pia

Winkley, F 2016 The Phenomenology of Metal Detecting: Insights from a Unique Type of Landscape Experience. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 25(2): 13, pp. 1–15, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/pia.496

RESEARCH PAPER

The Phenomenology of Metal Detecting: Insights from a Unique Type of Landscape Experience

Felicity Winkley*

Metal detecting is a unique way of experiencing the historic landscape, allowing many amateurs to access heritage hands-on in a way that would otherwise be impossible, locating and unearthing their own fragment of the archaeological record. With a conservative estimate of 15,000 people currently detecting in the UK, and 1,122,998 objects recorded to date (October 2015) on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database since its inception in 1997, England's historic places are being walked, searched and mapped by a significantly-sized population whose enthusiasm would be better off integrated into heritage programming, than rebuffed by it and misdirected elsewhere. Achieving this would not only have potential financial benefits for the sector, where cuts are prevalent, but also see the kind of community engagement that is regularly discussed but not often arrived at. Research by the author has shown that the majority of metal detectorists operating in the UK are members of clubs or societies with a local focus; 86% of detectorists (club members, or independent) report that they detect close to home. With a strong attachment to their home area and a good understanding of local history, the conscientious amongst them have been searching the same area for decades, building up a unique resource of artefactual and spatial data that informs a complex milieu of perception. These detectorists generate a unique attachment to the landscape on which they search – producing links between their own experienced version of the landscape and their perceived version of how it was experienced in the past, thus creating a very particular type of place-making. This paper begins by setting out the phenomenological method and the implications of this for studying the perception of landscape, before using qualitative and quantitative data from the author's research into the attitudes of metal detectorists to consider what this means for metal detecting within a perceived landscape and, by association, how heritage professionals might best approach the issue.

Introduction

Metal detecting in England and Wales is practiced by a long-established community whose number is difficult to accurately gauge. Most recently, Robbins (2014: 14) has suggested an estimate of 9,500, with only 7,125 of these likely to find objects recordable with Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) – i.e. over 300 years old, or of particular interest – because roughly a quarter of this population is thought to search on lands that do not offer up this kind

* University College London, GB
f.winkley@ucl.ac.uk

of object; this figure, however, reflects an almost stasis from ten years ago, when Bland (2005) proposed the detecting population was around 10,000.

In her 2009 thesis, Thomas (2009: 258) used her data on metal detecting clubs and membership therein to arrive at a result of 16,777 which was rounded down to 14,000. This figure is supported by the author, who would err on the side of caution and estimate that the community probably numbers somewhere between PAS's estimates of 10,000 and the National Council for Metal Detecting (NCMD)'s 20,000 (Gray 2011).

Be they 10,000 or 15,000, these interested amateurs, once they have obtained permission from the land owner, are free to detect for archaeological objects across vast swathes of England and Wales (exclusions include land scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, parts of the Crown Estate, and others), dig up their finds and carry them home to store as they see fit, with no governance whatsoever, unless the object is classified as 'treasure' – the legislation of which was tightened in 1997 but is still imperfect. Indeed, ever since the hobby first became commercialised in the UK when affordable machines became available for the general public around 1969, there have been strong concerns from the heritage sector about the potential damage to the archaeological record and the possible irrevocable loss of associated information (Fletcher 1978; Green & Gregory 1978; Thomas 2009). These concerns were voiced most clearly at the peak of a public anti-detecting backlash which occurred at the end of the 1970s and was typified by the now notorious Stop Taking Our Past, or STOP campaign: an initiative comprising 32 member associations including the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) and the Museums Association among others (Addyman 2008). Whilst the CBA-published (1980) campaign leaflet labelled detectorists as 'thoughtless', 'unscrupulous [. . .] pirates' with a sole aim to 'plunder [the] past under the guise of sport' and keep the spoils for themselves, it was keen to point out that by contrast:

> 'Archaeologists are not self-appointed custodians. Their training and their work is aimed towards producing a clearer picture of our past which can be passed on to everyone and handed down to future generations'.

Twenty-five years on, it has become clear to most that rather than targeting detectorists with polemic campaigns, the country's archaeological resource would be better served if treasure legislation was improved and the metal detecting community was better engaged through outreach and education into best practice for recording, handling and conserving found objects. This change in mindset is largely due to the continued efforts of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), a body formed alongside the passing of the *Treasure Act 1996* (which came into force on 24th September 1997). Administrated from within the British Museum, and funded through that institution's Department for Culture, Media and Sport grant, the Scheme's principal aim is to encourage the voluntary recording of archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales (Bland 1996; Lewis 2014b). Since its formation, the success of the Scheme has seen its coverage expanded from a pilot set-up of six Finds Liaison Officers (FLOs) to a regional network of 39, its database go through three major rebuilds and, most recently, the recording of its millionth find (Lewis 2014a). This 'milestone' of the millionth record – a nummus of the House of Constantine, and just one of the 22,000 coins that made up the Seaton Hoard – represented, according to Lewis (2014b: 3), not only the 'considerable contribution to archaeological knowledge', made by the Scheme to date, but also its success 'in breaking down barriers between archaeologists and metal-detectorists'. The Scheme strives to ensure that metal-detected finds can be used to *contribute* to

our heritage – not detract from it; and it is not just the major headline-grabbing hoards, but the chance finds that are filling in the gaps. The coin in **Fig. 1** is a good example of the PAS's contribution. In 1970 a complete catalogue was published of the known coins from the Iron Age Iceni tribe. It contained 59 coins. Now, thanks to the efforts of metal detectorists in particular, 1,711 different coin types are known, among them this one detected in 2010, a unique coin which has given us the name of a previously unknown ruler, Anarevitos (Bland 2011).

