you ever worked with the Portable Antiquities Scheme yourself?

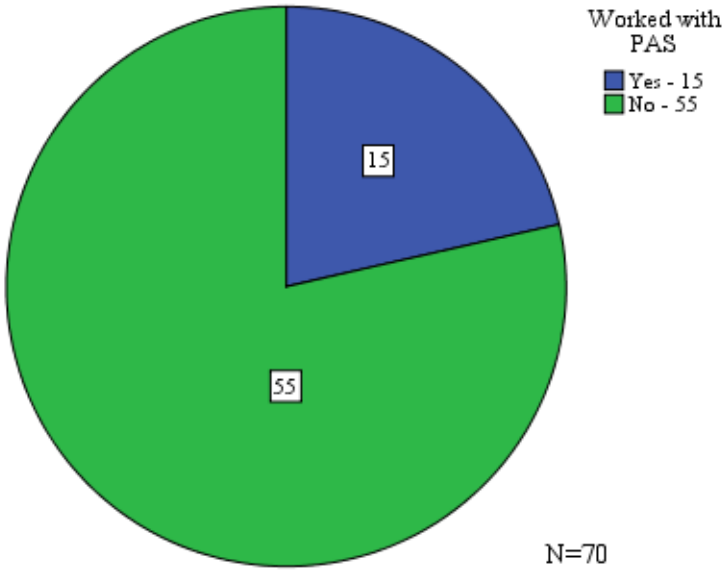

Chart 44 Pie chart showing whether the respondents who had heard of PAS had worked with it

Of the 70 respondents (35.9%) that had heard of it, 15 (7.7% of the total, or 21.2% of the 70 respondents answering Question 11) had actually worked with PAS.

Question 12: If yes, please explain how you have worked with the Portable Antiquities Scheme

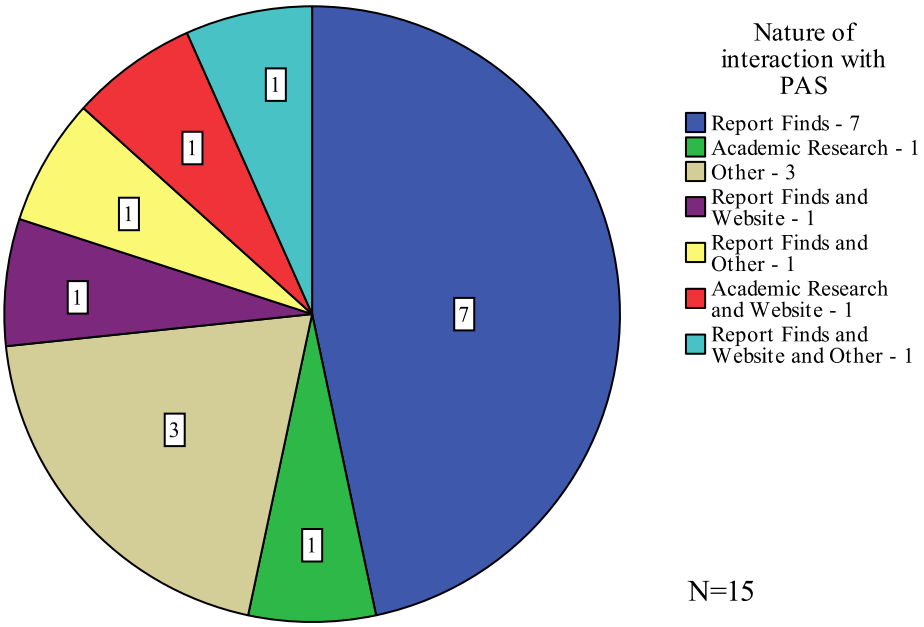

Chart 45 Pie chart showing ways in which respondents had worked with PAS

Although only a small sample, the majority of respondents had reported finds to PAS as part of their interaction with it. The response option “other” showed two respondents that had interacted through helping their metal detecting club record its finds (rather than their own personal finds), one respondent who actually was a FLO, and one respondent who represented a national metal detecting organisation in an official capacity.

Cross-Tabulations: Respondents' gender and the Portable Antiquities Scheme The 70 respondents that had heard of PAS were evenly balanced between male (36) and female (34). Question 11 asked those that had heard of PAS if they had ever worked with the scheme. Twice as many men (10) than women (5) said that they had actually worked with PAS.