Using Landscape To Improve Our Approach

For too long, approaches to metal detecting have been blinkered by agendas about who owns heritage objects, and who is best placed to preserve them for the benefit of the public. Shareholders contend with stakeholders in an established hierarchy of professionals over interested amateurs, and attempts to redress this balance are slow to be implemented, despite increasing understanding of the benefits to both public and past if an interface can be achieved (Little 2002). Although in recent years, seeing the potential contribution that could be made by a club of experienced metal detectorists, some innovative projects, particularly in the field of battlefield archaeology, have incorporated metal detecting into widespread archaeological surveys. Nevertheless, as Ferguson (2013: 1) points out, many fieldwork initiatives which invite detectorists to attend still see them 'consigned to the spoil heaps as a nod to community engagement (where they can do little damage)'. Likewise, research involving metal detectorists is limited: in the UK, studies have been conducted into the relationship between them and archaeologists (Thomas 2009) or, in association with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, investigated spatial patterning of their search areas (Robbins 2012), while abroad, valuable insights are coming out from Norway (Rasmussen 2014), Denmark (Dobat 2013) and the Netherlands (Van der Schriek & Van der Schriek 2014). However, the influence of landscape in metal detecting, from an experiential perspective, has so far been overlooked. By increasing our understanding of the hobby, the motivations and attitudes of its practitioners and their relationship with the historic environment,

Figure 1: Gold stater of Anarevitos found 2010, PAS ref: FASAM-FCD3A2 © Portable Antiquities Scheme.

such research has the potential to make a significant contribution to informing future heritage management decisions, both in terms of safeguarding the archaeological resource and ensuring the continuing success of the PAS for years to come.

Despite the many different variables that can affect the metal detecting experience, landscape is the common factor, the lens through which the detectorist population can be examined. Whether they search by themselves or with friends, on arable fields or pasture, twice a week or twice a month, all detectorists enact their pastime on *and within* the historic environment and all are united by the omnipresence of landscape as a platform for action. This platform, however, is not a static one – not simply a painted backdrop and a rigid stage. Instead, landscape is at once facilitating and constraining, created and creating, in its dynamic relationship with human perception and intervention (Gosden & Head 1994; Bender 2002). In the case of metal detectorists, the landscape is both the contemporary landscape of the here-and-now, with recognisable footpaths and landmarks, sights and sounds; as well as the populated landscape of the past – signified by found artefactual remains whose discovery triggers a different phase of perceptive 'mergence', towards an increasingly authentic experience (Seamon 1979). By seeking to better understand how metal detectorists experience landscape, we can hope to gain a better understanding of their attitudes to the portable antiquities they find and their heritage in general, whilst also giving voice to a community often marginalised by the heritage sector. By collecting qualitative and quantitative data, research recently completed by the author aims to create a hierarchy of detector user profiles, in order to identify the links between attitudes to landscape and metal detecting conduct, which could help policy makers define how the hobby is approached in future, and how best we can preserve the archaeological record of our portable antiquities. For this, a phenomenological approach to the metal detected landscape is required.

The metal detectorist is actively involved in a continuous process of creating, perceiving and experiencing landscape. For Ingold, whilst landscape is not nature, it is also not human as opposed to nature, rather – being dwelled in – it is with us, not against us: 'through living in it, the landscape becomes part of us, just as we are a part of it' (1993: 154). Today we understand this as structuration theory – namely that at the same time as we are experiencing a world not of our own making, we are also, through our own thoughts and actions, creating and changing the structures we encounter (Bender 2006). These structures are both the enablers, and constrainers, of agency. As life is lived, the temporal rhythms of being-in-the-world continue, the landscape is endowed with meaning and a plurality of place is created.

If we agree with phenomenology's founding father, Edmund Husserl, to understand the structures at work when metal detectorists experience the environment, all enquiries must be centered on the 'lifeworld' or '*Lebenswelt*', a term used to denote the self-evident lived-world, and the experience of any event or feature within it (Ashworth 2003; Husserl 1970). Because it is an omnipresent ground for human experience, lifeworld means that, even if our individual histories are inextricably bound-up in our personal versions of it, there is an intersubjective lifeworld that we experience collectively, and is therefore intersubjectively accessible. The overarching question implied by the phenomenological approach to the research is, what is the place of the landscape in the lifeworld of metal detectorists?