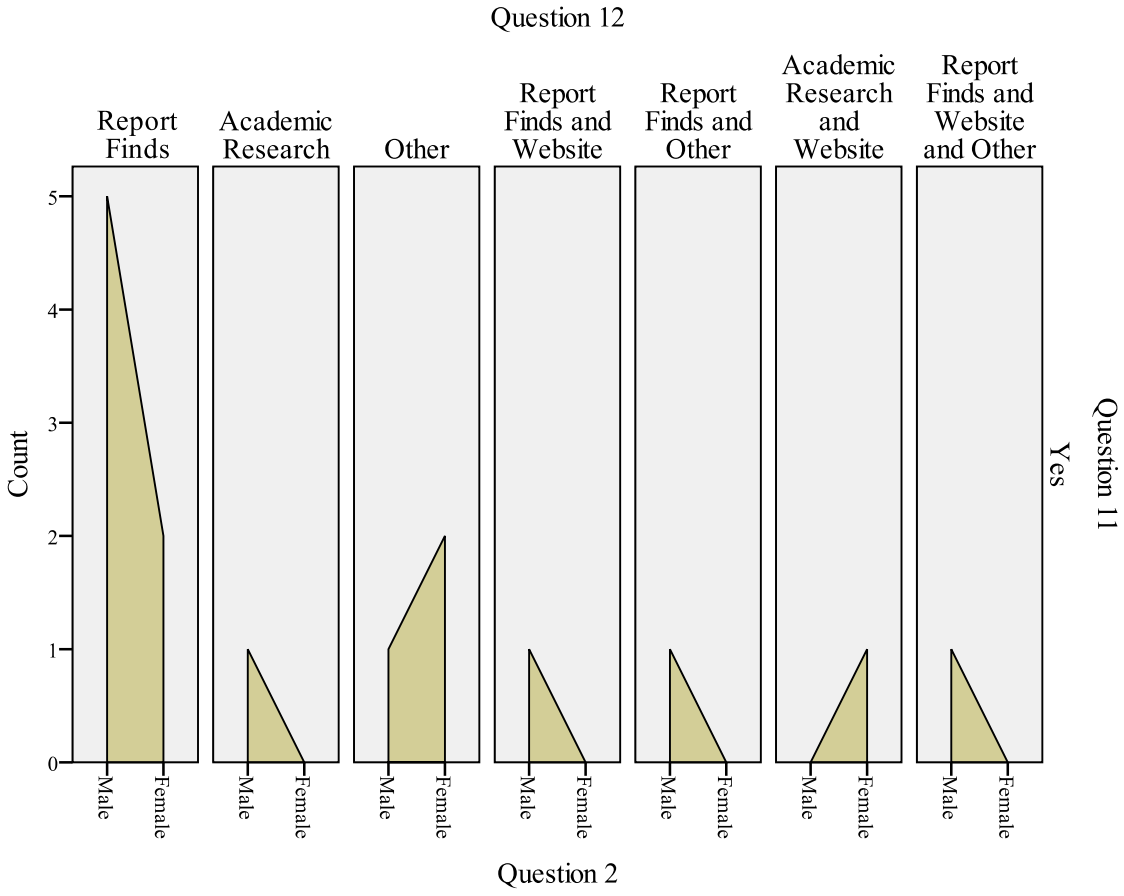

Chart 46 Area chart showing the gender of respondents and ways in which they had worked with PAS

The cross-tabulation of Question 2 (gender) and Question 12 ("if yes, please explain how you have worked with the Portable Antiquities Scheme"); shows double the number of male respondents using PAS than female. Of these results, there were slightly more male reporters of finds, presumed to be metal-detector users, than female. Realistically, the sample of 15 is too small to make any conclusive observations. However, the gender information supports observations in Chapter 7, about the domination of metal detecting by males.

Cross-Tabulations: Respondents' age and the Portable Antiquities Scheme

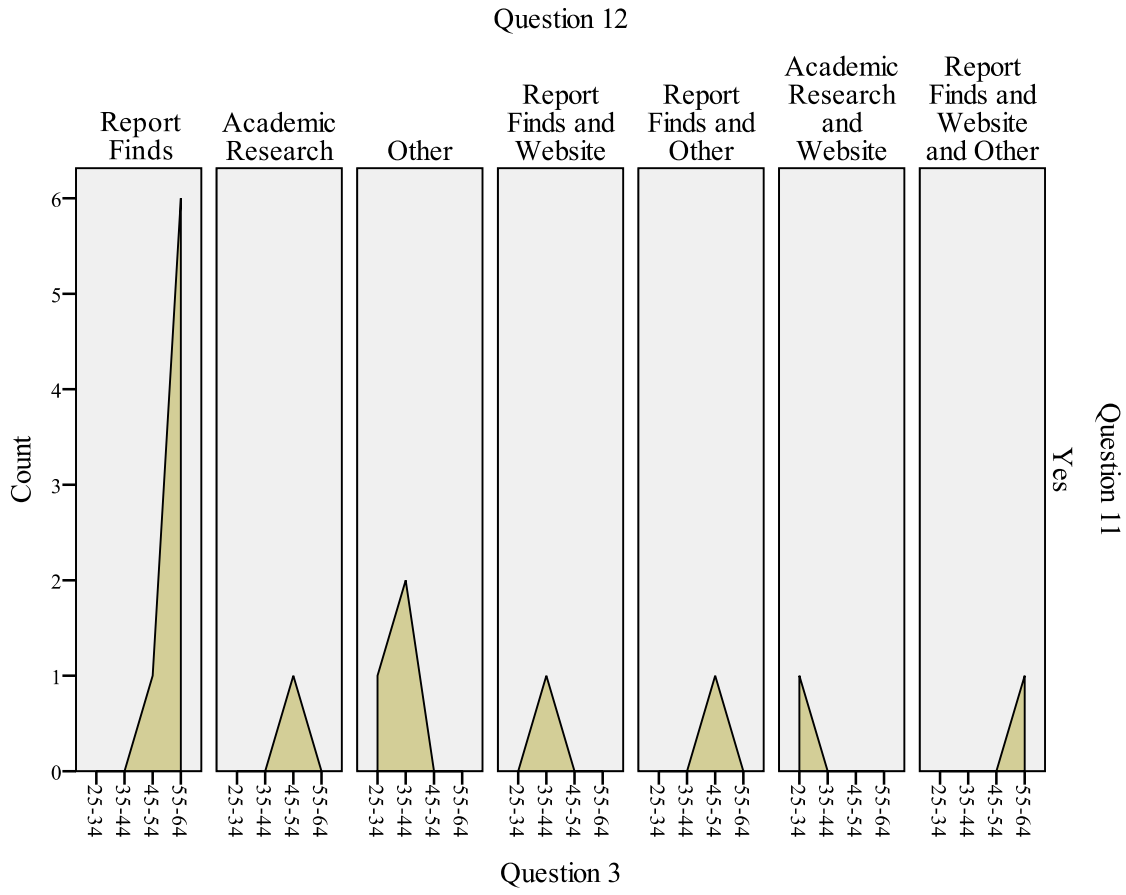

Chart 47 Area chart indicating age range of respondent and way in which they had been involved with PAS

When cross-tabulating the responses with age, the results indicate that respondents that had been involved in recording finds with PAS were more likely to be from the 'middle age' categories or older. If they are metal-detector users, this correlates with findings in Chapter 7 about the most common age ranges for current metal-detector users. The youngest respondents (age range 25-35) were more likely to be involved with PAS through academic research, use of the website, or "other" (the one "other" being a FLO!).

Question 14: Do you have any other comments you wish to make about the Portable Antiquities Scheme or this exhibition?

Seventy eight respondents (40%) did not offer a final comment about the exhibition. Interviewers took care not to lead respondents into making specific comments about any aspect of their experience, so that it could be observed, which aspect they chose to mention.

Respondents' attitudes towards 'treasure' were of particular interest to the researcher, given the implications that they may suggest for public perceptions of archaeology.

For example, Respondent 1 commented:

> "*I think it's important that antiquities of material importance, usually stored in London, are given an airing regionally so that more people benefit from its collection and associated information.*"

While her argument was for the need to tour important collections regionally, it is worth noting that she referred to the "*material importance*" of the antiquities, rather than the other aspects such as the archaeological or historical context. This may be indicative of wider issues of public understanding of archaeology and of the way in which artefacts are 'valued' by society in general.

Fifteen respondents (7.7%) commented on PAS after seeing *Buried Treasure*. Respondent 37 commented that PAS was a "*good idea*", adding that, "*…metal detectorists are numerous and serious, therefore they are a possible threat if not brought into the fold.*" Noticing the section about nighthawking, and Wanborough in particular, Respondent 42 said that it was "*a shame many items have been lost to theft etc.*" Respondent 122, a metal-detector user who had visited after hearing about the exhibition from his FLO, complained about the procedure for declaring Treasure finds, criticising the time taken by the British Museum in processing Treasure, and the paucity of information given to the finder about the object. Respondent 168 complained that the *Treasure Act* 1996 only applied to gold and silver, and suggested that if people were better compensated for more of their finds they would be less inclined to sell to dealers.

Some criticised the exhibition in other ways, particularly the physical layout and accessibility, suitability for children, and marketing. Some noted that little from the North East was on display. Respondents 30 and 31 both commented on the darkness of the exhibition in places, even though they had rated the exhibition as "Excellent". Other comments focussed more on the general enjoyment of the exhibition. Respondent 18 said of this type of touring exhibition, simply, "*Keep them coming.*"

Observations

Questions can be asked about the exhibition's success in challenging the common perception of what 'treasure' is, something that was picked up in online discussions around the exhibition (see Britarch email discussion list archives, 2005). This is also apparent in the low proportion of visitors who commented on the issues of archaeological context, theft, or the problems surrounding current legal definitions of treasure. Some of these issues are to do with interpretational theory in general for museums (their success in conveying their intended message), but also relate to the amount of success that PAS has in its efforts to raise awareness in general about its work and the importance of reporting finds. The 2004 review of PAS also indicated that, while PAS was aware of "*the value of publicity for raising awareness about its work*", a number of respondents to the review's survey still considered "*that more could be done to raise the profile of the Scheme*" (Chitty and Edwards 2004: 25).

A number of general observations can be made about wider public perceptions of PAS, archaeology, and metal detecting. For example, fewer than half of the sample was aware of PAS before visiting the exhibition. However, an interest in archaeology seemed a key reason that people visited the exhibition, indicating public interest in the discipline, even if many were attracted to the more spectacular (and financially valuable) finds. Of those who had worked with PAS, reporters of finds were more likely to be male than female, and of middle age or older, correlating with the survey of metal-detector users in Chapter 7. Almost all the sample interviewed enjoyed the exhibition.