Method

The research employed multiple methods of enquiry to achieve triangulation – in order to facilitate an effective assessment of the data, by providing a collage of multiple perspectives for observation (Hammersley 1990). Indeed, viewing the subject through these

multiple perspectives has led Richardson (2000) to propose that triangulation be replaced with the term crystallisation instead, to represent the reflection and refraction of alternative interpretations.

At the beginning of the research, a full literature review was conducted, after which quantitative data was collected through the issue of a questionnaire survey, hosted online via *Opinio*, a web-based programme which allows the researcher to author and distribute surveys. The questionnaire, which was piloted with the assistance of the Thames and Field Metal Detecting Club in March 2011, was distributed across various internet forums used by metal detectorists and through direct contact made with metal detecting clubs in England and Wales. After the final closure, the total number of responses was 505. The size of this data set enabled frequency tables to be analysed at a 5% confidence level for statistical analysis.

In the next stage of the research, twelve 'go-along' lifeworld interviews were conducted to obtain qualitative data. This go-along method saw the researcher accompany the interviewee across their usual metal detecting landscapes by car and on foot, and allowed the interview to follow an organic, unstructured course. These conversational encounters took place in the countryside across England between June 2012 and August 2014, were recorded and then transcribed in full. Ethnographers, geographers and social scientists have long accepted the validity and potential usefulness of the go-along interview as a research tool, for, as Carpiano (2009: 264) explains:

> 'From the perspectives of [. . .] contemporary theoretical orientations the go-along is consistent with interactionist and phenomenological concerns for studying direct and indirect social experiences as much as the creation and maintenance of inter-subjectivity'.

For Evans and Jones (2011: 849), 'it seems intuitively sensible for researchers to ask interviewees to talk about the places that they are interested in while they are in that place'. The walking go-along in particular, in which interviewer and interviewee are both mobile, rather than sedentary, as in a car or train for example, has been found to be particularly advantageous, because it facilitates access to respondents' attitudes to the surrounding environment directly, unmediated by any physical barrier (Evans & Jones 2011: 850). The success of this strategy in recent historical archaeology has been demonstrated by studies such as Moshenska's (2007) oral history interviewing at an excavation of a Blitz site in Hackney, London, where the locale of the interactions served as a powerful mediator in facilitating authentic recollections from participants.

In the metal detecting study, it was anticipated that using various methods to collect and analyse the research data would minimise the effects of any one method's potential limitations. One key benefit of the phenomenological approach is that it permits a level of reflexivity during the research process, so that the 'positionality' of the researcher can be acknowledged and accommodated; the researcher being allowed to 'locate themselves within the context of their research and writing' (Kusenbach 2003: 458). Likewise the flexibility of the approach was vital for drawing out the best possible quality of data on metal detectorists' attitudes, as the subjects were being asked to explain quite complex ideas about their perception of the environment and were, for the most part, assumed by the researcher to be unused to expressing these. Just as Hitchings and Jones (2004: 9) encountered difficulties in their study collecting respondents' reactions to living with plants, saying 'the everyday experience of a garden is hard to accommodate within the vocabulary of description', the same can be true of a wider landscape. By using a questionnaire survey with various different question types or conducting an informal walk-along interview over several

hours, the researcher hoped to collect a quantity and variety of responses sufficient to counteract these limitations and accurately extrapolate the respondent's attitudes to their encounters with place.

Questionnaire Data: Preliminary Results

Of the 505 questionnaire respondents, 75.2 per cent were members of a metal detecting club, and they represented 85 different organisations. A list compiled in March 2012 using directories from the National Council of Metal Detecting (NCMD) and Federation of Independent Detectorists (FID) websites (n.222) with the addition of a further 26 clubs mentioned in questionnaire responses that did not appear on either site, found a total of 248 active clubs, reflecting a response rate to the questionnaire of 34 per cent. The majority of the respondents to the questionnaire were male, making up 92 per cent of the sample. As the survey was hosted online, we can be confident that this is an accurate representation of the sample population, and not a bias, but it is also supported by the results from the Pilot survey where 85.7 per cent of respondents were male, showing this outnumbering occurs also at a club level.

Despite concerns about the persistent popularity of metal detecting, it is obviously not something being taken up by large numbers of young people. The largest grouping of respondents, 32.7 per cent fell under the 45–54 year old bracket followed by 55–64 and 35–44 years (see **Fig. 2**). The over 65s, 17.2 per cent of the sample, outnumbered the lowest three age tiers combined, at only 5.7 per cent of respondents. In response to asking if they recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme, whether club members

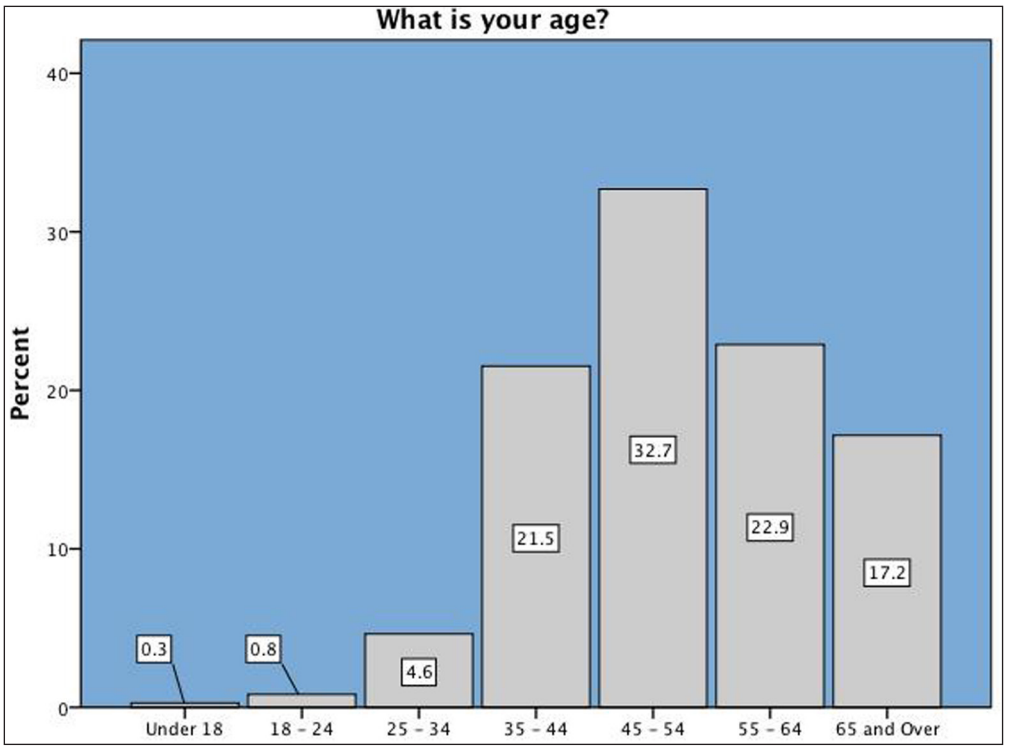

Figure 2: Age grouping of questionnaire respondents (n = 367).

or independent detectorists, 87.5 per cent of the sample responded in the affirmative, which is an extremely positive result for the scheme. Of those respondents who were not club members, only one in four did not record with the PAS, meaning 75.3 per cent of them must have initiated contact with the FLO of their own accord in order to record their objects.

The questionnaire (which is included herein as supplementary material) was structured into five sections:

A. classification data
B. when do you detect?
C. where do you detect?
D. your favourite findspot
E. recording and metal detecting conduct

Beyond the classificatory data, a combination of different question types was used in order to facilitate the metal detectorists expressing complex feelings about landscape which, as discussed above, may not have come naturally. Amongst these, the rating scale questions, whereby the respondent was asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with a statement, are able to provide at-a-glance information on detectorists' attitudes, largely because, as the question proposes a continuum that is defined, the intensity of the respondents' attitudes can likewise be defined. Looking at Section D – Your favourite findspot – in response to the statement 'I feel attached to the landscape upon which I detect regularly', 70 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt attached (**Fig. 3**).