8.4 Buried Treasure: Building Bridges

The researcher organised the *Buried Treasure: Building Bridges* conference (Fig. 8.2) in partnership with the Senior Curator of the Hancock Museum and the FLO for the North East (at that time). The conference took place on 18th June 2005. Staff from ICCHS and the British Museum also contributed assistance and advice. Speakers included representatives of PAS, the NCMD, an academic using data collected by PAS for research, and a Community Archaeologist from Northumberland National Park. The conference took place during the period that *Buried Treasure* exhibited at the Hancock Museum, as an additional event to coincide with the exhibition's visit to Newcastle. This was in some ways similar to the *All*

that Glitters… conference in Cardiff in 2004, which took place when *Buried Treasure* showed at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

Figure 8.2 *Buried Treasure: Building Bridges* leaflet

Speakers were invited to present case studies demonstrating the significance of co-operation between metal-detector users, other members of the public finding archaeological material, and archaeologists, in the development of, and addition to, the archaeological record. The presentations also demonstrated the ways in which professional archaeologists might aim to work with non-academics who have an interest in the past and a desire to become involved. Care was also taken to include presentations and displays from the local metal detecting community.

Experiences within PAS (Walton, *pers. comm.*, 4th May 2005) suggested that it might have proven difficult to encourage metal-detector users to attend the conference for a variety of

reasons. These included not only the practical matter of cost (which was kept to a minimum as a result), but also misgivings about the archaeological profession and concerns that the conference would be a one-sided discussion with metal-detector users being dictated to by archaeologists. The similar *All that Glitters…* conference in Cardiff had attracted rather more archaeologists than metal-detector users. In the case of the Newcastle conference, however, when it was announced on online discussion forums, members of the archaeological community were most vocal in their misgivings about it, rather than metal-detector users.

On the CBA's email discussion list, Britarch, one professional archaeologist commented regarding the conference and its title:

> *"…something like "Finding the Past Together: Building Bridges" would (have fitted on the page) and would be far more descriptive of what those gathered on one side of that "bridge" would prefer to be the message being discussed. Indeed it is the recognition that it is good "information about" the past and not "treasures from" the past which is what is needed before that bridge can even be built. Of course it is always far easier to go for the superficial…From what has been said here, it looks like the conference is yet another of those fluff propaganda exercises so characteristic of this discussion over the past few years…*"
>
> (Britarch email discussion list 2005)

Meanwhile, on the same forum, another archaeologist commented that:

> "*It might be easier to 'build bridges' if the emphasis of conferences like this was not so unremittingly on the 'treasure' aspect of the whole portable antiquities thing. The question I ask myself, as an archaeologist, is why should I waste a day, the conference fee and a train fare to hear people talk about material culture as 'treasure', a category that archaeology discarded many many years ago and which is of no conceivable interest in archaeological terms.*"
>
> (Britarch email discussion list 2005)

It would be inaccurate to assume that these comments reflected sentiments across the board – another response berated a particularly hostile discussant for implying that all archaeologists shared his negative view of metal-detector users. Nonetheless, the 1,484 Britarch discussion group email recipients (as it was in 2005 at the time of the discussion) plus any other individual browsing the messages via the CBA website could potentially have been influenced by these comments when deciding whether to attend the conference or not. Another factor to consider was the location of the conference: Newcastle's distance from London and other major cities in the south of England and Wales may have affected transport expenses. However, the discussions about the term 'treasure' itself, of which only two examples from the many are shown here, were revealing of the disapproval of this term with many, perhaps indicating a more deep-seated concern with the use of this term in governmental and legal contexts for archaeology.

It was surprising, and perhaps disappointing that so few archaeologists were available on the day to discuss their views at the open forum that the conference provided. The feedback from the conference participants was that, not only were they mostly satisfied with the selection of speakers, but also that they all wished to see a repeat of the event in future years. Metal-detector users in particular mentioned this in the closing debate of the day. The overall experience of the event for most participants was that it was a success, and that certainly metal-detector users in the North East appreciated the opportunity to take part in this kind of event locally to them, and to hear of positive examples of cooperation between their hobby and professional archaeology. However, the next section explores some of the hostility from some (but certainly not all) archaeologists.

8.5 Other views on PAS, and ways forward

The above surveys demonstrated perceptions about PAS from the wider public as well as the challenges and successes as experienced by PAS staff. Feedback from museum visitors, certainly in Newcastle in 2005, was that PAS was seen as a positive force by those who were aware of it, but that there were even more people who were not aware of what it was. Taking into account the fact that a number of the questionnaire respondents also attended the *Buried Treasure: Building Bridges* conference (at least 8 respondents or 4.1%), the actual public awareness of PAS may even have been lower, given that the conference participants were more likely than most to be involved with, or at least aware of, PAS.

The evidence from FLOs themselves in 2006 suggested that they identified a number of challenges for their roles, but that particularly the volume of work and the challenge of building better relationships with metal-detector users were key issues. Evidence from Chapter 7, however, suggested that PAS was used by a high proportion of individual metal-detector users for the recording of their finds (65.6%). In addition, club responses indicated that 86.5% of the sample had contact with PAS through regular finds recording sessions. Additional comments by both individuals and club representatives indicated a range of attitudes towards PAS, from very positive responses suggesting good relationships, through to evidence of continued distrust, reinforcing some of the comments from FLOs. A comment from West Norfolk Search & Recovery Group indicated that relationships with the FLO were excellent, as might be expected given the history in Norfolk of cooperation, pioneered by Tony Gregory.