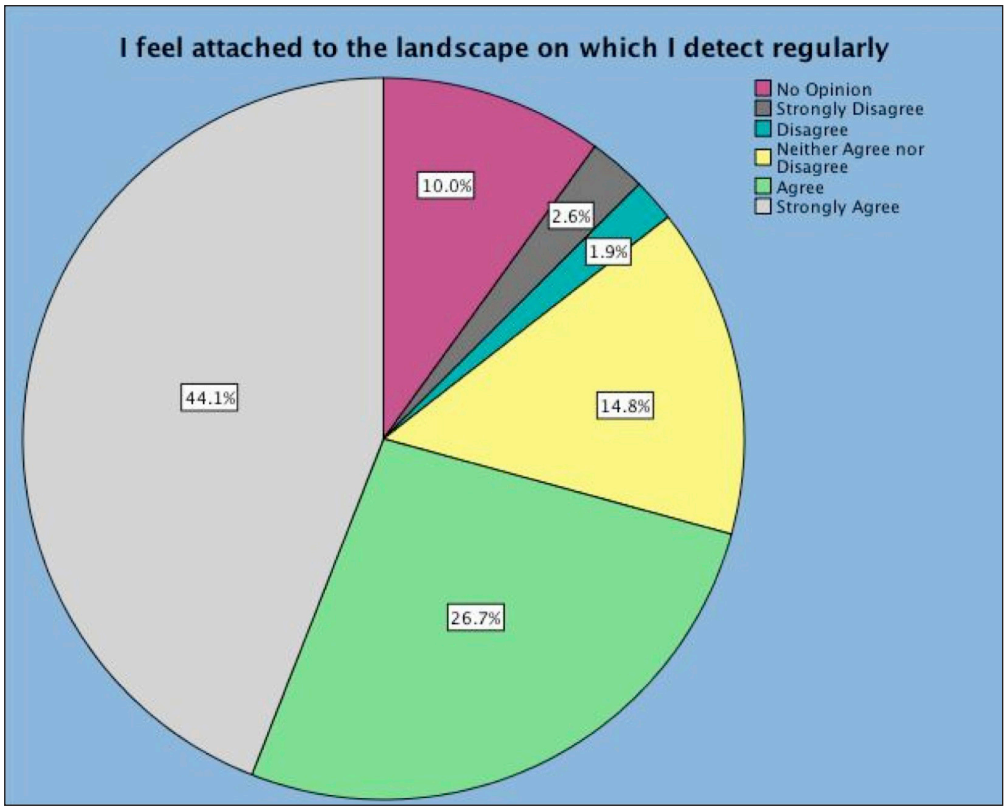

Figure 3: How many respondents agreed with the statement: 'I feel attached to the landscape on which I detect regularly' (n = 312).

To better analyse what this might mean, we can return to a previous question – in which respondents were asked to think of their favourite findspot and rate from 1 to 6, where 1 is the most important and 6 is the least important, the following elements in the order of importance: easy access; exclusive permission to detect; a good relationship with the landowner; high-quality finds; privacy; and attractive landscape (see **Table 1**). By a large margin, the factor prioritised by most respondents was a good relationship with the landowner, which was rated number one by 59 per cent of the sample. In the interviews, similarly, the subject was important – mentioned by 9 of the 12 interviewees, a cumulative total of 34 times. Understandably, permission from landowners to search is a fundamental issue to detectorists, as without it they cannot practice their hobby.

Today, because of stiff competition and the reticence of landowners to allow detectorists to search (owing to issues with 'nighthawks' -illegal metal detectorists – or the fear of potential disruption to farming or land development if an archaeological site were discovered) permissions are becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. This has resulted in land permissions becoming almost as prized a commodity as the artefacts themselves and subject to an equal, if not higher, degree of protectiveness amongst detectorists. It is hardly surprising therefore that a good relationship with the landowner is very important, and that when metal detectorists have found a farmer with whom they have rapport, as well as an interesting search area, the relationship can continue for many years, often cemented with gifts. One interviewee reported giving his farmers whiskey at Christmas, while another had presented theirs with a display case of small finds. This personal aspect could also contribute to the sense of attachment reported above.

In second place, high quality finds were the next most important aspect in a favourite findspot, being rated number one by 25.2 per cent of the sample. However, there was only a small margin separating this from the middle few aspects, which had very little between them. Evidently exclusive permission, easy access to the area, and an attractive landscape are all of fairly equal importance in a good location.

Privacy (meaning a location in which one was not easily observed or disturbed by passers-by) was overwhelmingly the least important factor of all, and was voted sixth by 24.2 per cent of respondents.

From 1–6, where 1 is the most important and 6 is the least important please rate the following in the order of importance in your favourite findspot

Findspot attribute	Ranking	Frequency of Number 1 rating	Frequency of Number 6 rating	Average rating
Good relationship with landowner	**1**	59%	8.40%	**1.9**
High quality finds	**2**	25.20%	9.70%	**2.95**
Exclusive permission to detect	**3**	21.30%	21.90%	**3.47**
Easy access	**4**	14.80%	18.40%	**3.61**
Attractive landscape	**5**	11.90%	21.30%	**3.73**
Privacy	**6**	11.90%	24.20%	**4.01**

Table 1: Table representing how respondents ranked the importance of different findspot attributes (n = 312).

The importance rating of an attractive landscape as fifth amongst other factors in a favourite findspot was a finding that surprised the researcher but may suggest that, rather than being unimportant, it is a feature that is simply slightly taken for granted by the respondents and, whilst not the priority in terms of comparative value weighting, it was at least as important as being easily able to get onto the landscape itself. However, in light of the attachment response already discussed, the ranking reveals that the cause for this attachment is, as was suspected, obviously something beyond the mere aesthetic. Instead it is clearly an attachment generated from a combination of different factors, including the quality and find-rate of the objects discovered there, the relationship with the landowner, and the overarching sense of history of the landscape. This conclusion is supported by the 87.5 per cent of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that they had a sense of the history of the landscape on which they detected regularly, and, moreover, that 88.1 per cent of them agreed or strongly agreed that it was important for them to understand that history (**Fig. 4**). It is also noteworthy that the proximity to the home area – 85.9% of the questionnaire respondents detected close to home – may contribute to a feeling of attachment to a certain findspot, and that this in turn could contribute to detectorists' sense of the history of the landscape there and their desire to find out more.