Provisions for delivery of PAS in Wales vary somewhat to the provision in England, and some have viewed this difference as problematic (e.g. Saville, *pers. comm.*, 19th October 2006). Instead of a FLO to cover each county or group of counties, there is one FLO for the whole of Wales, based in Cardiff. The location of the post within the National Museum of Wales gives some advantages, such as the availability of museum specialists for the FLO to consult when needed (Lodwick, *pers. comm.*, 1st August 2005). However, this location also brings challenges. For example, although Wales is a relatively small country, the road infrastructure is poor, making journeys between North and South Wales very time-consuming. It also means that a lot of the coverage in Wales is through four regional archaeological trusts with grants to deliver objectives of PAS in their regions (Lodwick, *pers. comm.*, 1st August 2005). That this coverage is limited compared to coverage in England is reflected in comments from the FLO survey. Comments were also made on the Britarch discussion list about the lower proportion of reported finds and reporting individuals in Wales compared to England (see "*PAS in Wales is a failure*" thread, 2005), although the lower overall population in Wales compared to England must also be a factor for this. Clark (2008: 8), in her recent review of PAS, also observed that the coverage in Wales "*seems inadequate*", recommending approaching the Welsh Assembly Government for assistance.

Certain archaeologists, too, have levelled criticism, if not distrust, at PAS. A number of individuals who were involved in earlier anti-metal detecting campaigns such as STOP have

questioned the appropriateness of PAS. Henry Cleere (*pers. comm.*, 17th July 2006), a former Director the CBA and a key coordinator of STOP, described PAS as "*too indulgent towards the metal detectorists*". In addition, Mike Corbishley (*pers. comm.*, 28th January 2008), who also worked for the CBA and was involved with STOP, indicated that his view of PAS is that it gives a seemingly 'official' status to metal-detector users that they would not otherwise have:

> "*I think the problems were that archaeologists started to work with detectorist people on the grounds that if we didn't work with them then we would lose all this information. I think what was shown in East Anglia was that this largely amounted to a complete waste of time. Working with them actually gave them much more opportunity to detect than they had before…* [Regarding PAS]…*I think they've now given detectorists the excuse they need to say 'we are a legitimate part of the history of collecting of this country, we are on par with archaeologists and historians and whatever'.*"
>
> (Corbishley, *pers. comm.*, 28th January 2008)

Peter Fowler, who was involved in the formation of both Rescue and STOP, as well as an Honorary Secretary of the CBA, made both professional and personal objections about PAS:

> "*One* [objection] *is, I think, over the last ten years, particularly the last five years, we, as professional archaeologists, have actually ceded the dominance of the researchers' agenda to the treasure hunters. I think we've actually given away a bit, and lost what was our most precious possession in a way, which was* [that] *we know or we can advise or give advice about what is best. And I think also that it's disgraceful.…..I think we should be ashamed of ourselves, the way we've ceded without really making any protest to what we know is an inferior methodology. I mean, we've actually gone along with the digging of sites like sacks of potatoes… …and where has the protest come from?... …And then secondly, purely as a private individual, I think I do object, and I think I object quite strongly, to my taxes being used to subsidise somebody else's leisure activity, particularly when that leisure activity is manifestly not in the public interest.*"
>
> (Fowler, *pers. comm.*, 28th November 2006)

There is, of course, also support for PAS from within the archaeological community. John Collis (*pers. comm.*, 17th May 2004), a university lecturer who had been involved in the Wanborough trials, said in interview that he was "*very much in favour of it*". The research developing out of the recorded finds data is also testament to the positive impact of the scheme on archaeology (e.g. Chester-Kadwell 2004: 56). Mike Heyworth, the current Director of the CBA has also said regarding PAS and its Director, Roger Bland, particularly in light of PAS' involvement of public interest:

> "*I think that the fact they've got so far with it is huge testament to him. And it does show at there is a public need for that sort of scheme, and a strong public interest argument in knowledge and archaeology, which I think is very helpful to the rest of us.*"
>
> (Heyworth, *pers. comm.*, 13th September 2006)

Other archaeologists, still concerned about metal detecting but perhaps resigned to the fact that it is not preventable, have seen PAS more as a way of minimising an existing problem. Georgina Plowright (*pers. comm.*, 29th November 2006), a Curator for English Heritage, said, "*I suppose that the Portable Antiquities Scheme, in a way, is making the best of a bad job*"; very similarly, Addyman (*pers. comm.*, 30th November 2006), instrumental in the formation of PAWG, commented that, "*…the Portable Antiquities Scheme is making the best of a very bad job. And it's making a very good best of a very bad job*".

Some less enthusiastic observers, particularly online, have made their views known regularly on both discussion forums and through blog sites. One of the most vocal opponents to PAS in recent times is Paul Barford. His blog site (www.paul-barford.blogspot.com) features regular commentaries on "*artefact hunting*" in Britain, the trade in antiquities, and PAS, which according to one entry, "*seems to be moving further and further away from being archaeological outreach to a service provider and legitimiser for artefact hunting and collecting*" (Barford 2008b).

Barford expresses concern not only about metal detecting, but also about sections of the archaeological community engaging with metal-detector users. His views reflect the concerns of the volunteer-run website, *Heritage Action* (www.heritageaction.org). The site, which campaigns for better protection of "*heritage places, especially the most threatened of all, our*

most ancient sites" (Heritage Action 2008), includes an "*Artefact Erosion Counter*". This 'counter' claims to monitor the number of artefacts removed from the ground through metal detecting since 1975, and on 17th December 2008 stated this total to be 10,364,652 (Heritage Action 2008). While this ever-increasing figure is aimed at highlighting the threat posed by metal detecting, the methodology used for reaching it is not clearly explained on the website, although it is described as "*deliberately conservative relative to documented evidence*" (Heritage Action 2008). This has attracted questions about its accuracy. Bland (2008b), for example, asked on Barford's blog, "*how can anyone put any credence into Heritage Action's Artefact Erosion Counter when the basis on which it is calculated is not stated?*" Discussing the issue in a later entry, Barford (2008c) did not offer a method for how the figure was reached, but retaliated, referring to PAS, that the Artefact Erosion Counter was "*far more useful as a basis for discussion of current policies than the government's eight million pound 'we don't know yet'*."

In other online forums, but often involving the same individuals, there have been heated discussions of metal detecting at times, involving those for and those against the hobby. The discussions about the *Buried Treasure: Building Bridges* conference in 2005 demonstrate just some of the many discussions and arguments over the years. In 2007, one Britarch mail recipient even decided to leave the list, having had enough of the arguments concerning metal detecting, declaring, "*I really can't cope with this perpetual circular argument about the same topic every couple of weeks. Life is too short*" (Britarch email discussion list 2007). In June 2007, a debate that began as "*Black Swan Saga*" discussing at first the activities of an American oceanic salvage company, returned rapidly to the discussion of metal detecting. A few days after the initial 'Black Swan' posting, the list owners made the decision to increase moderation of the contributions to the list, as the debate became increasingly acrimonious. Terms such as 'metal detecting', 'the hobby', 'detectorists' and 'MDs' were set as moderation terms for the discussion list administrators to monitor (Hull, *pers. comm.*, 18th December 2008). The circularity of the arguments put forward, and the involvement of the same list members, led one Britarch member to observe that, "*this debate is a dialogue of the deaf*" (Britarch email discussion list 2007). An earlier attempt to divert metal detecting debates to a separate Britarch-debates list in May 2003 had come to a halt by March 2005, perhaps because the participants in the debates wanted a larger readership that the main Britarch list offered (Hull, *pers. comm.*, 18th December 2008).

The discussion of metal detecting has occurred on other archaeology forums such as PAS' own forum, which although praised as a means of increasing the usage of the PAS website (Chitty and Edwards 2004: 51) is now defunct, and the British Archaeological Jobs Resource (BAJR). Discussions of the ethics surrounding metal detecting, including the role of PAS tend to be regular themes, often involving the same individuals. Metal detecting forums have also discussed PAS, in particular the United Kingdom Detector Net (UKDN), which was instrumental in organising support for PAS in 2008 (see below).

Another significant online development in 2005 was the launch of the United Kingdom Detector Finds Database (UKDFD, not to be confused with the UKDN, which is a separate group), which was mentioned in Chapter 1 and discussed in the surveys of Chapter 7. The UKDFD, run by metal-detector users, is a database for the recording of finds made by metal-detector users, which has led to some to claim it is a direct rival to PAS (see Britarch email discussion list, "*UKDFD – What does it mean?*" thread, 2005). The UKDFD's own launch release stated that:

> "*UKDFD recommends the services and supports the principles of the PAS, and is not intended in any way to compete with this scheme. However, it is recognised that for various reasons many finds are not presently being recorded. UKDFD's objective is to address this situation by providing an additional facility that will cater for those detectorists who would not otherwise record their finds. In addition, it will provide for the recording of post c.1650 finds, many of which are not currently within the remit of the PAS.*"
>
> (UKDFD 2005)

Four years later, the UKDFD is still running, despite some online discussions predicting that it would not last. Although it is used by a significantly smaller proportion of metal-detector users than PAS (see Chapter 7), the number of users is apparently growing (Brun, *pers. comm.*, 5th December 2008). The view of the FID regarding the UKDFD is that it is the choice of the metal-detector user whether they use it or not (Wood, *pers. comm.*, 20th November 2006). Representatives of the NCMD have expressed different views concerning the database, with the General Secretary, Trevor Austin (*pers. comm.*, 25th November 2006), saying that the NCMD does "*have a national database, which the National Council helped to*

promote in the first place, we can't see any reason for having another database", meaning PAS. Stephen Critchley (*pers. comm.*, 13th January 2007), the chair of the NCMD, commented that recording, whether with PAS, UKDFD or elsewhere, was down to personal choice.