Interview Data: Two Case Studies

To examine the subject more closely and in an attempt to glean real meaning from the quantitative findings, qualitative data was collected through a series of go-along lifeworld interviews conducted across England, with twelve candidates chosen from those known by PAS Finds Liaison Officers (*n.*10) and those suggested by the researcher (*n.*2) to create a geographically dispersed sample of respondents who searched on a variety of landscapes and employed a variety of recording techniques. By conducting the interviews out in the open air it was possible to rely upon the landscape to offer conversational prompts in a way that the researcher could not have managed alone, leading the interviewee to make much more pertinent links between the environment and their feelings, instead of simply trying to say the right thing (see, for example, Hitchings & Jones 2004). Furthermore, in comparison to the usual power dynamic experienced during the more common, structured interviewer/interviewee relationship, the dynamic during a go-along walking interview is much

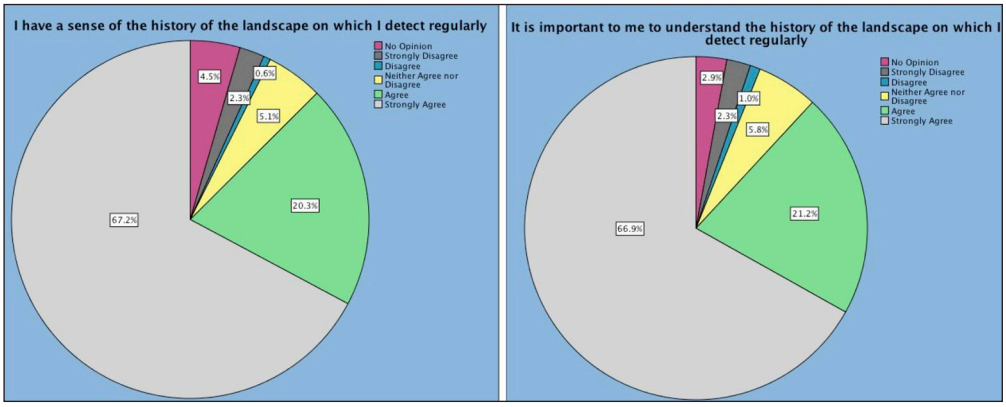

Figure 4: How many respondents agreed with the statements: 'I have a sense of the history of the landscape on which I detect regularly' (n = 311), and 'It is important to me to understand the history of the landscape on which I detect regularly' (n = 308).

more cooperative, with the interviewees even put into the role of "tour guide" for the researcher – a fact that was particularly useful given the need to avoid the academic vs. amateur hierarchy discussed earlier. In short, the approach was intended to put the subjects at ease and make them more likely to disclose accurate descriptions of their lived world, in keeping with the phenom- enological aims of the research (Kvale 2007) (**Fig. 5**). In total, the interviews provided 23 hours and 46 minutes of audio which was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Evidence from two of the twelve interviews will be presented here as individual case studies.

Yorkshire

The first detectorist interviewed was a Yorkshire farmer, a fieldwalker whose real interest was in flints. The interviewee had started detecting because he felt those to whom he had previously given permission to search on his land had not been informing him truthfully about the objects they were finding. So, having asked them to stop what they were doing, he started taking a metal detector out himself when fieldwalking to see what metal finds might be unearthed. With fieldwalking for flints, he said, he knew where to go, because he had been doing it for many years and, as he commented, 'you know your own landscape don't you?'; it was something of a revelation then when, upon taking out a metal detector with him on his walks, he suddenly began finding a significant number of Roman coins. At the time of the interview, the earliest coin he had found to date was one minted under Vespasian *[AD 69 – AD 79]*, whilst the latest was Eugenius *[AD 392 – AD 394]* and although it was clear that he prefers collecting flints to Roman coins, he clearly enjoyed the additional speculation

Figure 5: An interviewee metal detecting, January 2013.

of thinking about the Roman arrival on the land his family now farm, saying:

> **Interviewee A:** 'But what I'm getting at is, these took over, didn't they? When we were painting our faces blue, all these Italians came, nicely washed, and they came. They knocked us off our perch as I see it'.

Comments like these reveal just how much metal detectorists use their discovered objects to reconstruct and imagine the ancient history of the landscape upon which they detect. Later in the day, Interviewee A was describing his experience of finding flints and said:

> **Interviewee A:** 'If you walk up and down you can then start to build up a picture: if there's a concentration there they've been doing something there.'... 'You can interpret it, and you can lie in bed at night and think about it, and I'm happy with that. Yeah, I like how that works'.

Contrary to whatever popular opinions may remain about the mercurial motivations of metal detectorists trying to profit from the archaeological record, hobbyists like Interviewee A value the excitement of making finds and the resultant pleasure in interpreting the past. In the case of A in particular, he has only ever metal detected on his own land and is not interested in searching anyone else's – instead, he is motivated by an attachment to his family's farm and making a living from that landscape – discovering more about the people in the past, who also had to make a living in that place: 'I want to know what's happened on my land', he said. It is also about legacy. His family's legacy invested in the farmland, and the legacy of the historic landscape and the information contained in its portable antiquities.

> **Interviewee A:** 'I want somebody in twenty, thirty years time when I'm dead and buried, to be able to look back on something and say: 'That's interesting'.

Wapping

A member of the Society of Thames Mudlarks (where 'mudlark' is defined as somebody who searches river mud for objects) was interviewed on the foreshore of the River Thames as he detected one morning. He first started in 1974, when he was 10. Having always searched on the Thames, he is an experienced judge of where to dig, and how to identify whether the material has been disturbed or not:

> **Interviewee C:** 'The spots that we don't do, either it's because they've been disturbed in Victorian times, some areas there's just no layers there, and others it's not worth doing'.

Like archaeologists who can identify changes in stratigraphy, and the presence of the undisturbed 'natural', so long-term detectorists and Mudlarks develop an 'eye' for the material they search on regularly, acquiring expertise that is inherently linked to forging bonds with the landscape they go out on. Since 1974, Interviewee C had detected without a break, and although he used to search more regularly, he now goes out around every two weeks. When asked why he thought he continued to detect – what had kept him going on to the foreshore, at tide-dependent times, every two weeks for the last forty years – he said it was about the collecting, about looking out for that missing link, or that object with a particular story. He gave an example of collecting cufflinks, of seeing similar ones coming up time after time, but then:

> **Interviewee C:** 'all of a sudden there's a new design, you get that buzz, filling that gap, another piece of the jigsaw, and it's that – for me, it is.'

Many of the interviewees have described this 'buzz', the indefinable addiction to the

excitement of finding tangible history in your chosen landscape, often after searching over and over the same ground for many years. On this occasion, the mudlark said:

> **Interviewee C:** 'Once you've had the first find, you're really hooked then. Once you've had it out of the field or the mud, that's it, you're hooked for life.'

He also described the catharsis of searching the Thames foreshore (see **Fig. 6**), and was keen to register the importance of the fact that as a landscape, it is at a lower level from the built up City, and set down from what is observable of modern London, so that once down by the river it was easy to imagine being back in Medieval times.

> **Interviewee C:** '[it's] a little haven. All the hustle and bustle, you can see them walking over London Bridge, but it's like another little world'

It is clear that the discovered objects provide a tangible link, a haptic encounter which makes this imaginative reconstruction easier.

> **Interviewee C:** 'You can imagine back – when you get a piece of Medieval – the old boats, people unloading the ships. . .'.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to demonstrate that the metal detecting experience is incontrovertibly bound up in landscape – an artefact findspot is a special place, and 70 per cent of detectorists reported feeling attached to the areas where they detect regularly. Just as metal detecting is about more than simply finding buried treasure, so too is the detectorists' attachment to landscape about more than just the potential for this. Instead, both are about the meeting of past experience and potential action, aesthetic preferences combined with local knowledge, and lastly, as our mudlark interview revealed, the acquisition of years worth of experience, environmental

Figure 6: The Thames Foreshore, November 2012.

instinct, and getting 'hooked'. As Ingold (1993: 155) asserts, 'a place in the landscape is not "cut out" from the whole, either on the plane of ideas or on that of material substance', but is rather an embodiment of the whole multi-sensory, perceptive experience of a particular locale. Consequently, by seeking to better understand the sense of place of metal detectorists, we can hope to gain a better understanding of their attitudes to the portable antiquities they find, and their heritage in general.

Any examination of this will require a reflexive, phenomenological approach- typified by reference to the Husserlian 'lifeworld'- and a sensitivity to decades worth of damage done by offensive campaigns funded by professional bodies. However, if managed, not only will the academic/amateur hierarchy be diluted further, but we will gain valuable data to inform our institutions how to best deal with the hobby in the UK going forward. It is vital for the heritage sector to commence intuitive and creative problem-solving if it is to engage the metal detecting community appropriately and, in so doing, offer the protection that our archaeological resource so urgently requires. Unlike much of Europe, unchecked metal detecting is legal in this country and hugely popular amongst a large population, and it looks to remain so in both instances. Rather than alienating these thousands of hobbyists, we should acknowledge their contribution to date and find new ways to best work alongside them. The innovative Portable Antiquities Scheme database provides a resource of now over a million records, complete with deep zooming images and geo-spatial map data, that has so far been used in 87 PhD theses and 15 major research projects. This work would not have been possible without the cooperation of detectorists who, as a group, often feel marginalised and unappreciated. By contrast, data presented in the forthcoming research will demonstrate that the conscientious detecting community is a constituency no less valid than the country's local history societies, and one with a significant contribution to make towards a more complete understanding of the English landscape.

Competing Interests

A shorter version of this paper was originally presented at the Third International Landscape Archaeology Conference (LAC) 2014 in Rome, convened by the VU University Amsterdam and KNIR (Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome). The author declares that they have no competing interests.

References

Addyman, P V 2008 Before the Portable Antiquities Scheme. In: Thomas, S and Stone, P G (Eds.) *Metal Detecting and Archaeology.* Newcastle: The Boydell Press, pp. 51–62.

Ashworth, P D 2003 The phenomenology of the lifeworld and social psychology. *Social Psychological Review,* 5: 18–34.