The two databases even seem similar when compared, with a similar number of fields to fill in. One field that is particularly indicative of the status of the UKDFD as a detector user-run database, is the field asking the recorder what type of metal detector they used – something that is perhaps of interest to other metal-detector user but probably unlikely to be a question asked by most archaeologists. The National Grid Reference (NGR) is not shown in a general search of the UKDFD's database as it is a hidden field (Brun, *pers. comm.*, 20th December 2008), and instead the 'find spot' field only reveals very general information such as the nearest town. Vomvyla (2008: 7) has indicated that 42% of find spot recordings by metal detector club members with PAS was at six-figure NGR, with 33% of finds recorded at parish level of four-figure NGR, and 25% recorded at an eight-figure NGR or better. However, while not ideal not to have a grid reference, interestingly research requests to date to the UKDFD have not asked for such information (Brun, *pers. comm.*, 20th December 2008). This may indicate that researchers are not aware that this information is available through the UKDFD, or that find spot information is not part of their research agendas.

Certainly archaeological researchers should not ignore the UKDFD, as it can provide at least some information, in addition to that held by PAS. In addition, if it is true that some of the metal-detector users using the UKDFD would not be willing, ever, to engage with PAS, then it is providing them with somewhere to record that they do not perceive as threatening. The recommendation would follow, if it is not already the case, since on the UKDFD finders upload information to the database themselves rather than through a liaison officer or similar, to encourage more precise find spot recording. In addition, as one of the UKDFD fields for recording asks whether the object is also recorded elsewhere (e.g. PAS), it would be interesting to make a study of the proportion of finds only recorded with the UKDFD. This would test the argument that metal-detector users recording with the UKDFD perhaps would not record elsewhere. In addition, Clark (2008: 15) supports this hypothesis by stating that the UKDFD "*aims to promote a recording ethos and encourage detectorists who would not otherwise record their finds to do so.*" She adds that the UKDFD "*also allows members to record post c.1650 finds, which are less of a priority for the PAS database*" (Clark 2008: 16),

adding weight to the suggestion that the UKDFD contributes data to the archaeological record that would not arrive through PAS.

In the long term, the UKDFD will probably survive, whether it is perceived as an alternative to PAS or as a complementary metal-detector user-led database. The database creator, Gary Brun, has expressed dissatisfaction with current relationships between the UKDFD and archaeologists, including PAS:

> "*I seem to be banging my head against brick wall with many within the archaeological community within the UK and find it all very hypocritical. Professional jealousy I call it. To call people who record with UKDFD as being 'irresponsible' by the PAS is really frustrating.*"
>
> (Brun, *pers. comm.*, 5th December 2008)

Whether this lack of communication changes or not in the future may in some ways depend on the wider development of trust between archaeologists and metal-detector users.

PAS under threat and PAS reviewed

At various times in its eleven year existence, PAS has had to find ways in which to ensure its continued funding, such as through Heritage Lottery Fund grants or from direct Government funding (PAS 2006a), with short term grants often sustaining it to date. However, in 2007 serious questions were raised about the future of the scheme by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), with speculations arising that PAS would at the very least experience the loss of its central unit (British Archaeology 2008: 7), if not worse. Funding issues led to the loss of the Learning Coordinator post as well as two Finds Assistants. In fact the proposal was to freeze funding (HL Deb 28th January 2008, col. 5), but as Bland argued, this freeze, in light of inflation, was effectively a cut as other costs continued to rise (ACCG 2008). Cuts across the heritage sector seem to be occurring frequently, particularly with the London 2012 Olympics on the horizon; Heritage Lottery money has already been reduced because of this (e.g. HL Deb 17th May 2007, col. 281).

The threat posed to PAS by Government spending plans revealed widespread support for the scheme. Renfrew (2007) contributed an article in *The Guardian* in support of PAS. In

addition, an e-petition to send to Number 10 (the Prime Minister's Office website – see www.number10.gov.uk) was devised, "*to preserve and invest in the Portable Antiquities Scheme*" (Haughton 2008). This petition was signed by 2080 individuals, while another petition, with a smaller signatory of 556 individuals was also submitted around the same time with the aim "*to secure the future of the Portable Antiquities Scheme*" (Connolly 2008). While administrators of metal detecting website and discussion forum UKDN initiated the petition, concerned at the implications for metal detecting, signatures came from professional archaeologists and the wider public too. A group set up on Facebook, a popular social networking website, called "*Save the Portable Antiquity Scheme*", attracted approximately 700 members. In addition, there was an Early Day Motion (EDM) in Parliament on 12th December 2007:

> "*That this House recognises the great contribution of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) to transforming the archaeological map of Britain by proactively recording archaeological finds made by the public; celebrates the fact that in 10 years the scheme has recorded on its public database more than 300,000 archaeological finds, which would not have otherwise been reported, for the benefit of all; expresses concern at the likely impact of funding cuts proposed for the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), following the recent Comprehensive Spending Review, on the PAS; and urges the Government to ensure that the scheme is at least able to maintain its current levels of activity and to consider urgently whether MLA offers the best home for the PAS or whether another body, such as the British Museum, would not be better placed to provide PAS with a long-term sustainable future.*"
>
> (Loughton 2008)

The EDM attracted 229 signatures, making it the 18th most popular EDM of the Parliamentary session (out of 2727 EDMs).