Bender, B 2002 Time and Landscape. *Current Anthropology,* 43(Special Issue S4): S103–S112.

Bender, B 2006 Place and Landscape. In: Tilley, C., Keane, W., Kuchler, S., Rowlands, M and Spyer, P (Eds.) *Handbook of Material Culture.* London: Sage Publications, pp. 303–314. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781848607972.n20

Bland, R 1996 The Treasure Act and the Proposals for the Voluntary Recording of All Archaeological Finds. *The Museum Archaeologist,* 23 (Conference Proceedings): 3–18.

Bland, R 2005 A Pragmatic Approach to the Problem of Portable Antiquities: the Experience of England and Wales. *Antiquity,* 79: 440–447.

Carpiano, R 2009 Come Take a Walk With Me: The Go-Along Interview As a Novel Method for Studying the Implications of Place for Health and Well-Being. *Health & Place,* 15: 263–272. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2008.05.003. PMid:18606557.

Council for British Archaeology 1980 *Stop Taking Our Past: The campaign against the plundering of Britain's past.* London: CBA.

Dobat, A S 2013 Between Rescue and Research: An Evaluation after 30 Years of Liberal Metal Detecting in Archaeological Research and Heritage Practice in Denmark. *European Journal of Archaeology,* 16(4): 704–725. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/1461957113Y.0000000041

Evans, J and **Jones, P** 2011 The Walking Interview: Methodology, Mobility and Place. *Applied Geography,* 31: 849–858. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2010.09.005

Ferguson, N 2013 Biting the bullet: the role of hobbyist metal detecting within battlefield archaeology. *Internet Archaeology,* 33. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.11141/ia.33.3 (Accessed 11.03.2015).

Fletcher, E 1978 *The Complete Treasure Hunters Directory and Guide.* Co.Durham: Fletcher Publications.

Gosden, C and **Head, L** 1994 Landscape – A Usefully Ambiguous Concept, *Archaeology in Oceania,* 29(3): 113–116.

Gray, L 2011 English Heritage launch campaign against 'night hawkers' *The Telegraph* (11 February 2011). Available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/earth/earthnews/8316620/English-Heritage-launch-campaign-against-night-hawkers.html (Accessed 18 March 2015).

Green, B and **Gregory, T** 1978 An Initiative on the Use of Metal Detectors in Norfolk, *Museums Journal,* 77(4): 161–162.

Hammersley, M 1990 *Reading Ethnographic Research.* London: Longman.

Hitchings, R and **Jones, V** 2004 Living With Plants and the Exploration of Botanical Encounter within Human Geographic Research Practice. *Ethics, Place and Environment,* 7(1–2): 3–18. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1366879042000264741

Husserl, E 1970 (original partial publication 1936) *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press.

Ingold, T 1993 The Temporality of the Landscape. *World Archaeology,* 25(2): 152–174. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00438243.1993.9980235

Kusenbach, M 2003 Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool. *Ethnography,* 4: 455–485. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/146613810343007

Kvale, S 2007 *Doing Interviews.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Lewis, M 2014a *Portable Antiquities Scheme Records One Millionth Find.* News Item 26 September 2014 Available at: https://finds.org.uk/news/story/260 (Accessed 20.03.2015).

Lewis, M 2014b *The Portable Antiquities Scheme Annual Report 2013.* London: British Museum.

Little, B J 2002 Archaeology as a Shared Vision. In: Little, B J (Ed.) *Public Benefits of Archaeology.* Florida: University Press of Florida, pp. 3–19.

Moshenska, G 2007 Oral History in Archaeology: Excavating Sites of Memory. *Oral History,* 35(1): 91–97.

Rasmussen, J M 2014 Securing Cultural Heritage Objects and Fencing Stolen Gods? A Case Study on Museums and Metal Detecting in Norway. *Norwegian Archaeological Review,* 47(1): 83–107. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00293652.2014.899616

Richardson, L 2000 Writing: A Method of Enquiry. In: Denzin, N K and Lincoln, Y S (Eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research (Second Edition).* London: Sage Publications Inc.

Robbins, K 2014 *Portable Antiquities Scheme: A Guide For Researchers.* London: British Museum.

Seamon, D 1979 *A Geography of the Lifeworld.* London: Croom Helm. PMid: 435325.

Thomas, S 2009 *The relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users in England and Wales: Impact of the past and implication for the future.* Unpublished thesis (PhD), Newcastle University: School of Arts and Cultures.

van der Schriek, J and **van der Schriek, M** 2014 Metal Detecting: Friend or Foe of Conflict Archaeology? Investigation, Preservation and Destruction on WWII sites in the Netherlands. *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage,* 1(3): 228–244. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/2051819614Z.00000000020

How to cite this article: Winkley, F 2016 The Phenomenology of Metal Detecting: Insights from a Unique Type of Landscape Experience. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology*, 25(2): 13, pp. 1–15, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/pia.496

Submitted: 22 May 2015 **Accepted:** 15 October 2015 **Published:** 05 January 2016