There have also been commissioned reviews of PAS at various times (Chitty 2001; Chitty and Edwards 2004; Edwards 2006 – and see Chapter 1, Section 1.5 for discussion of these). A recent and significant consultation document (Clark 2008) was commissioned by the MLA, to provide an unbiased account of the effectiveness of PAS and to make recommendations in

order to assist Government decision makers, in light of the considerations being given to spending options at that time. The report came to positive conclusions that PAS "*appears to be well-liked, delivering genuine partnership and good value for money*" (Clark 2008: 38), and that, if anything, support should be extended rather than reduced or frozen. However, it also made recommendations to improve the scheme, such as changing its aims to reflect its relationship with museums, and developing more of a community-based recording capacity (Clark 2008: 6). Interestingly, the UKDFD model, described above, may become particularly significant in light of Clark's review of PAS: another recommendation was that, "*advisers should focus outreach on involving finders and other volunteers in the work of the scheme, including recording, education and promotion*" (Clark 2008: 6). This implies that (at least some) finders may eventually be encouraged to record their own finds to the PAS database. Another recommendation, "*Recommendation 7: do more to build skills in community engagement*" (Clark 2008: 7), elaborated that:

> "*Skills in community engagement are just as relevant for FLOs as finds expertise. This needs to be taken into account when recruiting and consideration should be given to more formal training and guidance in this field for FLOs.*"
>
> (Clark 2008: 7)

This seemed to reflect some informal comments by metal-detector users both to the researcher and to Clark (*pers. comm.*, 2nd July 2008), that certain PAS personnel had not seemed particularly approachable or friendly, something that metal-detector users found off-putting when trying to record their finds. FID founder David Wood made a similar observation in interview, that some of his membership had contacted him to report the consequences of an unpleasant encounter with one FLO:

> "*…it made that group say, 'oh we don't want to bother with the voluntary reporting scheme thank you very much because we've had a bad experience'. And we tried very hard to persuade our members within the group to look at it that it was a person and not the scheme itself.… …There are nighthawks within society; and it's the same thing with Finds Liaison Officers who aren't really interested, and who haven't learnt the subject. That's a person. That's not either the profession or the interest.*"
>
> (Wood, *pers. comm.*, 20th November 2006)

There are, of course, also countless more examples where FLOs have been successful at engaging with and earning the trust, even friendship, of metal-detector users in their region, as the results in Chapter 7 have demonstrated. Leicester Search Society, for example, reported that their FLO was even an honorary member of their club. The quote above, and the recommendation from Clark do not criticise the community engagement work of FLOs in general, especially as so many do have excellent relationships, but they do highlight the importance of selecting individuals with the social and communication skills necessary for a job of this nature. While finds identification is also an important aspect of the job, one could argue that this can be learnt through relevant training, whereas diplomacy and even friendliness can be harder to skills to acquire. Metal detecting is still controversial within the archaeological community, and some metal-detector users still exhibit suspicion towards the motivations of PAS. Hence, an individual who was not naturally outgoing, but was easily offended, might not be a suitable candidate for a FLO position. This would be particularly true if they had personal doubts about engaging with a community who will not always share the same opinions as them regarding the treatment of archaeological heritage, or at times even operate within the same ethical parameters.

8.6 Conclusions

From a theoretical perspective, the relationship between PAS and the metal detecting community is essentially based on an empiricist approach to archaeological data, as arguably, is much archaeological research. The scheme compiles the available information about finds made by metal-detector users and others, culminating in a finds database. Its focus on the epistemological echoes Thomas' (1995: 350) wider observation that, certainly in the 1990s, "*academic archaeology in Britain is... …overwhelmingly empiricist in tenor*". The collaborative research projects to date involving PAS have also focussed predominantly on the artefact data, rather than on other questions concerning the way in which the data is collected, or the different ways in which metal-detector users and archaeologists perceive, use and value archaeological material.

Exploring archaeologists themselves from an ethnographic perspective has been investigated in the setting of excavations (e.g. Edgeworth 2006). Similar observations would be beneficial if carried out in the research of metal-detector users, especially the observation of interactions

of archaeologists with metal-detector users, whether it is at rallies, on an excavation, or through interactions at clubs and museums with a FLO. Essentially, this would be a reflexive approach, "*the examination of the affects of archaeological assumptions and actions on the various communities involved in an archaeological process*" (Hodder 2000: 9). Such research, as shown in Chapter 7, moves away from the archaeological data itself and explores concepts such as 'social capital'. It has the potential to demonstrate the importance of these social 'currencies' in the empowerment of metal-detector users to engage more fully with archaeologists, and vice versa. However, some observers, perhaps understandably, disapprove of this engagement, largely due to what is seen as a compromise in archaeological principles, while, on the other hand, many metal-detector users are wary of what they see as attempts by archaeologists to 'control' their hobby. Hence, there is something of a paradox reached, where ethical frameworks themselves become challenged. These, and other issues, are discussed and concluded further in the next and final chapter.